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EDITORIAL

Romans 13 is a vital passage for the church throughout the ages, as is all Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17). Verse 1 commands “every person . . . to be in subjection to the governing authorities” because “those which exist are established by God.” Christians are destined for an eternal inheritance; therefore, believers are to submit to the authorities, love one another, and “behave properly.” Romans 13 addresses the relationship of “every person” with regard to the state. “Subjection to the governing authorities” is especially applicable to the Christian because each believer has a unique relationship to the state. The believer’s citizenship means that Christians have unique spiritual responsibilities (vv. 8-14) that are not obligatory for “every person.” Nevertheless, such citizenship does not lessen responsibilities to the state (vv. 1-7). The believer has solemn obligations to the state and the officials who govern the state.

Romans 13:1-12 teaches that the legal ordinances and statutes of the government must be obeyed because God ordains the powers. However, when governments demand obedience to unjust laws, then submission to corrupt or immoral practices is not an option. Obedience to the law of God may necessitate civil disobedience (sc. an assiduous, peaceful, and public noncompliance of a governmental law or policy, with the intent of affecting social transformation). The motivation for civil disobedience is always assiduous, as opposed to being merely pragmatic.

When obedience to the law of God necessitates civil disobedience (i.e. the only means of faithfulness to God requires such behavior), one must be willing to accept the consequences of those actions. Scripture does command submission to government regulations that are intended to protect and punish. God did not establish government to control or impede any of the doctrinal beliefs of his people, nor the resultant morality based upon those divine truths. God created the church and state with specific responsibilities; nevertheless, each institution is to function within the particular realm that the Lord has established. *Charles A. Clough’s article* helps the church to respond to the state’s usurping of God’s authority to define marriage. The proposal therein is not civil disobedience (although that might be a necessity if the church does not function as “the pillar and support of the truth”); rather, Clough suggests how the church can proclaim the truths of God’s Word and avoid discriminatory accusations that would likely result in judicial punishment.

Christians are both a citizen of earth and also a citizen of heaven. Philippians 3:20-21 reminds the believer that his/her “citizenship is in heaven.” The believer’s citizenship is in heaven, and therefore, the Christian may appeal to the Savior (just as the Philippians could appeal to Rome for protection). The believer is also to live with anticipation and eagerness for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the habitual perspective of the Christian whose citizenship is in heaven. *Ray M. Wenger’s article* clarifies this aspect of the believer’s citizenship and how church saints can be alert for the Lord’s coming. Thankfully, there is much information in this spring issue of the *Journal of Dispensational Theology* “to exhort us unto godliness” (1 Tim 4:7-10).

**RESPONDING TO GOVERNMENT’S DECLARATION
THAT “MARRIAGE” IS MERELY A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT:
A Proposal to Reform the Wedding Service
in Bible-Believing Churches**

Charles A. Clough

Due to a very successful crusade waged by certain activists, the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of marriage as a divinely designed relationship exclusively between one man and one woman has been virtually criminalized. Expression of that concept in the public square — whether in school, in government agencies (including the military), and in business — now meets with overwhelming disdain and even judicial punishment. Underlying this action by civil authorities is the assumption that marriage is merely a social construct that can and ought to be changed in response to public opinion. Therefore, two mutually contradictory notions of marriage — a mutable social construct and an immutable divine institution — appear in the wedding service when the pastor or other church officer pronounces the couple man and wife, while acting as an agent of both the state and the Lord Jesus Christ. *The proposal put forth in this article is that Bible-believing churches in those civil jurisdictions which have written the biblical view of marriage beyond their law must now respond by separating the civil portion of marriage from the ecclesiastical portion and eliminate it from the wedding service. The wedding service itself must now include a robust public defense of one-man-one-woman marriage based upon God’s design.* Appendices supply suggested topics to include in such a defense, a letter of official notice to the state government officials of the church’s new wedding procedure, and a sample exchange with government authorities regarding this matter of marriage.

