2022 Digital Digest

THE Global Anglican

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EDITORIAL

Preparing People for the Hardest Job of All

The Hardest Job of All was the title of the Editorial of Autumn 2019, referring to the ministry of the word and sacrament in the local church. Humanly speaking, as goes the minister, so goes the church, for a church finds it hard to rise above the ministry it is receiving. Thus, the task is both highly significant and very demanding.

This truth has only become more apparent in the last two years, with the special challenges posed by the pandemic. The business of the ministers of the word is to serve the Lord by serving his people. It necessarily involves teaching whether one-to-one or to congregations; whether by a formal sermon, or with a few words quietly said in the ear of someone in special need. To be excluded from so much of the personal lives of the flock for whom you labour and pray is painful. At the same time, to make the arrangements needed for the congregation to still 'meet' week after week has been demanding to say the least. So much good has been done, and we should be thankful to the Lord for his servants.

But in designating the front-line ministry of the congregational minister the most difficult job in the world, I was not suggesting that other ministries are easy. The episcopal role, for example, has its own demands. In particular, there is a loneliness in being a bishop, when decisions need to be made affecting the lives of others for which you alone will be accountable.

However, the responsibility for theological education, of helping to equip the ministers of the word, is also especially challenging. If the church will not, generally speaking, rise above its minister, the diocese or denomination will not rise above its theological education. Those who are committed to it, especially those who are in charge of providing it, need our support, whether we are laity or bishops or other clergy, or academics. We must get this right for the good health of the churches. When theological education fails, we are poisoning the wells. A Diocese cannot normally flourish without access to sound theological education, especially for those who are to be ordained.

I have the privilege of being the Director of the Theological Education Network that exists within the Global Anglican fellowship known as Gafcon. Gafcon came into life in 2008 as a confessional movement within

the Anglican Communion over the theological issue of the Bible's teaching on sexuality. The aim of the Theological Education Network is to ensure that Bishops world-wide have access to excellent theological education for the training of ordinands and others.

As part of this ministry, some years ago, I convened a meeting of theological educators, mostly Principals, from around the Anglican world. Our first task was to listen to each other as we described the problems posed for this ministry. Secondly, we endeavoured to work out the basics of theological education which would be relevant and helpful wherever the task is attempted, whether online, or in the bush, or in high prestige university. What are we committed to?

Challenges for theological education

For those responsible for providing theological education, especially Principals, the problems are very significant, wherever the task is attempted. Of course, much depends on both the location and the maturity of the institution. But there are basic issues which touch the lives of everyone involved. They are difficulties which may be apparent more to the Principal than to the lecturers.

I was interested that the first thing which my colleagues at the conference mentioned, was the world in which their endeavours were set and in particular the antagonism to the biblical gospel found therein. Whether it was Hinduism, or Islam, or Mormonism, or the Prosperity teaching, or secularism or theological liberalism, the whole business of shaping the lives of those who will preach the gospel has to take account of the competing world views. We prepare missionaries to cross the cultural divides; today, we need to prepare Christian preachers for a similar experience in their own countries.

Immediately, then, the argument was that our training has to be of a high standard, and many were the stories of ill-equipped pastors being sent out to preach without a deep understanding either of the faith or the world in which they laboured. If the Pastor does not know the faith, neither will the congregation and it will be vulnerable to the wolves which so easily arise, even from within the flock (Acts 20:28-30). We cannot afford to lessen the demands of our education.

Secondly, there was a list of the practical problems which beset the those in charge of running tertiary institutions: The need for adequate buildings and equipment; the constant search for finances for the students as well as for the College; the skilled task of administration; the recruitment of suitable students and the provision of accommodation; the question of where students would serve once they graduate; the danger that they will go off to secular jobs with their new qualification; the gathering of resources, especially books for the library, but also support staff. As well,

there are issues to do with the actual instruction – an appropriate syllabus; excellent teachers; a suitable pedagogy; accreditation.

Beyond these challenges there is engagement in ecclesiastical politics. An institution will be set within a Diocese or a Province and will have relationships with the local bishops. Not all bishops are sympathetic to, or understanding of, the project of education, and some will take successful teachers away for other ministries and then provide inadequate replacements. There are almost certain to be other tensions which arise between Church and College, not least if the College becomes rather overweening about its own importance. It does not help to forget to ask the Bishop to be present at the Graduation ceremony for example!

An issue which has caused difficulty in a number of places is where the Diocesan or Provincial authorities decide to turn an existing College into a University. This sounds like a positive thing to do, not least because it is potentially useful for the gospel, that the Church set up and run a Christian University. In some places this has worked well; in others, however, it has left the theological education element floundering. Is a modern university the best context for ministerial training?

I do not doubt that many other issues could be mentioned, and they require great skill and perseverance in dealing with them if we are to achieve success. But even more important is the issue of what I have called the basics of theological education, the profoundly important ideas which guide the endeavour in the midst of all the difficulties which are faced. These basics will help us determine where scarce resources are to be expended and will give point and power to the whole exercise. We need answers to the fundamental questions which drive us and make our endeavour fit for purpose. I have chiefly written from the point of view of a bricks and mortar College; but I hope that what I say can be taken and adapted to all the other forms of theological education, including online learning.

The basics of theological education

My own experience as the Principal of a College shows me that it is fatally easy to become the victim of circumstances, to become so busy dealing with challenges such as the ones I have mentioned, as to lose the undergirding vision. We have seen enough highly successful seminaries fade away into liberalism or worse; or other seminaries simply become uninspiring workplaces for faculty and students who cannot wait to leave, that we can see the need for a constant, simple reminder of what the whole enterprise is about.

I am not going to pretend that what I say next is anything especially new. I have added my own commentary to the questions I am about to ask. I do not suggest that all wisdom belongs to me. On the contrary, you

may well disagree vigorously with what I say. But in any case, I am hoping that all of us will have sound answers to these questions and be prepared to improve theological education by constantly asking them.

So, let me ask the questions which we need to keep asking ourselves. They are, *Why? Who? What? and How?*

Why? Why are we doing this?

How do you articulate the purpose of theological education? Personally, I can never improve on the well-known and much used, '*To know God and to make him known*'. I realise that it is an elderly vision-statement, but old age does not necessarily make something wrong or useless.

The value of the phrase is this: it reminds us that the Lord is at the centre of our endeavours, and more, that it is the knowledge of the Lord which we are on about. Faculty and students must share the same goal, namely to grow in their knowledge of the Lord. One of the great dangers of modern western education is that students enter into courses interested more in where it will get them in the end rather than the subject matter as such. Obviously, an interest in where graduation will lead to is not a bad thing, but the student will be poorly equipped if they are not also deeply motivated by an interest in their subject.

The prime subject of theological education is not even the theory and practice of ministry. It is a Person and the way forward has to involve relationships with that Person and his people.

Our aim, as a fellowship of believers is to know the living God and to delight in him. This will occur through the scriptures as God's self-revelation. But, if the students have a pragmatic aim, merely to graduate, they will be practitioners, not prophets. Worse still, if the faculty have become so over-specialised and engrossed in the technical aspects of their field of study that this is what motivates them, then even if they are world-leaders in some aspect of research, they will do more damage than good. The faculty ought to be experts on the knowledge of God first and foremost and only then on some part of the revelation.

That is why the worship of God and the prayer-life of the College is so significant. Do our lectures begin with prayer? Do they ever generate prayer and praise? It was said of Professor John Murray, who taught both at Princeton and Westminster, that 'His classes begin with whispered prayer; they often end with ringing affirmations of praise, aflame with the glory of Scripture.' Does the faculty meet to pray and hear God's word? Are the faculty members growing in their own knowledge of God and their capacity to serve him?

The knowledge of God will necessarily motivate our service of him in a profound obedience. But in a seminary the special aim will be 'to make him known'. First and foremost, this is not a technique. Of course, we

must learn the rudiments of ministry. But our commitment to the word of God, to speaking for the Lord in evangelism and in teaching must arise pre-eminently from our own love for him. Otherwise, ministry just turns into a job, or into an exercise in power over the lives of others.

Who? Who are the students and faculty?

The single most important question you can ever ask if you are assessing a theological education enterprise is '*Who teaches?*'. This is more important than the qualifications it hands out, or the beauty of a campus, or the wealth of its endowments or the reputation it has. For it is pre-eminently our teachers who shape us for ministry.

Without a doubt, the teachers need to know their subject. They need to teach the truth and, indeed, have a properly critical approach in their methods. They need to grow in their own understanding, and they need to be good teachers, able to communicate the truth to students clearly and memorably. Mere erudition is not enough, especially as the students themselves are expected to enter a pastoral ministry in which teaching and learning will be so important. Students learn not just from what is taught, but from how it is taught.

Furthermore, the teachers must clearly model the life of the Pastor as well as the Christian life. To have teachers who are morally compromised in speech or deed is a disaster. But, more than that, to have teachers who themselves do not engage in pastoral ministry, even within the seminary setting, because they lack the skills and giftedness required, only succeeds in turning the educational experience into a theoretical exercise. Worse, such teachers can sometimes merely encourage students not into pastoral ministry amongst ordinary people, but towards further academic study with a desire to become a theological professor. In my view, we mostly need teachers who never dreamed of being professors, but whose heart is in the ministry of the word and who have had fruitful experience in such ministry before being recruited, possibly even against their inclination, into the academic world.

I am also in favour of a seminary with a confessional unity. Not that the teachers have to agree on everything, but that they should be at one on crucial matters of the faith and preferably too in the way in which the faith is expressed in the documents to which we give our commitment. Thus for me I am a Reformed Anglican committed to the Thirty-nine Articles and the Prayer Book, but belonging too to the evangelical tradition. This enables students to build on a foundation, but also means that they can learn alternatives. But a seminary in which teachers are too diversified becomes open to filling the minds of students with confusion and doubt.

As well, all teachers must be at one in seeing that their fundamental business is not to do with some focused academic expertise (though they

should have one), but with the great business of the knowledge of God. Their question is how their knowledge of some part of the project of theological education feeds into the main task. Whether Old Testament, or New Testament, or Doctrine or Church History, the real purpose of the study is to know God and to be equipped to make him known. Every member of the faculty has that responsibility.

I once had the misfortune to serve on a faculty which was deeply divided over a relational issue. Ever since then I have prayed fervently for all Colleges I have had anything to do with, for unity. If teachers are to model Christ individually, then they are to do so corporately as well. Would it not be good for a faculty to act as though they are a fellowship of older brothers and sisters who invite the students as younger brothers and sisters into their fellowship for a time and lead them in the knowledge of God though the word of God? Is that not who we are? Or do we model ourselves on the typical University faculty with its hierarchical ethos and determination to prove ourselves by research output?

The question of the student body is also vital. It is always the temptation to accept everyone who offers in order to increase our numbers. But we must sometimes decline to accept a potential student, or at least to delay their entry. To take one reason, if the person who is applying (or being sponsored) is not already exercising a ministry, they need to realise that the experience we are offering them will not turn them into disciples or discipleship-makers. We can only take those with a ministry-heart and equip them to teach the word of God. Do the potential students already teach Sunday School? Do they share the gospel with others? Do they care for other Christians? Do they manage their own family well and teach their children the truth of God's word? Are they capable of learning and teaching? Are they men and women of prayer and do they lead lives of obedience to the Lord? Are they godly, not given to greed for power or money? Do they have the support of other, wise people who see in them the relevant gifts of the Spirit and that love without which the gifts do more harm than good? These are the students we need, but we cannot create them in a College, though we can certainly enhance their gifts. We must recognise them – and dare I say, prayerfully recruit them.

What? What is the syllabus?

Central to the syllabus must be the revelation of God found in the whole of the sacred scriptures and centred on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our students must graduate knowing and loving the scriptures and be capable of teaching and applying the scriptures to themselves, to their families and to their church. Of course, the level at which they graduate will differ considerably, depending on where we are. But it seems to me that if the graduates of a theological training do not possess at least the knowledge

and skills of a local secondary school teacher, they are not being adequately equipped to do 'the hardest job in the world'. In my part of the world, this means that our graduates heading for pastoral ministry will normally undertake the usual three-to-four-year full-time degree, provided that it contains an excellent knowledge of the Bible as well as development of the pastoral gifts needed. (Of course, the further development of pastoral gifts also depends upon post-College training and experience).

For this to occur the syllabus needs to be carefully crafted. First and foremost, it must be based on the unity of scripture as the word of God. That means that the teachers will be aware of the context of the whole as they teach the parts. There needs to be an awareness of the narrative of scripture, the unfolding story of the kingdom of God which unites both Testaments and enables us to read effectively. I think that such a narrative needs to be taught as a separate subject, in order to do justice to the unity of the whole Bible and to enable scripture to be interpreted by scripture. Only thus will we avoid mere moralism and see the gospel story from beginning to end.

But such a description of scripture is not enough. The unity of scripture also means that we must teach 'the doctrine of scripture', that is, the teaching of the whole revelation, taken from every part, always within context, but providing answers to such questions as 'what does the Bible say about sin?' or, 'What does the Bible say about reconciliation?', and, 'What does the Bible say about God?'. And yet this, too is not enough. For all our study needs to be done by listening to the voices of the myriad others who have read the Bible also: the early Church Fathers and the Reformers pre-eminently, but of course there will be those in every century, from all the church traditions, and from different cultures who can teach us. Hence the study both of history and philosophy. We need to know the roots of our own culture. We need to understand the philosophies which have shaped us. We need to know our Bible and, increasingly, our world.

Please notice that such an education cannot take place in a short space of time. Any tendency to lessen the length and reduce the standards of theological education is a profound error. I have not mentioned the study of the biblical languages, which in my estimate takes up about a quarter of the time available. That is a subject for another day.

How? How does the learning proceed?

I owe Dr Graham Cole, until recently Dean of the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Chicago, this observation: 'Learning in theological seminary is done one third in the classroom, one third in the library, and one third over food'. There are few disciplines which can be profitably imbibed by students on their own. We need interaction and we need friendship in order to try out ideas, learn new things and see how the

learning of the classroom makes sense. This is especially so with the learning needed to produce ministers of the gospel. It is not an accident that Jesus gathered his disciples and actually lived with them for three years. (I may observe here that it is good if husbands and wives can learn together if possible).

Pedagogy is a study of its own and it is something worth pursuing. Among other things it should not be assumed that giving theological lectures is a skill with which we are all born. If we think of a seminary as a place where the seeds of life are cultivated, the first seminary is the family, in which the parents teach the children and the second seminary is the church in which the people gather with each other in order to learn together what it is that the Lord is saying. These two seminaries are models for the business of theological education. Our teachers are not just the appointed professors, but the other students as well. Indeed, as Principal, I learned from students. And we learn by teaching each other in informal conversation; we learn by listening and observing; we learn by doing.

I am not saying that online learning is wrong; indeed, it can be very effective. Nor am I suggesting that a seminary has to have grand buildings and a great library. A brilliant seminary may have none of these things. It may even consist of a few students, a teacher, and a shed to meet in. My argument, rather, is that whatever we do, it must somehow make room for personal fellowship and worship.

Conclusion

A concluding word to bishops and others in the denomination. Supporting colleges can be a frustrating and difficult task, especially given all the other obligations which crowd out your life. But the good health of our work depends upon us providing ministers of the gospel trained in the whole counsel of God and able to share the knowledge of God with others. To have a seminary which advances this work is not a short-term project. We need to be thinking decades into the future. A thriving system of training not just ordinands but for the whole people of God, is a wonderfully beneficial gift to the work of God in the area of your ministry.

Such a system may take many different shapes, but we must constantly ask the great questions: Why? Who? What? and How?

PETER JENSEN

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Beyond Male and Female? How Redemption's Relationship to Creation Shapes Sexual Ethics

Sam Ashton

This article contributes towards current debates about issues of sexuality by exploring how the dogmatic locus of redemption relates to creation, specifically sexed embodiment. How does the redemptive work of Christ relate to the "male and female" of the creation event? Megan DeFranza has recently proposed the biblical category of "eunuch" as a placeholder for intersexuality, discerning a biblical trajectory where in Christ eunuchs supplement the male-female binary of creation. Thus, "redemption expands creation" such that sexual dimorphism becomes sexual polymorphism. In response, this article engages Isaiah 56 and Matthew 19 to maintain that redemption's development of creation concerns spiritual and social inclusion rather than any expansion of sexed bodily structure.

This article is the winner of the 2021 Global Anglican Essay Prize, and was highly commended by the judges: Bishop Samuel Morrison (Chile), Revd Shady Anis (Egypt), Dr Lee Gatiss (UK), and Dr Martin Foord (Singapore).

1. Introduction

Recent debates about issues of sexuality are often underpinned by the question of how redemption relates to creation.[1] More specifically, "How does the redemptive work of Christ relate to the 'male and female'

[1] E.g., see the 2018 Theology Working Group papers that contributed towards the House of Bishops of the Church of England, *Living in Love & Faith: Christian Teaching and Learning About Identity, Sexuality, Relationships, and Marriage*. (London: Church House, 2020). See "LLF Library," https://llf.churchofengland.org. In this article "creation" refers to the prelapsarian dispensation and dogmatic locus recorded in Genesis 1–2. My use of "redemption" assumes the historical distinction between redemption accomplished and applied "now" at Christ's first coming (e.g., "redeeming those under the law," Gal 4:4–5) and the redemption that is "not yet" but will be fully accomplished and applied at Christ's return (e.g., "making all things new," Rev 21:5). Without ignoring how redemption and eschatology overlap in a "two-ages and two-realms" schema, language of "redemption" in this article will refer to redemption "now." See further (Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and the Hope of Glory: An Exegetical and Theological Study* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020], 57). While space precludes an examination of

of the creation event?"[2] Megan DeFranza contributes to the current discussion by arguing that redemption in Christ *expands* the categories of creation.[3] With a particular concern to advocate for intersex inclusion,[4] DeFranza concentrates upon the eunuch motif in Scripture. "Much like the [modern] term 'intersex', 'eunuch' was an umbrella concept" in the ancient world, representing not only castrated males, but all those who fell "in-between" the sexually dimorphic binary of "male and female."[5] By valorising the eunuch in Matt 19:12, Jesus enfolds eunuchs "*as they are*" into the purposes of God,[6] thus indicating that "male and female" are not the exclusive norm. In redemption, Jesus provides "an important supplement to the binary model of human sex and gender" recorded in creation.[7] "The Scriptures offer a third way for recognising a third gender."[8] The task of the church today is to continue the NT trajectory of improvisation within God's "unfinished drama,"[9] allowing the Spirit to queer traditional sexual ethics.[10]

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somatic and spiritual transformation at the Consummation, conclusions reached in this article will naturally inform any exploration of eschatological embodiment.

[2] Whether one perceives the "male and female" of creation event as an exclusive norm or a statistical majority, this article minimally examines the pressure of redemption for the sexed bodily pattern found in creation.

[3] For a similar account, emphasising how grace in Christ builds upon nature, see David Albert Jones, "Gender Identity in Scripture: Indissoluble Marriage and Exceptional Eunuchs," *SCE* 34:1 (2021): 3–16.

[4] Intersex is a "medical term used to describe the physical anatomy of a human being whose primary and secondary sex characteristics are not clearly male or female" (Jay Kyle Petersen, *A Comprehensive Guide to Intersex* [London: Jessica Kingsley, 2021], 24).

[5] Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 68. While Defranza recognizes that the suggested link between intersex and eunuch is anachronistic (nor univocal), she still advances its validity given the experienced liminality of both groups (ibid., 103).

[6] Megan K. DeFranza, "Good News for Gender Minorities," in *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 174. Italics original.

[7] DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 106.

[8] Ibid., 66.

[9] Megan K. DeFranza, "Rejoinder," in *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church*, ed. Preston Sprinkle, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 122.

[10] DeFranza has written "affirming" pieces on same-sex marriage and transgender identities.

At the heart of DeFranza' proposal is a pre-understanding of how the biblical story coheres. Given DeFranza's preference for Irenaeus,[11] it seems fitting to appropriate Irenaeus's observation that how we piece together the biblical mosaic reveals different portraits of Christ—whether a "miserable . . . fox" or the "beautiful . . . king."[12] In this sense, what is at stake is not only a biblically faithful view of the sexed body in redemption, but also a clear picture of Christ the Creator, Redeemer, and Exemplar of sexed embodiment, as well as the gospel he heralds. Consequently, I shall first narrate DeFranza's "redemption expands creation" position, focusing on her presentation of the eunuch motif in Scripture. Second, I shall respond by exploring Scripture's trajectory as it pertains to the sexed body, arguing contra DeFranza that redemption's development of creation concerns spiritual and social inclusion rather than an expansion of sexed bodily structure towards sexual polymorphism.[13]

2. Redemption Expands Creation

2.1. OT Eunuchs

For Megan DeFranza, the modern categorisation of intersexuality is evidenced in the ancient world by the term "eunuch," an "umbrella concept" for bodily "in-between-ness."[14] In assessing the biblical material, DeFranza highlights not only the stigma of being a eunuch under the old covenant, but she also offers a rationale for why the eunuch was judged to be "the epitome of 'other',"[15] namely as a mixed foreigner. Taking "mixed" first, DeFranza (via Mary Douglas) presses into the food laws of Leviticus 11 to claim that unclean "detestable" creatures are those that "mix the categories of animals named in Genesis 1:28."[16] For old

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[11] DeFranza comments that her "theological anthropology is shaped less by Augustine and more by Irenaeus and the Eastern Church" ("Rejoinder," 122).

[12] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.8.1 (ANF 1:326).

[13] "Spiritual" and "social" refer to our relationship with God and others. "Structure" denotes our sexuate condition.

[14] DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 68. DeFranza does fine work describing various attitudes to eunuchs in the ANE, GRW, and early church. For an account of how the physical ambiguity of eunuchs also translated into the moral realm, see Mathew Kuefler, The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity, CSSHS (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 31–36.

[15] DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 78.

[16] DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 167. See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, RC (London: Routledge, 2005), 51–71. For Douglas, "The underlying principle of cleanness in animals is that they should conform fully to their class" (ibid., 69). Unclean animals are those that defy

covenant Israel "separation equalled holiness. Mixing was detestable, an abomination."[17] Thus, the food laws reinforced for Israel that "mixed things . . . were unclean."[18] DeFranza extends this insight to "eunuchs, whose bodies blurred the lines between male and female."[19] Secondly, the eunuch's "outsider status" is inscribed in Deut 23:1,[20] DeFranza discerning a close association between "castrated eunuchs" and "ancient fertility religions."[21] Thus, there is a sense in which old covenant eunuchs were doubly disadvantaged, considered to be both mixed and foreign.

2.2. NT Eunuchs

Against this OT backdrop DeFranza highlights the shock of Jesus not only *not* healing any eunuch, nor speaking of them as "proof of the fall," but actively heralding eunuchs in Matt 19:12 as "icons of radical discipleship."[22] Here, debate focuses on the identity of the third category of eunuch that Jesus mentions. DeFranza insists that while the majority of the Christian tradition has followed Augustine in reading "eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom" (Matt 19:12c) as figurative for voluntary celibacy,[23] such an interpretation is an illegitimate backreading of 1 Corinthians 7 into Matthew 19,[24] motivated in large part by Augustine's pagan desire to uphold the "Roman cultural values" of a "hierarchically ordered household, within a hierarchically ordered city, overseen by a hierarchically ordered church."[25] For too long has Augustinian order triumphed over the "freedom of the future kingdom of God."[26]

In contrast, DeFranza argues that this third category of eunuch should be read literally. Highlighting the juxtaposition of eunuchs in v.12 with "children" (παιδίον) in the immediately following pericope (Matt 19:13–15), DeFranza offers in the form of a highly suggestive question,

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the class boundaries established by Gen 1:28 (water, air, and earth) through their mode of "locomotion" (ibid.).

17 DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 167.

18 Ibid., 166.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 165.

21 DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 78. DeFranza refers to the people of Deut 23:1 as "cut eunuchs," but she seems to assume rather than develop the link with intersex embodiment ("Gender Minorities," 164).

22 DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 160, 169.

23 E.g., Augustine, "The Work of Monks," in Treatises on Various Subjects, trans. Mary Sarah Muldowney, FC 16 (New York: *Fathers of the Church*, 1952), §32 [390-93].

24 DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 72.

25 DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 163.

26 Ibid.

that children "represent those without gender,"[27] mentioning further how "in Greek, the word for child (*teknon*) is neuter."[28] By privileging the literal eunuch, Jesus "provided an important supplement to the binary model of human sex and gender."[29] In this, Jesus demonstrates that he is the Isaianic Messiah, fulfilling the promise of Isa 56:3–5 that eunuchs are given "a place in God's house *as they are*, [and] not after some kind of restoration to an Edenic pattern."[30]

Moreover, DeFranza supports her exegesis with an appeal to tradition, narrating the early church practice of self-castration, offering the famous example of Origen, and noting further that "there were enough Christians taking Jesus' words literally that the Church Fathers, as early as the Council of Nicaea (325), saw the need to address the issue."[31] Indeed, what remains subtly implicit for DeFranza, but is made explicit by David Hester (whom DeFranza cites positively), is the "extremely powerful, naturalized and self-evident reading that Jesus was calling his followers to perform ritual castration as a sign of religious devotion and commitment."[32] Thus, Matt 19:12's logion about the privileged standing of eunuchs in the new covenant "threatens the sacred boundaries between male and female."[33] Such a literal interpretation has "the advantage of a 'plain text' reading."[34] In contrast, the figurative interpretation ends up concluding that the third "eunuch is not a eunuch at all, but a man who chooses celibacy," a conclusion "premised upon a completely ideological misreading of eunicism altogether."[35] Those who "rhetorically invent an allegorical reading,"[36] must "confront both the fact of the dominical *rejection* of this [sexually dimorphic] norm and the early Christian practices that embraced this rejection."[37] In summary, Jesus' focus in Matt 19:12 is not on singleness as an alternative vocation to marriage. Such

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[27] DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 81.

[28] Ibid., 81 n.63. Although note that Matthew uses παιδίον not τέκνον in the immediate context.

[29] Ibid., 106.

[30] DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 174. Italics original.

[31] DeFranza, Sex Difference, 72. Although for suggested "loopholes" in canon 1 of Nicaea I see J. David Hester, "Queers on Account of the Kingdom of Heaven: Rhetorical Constructions of the Eunuch Body," Scriptura 90 (2005): 819 n.66. That Origen may not have been castrated, see Jones, "Gender Identity," 11.

[32] J. David Hester, "Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus: Matthew 19.12 and Transgressive Sexualities," JNST 28:1 (2005): 31.

[33] Ibid., 37.

[34] Hester, "Queers on Account of the Kingdom of Heaven," 820.

[35] Ibid., 822. For Hester, the figurative reading is falsely premised on the ideological "naturalness" of "nature" and the "male/female binary" (ibid., 823).

[36] Hester, "Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus," 34.

[37] Ibid., 40. Italics original.

a reading would neuter the illocutionary intent of the first two kinds of eunuch. Rather, all three categories of eunuch should be read literally. Thus, Jesus valorizes all three above marriage, thereby supplementing the old covenant binary of male and female.[38]

2.3. New Covenant Expansion

To support her case that new covenant eunuchs are a "supplement to the binary model,"[39] DeFranza argues that "these changes parallel other biblical movement from the Old to the New Testament—laws about mixing things that should be distinct."[40] DeFranza notes from Mark 7:18–23 that just as "Jesus declared as clean those animals that mixed creational categories . . . [he] also spoke positively about humans who didn't fit the categories of male or female, naturally born eunuchs."[41] OT holiness was about external separation, enforced by laws that acted as "every day reminders that God's people were to remain separate from all others" until the coming of Christ (cf. Gal 3:14).[42] With Christ's advent, external holiness is now internalised (Mark 7:18–23). Thus, things that were previously mixed and unclean now become clean and accepted. Here, "The story of eunuchs parallels the narrative of clean and unclean things."[43] This narrative continues to expand throughout Acts, with the inclusion of the Ethiopian (N.B., foreign) eunuch (Acts 8:26–40), unclean food (Acts 10:15), and Gentiles (Acts 10:34–35). Indeed, DeFranza emphasises an important "expansive notion of otherness" set within an "eschatological trajectory," where "other others are born . . . other ages, other languages, other cultures, and even others whose sex does not match either parent," climaxing in the "eschatological community" of Rev 7:9.[44]

DeFranza's juxtaposition of sexed embodiment and food reveals her understanding of how redemption relates to creation. "The Christian

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[38] While Hester reads Jesus' words as rejecting the binary model of creation, DeFranza prefers the language of supplementation because she still recognises the good of heterosexual marriage as "the majority story" (cf. Matt 19:4–6) ("Journeying from the Bible to Christian Ethics in Search of Common Ground," in *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church*, ed. Preston Sprinkle, Counterpoints [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016], 90).

[39] DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 106.

[40] DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 165.

[41] Ibid., 169.

[42] Ibid., 172.

[43] Ibid.

[44] DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 182. Space precludes analysing the historical, philosophical, scientific, and theological viability of DeFranza's parallel between a trajectory of ethnicity and sex. See further Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves, eds., *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

story is not circular but linear," DeFranza opines.[45] "It does not end where it started. As God's revelation unfolds, more and more outsiders are brought in."[46] Thus, Adam and Eve were not prototypes of fixity but progenitors of fecundity. As the trajectory incipient in creation expands in redemption, the task of the church today is to follow the example of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and continue to improvise within God's "unfinished drama."[47] DeFranza affirms the approach of Sparks, who demands a willingness to "move beyond the written word by listening to God's living voice, which includes not only Scripture but also the voices of creation, tradition, and the Spirit."[48] Indeed, the "only way that conservative Christians will be able to move beyond heteronormativity is by adopting a similar hermeneutic."[49]

3. Not Structural Expansion but Spiritual Inclusion

Although DeFranza expresses a correct intuition that there is a *more* to creation,[50] and her compassion for sexual minorities is laudable, her overall model of "redemption expands creation" remains problematic, in large part due to key aspects of her exegesis (as I shall argue).[51] Indeed, since DeFranza's proposal is more textually inflected, the weight of my response will focus on the exegetical arguments that ground her expansionist proposal. Given that the core of DeFranza's argument rests on the propinquity of her proposed parallel between Jesus expanding options on the food menu and Jesus expanding divinely endorsed options for the sexed body, I shall first examine her claim that in the OT the eunuch is an unclean mixture of male and female. Secondly, I shall analyse

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[45] DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 174.

[46] Ibid.

[47] DeFranza, "Rejoinder," 122. DeFranza grounds her trajectory hermeneutics in N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative," Vox *Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7–32. Yet note Wright's caveat that "new improvisation" must fit with the preceding acts of creation, fall, Israel, and Jesus. Further, since the NT forms the first scene in the fifth act of the church, "giving hints . . . of how the play is supposed to end," subsequent scenes must cohere with the first scene (ibid., 19).

[48] Kenton L. Sparks, *God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 299. See DeFranza, Sex Difference, 267.

[49] DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 267.

[50] For examples of correspondence and heightening between Eden and the Eschaton, see G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 29–87.

[51] There is also a sense in which DeFranza's preference for evolving creational systems over stable creational structures is overly historicist, resulting in a reductionistic doctrine of creation.

the illocutionary intent of Matt 19:12, before thirdly, exploring whether Jesus' inclusive move with food in Mark 7 intimates a similar expansion towards sexual polymorphism. My cumulative case maintains that the focus of Jesus' work in redemption "now" concerns spiritual and social inclusion rather than structural expansion of the sexed body.[52]

3.1. OT Eunuchs: A Mix of Male and Female?

DeFranza asserts that for old covenant Israel, certain foods were "detestable" because they mixed the clearly defined categories of Gen 1:28. Similarly, "eunuchs, whose bodies blurred the lines between male and female, were considered foreign,"[53] and so excluded from the assembly of YHWH (Deut 23:1). However, even if we assume the accuracy of the "mixed" thesis as it relates to unclean food,[54] it is not clear that OT eunuchs fit the "mixed" category. First, this is because on closer examination there is only one biblical text that may satisfy the modern definition of an intersexed person (genuine sexed body ambiguity because of a congenital condition), and secondly, the qualifying text employs the descriptor of "blemish" (מום), which does not parallel the concept of "mixed."

3.1.1. Intersexed as "Eunuchs"

The Hebrew word for eunuch (סריס) has a broad semantic range, which depending on the context refers mostly to a high-ranking male official, but can also indicate a castrated male.[55] The rabbinic distinction between

[52] That the focus of redemption "now" is upon spiritual and social inclusion does not preclude the possibility of structural expansion/transformation in redemption "not yet." The nature of somatic transformation in the Eschaton is elucidated in 1 Cor 15:20-58, where we see eschatological redemption restoratively transforming creation. See further Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 1986), esp. chs. 1-3. Space prohibits examining whether DeFranza's "redemption expands creation" schema brings forward into the present structural transformation that is properly reserved for the Eschaton—an over-realised eschatology.

[53] DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 166.

[54] DeFranza builds her case upon the work of Mary Douglas. For a criticism of Douglas' taxonomy, highlighting her treatment of "swarming," see Walter Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law*, JSOTSup 140 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1993), 100–14. For the simple observation that "Leviticus does not provide any explicit rationale for the food laws other than: (1) God is holy and so the Israelites should be holy; and (2) God says so (i.e., revelation)," see Jordan D. Rosenblum, The Jewish Dietary Laws in the Ancient World (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 16.

[55] *HALOT* 2:770. For an overview of סריס in the OT, see Francois P. Retief and Louise Cilliers, "Eunuchs in the Bible," Acta Theologica:7 (2005): 247–258.

congenital "eunuchs of the sun" (יסריס המח) and "man-made eunuchs" (סדא יסירס) is not explicit in the OT, even if subsequently recognised by Jesus in Matt 19:12.[56] Where סריס appears in Isa 56:3, the focus is not directly on biological markers but on religious status. The "eunuch" is placed in parallel with the "foreigner", both of whom are drawn into the covenant community via their faith in YHWH, expressed by religious Sabbath observance (vv.2, 4, 6). Whilst it is not clear what kind of eunuch Isa 56:3 has in mind, Delitzsch makes the timeless suggestion that it refers to those who "had been mutilated against their wills, that they might serve at heathen courts" (cf. Isa 39:7).[57] For these "unfruitful trees" returning from exile, their fear of exclusion is valid in light of Deut 23:1 expressly declaring that "no kind of emasculated person is to enter the congregation of Jehovah."[58] In Isa 56:3, סריס could represent the "ambiguous bodies" of intersexuality,[59] but given the intertext of Isa 39:7, combined with the explicit concern with infertility, it seems more likely that סירס refers to a castrated male rather than a congenital condition.[60]

DeFranza's other oft-cited biblical text is Deut 23:1, where the word סריס does not appear, but DeFranza discerns the concept of intersexuality. However, the juxtaposition of eunuchs and foreigners in the pericope of Deut 23:1-8 further intimates that those "who are bruised-crushed and have a severed male organ" (23:1[2] פצוע־דכא וכרות שפכה) are in fact castrated individuals, perhaps associated with pagan worship, and not those born with a congenital condition.[61] The phrase "bruised-crushed" does not indicate which part of the body is damaged, and although scholars typically agree that the noun שפכה refers to the penis, it is a hapax legomenon in the OT, challenging semantic certainty. The translational test is evidenced further by the LXX rendering the whole phrase as θλαδίας ("eunuch"), likely a euphemism. Indeed, given the three passive participles,

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[56] On the rabbinic distinction, see Hermann Leberecht Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 2nd ed. (München: Beck, 1956), 1:805–07.