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INTRODUCTION

Activists for expanding the definition of marriage beyond that of one man and one woman have succeeded in convincing political leadership to employ their legal authority for forcibly imposing this new marriage concept upon society. They have skillfully employed adjectives like “fair,” “socially just,” and “equal” in indiscriminate fashion. Their arguments have been emotionally appealing in spite of their logical fallacies. The end result of their campaign not only intimidates many into silence but also sets up Bible-believing Christians who express their disagreement in public as “bigoted” and “self-righteous” and subject to dismissal from their jobs and/or liable for criminal charges.¹

The wedding service is the central occasion when the concept of marriage ought to be explained and implemented in an unambiguous manner. For it to be intelligible, the officiating authority has to remind those present of the institution’s essentials. After all, those present are being asked to witness the couple’s public oath taking and should therefore understand what the relationship is that they are promising to support. An explanation of the difference between the state’s so-called “progressive” view that marriage is a mutable social construct subject to changing definition and the biblical view that marriage is an immutable divinely-designed institution defined by God once-and-for-all should now become part of the wedding service. Consistent with that explanation, civil licensing should be excluded from the wedding service. The pastor or other officiating person should no longer act as an agent of the state lest he lend unspoken endorsement to the false precepts now infiltrating civil

¹ Federal employees and members of the military who believe the Bible are increasing targets of anti-Christian bigotry. In a recent example, gay activists demanded that the USAF Academy dismiss one of their civilian analysts merely because he worked on his own time for Exodus (a ministry helping homosexuals seeking to follow the Lord to leave the lifestyle) and Focus on the Family (Stephen Losey, “Academy Stands by Controversial ‘Ex-Gay’ Official” [article online] [AirForceTimes, 20 December 2013, accessed 23 January 2014] available from <http://www.airforcetimes.com/article/20131220/NEWS/312200018/Academy-stands-by-controversial-ex-gay-official>). Recent examples of criminal charges against Bible-believing business men and women seeking to live within the dictates of their conscience regarding the definition of marriage include the following: Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cakeshop (Denver, CO); Barronelle Stutzman of Arlene’s Flowers (Richland, WA); Aaron and Melissa Klein of SweetCakes by Mellissa (Gresham, OR); and, Blaine Adamson of Hands on Originals (Lexington, KY).

marriage. All people present at the service, therefore, should see only the correct view of marriage enacted.

To help Christian leadership understand why reformation of the wedding service is needed the following sections of this proposal will: (1) critique the concept of the new expanded view of marriage; (2) review the manipulative use of terminology that led to this view; (3) analyze the particular paradigm responsible for altering the definition of marriage; and (4) note the potential legal threat to a pastor and his church if they do not separate the civil from the ecclesiastical portions of marriage. Hopefully, by the conclusion of this work, church leadership will be prepared to remind those present in a wedding service of why it is a service exclusively for one man and one woman while minimizing the likelihood of this feature being labeled as bigotry and self-righteousness.

THE TENSION BETWEEN THE SPHERE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY AND THE SPHERE OF BIBLICALLY-BASED LOCAL CHURCH AUTHORITY

God instituted marriage long before his institution of civil authority. Marriage as an original creation ordinance has prior claim to civil authority. Civil authority came after the later events of the Fall and collapse of antediluvian civilization; it arose when God delegated to humanity the ethical responsibility to execute temporal judgment against the more overt forms of evil in order to preserve society (Gen 9:1-7; cf. Rom 13:1-7). Biblical history reports, however, that mankind soon perverted this divine institution into a tool of social engineering toward a “progressive” civilization as conceived independently of God (Gen 11:1-9, “We will make a name for ourselves”). God responded historically by creating a counterculture through Abraham as a conduit of his revelation (Gen 12:1-3, “I . . . will make your name great;” Rom 3:2; 9:4). Over the four thousand years since this calling of Abraham, tension has persisted between human culture – deceived and empowered by the dark spiritual powers (Eph 2:1-3) – and communities of those trying to adhere to the authority of God’s special revelation. The tension manifested itself in the interactions of the great Gentile powers of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome (first with ancient Israel and later with the early church).

Having rejected the ultimate authority of God’s revelation preserved in Scripture, the pagan perversion of civil government inevitably

attempts to relocate that ultimate authority in itself.² Authority has to reside somewhere because it is an inescapable concept. Pagan state institutions, therefore, cannot avoid establishing a counterfeit religious faith to safeguard their political authority. The ancient Pharaohs were considered mediators between heaven and earth, which contributed greatly to the stability of ancient Egypt and resistance to Moses’ call for a Jewish exodus. As one learns from the biblical books of Daniel and Esther, the Babylonian and Persian kings thought nothing with regard to combining counterfeit religion with totalitarian civil government, using the former to solidify the latter. Even within ancient Israel, apostate Jewish kings created their own state religions to help insure their reigns against the challenge of competing Yahwehism (e.g. King Jeroboam ‘s reasoning in 1 Kgs 12:26-33, and the state-imposed Baalism of Ahab and Jezebel in 1 Kgs 16:30-33). They reasoned that it was better for subjects to owe allegiance to the king than to God, thus granting absolute control in the hands of the king!

After Christ established his church, the tension continued. Early Christians were not persecuted, threatened with fines, punishment, and death because they had taken armaments to use against the Caesars but because they refused to accord ultimate authority to the state. German evangelical pastors who refused to submit their church proceedings to the Nazi Party were jailed, just as believers have suffered and continue to suffer under Communist regimes (e.g. China). The tension similarly continues today under Muslim regimes that demand submission to the counterfeit religion of Islam, upon pain of death.

Christians should not be surprised, therefore, that federal, state, and local governments of the United States increasingly demand that Christians submit to their authority to pervert the divine institution of marriage. Becoming increasingly like pagan states of the past, they cannot tolerate the notion that marriage is founded in God’s design of man and woman because as such it lies beyond the state’s authority and therefore cannot be changed.³ Notice, for example, the very title of Maryland’s

² The term “pagan” here is used in a technical way to mean the disbelief in the revelational authority of the Old and New Testaments and the metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical consequences that reshape society. The definition is the same as that used by *Encyclopedia Britannica* editor, Mortimer J. Adler in his book *How To Think About God: A Guide for the 20th-Century Pagan* (New York: MacMillan, 1980). Since everyone utilizes an ultimate authority, that authority never disappears; it is simply relocated.

³ The motivational parallels here with the Old Testament “sin of Jeroboam” are becoming remarkably obvious. Fay Voshell recently wrote on the

destructive 2012 legislation: the “Civil Marriage Protection Act.” Following the age-old Babel vision of civil authority as the definer and redeemer of society, the Maryland legislature characterized its actions as “protecting” marriage. Marriage in Maryland, legislators argued, was to be protected against the transcendent threat of being defined once-and-for-all by an Authority higher than themselves.

Defenders of Maryland’s “Civil Marriage Protection Act” and other similar legislation have stated that pastors and their associated churches ought not to feel threatened. The legislation, they claim, contains “exception clauses” that permit churches to conduct wedding services in accord with their faith in one-man-one-woman marriage. They affirm that a pluralistic society must accommodate different beliefs. So, what is the problem? The issue is that by granting such exception clauses, the state implicitly assumes that it has the authority to regulate church officers who preside at weddings. Moreover, it asserts that the state has magnanimously granted a special privilege to church leaders (for the time being). The threat is not idle. Gay rights organizations recently demanded withdrawal of such an exception clause in proposed same-sex marriage legislation in New Jersey.⁴ Once the state claims the Babelesque authority to redefine marriage, it has denied that marriage is an unchangeable institution with a

American Thinker website regarding the federal government’s health care assault upon religious beliefs: “In direct contradiction of the First Amendment, which forbids the establishing of a state religion, the Obama administration is busily doing just that. . . . It is establishing the faith of secular statism, a religion currently characterized by the tenets of radical progressivism. Statism is rapidly becoming the only faith in America allowed to operate with complete freedom. . . . Government enforcement of the religion of statism, which includes the belief in the supreme higher power and authority of an absolute State, is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Whatever the eventual fate of the sisters, their case is an example of our administration trying to force state religion down the throats of Christians” (“Establishing a U.S. State Religion” [article online] [*American Thinker*, 10 January 2014, accessed 23 January 2014] available from http://www.americanthinker.com/2014/01/establishing_a_us_state_religion.html).

⁴ Democratic Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg explained that certain gay-rights activists “don’t want any kind of religious exemption” (Ken Klukowski, “NJ Stalls Same-Sex Marriage Bill to Kill Religious Protections” [article online] [*Breitbart*, 18 December 2013, accessed 9 January 2014] available from <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Government/2013/12/18/War-on-Christians-in-New-Jersey>). *They are demanding that the law allow for full and vigorous prosecution under anti-discrimination and public accommodation laws of anyone who will not embrace and celebrate homosexual marriage.*

prior authority claim to that of the state. Marriage has become a mere social construct under the protection and social engineering of the almighty state. What is more, there may soon come a day when this social construct will have to be further “protected” against the allegedly unfair, unjust, and unequal notion of one-man-one-woman being promulgated by Bible-believing churches.⁵

A frightening sign of that mentality can be witnessed at the federal level in the 2013 Supreme Court decision concerning the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Although the Court refused to redefine marriage for the nation, Justice Kennedy (who wrote for the 5-4 majority opinion) reasoned that support for one-man-one-woman marriage prior to 2000 was based upon bigotry (!). Justice Scalia in a scathing dissent wrote:

⁵ The recent pluralist argument that the state must accommodate beliefs that go to the extreme of rejecting the philosophical common law foundation of the United States Constitution and its laws is itself a radically innovative philosophical dogmatism. Alan Sears, president of Alliance Defending Freedom, wrote in his introduction to Patrick Henry College professor Robert Stacey’s book *Sir William Blackstone: The Common Law* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press, 2008) as follows: “The common law, contrary to what critics have said, did not establish Christianity as an oppressive state religion. Blackstone wrote that the law of England (and eventually that of America), ‘gives liberty, rightly understood, that is, protection, to a Jew, a Turk, or a heathen, as well as to those that profess the true religion of Christ.’ Those founding fathers that were not devoted Christians still shared the understanding of the religious underpinnings of the common law and accepted the fact that our country was being founded on Christian principles. This was true religious liberty, a freedom that protected all people of faith and favored no religion above another, but *acknowledged that all law came from God, not from man*” (p. 14, emphasis supplied). Like every belief system, pluralism contains its own ultimate authority, and this recent form of legal pluralism tries to extend the notion of accommodation to include both beliefs in the Creator/creature distinction and pagan denials of that distinction. In the first view, the Creator is the source of law; in the second, man is its source. The state cannot logically accommodate the two mutually conflicting concepts. Consequently, states like Maryland and others that redefine marriage have shifted the basis of their laws to a pagan belief system under which law is derived wholly from man. There is then no transcendental standard to inform the conscience regarding a law. Conscience thus cannot claim any higher authority than individual, subjective opinion or a statistical compilation of such opinion. All citizens of these states regardless of their personal faith are *now compelled to live their lives in the public square as functional pagans*.

To defend traditional marriage is not to condemn, demean, or humiliate those who would prefer other arrangements. . . . To hurl accusations so casually demeans this institution. In the majority's judgment, any resistance to its holding is beyond the pale of reasoned disagreement. . . . All that, for simply supporting an Act that did no more than codify an aspect of marriage that had been unquestioned in virtually all societies for virtually all of human history. It is one thing for a society to elect change; it is another for a court of law to impose change by adjudging those who oppose it *hostes humani generis*, enemies of the human race. . . . I promise you this: The only thing that will "confine" the Court's holding is its sense of what it can get away with.⁶

The traditional view of marriage (i.e. the biblical view) will undoubtedly be deemed prejudicial and subject to increasingly aggressive suppression by all levels of civil government in every area of social life.

THE MANIPULATIVE USE OF TERMINOLOGY TO MAKE BIBLICAL MARRIAGE APPEAR UNFAIR, UNJUST, AND UNEQUAL

Political causes have for years used words manipulatively as slogans because words have a feature that extends beyond their definition. Over forty years ago, Francis Schaeffer (in examining the example of twentieth century theology) delved into the manipulative use of words. "Every word has two parts," he wrote. "There is the dictionary definition and there is the connotation. Words may be synonymous by definition but have a completely different connotation. . . . So when the new theology uses such words [as the *cross*], without definition, an illusion of meaning is given which is pragmatically useful in arousing deep motivations. This is something beyond emotion. An *illusion of communication and content* is given so that, when a word is used in this deliberately undefined way, the hearer 'thinks' he knows what it means"⁷ (emphasis original).

⁶ As cited by Ryan Anderson in his essay entitled "What Three Dissents Signal for Marriage's Future" [article online] (RedState, 2 July 2013, accessed 9 January 2014) available from <http://www.redstate.com/users/ryantanderson>. Anderson is a co-author of the book *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (Encounter, 2012) with Princeton University scholars Sherif Girgis and Robert P George.

⁷ Francis A Schaeffer, *The God Who is There* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1968) 57.