[57] Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 2:362.

[58] Ibid. It is also possible that the reward of a יד (Isa 56:5) is a poetic reference to a "penis," and not simply a "memorial" (NIV, NASB), "monument" (ESV, NRSV), or "place" (NKJV). This possibility is increased when we appreciate the proclivity for polyvalence in Hebrew poetry, and well as the clear use of יד as "penis" in Isa 57:8 (plus its more metaphorical employment in Isa 57:10). See further P. R. Ackroyd, "יד," TDOT 5:402–03.

[59] DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 168.

[60] Paul R. House goes further, stating that the eunuch "most likely specifies persons who serve other deities" (*Isaiah: A Mentor Commentary,* MC [Fearn, UK: Mentor, 2019], 538).

[61] The numbering in square brackets refers to the versification of the MT.

it remains unclear whether the damage referred to is inflicted by the self or others. Either way, as Wang concludes, "The most we can say about this category is that it is a group whose male organs are damaged like a eunuch, voluntarily or not."[62] Thus, the juxtaposition with foreigners intimates that these are likely castrated men, probably excluded due to their association with a pagan cult.[63] Interestingly, DeFranza recognises the individuals of 23:1 as "castrated eunuchs," noting the literary context of "ritual castration" and its association with foreign religions,[64] and yet insists that these "bodies blurred the lines between male and female."[65] While this latter comment could be correct on a social level, any claim advanced at the sexed structural level remains overdrawn.

Consequently, on closer inspection the suggested text of Deut 23:1 does not qualify as sufficient evidence for intersexuality. Indeed, the only text where the concept of intersexuality *may* be in view is Lev 21:20, which prohibits offspring of Aaron who have the "blemish" (מום) of a "crushed testicle" (מרוח אשך)[66] from offering food as priests. Again, the text does not record how the blemish came about, whether self-inflicted, given by others, or congenital. But given that some of the other blemishes mentioned could be from birth (e.g., a limb too long; a dwarf), a "crushed testicle" as a congenital condition is a possibility.[67] Accordingly, could a "blemish" qualify someone as a "mixed" thing *qua* unclean food?

3.1.2. Intersexed as "Mixed"

Whilst God banned mixing in some areas (cf. Deut 22:9–11), DeFranza's claim that eunuchs are also "mixed" and so "unclean" remains unpersuasive. First, the connection DeFranza draws between "mixed" and "blemished" conflicts with the way OT texts use these words. Congenital eunuchs may be described by the adjective of "blemish," but never "mixed." As Douglas herself notes, "Leviticus never uses the word for blemish (מ[א]ום) for the physical characteristics of species forbidden as food."[68] Admittedly, even though the word may be absent, the concept may still obtain.

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[62] Franklin Wang, "A Holy People of YHWH: Deuteronomy's Vision of Israelite Identity" (Ph.D. diss., Wheaton College, 2020), 284.

[63] Retief and Cilliers, "Eunuchs," 250. Similarly, Jeffrey H. Tigay, Deuteronomy דברים, JPSTCP (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 210.

[64] DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 165. Cf. DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 78.

[65] DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 166.

[66] Both words are hapax legomena in the OT.

[67] Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, Leviticus, AOTC 3 (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2007), 398.

[68] Mary Douglas, "Sacred Contagion," in *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas*, ed. John F. A. Sawyer, JSOTSup 227 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 101.

Secondly, foods that are mixed and so unclean are prohibited as a whole class. For example, the pig *qua* kind-essence is unclean (Lev 11:7–8), not individual pigs who might be guilty of specific infringements. In contrast, blemishes are only predicated of individuals. These individuals could be grouped into a set, but the class itself, whether sacrificing people or sacrificed animals, are not "detestable" *qua* kind-essence. If we make the blemished set a mixed (and so detestable) class, then we inadvertently suggest that intersexed persons are of a different kind-essence to the unambiguously sexed. Such logic is inherently dehumanising of intersexed persons, the very conclusion revisionists rightly want to avoid.[69]

Thirdly, the important difference between blemished individuals and unclean classes of food may be further clarified by attending to the economy of holiness in Leviticus, which slides from holy to common/clean to unclean.[70] As Thiessen notes, some food is "ontologically . . . impure. It [a pig] is born impure, passes on that impurity to any of its offspring, and then dies impure."[71] In contrast, while blemished priests are not holy, they are "not said to be unclean."[72] Rather, as Levine comments, they are "deprived only of the right to officiate in the cult, not of their emoluments."[73] Nor are they "cut off from the covenantal community."[74] Indeed, "Even 'blemished' kōhānîm have more access to the sacred than ordinary Israelites."[75] Thus, an individually blemished priest remains clean, importantly distinct from a class of unclean food.

Therefore, the single text that could qualify as referring to the concept of intersexuality does not support DeFranza's claim that in the OT eunuchs are "mixed" things. This conclusion problematises DeFranza's later move of discerning a propinquitous parallel between Jesus declaring mixed food as clean and eunuchs as acceptable.[76]

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[69] Joseph A. Marchal, "Bodies Bound for Circumcision and Baptism: An Intersex Critique and the Interpretation of Galatians," T&S 16:2 (2010): 166; Joseph A. Marchal, *Appalling Bodies: Queer Figures Before and After Paul's Letters* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 69.

[70] See Gordon J. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, NICOT 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 18–25.

[71] Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity Within First-Century Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 188.

[72] Wenham, *Leviticus*, 20.

[73] Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* ויקרא, JPSTCP (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 145.

[74] Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 398.

[75] Julia Watts Belser, "Priestly Aesthetics: Disability and Bodily Difference in Leviticus 21," Int 73:4 (2019): 357.

[76] Perhaps DeFranza is motivated to read OT eunuchs as "mixed" more from a prior commitment to the hybrid argument from Genesis 1 than from a close reading

3.2. NT Eunuchs: Literal or Figurative?

From Matt 19:12, DeFranza claims that Jesus enfolds eunuchs into the purposes of God "*as eunuchs*,"[77] thereby providing "an important supplement to the binary model of human sex."[78] DeFranza is correct in noting that Jesus never explicitly heals a eunuch,[79] and that in Matt 19:12c Jesus lauds eunuchs "διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν" as "icons of radical discipleship,"[80] thus demonstrating his "identification with the messianic visions of Isaiah."[81] However, these accurate observations do not necessitate DeFranza's conclusion that Jesus expands the creation category of male and female into sexual polymorphism. This becomes evident when we scrutinise DeFranza's insistence that all three categories of eunuch should be read literally. Yet such a reading is exegetically unwarranted on three levels (contextual, pericopal, and grammatical), as well as being ethically dubious.

First, at the contextual level, DeFranza's literal reading does not sufficiently account for the immediate literary context. Her interpretation of children (vv.13–15) as representing those "without gender" (because their grammatical gender is neuter),[82] not only fails to heed Jesus' own link between children and humility in Matt 18:2–4, but also commits the

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of Leviticus. Put simply, the hybrid argument argues that since Genesis 1 paints creation "in broad brush strokes," its failure to mention mixed forms (e.g., rivers, asteroids, and amphibians) does not entail that they are a result of the fall, nor that they stray from God's good creational intent (DeFranza, Sex Difference, 177). As such, the mention of "male and female" does not exclude the existence of "others" or "hybrids," such as intersexed persons, who instead are "naturally occurring variations [of humanity] . . . which God has declared to be good" (Justin Sabia-Tanis, "Holy Creation, Wholly Creative: God's Intention for Gender Diversity," in Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019], 201). For an example of the influence of the hybrid argument, see Church of England, Living in Love & Faith, 403. Somewhat ironically, DeFranza's inclination to read Leviticus alongside Genesis 1 parallels the Augustinian inclination of reading Matthew 19 alongside 1 Corinthians 7, thus obviating her indictment of the latter.

77 DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 168. Italics original.

78 DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 106.

79 However, given DeFranza's own "umbrella" definition of eunuch, the haemorrhaging woman of Mk 5:25–34 may qualify for DeFranza as someone whose functional barrenness, and so "eunuch" status, was healed. For an account of Jesus' body that is "ontologically holy, oozing holiness" such that it inevitably destroys the very source of the woman's ritual impurity, see Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 69–96 (93).

80 DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 169.

81 DeFranza, *Sex Difference*, 82.

82 Ibid., 81 n.63.

"unwarranted associative" logical fallacy of jumping from an observation about grammatical gender to make a claim about biological reality.[83] Indeed, Matt 19:3–12 is set within Jesus' fourth teaching discourse that focuses on the relational status and characteristics of those in the new kingdom community (Matthew 18–20). The literary context is about kingdom status rather than bodily structure.

Secondly, the eunuch logion is located within a pericope whose topic is marriage and divorce, and whose intended speech-act explicates relationship status (married or single) in light of the "kingdom of heaven," rather than sexed bodily structure (sexual dimorphism to sexual polymorphism). In Matt 19:3–11, *contra* the Pharisees' leniency, Jesus reemphasises the indissolubility of marriage via a "creation principle."[84] Yet while the gift of marriage is given to some, Jesus surprisingly commends the disciples' "ironical" conclusion by stating that God gives others an alternative gift, namely the relationship status of not being married, i.e., singleness.[85] If Jesus' intent is to include singleness as a legitimate vocation within the inaugurated kingdom of heaven, then DeFranza's argument for an expansion towards sexual polymorphism conflicts with the occasion and inherent logic of the passage.

Thirdly, the figurative reading is strengthened by noting how Matt 19:12 exhibits the grammatical structure of a "climactic tricolon," which as Yaron catalogues is a typical pattern within wisdom literature.[86] As Davies and Allison summarise, "The first two lines relate concrete facts about the everyday world and serve to introduce or illustrate the third line, which proclaims a truth—much less concrete—from the moral or religious sphere."[87] Thus, in response to the disciples' question, Jesus employs "two concrete realities of everyday existence (those born eunuchs and those

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[83] D. A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies, 2nd ed. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 115. Further, DeFranza's juxtaposition of "eunuch" with "children" seems strained. DeFranza wants "eunuch" to represent a fixed category to supplement the male-female binary, and yet being a child is an inherently fluid state (one grows out of childhood).

[84] Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 703. For a robust defence of marital indissolubility from Aquinas, see Matthew Levering, *The Indissolubility of Marriage: Amoris Laetitia in Context* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2019), 127–53.

[85] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 722. Space prohibits assessing whether singleness is "better" than marriage. See Jana Marguerite Bennett, *Water Is Thicker Than Blood an Augustinian Theology of Marriage and Singleness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[86] Reuven Yaron, "The Climactic Tricolon," JJS 37:2 (1986): 153–159. E.g., Prov 10:26; 17:3; 25:3; 27:3.

[87] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 3:22.

made eunuchs) to support a third spiritual or moral truth (those eunuchs for the kingdom)."[88] If Jesus had moved straight to the spiritual truth, employing "eunuch" as a placeholder for "singleness," then his disciples would have remained confused because "eunuch" most naturally referred to a literal condition. Rather, Jesus uses a wisdom formula, offering the first two categories "for the sake of conceptual clarity."[89]

Finally, the literal reading is ethically dubious. If the third category of eunuch is literal, then Jesus is calling for self-castration. While DeFranza remains conspicuously silent, Hester lauds this "self-evident" conclusion as a sign of "religious devotion."[90] Yet such extreme self-harm contradicts God's concern for life and wholeness evidenced throughout the Bible.[91] Thus, the literal reading "so expounds one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another."[92]

Therefore, the literary context, the topic and occasion of the pericope, the syntax of v.12 itself, as well as the ethical implication of the literal reading, all undermine DeFranza's claim that Jesus expands male and female into sexual polymorphism. In contrast, Jesus' focus is not on sexed bodily structure, but on relationship status (married or single) that serves spiritual faithfulness (cf. Isa 56:3), as recognised throughout church history.[93]

3.3. New Covenant Expansion

DeFranza is correct to discern a trajectory from OT to NT. But again, the intended contrast in Matt 19:3–12 is not between structural embodiment (male, female, or intersexed), but between relationship status (married or single) in the inaugurated kingdom community. Following the work of Barry Danylak on Deuteronomy 7 and 28–29, old covenant adult Israelites were expected to marry, experiencing blessing through progeny.[94] But here, in the new covenant, Jesus expands legitimate relationship options,

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[88] Osborne, *Matthew*, 702.

[89] Barry Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 156.

[90] Hester, "Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus," 31.

[91] E.g., Gen 9:6; Ex 15:26; Lev 19:28; Deut 30:19; Ps 139:13–16; 1 Cor 15:54. Although note Candida R. Moss' claim that Jesus calls for "literal self-amputation" in Mark 9:43–47, in *Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 57.

[92] Article XX in W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Principles of Theology: An Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles* (London: Church Book Room, 1951), 281.

[93] For representative literature, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2001), 2:497.

[94] Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness*, 55–82.

valorising the vocation of singleness. "To be blessed in the kingdom of God," Danylak deems, "no longer requires marriage and offspring."[95] Jesus then introduces the concept of volition to categorise singleness further. Some have the gift of singleness involuntarily, either because of a congenital condition or because of human harm,[96] and some have the gift of singleness voluntarily,[97] i.e., they choose to live like their involuntarily eunicised brothers and sisters by ordering their total devotion "in order to serve" the kingdom of heaven.[98] Thus, the new covenant *more* of Jesus' redemption is about the inclusion of singleness as a legitimate vocation rather than the expansion of sexed body structure towards sexual polymorphism.

This conclusion accounts more naturally for what is promised in Isaiah 56:3–5 and filled out in Acts 8:26–40 (cf. Acts 10 and 15). In both passages, DeFranza is correct to stress that the eunuch is welcomed *as a eunuch*. But again, the focus in both passages is on spiritual inclusion. Neither text explicitly mentions any physical healing for eunuchs because the shock value of both passages is the greater spiritual healing,[99] as former "outcasts are now included in the restored people of God" as priests (cf. Isa 66:21), thus reversing Deut 23:1 and Lev 21:20, and fulfilling the Isaianic New Exodus.[100]

Indeed, Jesus' introduction of involuntary/voluntary, combined with his verbiage of "eunuch," indicate further the illocutionary intent and character of Jesus' redemptive inclusion of singleness. Again, DeFranza helpfully observes from background sources how Jesus' shocking choice of "eunuch" emphasises absolute dependence and devotion to God.[101] As such, Jesus' focus is not just on the bare status of singleness (vs. the status of being married), but on the volitional and sacrificial service that the gifted status of singleness calls for in the kingdom of heaven. Singleness is not simply about forsaking marriage, but sacrificing "one's right to marriage, procreation, and sexual relations, for the sake of the kingdom

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[95] Ibid., 157.

[96] The involuntary nature of the respective conditions is emphasised by the choice of passive indicative verbs (ἐγεννήθησαν and εὐνουχίσθησαν).

[97] Emphasised grammatically by an active reflexive verb (εὐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς).

[98] "διὰ has not final but causal sense: 'because of the kingdom' (in order to serve it)" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:23 n.115).

[99] Although note the restorative and recreative language of 66:22 (cf. 65:17), set within a pericope (66:18–24) that mirrors Isa 56:1–8. On the chiastic mirroring of these pericopes, see John N. Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 461–65.

[100] David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, WUNT 130 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 141.

[101] E.g., DeFranza, "Gender Minorities," 162.

of God."[102] In short, DeFranza is correct to note that the redemptive work of Jesus introduces a trajectory, but it is one that pertains to the inclusion of singleness for the service of spiritual ends rather than the expansion of sexed bodily structure.

Consequently, if we combine this conclusion from Matt 19:3–12 (status not structure) with the earlier observation that OT eunuchs do not qualify as "mixed things," then DeFranza's claim that Jesus' expansion of new covenant food options (Mark 7) indicates a similar expansion of sexed embodiment looks increasingly unpersuasive. DeFranza's proposed parallel between food and sex does not obtain. Food and bodily sex exhibit different trajectories from creation to redemption. Concerning food, creation vegetarianism (Gen 1:29) expands to a postdiluvian carnivorous diet (Gen 9:3). The Mosaic law then stipulates a narrowing of dietary options (e.g., Lev 11), before a further expansion in the new covenant (Mark 7:19). In contrast to food's fluctuating trajectory, there is no textual evidence to support a similar trajectory for bodily sex. Admittedly, this does not mean that the sexed body *cannot* undergo new covenant expansion, but only that DeFranza's appeal to Mark 7 as a propinquitous parallel is unwarranted.[103]

4. Conclusion

While DeFranza helpfully notes that there is a *more* to creation, her argument that redemption "now" structurally expands the creation categories of male and female into sexual polymorphism remains unconvincing. DeFranza's central text of Matt 19:12 is not concerned with expanding bodily structure but with including and valorising the vocation of singleness for the service of God. A closer examination of Mt 19:3–12 indicates that while the sexed bodily structure of creation endures, godly expression of one's sexed body now includes the new covenant vocation of singleness for kingdom service, supplementing the old covenant vocation of marriage. Thus, redemption "now" emphasises spiritual and social inclusion as opposed to any structural expansion of creation's "male and female."

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[102] Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness*, 157. For the eschatological virtue of chastity in a Thomistic key, see Matthew Levering, *Aquinas's Eschatological Ethics and the Virtue of Temperance* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 79–106.

[103] Perhaps a more propinquitous parallel to sexed embodiment than food is sexual ethics. Yet when we chart the conceptually closer category of sexual ethics, it appears to undergo a trajectory of "narrowing" as the biblical story unfolds, the very opposite of DeFranza's expansionist thesis. See Gerald Hiestand, "A Biblical-Theological Approach to Premarital Sexual Ethics: Or, What Saint Paul Would Say About 'Making Out,'" BET 1:1 (2014): 31.

That creation structure endures in redemption should not make modern-day eunuchs or the intersex among us feel disenfranchised or dehumanised. Rather, we should follow the example of Philip and lay the emphasis upon "the good news about Jesus" (Acts 8:35), whose redemptive work inaugurates a radical spiritual and social inclusion—for the renewal of his church and the conversion of his world. By putting the pieces of the mosaic together in a way that recognises *both* the stability of creation *and* an expansive spiritual and social inclusion, we see a compelling invitation for all humans—however sexed—to come to the King for rest (Matt 11:28).

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The Anglican Network in Canada: Protest, Providence, and Promise in Global Anglican Realignment

Editors: George Egerton, Kyle MacKenney, David Short, Trevor Walters. California: Anglican House Publishers, 2021 (ISBN: 9781734618044 pb, 339pp)

The book, The Anglican Network in Canada (hereafter TANiC), like the eponymous denomination, meets a distinct need amongst orthodox, evangelical Anglicans. In the case of the memoir-based book, it is the first account of the formation of the Anglican evangelical option in Canada since the departure of the Anglican Church of Canada from the historic Christian understanding of marriage. TANiC is a blow-by-blow account of the personalities, synods, and events that precipitated the intra-denominational schism. The book is an informative, interesting, and at times quite pointed work.

TANiC is composed of 4 parts (with an appendix) and 15 contributors, each putting forth a unique take on the birth of ANiC. The procession of the accounts follows a logical development: from theology in a more intellectual mode (Part I: "Foundations"), to applied theology (Part II: "Anglican Essentials"), then to what occurred at a rather granular level (Part III: "Crisis, Rescue, and Realignment"), and finally, the outcomes (Part IV: "Growth and Fruit"). The Appendix is helpful, particularly the timeline, but also the inclusion of various declarations. While the essence of the book might simply be considered a historical development of yet another denomination, I rather see it differently: the book stands as a testament to the reality that progressive ecclesial politics and revisionist readings of scripture are not a *fait accompli*.

While the book concerns developments on the Canadian scene, there is much here for a global audience. Part I and the Appendix are terrific. Reading the late J.I. Packer's essay (an adaptation of a lecture he delivered at Oak Hill College in London in 2009) is a model of a biblically stout theology, winsomely presented. Edith Humphrey's chapter on "Scripture, Exegesis, and Christian Sexuality" may be applied to any conversation surrounding revisionist readings of Scripture and need not (and is not) confined to one time and place. The chapters in the book that deal with regional meetings (such as the Anglican Essentials Conference in 1994 and

2001) may serve as an inspiration to communions that find themselves unsure of where to start in the process of engaging errant doctrine. The many chapters that recount the heart-rending struggle of pastors and parishioners alike (Canon David Short's excellent chapter 10 comes to mind) will undoubtedly console those mired in the acrimonious struggle over sound doctrine. Finally, the book concludes with an evidence-based optimism: schism is painful, but when a result of necessity, can yield much fruit for the Kingdom.

This book is relevant for non-Anglicans as well, but with two significant caveats. The relevance is found in many of the authors appeals to Evangelicalism proper as the foundation for schism: a right confidence in the bible as the word of God (along with its clarity) and the necessity to walk in accordance with God's revealed will for marriage and human sexuality.

The first caveat that follows from this, however, is the repeated emphasis on "being Anglican" that might not make sense to non-Anglicans. Traditions are important; after all, we're all affected by the particulars of our "place" in God's story. The authors in TANiC are aware of this. A handful of statements repeatedly affirm the goodness of an Anglican identity ("At the end of the day, we were Anglicans. To be Anglican… You have to be connected to the Anglican Communion," 117; "we all worked very hard at establishing from the beginning that we were truly Anglicans in life and in structure," 157), but without fulsome elaboration, these statements remain almost tautological. The crucial question could be asked: what If theological liberalism is a necessary consequence of the Anglican project? If this were so, then wouldn't pursuing an avowed "Anglican" identity become a burden, instead of a blessing? I do not believe this is so, yet every so often in reading this book, the spectre of yet another fissure lurks—not on the question of sexuality, but rather, the ordination of women to the presbyterate. Hence, the second caveat.

TANiC repeatedly affirms the centrality of the Scriptures in the life of the church. Authoritative and inerrant, the Bible alone is to be regarded as the normative rule for doctrine and practice. In accordance with this belief, statement after statement in the book expresses the moral rectitude of ecclesiastical divorce in the case of ANiC. Because the Anglican Church of Canada has erred on the question of human sexuality, God is on the side of the dissenters. Yet when the fraught question of the ordination of women arises the reader is greeted with statements that suggest that, for ANiC, the question has largely been settled. In Chapter 6, "Memories and Engagements" Bishop Donald Harvey reflected upon his initial comments about the ordination of women in what would become ANiC: "I announced that in our new Canadian diocese, the Anglican Network in Canada, any position that could be held by a male could be held

by a female" (emphasis original). Bp. Harvey acknowledges that his statement was issued "without consultation" with other authorities on account of their absence—there was no one else to consult. Bp. Harvey comments that the "policy was modified" by the province, but only until "agreement could be reached." Confident of his proposal, Bp. Harvey states epistemological confidence in the leading of the Spirit (129). This confidence was obviously communicated to Bishop Charlie Masters, who shows less circumspection with the policy, stating in his own chapter that, "Bishop Don[ald Harvey] also made it clear, right from the start, that women clergy were very welcome in every way in our diocese by appointing his first archdeacon, Desiree Stedman, and also charging her with the task of being our first examining chaplain" (158).

The question that all of this raises is obvious, and is a fault line that runs through the book. Is ANiC just one degree to the right of the ACC? Will there be another ecclesiastical schism, this time on the part of those who interpret 1 Tim 2:12 in its "plain sense"? Who are one degree to the right of ANiC? I do not wish to be flippant. The concern here is the same one that George Sinclair mentions, that Anglican Essentials was viewed by "liberals" as a single-issue group (112-3). The precipitous "high view" of scripture can become vertiginous when challenged by someone higher up the literalizing slope.

In the end, TANiC is an important book because it bears witness to the fact that it is not a matter of whether the Church will be called to witness against unorthodox views of sexuality and marriage, but when. Further to that, TANiC is a poignant reminder that to remain committed to a biblical view will be to lose parishes (buildings and ministries) and in the case of many of the authors of this book, loss of health: financial, mental, and physical. Where TANiC shines, however, is in the testimony of those who, even through this loss, found gain—page after page recounts the joy of the Lord in the midst of suffering and disappointment. The book is clear: the light is not a momentarily triumphalism—a victory in the culture wars—but instead, it is the glory of the saviour who came to save sinners, of whom we are first.

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David's Crown: Sounding The Psalms

Malcolm Guite

Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2021 (ISBN: 9781786223067 pb, 170pp)

Malcolm Guite is one of the finest, and one of the more accessible, poets writing in English today. Standing in the tradition of the metaphysical poets—anyone who loves George Herbert will love Malcolm Guite—he has delighted readers with several collections of poems on Christian themes. Previous collections, all published by Canterbury Press, have offered sonnets on the church year (Sounding the Seasons [2012]), the more wide ranging themes and forms of The Singing Bowl (2013), and an exquisite series of sonnets building phrase by phrase on Herbert's sonnet 'Prayer (I)' (in After Prayer [2019]).

David's Crown was written during the Coronavirus pandemic, and its title and structure play on this. There are 150 poems, one for each psalm. Each poem is a fifteen line *terza rima* (five stanzas of three lines each, with the interlocking rhyme structure ABA BCB CDC etc.). Guite has used this before in The Singing Bowl, in poems responding to Dante's Divine Comedy, also written in *terza rima*. The final line of each poem is repeated as the first line of the next (the final line of 'Psalm 150', is identical with the first line of 'Psalm 1': "Come to the place where every breath is praise" [1, 150]).

This circular structure, where every poem is linked to the one that precedes and the one that follows, is known as a corona, hence the connection to the pandemic. However, more importantly, the corona also alludes to King David's royal crown, and to the eternal crown, and crown of thorns, of David's Greater Son. In this, the sequence echoes John Donne's use of the device in his great sonnet sequence on the life of Christ, La Corona.

Guite's meditations on the psalms are consistently Christological: a fitting crown of prayer and praise to the Crucified King. The circular nature of the collection also matches, and arises naturally from, the liturgical rhythms by which Guite, as an Anglican priest, has prayed and sung the Psalter month by month for many years: at the head of each poem is the latin title of the psalm, drawn from the Book of Common Prayer.

Guite uses the corona technique to highlight connections between neighbouring psalms, and therefore something of the flow of the psalter as a whole. One beautiful example is found in Psalms 21-23. 'Psalm 21' ends: "Our Lord comes down / Into the heart of all our hurts to wear / the sharp corona spinea, crown / of thorns, and to descend with us to death / Before he shares with us the golden crown." (21) This contrast, present in the psalms themselves, between the crown of gold (Ps 21:3) and the crown of thorns, continues into 'Psalm 22': "Before he shares with us the golden crown / He comes to share with us the crown of thorns." Guite allows the imagery of Psalm 22 to carry its full weight, before concluding, poignantly, "I tremble at the mystery / For Christ himself is crying through this psalm, / to suffer my own dereliction for me."' (22) As we move into Psalm 23, we are reminded why Christ suffered in our place: "To suffer my own dereliction for me, / To be my shepherd, and to lead me through / The grave and gate of death, in strength and mercy / Christ has come down." (23) In this way, Guite not only links Psalms 22 and 23, he also connects us back to Psalm 21, via the theme of Christ coming down to us: into the midst of our hurts, to atone for our sin, and to lead us through death to everlasting life. This journey from death to life then continues into Psalm 24, as we ascend with Christ into God's presence.

Guite is a master of rhyme and metre; he dwells on and develops the imagery of different psalms with great beauty; and each poem clearly comes from years of meditation on the theological and spiritual significance of the psalms. The volume is therefore not just poetically rewarding: this crown is studded with devotional gems. David's Crown is a masterpiece, deeply moving on its own, and richly edifying as part of a pattern of devotional reading. Perhaps it would best accompany an Anglican minister's monthly reading of the psalter in Morning and Evening Prayer.

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Forty Women:
Unseen women of the Bible from Eden to Easter

Ros Clarke

London: IVP, 2021 (ISBN: 9781789743562 pb, 123pp)

Could you name forty women in the Bible? It's not easy! But Ros Clarke finds them, highlighting many fascinating but often glossed-over Bible characters, affording us a glimpse into their perspectives. Using the forty days of Lent, she guides us through the familiar and the obscure, from Eve to Delilah, to Huldah, to Mary Magdalene, taking us in a journey towards the coming Messiah. Despite living thousands of years ago, these women experience the same struggles, temptations, oppression and violence as women all over the world today. Some are heroes, some are villains; some are members of God's people, some are not; many demonstrate extraordinary faith, a few, extraordinary folly; but all of them teach us more about God's gracious character and how each one of us is important him. They challenge us to speak out for the victims, to find courage in God's strength, and to believe his promises.

Each three-page chapter includes a suggested Bible reading, a discussion of the woman and her situation, a couple of questions for reflection, and a prayer. One of the things I loved about this book is that it meets you on many levels. Whether you're looking for a short Lenten thought-for-the-day, or a springboard for an in-depth Bible study, you'll find it here. The questions for reflection go as deep as you want to take them – there are daily opportunities to learn more about ourselves in the light of God's word, and this is then channelled into challenging, outward-looking application. At times this can make for uncomfortable reading – which is a very good thing, as our neat and tidy viewpoints are upended, and Ros Clarke helps us to glimpse people the way God sees them – beloved, valued, sinful, and redeemable.

Another definite plus point is the prayers. These aren't just something to be said – they're something to turn over and use as the basis for more prayer. If you're anything like me, then the prayer is the bit you'll be tempted to gloss over, but don't! Anyone who invests time and effort here will be rewarded with a fresh flourishing of their relationship with God, as the biblical truths of each chapter burrow deeply into hearts and transform actions. This is what the book is aimed at: not just informing our minds about the problems of women throughout history, but impacting us and those around us today.

Who is this book for? It really is for everyone. Certainly women, but certainly men as well, who will be enriched by seeing things from a women's point of view. And it's for all stages of Christian walk. A mature believer will find new angles on familiar tales, which inspire them to love God even more. A new Christian will be enthralled at the many examples

of God's grace. And a non-Christian will find it intriguing because each chapter is somebody's life story, and that's fascinating. Why not buy a couple of copies, give one to a friend, and chat about it over coffee?

Anna Marsh, Manchester, UK

A Theology of Disagreement: New Testament Ethics for Ecclesial Conflicts

Christopher Landau

London: SCM Press, 2021 (ISBN: 9780334060451 pb, 240pp)

You may be thinking, "Not another book on good disagreement", but be encouraged: there is a lot to be commended in this book. Yes, the acknowledged context is public disagreement within denominations, in particular disagreement over sexuality within the Church of England, but this book is not about that debate. Landau's (entirely appropriate) contention is that public disagreements between Christian groups of recent years have been distinctly uncharacterised by the love that Jesus commands his followers to have for one another. What is more, Landau argues that such unloving behaviour is not just disobedient, but directly hurts our mission witness in the world. This book is written to establish how the New Testament would have us disagree, when such disagreements (inevitably) happen: "Followers of Christ are to be orientated towards a world view where the kingdom is expressed through the love shown among disciples… that they will disagree is inevitable, but this orientation towards a life of loving unity compels them to approach these disagreements in a way that is both distinctive and attractive" (132).

In the end, his conclusions are modest, but could hardly be disagreed with:

> A theology of disagreement forces those who debate in public to consider that there might be value in improving the quality of encounter between divided Christians, even while the issues that divide them may remain seemingly intractable (153).

There is much that is good here. The book follows (with some refinements) Richard Hays' four-stage methodology for New Testament ethics, starting with description (exegesis of relevant texts), synthesis (putting the different voices of the New Testament together), hermeneutics (interpretation for today), and pragmatic application. Landau holds that a theology of disagreement "will need to grow out of a robust engagement with Scripture, providing some sort of basis upon which disagreeing Christians might (however reluctantly) agree as to how the issue of disagreement might be faced" (viii). He rightly commends this approach over, for

instance, that of Jack T. Sanders, who concluded that "we are now … relieved of the need or temptation to begin with Jesus, or the early church, or the New Testament, if we wish to develop coherent ethical positions" (quoted xii). The majority of Landau's book is concerned with exegeting New Testament texts, and he includes texts from the Gospels, Acts, Paul's letters and other New Testament material, with examples and stories as well as direct teaching.

Landau makes some very useful observations from the New Testament. First, disunity is evidence that the church is falling short. He also notes that there were, for instance in the debates over Jewish laws in Acts, the beginnings of attempts to order the church's response to disagreement, "anticipating conciliar processes to come" (101), and that the discussions in Acts show "profound dissatisfaction with the way in which inevitable disagreements risk undermining missionary effectiveness" (101). The church should have orderly discussion about truth, with the priority of spreading the gospel.

Landau's conclusions from his synthesis of texts are very helpful. He gives three rules for Christian disagreement, and one 'paradigm'. The rules are:

1. Following Colossians 4:6, Christian speech must be "gracious, seasoned with salt"; i.e. generous, but need not be "bland or lacking bite", requiring discernment.
2. Pursue godly speech, inspired by the Spirit, and with the wisdom of the Spirit.
3. Following Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" – putting the responsibility for peace-spreading speech on every Christian who speaks. (See 132–134)

These rules are held within a paradigm based on Galatians 5, the need to be transformed by the Spirit. Landau commendably emphasises the role of the Spirit in Christian life, and that we must actively seek to bear the Spirit's fruit.

Landau is admirably practical, not just asserting his conclusions, but advising how the individual Christian might be transformed to be more loving. He acknowledges that we need to make theology a "habit of the heart" (176); his primary recommendation here is that this happens through liturgy. I might quibble that liturgy alone is not enough – we need thorough, exegetical teaching in churches in many forms – but Landau is entirely right that truth must be impressed upon the mind and heart, as part of the Spirit's process of transformation. Landau also emphasises the importance of living in virtue, to practice it. As our sage song-writer Colin Buchanan might say, "practice being godly".