Manipulative use of words for the sake of their socio-political effect is a favorite means of propaganda because it bypasses the conscious reasoning process and therefore escapes ethical evaluation. One can detect this kind of word usage by noticing the lack of substantive argument in the immediate context. Words are repeated with unvarying repetition to enlist their connotation power and without relating their dictionary meanings to the present subject. Adjectives like "fair," "just," and "equal" have been very effective in rendering biblical marriage suspect in the perspective of public opinion because they create the illusion of a moral superiority over the Bible. When one asks why biblical marriage is not fair, not just, or not equal, one usually receives the response "it just isn't." When homosexual activists are the compelling impetus for redefinition of marriage, the response is a little more thoughtful: "It excludes loving, same-sex couples." In Maryland, one favorite tactic that persuaded hesitant legislators was the claim that defining marriage to be only between one man and one woman was unfair to the children of same-sex couples who had little or nothing to do with the same-sex status of their (adoptive) parents. Who wants to be unfair to children? The tactics worked only because the general public repeatedly hears the adjectives "fair," "just," and "equal" manipulatively used to arouse sympathy, and thinks that a legitimate moral argument has been made to alter the meaning of the noun "marriage."

Of the three adjectives, "equal" is perhaps the most effective, as in the following assertion: "I believe in marriage equality." The statement is frequently used throughout today's political spectrum to enlist the powerful connotation of the Declaration of Independence (sterilized, of course, of any notion that equality comes from God's creation) in juxtaposition with the inequality of American slavery and its aftermath. Further manipulative power comes from the growth of radical egalitarianism that has developed from the so-called Enlightenment and which was so dramatically expressed in the slogan of the French Revolution of 1789: "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." History quickly proved, however, that the liberty of the Revolution quickly became anarchy, equality became the condition only of those outside of the reigning elite, and fraternity survived only within feuding political groups. Applied to the contemporary marriage debate, the word "equal" conveys all these connotations, which give an *appearance* of profundity to the cause without an explicit argument for it.⁸

⁸ For a recent example of how one Congressman categorized the traditional marriage view as "marriage discrimination," but was properly challenged on his manipulative vocabulary by one of his evangelical constituents, see Appendix 3.

Appearance or not, claiming that marriage ought to include other unions besides that of one man and one woman is a radical innovation in human history (as Justice Scalia noted) and therefore warrants critical examination. Without such an examination, it remains a merely arbitrary claim. Just saying something is equal, even if it is repeated a hundred times, does not make it equal. Why, for example, must the relationship of loving same-sex couples be classified as a marriage? Could not the state have devised another term for a contract regarding that relationship? Is that sort of relationship really *equal* to a heterosexual marriage in its function in society? Does the act of sodomy express the sexual design of the male and female bodies equally as well as normal intercourse expresses it? Are same-sex parents able to provide the diverse male and female perspectives for training their adopted children *equal* to child training by heterosexual parents? If a feeling of love qualifies a homosexual couple for marriage, why does not that feeling also qualify any kind or number of people for marriage: polygamists, for example? If the terms “love” and “equal” can be repeated enough times in public discourse to persuade civil authorities to equate homosexual and heterosexual couples’ relationships, why cannot these same terms also be used to equate, say, polygamist multiple-partner relationships? Thought-provoking questions are rarely provided and when they are asked, they are not seriously answered.⁹

What the endless use of connotation words hides is an argument that resembles an attempt to change the sport of football by arguing that baseball players are “equal” to football players so they ought to be allowed

⁹ During their campaign for same-sex marriage, the gay lobbyists and their media allies, such as *The Baltimore Sun*, ridiculed the “slippery slope” argument that such redefinition would grant freedom to any conceivable “loving” relationship. However, in December 2013, the federal judge in the United States District Court in Utah ruled that the state’s anti-polygamy law is unconstitutional (in spite of the U.S. Supreme Court’s DOMA decision that refused federal interference with existing state marriage laws). Albert Mohler commented, “If marriage can be redefined in terms of gender, it can easily be redefined in terms of number” (“Moral Mayhem Multiplied—Now, It’s Polygamy’s Turn” [article online] [AlbertMohler.com, 16 December 2013, accessed 9 January 2014] available from <http://www.albertmohler.com/2013/12/16/moral-mahem-multiplied-now-its-polygamys-turn>). In addition to Mohler’s notion, marriage can now be defined in terms of non-human partners. A French city mayor recently blessed a marriage between a woman and a bridge! See how far this foolishness can be applied in the following: Sara Malm, “Rock-solid Love” [article online] (MailOnline, 5 July 2013, accessed 23 January 2014) available from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2356774/Australian-woman-Jodi-Rose-marries-bridge-France-gets-mayors-blessing.html>.

to play football with baseball rules. As matters now stand, it would claim, baseball players are unjustly discriminated against by their exclusion from football, and such exception is not “fair.” The truth is if one wants to play football, one adheres to the rules of football, not baseball. If one wants to call a relationship “marriage,” one man and one woman are required, not some other combination. God has designed the human language with nouns in order to discriminate between different things and give them stable meanings. Excluding baseball-only players from football in no way demeans their value as human beings; it is simply the consistent use of the noun, football.

The political pressure to deny biblical marriage could have originated from several groups; it could have come from polygamous or pedophilic peoples. Indeed, in one sense, it already existed in the pressure from those who campaigned years ago for liberalizing divorce (and thus allowing serial polygamy), although that campaign focused upon the contravention of the marriage contract rather than upon the more overt changing of its content. Any group that attempts to alter the traditional legal definition is essentially arguing against the biblical notion of an unchangeable marriage institution. As one knows, however, the political pressure did not originate from any of those groups.

The group that accomplished the overthrow and transformation of marriage was the homosexual lobby. Their success in radically shifting public opinion in their favor came from a skilled six-point strategy articulated in two publications: an article in 1987 (“The Overhauling of Straight America”) and a book in 1989 (*After the Ball*). The homosexual lobby has executed those six points with precision:

1. Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and as often as possible;
2. Portray gays as victims, not aggressive challengers;
3. Give homosexual protectors a “just” cause;
4. Make gays look good;
5. Make victimizers look bad; and,
6. Solicit funds (i.e. get corporate America and major foundations to provide financial support to the homosexual cause).¹⁰

¹⁰ The authors were Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen. Madsen wrote the earlier article under the pseudonym Erastes Pill. See documentation and complete discussion of this well-executed strategy to transform public perceptions in *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2003) by Alan Sears and Craig Osten. With its apparent victory for social acceptance, the agenda now is affecting the public schools by convincing prepubescent elementary students to begin experimenting with homosexuality. The manipulative use of words is evident with terms, such as

The execution of the six-point strategy has not always been limited to the manipulative use of terminology to give the illusion of communication. Occasionally, it has also utilized violent mob-like events, personal threats, destruction of property, and financial blackmail (behavior reminiscent of the mobs of Sodom recorded in Gen 19:1-13 and of any people who are spiritually without control). The tactics reveal the true spirit behind the movement. Violent attacks against Christianity always occur when Satan's false teaching fails to alter believers' adherence to biblical authority.

The response by churches to homosexuals' strategy to gain acceptance has varied from a lack of grace among some conservative groups to total capitulation by liberal ones. Sadly, one extremist group from Kansas pickets funerals of fallen American soldiers with signs that blame their death upon the nation's public toleration of homosexuality. Deceived by the gay lobby's claim that one cannot distinguish homosexuals from their homosexual disposition, some conservative congregations have reacted with a kind of ostracism. They have unwittingly denied the biblical distinction between a sinner – as a person made in God's image for whom Christ died and provides his transforming work – and that person's particular sin pattern. Authentic biblical theology, however, does better than that.

Liberal groups, accepting the propaganda that homosexual identity is unchanging, have responded by embracing both the homosexual and his or her sin. To justify that kind of acceptance they have had to modify their theology to exalt God's love to the exclusion of his other attributes.¹¹

"anti-bullying" and "making schools safe for all students," that create the illusion of moral superiority. Use of such terminology deliberately distracts observers from ethical evaluation of such projects.

¹¹ For years, liberal churches have been adopting this practice regarding other matters. Therefore, the Presbyterian Church USA excluded the hymn "In Christ Alone" from their new hymnal because members objected to the line "On that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied" and wanted the writers (Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend) to replace the last clause with "The love of God was magnified." Mary Louise Bringle, the chairwoman for the hymnal committee, explained in the August 2013 issue of *The Christian Century* magazine that the committee did not want to claim that Jesus' death on the cross was an atoning sacrifice needed to assuage God's anger toward sin. Love here is clearly divorced from a justice based in God's revealed essence when, ironically, the same Presbyterian Church USA has been involved in numerous political campaigns in the name of "justice." Thankfully, Getty and Townsend refused to change the hymn

Liberals apparently forget that the greatest act of love in cosmic history was the Cross whereupon love fulfilled all righteousness and justice with a substitutionary atonement. Note the balance in Romans 3:25-26 which preserves the righteousness of God while allowing an expression of his love. Biblical love is not an ethically void sentiment.

EXAMINING THE UNDERLYING LOGIC OF THE CASE FOR FULL PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY

In contemporary culture, the denial of biblical marriage is based entirely upon the underlying homosexual rationale. To defend biblical marriage during a wedding service, therefore, the pastor needs to understand that rationale. Wedding attendees need to appreciate why one affirms one-man-one-woman marriage in spite of widespread accommodation of the homosexual agenda by federal, state, and local bureaucracies, major corporations, and public school curricula. The dispute is not because Christians “hate” homosexuals;¹² rather, it is because the homosexual lobby’s case (when removed of the superficial connotation words) is flawed logically and ethically, in addition to being hateful of Scriptural authority.