I also like Landau's realistic view that disagreement inevitably happens, and that it can be morally neutral. It is not necessarily aggressive

or ungodly simply to disagree. Jesus was unafraid of disagreement, both with opponents and among his followers. Paul's criticisms of the Corinthians apparently caused hurt, but this was "godly grief" leading to repentance. It is good to remember in our current context that being hurt does not automatically put a person or party in the right. In other words, disagreement can be positive, and stimulate "fresh perspectives and deeper understanding of God's purpose" (13). Faith in Christ "is the context that alters whether disagreement is ultimately fruitful" (14-15).

As an overall summary of how Christians should conduct themselves in speech and act during disagreement, then, I can only commend Landau's book. There are, however, some weaknesses, which I think mean that this is not really a theology of disagreement, however well Landau has articulated an ethic of conduct during disagreement.

Landau, for all his emphasis on Scripture, thinks it inconsistent: "It is clear that these later New Testament texts *do not* begin to speak with one voice about how disagreement might be faced in the complex context of emerging Christian community" (101, emphasis added). In particular, Landau finds the instances of strong criticism of opponents inconsistent with Christian teaching, even when it is Christ himself voicing that strong criticism. Jesus, Landau says, "promotes an ethic of loving unity within the kingdom, and therefore within the church, while rigorously and sometimes vituperatively challenging morality and other practices that stand in contradiction with the kingdom" (3). Landau sees this as a problem, resolved by noting that Jesus' anger and rancour "tend to be visible on occasions where the way of the kingdom is being articulated or defended" (4). In other words, Jesus' anger is not intended to be an example for those within the kingdom. There is, Landau says, a difference between "defining the kingdom in debate with those who stand beyond it, and the ethic of mutual loving relationship that [Jesus] both models and commends among those who have chosen to follow him" (4). But that, I think, just begs the question. How do we know when we are facing those who stand beyond the kingdom? Might it not happen now, as happened in Jesus' day, that Christians face others who claim to be in the kingdom, and to know Scripture, but are not obeying it?

Similarly, Landau holds that the New Testament has "moral inconsistencies" (106), and that "The New Testament is …. ambiguous in its witness concerning how disagreement should be faced" (127). For instance, the encouragement in Titus to rebuke some people "sharply" (1:13), he says, stands in contrast with the slowness to speech recommended in James 1:19-20. The letter to Titus should not just be set aside, "but we can suggest that, in its intemperate approach, it offers an example of the sort of response to disagreement that, elsewhere, the New Testament repeatedly urges faithful disciples to try to resist" (131).

I would suggest that the reason that Landau considers these examples to demonstrate an inconsistent approach to disagreement is because he overlooks some major ideas in the New Testament. While he rightly emphasises the image of the vine (and the necessary organic unity that must be maintained with Christ), and Jesus' example of foot-washing (emphasising servant-heartedness), there are other images that also explain the nature of love. For instance, the image of the shepherd, which is particularly prominent in the New Testament. The shepherd not only cares for the sheep, but must be on guard against the wolves who may be right there amongst them (Acts 20: 29-31). This fits with Timothy being warned to "guard what has been entrusted to your care" (1 Tim 6:20, cf. 2 Tim 1:14) which may involve correcting and rebuking (2 Tim 4:2) as well as encouraging. Landau is aware of these verses, indeed quotes from all these books, but evidently does not see that such images explain why the sharp rebuke of Titus 1 is just as much an example of loving maintenance of unity as gentle speech is. It is loving to stand strongly against those who oppose the truth handed down to us. That is part of protecting the unity of the church, and keeping people within the vine. It is part of servant leadership to protect one's flock against the wolves who may well be members of the church. Landau is quite right that the love command must rule. He does not, however, seem to see that the harshness that he rejects may also be loving. It is not necessarily an example of the love command not being applied.

This leaves us with two problems.

First, how do we recognise the wolves? Landau knows that the bounds of orthodoxy are crucial: "Our particular concern is with disagreements that emerge within the mutually acknowledged boundaries of the community of faith" (xvi). But that is precisely our problem currently within the Church of England: what are the "mutually acknowledged boundaries"? What happens when one group thinks another has moved beyond them? How do we know what can be lived with as a matter of indifference, and what is a gospel matter where truth must be strongly defended? Landau evidently thinks this beyond the scope of his book; he hints as much in places. However, without it, I do not think we have a theology of disagreement. For that, we also need to know the limits of things indifferent. (I believe someone at Oak Hill wrote a dissertation on this: if it was you, could you please contact me?)

Second, what does it mean, in practice, to be loving when we are talking to "wolves"? Here I think Landau's advice is still helpful. We are all capable of temptations to sinful anger, to objectifying an opponent (rather than thinking of him or her as a person to be loved), to scoring points or personal belittling. Online communication appears to exacerbate such temptation. Yet all Christians are responsible to say whatever they say in a Christian way, even when rebuking. This means being more careful, more

considered, after more listening, than the surrounding worldly culture. There may also be an argument for leaving public disagreement to those who know how to do it well; who are able to put up with hostility and remain calm in the face of it, with measured and thoughtful opposition. (I may add Peter Jensen has always been an excellent example of this.)

In the end, Landau is right when he observes that being gracious, godly and peaceful, and Spirit-filled - while these things do not resolve disagreement, nor determine whether an issue is within adiaphora or not - do "offer a moral theological framework within which disagreement could be transformed" (141). We are rightly encouraged to seek such godliness.

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Trans: When ideology meets reality

Helen Joyce

London: Oneworld, 2021 (ISBN: 9780861540492 hb, 320pp)

In the Tokyo Olympic Games held in 2021, Laurel Hubbard competed for New Zealand in the women's 87kg weightlifting competition. No successful lifts were recorded and like many other competitors, the real triumph was simply reaching the Olympics at all. But for Hubbard, that triumph was nothing to do with Covid-19, and all to do with competing in the women's category. Because Hubbard is a man. As a junior athlete, he made it to some national competitions but was nowhere near the level required for Olympic qualification. As a woman, even at the age of 43, he qualified easily.

Helen Joyce's excellent book on transgender examines the origins of the contemporary transactivist movement, beginning with early examples

of sex-change surgery, and showing how the focus moved away from biological sex to subjectively-experienced gender. Joyce, who writes for The Economist and has a PhD in Mathematics, is not a Christian and this shows itself in her approval of homosexuality as well as the possibility of trans-sexual adults. However, she clearly outlines the many significant problems with transactivism, and especially the dangers it holds for women and children.

These are well-illustrated by examples from countries where transgender rights are enshrined in law, such as Canada and Ireland. There are horrific examples of men posing as transwomen in order to be moved into women's prisons, where they will go onto to repeat their crimes: rape and other violence against women. It is not, as Joyce points out, that all men are violent against women, but it is true to say that almost all violence against women is perpetrated by men. And transitioning has no impact on these statistics: so-called transwomen also perpetrate violence against women. The hard-won rights of women to single-sex spaces are being cast aside in favour of the rights of men who self-identify as women.

Self-identification allows transactivists to ignore the scientific research into gender-nonconformity and gender dysphoria. Joyce describes one study into gender-nonconforming young children in the 1970s which showed that only around 1% persisted in their gender-nonconformity to adulthood. The vast majority felt comfortable in their birth sex by the time they had gone through puberty, though there was a high incidence of homosexuality in the group. However, similar children now, presenting with gender-nonconformity prior to puberty, are very likely to be given hormone treatment to delay or block puberty, then moved onto cross-sex hormone treatment, and eventually be offered sex-change surgery. 100% of those children who begin puberty blocking treatment go on to identify as transgender by adulthood. The comparison is shocking: currently accepted medical treatment for gender nonconformity creates transgender adults, where without treatment there would be almost none. This is not merely a matter of emotional and mental health. Side-effects of the transgender treatment include infertility, sexual dysfunction, higher incidence of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

How has modern Western society so quickly reached the point where to insist that women and men are defined by biological reality rather than self-identification causes outrage, claims of bullying, and even for some, losing their jobs? How has it been possible for Laurel Hubbard to compete against women in a sport where men have vast natural advantages? How have we tied ourselves into such knots as to allow convicted male sex offenders to move into women's prisons, and men to have access to women's refuges and women's services for counselling rape victims? Joyce's account of the development of the transactivist movement makes for compelling and disturbing reading.

In the final chapter, she points out some recent developments which offer a note of hope. The online forum, Mumsnet, has been powerful and effective in challenging the transactivists' narrative in the UK. Women's groups which exclude transgender people are beginning to form in defence of the rights that have been won by previous generations. The tide may, just possibly, be turning.

As Christians, we will not agree with all of Joyce's analysis. We will want to consider the creation accounts of men and women as they establish sex and gender. We will be concerned about the positive view of homosexuality she espouses. Nonetheless, this is an extremely helpful book for us to understand the way that the transactivist agenda has swept through society, and why it has been so difficult to counter.

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EDITORIAL

The real problem with youth today

Here is a frequent and significant question: what can you tell us about contemporary young people? If you think of those under the age of thirty, who are they? How can we address them with the Christian gospel?

The answer will, of course depend to some extent on the culture in which the question is asked. And indeed, in every culture there will be a difference, for example, between urban and rural youth. Nonetheless, in Western cultures at least, it has become fashionable to categorise all people according to their age and to ascribe certain characteristics to those born at certain times. We have become familiar with Gen X and Gen Y and Gen Z and now Gen Alpha, referring to those born in the early twenty-first century. They are contrasted with the baby boomers who were born after the second war and in some places fought the Vietnam war in person or on the streets. Alternatively, it was that age group which Chairman Mao unleashed on the Chinese world, eighteen-year-olds doing unspeakable things to their elders and teachers.

It makes sense for those of us entrusted with sharing the gospel to study such differences and to get to know the characteristics of those we are talking to. In particular, it is worth getting to know the points at which the message of Jesus will particularly address their concerns, hopes and fears. Thus, it is often pointed out that the under-30s are especially afflicted by the question of identity and the pain of anxiety. This is not at all surprising given the mess we have made of family life and the terrible insecurity for children that results.

It is fascinating to observe the promises made by private schools as they try to inveigle parents to pay the huge fees necessary to send their children to be educated by them. The promises reveal so much about the underlying anthropology at work. Apparently, all our children are capable of achieving anything they wish to in life; they are each one so special and important and must be encouraged to think that about themselves; all the children at some schools seem to be regarded as above average. Naturally, they are all spontaneously good people, obsessed with the wonderful ambition to 'make a difference'.

Clearly there is a belief at work that the problems of this generation – for example identity and anxiety – can best be dealt with by an education which affirms and inspires. It is tragic than so many of such schools have a Christian foundation and that their original school mottos (often in

Latin, admittedly) are lost in the flurry of providing new and appealing marketing slogans.

It is right for the Christian to understand their world, to ask such questions and to study the social pressures which shape people in our own part of the world, so that we may address them using their language and ministering to their problems and ambitions. I myself have given much thought to such issues in order to be a better communicator of the gospel of Jesus. In particular I appreciate the works which give the intellectual and spiritual history of our civilisation and believe that they ought to be part of the equipment of the communicator. I have to say that in doing so, I have become aware of what you may call the medicalisation of analysis; that we look for medical conditions which may explain behaviours, and which may perhaps be susceptible to treatment if they are sufficiently disruptive or disabling.

However, recently I had a shock.

In pursuit of further enlightenment, I asked a fellow preacher, with much experience of dealing with youth, the two diagnostic questions:

First, what is their greatest problem of contemporary young people? And, second, what is their greatest need?

Imagine my surprise when he only uttered two words in reply.

To the first question, of the greatest problem, he said 'Sin'!

To the second question, he said, 'Forgiveness'.

And that was a great rebuke. I had become so engrossed with the sociological and historical analysis of human society (important as this remains), that I had forgotten the basics. I had become so busy learning the language of a different culture that I had forgotten that I still had to explain the gospel in its own terms. I had become so engrossed with the particular problems of a group that I had neglected the universal failings and the universal needs of human beings wherever we may come from, whenever we were born, however we have lived. And I suspect that I am not alone.

The danger is that we then fail to preach the gospel itself, or that we distort it to meet the perceived need of the hearer. The three obvious victims of such a distortion are: first, knowledge of the pervasive and debilitating power of sin and its guilt; second, the one full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice of the cross, dealing with the sin and guilt and yielding forgiveness; third, the Lordship of Christ to whom we turn in repentance and to whose will we subsume all our ambitions and hopes.

Our greatest problem

What makes my friend's answer true? 'Sin' is not a popular or common word in contemporary speech. As preachers of the gospel we therefore try to avoid it, finding words which we hope will convey the same truth. But by so doing we cut off our hearers from the Bible itself, and we weaken the message. Furthermore, we take the concept out of its biblical context and make it basically subjective, the feeling of failure, rather than

objective, the fact of sin and guilt. In a world which encourages benign self-judgement, there is no voice which speaks to the conscience and reveals the truth about our corrupt hearts. We are not given the capacity to truly know ourselves.

The latter error arises from our unwillingness to use the law of God as a way of defining and locating sin. But is it God's law which is endorsed by Jesus himself and the Apostles Paul and James and stands forever as an exposition of the will of God for us all. The New Testament's use of the Ten Commandments give us a warrant to use them as revealing the will of God for us all. The worship of the living God is our obligation, and in order to worship him, we must love him with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength and love our neighbour as ourselves. This is the teaching of Jesus as much as it is the teaching of the Old Testament. By this standard our thoughts, desires, words, deeds and even our inertia will be judged. There is no escape, and failure in one part is failure in all.

The truth of this becomes clear as we hear the law of God, learn and apply it. It was right that the catechisms of the Reformation insisted on the learning of the Ten Commandments. Likewise, the service of Holy Communion in the *Book of Common Prayer* begins with the commandments and invites self-reflection and repentance. Of course, the enunciation of the law in the decalogue needs to be read through the revelation that has come though Christ. How could we understand sin, and therefore ourselves, otherwise? But there is a belief here that the way to know yourself is to look in the perfect mirror of God's law. Furthermore, whether we are talking to teenagers in Manchester, Nairobi, Singapore or Santiago; or whether our ministry takes us to the baby boomers or the even more greatly aged in these places, the law of God is still the law of God and the failure to obey it from the heart is still sin and brings guilt. There is no difference for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

For the last thirty years, as I have taught beginning theological students, I have conducted a survey to find out how many know the Ten Commandments off by heart. The answer is, very few indeed. The ones which are frequently omitted are numbers two, three, four and ten, though sometimes students forget one or several of the others. Now, admittedly this is hardly a proper survey, being confined to a small group of students in one particular city. I suspect, however that my experience reflects something widespread. I suggest that you carry out the same exercise where you are and see whether it is true.

Of course, it could be argued that I have asked the wrong question and that it gives the decalogue too great an importance in the expression of God's ongoing will for humanity. I would dispute that, but in any case, why not seek to discover what the relevant group knows about the will of God for humanity? We often use language about human rebellion against God. What does that rebellion specifically consist of? Of what are we guilty? If we do accept that the law of God, understood though Christ, expresses the will of God for human beings, what does it show?

Just as a medical scan may reveal the hopeless extent and deadliness of a cancer, so the law reveals that our sin is universal to our race – you never need to teach a child to do the wrong thing; it is pervasive to our person. There is no part of our person which is not affected by sin; it arises from evil desires, which may be invisible to others and may not even find expression outside ourselves, but are wicked in themselves; sin leaves us vulnerable to the power of the world and the evil one to lead us away from God; sin cannot be cured by education, or medical intervention, nor even the law itself; sin is corporate, in that we inhabit a world of sinners and take our lead from others, led into sinful practices because those around us are doing the same thing. Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

Many are the devices which we use to get around the law and its revelation of the heart. We zealously keep a section of the law in the pretence we are keeping the whole. Or, we modify the law in a downward direction, making it match the actual potential of the person. Or, we explain that grace has now triumphed and the law is merely a benign uncle who will give us guidance when called upon to do so. These and other techniques are mere evasions, hiding the truth of our spiritual sickness from ourselves if not from others. The truth of the law leaves us in without hope of cure, facing the judgement which our guilt deserves.

The damning critique of Genesis 6:5 about the wickedness of humanity in those days remains the testimony of scripture about human depravity: 'every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time'. The same verdict is repeated after the flood was all over, and Noah and his family saved (8:21). Noah carries the sin of Adam with him into the post-flood world. It is hardly surprising that such a verdict results in the expression of the wrath of God prefigured by the great flood, but to be displayed finally at the end of times in the judgement of the living and the dead. For sin has turned us into the very enemies of God, dead in his sight and worthy only of his condemnation, as were the people in the times of Noah.

We may still, indeed, analyse the human condition and speak of such things as anxiety and the crisis of identity. We may well trace the history of such symptoms and talk about the malign results of the sexual revolution or go even to the philosophies which have shaped the modern soul. But we need to recognise at the same time that these are merely symptoms of the fundamental spiritual malaise which is called sin. We may even register many conversions to Christianity amongst the young as we give them spiritual experiences via such things as music or tribal fellowship or superficial psychology which will meet their yearnings for assurance and relationship. But unless we do so by identifying the root cause, showing how we do not keep the law of God and that we are inveterate sinners, the conversions will be religious rather than Christian. People will be converted but not saved.

Difficult as it is for Christian leaders to say such things in public and make this the gist of their message, we must still do so. If we wish to be heard via the public media it is far easier to speak about contemporary

social problems and to be known as someone who cares for social justice issues. We can easily gain traction for our message by attacking the policies of the present government, a safe thing to do in democracies. But if we cannot find a way to illustrate to our audience how such human failures reveal the truth of Christian anthropology and so sin, we will fail in our purposes. Unless, of course, we are simply seeking celebrity or popularity.

Our greatest need

My friend's answer to the second question was 'forgiveness'. Of course, he was reminding me that as those who are destined to appear before the judgement seat of God and to live for eternity, there can be no greater blessing than the Lord's word of forgiveness and his invitation to be reconciled to him. Here is peace with God, and justification; here is life eternal; here is freedom; here is the true answer to anxiety and identity.

Forgiveness can be easily given and friendship re-asserted without great cost to either party. But that is not the case here. At the heart of true forgiveness there is always cost and sacrifice. Divine forgiveness under the circumstances of human sinfulness certainly entails such a cost. Hence the central importance of the sacrificial death of Christ in which he became sin that we may receive the gift of an undeserved righteous standing before God.

If the horror of the human condition without divine intervention is not fully understood, say through neglect of the law, the significance of the propitiation achieved by Christ is similarly undervalued. Its power as the one true sacrifice, propitiation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world is denied. Other aspects of his death, real or imagined, become the central message. We hear that the death of Jesus is primarily an example, or a victory or a means of understanding suffering. Of course, none of these is wrong in itself, but they have no real power if they are severed from the propitiatory sacrifice which the cross entailed. It is no accident that when law is softened, sin is weakened and the cross loses its power. We thus have the preaching of a gospel in which Jesus and his death are somehow a merely solution to our symptomatic problems. Converts of such a gospel are being tempted to turn the death of the Saviour into a sort of talisman or lucky charm guaranteed to make their life happy. The trivialisation of the cross is one of the greatest dangers which confronts us. In some of our preaching it is of little more significance than an aspirin-like drug which takes the symptomatic pain away, or, to change the metaphor, like an answer to a crossword puzzle.

But the true preaching of the cross is utterly transformative. It will demand a profound repentance, a taking up of the cross to follow the one who gave his life for us. There is no other path to walk. Forgiveness brings reconciliation; reconciliation restores relationship; relationship with God changes us every day and forever. We must have the proclamation of the gospel which creates disciples who will give up all to follow the Lord.

The real problem with youth today

It is such a ridiculous title to give this editorial. Very old-mannish.
Worse, it gets around the fact that the real problem with youth today is exactly the same as those in every age and of every age who do not yet know Jesus as their Saviour and Lord: that they are lost, that they live in darkness, that they do not have eternal life, that they are bound for an eternity of frustration and pain, without God and without hope in the this world and the next. It is sin and the only hope is forgiveness.
If this does not set our hearts on fire with love, what will? Ask yourself, what would love do?

We are living amidst populations of people who do not have salvation. What of our city, our nation, our world? What are you doing to bring the gospel of hope to people without hope? Is your gospel the truth found in the word of God? Does it identify the human problem, reveal the saving power of God and summon people everywhere to repentance and faith? Are you praying for your nation and for our world?

Many years ago the Church of England published a report called 'Towards the Conversion of England', setting out what must happen to bring the gospel to all. It was a wonderful challenge, unfortunately soon forgotten. I fear that many of us have become mere weary servants of the denomination in which we find ourselves and unwilling to follow the lead of a John Wesley in insisting that the preaching of the gospel must take pre-eminence.

We must translate that idea to suit the country or city where we live and never tire of proclaiming the Saviour.

That is what love would do.

PETER JENSEN

Note from the Director

This month (July 2022), bishops from the Anglican Communion are invited to attend the Lambeth Conference, which has been postponed since 2020. To help delegates in their reflections, the St Augustine Seminar has produced a commentary on 1 Peter.[1] In preparation for the conference, *The Global Anglican* is devoting this issue to the book of 1 Peter. It is hoped that the articles included here will not only be a helpful guide to delegates of the Lambeth Conference, but will be a lasting resource for all readers of the journal.

Lee Gatiss, Director of Church Society, 2022

[1] https://www.lambethconference.org/resources/1-peter-resources/the-1-peter-commentary/

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LLF, the Lambeth Conference and the Church of England

Keith Sinclair

I am writing on developments within the Church of England (C of E) this year, as the Archbishop of Canterbury asks bishops from all over the Anglican Communion to come to the Lambeth Conference this July (postponed now for two years since 2020). I'm writing in a personal capacity, at the end of a year serving as the part-time National Director of the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC). A key dimension of the Church of England's life this year will be the ending of the formal consultation of the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) process in April 2022, and the consideration by the C of E Bishops of a report from a 'next steps' group in September 2022, so that they can then propose a way forward to the General Synod in 2023.

In this article I would like to include some reflections on the LLF process in England: though I believe there are positives in the LLF process which must not be ignored, there are also significant concerns. I want to consider how those positives and concerns relate to Global Anglicans, and in particular to the Lambeth Conference this summer. As it will be seen, those concerns about LLF relate chiefly to the authority of scripture in the life of the Church. I want to consider the role 1 Peter has in the work of the Lambeth Conference, as this is the biblical book the bishops will be studying together, guided by a 'global commentary' on 1 Peter edited by Jennifer Strawbridge (published by SCM 2020).[2]

Living in Love and Faith: reflections

Let me begin with LLF and reflections both positive and otherwise. I will then consider the Lambeth Conference, give some brief reflections on 1 Peter, and explain why the concerns I have for the C of E after LLF are the same concerns I have for the Anglican Communion after Lambeth. I am hoping these reflections will spur us to prayer for the Church of England and the Anglican Communion and help those preparing to come to Lambeth (or who have decided not to come) to know how to be prepared themselves and to pray.

It is beyond the scope of this article to summarise the argument of the LLF course or give an adequate account of its history. Its own website should help the curious, and there are numerous resources on the CEEC

[2] Jennifer Strawbridge (ed.) *The First Letter of Peter: A Global Commentary* (London: SCM, 2020). See a review in *The Global Anglican* (2020), 272-273

website http://www.ceec.info to guide the perplexed. An excellent book-length response is the analysis by Martin Davie, Theological Consultant to the CEEC.[3] The whole book is worthy of study, but the headings in chapter 4 'A theological Response: assessing the LLF material' give an overview shared by many evangelicals across the C of E:

Positive teaching in LLF

- clarity about who God is
- clarity about the need for distinctive Christian living
- clarity on orthodox understanding of Christian marriage

Problems in LLF

- inadequate view of the contemporary world and contemporary science
- inadequate view of creation
- lack of clarity on the nature and authority of the Bible
- inadequate understanding of Jesus' teachings
- mistaken evaluation of experience, conviction and culture in the light of creation
- failure to address how disagreements about Christian conduct should be resolved
- failure to pay attention to the historic mind of the Church on identity and sexual ethics
- inadequate advice of pastoral care
- inadequate view of the role of bishops and episcopal guidance

I would agree with much of Martin's critique. However, I would add one further positive, which also may have significance for the Anglican Communion.

Participating in the LLF process has required evangelicals to engage with those in the Church of England who hold radically different views on the authority of scripture and the nature of human identity, sexuality and marriage. This has often been uncomfortable; it has followed on from Shared Conversations across the C of E which followed the Pilling Report (Report of the House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality published in 2013 GS 2019, which included a dissenting statement by me when I was serving as Bishop of Birkenhead). LLF has extended those conversations to ensure that engagement has been lay as well as ordained, and corporate as well as individual. For many, LLF will have been the first time that they have heard stories from those who would identify as

[3] Martin Davie, *Living in Love and Faith: A Biblical Response* (Oxford: Dictum Press, 2021).

LGBTI+ or same-sex attracted. It will have meant listening, lament and repentance.

Some engaging in LLF will already have been familiar with the True Freedom Trust and Living Out, which are both evangelical charities offering pastoral support and teaching based on a traditional reading of scripture. For many others, however, LLF will have introduced them to these networks (which are not confined to the Church of England), as well as other individuals, groups and networks which take a different view. There has been therefore a challenge to love, including loving those with whom there is profound disagreement. This has been my experience even after the Pilling Report, and the experience of the Shared Conversations.

Apart from engaging with LLF in 2021, CEEC invited one of the Co-Chairs, Ed Shaw (Director of Living Out), to work with a small group on other issues of concern which were summarised as Culture, Power and Abuse (their report, resources and guides for churches can be found on the CEEC website). In their report there is recognition of the need for evangelicals in the Church of England to repent of attitudes which collude with any kind of abuse. We should surely have no problem in recognising our need to repent where necessary, as repentance is basic to the gospel.

That spirit of repentance I believe is one part of the CEEC response to LLF, where recognition of hypocrisy, fear, silence, prejudice, and ignorance (as summarised in the Pastoral Principles embraced by the C of E alongside LLF) among evangelicals in the Church of England is taking place and is a profound difference to which LLF has contributed, and is ongoing.

A significant scripture for me, since Pilling especially, has been John 13:1. We must understand what it means for us that the Lord Jesus 'knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them *to the end*'. The first of CEEC's goals in response to LLF is to ensure that the Church of England is a welcoming church in which all people know they are made in the image of God and loved by God.

This is a challenge for the whole Anglican Communion, especially those most committed to upholding Resolution 1:10 of the Lambeth Conference 1998, and gives expression to the commitment included in that resolution:

> [The conference]
>
> recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience

> of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
>
> while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex

These are powerful words, and they should draw from us lament and repentance when we have not listened, when we have not loved to the end, and when we have not communicated the love of God or ministered pastorally or sensitively, or condemned irrational fear, violence, trivialisation or commercialisation.

It is possible, then, to envisage ways in which the LLF course in the Church of England could be of benefit both to those attending, and those not attending, the Lambeth Conference. However, though it is right to acknowledge where there has been positive impact of LLF in terms of listening, engaging and repenting, it is necessary to record ways in which LLF has made a difference which I do not believe is positive.

Chief among the concerns widely held across CEEC is that in the methodology of the LLF book, and especially in the way the course is framed, *story* has supplanted *scripture* as the basis for our obedience to Christ. This is my major concern.

The greatest difficulty CEEC has encountered, even as we have encouraged people to engage, is that the presupposition of the course is that we can all, whatever our views, experiences, and interpretations, live in love and faith together. The strapline for each participant in the video stories makes this very point.[4] Our difficulty is that this presupposes baptising conduct and understandings of human identity, sexuality and marriage, which we believe to be contrary to the obedience of faith revealed in scripture. Thus the course, while recognising these differences, is inadvertently shepherding the local and national church to a place of mutual acceptance of beliefs and practice, which are not of God. This is not loving to the end. It is not loving as Jesus did.

At one level the course works as an exploration of difference, and as we have said there is much good that comes from this; but at another level it does not indicate how decisions are to be made to resolve these differences, and these differences go to the heart of God's revelation and intention in the kingdom of God.

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[4] At the end of each story of someone's life experience, the person says 'I'm living in love and faith'.

This is a major concern I have for those attending Lambeth, that they may find themselves shepherded in the same way, and before they know it their very presence at Lambeth is advertised to the world that 'we are just agreeing to disagree'.

CEEC has been involved for many years in these debates within the Anglican Communion, and has produced a number of resources for local churches which are available on the CEEC website. The ongoing challenge for evangelicals, is how to be faithful to the revelation of God in the whole of scripture, creation, law, prophets, wisdom, gospels, epistles, apocalypse, to the needs of those wondering whether they are truly loved by God and invited into his kingdom, and to proclaim by word and life that we are!

Lambeth since 1998

Perhaps now is the moment to reflect on LLF within the history of the Anglican Communion, especially since the 1998 Lambeth Conference (see below for the full Resolution 1:10).

Following the overwhelming numbers of bishops in support of Resolution 1:10 at the Lambeth Conference in 1998, those who wanted to depart from its affirmation of biblical and Anglican teaching were warned that they would be tearing the fabric of the Communion at the deepest level if they refused its guiding wisdom.

That wisdom was refused by The Episcopal Church (TEC) when it proceeded to ordain a bishop in a same sex relationship in 2003. The tear deepened in subsequent years as other Provinces have followed suit (Canada, New Zealand, Scotland, Wales), making liturgical provision for those in same sex relationships to be blessed within the Church.

Since 2008, the year of a very different Lambeth Conference, two other global networks were already established (GAFCON and Global South). They grieved that the teaching and authority of Scripture in establishing and directing Anglican thought and practise had been superseded by the primacy of story and human experience in these other Provinces. This made a continuation of fellowship impossible without recognition that issues of truth were at stake, as much as unity. Those two global networks represent the vast majority of Anglicans in the world today, and they are predominantly amongst the poorest and most disadvantaged.

CEEC's position is that were the Church of England herself to embrace the teaching and practice of the Provinces which have departed from biblical and Anglican teaching (as expressed in Resolution 1:10) then the tear in communion, which has affected the global church, would be replicated here.

We would be wanting to seek ways in which evangelicals in the Church of England could stand with our brothers and sisters in the Global

South and GAFCON. We could not advise 'continuation' in fellowship and communion, as if nothing of significant change had taken place, because the Church of England would be ordaining something which is contrary to God's word written, and in effect expounding one place of Scripture so that it is repugnant to another (thus contradicting Article XX).

I believe C. S. Lewis's analysis of certain kinds of disagreement in his Preface to *The Great Divorce* is pertinent to our present crisis:

> Blake wrote of the Marriage of Heaven and Hell.
>
> If I have written of their Divorce, this is not because I think myself a fit antagonist for so great a genius, nor even because I feel at all sure that I know what he meant.
>
> But in some sense or other the attempt to make that marriage is perennial. The attempt is based on the belief that reality never presents us with an absolutely unavoidable 'either-or'; that, granted skill and patience and (above all) time enough, some way of embracing both alternatives can always be found; that mere development or adjustment or refinement will somehow turn evil into good without our being called on for a final and total rejection of anything we should like to retain.
>
> This belief I take to be a disastrous error. You cannot take all luggage with you on all journeys; on one journey even your right hand and your right eye may be among the things you have to leave behind.[5]

The way forward

On the basis that there is pressure for the Church of England to change her doctrine and discipline to follow the Provinces which have refused the guidance of the Lambeth conference Resolution 1:10, the CEEC produced a film in November 2020, called *The Beautiful Story* (visited by over 50,000).[6] At the end of the film, the CEEC declared our intention to explore ways in which some kind of 'differentiation' could be considered, as a way of avoiding what has happened in North America, where the action of TEC led to schism and the establishing of the Anglican Church of North America.

We believe continued exploration of 'differentiation' is needed; not continuation as if no change of significance has taken place, and

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[5] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (London: William Collins, 2015; first published Geoffrey Bles 1945), vii-viii.

[6] http://www.ceec.info/films.html

not separation as if there is no possibility of any kind of connectivity remaining, but differentiation. At the end of the film a comment is made that this differentiation might include among other options the possibility of separate Provinces. CEEC is committed to continuing to explore these options and possibilities, profoundly hoping and praying that the Church of England will not depart from the teaching of the apostles and prophets. Decisions must be made: as a matter of basic integrity we cannot go on pretending that we are all in agreement, when we disagree on matters on which scripture speaks with great clarity.

As CEEC has repeatedly expressed, we believe God's revelation given in scripture is good news for all the world, including those who are same sex attracted or who identify as LGBTI+. In all our listening and sensitivity, we need also to remember those brothers and sisters from Living out and True Freedom Trust who have expressed their sense of being abandoned by those churches which have revised their teaching apart from that revealed in scripture.

Tragically, many of those Churches, (URC, Methodist) are in rapid decline. We pray the Church of England in 2023 and the Anglican Communion at Lambeth 2022 will continue to uphold the teaching and practise of scripture, and remain in agreement with the majority of the Anglican Communion, as well as Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal and churches part of the Evangelical Alliance and World Evangelical Alliance.

I wish my worries that the Lambeth Conference will unwittingly follow the trajectory the LLF material opens up were ungrounded. I fear that those coming to Lambeth will realise, perhaps too late, that they are part of a gradual shifting of the ground from 1998; and that those responsible for the change will present these developments, though in direct contradiction of what was declared, as somehow normal and inevitable.

The problem with agreeing to disagree

I believe LLF sets out fairly the different positions held currently in the Church of England about marriage, sexuality and human identity. However, in declining to express any view as to how the C of E might decide between them, the Church is vulnerable to the conclusion that all may in some way be incorporated into the life and teaching of the Church of England. Of course, the authors of the LLF material may fairly say that such direction was beyond their brief, and certainly to guide the Anglican Communion was beyond its brief, but to return to the quotation from C. S. Lewis, sometimes/often in the kingdom of God a decision must be made. The preaching of John the Baptist begins with the call to repentance. It is a theme most eloquently expressed in Deuteronomy

30:11-20 which is worth quoting in full and I offer it for prayer with Lambeth 2022 especially in mind:

> 11 Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' 14 No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.
>
> 15 See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. 16 If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, 20 loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Such decisions and choices go to the heart of what it means to be the people of God. Of course, choices and decisions made without love are 'nothing worth' as 1 Corinthians 13 teaches us, but we cannot avoid the interplay between unity and truth; the plea for unity without truth is vacuous and self-defeating because without truth, there will be no life. We cannot quote in full every biblical reference, but nowhere is the interplay between unity and truth expressed more poignantly than in the prayer of the Lord Jesus recorded in John 17. In that prayer, in which he prays that we may be one and be one in the truth (17:17 'Sanctify them in the truth: your word is truth'), again and again the touchstone for recognising that truth, is God's word (vv 6, 8, 12, 14, 20).