Fortunately, in recent years, increasing numbers of Christians are addressing the issues and legally defending the freedom to adhere to the biblical ethic as Christian citizens.¹³ Ed Vitagliano summarized what he calls the “gay paradigm” that forms the basis for the homosexual agenda. He wrote, “This juggernaut has found its success due to the clear and cogent argument it has employed: Homosexuality is natural, moral and healthy, and thus it should be accepted by all fair-minded people. . . . Most Christians are completely unprepared to confront the logic of this

so the Presbyterian Church USA exercised its anti-biblical dogmatism by omitting it from their hymnal.

¹² The silly idea that because one ethically disagrees with someone’s behavior, one must hate them is easily refuted by observing parental disagreement with their children’s behavior. Do parents “hate” their children because they differ with their children’s choices? Moreover, this idea is self-refuting. Homosexuals ethically disagree with those of biblical faith so they must hate them. They make conclusions in exactly the same manner as they accuse others of doing.

¹³ See, for example, the excellent compendium compiled by Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), especially chapter 7 addressing marriage and the law (pp. 213-44).

paradigm. . . .”¹⁴ Summarizing his analysis and modifying it slightly, one may achieve three propositions that express the underlying logic.

P1: Homosexual feelings are natural.¹⁵

P2: What is natural is moral.

P3: What is moral ought to be publicly expressible and not repressed.

Following the advice of the book of Proverbs, one should examine these three propositions in two ways. *First*, Proverbs 26:5 reads, “Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.”¹⁶ Christians are directed to do an internal critique of claimed beliefs. Believers are to listen to the fool lest they misunderstand him and respond prematurely (cf. Prov 18:13); then, one is to contemplate the beliefs (i.e. ponders things from the other’s viewpoint), and discern logical problems in that perspective, including any absurd consequences that would result from it. The Lord made use of this form of reasoning in Isaiah 41:21-23. Paul used it to challenge some in the Corinthian church who claimed that the resurrection was not integral to the Christian faith. He demonstrated that their position contradicted itself (1 Cor 15:12-19). Following this procedure, one may then question whether the three core propositions logically support the public impression given by the homosexual lobby’s six-point strategy.

An Internal Critique of P1

Does the statement “homosexual feelings are natural” belong to a general class of statements “X feelings are natural,” or is it a particular statement applicable only to homosexual feelings? If a general class, does it include all kinds of sexual feelings? Does it also include all kinds of non-sexual feelings? If so, then an extensive variety of feelings – heterosexual desires

¹⁴ Ed Vitagliano, “Piercing the Gay Paradigm,” *AFA Journal* 37 (September 2013): 8, 10-11.

¹⁵ The noun “feelings” is used as a class label for the varied and usually undefined terminology used in this debate which would also include terms such as “attractions,” “orientation,” “disposition,” “desires,” etc.

¹⁶ All quotes included herein are from the *New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997). The author herein is indebted to Dr. Greg Bahnsen who in his various lectures and writings identified the application of these texts in Proverbs for internal and external apologetic critiques.

to fornicate, anger, coveting, desire to dominate, etc. – must also be included. All feelings would then appear to be *equal* in the sense that they are all *natural* according to P1. What would be the outcome of applying P2 and P3 to this entire class of natural feelings? Not many would accept the absurd consequences that ensue from this reasoning, so P1 must be a particular statement applicable only to homosexual feelings. However, if P1 is a particular statement, it implies that homosexual feelings are natural in a manner in which not all other feelings are natural. How so? P1 suffers from *ambiguity*. The terms "feeling" and "nature" are used imprecisely.¹⁷

Important in understanding P1 is the matter of determinism. Unfortunately, there is a disadvantage at this point in the examination of P1 as a consequence of its inherent ambiguity. If such feelings actually determine behavior, is one concerned with determinism in all human feelings or just in homosexual feelings? One should try again to understand P1 as making a claim regarding all human feelings. Are all human feelings compulsive or merely tempting of behavior? If compulsive, there is little difference between a feeling and a behavior. One would then have no real freedom to choose whether or not to act upon a feeling. Behavior in this case is merely the response to a biochemical stimulus, and this conclusion would invalidate all rules because law assumes that citizens have freedom of choice and are responsible. Society acts as though most human feelings or desires are only enticing of behavior (i.e. freedom of choice exists between desires and behavior).