I submit that this word, written in Holy Scripture, provides clear teaching as to the place of sexual intimacy taking place within heterosexual marriage, and that it is not commended as taking place in any other relationship, and that this teaching expressed in the creation accounts is defended by the law, included in the righteousness required by the prophets, assumed in the teaching of the gospels and taught by all the apostles.

Marriage between a man and a woman is given as the pinnacle of creation, and is the basis for the existence of every succeeding generation on earth in every culture. It is deeply ironic and tragic at the very moment the C of E with the worldwide church is recognising the threat to the future of the planet itself because of climate change occasioned by human autonomy and arrogance, yet the creation gift of human identity as male and female intended to exercise dominion well for the good of the whole creation is being redefined 'otherwise than God's Word doth allow'.[7] It seems to me that we are in grave danger of succumbing to the disobedience invited in the question 'Did God say?' (Genesis 3:1).

This is why in CEEC we have believed it important, as well as engaging fully in the LLF process, to recognise that if the C of E departs from core teaching reflected in every part of scripture, then it will not be possible for evangelicals to continue in worship, fellowship, ministry and service with those who it appears to us, are falling into the very sins named in Romans 1:18-32. The gospel of which the apostle Paul is not ashamed, which unites even Jew and Gentile in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, leads both Jew and Gentile to offer themselves as living sacrifices, not being conformed to the world but being transformed by the renewing of their minds 'so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Romans 12:2).

I do not believe that sufficient attention or weight is being given to this biblical teaching in the discernment process initiated by LLF. Nor is it for Lambeth 2022; I will come on to 1 Peter and the guidance offered in the commentary in a moment.

There are matters about which the people of God may have different practices, as to foods, days and cultural practises such as given in Romans 14. I do not see how the argument from Romans 14 can be used to negate the teaching of Romans 1. How can practice which is expressive of human idolatry and subject to God's just judgement, become by Romans 14 a 'matter indifferent' about which the people of God may legitimately differ? We celebrate the great diversity of the Church recorded in Romans 16 but note that diversity and unity in the gospel does not mean it may not be necessary at times to heed the apostles urging 'to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned: avoid them' (Romans 16:7) and this is why we continue to explore the possibility of differentiation, even as we profoundly hope and pray it will not be necessary.

Sadly, following the tear in the life of the Anglican Communion caused by the embracing of teaching which is in opposition to the apostles, I

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[7] 'The form of solemnization of matrimony', *Book of Common Prayer* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 302-3.

grieve that some such parting of the ways may be necessary in the Church of England itself.

Commentary on 1 Peter: reflections

I offer a brief comment on the *Commentary* on 1 Peter, produced by a number of most distinguished theologians from across the globe for Lambeth 2022, from (I would guess) all traditions. Of course, there is so much here that illuminates the text and brings into glorious sight the reality and blessing we offer to 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 Peter 1 :3). However I searched in vain for any application of this letter to the crisis facing the Anglican Communion, as to whether it will continue to devote itself to the apostles teaching (Acts 2 :42) or create new categories of human identity, marriage and sexuality which have their origin in contemporary philosophy (western philosophy) and do not belong to Christ.

I wondered, given that still significant numbers of bishops who are part of GAFCON and Global South will not be attending the Conference following the injunction of Romans 16:7 (see above) there might be some consideration of exile, holiness and obedience to the word of God which are key themes in the letter.[8] Peter even quotes Leviticus 19 in the call to be holy, which I thought might prompt some consideration of Leviticus, which is not irrelevant to the debates on human sexuality, but instead, silence. I could only find one direct reference to 'disagreements about sexuality' (Introduction, p. xxi), and this came as an aside on making a defence of the hope in us, in contrast with the church being known in many parts of the world for 'its abuse, infighting or disagreements on human sexuality'. There is no invitation to explore those disagreements, no consideration why significant numbers of bishops are absent, no consideration of what living in exile might mean globally in terms of the Church as a counter cultural community in America, Europe, Africa or Asia, no consideration of what holiness might mean either or obedience to the word, and the word of scripture. There is only an eliding of these disagreements with abuse and infighting, leaving the reader to consciously or unconsciously avoid raising the matter for discussion.

This view was confirmed for me in the other passing reference to 'the ongoing and diminishing conflicts over sexuality' (p. 50) which comes in an excursus on Communion and its meaning. The Excursus concludes with this comment following on immediately from the reference to sexuality,

8 These themes are referenced in the *Commentary*, but not applied at all to the pressing cause of division.

> Peter's letter shows that Christian Communion is not so much the result of resolving these challenges successfully, as it is the 'way' such challenges are to be engaged together: with mutual love, in humility and gentleness, and with ungrudging hospitality (p. 50).

Here I felt was an echo of the LLF process I have described, applied to the reading of 1 Peter. I doubt the author of 1 Peter would have agreed. On the contrary, I am sure if he had been asked as to the meaning of holiness in relation to same sex-sexual activity, his answer based on his reference to Leviticus 19 (1 Peter 1:16) would have been clear, and would have resolved the challenge forthwith.

Of course, the authors of the commentary might fairly argue that addressing a conflict which does not (to me at any rate) appear to be diminishing was not in their brief, but I was left with the strong feeling that anyone wanting to raise these concerns in the group Bible studies would find the room temperature fall dramatically, and that the premise of these Bible studies was that diversity was a given and that no authoritative teaching on these matters should be sought or explored together, and 1 Peter offered us no guidance.

When the Lambeth Conference had to be postponed in 2020 because of the Covid pandemic (and with it the GAFCON conference in the same year) I with a number of others wondered whether this delay was an opportunity for some reflection and rearrangement could take place to heal the tear in the Communion that has been increasing since 2003. Sadly, in my opinion this possibility was never explored, and two years on the schism in Global Anglicanism is as great as ever. Though the programme for the Lambeth Conference is not yet published, based on the material from 1 Peter I do not detect any opportunity being given to those coming to consider how the tear may be repaired.

I was supportive of encouraging evangelicals in the C of E to engage with LLF because even though I dreaded the outcome, I thought it would demonstrate that we were 'making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3). I hope these words too can be received as an attempt to express 'truth spoken in love' (4:15).

Conclusion

There is of course much more to say about Lambeth, LLF and the C of E. Praise God, he has not abandoned us; and I know there are daily experiences of his mercy and life all over the place, not least in my parish here in Openshaw, East Manchester. I hope I have recognised those things in LLF which belong to our good as well as those things which I believe do not. There is need to repent, and there is need to pray.

May LLF and the Lambeth Conference not set the stage for the C of E or the Anglican Communion to depart from the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). May we instead 'Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let (ourselves) be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2:4).

KEITH SINCLAIR is the National Director Church of England Evangelical Council

Resolution I.10 of the Lambeth Conference 1998 reproduced in full

Human Sexuality

This Conference:

a. commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
b. in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
c. recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
d. while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
e. cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
f. requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in

the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;

g. notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.

The Global Anglican 136/2 (2022): 126–144

Obedience and Submission in 1 Peter[1]

Lionel Windsor

Obedience and submission are pervasive concepts in 1 Peter, but are often misunderstood. This article examines the meaning of these terms in the ancient world generally and in 1 Peter in particular. 'Obedience' means 'heeding' the gospel message – i.e., conversion. The verb often translated 'disobey' refers to 'being unpersuaded' by the gospel. To 'submit' means to voluntarily place oneself in an ordered relationship/arrangement. This involves preserving the integrity of the relationship and honouring the person in authority. It does not imply grudgingly following specific orders, suppressing one's will in favour of another's, or tolerating abuse. This exploration leads us to question the adequacy of prevailing postcolonial interpretations which focus on strategies for surviving and resisting systemic injustice in human institutions (e.g., empire, slavery, patriarchy). The postcolonial focus too easily obscures Peter's focus on Christ's redemption and on God as creator and judge of all.

Reading 1 Peter in church and world

Obedience and submission are pervasive concepts in 1 Peter. For those who accept this letter as God's authoritative word, it is important to understand how Peter[2] is using these concepts, not least because they have significant implications for day-to-day relationships involving power and authority. For example, in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*'s Form of Solemnization of Matrimony – a service deeply rooted in a high view of Scripture – the wife pledges to 'obey' her husband, using a term that occurs in the NT with reference to wives only in 1 Peter 3:6. Although this precise wording is seldom used today, the BCP remains a fundamental standard of doctrine and worship for Anglicans worldwide. Hence it is important to understand what Peter means – and does not mean – by the term 'obey'. The same goes for the related term 'submit', which Peter uses in his discussions of various human relationships, including marriage (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5; 5:5; cf. 3:22).

Yet exegesis, interpretation and pastoral application are often difficult to disentangle, especially in these areas. If we are not careful, we can

[1] I am grateful to Dr Claire Smith for commenting on an earlier draft of this article with valuable suggestions for improvement.

[2] Although scholars have disputed the letter's authorship, I will refer to the author as 'Peter' (1:1), both from personal scholarly conviction and for clarity.

unintentionally impose twenty-first century assumptions and meanings on our understanding of Peter's first-century terms. Consequently, when we come to explain and apply Peter's text, we can end up applying what we have inadvertently imported into the text, rather than being formed and challenged by the text. Furthermore, our hearers may reject the authority of the text, not because of what Peter is actually saying (which may be challenging enough), but because of pain and anger caused by applying what Peter is wrongly heard to be saying.

Part of the problem is the modern terminology we use to translate, explain and apply Peter's text. Finding unfreighted language is harder than we might think. For example, when modern English speakers hear the English terms 'obey' and 'submit', they often envisage specific situations in which a person suppresses his or her own will in favour of another's or grudgingly follows an order. Understood this way, Peter's instructions to 'obey' and 'submit' can sound like an instruction for Christians to surrender themselves to instances of coercive control and violence, contrary to other parts of Scripture (e.g., 2 Corinthians 11:19–21). This can be seen to endorse or even excuse abusive relationships in which the dominant paradigm is that of control.[3]

To avoid issues such as these, several modern translations employ more general terms for submission such as 'accept the authority of' (1 Peter 3:1 NRSV) or 'be subject to' (1 Peter 3:1 ESV). This avoids the connotation of grudgingly following specific orders. However, it raises further potential problems, since the modern terminology of 'authority' and 'subjection' is most commonly found in political and military spheres. Understood this way, the use of these words in 1 Peter can sound like an endorsement of fixed pervasive hierarchies of human status or worth.[4]

Some seek to explain the concept of wives' submission using the terminology of male 'leadership' and male/female 'roles'.[5] This language is intended to counter the idea of fixed hierarchies of worth, since it limits

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[3] For examples from a US context see Steven Tracy, 'Domestic Violence in the Church and Redemptive Suffering in 1 Peter', *CTJ* 41 (2006): 283–84; Caryn Reeder, '1 Peter 3:1–6: Biblical Authority and Battered Wives', *BBR* 25.4 (2015): 520. Such a view is rightly rejected by Claire Smith, *God's Good Design: What the Bible Really Says about Men and Women*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2019), 142, 189–203. Note that domestic control and abuse is not a predominantly 'conservative' or Christian phenomenon; indeed, it seems to be increasing alarmingly in 'progressive' and post-Christian societies: see Jess Hill, *See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse* (Carlton: Black Inc., 2019), 169, 183, 286, 418–19.

[4] Cf. Diane Langberg, *Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2020), 91–102.

[5] E.g., Wayne Grudem, 'Wives Like Sarah, and the Husbands Who Honor Them: 1 Peter 3:1–7', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to*

submission to specific functions and activities. It also helps to undergird the husband's responsibility to love and care for his wife (cf. 1 Peter 3:7).[6] Furthermore, since this language is at home in the modern economic and business world, it provides points of analogy with workplace authority structures that are comprehensible to many modern hearers.[7] Yet this advantage carries with it an inherent danger: it risks uncritically importing modern concepts of 'leadership' from the workplace into Peter's meaning. This can lead to a focus on issues such as decision-making processes which, while possibly a valid extension of the concerns of the biblical authors, are probably peripheral to their focus.[8]

An influential scholarly approach to 1 Peter that seeks to mitigate problems with modern application is that of postcolonial interpretation. Postcolonial interpreters seek to read 1 Peter in light of strategies adopted by colonized groups.[9] They regard the description of the recipients as 'sojourners' (παρεπίδημοι, 1:1; 2:11) and 'temporary residents' (πάροικοι, 2:11; cf. παροικία, 1:17) as central for interpretation. For example, the recent Global Commentary prepared by a group of scholars for the Lambeth Conference 2022 regards these terms as marking out the recipients as 'minorities in a colonized world', such that 1 Peter is to be read as offering 'strategies' for 'suffering Christians' and a 'mirror for us to examine power dynamics both in the public and domestic sphere'.[10] For postcolonial interpreters, 1 Peter is as regarded describing societal structures and institutions that are inherently unjust, such as empire, slavery and patriarchy. Various strategies are identified in the letter for dealing with these unjust human institutions, e.g.: conformity for the sake

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Evangelical Feminism, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 194–208.

[6] Grudem, 'Wives Like Sarah', 206.

[7] E.g. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Margaret E. Köstenberger, *God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 37, 41, 184.

[8] E.g., Grudem, 'Wives Like Sarah', 200; George W. Knight, 'The Family and the Church: How Should Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Work Out in Practice?', in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 349–50.

[9] For an overview see Abson Joseph, 'The Petrine Letters' in *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 426–30.

[10] Jennifer Strawbridge (ed.), *The First Letter of Peter: A Global Commentary* (London: SCM, 2020), 21–22.

of survival,[11] resistance for the sake of distinctiveness,[12] 'polite resistance',[13] and '(Assimilated) Resistance' with 'Subversive… Good Works'.[14]

Some have embraced the postcolonial approach as a valuable framework for how to apply (and not apply) 1 Peter's instructions today.[15] Others, however, have used a postcolonial approach to argue that 1 Peter's instructions to 'obey' and 'submit' are deeply problematic. In the face of systemic injustice, just 'following orders' (which is what 'obey' and 'submit' are often understood to mean) is not an excuse, but an act of guilty complicity. So, for example, Jennifer G. Bird argues that the letter has 'socio-political implications that lead to collusion with Empire, thus, 1 Peter is one of many texts in the Christian canon that perpetuate imperial ideology'.[16] On this view, 1 Peter's perpetuation of abuse, especially in relation to women, must not be excused or adapted for Christians today; rather, it must be exposed and critiqued.[17]

This gives rise to two important questions. Firstly, a hermeneutical question: Have prevailing postcolonial interpretations adequately comprehended the attitude of 1 Peter towards the social relationships it describes? That is, is it correct to say that 1 Peter is describing inherently unjust social constructs – e.g., empire, slavery, patriarchy – and providing 'strategies' for oppressed people to respond to them? Or, is the letter doing something else? Secondly, a semantic question: What does Peter mean when he uses the language of 'obedience' and 'submission'? This

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[11] David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, SBLMS 26 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1981); cf. Strawbridge, 1 Peter, 51.

[12] John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1981).

[13] David G. Horrell, 'Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliott Debate Towards a Postcolonial Reading of First Peter', in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter*, ed. Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin, LNTS 364 (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 111–43 quoting 143.

[14] Travis B. Williams, *Good Works in 1 Peter: Negotiating Social Conflict and Christian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, WUNT 337 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 245–73 quoting headings; cf. Reinhard Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, trans. Peter H. Davids (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 151–57.

[15] E.g., Peter H. Davids, 'A Silent Witness in Marriage: 1 Peter 3:1–7', in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothius, and Gordon D. Fee, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 2005), 225–38; Strawbridge, 1 Peter, 55–56.

[16] Jennifer G. Bird, Abuse, *Power and Fearful Obedience: Reconsidering 1 Peter's Commands to Wives*, LNTS 442 (London: T & T Clark International, 2011), 3.

[17] Bird, *Abuse*, 142–44.

article seeks to answer the semantic question, with a constant eye to the hermeneutical question.

The key terms are ὑπακοή (1:2, 14, 22), ὑπακούω (3:6), ἀπειθέω (2:8; 3:1, 20; 4:17) and ὑποτάσσω (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22; 5:5). As noted above, these terms are often glossed in English as 'obedience', 'obey', 'disobey' and 'submit' respectively. Although this article will continue to employ these English glosses, the ultimate purpose of the article is to question common modern connotations of these terms (see above) and to correct and fill out the terms' meanings by examining their actual usage in 1 Peter. This will require both 1) examining the broad semantic range these terms can have in ancient Greek and 2) investigating the specific meaning of each term as it is used in 1 Peter.[18] In doing so, the article will also address issues raised by common postcolonial interpretations.

1. 'Obedience': heeding the gospel (chapter 1)

The first chapter of 1 Peter contains three references to 'obedience' (ὑπακοή, 1:2, 14, 22). This term, along with the cognate verb 'obey' (ὑπακούω, cf. 3:6), is sometimes understood to convey a primary sense of following specific instructions, whether willingly or grudgingly.[19] Admittedly, the verb does carry this narrow sense at times in the NT (e.g., Luke 17:6). However, the semantic range of the word-group is far broader than this. The form is literally 'hear under' (ὑπ[ό]+ἀκούω). In ancient Greek literature, the verb's range of meaning includes 'to listen, give ear, hearken'; 'to heed, comply with, obey'; 'to be subject, be under the rule'; and 'to answer'.[20] The LXX uses ὑπακούω to translate the Hebrew verb 'hear' (שָׁמַע), especially when a concrete response is involved;[21] thus, ὑπακούω is often best translated 'listen' or 'heed' (e.g., Proverbs 1:24; 22:21 LXX). The idea of 'heeding' – i.e., hearing a message and exhibiting a concrete response – fits several key NT instances of ὑπακούω/ὑπακοή denoting a holistic reorientation of attitude and life in response to the gospel message (Acts 6:7; Romans 10:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8). As we shall now see, this sense of 'heeding' the gospel also fits instances of ὑπακοή in 1 Peter.

Peter's first use of 'obedience' (ὑπακοή) occurs in his opening address (1:2). Peter is here describing the 'elect' status of his addressees (cf. 1:1): 'according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, by [the] sanctification of [the] Spirit, *unto obedience and sprinkling of [the]*

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[18] I.e., paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis.

[19] '[O]ne listens and follows instructions': BDAG, s.v. 'ὑπακοή'; 'to follow instructions': BDAG, s.v. 'ὑπακούω'.

[20] Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 2185–86.

[21] *TDNT*, s.v. 'ἀκούω, κτλ.', 224.

blood of Jesus Christ (εἰς ὑπακοὴν καὶ ῥαντισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)'. Although the meaning of this final prepositional phrase is disputed,[22] it is best to understand Peter here describing two interrelated goals (εἰς) for the elect: firstly, that they exhibit 'obedience' (ὑπακοή; cf. Exodus 24:7), expressed without qualification; and secondly (καί), that they receive the benefits (ῥαντισμόν) of the atoning death (αἵματος) of Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; cf. Exodus 24:8).[23] Peter is thus highlighting 'obedience' as a prominent concept at the start of his letter. It is natural to regard the term here as having the sense in which it appears in other parts of the NT (see above), i.e., 'heeding' the gospel message by exhibiting a concrete response, primarily by trusting in Christ's atoning death for salvation. This understanding of the term fits well with what Peter goes on to describe: a reorientation of life springing from Christ's atoning death, including new birth (1:3; cf. 1:23; 2:2), a 'living hope' of an imperishable inheritance through Christ's resurrection (1:3–4, cf. 18–19) and a life of confident endurance in suffering modelled on Christ's (1:5–7; cf. 2:21–25; 3:18–4:1; 4:13). Thus, 'obedience' here denotes conversion.[24]

This understanding of 'obedience' as conversion is confirmed by Peter's subsequent uses of the word. In 1:14, Peter describes Christians as 'children of obedience' (τέκνα ὑπακοῆς). For Peter, obedience is not simply an attribute of Christians (i.e., Peter does not write 'obedient children', ὑπήκοα τέκνα). Instead, the genitive of source or relationship (cf. John 1:12; Romans 8:16; Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15; 1 John 3:1–2) depicts 'obedience' as something that metaphorically gives birth to Christians and so defines their identity and consequent lives (cf. 1:3, 23; 2:2). Again, 'obedience' is best understood here as 'heeding' the gospel – i.e., conversion. This creates a decisive change of lifestyle involving

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[22] Some translations regard the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as objective with respect to ὑπακοήν and possessive with respect to αἵματος: 'for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood' (ESV); however, this is 'something of a grammatical monstrosity': Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter,* Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 87. Some take Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as subjective with respect to both ὑπακοὴν καὶ ῥαντισμόν: 'because of the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ' (Francis H. Agnew, '1 Peter 1:2: An Alternative Translation', *CBQ* 45 (1983): 68–73 quoting 73; cf. John H. Elliott, *1 Peter,* AB 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 319; Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, THNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 20–21). However, this requires εἰς to have a rare causal sense, which is out of step with Peter's other uses (cf. 1:3–5); furthermore, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ reads most naturally as possessive with respect to αἵματος (cf. 1:19) (Sydney H. T. Page, 'Obedience and Blood-Sprinkling in 1 Peter 1:2', *WTJ* 72 (2010): 293–95).

[23] Page, 'Obedience', 295–97.

[24] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC 37 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 55–56.

holiness and the 'fear' of God (1:14–17), grounded in knowledge, faith and hope in Christ's atoning death and resurrection (1:18–21).

In 1:22, Peter expands on the concepts he introduced in 1:2. He expands the cultic purification term ('sprinkling', ῥαντισμόν, 1:2) to 'having purified (ἡγνικότες) your souls' (1:22). He expands the unqualified term 'obedience' (ὑπακοήν, 1:2), to 'obedience/heeding of the truth (τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας)' (1:22), thus confirming that 'obedience' means heeding the gospel. He clarifies the connection between obedience and sprinkling, initially expressed simply by the word 'and' (καί, 1:2), as instrumental: obedience to the truth (i.e., heeding the gospel or conversion) is the means (ἐν) by which Christians have purified their souls (1:22). The perfect participle 'having purified' (ἡγνικότες) implies that heeding the gospel has ongoing consequences for the lives of Christians. These consequences are developed in 1:23–25 in terms of communal love springing from the preached gospel message (λόγου, 1:23; τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ εὐαγγελισθέν, 1:25).

Thus, 'obedience' (ὑπακοή) in 1 Peter 1 is primarily a matter of 'heeding' the gospel message of Christ's death and resurrection. It denotes conversion and implies a holistic reorientation of life around the gospel message.

2. 'Disobeying': being unpersuaded by the gospel

This sense of 'obedience' as 'heeding' the gospel message is confirmed by examining Peter's use of the negative term ἀπειθέω (1 Peter 2:8; 3:1, 20; 4:17). This word is often translated 'disobey'/'not obey' (e.g., NRSV, ESV). However, as Jensen has demonstrated, 'the distinct contribution of this word-group' is not 'behavioural' (nor 'volitional') but 'cognitive'; it is thus better translated as 'unpersuaded'.[25] In 1 Peter, being 'unpersuaded' by the gospel message leads to unbelief and thence to judgment.[26] Unbelievers 'stumble' over Christ because they are 'unpersuaded by the word' (τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες, 2:8). Husbands may need to be won over because they are 'unpersuaded by the word' (ἀπειθοῦσιν τῷ λόγῳ, 3:1). The spirits were in prison (3:19) because they were 'unpersuaded' (ἀπειθήσασιν) by Noah's preaching (3:20). Severe judgment will come to 'those [outside God's household] who are unpersuaded by the gospel of God' (τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ, 4:17) and who thus continue in sin and do not receive salvation (4:18).

It is worth noting that Peter views both outsiders and those in the 'household of God' as accountable to God (4:17, cf. 4:5). Peter does not

[25] Matthew D. Jensen, 'Some Unpersuasive Glosses: The Meaning of Ἀπείθεια, Ἀπειθέω, and Ἀπειθής in the New Testament', *JBL* 138.2 (2019): 391–412 quoting 411–12.

[26] Jensen, 'Unpersuasive Glosses', 410–11.

regard outsiders merely as oppressive 'others' who must simply be resisted or survived. Rather, because God relates to all people as the sovereign and judge of 'each person's works' (1:17), there is a sense of solidarity between Christians and outsiders. What defines Christians as distinct from outsiders is not primarily a matter of human power imbalances. Rather, it is a matter of whether one 'obeys' (i.e., heeds) the gospel for the sake of salvation or 'disobeys' (i.e., is unpersuaded by) the gospel. Since there is always the prospect that those who are presently 'unpersuaded' might be 'won' by contact with believers (3:1, cf. 3:15), the boundaries between Christians and outsiders are at present porous. This undergirds a sense of confidence and vocation in the world for believers, grounded in the preached gospel of Christ's death and resurrection (cf. 2:4–10).

3. Submission in human arrangements (2:11–17)

Peter first uses the verb 'submit' (ὑποτάγητε) in 2:13. Given the potential for modern misunderstanding and misapplication, it is helpful to clarify the general semantic range of this verb and its cognates in regular Greek usage, before returning to discuss its specific usage in 1 Peter.

The ὑποτάσσω word-group is a subset of a broader set of terms indicating 'arrangement' or 'order' (τάσσω, etc.).[27] The form of the verb is literally to 'arrange/order under' (ὑπο+τάσσω). The word is used for a wide variety of ordered arrangements. The arrangement/order normally involves an element of authority, although the nature of such authority varies considerably depending on the kind of arrangement/order in view.

The verb ὑποτάσσω has both transitive and intransitive uses. The transitive use involves a subject imposing an order on another thing or person; it means 'to subject' or 'to subordinate'. Transitive uses can be found in varied contexts in ancient Greek texts, e.g., letters attached to the end of words;[28] human authorities (including the Messiah) subjected to God (Psalm 59:10 LXX; 1 Corinthians 15:28); the created order arranged under God (1 Clement 20:1) or humanity (Psalm 8:7 LXX; Philo, *Creation* 84) or Christ (1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22; Philippians 3:21; Hebrews 2:5, 8); political and military authority structures;[29] and the ordering of an individual's inner life.[30]

The intransitive use, by contrast, involves a subject voluntarily placing him/herself within an ordered arrangement; it is normally marked by the middle or passive voice or a reflexive pronoun and means 'submit'. Clement, for example, deliberately contrasts these two uses, both commending

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[27] *TDNT* s.v. 'τάσσω, κτλ'.

[28] Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 737f.

[29] *T. Jud.* 21:2; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.140; Plutarch, *Apoph. lac.* 66.

[30] Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 3.26; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.12.12; 1 Corinthians 14:32.

humble voluntary 'submitting' to others (intransitive ὑποτασσόμενοι) and condemning arrogant 'subordinating' of others (transitive ὑποτάσσοντες, 1 Clement 2:1). Intransitive uses occur in varied contexts in ancient Greek texts, e.g.: people submitting to political arrangements (Daniel 6:14 Θ; Luke 10:17, 20; Romans 13:1, 5; Titus 3:1; 1 Clement 61:1; Josephus, *J.W.* 4.175); people actively trusting and delighting in God's sovereignty in the face of danger rather than disbelieving, clamouring or quarrelling;[31] children (including Jesus) submitting to parents (Luke 2:51; Hebrews 12:9); people in authority voluntarily 'yielding' to others in specific circumstances for various reasons;[32] and a general use that deliberately encompasses various kinds of submission operating together for the sake of a united community (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Clement 37:5–38:1; cf. 2:1). It is also used by Christians to refer to household and church relationships; we will examine these usages below.

Returning to 1 Peter 2:13: the imperative 'submit' ὑποτάγητε is an intransitive usage denoting voluntary submission.[33] It is a prominent command in the discourse.[34] The submission in view is 'to every human creature' (πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει). The term 'every' (πάσῃ) indicates that Peter is referring to a variety of orders/arrangements with different kinds of authority; this is consistent with the broad range of uses of the ὑποτάσσω word-group surveyed above. Peter's command has within its scope the various kinds of human orders described in the subsequent discourse: political (2:13b–14; cf. 2:17), household/economic (2:18), marriage (3:1–7) and relationships amongst believers (3:8–12; cf. 2:17; 5:1–5).[35] The term 'human' (ἀνθρωπίνῃ) recalls and qualifies Peter's preceding statements about antagonism and distance between Christians and the rest of humanity (2:4–12). Even though Christ is 'rejected by humans (ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων)' (2:4), this does not mean Christians should reject human authority entirely; rather, Christians should 'submit' to 'human' (ἀνθρωπίνῃ) arrangements/orderings (2:13).

The phrase 'human creature' (ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει) is sometimes understood to mean a thing created *by* humans, i.e., 'human institution'.[36] On this understanding, Peter is instructing his readers to submit to

[31] Psalms 36:7; 61:2, 6 LXX; Romans 8:7; 10:3; Hebrews 12:9; James 4:7; cf. Epictetus, *Diatr*. 4.12.11; 1 Clement 34:5.

[32] Epictetus, *Diatr*. 1.4.19; Let. Aris. 257; 2 Maccabees 13:23.

[33] It is a causative/permissive passive imperative; cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 440–41.

[34] The imperative heads its clause with no prior connective.

[35] 2:13–3:12 form a unit: Feldmeier, *First Peter*, 22; Green, *1 Peter*, 72; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC 49 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988), xxxvii; Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 117.

[36] E.g., BDAG, s.v. 'κτίσις', 3; Feldmeier, *First Peter*, 158.

authority systems and power structures *as instituted by humans*. This understanding supports postcolonial interpretations that regard the letter as directly addressing unjust institutions/systems such as the Roman Empire, first-century slavery and first-century 'patriarchy'.[37] However, firm evidence for this use of κτίσις is lacking.[38] Rather, the word normally refers to *God's* creation, including the human members of that creation (cf. Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 4:13; Didache 16.5; 1 Clement 59.3).[39] Hence, Peter's focus here is not on *systems* or *institutions* per se, but on *human beings* who are subject to God as creator (cf. 4:19).[40] The effect of this focus is twofold. Firstly, it relativizes the significance and power of the human arrangements Peter is about to discuss. They are not supreme but simply 'human', subject to the creator.[41] Secondly, it confers an inherent (albeit contingent) value on these relationships as being under the creator's rule.[42] Hence, even alongside the existence of injustice (e.g., 2:18–19), these arrangements enable 'doing good' (ἀγαθοποιέω/ ἀγαθοποιός; 2:14, 15, 20; 3:6, 17; cf. Romans 13:1–7; 1 Timothy 2:1–4); such 'doing good' (ἀγαθοποιΐᾳ) is the primary activity of those who entrust themselves to God as 'faithful creator' (πιστῷ κτίστῃ, 4:19). God the creator is superintending these human arrangements for his own purposes, despite the existence of injustice. Hence submitting 'on account of the Lord' (διὰ τὸν κύριον) is not merely a strategy for bearing up under unjust systems;[43] it is a recognition of the intrinsic-yet-contingent value of human arrangements under the authority of 'the Lord' (cf. 3:12). Such value is not located in the form of the arrangements per se; rather, the value derives from the fact that God is sovereign over human arrangements to enable humans to 'do good' in concrete relationships.

Understood this way, Peter is not making a direct comment about dealing with systemic injustice such as that found in 'empire', 'slavery' or 'patriarchy'.[44] He is simply affirming the contingent value of various kinds of ordered human relationships within the order established by God as creator. There is thus no problem in seeing different levels of directness between God's creation purposes and the 'goodness' of the various human arrangements Peter describes here. We can see from elsewhere in the Scriptures that the 'good' of marriage is far more fundamental to God's

[37] E.g., Strawbridge, *1 Peter*, 45–47.

[38] The parallels cited in BDAG, s.v. 'κτίσις', 3 are indirect and unconvincing: Williams, *Good Works*, 224–28.

[39] BDAG, s.v. 'κτίσις', 2.

[40] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 182; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 124; Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 127–28.

[41] There may be an implied critique of imperial claims to divinity: Williams, *Good Works*, 224–28.

[42] Smith, *God's Good Design*, 143.

[43] *Contra* Strawbridge, *1 Peter*, 45–47, 62.

[44] *Contra* Strawbridge, *1 Peter*, 47.

purposes (e.g., Genesis 2:18–25; Ephesians 5:31–33) than contingent economic arrangements that can give rise to slavery (e.g., Deuteronomy 5:6; 1 Corinthians 7:21). Furthermore, while Peter acknowledges that injustice may exist within human arrangements, he insists that injustice does not have the final word. Peter has already affirmed that the Father upon whom Christians call is an impartial judge of all humanity's deeds (1:17). He goes on to affirm that the risen, ascended Jesus Christ even now has all heavenly authorities 'subjected' to him (ὑποταγέντων; 3:22); and that all human beings will ultimately need to 'give account to the one who is ready to judge living and dead' (4:5). Hence Christians are to regard themselves ultimately as 'slaves' (δοῦλοι) only to God and 'free' (ἐλεύθεροι) in relation to the world (2:16), in which they may thus operate as metaphorical benefactors, 'doing good' (ἀγαθοποιοῦντας) even in their difficult temporal circumstances (2:15). While there is a 'subversive' element in such good works,[45] this does not negate their inherent value.

The series of four asyndetic imperatives in 2:17 identifies a complex of varied responses appropriate for different kinds of relationship. Each of these responses recalls key points made in the letter so far: for the fraternity of believers, 'love' (ἀγαπᾶτε; cf. 1:22); for God, 'fear' (φοβεῖσθε; cf. 1:17); for 'all' and for the 'Emperor' (cf. 2:13), 'honour' (τιμήσατε/τιμᾶτε). This forms an imperatival frame that conceptually and syntactically governs the following sections, each of which begins with a participle: 'submitting' (ὑποτασσόμενοι) for household slaves (2:18), 'submitting' (ὑποτασσόμεναι) for wives (3:1), 'dwelling with' (συνοικοῦντες) for husbands (3:7) and '[being] like-minded, sympathetic, fraternally loving…' (implied ὄντες) for fellow Christians (3:8).[46] While these participles retain an imperatival force from their controlling verbs in 2:17,[47] nevertheless they are not presented as independent commands.[48] Rather, the participial instructions must all be understood in light of the multidimensional understanding of the Christian life set out in the imperatives of 2:17.

This means that the submission as described in the following sections is not primarily a matter of following specific orders (though it may involve this); rather, Peter deliberately frames the concept of submission in terms of honouring human beings in various positions of authority, while fearing God as creator, judge and redeemer (2:17). These are the controlling concepts in what follows.

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[45] Williams, *Good Works*, 245–73.

[46] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 194, 221.

[47] *Pace* Feldmeier, *First Peter,* 167.

[48] *Pace* Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter,* BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 189, 200–201; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 137–38; Schreiner, *1 Peter,* 137.

4. Submission for slaves (2:18–25)

In 2:18, Peter's topic shifts from the government sphere to the microeconomic/household sphere, i.e., the submission of 'slaves' (οἱ οἰκέται) to 'masters' (τοῖς δεσπόταις). Slavery in the ancient world was a more widespread and varied phenomenon than we might assume from the modern history of slavery. While some slaves faced harsh conditions, others could rise to eminent positions. Nevertheless, all slaves faced a significant lack of power and control over their lives.[49] Peter's instructions acknowledge this reality, but provide a distinctive Christian perspective on it. Ancient secular discussions of slavery seldom, if ever, use the term 'submit';[50] the use of this terminology for slaves seems to be a distinctively Christian phenomenon (e.g., Titus 2:9; Didache 4:11; Barnabas 19:7). The phrase 'in all fear' (ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ) refers not to masters but to God (cf. 1:17; 2:17), reminding the readers that household/economic submission is not merely a pragmatic strategy for dealing with human power, but an issue of faithful living before God.

The second half of 2:18 shifts the topic to slaves' submission in unjust circumstances: while some masters are 'good' (ἀγαθοῖς), others are 'crooked' (σκολιοῖς), i.e., not in line with the creator's intentions for those in authority (cf. 2:13–14). In such circumstances, counterintuitively, submission for Peter does not mean grudgingly conforming one's actions to the desires of a crooked master. In fact, it means the precise opposite: 'doing good' (ἀγαθοποιοῦντες, 2:20), which incurs 'suffering' (πάσχοντες, 2:20) from masters who are not 'good' (ἀγαθοῖς, 2:18). In this case, 'submitting' (ὑποτασσόμενοι, 2:18) is exhibited not through following orders, but through 'bearing up under' (ὑποφέρει, 2:19) and 'enduring' (ὑπομενεῖτε, 2:20) suffering 'unjustly' (ἀδίκως, 2:19).

Nevertheless, Peter does not directly instruct slaves to endure physical violence.[51] Peter's only explicit mention of physical violence is in relation to the slave who 'sins' (ἁμαρτάνοντες) and is consequently 'beaten' (κολαφιζόμενοι, 2:20). When describing the opposite, i.e., the slave who is 'doing good' (ἀγαθοποιοῦντες), Peter uses the more general term 'suffering' (πάσχοντες, 2:20). This elsewhere refers to being verbally slandered for 'righteousness' (δικαιοσύνην, 3:14) and for 'doing good' (ἀγαθοποιοῦντας, 3:17; cf. 3:9, 16); thus, for example, Peter may be referring in 2:20 to slaves being maligned for not participating in their masters' debauchery (cf. 4:1–4). While it is true that slaves also incurred physical beatings for non-compliance,[52] this physical suffering is not Peter's focus, nor is it something that Peter explicitly instructs slaves to tolerate.

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[49] Schreiner, *1 Peter,* 135.

[50] E.g., Aristotle uses the term 'rule' (ἄρχει) (*Pol.* 1.5.6).

[51] *Pace* Reeder, '1 Peter 3', 523.

[52] Reeder, '1 Peter 3', 523–24 n. 19.

Yet the form of submission that Peter does advocate – i.e., doing good in the face of evil – might seem in human terms to be a foolish strategy that might endanger long-term survival. Therefore, Peter grounds his instructions not in pragmatic human strategies, but in the atoning activity of Jesus Christ, which, as we have seen, is the firm basis for the new existence Christians have come to live in through their 'obedience' to the gospel. In 2:19–20, Peter makes the link to Christ implicitly in several ways. He frames his explanation in terms of participation in divine 'grace' (χάρις, 2:19, 20), which recalls the precious and sure gift of salvation through Christ (1:2, 10, 13; 5:10).[53] He also alludes to the Isaianic Suffering Servant through the phrase 'because of consciousness of God, someone bears up under sorrows' (διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ ὑποφέρει τις λύπας, 2:19).[54] This reference to the Isaianic Servant becomes even more explicit in 2:21–25, where Peter uses various allusions to Isaiah 53 to describe the events of Jesus' passion, presenting Jesus both as the substitutionary atoning sufferer (ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν) and as the 'paradigm' (ὑπογραμμόν) for Christians experiencing unjust suffering (2:21).[55]

For Peter, a Christian's suffering is not in itself redemptive; rather, Christ's prior redemptive work provides a certain hope and a pattern for living in the midst of suffering.

5. Submission and obedience for wives (3:1–7)

In 3:1, Peter's discourse shifts again to a related yet distinct topic: 'likewise wives, submitting to your own husbands…' The adverb 'likewise' (ὁμοίως, 3:1) is not intended to imply that the content of Peter's instructions to wives (3:1–6) is to be understood as parallel to the content of the instructions given to slaves (2:18–25).[56] Rather, ὁμοίως serves to highlight the syntactic (i.e. structural) parallel between 3:1 and the structurally similar 2:18, both of which are syntactically dependent on 2:17.[57] In other words: just as the phrase 'slaves, submitting' (οἱ οἰκέται ὑποτασσόμενοι, 2:18) began one kind of application of the imperatives in 2:17 to one group of people, so also (ὁμοίως) the phrase 'wives, submitting' (αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτασσόμεναι, 3:1) now begins another kind of application of the imperatives in 2:17 to another group of people. The content of 3:1–6, therefore, should not

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[53] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 191; cf. Feldmeier, *First Peter*, 171–72.

[54] Cf. the Servant's consciousness of God (Isaiah 50:4–9; cf. 53:11); 'he bore our sorrows' (חֳלָיֵנוּ הוּא נָשָׂא, Isa 53:4 MT); 'bear' (φέρω, Isaiah 53:3–4 LXX; ἀναφέρω, Isaiah 53:11–12 LXX; cf. 1 Peter 2:24).

[55] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 194–95.

[56] *Contra* Reeder, '1 Peter 3', 524, 527–29; Strawbridge, *1 Peter*, 57. See Smith, *God's Good Design*, 141–42.

[57] Green, *1 Peter*, 91.

be read primarily in light of the content of 2:18–25, but in light of the imperatives in 2:17.

In this case, the key imperatival phrases in 2:17 are 'honour (τιμήσατε) everyone' and 'fear (φοβεῖσθε) God'. These are directly relevant to the specific situation described in 3:1. In this 'mission' situation, believing wives are seeking their unbelieving husbands to be 'won' (κερδηθήσονται) to 'the word' (τῷ λόγῳ).[58] Presumably these wives had previously sought to speak the gospel word to their husbands (cf. 3:15), yet the husbands are 'unpersuaded' (ἀπειθοῦσιν). The key issue facing wives in such a situation is: How can they both 'honour' their unbelieving husbands and 'fear' God (cf. 2:17)? In such a scenario, the two imperatives seem to be incompatible. Wives were normally expected to adopt their husbands' gods, so a wife's commitment to Christ, especially when expressed verbally, potentially dishonoured her husband.[59] Peter advises that in this case, the wife should express her submission by exhibiting 'pure conduct in fear', which may be observed by the husband and so be the means by which he is 'won' wordlessly.

Submission for wives primarily involves honouring their husbands and so upholding the integrity of their ordered marriage relationship, within the bounds of their overarching commitment to God and Christ. This involves not dressing provocatively and thus shamefully (3:3) and maintaining a 'gentle and quiet spirit' (πραέως καὶ ἡσυχίου πνεύματος) that does not clamour or quarrel in the face of a husband's unwillingness to heed the word of the gospel (3:4). This is similar to the attitude all Christians should have towards outsiders (3:16; cf. 1 Timothy 2:2, 11), but is especially relevant to the husband-wife relationship.[60] Ideally, the attractive character of such submission may lead to the husband being persuaded by the gospel; but regardless of outcome, it is still precious in God's sight.

It is often claimed that the details of the instructions of 3:1–6 are drawn from Greco-Roman household ideals, which means Peter's instructions here are designed to provide a survival strategy intended to allay husbands' fears about Christianity by demonstrating its compatibility with Greco-Roman marriage values.[61] Some take this to imply that Peter's instructions should be applied differently in various modern cultures, depending on whether the culture is aligned with or rejects such 'patriarchy'.[62] However,

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[58] Cf. David G. Horrell, 'Fear, Hope, and Doing Good: Wives as a Paradigm of Mission in 1 Peter', *Estudius Bíblicos* 73 (2015): 409–29.

[59] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 211.

[60] Green, *1 Peter*, 99; Horrell, 'Fear', 415–16.

[61] E.g., Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 206–7; Davids, 'Silent Witness', 226–27; Reeder, '1 Peter 3', 524–27; Strawbridge, *1 Peter*, 59–61.

[62] So Strawbridge, *1 Peter*, 57.

several observations demonstrate that Peter is not here simply providing a strategy for surviving Greco-Roman patriarchy.

Firstly, the use of the 'submission' word-group for marriage relationships was an almost exclusively Christian phenomenon (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:34; Ephesians 5:24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5).[63] Greek-speaking authors outside NT circles seldom describe ordered marriage relationships using 'submission' terminology; instead, they normally use other terms more directly related to political and economic spheres such as 'control';[64] 'rule';[65] 'leadership'/'governance';[66] and 'serve as slave'.[67] In the one passage where Plutarch uses 'submission' terminology in relation to marriage, he is comparing the status of wives in marriage to the honoured position of philosophers in an ordered society.[68] In contrast to his more usual political/economic terminology, Plutarch's use of the term 'submit' here places the focus on the preservation of honour and order, which is also the focus of 1 Peter 3:1–7.

Secondly, modesty and gentleness over against outward beauty (3:3–4) are not distinctively Greco-Roman values. While they are praised in Greco-Roman literature as virtues that befit honour in the marriage and order in the household (e.g., Aristotle, *Oec.* 3.1; Plutarch, *Conj. Praec.* 29–32), they are also commended in the Jewish Scriptures as befitting the same things, in the latter case linked to the 'fear of the Lord' (Proverbs 31:10–31, esp. 31:30; cf. Isaiah 3:16–24).[69]

Thirdly, the meaning of Peter's phrase 'pure conduct in fear' (τὴν ἐν φόβῳ ἁγνὴν ἀναστροφήν, 3:2) works directly against the idea that Peter is counselling conformity to Greco-Roman values for the sake of survival. By using this language, Peter is recalling the attractively distinct – yet potentially dangerous – Christian values derived from obedience to the gospel of Christ, which lead Christians to fear God rather than humans (1:17, 22; 2:12, 17; 3:16).[70]

Fourthly, Peter's language in 3:3–4 explicitly recalls the apocalyptic perspective he has introduced in chapter 1. In 3:3–4, Peter commends the

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[63] Cf. Karl L. Armstrong, 'The Meaning of Ὑποτάσσω in Ephesians 5.21–33: A Linguistic Approach', *JGRChJ* 13 (2017): 168–69; Kelvin F. Mutter, 'Ephesians 5:21–33 as Christian Alternative Discourse', *TrinJ* 39NS (2018): 9–10; Benjamin Marx, "Wifely Submission' and 'Husbandly Authority' in Plutarch's Moralia and the Corpus Paulinum: A Comparison', *JGRChJ* 14 (2018): 62–63.

[64] κρατέω/κράτος, Plutarch, *Conj. Praec.* 33; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.201.

[65] ἀρχή/ἄρχω, Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.2.12; 1.5.1–2, 6; 3.4.5; Plutarch, *Conj. Praec.* 8; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.201; Arius Didymus cited in Stobaeus, *Flor.* 2.149.5.

[66] ἡγεμονία/ἡγεμονικός, Plutarch, *Conj. Praec.* 11.

[67] δουλεύειν, Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.3.

[68] Plutarch, *Conj. Praec.* 33.

[69] Jobes, *1 Peter,* 204–5.

[70] Green, *1 Peter*, 95.

'hidden' (κρυπτός) person (3:4), as a contrast to outward beauty, which includes, e.g., 'wearing of gold ornaments' (περιθέσεως χρυσίων, 3:3). While this hidden person may be unacknowledged by the husband, her virtuous nature is 'expensive/valuable (πολυτελές) in God's sight' and 'imperishable' (ἀφθάρτῳ, 3:4). This recalls apocalyptic language from 1:3–25. The faith of Christians under trial, which is 'more expensive/valuable than gold' (πολυτιμότερον χρυσίου), will result in praise and honour at the revelation (i.e., 'apocalypse', ἀποκαλύψει) of Jesus Christ (1:7). The 'imperishable' (ἄφθαρτον/ἀφθάρτου) nature of Christians' future inheritance and God's word (1:4, 23) forms a contrast to the 'perishable' (φθαρτοῖς) quality of silver and 'gold' (χρυσίῳ, 1:18).[71] Peter's grounding of his instructions in his apocalyptic perspective shows that he does not regard submission merely as a strategy for conformity and survival. Rather, Peter advises acting in a way that is commendable to God the creator and judge of all, with or without 'outward' (ἔξωθεν) human approval.

The transcultural element in Peter's instructions is confirmed by his appeal to the 'Holy women who hoped in God' from the past who adorned themselves by 'submitting' (ὑποτασσόμεναι) to their own husbands (3:5). Peter's instructions are grounded not in Greco-Roman values, but in the Scriptures. Peter's specific appeal to Sarah who 'obeyed (ὑπήκουσεν) Abraham, calling him Lord' (3:6) has puzzled interpreters. Firstly, the word 'obey' (ὑπακούω) is never used of Sarah in the LXX. Secondly, in the one place in Genesis where Sarah calls Abraham 'Lord', she is being sceptical, not 'obedient' in the sense of following specific instructions (Genesis 18:12).[72] However, the reference becomes more explicable if we understand the term 'obey' here in a similar sense to 'obedience' in chapter 1 (see above) – i.e., as 'heeding' a message or person in a way that involves a reorientation of attitude. Sarah's transformation of attitude is evident in the narrative of Genesis 16–18. Throughout this narrative, Sarah is markedly (and often redundantly) described as Abraham's 'wife' by the narrator (16:1, 3), God (17:15, 19) and God's representatives (18:9–10). As Abraham's wife, Sarah is the one who is expected to bear the promised offspring (cf. chapter 15). Initially, however, due to her inability to conceive, Sarah seeks to achieve this outcome in a way that seriously undermines her status as wife, by giving her slave to Abraham to bear children (16:1–2). Abraham 'obeyed'/'heeded' (ὑπήκουσεν) the voice of Sarah in this matter (16:2 LXX), which the narrative depicts as having disastrous results (16:4–6). However, as the narrative progresses, both Abraham and Sarah learn that God will indeed bring about offspring

[71] Green, *1 Peter*, 98.

[72] Reeder, '1 Peter 3', 536–38 summarizes the interpretive issues and various solutions which include appeals to Genesis 12:10–20; 20:1–18; Sarah's general attitude; and second-Temple interpretations (e.g., *T. Ab.*).

through 'Sarah your wife' (17:19; 18:10). When Sarah finally responds to this pronouncement by naming Abraham as her 'Lord' (18:12), this represents a turning-point in her attitude. Even in her incredulity, she is demonstrating that she has indeed learned to obey/heed Abraham as her husband and is honouring him as such.[73]

Sarah thus functions for Peter's readers as a model of 'obedience' – not as an idealized model of how to always follow a husband's specific orders, but as a key example of a woman who has learned to 'heed' and honour her husband, even in difficult and humanly impossible circumstances (cf. 'hoped in God', 1 Peter 3:5). Wives thus become Sarah's 'children' (cf. 'children of obedience', 1:14) by honouring their husbands as husbands, and trusting God in difficult circumstances. This involves 'doing good' (ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι, cf. 2:15, 20; 3:17) and 'not fearing any intimidation' (μὴ φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν; cf. 3:14). The latter phrase contrasts with the 'fear' of God that is appropriate for Christians as they submit (2:17; 3:2). Wives are to fear God and so 'do good', rather than succumb to human 'intimidation' (πτόησιν) from unbelieving husbands, who might coerce them to do wrong. Thus, the 'fear' of God is the answer to husbandly 'intimidation' and control. The same terminology and concepts are used in Proverbs (3:7, 25 LXX), which Peter may be alluding to here.[74] Hence 1 Peter certainly does not condone abuse; in fact, it is an encouragement to wives today (or husbands, for that matter) not to put up with abuse, and to seek safety in such circumstances.

In 3:7, the command to 'honour (τιμήσατε) everyone' (2:17) is now applied to Christian husbands, who are to dwell with their wives by 'showing [them] honour (τιμήν)' (3:7).[75] The fact that wives should be honoured as 'fellow-heirs of the grace of life' shows that submission does not imply inferiority of worth or status. The phrase, 'a weaker vessel, the female' (ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ), refers not to inherent inferiority,[76] but to physical vulnerability,[77] probably linked to reproductive capacity (cf. Genesis 18:11 LXX).[78] This instruction to husbands to honour and value their wives provides further evidence that 1 Peter in no way condones wives simply tolerating abuse.

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[73] Cf. Schreiner, *1 Peter,* 156–57.

[74] Achtemeier, *1 Peter,* 216–17.

[75] Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 217.

[76] Pace Feldmeier, *First Peter*, 183.

[77] Achtemeier, *1 Peter,* 217.

[78] Israel A. Kolade, "The Weaker Vessel' (1 Peter 3:7): A Linguistic and Contextual Analysis of Ἀσθενεστέρῳ Σκεύει', *Presbyterion* 47.1 (2021): 121–26.

6. Submission among believers (5:1–5)

The final reference to submission in 1 Peter occurs with reference to relationships amongst the fraternity of believers (cf. 2:17; 3:8). In this case, the 'younger' are instructed to 'submit' (ὑποτάγητε) to the 'elders' (5:5). As with previous references to submission, the specific nature of the elders' oversight and authority determines the specific nature of submission. Just as Christ exercised his role as 'shepherd (ποιμένα) and overseer (ἐπίσκοπον)' (2:25) by sacrificial self-giving (2:21–24), elders are to 'shepherd (ποιμάνατε) the flock of God among you, exercising oversight (ἐπισκοποῦντες)' (5:2) by following the example of the 'chief shepherd' (5:4), becoming Christ-like 'models' (τύποι, 5:3; cf. Matt 10:25; Mark 10:42; cf. Luke 22:25).[79] The 'authority' in view here is not the 'domineering' (κατακυριεύοντες) authority of political or military leaders (5:3).[80] Rather, the authority is that of role models of humble self-giving. The younger are to 'submit' by placing themselves within this order of exemplary sacrifice, which primarily involves following their model of good conduct (5:5).

7. Reading obedience and submission in 1 Peter today

In summary:

1) The noun 'obedience' (ὑπακοή) in 1 Peter means 'heeding' the gospel message, which involves a holistic reorientation of life in light of Christ's death and resurrection – i.e., conversion. The verb often translated 'disobey' (ἀπειθέω) refers to 'being unpersuaded' by the gospel. The verb 'obey' is also used to describe a wife 'heeding' and honouring her husband, especially in difficult circumstances.

2) The verb 'submit' (ὑποτάσσω) in 1 Peter, when used in relation to humans, means voluntarily placing oneself in an ordered relationship/arrangement. This involves preserving the integrity of the relationship and honouring the person in authority. There are a variety of such ordered relationships, with a corresponding variety in the kinds of authority in view.

3) The terminology of obedience and submission does not imply grudgingly following specific orders or suppressing one's will in favour of another's. It may involve following specific instructions, but this is not the central idea. Indeed, when the person being submitted to is not 'good', submission may involve 'doing good' despite the desires of the person in authority and trusting God when slandered. Nevertheless, there is nothing meritorious about tolerating abuse in a marriage (or any other situation).

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[79] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 305–6.

[80] Cf. later writers who used overtly political/military concepts when describing submission to church leaders (1 Clement 1:3; 37:2; 57:1–2; Ignatius, *Pol.* 6:1).

Those who suffer in such contexts can find encouragement in the NT to seek justice and their own safety (Matthew 18:15–17; 2 Corinthians 11:19–21).[81]

This exploration of the language of 'obedience' and 'submission' in 1 Peter has led us to question the adequacy of prevailing postcolonial interpretations. The postcolonial focus on systemic injustice in human institutions (e.g., empire, ancient slavery, first-century patriarchy) too easily obscures Peter's focus on God as creator and judge of all. For Peter, human orders/arrangements (e.g., government, economic structures, marriage) have an inherent value, despite the existence of injustice, since they exist under God as creator and judge. While those redeemed by Christ's death and resurrection are indeed 'sojourners' and 'temporary residents' in the world, they may nevertheless genuinely 'do good' in these arrangements, following Christ's example, secure in their salvation and future as God's children. Thus, for Peter, submission in human relationships is far more than a strategy for living in inherently unjust systems; it is a right attitude by redeemed Christians to fellow humans within God's creation.

Understood this way, 1 Peter is more directly applicable to our modern world than is often acknowledged. For example, while modern slavery is rightly illegal and cannot be condoned, Peter's encouragements in 2:18–20 could be applied to workers involved in legal but suboptimal economic arrangements with limited choice and power, e.g., call centre operators or gig economy workers. Furthermore, 1 Peter 3:1–6 contains much comfort and wisdom for Christian wives with unbelieving husbands in any society. Nevertheless, 1 Peter does not say everything that needs to be said about these topics. Other parts of the Bible are necessary to address key issues, e.g., the grounding of the order of marriage in creation and redemption (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:2–16; Ephesians 5:21–33) and the rightness of removing oneself or others from unjust economic situations when possible (e.g., 1 Corinthians 7:21; Philemon).

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[81] 2 Corinthians 11:19–21 makes this point through irony.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Psalms As Christian Praise: A Historical Commentary

Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019 (ISBN: 9780802877024 pb, 366pp)

With this volume, we have the final instalment of Bruce Waltke's and James Houston's excellent commentaries and books on the Psalter. Readers of the previous volumes (*The Psalms as Christian Worship* and *The Psalms as Christian Lament*) will know the distinctives of this commentary: careful grammatical and syntactical exegesis of the Hebrew text, with an eye on the whole Canon, by Bruce Waltke, and historical commentary, in church history, on the Psalms by James Houston.

This volume continues that format. The authors recognise that praise is the essence of the Psalter, but focus on psalms in Book 4 (Ps 90-104) of the Psalter. The commentary argues that the theme of God's kingship is central to Book 4. The introduction sets the tone for the commentary. The object of grateful praise is 'I AM' (*sic;* Waltke's suggestion for the meaning of the divine name) as the one who is progressively revealed in Christ and is the King who is a warrior and administers justice. Praise is right and fitting, good for us as humans and as the people of God.

On contested critical matters, the commentary argues strongly that the superscripts of the LXX, ascribing authorship to David, are credible and that the psalms must be interpreted in a Christological framework, but argues that the thesis of older, critical scholarship that the *Yahweh Melek* psalms were sung at an autumn enthronement festival goes far beyond the evidence. After a useful section on Hebrew poetry and music, the book launches into commentary on Pss 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, and 104.

For each psalm, a translation with footnotes on Hebrew grammar and syntax is offered before focusing on the form, rhetoric, and structure of the psalm. Then exegesis on individual verses follows. After the exegesis, the focus switches to comment on the reception of the text from eminent commentators on the particular psalm from church history.

Of most interest at the time of the current pandemic is the treatment of Ps 91. The book argues that Ps 91 was written for the Davidic King, to urge him to trust God's protection when an epidemic had broken out on the battlefield. For the authors, Ps 91 speaks of the ideal king and ultimately, reveals the Messianic antitype, Christ. It worth buying the book merely for its treatment of Ps 91, and it corrects the misunderstanding that Ps 91 assures the ordinary Christian of God's total protection against plague.

If the book has a weakness, it is in its very wide selection of short paragraphs on the commentators on the psalms through church history. Thus, I am not sure that just one short paragraph on Luther's comments on Ps 92 adds much to the book, while two pages on the Tridentine Roman Catholic commentator's views on Ps 95 seems too much, given the importance of Ps 95 in the BCP and Anglican tradition, which is not mentioned. Further, it would have been better if all the volumes had covered all 150 psalms, rather than a just a selection.

Yet, on the whole, this book (and its predecessors) is superb in giving us the psalms with sound exegesis, and in a Christological and canonical focus, and thus means that this book is of great value to the evangelical preacher with both exegesis and theology. Strongly recommended.

Rohintan Mody, Evangelical Theological College of Asia, Singapore

Analyzing Doctrine: Toward a Systematic Theology
Oliver Crisp
Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019 (ISBN: 9781481309868 hb, 279pp)

This is a new tome from the ever-flowing pen of Oliver Crisp, until recently Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, and now Professor of Analytic Theology at the University of St Andrew's. In a series

of publications over the last decade, Crisp has sought to use the tools of analytic philosophy to examine and defend central Christian doctrines from an orthodox and Reformed perspective. Whilst some of Crisp's previous books have focussed on the contributions of specific theologians (such as Edwards and Shedd), or on particular aspects of (for instance) soteriology and Christology, this volume represents, as its title suggests, an attempt to apply analytical philosophy to almost all the traditional themes of systematic theology. Crisp writes (as one would expect) crisply, and he packs a huge amount in to 280 pages—over eleven chapters he provides carefully-argued accounts of divine simplicity, Trinitarian ontology, the creator/creature distinction, original sin, the virgin birth, the incarnation, Christ's two wills, salvation, and bodily resurrection.

Crisp is eminently lucid, thorough, and judicious in all these explorations, and especially helpful in surveying the latest work in particular fields. A repeated theme (at least implicitly) is a kind of conceptual generosity that seeks to preserve the essentials of classical theism and Reformed dogmatics, whilst softening or qualifying them in certain secondary respects, in response to perceived weaknesses or limitations. Purists might allege, therefore, that what Crisp describes as his 'chastened' articulations of (for instance) divine simplicity or intra-Trinitarian relations are ultimately unsuccessful attempts to have his cake and eat it, but, there is something beguiling about Crisp's charitable attentiveness to opposing views, even if he still ultimately finds them wanting. For instance, Crisp offers a nuanced defence of dyothelitism against recent evangelical scholars (on both sides of the Atlantic) who have nudged towards (or wholeheartedly embraced) monothelitism—but in doing so he nonetheless acknowledges the conceptual strengths of their position.

Two of his chapters were especially thought-provoking. In 'Incarnation Anyway,' Crisp defends a distinctive form of supralapsarianism, arguing that Christ would have been incarnate even if man had not fallen, because the reason for the incarnation was not just atonement for sin, but also to make possible man's union with God, through Christ's assumption of a human nature. This analysis helps to pave the way for a subsequent discussion of human participation in the divine life (cf. 2 Pet 1:4) as a key theme in humanity's eschatological hope. Perhaps most likely to raise eyebrows, though, is Crisp's chapter on original sin. Here, retrieving a 'minority report' in the Reformed tradition (found especially in Zwingli), Crisp seeks to detach original sin (which he affirms) from original guilt (which he rejects). This is partly because Crisp finds the idea that all humans bear the guilt of Adam's sin unjust, and partly because he is concerned to re-express the doctrine in ways that appear (to him) more compatible with evolutionary theories. I found this the least convincing of

Crisp's studies, but, even here, there was much to animate the little grey cells.

In short, this is a fascinating collection of essays, and would be an excellent piece of 'further reading' for anyone eager to dig deeper into debates in modern systematic theology.

Mark Smith, Clare College, Cambridge, UK

The Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets

Julia M. O'Brien (editor)

Oxford: OUP, 2021 (ISBN: 9780190673208 hb, 576pp)

Oxford Handbooks seek to offer authoritative and up-to-date surveys of research aimed at scholars and graduate students. The present volume collects forty essays in four parts. Part One deals with historical considerations. Discussing the relationship between prophets and prophetic books, Ehud Ben Zvi makes the case for giving prominence to post-exilic scribes, while Jason Radine pushes back on the 'Persian-Period 'Turn'.' These make for an excellent start. The question whether the Minor Prophets are twelve books or a single book is tackled by Anna Sieges. Summarising on a mere eight pages an issue on which some half a dozen books of collected essays have been published, not to mention the monographs, is perhaps an impossible task. In addition, missing the distinction between collecting the twelve writings on a single scroll and treating them as a strongly unified entity distorts the author's presentation of the ancient evidence. The manuscript evidence is in fact discussed in the following two essays, of which Mika S. Pajunen on the Judean Desert manuscripts (Dead Sea Scrolls) is a fine example of scholarly care.

Part Two offers literary considerations. Again we get off to an excellent start with a useful essay by Michael H. Floyd on genres and

forms in the Minor Prophets. It is followed by the first of several essays that challenge commitment to the truthfulness of biblical books. Carol Dempsey's 'Metaphor in the Minor Prophets' seems primarily a call to resist 'the androcentric, anthropocentric, androtheistic, monotheistic, hegemonic metaphors of the Minor Prophets' (96), thus anticipating some contributions collected later in Part Three. Several essays on themes (God, cult and temple, the nations, the future, the problem of 'justice' as social criticism, violence) mostly summarise their authors' reading of the biblical text without much analysis. Required brevity is likely responsible for this but I did wonder whether, in the case of some at least, readers would not be better advised reading the Minor Prophets themselves with an eye on these themes. Part Two concludes with three essays on the relationship of the Minor Prophets to the Torah and Former Prophets, the Major Prophets, and the Wisdom Tradition(s).

Part Three opens with sketches on the history of interpretation. The first two, on Early Judaism and Early Christianity, spotlight the question whether the Minor Prophets were read as a unified composition, the third, on reception within Islam, is broader. Marvin Sweeney distils modern biblical interpretation in ten pages before John Sawyer samples reception in art and music with some (black and white) illustrations. Contemporary academic perspectives are represented by Susanne Scholz's reading for gender and sexuality, Stacy Davis's study of race and intersectionality, Jason Silverman's plea for taking historical economic perspectives into account, and Jeremiah Cataldo's call for postcolonial approaches to include the challenge to resist 'ideological colonization' from those who treat biblical texts as authoritative. Three essays deal with the contemporary world: 'Jewish life Today,' 'Habakkuk as a Model for Posttraumatic Christian Prophetic Preaching,' and 'Modern Culture.' Part Four offers chapters on each of the prophetic books, exploring its structure, key themes, how it relates to other books of the Minor Prophets, and key contested issues. These are on the whole well done but there are some significant omissions and a few misrepresentations.

A great diversity of methodological approaches and agendas is evident in this *Handbook*. This faithfully reflects contemporary scholarship on the Minor Prophets which is of mixed value for the church.

Thomas Renz, Barnet, UK

The Five Phases of Leadership: An Overview for Christian leaders

Justyn Terry

Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Global Library, 2021 (ISBN: 9781839730689 pb, 136pp)

Books within the field of Leadership Studies frequently focus on a particular niche, requiring a newcomer to read extensively simply to get basic overview of the discipline and its practical outworkings. Justyn Terry (Vice-Principal and Academic Dean at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, UK) has thus performed an admirable service to the worldwide church by writing *The Five Phases of Leadership* as a short, accessible introduction to what emerging leaders can expect, and how they should understand (and withstand) the inevitable peaks and troughs of a typical lifelong leadership journey.

The five phases of the book's title refer to the chronological, overlapping, seasons of leadership that Terry identifies, beginning with a leader's arrival in a new setting, up to his/her transitioning out at the end. The majority of the book consists of five chapters, describing these phases: (1) Establishing Trust, (2) Cultivating Leaders, (3) Discerning Vision, (4) Implementing Plans, and (5) Transitioning out. I personally found the first and third of those chapters the most perceptive and practical. The book is explicitly Christian, with scripture quotations and some gentle biblical teaching, but also engages constructively with several influential secular leadership texts too. Terry writes with humility and honesty, and his frequent and relevant case studies/anecdotes are mostly drawn from his own leadership experiences as a parish clergyman in London and Bible College Principal (in the US) and Vice-Principal (in the UK).

It is worth noting that, for all its genuine applicability to developing Christian leaders, this book doesn't provide a clear, overarching

leadership paradigm. Amidst the abundant helpful and insightful practical advice, readers will still need to come to the book with a clear, personal understanding of what they are called to as leaders, and the divine purpose in this calling.

As would be expected from a Langham Global Library title, the book is written with an international audience in mind (and comes with a foreword from The Most Revd Dr Benjamin Kwashi, Archbishop of the Province of Jos, Nigeria). Although there are some quotes from majority world leaders scattered throughout, and adaptations of various themes to non-Western contexts, the basic leadership paradigm remains from and for a Western context. Fundamentally though, I would not hesitate to gift this book to a seminary graduate entering church (or other organisational) leadership, and would recommend others do the same thing. If we wish to develop effective Christian leaders then *The Five Phases of Leadership* should be widely distributed and studied, for the benefit of us all.

Chris Howles, Uganda Martyrs Seminary Namugongo, Uganda

THE SEPTUAGINT: What It Is and Why It Matters
Gregory R. Lanier and William A. Ross
Wheaton: Crossway, 2021 (ISBN: 9781433570520 pb, 216pp)

This excellent book is important reading for anyone seeking to seriously study either biblical Testament, who cannot already answer the questions 'what is the Septuagint and why does it matter?'. In summary, 'the Septuagint' is a broad term for the various translations of what we call the OT, into Greek, in the centuries immediately before and after the time of Jesus. It is a hugely important resource for recovering and understanding the text of the OT, understanding the context of the NT and understanding

the sometimes rather unusual way the NT writers quote and interpret the OT. Unfortunately, for such an important collection of texts, the Septuagint can seem complex and obscure. Therefore, Lanier and Ross' clear, accessible and insightful introduction is to be much welcomed. The authors are committed both to excellence in historical and linguistic scholarship and to a thoroughly evangelical doctrine of Scripture.

The book divides into two parts, 'What is the Septuagint?' and 'Why does it matter?'. The first part outlines the origins and problems of the term 'Septuagint' and explains what can be known about the translations from a historical and linguistic perspective. The writing draws deeply on recent technical scholarship, but is nevertheless clear and accessible. The authors try hard to be fully accessible to readers without Biblical languages and all Hebrew and Greek is transliterated. It will realistically be difficult for readers without any of either language to follow all the technical details, but anyone will be able to read the book with profit and a student with only a year or so of either language will be able to grasp almost everything.

The second part, 'why does it matter?' opens up important theological questions. Ross and Lanier argue convincingly that while ultimate authority must rest with the Hebrew original, there are times when the earliest Hebrew wording has been lost and it can be reconstructed only from Greek translations. They discuss the relevance of the Septuagint for the boundaries of the canon and then consider the authority of the Septuagint, arguing that it has derivative authority, like any Bible translation, and interpretative authority, in that it preserves important Jewish ways of reading the OT. They also analyse in detail a number of difficult passages in the NT, where the authors quote the Septuagint, although it clearly differs from the Hebrew text (at least as the latter is preserved today). Ross and Lanier argue helpfully that the NT writers are, like modern preachers, quoting a translation to make a true point. However, the problem remains that sometimes that true point is a rather different one to that made by the Hebrew version of the quoted text. This means that the NT writers seem strikingly indifferent to the surface level meaning of the Hebrew text they quote. More could be said on this complex problem, but that is hardly a criticism of this book. Lanier and Ross do an excellent job of mapping the marshy historical and linguistic terrain and sketching some possible theological paths through it. More detailed work is undoubtedly needed to turn those paths into tarmac roads, but this book will doubtless prove an inspiration and a vital aid for a new generation of scholars to take up that task. I heartily commend it to all *Global Anglican* readers.

Michael Dormandy, Ripon College, Cuddesdon,
University of Oxford, UK

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EDITORIAL

Reconciliation without Repentance?

Are we to *obey* our parents, *leave* our parents or *hate* our parents?

All three are enjoined upon us in the Bible (Exodus 20:12, Genesis 2:24, Luke 14:26). No serious reader of scripture is ever troubled by such an apparent contradiction; indeed, the contradictions help us better to understand the meaning of each text. For the texts are deeply relational. Inherent in each is an obligation we owe to another person or persons. Two of them are conditional, based upon the circumstances of time, with the spouse demanding a greater loyalty even than a parent. But one commitment is absolute and hence the drama of the word 'hate'.

The whole text runs like this:

> Now great crowds accompanied (Jesus), and he turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple'.

Our obligations even to parents, children and siblings and spouse cannot supersede or even compare with, our loyalty to Christ. Furthermore, in the most graphic terms, Jesus makes clear that such loyalty is inherently cross-bearing. It is no easy matter. In Bonhoeffer's famous words, 'When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die'. Discipleship is death to self.

All this is, of course, contained within the first demand of the gospel, namely repentance: 'Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel"' (Mark 1:14-15). It is a demand specified for salvation by Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38) and by Paul in Athens, 'God commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead' (Acts 17:30-31). Saving repentance involves the decision to make a complete submission of the self to the Lord Jesus, a submission which we repeat constantly in our warfare against sin, the world and the devil. It is the pathway of the Christian life.

I have to say that in my experience this is not a summons we hear often even in evangelistic sermons. A friend of mine attends a church in which the love of God is preached constantly and winsomely. The cross is often appealed to as the demonstration of the love of God. The preaching ministry is powerful and positive. But repentance from sin is rarely mentioned. Is this the gospel?

In my role as a teacher at several theological institutions, I ask new students to fill in an anonymous profile. One of the tasks is to give a brief outline of the essence of the gospel as they understand it. The answers vary; usually they conform to a pattern which I would regard as satisfactory – except for this: it is usual for there to be no mention of repentance and faith. The gospel presentation seems to be about what God has done in Christ, but not what we are supposed to do in response. We accept the grace of God and bask in the offer of forgiveness, but do not demand that the grace of God be received by repentance and faith.

What is the source of this failure? I would suggest three major factors.

First, mainly in evangelical circles, there is confusion about the meaning of conversion.

We look for a story of conversion in other Christians and we work towards conversion in those who do not yet know Christ. Our language suggests that conversion is an experience, often accompanied by deep emotion, to which testimony may be borne. Our way of speaking about it suggests this is the indispensable way of salvation, and that a genuine Christian ought to be able to describe their conversion experience.

The language we use seems to have arisen from the Authorised Version's rendition of words such as *metanoia* and *epistrephein* and their cognates. Thus Matthew 18:3, the AV translates *straphete*, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children …'. Modern translations, however, are far more likely to render the verse, 'Unless you change and become like little children …' (NIV); 'Unless you turn and become as little children …' (ESV). The whole idea is better expressed theologically by the word 'repentance', used to describe the fundamental turning of a person toward God in true, spiritual worship (Rom 12:1–2). Indeed, 'conversion' is simply a word used to describe that repentance and faith which arises from regeneration and unites us to Christ as Lord.

We do not need the word 'conversion' as such. As long as we talk about repentance and faith, we are talking conversion. But the danger of using 'conversion' is that it becomes a separate category, an experience we need to have to demonstrate salvation, but one which because of the way in which we have allowed it to be used may indicate something other than repentance and faith.

The perils of this are obvious. We have people having a spiritual experience which does not amount to repentance and faith. We have people relying on this as their voucher for salvation. We have people relying on a conversion story to gain acceptance in evangelical circles

and even to obtain ministry positions, who have never truly repented. Indeed, since some lukewarm Christians began as evangelicals, they too may speak engagingly and knowingly of a conversion, giving date and time and circumstances, but referring to an experience which lacked the necessary spiritual elements involved in 'turning', namely repentance and faith.

The second difficulty is christological. Repentance is not remorse, though it may well contain elements of deep remorse. But the whole idea of repentance and the reason why it is inextricably linked to faith is that it is a turning away from the self dominated by the world, the flesh and the devil to the living God, and in particular to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the ancient sacrifice of a humble and contrite heart, as the poet said, no doubt referring to Isaiah, 'But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word' (66:2).

The heart of the gospel message is, 'Jesus Christ as Lord', and when God shines his light in our hearts, it is 'to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor 4:5–6). Beholding his glory as revealed in scripture, we are being 'transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another' by the Holy Spirit (3:18). Because we will all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, 'we make it our aim to please him' (5:9–10), or, to quote Isaiah again, we tremble at his word. It is this Jesus who has now been highly exalted and received the name which is above every name 'so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father' (Phil 1:8–10). Furthermore, all things have been created 'through him and for him' (Col 1:16).

The Christ we preach is 'Christ crucified'; of that there can be no shadow of doubt. The cross is there in all these passages. But there is a tendency to so preach the cross alone that it becomes a rather mechanical solution to the sin problem and the constant iteration of the cross has a tendency to become mundane. The one who has been crucified has been glorified, and we need to explore this as well and make sure that we preach a Christ who is alive and reigning as the Word of God, the King in God's kingdom, the one whom we are to please in all things. So deeply committed to this living Person must we be, that even the most important relationships in our lives, such as parents and siblings can be described as 'hate' by comparison.

The third difficulty is our problem with sin. Isaiah speaks at those who tremble at the word of God. Living as we do, however, in a world which believes in the goodness of humanity and the power of psychology to explain all human thoughts, feelings and actions, we have ceased to think of the category of sin for which we are culpable and hence the need for us to fight against our spiritual enemies. The whole idea of taking up the cross daily, of putting the flesh to death, has become alien to us. We

are prone to find excuses and explanations for not following the word of God as we should.

If the gospel is not preached in terms of sin and forgiveness; if the gospel loses its summons to repentance, it is no gospel and it leads to an empty Christianity, without Christ and without the cross. We can talk about reconciliation all we will, but if repentance is not at the heart of it, reconciliation is not genuine.

Is that where we are?

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I am writing this during the very first days of the 2022 Lambeth Conference. I have no idea how the conference will turn out, but the words 'repentance' and 'reconciliation' have both been used already. The truth of the prediction uttered as far back as 2003, that the very fabric of the Communion would be torn at its deepest level by the initiative of the North Americans to endorse same-sex behaviour, seems to be on the verge of final fulfilment. No amount of ecclesiastical politics and diplomacy seem to be sufficient to get people to walk together, even at a distance. Some have chosen to vote by being absent; others by being present. But the vast majority of the Communion want the repristination of the resolution from 1998, known as 'Lambeth 1.10'. And they want reconciliation based on repentance.

There is pain in all this. One of the things which is obvious to those of us who have mixed in Anglican episcopal circles is the profound respect accorded by the members of the Communion, especially by the African churches and the rest of the Global South, to the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury and to the English church. Looking from a far distance, however, the events of the opening days of the Lambeth Conference appear to signal that the powers of the Archbishop's office have waned. Indeed, the absence of so many from the Conference (and this is more widespread than the three major African Provinces which are not present), is testimony to this fact. He can no longer summon the Communion. The cost of this re-configuring of the Communion is, to say the least, significant.

Appropriately, in these early days of the Conference, the Global South representatives have made clear that they regard the real dispute to be over the word of God, the authority of the sacred Scriptures. It is too easy to categorise the objectors as merely homophobic, or culturally blinkered. Their challenge is that we should all 'tremble at God's word' and turn again and be forgiven. They would rightly argue that the word of God sets before us a way of life which is good and that our current sexual permissiveness is not in the best interests of our people, any more than polygamy is in the best interests of family life.

Instead of embracing permissiveness, Christians should be doing the hard work necessary to show why God's word is best for us, even if it involves living a chaste and single life. We have, to quote the title of Professor Glynn Harrison's excellent book, 'A Better Story'. All the efforts of contemporary Christians should have been devoted to showing this, rather than to capitulating to the spirit of the age. Rightly, then, they have called for repentance as the way to heal the Anglican Communion, not a 'live and let live' rapprochement or a 'reconciliation' which fails to address the actual problem of sin and the need for fundamental change.

It is not just individuals who need to repent. Among the churches of the opening chapters of Revelation were those who temporised with the spirit of the age, who followed the ways of sexual immorality and idolatry, and who were summoned in no uncertain terms to repent. There were those in some of these churches who had not succumbed, but they were not called to reconcile with those who had. The most striking words of all were spoken to Laodicea, described as lukewarm and told that because of this, 'I am about to spit you out of my mouth' (3:15). And yet, the Lord still declares his love, and says, 'I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me'.

For the summons to repentance does not arise from hate but from love. The Lord does indeed long for reconciliation between the people and with the people. But it is not through acceptance of sin, but repentance from sin. The path forward for the Anglican Communion is not, for example, that The Episcopal Church (TEC) recognises that in acting unilaterally in 2003 they did not properly respect their fellowship with others, and should apologise. To my mind, that is true, but it is not the essence of the problem. The whole matter is to do with whether we tremble at the word of God and turn back to him, first and foremost.

I have said '*we* tremble at God's word and turn back to him'. The call to repentance is not confined to TEC and the churches which have followed its example. We must all examine ourselves and our churches and ask whether we have turned with all our hearts to the Lord and are following him no matter what the cost. Thus, we need to remember that the assertion of marriage being between and a man and woman is not the sum total of Lambeth 1.10 (1998). The power of Resolution 1.10 is not that it is a law – it is not; nor is it even that it represents the minds of such an overwhelming number of bishops, significant though that may be, given the teaching role of the episcopacy. Rather, it speaks because it represents the word of God with authenticity, not least in its summons to love of neighbour.

All the more important, then, that we notice not just its assertion of sexual morality, but also its challenge to offer pastoral care and support to those who experience same-sex attraction. The Conference,

> Recognises that there are among us persons which experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are member of the Church and are seeking pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ.

I fear that many like myself, who fully accept the first part of Lambeth 1.10, are forgetful of the second part. Should we have not done more to put this on the agenda of our discussions and conferences? There is room for prayer and thought here and painful discussion too. Indeed, if we see that the second part of Lambeth 1.10 also represents the teaching of God's word, we need to tremble and repent. Here is a project which will take a long time, but it is good to see that this has been acknowledged as the Conference begins. It is best carried out by those who believe in the entirety of Lambeth 1.10.

The thing which will keep us from being the mere victims of cultural dominance, whether it is the culture in which we grow up or the culture which reaches out to capture our hearts, is repentance. It is Jesus Christ who is Lord, not the powers and ideologies of this world, no matter how attractively they may be clothed or deeply ingrained. Judging by the opening of Lambeth, we still wish to see the gospel of salvation proclaimed in all the world. But it has to be the gospel that Jesus Christ is Lord and it must summon us to an initial act followed by a path of repentance.

It was repentance which marked the East African Revival. We cannot demand revival; that is a gift of God, not the doing of men. But, when the East Africans decided that they could not have two masters, that they could not pray to God and also call on the spirits, when they turned decisively to the Lord alone, confessing their sins to one another, the results were overwhelming.

In God's providence, the Anglican Communion has been a blessing to countless numbers of people. It has stood for truth; its roots are in God's word; it has confessed the living Christ; it has spoken with some power to the world; it has been the means of mutual support and care. Humanly speaking, the loss of the Communion would be tragic. But at this moment it can only be sustained by spiritual renewal involving a profound turning to Christ and costly submission to his word. And this must be a word for us all, and not merely for some.

PETER JENSEN

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The following articles are lightly revised versions of lectures delivered at the Oak Hill School of Theology in 2020. Some retain the oral style in which the material was first delivered.

Mapping the Territory: what is the 'Theological Interpretation of Scripture'?

Timothy Ward

This article gives a general and basic introduction to the broad movement known as 'Theological Interpretation of Scripture' (TIS) which has arisen in recent years, and addresses in particular the interests of readers who serve in pastoral ministry. It defines TIS as less a cohesive movement and more a shared set of general convictions that revolve around a central concern over the unfortunate impact of influential forms of post-Enlightenment biblical scholarship on the academy and especially on the church. It locates these convictions in the function of the canon of Scripture in biblical interpretation, the nature of the history of biblical interpretation that we tell ourselves, and the role of theology in interpretation. It concludes by identifying two further topics of interest to advocates of TIS which run through these convictions: the relation of the divine authorial intention in Scripture to the human and the significance of godliness in Bible reading.

Introduction: what is TIS and what's the big deal?

Imagine that someone comes up to a pastor and says, 'I've tried reading the Bible on my own, but honestly I'm struggling. I want to hear God speaking in the Bible, but I don't know how. Can you help?' What should the pastor say? I presume all of us have a ready answer to that question! But there are many things that pastor *could* say …

Should he talk most about exegetical skills – after all, many people have been helped by being taught to ask questions like, 'What is the "therefore" there for'?

Should he suggest that this keen person devote themselves to understanding good theology? Isn't that why Calvin says he wrote his *Institutes* – to help people hear the message of the Bible better?

Should the pastor encourage the person to devote themselves to walking in step with the Holy Spirit? After all, the ultimate author of

Scripture is the Holy Spirit and therefore crucial to hearing his voice in his word is being sanctified by him.

Exegetical technique? Theology? Godliness and spirituality? What should the wise pastor recommend to the keen but struggling Bible reader? Perhaps we should say that it should be all three – but if so, how are we to weight those three and relate them to each other? Imagine that the same pastor is putting on a short course to train the church's Bible study leaders in good practices of biblical interpretation. He only has six evenings with them. He can't say everything. What are the most important things to include?

The broad academic movement known as the 'Theological Interpretation of Scripture' (TIS) speaks directly into these practical questions. Its fundamental concern is that God may tune and train our ears well, so that we may discern well what he says in Scripture.

My aim in this introductory article is to be introductory: to give an orientation to TIS especially for those who may feel only dimly aware of it at best. This article will be a rapid 'bus tour' of the TIS major sites, mapping out the territory. The other articles in this volume will encourage you back on the bus, and will go round again, but lingering for a bit longer at each of the attractions.

What is TIS? To start very simply: it is *not* what the label might first make you think it is. It is not about reducing the Bible to a list of theological bullet-points. Instead it is *a wide-ranging set of convictions about biblical interpretation, that revolve around a central concern*. That central concern is something like this: In Western scholarship since the Enlightenment, people have said that good biblical interpretation is a purely technical exercise, governed by a set of methods which can be practised objectively by anyone. The motto has been 'Don't bring any doctrine in' – that just obscures the whole business of interpretation. Moreover, we do not need to be interested in the interpreter's spiritual state. An atheist can interpret Scripture just as well as a believer, if skilful with the right technique. Believers are allowed in to interpret Scripture, but they must check their bag of beliefs in at the door, so as not to skew the objectivity of the practice.

I will call this the 'post-Enlightenment' approach. TIS says it is not a good thing. Those who know something of the history of biblical interpretation can see, then, that at root TIS is a push-back against the enterprise of scholarly study known as Historical Criticism. This may sound like a problem just with how the Bible is treated by academics, and partly it is. However many TIS advocates are believers who want to serve the *church*; people who are concerned that in various ways this post-Enlightenment approach to biblical interpretation has been partly absorbed by the theologically orthodox church.

To put it provocatively: some TIS advocates think that churches that have not given in to liberal *theology* have given in to liberal *ways of interpreting the Bible* – that is, liberal *hermeneutics*. For the purposes of this introduction, I am identifying *that* as TIS's central concern. According to TIS, where this has happened the outcome often will not be that orthodox churches get the Bible *wrong*; they will not fall into false teaching. Often, however, the outcome will be that churches discern *less meaning* in Scripture than God has actually put there.

The label 'TIS' seems to have been consciously used for the first time just over twenty years ago. No one 'owns' the label, and over time a wide variety of people have used it to describe their work. There is also a broader group of others who do not self-consciously adopt the label but who share the central concern. Therefore I need to make some clarifications, because writing under the label 'TIS', or sharing many of its concerns, you will find Roman Catholics and Protestants, and orthodox and liberal.

The quality of the fruits of *T-I-S* all depends, of course, on the kind of 'T' that you bring, and the rigour of the 'I' that you practise. For example, the Roman Catholic scholar Gary Anderson has written an essay where he claims to find a biblical basis for the veneration of Mary.[1] I don't agree with the *theology* he brings, and I think I can spot where the *interpretation* he practises is faulty, so I do not accept *that* particular exercise of TIS.

Many other TIS writers, though, bring a thoroughly orthodox theology to the table. Indeed one of the things that commends TIS for our consideration is that among those who think it is onto something are many of the most significant names in orthodox Protestant theology today – John Webster, Kevin Vanhoozer, Michael Allen, Todd Billings.

I have defined TIS roughly as *a set of convictions that revolve around a central concern*. I have identified the central concern: the reduction of biblical interpretation in Western scholarship since the Enlightenment simply to a set of objective exegetical techniques, and the worry that this has been partly absorbed into some evangelical churches. TIS claims that three core convictions will give us better ears for hearing God speak in Scripture. They are to do with canon, the history of interpretation, and doctrine.

Conviction 1: the canon of Scripture

In his recent popular commentaries on the Psalms, Christopher Ash does what TIS recommends. Ash says that Jesus is literally the speaker of many of the Psalms. In Psalm 23, it is *Jesus* who first of all literally says about

[1] Gary A. Anderson, *Christian Doctrine and the Old Testament:Theology in the Service of Biblical Exegesis* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 121-33.

his Father, 'The Lord is my shepherd'. Here Ash is following Augustine's interpretation of the Psalms. Ash does not just see Jesus *pointed forward to* in the OT. He sees him literally *in* the OT – literally speaking, and literally spoken about. Christ is not only *fore*-told *by* the OT. He is also *forth*-told *in* the OT.

The historian Carl Trueman uncovers for us the hermeneutical convictions that lie behind an approach like this. Trueman agrees with TIS that there's been a trend in evangelical churches to take on board too much of the post-Enlightenment approach to biblical interpretation. 'One example of this trend', he says, 'is the redemptive-historical method of interpretation that is now the default in many Reformed and evangelical circles'. His critique is: 'It is not that the redemptive-historical approach is incorrect; rather it is that it does not say enough'.[2] Trueman is not saying the redemptive-historical approach is wrong. On the contrary, it protects us from some errors. Trueman's point is that it is not the sum total of the hermeneutics that we need.

Why so? The OT scholar Don Collett helps us here. He says:

> I often like to point out that 'the Old Testament got there first' … not merely in [a] chronological or historical sense … but also in a theological sense. The Old Testament provides the basic theological grammar for the church's confession on creation, providence, … the nature of biblical inspiration, … Trinity, Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. The Old Testament's unique contribution to these doctrines does not simply anticipate or duplicate the New Testament's own witness to the same. Rather, the Old Testament renders its witness to these teachings in its own language and on its own terms.[3]

The key point is that the OT 'does not simply anticipate or duplicate' what the NT says on key doctrines; it also speaks of them in its own particular way. Collett and others are not making the claim that OT believers held consciously trinitarian faith (that is another debate for another day). Rather the claim is, in effect, that a redemptive-historical reading *forwards* through the Bible *needs to lead to a reading backwards*. First we trace through Scripture's redemptive-historical story to its culmination in the trinitarian work of salvation in Christ, and then we read *back* into the OT and see these things spoken of. We see the basic 'theological grammar' for these things, as Collett puts it, set down in the OT itself. The triune God, his works and ways, and his people in him, are literally referred to

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[2] Carl Trueman, 'Foreword', in Craig A. Carter, *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2021), xi.

[3] Don C. Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament: Theology and Practice* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 1.

in these OT texts, although we can only hear the fullness of that when we know how the canonical story ends.

This line of thought may be developed in a couple of ways. First, if it is the case that the OT did indeed 'get there first' theologically, and if therefore as well as reading Scripture forwards redemptively-historically we must also read it 'backwards' theologically, then a rich variety of *canonical* forms of interpretation come into view. We may read one Scripture alongside another, not simply by asking 'how does this fit in the unfolding of the history of redemption?' – although that is a vital question to ask. We may *also* read one Scripture alongside another, discerning how one text seems designed by the Holy Spirit, the author of the whole, to invite us to read the two together, with biblical meaning emerging from the relationship between the two.

Second, this question of canonical reading leads us inevitably to the tricky questions of typology and allegory. Chris Ansberry will be our guide into this swampy territory, and I will set the scene for that here. A standard evangelical account of typology and allegory, that many of us will have encountered, goes like this:

> Typology is good. It's good because it's grounded in history. It identifies types, that is, patterns of God's ways in Christ, recurring through Scripture—patterns built into events, people and practices as narrated in Scripture. Quintessentially, the exodus is a type of his setting his people free spiritually from slavery to sin. Allegory [in the standard account] is entirely different and is *not* good. The example most often used is the allegorical interpretations of the parable of the Good Samaritan found in the church Fathers. In Augustine, the inn symbolises the church, the two coins symbolise either the double command to love God and neighbour, or the promises of God for this life and the life to come, and so on. This is bad [says the standard account] because it's *uncontrolled*. It imposes an interpretive grid—in this case, a detailed story of the process of salvation - onto a text which may not be about that.

That is the standard narrative, simply put. Yet TIS writers commonly argue that typology and allegory are not in fact separate, water-tight categories: the standard clean distinction is just too clean. Instead there are huge areas of overlap. For example, most would accept that the history of Joseph in Genesis *as a whole* speaks *typologically* of Christ: rejected by his own, but raised up by God to save those who rejected him. However what if we pick on a detail – Joseph sold by his brothers for money – and say that this speaks directly of Jesus betrayed for money by Judas? Those who like that interpretation might call it rich typology. Those who don't like it might call it allegory. At points like this the categories blur into each other.

Some propose that we re-define allegory as a very broad category of symbolic language, with typology as a subset of it, and with more responsible and less responsible ways of going about it. Increasingly a number of writers are using the adjective 'figural' as a useful overall category.[4] Todd Billings recommends this, which I think is helpful:

> we would probably do best to view … [typology and allegory] on a continuum based on the extent to which the 'figure' draws on the historical sense of the biblical text. In a sense, typology and allegory are two types of 'figural' reading, and sometimes the boundary between the two can be very thin.[5]

Conviction 2: the true history of biblical interpretation

The second area of TIS conviction is to do with how we understand the history of biblical interpretation. The standard story might be:

> For the first fifteen hundred years of the church, biblical interpretation was at best a very hit-and-miss affair. Of course there was some good stuff, but sadly the people who won the day were the allegorists who read fanciful meanings into Scripture. Biblical texts could be made to teach pretty much whatever spiritual truths the interpreter wanted them to teach. However with the Reformation it wasn't just new *doctrinal* light that dawned; the *hermeneutical* lights were switched on too. Calvin, especially, pioneered something called 'grammatico-historical' exegesis, which had a far clearer set of controls for determining good interpretation from bad.

Advocates of TIS find this very misleading. We can look at this from two angles.

First let us consider the Fathers and the mediaevals. Many TIS advocates point to the growing number of historical studies that conclude that, although older interpreters certainly found multiple meanings in biblical texts, their approach was often not as uncontrolled and fanciful as many have said it is.

First of all, the multiplicity of meanings which the ancients found in text was a multiplicity only in *one* aspect of textual meaning. The meaning of any text has three basic aspects:

(1) 'sense': how the words hang together grammatically;
(2) 'reference': what realities in the world the words speak about;
(3) 'action': what impact the text is intended to have.

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[4] Collett uses 'figural' but says he could easily have used 'allegorical' instead.

[5] J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 2010), 179.

When the ancients spoke of a biblical text as having multiple 'meanings', they were talking not about all three of these aspects, but just one: reference. They did not think they could play fast and loose with the ways words run in the sentence or paragraph; but they were convinced that a biblical word could refer – and refer literally – to more than one reality. It is crucial to be clear on this terminological point. It is often said that the ancients found multiple spiritual *meanings* or *senses* in a biblical text. To be precise, they saw multiplicity only in *reference*.[6]

Here is the best-known example, and one given by the mediaevals themselves. Imagine you are reading Isaiah 4.4: 'The Lord will … cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire.' You ask yourself: what is this language of 'Jerusalem' referring to? The Middle Ages typically answered that: 'Jerusalem' here refers to four things:

i. Most straightforwardly, 'Jerusalem' refers to the actual city in history. This is the *literal* (or *historical*) sense/reference. In OT times, the passage taught truths about the kingdom of Judah, but when that passage is read (canonically) in light of the rest of Scripture, 'Jerusalem' also has three further referents, usually called 'spiritual' referents:
ii. 'Jerusalem' refers to the church, in whom Christ now dwells. This is the *allegorical* sense/reference. So the passage teaches truths to believe about Christ and the church.
iii. 'Jerusalem' refers to each individual believer who makes up the church. This is the *tropological* or *moral* sense/reference. So the passage teaches about how we should live.
iv. 'Jerusalem' refers to the future new creation. This is the *anagogical* sense/reference. So the passage inspires our hope in the future.

To summarise, we have:

- the literal sense
- three spiritual senses:
  - the allegorical sense
  - the tropological / moral sense
  - the anagogical.

Second, this multiplicity of reference in a biblical text was a highly controlled one. It was controlled supremely by the theological reality of what God has done and will do in history. Here is Aquinas on this point, who is rather typical:

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[6] As rightly pointed out by Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 137.

> The multiplicity of these senses [i.e. referents] does not produce equivocation [i.e. conflicting meanings] or any other kind of multiplicity, seeing that these senses are not multiplied because one word signifies several things, but because the things signified by the words can be themselves types of other things. Thus in Holy Writ no confusion results, for all the senses are founded on one – the literal – from which alone can any argument be drawn, and not from those intended in allegory.[7]

Thus the word 'Jerusalem' found in the OT ought to be seen as referring to four different realities, not because the interpreter is free to apply some fanciful hermeneutics, but because God is the Lord of history and so he is uniquely able to make one thing in the world refer to another thing. He can make the ancient city of Jerusalem a pattern for the reality of the church and for each believer now, and also a pattern for the future reality of new creation. Because God can do that, when he uses words to refer to *one* of those works, that word *also* refers to those *other* figured realities. There is multiplicity here, but it is a rule-bound multiplicity. The rules derive not from human imagination but from the special theological reality that the Bible talks about.

Over 1500 years many biblical interpreters at times ended up in exegetical fantasy-land. (Presumably we sometimes do the same.) In doing so, however, they were failing to practise what most of their exegetical theory said should be done.

Third, the theological grounding for this 'spiritual' hermeneutic means, as Aquinas stresses, that the spiritual referents may not float free from the original historical referent. They must be grounded in it. This means that in fact it is probably not best to talk, as I have done so far, of the ancients seeing a *multiplicity* of referents in Scripture. Rather, it is better to describe them as seeing *depths* or *layers* of reference in a text – depths and layers all grounded in the historical.

In light of this re-evaluation of patristic and medieval biblical interpretation, TIS holds the conviction that contemporary biblical interpretation has much to learn, judiciously, from old paths. In this volume, Alden McCray's article on John Calvin provides an example. Calvin can be found being very rude about allegory (at one point he calls it 'satanic'); but when you look more closely, what he is rude about is not *all* allegory but the *wild, excessive* versions of it. In practice he often does not throw out older spiritual interpretations – but he does tend to re-label them. He prefers not to speak of 'literal' and 'spiritual' meanings of a

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[7] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.1.10; Benziger Bros. edition, 1947, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/home.html.

passage, but of the 'plain sense' of a passage that in fact is a multi-levelled thing, that includes the spiritual with the literal.

TIS wants to say to contemporary Christians that this more accurate picture of the history of biblical interpretation is hugely significant. If it is the case that, from the earliest days right through the Protestant Reformation and beyond, most people were agreed that a biblical text could have this kind of richness of spiritual meaning, then evangelicals who reject this will now find themselves in fact in a rather smaller minority than perhaps they previously thought.

TIS, then, is convinced that churches need to re-evaluate their inherited practices of interpretation in light of a more accurate view of the history of biblical interpretation.

Conviction 3: theology

TIS is convinced that *theology and doctrine* need to play a major role in the practices by which we listen for the voice of God in Scripture.

This is where TIS's foundation in a rejection of post-Enlightenment historical-critical scholarship is most evident. The thought of the seventeenth-century Dutch thinker Baruch/Benedict Spinoza was greatly influential on that scholarship. For Spinoza, Christian doctrine was the great enemy. He argued that it needed to be radically excluded from the practice of biblical interpretation. In his *Theological-Political Treatise*, he wrote: 'As for theologians, we see that for the most part they have sought to extract their own thoughts and opinions from the Bible and thereby endow them with divine authority.' All theology does, he says, is obfuscate and confuse things: what is needed is a method of biblical interpretation by which we may 'extricate ourselves from such confusion and … free our minds from theological prejudices'.[8] This prejudice against confessional biblical study is alive and well in parts of the academy today; TIS would want to highlight any places in the *church* where Spinoza's instinct has been taken up – that is, where the exclusion of theology is thought to be necessary for 'good' Bible-interpretation. Yet as Chris Stead's article in this volume shows, a two-way street must exist between Scripture and doctrine. First, Scripture is itself best read with consciously-held orthodox doctrine. That is, we have no choice but to read Scripture theologically, because we're always reading through the lens of our theology. However the street is two-way, and some TIS writing explores

[8] Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* ed. Jonathan Israel, trans. Michael Silverthorne & Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 97-98.

how we read Scripture not only *from* theology but also *for* theology – that is, digging into the ways in which Scripture *gives rise to* theology.

Here is a simple example. As a young Christian I can remember being told that in evangelism we should not harp on about the depths of Christ's experience of suffering on the cross, for the reason that the NT does not. However, if Augustine is right that Jesus is the ultimate literal speaker of the psalms of lament, then in fact Scripture *does* reveal profound aspects of his physical and spiritual torment, in ways that the NT does not.

Another example: the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father has recently been questioned by some evangelical theologians. TIS would suggest to us that the biblical basis for the doctrine came to seem flimsy in the eyes of some because they'd been persuaded that the interpretative practices which led earlier theologians to discern the doctrine in such texts as Proverbs 8 and Psalm 2 were actually 'dodgy allegory'. In fact a number of venerable doctrines which some evangelicals have judged to be biblically *suspect* may turn out to have rather *stronger* biblical basis than we imagined, if we decide that TIS is correct in urging us to reacquaint ourselves with the hermeneutics on which they were grounded. In other words, TIS wants us to question our assumptions about what counts as strong or flimsy evidence for thinking that Scripture clearly teaches a particular doctrine.

Two running themes

Two further themes run through much TIS thinking.

(i) Divine and human intention

On our rapid bus-tour, you might have spotted a particular view of divine authorial intention and human authorial intention that's been running through. It's the view that *God's* intention in a Bible passage often goes beyond the *human* writer's intention – not contradicting it or floating free from it, but most definitely *exceeding* it.

This is clearly implied in the notion that a text can refer richly to a number of different things. When Isaiah wrote the word 'Jerusalem', did he, at that moment, consciously have in mind the whole people of God, each individual believer, and also the new creation? 'No', says the consensus of the first 1600 years of the church: 'we don't have to imagine that he did. But the *Holy Spirit* consciously intended those meanings when he breathed out those words through Isaiah. And since the spiritual senses ought to be grounded in the literal sense, the divine intention does not conflict with the human intention even when it goes beyond it, but naturally develops from it.'

In the history of biblical interpretation, the most significant attempt to reject this, and to say that the divine intention in a Bible passage

does *not* go beyond the conscious human intention of the writer but is entirely identical with it, is in fact found in post-Enlightenment Historical Criticism. The sharp challenge that TIS presents to anyone who agrees with that shrinking of divine intention to conscious human intention, is to point out that it would have seemed bizarre to almost everyone before around 1700, and to point out that it became prominent as the interpretative strategy of theological liberalism.

Now the nature of authorial intention is a complex thing – for human beings, let alone for God. Some writers worry that allowing divine intention to go beyond human intention leaves the barn door wide open to people seeing almost anything in a text and calling it the divine intention. Some have addressed this by describing an expanded notion of human intention. Thus Greg Beale speaks of what he calls 'the cognitive peripheral vision' of biblical authors, whereby OT authors have, as it were, in the corner of their mind's eye the meanings which NT authors definitely see in their texts.[9] Similarly the literary scholar E.D. Hirsch argues that writers of religious texts, which look into the future, often consciously intend their texts to have meanings which they themselves are not aware of.[10]

This may help those who get nervous when the divine intention is said to exceed the human intention. For myself, I don't think it's necessary. As long as the divine-only intentions in a text do not float free from the divine-and-also-human intentions, we can quite reasonably acknowledge that the intentions of the eternal, omniscient and sovereign God exceed the intentions of the creaturely, limited human writer.

(ii) Godliness in Bible reading

When we speak, as TIS does, of the importance of *theology* in developing good ears to hear God in Scripture, we are shifting the weight in biblical interpretation from the university to the church, because it is in the *church* that the theology is believed in and cherished. Indeed this is where TIS advocates want to push the focus. When we locate biblical interpretation firmly in the church, then the sanctified life of God's people comes clearly into view. Biblical interpretation is then no longer reducible simply to a set of exegetical procedures. It is clearly a spiritual activity engaged in best by spiritual people. That is controversial in the West since the Enlightenment – but before about 1600 it would have seem too obvious to need saying. If we recover ancient hermeneutics we will inevitably recover this point. At the conclusion of her study of patristic exegesis Frances Young says: 'patristic study is most significant for the discovery of the inseparability of

[9] G.K. Beale, 'The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors' *Westminster Theological Journal* 76 (2014): 263-93.

[10] E.D. Hirsch, Jr., 'Transhistorical Intentions and the Persistence of Allegory' *New Literary History* 25 (1994): 549-67 (552).

theology, exegesis of scripture and spirituality, an integration by no means apparent in the modern world.'[11]

The inseparability of exegesis and spirituality has indeed not been apparent in the modern world of secular scholarship. What about the modern world of the evangelical church? For myself, as a former pastor and now a member of a church family and serving as a preacher and a leader of a midweek small group, that question which TIS forces on us rather haunts me. Would the church I pastored have heard from me that what they really need, if they are to get the Bible right, is simply exegetical technique? What then about those many people who, for whatever reason, struggle to master and articulate 'technique', but who have learned through long years of walking with the Lord to listen well to him speaking in his word, in ways they can't fully explain?

A final observation

It has become evident how large the TIS claim is. It is not offering us yet another tool for our existing exegetical toolkit. It does not claim to give us just an extra string to our interpretative bow. It claims to do something much broader than that. It does *not* say that we must ditch our exegetical techniques – but it *does* say that we must not imagine that those techniques are all we need for discerning God's voice in Scripture. It says we must set our techniques within a broad view of interpretation that includes the richness of canonical interpretation, of spiritual life and of doctrine – a broad view that is in fact in line with how faithful believers have largely read the Bible through history.

TIS urges us to ensure that our practices of interpretation are as rich as they ought to be, so that we have ears to discern the full richness of what God is saying in each Bible-passage, and so that we don't hear just one strand of his message to us. As we each assess what we make of TIS, it's important that we understand this – the all-encompassing nature of the claim that we are assessing.

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[11] Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 265.

BOOK REVIEWS

Going to Church in Medieval England
Nicholas Orme
Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2021 (ISBN: 9780300256505, hb, 483pp)

This truly fascinating book, packed with extraordinary details, was a joy to read and often a revelation. It does not purport to prosecute any particular thesis but tries to describe English church life from the time of St Augustine of Canterbury (about AD 597) to Elizabeth I (1559). After a chapter on origins and the parish, church staff, buildings and congregations are considered. Chapters cover the daily and weekly services, the seasons and the church year, and life events. The study concludes with a brief look at official changes during the Reformation and some reflections. Nicholas Orme is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Exeter and author of over thirty books on the religious and social history of England. It is easy to see how a lifetime of research into the medieval church has served this book.

Of course, there is much we don't know. For example, before 1400, we don't know what time services started or how long they lasted. Women are much less visible than men and apart from baptisms and some boys serving at the altar, etc., children are largely invisible. We should beware arguments from silence. We sometimes read about what some people thought ought to have happened rather than what was actually going on. Orme expends some energy, for example, thinking about how the Sarum rite, written up for cathedral use, might have been applied in parishes (where manuscripts, even if the church had one, were not totally uniform). Other rites were also available and some practices varied considerably from place to place or over time. Orme remarks that there must have been some reasonably godly satisfactory clergy, but we tend to hear about those who got into trouble. We would of course love to know more about the faith and psychology of medieval congregations but this drawing on a wide variety of sources advanced my knowledge of what probably went on enormously. Parts of the descriptions of baptism and confirmation practices, for example, were remarkable and new to me.

The book contains no extended theological reflection. Many readers will think this consideration of medieval church life shows how necessary reform was. But Orme's way of telling the story tends to reveal significant continuities, as well as noticing changes. Much that we recognise today in parishes, priests, bishops, archdeacons, rural deans, buildings and services is very ancient. The Reformers brought a much greater uniformity and education of the populace in a biblical and Christ-focused direction but they thought they were restoring and correcting, not starting from scratch.

Much here is very parochial and some things are frankly peculiar. For me this was an important part of the book's charm. But Orme's study should be of global interest too. Since the medieval English church was part of the Roman Catholic church, much that was true in England will have been the case in Europe, and occasionally evidence or influence from the continent is discussed. Global Anglicanism also owes much for good or ill to the particularities of the history of the Church of England and I suspect this book would be of interest around the world, if at times it would feel even more foreign than medieval England already does to local (post-)moderns.

The book is enhanced by fifty-nine illustrations and a useful list of the technical terms that abound in English church life.

Marc Lloyd, Warbleton, East Sussex, UK

A Theology for the Twenty-First Century
Douglas F Ottati
Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 2020 (ISBN: 9780802878113 hb, 800pp)

Douglas Ottati is a Presbyterian scholar from the United States who is currently Professor of Reformed Theology and Justice at Davidson College in North Carolina. His new book is a systematic theology in three parts.

Part I explores the nature of Christian theology and the 'Formation and Arrangement of Theological Statements'. Part II 'pictures the world and ourselves in relation to God as Creator, and it includes sections on creation and sustenance (or continuation)' (152–153). Part III 'depicts the world and ourselves in relation to God as Redeemer. It contains sections on the event of Jesus Christ and the covenant of grace, sin and renewal, history, and hope' (153). An Epilogue considers the doctrine of the Trinity under the title 'The sense the Trinity makes' (741).

The perspective from which Ottati writes is 'Augustinian' and 'Protestant' because it sees human beings as 'good and limited creatures, radically corrupted by sin but nevertheless forgiven, turned, and enabled by grace alone to respond faithfully to God and others' (12). It is 'liberal' because it gives 'sustained attention to critical argument and scientific inquiries, a developed historical consciousness, and a commitment to social criticism and reform' (13). Finally, it is 'humanist' because it involves 'an effort to understand ourselves in relation to God that is shaped by the Christ event and engages humanities, sciences, and other sources of insight; an insistence that, in relation to the God of grace, while we humans are not the sole point of everything, all humans have worth;

and a biblically attentive and prophetic disposition concerned for justice and the interests of others' (19).

The overall purpose of Ottati's work

> [i]s to present a Christian theology or practical wisdom that deepens and clarifies a specific piety or settled disposition by helping us envision God, the world, and ourselves. While this wisdom takes account of information and ideas contributed by sources other than the Bible and Christian transition, it is not a neutral or detached enterprise either. It tries to strengthen and support a faithful orientation in living by making use of interpretive resources furnished by the Bible and ecclesial traditions – for example, God the Creator – and is closely intertwined with felt senses or inklings of the divine that have been cultivated by Christian communities (29).

A Theology for the Twenty First Century contains much interesting material, but overall it cannot be recommended for those looking for a new Reformed systematic theology. This is partly because it is difficult to read and to follow, and is full of American academic theological jargon, but more fundamentally it is because it stands in the tradition of Reformed theology going back to Friedrich Schleiermacher that continues to use orthodox language, but is unorthodox in content. Thus, in Ottati's work, God is the general dynamic at work in creation rather than a person who providentially governs all that occurs; humans are sinful but there was no historical Fall; Jesus is the person who reveals God and in whom God is savingly at work, but is not himself God; Jesus' death was not an act of substitutionary atonement and he did not rise bodily from the tomb; the Spirit is the divine power at work in the Church, an 'it' rather than a 'he'; and while we experience God in a Trinitarian fashion we cannot say that God in himself is Triune.

For these reasons those who want to read a modern Reformed systematic theology would be better off with the works of Michael Horton, J. I. Packer or John Webster.

Martin Davie, Meopham, UK

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EDITORIAL

The Cost of Renewal

Towards the end of his book *The Jesus of History,* the Cambridge Classicist T. R. Glover (1869-1943) discusses what he calls 'one of the greatest wonders that history has to show', namely the triumph of the gospel of Jesus in the ancient world. It replaced:

> the great pagan religion, with its enormous strength, its universal acceptance, its traditions, its splendours of art and ceremony, its manifest proofs of its gods – everything that, to the ordinary mind, could make for reality and for power; to show how absolutely inconceivable it was that it could ever pass away.

What a contrast the Christian gospel and the church which grew from it:

> Then comes the Christian Church – a ludicrous collection of trivial people, very ignorant and very common; fishermen and publicans, as the Gospels show us, 'the baker and the fuller' as Celsus said with a sneer. Yes, and every kind of unclean and disreputable person they urged to join them, quite unlike all decent and established religions … [Yet] Where is the old religion? Christ has conquered, and all the gods are gone, utterly gone. They are memories now, and nothing more. Why did they go?

Glover answers his own question with these telling words, 'The Christian Church refused to compromise'.

That is surely enough to make us think about our own times, especially amongst the Western churches. But Glover famously offers a further analysis of this by using three words which we could well make our own: 'Here we touch on what I think is one of the greatest wonders that history has to show. How did the Church do it? If I may invent or adapt three words, the Christian 'out-lived' the pagan, 'out-died' him, and 'out-thought' him'.[1]

There could hardly be a more relevant challenge to contemporary Christianity, at least in the West, than that posed by these words. We see Western churches shrinking drastically. More important, this is a generational matter. At the present rate of decline the old prestigious denominations will die in the next generation as we simply fail to win the

[1] T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History* (Association Press, 1917) pp. 198–200.

younger people with the message of Christ. How do we disciple the under-thirties when, as Christians, they face social martyrdom for a cause which they barely understand? Can they sustain their faith when the churches to which they belong are riven with disputes about sexual morality? Is this the gospel?

We are living in one of the most dangerous moments for decades. But we are also living in one of the best moments, if we can but seize it for Christ. To change the order given by Glover, if we can but out-think, out-live and out-die our world, with God's mercy and strength we can see the new generations responding with enthusiasm to the everlasting gospel. For the foundations of worldly disbelief are themselves weak and unsatisfying, and the truths of the Christian gospel, properly put and properly understood, are powerful and satisfying.

That said, we do need to trust our own message. I have mentioned the constant quarrels rending the churches, especially about sexual morality. By these, untold harm has occurred, as people look and say to themselves 'If they cannot agree on such basic matters, how can we trust them to speak the truth on matters of life and death?'

It could, therefore, be argued that the arguments should cease, that both sides should lay down their weapons, that there should be peace and that both points of view should co-exist. Unfortunately, such apparently nice simplicity is no answer to issues of fundamental importance. There can be no peace where matters of such moment are concerned. These issues are first about the authority of the Bible and second about the very nature of our humanity. And since the Christian gospel itself is a declaration about the authority of God's word and the nature of human beings, we cannot declare that these are matters of indifference. Instead, we need a radical repentance, together with determination to eschew compromise. It will require us to out-think, out-live and out-die the newly pagan world.

To Out-think

There are two major axioms basic to fulfilling this challenge. The first is:

> We must know the world better than it knows itself.

In particular, we need to know the world's anthropology, its answers to the questions 'who am I? who are we?' In this we have been greatly helped by Christian thinkers, for example in the magisterial work of Charles Taylor. We must also mention the more accessible works of authors such as Carl Trueman, whose book *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*[2] has rightly been so influential. There are many, many others. I think of

[2] Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2020).

Os Guinness and Glynn Harrison, for example. The latter's exposé of the self-esteem movement in *The Big Ego Trip*,[3] which I have only just discovered, has left me saying to myself 'Now I understand!' about the things I have been told and even practised since the 1960s. Ironically, Christian doctrine should have raised these very issues for me from the beginning.

But much as has been done, much more needs to be done. We need to examine the foundations, philosophical and historical, of all the great academic disciplines and ask ourselves about the presuppositions at work, not least 'What is the anthropology assumed here and why?' Following this, education in Christian schools demands not merely Bible stories, but a grasp of Christian doctrine which will enable students to compare and contrast the Christian pre-suppositions with those of our world. This will require Christian teachers to be well formed in the historical and philosophical foundations of their discipline whether it be economics, social studies, law, literature, science or anything else.

Such an approach, seriously carried through and propagated, will incur ignominy. Those who have created the contemporary progressive mind of Western culture have been prepared to pay the price exacted in the early years of their efforts – for example in the cultural rejection of same-sex relations. They have strategized, marched and argued and boldly flourished the symbols of their quest for acceptance and endorsement. They have come through rejection and disdain and have arrived. They carry the authority of martyrs for their cause. Their largely individualistic views have been carried through the media and the educational institutions (not to mention sport and business operations) and have become the moral wallpaper of their culture. Not surprisingly, they have declared that those who opposed their liberation originally should now be outcast as they themselves once were.

Ignominy may be the result of the project to speak for Christ, an ignominy including rejection from teaching and leadership roles, but someone has to point out the weaknesses in contemporary philosophies. If we do not analyse Marxism and feminism and post-modernism and utopianism and individualism and all the other contemporary -isms in order to show their flaws and weaknesses, we will be failing our witness to the gospel. We will also be failing our duty of love, since these philosophies cannot deliver what they promise, being based on inadequate anthropologies, not least in their neglect to account for sin.

However, the longing for a peaceful compromise with this world has left contemporary Christianity in a dire state. Collapse is not too strong a word. Pushed by the world's revolution, we have become fearful, miserable, and divided. Our own intellectual and moral weaknesses

[3] Glynn Harrison, *The Big Ego Trip: Finding True Significance in a Culture of Self-Esteem* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014).

are on display, as those who stand for the traditional interpretations of Scripture are in mortal combat with those who believe that Scripture is a book which can be used to support the progressive, individualistic agenda of the revolution. One side maintains that 'this is what Scripture says'; the other argues, 'yes, but this is what Jesus means'. The energy which should be used to promote the saving gospel of Jesus is exhausted not in arguing with the world, but in arguing with one another, while the world looks on with gladness.

Learning to live with our different viewpoints, as we may be tempted to do, is not the answer, either. It is tragic that such a compromise has ever been considered as the way forward. It means that instead of engaging in the necessary critique of the world and pointing out its hopelessness, we spend our time arguing with each other and negotiating compromises which will not work in any case. Ironically, some of the best negative assessments of the world's philosophies, including works which have looked wistfully at our Christian origins, have been written by people who do not call themselves Christians. It is as if God has raised up prophets from among the non-Christian world to say the same things as the biblically faithful.

Which leads to the second axiom as we seek to out-think the world:

> We must learn again to trust the truth of the Bible.

I firmly believe that those who have compromised with the world, not least in the sexual revolution, have made a fatal mistake. They have used their academic and other resources to show how the Bible can be read in a way which supports their cause. In so doing they have robbed the Bible of its voice, with tragic consequences. At a popular level, they have used the mantra of 'Jesus first' to pit Christ against Moses and Paul; they have claimed for Christ the love which accepts and endorses, the love which approves of love however expressed. They have claimed, as though it were true beyond doubt, that Jesus never condemned same-sex activity, neglecting to mention the Lord's condemnation of *porneia* (Mark 7:21), and failing to observe that he made no explicit mention of incest or bestiality or foul language either. The whole business of 'showing' that a proper reading of Scripture does not condemn sex outside of the marriage of a man and a woman, robs the Bible of its clarity and hence its authority. It is interesting to ask whether, if the same method was employed, the doctrine of the Trinity could be read from the pages of Scripture.

Even more to the point, however, is that in turning this into a debate about whether the Bible teaches what it has traditionally been thought to say, and pitting Christian against Christian, we have been robbed of the opportunity to hear the voice of God setting out what is best for humanity and why. The anthropology of Scripture is so authentic and so sustaining that we may teach it to the world as part of what makes the Christian

faith appealing. That is what our ancestors did when they out-thought the world.

In a world which has destroyed community in favour of individuality, has destroyed the boundaries of wisdom in favour of libertarianism, has destroyed the family in its quest for money and a false version of equality, which has turned sex into momentary pleasure rather than deep relational joy, which has created two generations of anxious and yet narcissistic persons rather than men and women who have purpose, meaning and hope in the promises of God, which has promoted the worship of self rather than the exercise of self-control, we have a better story, a demonstrably better story. This is the thesis of Glynn Harrison's brief book by that name and we can now read it in a non-Christian form in the work by Louise Perry, *The Case against the Sexual Revolution*.[4]

If all the intellectual and political energy which has been put into re-thinking Christian sexual ethics and in arguing the case within the church, with disastrous and divisive results, had been put into taking the teaching of the Bible and demonstrating how much better it is than the sad alternatives which have given us the wallpaper of modernity, it would have been far better for humanity and for the witness of the gospel. Instead, unlike the early church, the modern Western church has been prone to compromise. It has failed (so far) to out-think the world. But it can be done, and must be done. We need prophets with the voice of Elijah, the brain of Augustine and the communicating fervour of Luther to trust the word and show why its teaching is for the best. And they must both strengthen the Christians and appear amongst the lions in the public arena.

To Out-live

Many are the ways in which we are to out-live the world, of course; but essential to all is the local church which ought to be both a model for humanity and also integral to God's way of equipping his people to live for him and for others.

A false anthropology can have disastrous results. For example, it is now generally agreed that the 'one child policy' of the Chinese government, adopted between 1980 and 2016, revealed a false anthropology. This is not how human beings are intended to function. The sexual revolution embraced so readily in the West, however, taken with the inherent individualism of the culture, has been almost as disastrous. Men have been encouraged to remain as immature as teenagers and women have been enticed into a subservience as bad as any they have left behind. At the same time the death toll of the innocent unborn has been horrendous, not least unborn females.

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[4] Louise Perry, *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution* (Wiley, 2022).

What faith in the word of God gives us is not the individualism of the West nor the collectivism and autocracy of some other cultures, but a model community with power to bless and to encourage. This model community is called 'church'.

By church I mean the local church, the suburban church, the ordinary church. The denominations have taken over the word 'church' and have covered themselves with the glory of the scriptural descriptions of this mighty work of God. It has given them authority and suited an ever-growing bureaucracy. But the local church is the prime expression of the one true church. This must take precedence over the denomination; the bureaucracy of the denomination, even the bishops, are to be dedicated to its well-being, not the other way around. This will include respect for the authority of the local Pastor and the people, a respect which, in my opinion, ought to include encouraging the local people to house and pay for their own Pastor.

Such a church, large or small, if reflecting the teaching of the New Testament about its function and nature, will model our humanity in a way which will become increasingly attractive to the victims of the secular anthropology. The fourth and fifth chapters of Ephesians, for example are not primarily designed to be a handbook of Christian ethics, but a summons to the church to fulfil its function. Thus we see that the Lord of the church gives as his gifts those who will teach the word. The Pastor-teachers will build on the work of the Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists, teaching in such a way that the whole church, speaking the truth in love, will grow into spiritual maturity where every person is ministering, and thus, corporately into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

The contrast with any experience in the secular world, as believers speak the truth, work hard, act with generosity, forgive each other, speak well and without coarseness, avoid sexual immorality, and so love one another that we build each other up, submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ, is stunning. Not only that, the transformative power of belonging to such a community is observable. It is clear that believers are more likely to belong to voluntary societies, more likely to be generous, more trustworthy – even more likely to give blood (!) – than unbelievers as a whole. Even singing together has its benefits. Suburbs, towns and villages which have good churches are blessed indeed.

The properly functioning local church is a model of what humans are meant to be and how they are to raise their children. The church provides a place where children are not simply raised by their peers – a dangerous ride. Rather it is a community in which there are people of all age groups who care for children, who teach them, lead them, listen to them and pray for them. That the church fellowships have been abused by people taking advantage of the trusting relationships which emerge is a call for vigilance; but it does not change the fact that the whole experience is, in

the vast majority of cases, of great benefit to those privileged to grow up thus.

The church experience is also integral to what goes on after church. We go to church to meet the Lord Jesus through his word in the power of his Spirit and the fellowship of God's people. Through Christ we have access in one Spirit to the Father. Such an experience is transformative. We return from church assured once more of the grace of God by word and sacrament, and for our part we have turned to him once more in submissive repentance and great thanksgiving. By the power of the Spirit we are to live lives which demonstrate love for others. This love is one of the things which was so noteworthy about the first Christians as they cared for abandoned children, stayed to nurse the sick in plague times and were generous to others. Of course, they remained sinful and often let the Lord down, as we do. But they were sufficiently different to point to the gospel of hope in their deeds and words.

Most Christians will simply live lives of local obedience and love, doing the good works which will bring glory to the Father. It is also no accident that some of the greatest works of love, which have affected the lives of millions, have arisen from faithful Christians seeing a desperate need and meeting it. Hospitals, orphanages, city missions, homes for the homeless, the care of the aged … the list is endless. It is tragic, of course, that so often such great works have lost their Christian connections and people do not see in them the love of the Lord Jesus. We need to be vigilant as we do good that people will be able to glorify God and not those from whom they receive such help. For all these works of love stem from the cross.

But am I describing our churches? Have we become sleepy and committed to habitual attendance at meetings in which a professionalised clergy take responsibility for everything (looking after young people, for example) in a way which means that the ordinary Christian becomes an on-looker rather than an active and caring participant? How different when we remember that all are gifted, that all are responsible, that all are challenged to edify the church, that all must be motivated by love.

In short, if we are to out-live the world, we need to see spiritual renewal in our local churches, whether it is a village church of fifteen people or a city church with hundreds. It is certainly not the only key to out-living the world, but it is a crucial one as we show forth, under Christ, the humanity which we are meant to exhibit. We need to live as united communities, and this is not helped when denominational authorities waver or even capitulate to the demands for conformity to this world. In such matters, compromise is not the way of the cross.

To Out-die

Martyrdom in the name of Christ is a common phenomenon even in the twenty-first century. This should not surprise us, though it should shock and dismay those of us who live in safety. The true gospel is deeply offensive and always has been. It declares that there is one God, the Creator and ruler of the world, and thus announces that the gods of the nations are futile. It declares that all have sinned and are in need of salvation and thus confronts all the philosophies which insist on fundamental human goodness. It declares that salvation is found in one name alone – that of a man who suffered the shame of crucifixion – and thus is intolerant of all who claim another name of another way of salvation. It declares that this one man has been resurrected from the dead and is Lord of all and is coming to judge the world, and that therefore there lies before all a judgement day on which some will be saved and some lost to an eternal misery. It declares that God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, loved the world and so brought salvation; but it declares that only those who repent and trust in God will be brought into this eternal fellowship and be saved, and it declares that those so saved are to trust the word of God, live by it, and not change it.

This is an intolerant and offensive message, and it is not at all surprising that it should be so vehemently rejected, not least by those who see in it a threat to their culture and their way of life. Nor is it surprising that the overwhelming temptation of modern Christians is to change the message, in particular assuring all that God is the Saviour of all, that Jesus accepts all, that all will be with him in the end, all the lost will be found again, and that repentance is not needed if it interferes with our libertarian way of life. This relieves us of the burden of sharing the message with our contemporaries because they do not really need to hear it.

But it is the message which changed the world. To embrace it is to die. Repentance is like that. After the initial submission to Christ as Lord, it is the long process of turning against one's own beloved sins and turning to the will of the Lord instead. We make it our aim to please him, not ourselves; and part of pleasing him is the love of neighbour, in which we put the needs of others ahead of our own needs, in which we put their interests first. Their own greatest need is to hear the gospel and be saved. To live for Christ is the way of the cross, the way of martyrdom which may well lead to ridicule and scorn and derision, and in some cases will lead to persecution and death itself. But it is the cross which grows the church.

I fear that I have written with some passion. But there is a world to hear the message of salvation from sin, death and judgement, and in my view we in the Western church have spent so much time and effort compromising with this world, and then trying to correct the mistakes,

that we have been diverted from our task of actually knowing God's revealed truth, trusting it and living it.

May the Lord renew his great work amongst us.

PETER JENSEN

The Global Anglican 136/4 (2022): 300–319

'Spiritual Abuse': A Christocentric Response to an Ethical Crisis

Alan Wenham

The utility of 'spiritual abuse' terminology has been a topic of debate among evangelicals. It is argued that the church must attend to the moral and theological dimension of the discourse. Spiritual abuse exposes a profound problem for traditional secular categories of abuse. Christians need a Christocentric foundation to inform safeguarding language and address a metaphysical, moral, and methodological crisis of ethics.

Much has been written about the shameful procedural and pastoral failures of Christians in dealing with abuse in the church. From revelations of sexual abuse, attention has turned to the abuse of power by Christian leaders, with several high-profile evangelical cases.[1] In trying to articulate a public response, evangelical leaders have faced not only the moral complexity of such cases but the fact that their role and tools of ministry are increasingly viewed as part of the problem. In a society suspicious of authority and claims to truth, biblical teaching is in the dock. From the shadow of painful investigations has emerged a campaign by Christian safeguarding advocates for a distinct category of 'spiritual abuse' to protect people from the harm of coercive control in a religious context. This has polarised opinion among evangelicals. Some see the language as necessary to address the deep emotional and psychological damage caused by the abuse of power in churches. Others believe that the discourse may restrict Christian liberty, and that the problem of such abuse is adequately addressed by existing safeguarding measures. In addressing spiritual abuse, however, evangelicals seem only partly alert to the metaphysical, moral, and methodological problem of a safeguarding discourse that is not firmly welded to a robust biblical narrative. It will be argued that spiritual abuse cannot be adequately tackled by divorcing biblical teaching from safeguarding principles; instead, Christians must see the underlying moral problem and apply a more explicitly Christ-centred approach to justify intervention, address virtue, and affect change.

[1] Formal investigations into the conduct of Mark Driscoll, Bill Hybels, and Ravi Zacharias in America and John Smyth, Timothy Davis, and Jonathan Fletcher in Britain have been published online, for example.

This article seeks to contribute to the debate about the definition of spiritual abuse by outlining a Christocentric basis to the ethical problem of the misuse of power in a religious context. While focusing mainly on British literature, this paper has broader relevance to the Christian discussion on abuse definitions and ethics in general. First, a summary of the debate between two leading evangelical organisations will highlight concerns about the necessity, purpose, and consequences of a distinct category of spiritual abuse. Second, historical, ethical, and theological study will be suggested to navigate the hazards of categorization. Third, a widely promoted Christian definition of spiritual abuse will be evaluated in comparison to three common ethical approaches to abuse to show that in its conception of abuse it shares certain strengths, but exhibits greater weaknesses compared to similar consequentialist and deontological approaches. Fourth, the metaphysical, moral, and methodological challenge of spiritual abuse will be described to show the ethical inadequacy of safeguarding approaches that rely solely on empirical and rational means to justify intervention, that neglect character and virtue, and that present only external procedures to affect change. Fifth, it will be argued that Christ's lordship, judgement, and redemption provides a more robust moral framework for addressing spiritual abuse, providing an objective moral standard which encompasses traditional ethical approaches, and reveals a greater means of inner transformation. In conclusion, it is argued that to address an ethical crisis, Christians must recognise that abuse in the church is more than a pragmatic failure and they must explicate Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

1. An evangelical debate about spiritual abuse terms

Position papers by The Evangelical Alliance (EA) and the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS, now called Thirty-one:eight) published in 2018 provide a good introduction to the debate among evangelicals about spiritual abuse definitions.[2]

[2] CCPAS is a British independent Christian safeguarding charity that has campaigned for a separate category of spiritual abuse to protect people from the harm of coercive control in churches. EA is an association that represents Evangelical groups in Britain, of which CCPAS was a long-standing member. See *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse". Logical Problems and Unintended Consequences*. (A Report by the Evangelical Alliance Theology Advisory Group, February 2018), https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Reviewing- the-discourse-of-Spiritual-Abuse.pdf; and *Spiritual Abuse. A Position Paper. February 2018* (CCPAS, 2018), https://thirtyoneeight.org/media/2191/spiritual-abuse-position-statement.pdf.

1.1. Necessity and purpose of abuse definitions

Having worked together on various safeguarding issues, EA objects to CCPAS's proposal for a distinct, legal category of spiritual abuse, defined as 'coercion and control' that causes psychological and emotional harm in a religious context. Its concern is that the definitions promoted by CCPAS are ambiguous, that the implementation in secular law would be unworkable, and that this form of abuse is adequately addressed by existing safeguarding instruments tackling emotional and psychological abuse. EA accepts, however, that an accurate, coherent definition of spiritual abuse may have a role in an ecclesiastical disciplinary setting and have analytic and therapeutic value – much like an accurate diagnosis of illness.[3]

In response, CCPAS acknowledges that spiritual abuse could partly be addressed by the existing range of safeguarding instruments and has retracted its call for a distinct or statutory category of spiritual abuse.[4] However, CCPAS argues that secular safeguarding provisions do not address the spiritual aspect of abuse, which is the church's responsibility. It is the religious context of this abuse that causes deep harm to a person's psychological, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Clear definitions can help enable the church to fulfil its mandate in providing an effective caring response and in promoting healthy leadership and safe church cultures.[5] To develop that idea in theological terms, a biblical definition of abuse might function like a summary of doctrine, to guide Christians in 'good works' (2 Tim 3:16).

The organisations therefore agree that a spiritual abuse definition may have a role in protecting and pastoring the flock, but not in the statutory prosecution of abuse, as this is covered by existing laws. Their position on the unintended consequences and impact of a spiritual abuse definition shows less unanimity, however.

1.2. Unintended consequences of abuse definitions

First, EA warns that in asserting the prevalence of spiritual abuse and promoting the language, CCPAS has failed to give proper critical consideration to its own influence on the discourse. While not denying the reality of abuse in a religious context or the need for pastoral support for survivors, EA suggest that the vigorous campaigning and methodological weakness of research conducted by CCPAS has 'oxygenated' the debate and may act as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', disproportionally furthering the idea and calls for action.[6] Second, spiritual abuse terminology could indirectly damage religious freedom. While the language may be well

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[3] *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 1, 16.

[4] *Spiritual Abuse*, 2.

[5] *Spiritual Abuse*, 6.

[6] *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 6, 18.

intended, EA notes that the nomenclature is increasingly finding its way into Church of England safeguarding literature and was cited in a clergy disciplinary case against Timothy Davis, giving some 'proto-legal weight' to the term.[7] If this trajectory continues and spiritual abuse is enshrined in law, it could restrict Christian freedoms of belief, assembly, and expression. Third, related to this point, spiritual abuse could lead to discrimination against certain theological positions. By way of example, EA cited a paper by Jane Ozanne who calls classic Christian views on sexuality 'spiritually abusive' and appeals for the vulnerable to receive the 'same protection as those facing other forms of abuse'.[8] If this proposal were adopted, Christians could effectively be punished for hate crimes. Fourth, definitions of spiritual abuse have been developed by and applied to Christians, but they will also affect other faith communities if they gain traction. The impact on inter-faith relationships should be considered with the development of definitions, EA suggests.[9]

In its paper, CCPAS does not explicitly comment on its influence in the debate. In his forward, however, Justin Humphreys, the Executive Director of CCPAS, assures readers that it is not the agency's intention to fuel unhelpful or polarized debates; their research is evidence-based, and they focus on the perceived need of those whom they support. Concerning religious freedom, spiritual abuse terminology should not prevent Christian leaders from exercising proper authority. On the contrary, they argue that such categories help develop authentic and healthy leadership and church cultures, while recognising that the victims of abuse also include church leaders. CCPAS is aware of the danger of 'spiritual abuse' being used as a weapon to discriminate against theological opponents. It states that any religious position can be misused but assert that holding a particular theological position is not spiritually abusive per se; it is about the manner of expression, where beliefs are held in a 'dictatorial, controlling, or coercive way' that harm can be caused.[10] While not directly reflecting on the impact of the term on other faith communities, they do accept the need for 'ongoing dialogue and exploration across the Christian Church and beyond'.[11] EA also recognises the power of language in the broader national context. A term like 'abuse' is loaded and may disturb people when cojoined with a term like 'spiritual'; but EA argues that this

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[7] *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 10.

[8] Jayne Ozanne, 'Spiritual Abuse – The Next Great Scandal for the Church' (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2017), 1, 9, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzMyH8nMD_OdNW5WUW4zTmVvQms/view?resourcekey=0-fJoosFIVVdkzSj9i_Q8J1w.

[9] *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 16.

[10] *Spiritual Abuse*, 5.

[11] *Spiritual Abuse*, 1.

strong phrase is an appropriate reflection of the deep harm and trauma caused by the abuse.

EA and CCPAS's concerns relate to the effects of power exercised through discourses to provide protection and curtail freedom. The problem with consequentialist arguments that focus on the harm and benefits caused by language is that such outcomes are difficult to evaluate, particularly in future contexts. After considering the definitional hazards, it may feel best not to tackle the confusing 'maze of spiritual abuse'.[12] However, the issue of abuse in the church is too important to neglect. Instead, it may help to explore three aspects in the debate, which have not been thoroughly addressed in the discourse so far. The first is historical, the second is moral, and the third is theological.

2. Progressing through the hazardous terminological maze

First, the historical development of abuse terminology needs greater consideration. The papers from EA and CCPAS trace the origins of spiritual abuse terminology in Christian American and British literature into the early 1990s.[13] However, they do not explore the evolution of abuse concepts in statutory social work, from 'physical', 'sexual', and 'emotional' abuse, to the consideration of terms such as 'ritual' and 'satanic' abuse. These are antecedent terms that refer to types of spiritual abuse, according to the definitions proposed by CCPAS, being primarily associated with the sexual abuse of children in a religious context. The Orkney child abuse case of 1991 seems particularly relevant to the Christian debate on spiritual abuse. In this notorious British case, statutory social services mishandled investigations into claims by three siblings that they had been subject to ritualised sexual abuse, organised by a Church of Scotland Minister, Revd Morris McKenzie, with four families known to them. As a result, nine children were removed from these families into statutory care for several weeks during the investigation, before the case was abandoned on legal advice. In the subsequent government inquiry into the proceedings, Lord Clyde commented on the terms 'organised', 'ritual', and 'satanic' abuse, which were used widely by the media and in the broader context.[14] While he sees some value in the categories to

[12] The metaphor used by Lisa Oakley and Justin Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse: How to Create Healthy Christian Cultures* (London: SPCK, 2019).

[13] *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 3; *Spiritual Abuse*, 1.

[14] Clyde considers 'organised' abuse to denote the involvement of multiple people; he says 'ritual' usually suggests repeated abuse, possibly involving symbols or group activities that maybe religious, magical or supernatural in character; and 'satanic' and 'demonic' suggest 'bizarre forms' of ritualistic behaviour. See J. J. Clyde, *Report of the Inquiry into the Removal of Children*

understand abuse and direct courses of action in such cases, Clyde states that the terms had no relevance to the social service's investigation, and his report warns of the detrimental effects of disputed, technical and polarised language.[15] Importantly, Clyde recommends that in the investigation and management of such cases, labels should not be used 'without a common understanding of the definition and the purpose of the label'.[16] Following his recommendations, the government commissioned Professor La Fontaine to do research into the nature and prevalence of organised and ritual abuse in Britain. Despite numerous allegations, she found that there were only three cases of sexual abuse that involved rituals and no substantiated cases of satanic abuse.[17] She concluded that evangelical Christian campaigns against new religious movements and self-appointed 'specialists' in satanic abuse had been 'a powerful' but misleading force encouraging its identification.[18] This affirms the need for Christians to take great care in their use of abuse terms.

Second, in defining spiritual abuse, Christians need to consider the moral dimension at play. Part of the difficulty with categorising abuse is that definitions are multidimensional in nature. EA rightly points out that the spiritual abuse definitions proposed by CCPAS intersect with the science of psychology and law and should therefore be scrutinised by these disciplines.[19] The political nature of definitions is also implicitly drawn out by EA, reflecting on the inception of spiritual abuse from a particular socio-political context to its perpetuation by certain individuals with vested interests.[20] Underlying all facets, however, is an implicit and intrinsically moral dimension to abuse: the word 'abuse' refers to something that is wrong.[21] If Christians do not attend to this moral aspect and insist that existing legal definitions are adequate to deal with spiritual abuse, they may appear uncaring and even immoral in the face of deep suffering.

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from Orkney in February 1991, Return to an Address of the Honourable the House of Commons Dated 27 Oct 1992 (Edinburgh: H.M.S.O., 1992), 267–68, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/235702/0195.pdf.

15 Clyde, *Report of the Inquiry*, 267–69.

16 Clyde, *Report of the Inquiry*, 269.

17 The study considered 211 alleged cases of organised child sexual abuse in Britain that occurred between January 1988 to December 1991. J. S. La Fontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Sexual Abuse of Children: Research Findings* (London: HMSO, 1994), 24–25.

18 La Fontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Sexual Abuse*, 31.

19 *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 6.

20 *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 3, 4.

21 See Ian Hacking, "The Making and Molding of Child Abuse", *Crit. Inq.* 17.2 (1991): 259–69.

Without understanding people's moral perceptions of abuse, Christians may not grasp a victim's distress at abuse, what drives calls for new legal and pastoral instruments, and why spiritual abuse presents a challenge to a secular ethical framework. An ethical analysis of terminology may therefore help understanding, which will be demonstrated.

Third, most importantly, any definition of spiritual abuse must consider theology. As EA states, spiritual abuse ipso facto entails spiritual considerations and should therefore be grounded in theology.[22] CCPAS acknowledges its Christian heritage but distances itself from a particular theological standpoint. Its claim that it is a coercive controlling manner and not a theological position that is inherently abusive fails to recognise the damage caused by false Christian teaching, regardless of manner. Also, its language and position on abuse is not theologically neutral; it expresses a certain belief and values that should be subject to biblical evaluation. The authors state that the misuse of Scripture is a component of spiritual abuse, but if Christians address only the manner and not the theological narrative of abusers, they could allow abuse to be justified and perpetuated through a false or deficient theology. If Christians fail to critically evaluate their own beliefs, they could harm others through their own false or prejudiced ideology, regardless of good intentions. Furthermore, it will be argued that theology must be explicated and not divorced from spiritual abuse definitions to effectively counter the metaphysical, moral, and methodological challenge of abuse in a religious context.

This article will begin to consider the definition of spiritual abuse by comparing a widely cited definition with three ways of defining abuse, which reflect traditional approaches to ethics. An evaluation of these ethical positions will help highlight the key aspects, strengths, and weaknesses of spiritual abuse terminology.

3. An evaluation of 'spiritual abuse' and three ethical approaches to definition

Lisa Oakley has worked closely with CCPAS and has been at the forefront of calls for a spiritual abuse definition in Britain. Her definitions are frequently cited in publications on the subject, and her book co-authored with Humphreys explicates her 2018 iteration:

> Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. This abuse may include manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship

[22] *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 6.

> of decision making, requirement for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser had a 'divine' position, isolation as means of punishment, and superiority and elitism.[23]

Abrams's typology of child abuse and neglect terminology summarises three ways of defining abuse, which will be compared to Oakley's definition to evaluate its relative merits compared to secular approaches.

3.1. The consequences of abuse

The first and most common approach is to define abuse and neglect in terms of harmful consequences, according to Abrams.[24] This is a consequentialist approach that provides a rational way to evaluate harm and address the detrimental effect of abuse. Oakley's definition primarily fits this category by defining spiritual abuse in terms of repetitious coercion and control that causes emotional, psychological, or other harm. While acknowledging the difficulties of defining harm and distancing herself from a specific theological position, what is not explicit from her writing is by which standard harm is judged.[25]

According to Abrams, harm is often judged in one of three ways in consequentialist abuse definitions. First, harm can be viewed in terms of failing to meet a minimum need.[26] In her co-authored book, Oakley argues that a definition must reflect the damage caused by spiritual abuse, 'but also enable the professional to determine whether a threshold has been crossed in terms of safeguarding'.[27] Oakley does not say whether this threshold is synonymous with a person's minimum need, nor does she present a list of basic spiritual needs. A threshold could indicate the point of preventative action, rather than punitive intervention. If this threshold is the minimum spiritual need of a person, however, an individual would be spiritually abused if these needs were not met. Second, harm is commonly constructed in terms of social or community standards. Oakley states that she wanted her definition to reflect the views of survivors, as well as lessons from research and the statutory framework.[28] To what degree the victims' views are representative of broader opinion or are taken as normative in her definition is not clear. If the survivor's views were considered normative, behaviour would be deemed abusive if it fell below the victims' collective expectations. Third, harm could

[23] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 31.

[24] N. Abrams, 'Problems in Defining Child Abuse and Neglect', in *Having Children. Philosophical and Legal Reflections on Parenthood*, ed. O. O'Neill and W. Ruddick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 156.

[25] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 16, 24.

[26] Abrams, 'Problems in Defining Child Abuse and Neglect', 157.

[27] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 23.

[28] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 20.

be measured according to best interests. Framed in these terms, people would be spiritually abused if their spiritual best interests were not met. Oakley's stated goal is to promote healthy church culture and leadership, not just to ensure that people's basic needs are met, but that more positive emphasis is not translated into her definition.

Whichever approach Oakley takes to harm, consequentialist approaches have certain weaknesses that should be noted in evaluating definitions of spiritual abuse. Where a standard of minimum need is employed, an act may not be deemed harmful because it is not repeated or does not fall below the threshold, despite it being damaging. Similarly, people may not be defined as abused despite being systematically neglected, because they are very resilient and experience relatively little psychological or emotional harm.[29] Oakley partly seems to anticipate this difficulty by stating that spiritually abusive behaviour is systematic in nature, but isolated incidents can also be harmful.[30] Where a social norm defines the standard of harm, this becomes problematic when society sanctions 'beneficial' behaviour that is unjust to certain individuals or where standards fall below people's spiritual needs – that might include the prosecuting of biblical teachers for 'hate speech', for example. Moreover, commonly accepted standards do not exist in any society, particularly when it comes to spiritual abuse. The danger is that norms are set by those who are most adept at grasping power or at appealing to the populace and not according to what is true and just. A definition that looks to the best interests of a person, rather than minimum needs, might be more in keeping with the goal of promoting spiritual health. However, this raises the question of who determines what is best and although the 'quest for best' is desirable, this pursuit could be never ending and create unrealistic expectations and burdens on those responsible for providing spiritual care.[31]

3.2. The act of abuse

A second approach outlined by Abrams is defining abuse and neglect in terms of the act itself, regardless of the consequences.[32] This is a type of deontological approach, which is often framed in terms of a duty to keep certain rules or principles. This method can be advantageous because it captures the moral consensus that an act of abuse is intrinsically wrong, regardless of the damage it causes. It recognises the equal value of people and the duty to respect individuals, even when their interests conflict with

[29] Abrams, 'Problems in Defining Child Abuse and Neglect', 162.
[30] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 25.
[31] Abrams, 'Problems in Defining Child Abuse and Neglect', 157.
[32] Abrams, 'Problems in Defining Child Abuse and Neglect', 159–60.

a larger group. It can also help vet candidates for leadership by specifying prohibited behaviours in advance, such as anger or violence.[33]

Oakley's definition includes deontological elements by listing some acts of coercive control that are wrong regardless of the harm caused, such as manipulation, exploitation and enforced accountability. To avoid the pitfalls of consequentialist abuse definitions, Abrams proposes a broader deontological approach, tying child abuse categories to the concept of human 'dignity', in accordance with The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). If applied more generally, abuse would occur when an offence to someone's dignity was committed 'without their full and valid consent'.[34] According to this approach, abuse would not be viewed simply in terms of harm to personal development or specific relationships, but that which failed to treat people as humans or ends in themselves.

Before adopting such a definition, however, a practitioner would need to be cognisant of the weaknesses of deontological approaches. Definitions of abuse based on absolute principles like human dignity could cover a vast array of behaviours and be breached on a very large scale. Where there are multiple duties or rules, there are likely to be conflicts of duty that may become hard to resolve. Duties need to be justified by an overarching explanation, which raises the question of where one would find this metanarrative, particularly if one relativises theology. Abstract deontological principles also often need legalistic qualifying criteria – such as standards of dignity – making them complex and difficult to follow. People may also still be harmed despite a careful adherence to codes of practice.

3.3. The abuser's intentions

Abrams' third terminological category accounts for abuse in terms of an agent's intentions to injure or neglect, regardless of actual harm. While she provides no working examples of this type of definition, this category is helpful in recognising the moral importance of people's intentions or aims. According to this approach, a person would not be considered abusive if they hurt another but did not intend to cause harm.

Oakley's definition does not contain a word that indicates intent – such as 'intends' or 'aims'. This notion may be assumed, but her co-authored book suggests that intent is absent in many abuse cases, stating that often, 'far from being wilful, those who have fallen into spiritual abusive

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[33] See Abrams, 'Problems in Defining Child Abuse and Neglect', 163.

[34] Abrams, 'Problems in Defining Child Abuse and Neglect', 160. See *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Unicef, 1989), https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child .pdf, 3.

patterns of behaviour did so without realising it'.[35] Similarly, the CCPAS paper says, 'that a significant amount of spiritual abusive behaviour is not intentional'.[36] The problem with calling unintentional acts 'abusive' is that this may result in moral judgements that are simplistic and unfair. Take a parent pouring boiling water over their child, for example. If the parent intended or could have reasonably foreseen the harm occurring from their actions, then their actions would seem wrong and abusive. But if they did not intend or lacked the capacity to understand the result of their behaviour, their actions would not seem immoral or abusive but a terrible accident. In ethics, it is important to consider intent, not just acts or consequences, to help establish fault and prevent injustice.[37]

'Motive' should be distinguished from intent but is also significant in abuse cases. Motive is the reason or explanation for an action – for example, 'I poured boiling water on my child because I tripped and fell'. Oakley includes the motives of elitism and superiority as examples of spiritual abuse in her definition. Stewart argues that an analysis of the motive of the abuser and practitioner is important for moral orientation in child abuse cases, to aid decision-making, and facilitate a child's recovery as they grapple to comprehend this moral event.[38] An abuser may have contradictory or mixed motives, or the apparent absence of motive – which may be a way of the abuser avoiding responsibility and causing further confusion. A safeguarding practitioner's analysis may also be biased: thinking that understanding a person is synonymous with excusing their abusive actions or considering someone abusive simply because of their beliefs, for example.[39] However, although intent and motive are important, they should never be the sole criterion for judging abuse. Not only are they hard to demonstrate, the divorce of intent from action could lead to the condemnation of people who are deemed to have a 'guilty mind', without them having committed an abusive act. It could also result in the excusing of abusive behaviour because the abuser insists 'I intended no harm'.

In summary, Abrams's typology helps highlight three common aspects of abuse and neglect definitions, which follow traditional approaches to normative ethical theory, including consequences, action, and intent. Oakley defines spiritual abuse primarily in terms of harmful consequences,

[35] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 114.

[36] *Spiritual Abuse*, 5.

[37] Similarly, in law, intent (*mens rea*) is important to establish fault, delineate criminality from unintended actions, and to help restrict unexpected state intrusion into the lives of citizens. See Winnie Chan and A.P. Simester, 'Four Functions of Mens Rea', *CLJ* 70.2 (2011): 381–96.

[38] K. Stewart, 'Sexual Abuse as a Moral Event', *Br. J. Soc. Work* 26.4 (1996): 493–508.

[39] Stewart, 'Sexual Abuse as a Moral Event', 494.

irrespective of intent. She gives examples of abusive acts and motives, without providing a clear standard or theology by which to judge harm. As such, her position shares the strengths and weaknesses of similar secular consequentialist and deontological definitions but falls short of more robust common criteria that protect human dignity, freedom, and promote wellbeing, rather than just preventing harm. However, even if more rigorous secular criteria were adopted, a safeguarding discourse will struggle to address spiritual abuse if divorced from theology, which will be explained next.

4. The challenge of spiritual abuse to secular ethical approaches

An approach to spiritual abuse that adopts a secular view will have an inherent metaphysical problem in discussing anything spiritual without an explicit theology. In particular, advocates like Oakley will struggle to find an objective standard to justify their ethical framework. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore this predicament in detail, this section will briefly outline the metaphysical, moral, and methodological challenge that a secular safeguarding practitioner will face in addressing spiritual abuse, which is evident from social work literature discussing satanic abuse – meaning, abuse directed to the worship of Satan.[40]

4.1. Moral justification

First, spiritually directed or motivated abuse presents a metaphysical challenge to the secular idea that there exists only a material reality and a human means of justifying morality. As Clapton says, when discussing motives and reasons for satanic abuse, 'The ground shifts from possible material reasons to the metaphysical'.[41] In general, the sexual abuse of children is unlike many other moral wrongs, 'in that rarely does anyone attempt to justify such abuse by appeal to nobler ends'.[42] Abuse that is directed to or rationalized by the worship of Satan or (more commonly) of God, however, suggests a metaphysical justification.[43] Bottoms *et al.* give examples of spiritual rationales for child abuse in their examination of the topic, such as 'it is better that children experience a temporary hell inflicted by loving parents than they burn in an eternal fire' and that

[40] This echoes the definition of La Fontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Sexual Abuse*, 3.

[41] G. Clapton, *The Satanic Abuse Controversy: Social Workers and the Work Press* (London: University of North London Press, 1993), 23.

[42] L. Thomas, 'The Grip of Immorality: Child Abuse and Moral Failure', in *Reason, Ethics & Society. Themes from Kurt Baier, with His Responses*, ed. J.B. Schneewind (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 144.

[43] Thomas, 'The Grip of Immorality: Child Abuse and Moral Failure', 144.

medical neglect is warranted because 'prayer works' and treatment is a 'blasphemous intrusion into God's plan'.[44] If safeguarding officers reject such religious beliefs or values simply because they cannot be materially or empirically verified, then the workers risk undermining the unverifiable presuppositions of all belief systems, including their own. Similarly, if practitioners reject the existence of anything that cannot be explained by reason, all appeals to reason are threatened as the existence of reason cannot be explicated without reference to itself. An objective standard of judgement is needed to protect people from such abuse. However, without reference to God, there 'are no universal vantage points which give automatic access to the 'truth' and 'Power/knowledge relations are implicated in all our explorations'.[45] The subjective views of a group of people, such as social workers, provide an inadequate basis to justify intrusive safeguarding interventions alone – 'it is right because they say so'. Justification by reference to scientific study is also problematic as it is a naturalistic fallacy to derive moral imperatives from empirical observation – 'it is, therefore it ought to be'. Hence, without an explicit theology, Oakley's definition shares the weakness of secular approaches that have no objective standard to justify definitions of spiritual abuse.

4.2. Moral virtue

Second, spiritual abuse challenges a safeguarding framework that reduces abuse to a series of consequences or acts by raising issues of virtue, character, and being. Featherstone and Harlow argue that if the abuser does not fit the conventional image by gender or occupation, it is harder to believe allegations.[46] The notion of the virtuous character – the Church of Scotland Minister, for example – is attacked, when someone embodying that position is alleged to have sexually abused children. The repugnance is amplified, and the debates are sharpest, when satanic or spiritual abuse is alleged. After all, as Bottoms *et al*. write, 'religion is supposed to provide directives for moral action and the promotion of human welfare, not to add to the degradation and misery'.[47] If one defines abuse solely in terms of abusive acts or harmful consequences, it is difficult to explain why abuse committed by a priest seems worse than comparable abuse perpetuated by a non-religious professional. Oakley and Humphreys

[44] B.L. Bottoms *et al*., 'In the Name of God. A Profile of Religion Related Child Abuse', *J. Soc. Issues* 51.2 (1995): 87.

[45] B. Featherstone, 'What Has Gender Go to Do with It? Exploring Physically Abusive Behaviour Towards Children', *Br. J. Soc. Work* 27.3 (1997): 428.

[46] B. Featherstone and E. Harlow, 'Organised Abuse: Themes and Issues', in *Violence and Gender Relations: Theories and Interventions*, ed. B. Fawcett *et al*. (London: Sage, 1996), 161–70.

[47] Bottoms *et al*., 'In the Name of God. A Profile of Religion Related Child Abuse', 86.

recognise the moral gravity of abuse committed by religious agents and that character in leadership is 'all important'.[48] They present a short list of Christ-like leadership virtues to help counter spiritual abuse, including sacrificial service, authenticity, and compassion. However, their chosen definition of spiritual abuse centres on harmful consequences and acts, not virtue and intention, and by neglecting key biblical texts on church leadership they fail to include important virtues such as faithfulness, self-control, gentleness, and temperateness (see 1 Tim 3:1–12; Titus 1:5–9).

4.3. Moral change

Third, spiritual abuse challenges the adequacy of a safeguarding methodology that focuses on only external practices to affect change. Oakley and Humphreys propose that spiritual abuse must be tackled by promoting healthy church culture, as well as leadership. For example, they suggest engendering a healthy church culture by empowerment, enabling personal autonomy in thought and expression; supervision, providing accountability and care to all in leadership; support for survivors of abuse; training in safeguarding practice for work and leadership; and awareness of the ways and impact of spiritual abuse and alternative ways of behaving.[49] Certainly, their independent investigations with Thirtyone:eight into abuses of power by Christian leaders found deficiencies in such safeguarding practices. However, if one believes that abuse can be combated by external safeguarding practices alone, it becomes difficult to explain why cases of abuse occur in church despite the presence of safeguarding measures. If culture is an organic whole that reflects beliefs, values, and a worldview, it is hard to imagine how safeguarding methods alone will change such deep-seated wrong views, let alone the transgressive desires of an abuser. EA reiterates the philosophy of John Locke, that the application of external legislation may restrain criminal behaviour, but it is ineffective in convincing the mind.[50] Education maybe presented as the solution to an abuser's deviant beliefs and values, but then one must explain why some Christian leaders commit abuse, and churches ignore abuse, despite knowing that these actions are morally wrong – which is evidenced by their deceit and silencing of victims. Simply prescribing more safeguarding training or practices in such cases seems to be an inadequate solution. This is not to say that safeguarding measures are redundant or are unimportant; only that something more is needed to affect inner transformation.

In short, spiritual abuse presents a profound metaphysical, moral, and methodological problem to a purely secular approach. It shows the inadequacy of justifying morality by only human empirical and rational

[48] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 120.

[49] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 134–35.

[50] *Reviewing the Discourse of "Spiritual Abuse"*, 14.

standards, the insufficiency of consequentialist and deontological ethics that neglects intent and character, and the ineffectiveness of external methods alone to engender change. A safeguarding discourse without a clear theological basis will lack the means to address these challenges of spiritual abuse comprehensively. It will be argued that a Christ-centred approach is needed, which explicitly combines a biblical theology with praxis. While Jesus Christ certainly does not promise all the solutions to abuse in this life, he does provide an ethic that is objective, encompasses virtue, and provides a radical means for internal personal transformation.

5. A theological Christocentric approach to spiritual abuse

The aim in this section is not to present a comprehensive theology of abuse but to introduce a Christian theological basis for addressing spiritual abuse. This approach is grounded in the God of Jesus Christ and the Bible and meets the moral challenge of spiritual abuse more robustly than secular approaches. It is proposed that to meet this ethical challenge and build an adequate definition of spiritual abuse, a theological position is needed that affirms at least three foundational biblical presuppositions about Christ:

5.1. Jesus is the divine Son of God

First, it is important to affirm that Jesus is the one and only divine Son of God. Jesus is fully God and fully man, eternally one in substance with God the Father and the Holy Spirit and incarnate as a human in history (John 1:1–5; Col 1:15–20; Heb 2:17-18; Mark 1:10–11). Christ's unique divine-human perspective is important as it provides a moral field that is objective and authoritative.

Christ's claims to divinity were confirmed by his mighty 'deeds of power' in accordance with the ancient prophets (John 14:6–7; Mark 2:10–12; 1:21–28, 2:1–12, 4:35–41, 5:21–43; Dan 7:13–14; Isa 35:4–6). This divinity means that he confers not just a truth, but 'the way and the truth and the life' (John 14:6). His transcendent perspective supersedes any human opinion and, although expressed within a redemptive historical context, is transcultural, being relevant at all times, in all places, and to all peoples. Christ's incarnation or human presence on earth means that his normative ethic is not abstract or abstruse but is within the grasp of human means. His example and teaching are known today ultimately through the divinely inspired eye-witness accounts in the Bible (Luke 1:1–4; John 20:30–31; 2 Tim 3:16). Normative ethics can be derived from rational and empirical means through observing the world and human conscience, but scripture is the highest authority for Christians as it is the supreme way of knowing God in Christ (Rom 1:20; 2:15; Luke 24:27; Heb 1:1–2). This is not to say that the Bible addresses every contemporary

problem or to deny the difficulties of applying biblical principles across historical and socio-cultural contexts. However, Christ promises fallible Christians the Holy Spirit to empower and unify them in understanding as they seek to follow his word in scripture today (John 16:13; Mark 4:11–12; 2 Cor 4:4–6).

The transcendent divinity and incarnate sonship of Christ are therefore a cornerstone that provide an objective and authoritative ethical framework, meeting the metaphysical problem of how to justify ethics when countering spiritual abuse.

5.2. Jesus is the perfectly holy judge

The second key presupposition that is necessary to combat spiritual abuse is that Jesus Christ is God's holy judge. He alone determines right from wrong and is the absolute standard of God's moral purity (John 8:45–46; 1 Pet 2:22). It is the awesome holiness of God in Christ that provides a norm that determines what is wrong, evil, and abusive in character.

Jesus Christ calls people to be holy as he is holy (Matt 5:48; 1 Pet 1:16). Anything that deviates from his perfectly good character and teaching is evil (John 3:36; 12:48; 13:34), and Christ will eventually judge all people according to his standards for all eternity (Matt 25:31–33; John 5:22; Luke 16:19–31). Christ's virtuous instruction and example should therefore be followed and not only provides a norm, but a 'unified moral field'.[51] In other words, the moral way of Jesus encompasses and supersedes a consequentialist and deontological ethic and includes virtue.

Depending on its nature, abuse might be a violation of the created order of God, who made people in his image to be cared for in families with *dignity* (Gen 1:27–28; Mark 10:1–6; Eph 6:4). Abuse might go against the foundational commands of Christ that prescribe an individual's *duty* to honour God and serve one's neighbours (Mark 12:28–33). The detrimental *consequences* of behaviour might make it abusive because it causes an individual *harm* or contravenes a person's *best interests*, which transcends temporal health or flourishing to include the goal of enjoying an eternal relationship with God (Mark 9:42; Luke 18:15–17; 1 Cor 10:31). Harm might be judged according to a biblical standard of *minimum need*, such as avoiding hypocrisy in leadership (Matt 23:13–33), or a *community norm*, such as showing Christ's sacrificial love to fellow Christians (John 13:34–35). Abuse might also be viewed as an anathema to Christ's life of *virtue* – a life of faith, love, and hope that encompasses action, *intent*, and *motive* (Mark 7:6; Mark 12:29–31; 1 Cor 13:13) – which should characterise the life of all Christians, especially those in church leadership (Matt 20:25–28; 1 Tim 3:1–13).

[51] For the term and a useful theological framework for ethics, see Andrew J. B. Cameron, *Joined-up Life: A Christian Account of How Ethics Works* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 176.

In summary, the God of Jesus Christ meets the moral challenge of spiritual abuse; he addresses every moral dimension, including the heart of human character and being, not reducing morality or personhood to a series of acts, principles, or motives. While Christ's perfect standard is deeply uncomfortable, his holy justice is essential to define a virtuous character and identify abuse.

5.3. Jesus is the gracious redeeming saviour

Although the sonship and holiness of Christ are necessary to present spiritual abuse as objectively wrong, a third presupposition is needed for compassion and the hope of change: the good news, that Jesus is the redeeming saviour.

Christ entered a fallen world, in which there was abuse not simply because of some human inadequacy – an unmet need, misplaced dependence, or ignorance – but owing to the wilful rejection of God by humans in the pursuit of their own desires (Mark 7:20–23; 12:1–12). Such rejection of goodness deserves condemnation, but Christ came in love, not to destroy the world but to save it by dying on a cross to take upon himself the righteous punishment of God (Mark 10:45; 15:24–39). Three days later he rose to life, offering forgiveness and a new way of goodness: internal change bestowed by God's grace, not through external human works (Mark 16:6–7; John 14:6–14; 16:6–15; Eph 2:8–9). Hence, Christ's moral life of virtue is not brought about by rules, discipline, or support – these aid ethical practice but only partly influence the mind, feelings, and behaviour (Rom 7:7; Matt 18:15–20). Christ brings about internal transformation through the Holy Spirit, changing the desires of the heart and creating a new character (Mark 10:26–27; John 3:3). This new life is received through repentance and faith, proceeding from a change of presuppositions and relationship with Christ (Mark 1:15; John 3:18). The beliefs and values of this faith are learnt in practice from the 'Word of God' and the 'People of God' (Mark 3:13–19; 4:1–34).

However, while Christians are graciously granted a holy status before God and spiritual power to change, their sinful nature remains until death and growth in virtue is gradual, as they turn from wrong desires in obedience to Christ (Gal 5:16–18; Phil 2:12–13). Sin therefore explains the presence of abuse in the church, even from genuine Christian leaders. While such sin is deeply troubling, Christ offers the hope of change to the truly repentant, and he promises that one day he will return to destroy all evil and save his people for a life of eternal flourishing in a re-made body and world with him (Matt 24:36-41; John 14:1-4; Rev 21:22–22:5). It is this redemption of Christ – inaugurated but not yet fulfilled – that enables Christians to address the methodological problem of spiritual abuse, proclaiming both the possibility and limitations of individual change, within and affecting the church and society.

Christ's redemption might shape a Christian response to misuses of power in various ways. For example, Christians might seek to guard people against the psychological and emotional harm of abuses of power in church; while simultaneously maintaining a central concern for people's spiritual wellbeing through Christ for eternity. They might propose biblical ecclesiastical principles and rules to protect people from abuses of power; while emphasising that true virtue comes not by law but through the saving grace of Christ, realised partly now and fully in the coming life. They might seek renewal in church culture by gently and lovingly proclaiming Christ crucified and calling people to repent of misuses of power; while accepting that safeguarding measures will still be required until Christ returns to purify his church, because some within the church will resist change and deceive others, even while expressing remorse. Christians might work for better church leadership through teaching the Bible and modelling Christ in selection and discipleship to develop character; while accepting that, even with the best teaching and mentoring, leaders will fall into sin until Christ completely sanctifies his people in eternity. Hence, the redemption of Christ extends the horizons of Christian praxis beyond the secular safeguarding practitioner, from external acts to internal character and from a partial present realisation to a perfect future fulfilment through Christ.

In summary, it is Christ alone who provides Christians with an adequate approach to justify intervention, address virtue, and affect profound change in spiritual abuse cases, while recognising that abuse will occur in this age with even the best safeguards. Oakley and Humphreys acknowledge that 'there are core Christian doctrines that underpin the faith', and there is a 'need to raise awareness of Scripture and sacred texts' to prevent these being manipulated.[52] But, apart from referring to the love of God, these core beliefs are not detailed or clearly related to the fundamental problems presented by spiritual abuse. It could be countered that Christ's divine sonship, holy judgement, and redeeming salvation are assumed in such Christian responses. Thirtyone:eight did later produce a brief theological survey of safeguarding, acknowledging the importance of theology and relating God's justice, care and power to the Christian mandate, motivation, and mission to care for the vulnerable.[53] However, when facing spiritual abuse in a society and church that is increasingly adrift from biblical teaching, it is not enough to assume such truths or relegate theology to an incidental paper; Christ's claims must be

[52] Oakley and Humphreys, *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse*, 45, 135.

[53] Krish Kandiah and Justin Humphreys, 'On Behalf of the Voiceless. A Theology of Safeguarding' (Thirtyone:eight, 2020), https://thirtyoneeight.org/media/2674/theology-of- safeguarding.pdfhttps://thirtyoneeight.org/media/2674/theology-of-safeguarding.pdf.

made explicit, the implications of his call must be spelled out, and the bankruptcy of other alternatives must be lovingly exposed. If Christians effectively bury the rock of Christ under the moss of secular terminology, his goodness will be veiled to suffering and sinful people. If Christians abandon the rock of Jesus for the sand of secular presuppositions, there will be fearfully little defence against a creeping tide of relativism or authoritarianism. In practice, quoting a safeguarding policy does not have the necessary authority of Christ's words in the Bible to counter abusive spiritual justifications. Nor is safeguarding 'the true north of all helpful service the church has to offer'.[54] Rather, proclaiming the true gospel of Christ is the magnetic pole that begets safeguarding in its wake.

Conclusion

We owe a debt of gratitude to the 'watchmen' who have called out abuses of power in the church. This article is not intended to attack the work of Christians who have undertaken this task or to minimise abuse within the church. Instead, it is an appeal to see the underlying moral problem and to recover a Christocentric view. A safeguarding discourse is implicitly moral, and definitions of ethical practice are one weapon in the Christian's arsenal against the immoral misuse of power. However, while well intentioned, it is questionable whether the term or the current definitions of 'spiritual abuse' have the clarity, consensus, or underlying theological convictions necessary to counter abuses of power.[55] By adopting consequentialist notions of abuse and neglecting virtue, the church may promote a deficient norm or sanction leaders of immoral character. Without considering intent or motive, Christians may penalise actions that unintentionally cause harm or allow abuse to be excused as 'unintentional' and fail to challenge prejudiced attitudes. Certainly, Christians must take heed of past safeguarding mistakes and statutory recommendations in cases such as Orkney. But additionally, they must not remove, relativise, or relegate biblical theology and offer only safeguarding procedures as solutions to abuse in churches. If they do, they will struggle to justify their moral framework and intervention against abuse or fail to articulate a means of profound personal transformation, spiritual wellbeing, and salvation.

Our age may be hostile to biblical truth, but this is an essential tool to combat abuse in churches because it is through the scriptures that we can clearly and authoritatively know Jesus Christ. The divine Son of God provides us with an objective and authoritative rebuttal of abuse and false spiritualities; the holy judge recognises abuse as a problem of being, as well

[54] Kandiah and Humphreys, 'On Behalf of the Voiceless', 4.

[55] The term, 'abuse of power by Christians' or 'in church' seems less ambiguous and contentious.

as wrong action and harmful consequences; and the redeeming saviour can both transform abusers and heal victims through hearing his word in the Bible from his people, for a life of everlasting flourishing. The abuse of power in the church is more than a failure of definition or procedure; it points to a profound moral and spiritual problem. Ultimately, to avert an ethical crisis, Christian leaders must repent and return to the biblical foundation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

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From Prisoner to Prince: The Joseph story in biblical theology
Samuel Emadi
London: Apollos, 2022 (ISBN: 9781789743947 pb, 188pp)

The story of Joseph was once considered a textually granted christological type by nearly all exegetes. Yet over two and a half centuries of higher

criticism has left it as little more than an editorial addendum to the Book of Genesis, a narrative bridge through which an unskilled redactor managed to relocate the family of Abraham from Canaan to Egypt, or 'an isolated literary composition without any significant literary, theological or biblical-theological connection to the rest of Genesis (7). What is more, rather than Joseph being a type of Christ, scholars such as Westermann considered this hermeneutical scheme a 'time-conditioned' adaptation (13) that was imposed on the narrative by the early church.

In the face of this, Samuel Emadi's biblical theology of Joseph is nothing less than ambitious. First, he seeks to reincorporate the Joseph narrative as the organic resolution of arising themes in early Genesis. Secondly, he seeks to find signs of Joseph as being a Messianic type *within the Old Testament*. Thirdly, he seeks to demonstrate how the New Testament incorporates the Joseph Messianic type as being fulfilled in Jesus. And in large part, I would argue he succinctly succeeds in this efforts.

Emadi's first bit of groundwork is to draw on Gentry and Wellum to rehabilitate typology by defining a type's central features as follows: 'Scripture must attest that a proposed type, rightly understood in covenantal context, is a historical person, event or institution anticipating an escalated reality' (29). The second bit of groundwork is to use the *tôlêdôt* formula– the idea that Genesis is divided into ten sections, each beginning with the word *tôlêdôt* ('generations') – to argue for an intentional cohesive narrative structure throughout Genesis. The purpose of the *tôlêdôt* structure is to trace God's promise through each generation; with this in place, Joseph is no longer seen as an addendum, but rather the 'final plot piece' (36) of Genesis' narrative arc.

On the basis of this, Emadi moves to the main part of his argument. First, Joseph as the kingly figure is the partial reversal of Adam's failure to be the royal vassal he was created to be, and the partial fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham regarding the royal seed. 'God promised Abraham a dynasty, a royal seed. Joseph is the first of that seed, a new Adam mediating God's blessings to the nations – a beloved son and servant king' (56). Emadi also explores the relationship between the alternating Joseph and Judah narratives in Genesis 37–50 as demonstrating how Joseph is a type of the later Judahite king. Furthermore, Joseph resolves the ongoing problem of sibling rivalry throughout Genesis from Cain and Able onwards, through the theme of reconciliation.

The stage is now set for seeing Joseph as a messianic type of the true Israel throughout the rest of the Old Testament. In both Psalm 105 and the remarkable parallels with the story of Daniel (see the excellent the tables on pp. 110–1) this theme is developed, which then naturally leads to the use of Joseph in the New Testament (especially Acts 7). Although I was less convinced by Emadi's arguments for messianic allusions to

the Joseph story in the parable of the tenants, I can see how this can work within the wider Israel-narrative. I feel less confident with Emadi's apparent dismissal of aspects of redactional criticism (for instance, simply declaring 'Moses' as the author of Genesis – something which I feel needs tempering). Nevertheless, this is a minor quibble in an otherwise compelling tract.

Joshua Penduck, Newcastle under Lyme, UK

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