Consequently, one may also ask concerning the specific feeling or desire of same-sex attraction. Is that specific desire compulsive or merely an enticement? Whichever decision is made, homosexual feeling cannot be said to be *equal* to *all* other natural human feelings; it can be equal only to compulsive feelings or to temptations but not to both. P1 is so ambiguous it

¹⁷ The same problem occurs when neo-Darwinian evolution is introduced into the discussion as a supporting proposition for P1. Since man is said to be a highly evolved animal, human behavioral characteristics are often thought to be a sort of evolutionary legacy. Homoerotic behavior is observed throughout the animal world. Therefore, the reasoning is that homosexual behavior in man is indeed natural. However, Biologist Kevin Anderson identified two problems here. First, "various forms of rape, pedophilia, incest, theft and murder occur in the animal world. Does that give us a justification for the normalcy of these behaviors as well?" Second, "overlooked in these arguments is that actual same-sex copulation between animals is rare. While various animals may display forms of homoerotic behavior (at least defined by the human researcher), the human version of homosexual intercourse is far from widespread in the animal world" (Kevin Anderson, "Not So Gay," *Creation Research Society Journal* 48 [Winter 2012]: 3, 199ff).

does not say one way or the other. Although scientists have studied genetics and brain chemistry for a link with homosexuality, no significant connection has been identified, just as a significant connection between genetics and behavior (in general) has never been found.¹⁸ Humans appear to have enough freedom-of-choice to be held responsible for most of their behavior.

The internal critique of P1 has found that its *ambiguity* does not distinguish homosexual feelings from any other human feelings, and that failure leads to two problems. *First*, either homosexual feelings are uniquely natural in some undefined way, or all human feelings are natural, including outright criminal desires. *Second*, either homosexual feelings are biochemically determined (i.e. compulsive) in a way that distinguishes them from other ordinary human desires, or not. If not, then they are merely enticements and homosexuals have as much freedom-of-choice regarding them as mankind has regarding all feelings. One has a right to ask a question of P1. Are homosexual feelings different from other human feelings or not? If so, how?

An Internal Critique of P2

To argue that something is moral for everyone is to assume: (1) there is freedom-of-choice; and, (2) there exists a universal moral standard by which to evaluate that choice. At this point, one must clarify the ambiguity in P1. If homosexual feelings are compulsive, then an ethical standard would no longer apply any more than it would apply to a birth defect. Compulsory behavior is ethical only in the sense that it cannot be condemned, but it is not ethical in the sense of satisfying some positive moral standard. However, homosexuals are not campaigning for the kind of acceptance accorded to those with birth defects. They want the kind of acceptance like that accorded to moral heterosexuals. Therefore, P2 makes sense only if homosexual desires are non-compulsive temptations. However, if they are genuine temptations, then choice exists, and homosexuals have the freedom to choose or not choose to act upon their desires. If that is true, then escape from unwanted bondage to such powerful feelings might be possible with certain therapeutic aids (something that the activists adamantly oppose).¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Anderson recounted how repugnant to homosexual activists is the idea that change from homosexuality is possible. "Masters and Johnson (1979) stated that 'reparative therapy' was often effective for individuals who wanted to change.

Moreover, if P2 is a universal claim involving free choice, it has to assume that a universal moral standard exists for all people. Where is the implied moral standard in P2 originating? Since the biblical claim of God's revealed ethical standards has been rejected, the standard must be derived from man who is thought to be "the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving."²⁰ P2 here blunders into the "is-ought" fallacy. One cannot derive a universal ethical standard (an "ought") from one's limited experience of reality in a universe without revelation from God (an "is"). The only way to do it might be to posit some sort of self-evident truth, as Adler has demonstrated.²¹ The idea in P2 that all feelings – because they are natural – are therefore moral is without any sort of support (e.g. a sort of intellectual magic act of levitation). Whereas P1 was an *ambiguous* claim, P2 is an *arbitrary* claim because it merely asserts but does not justify its ethical rationale. One has the right to ask the following questions of P2: *What is the source of the standard of morality used to declare "what is natural is moral"? Moreover, if homosexual feelings are subject to moral judgment, does that not imply they also are freely chosen?*

An Internal Critique of P3

The assertion "what is moral ought to be publicly expressible and not repressed" omits two considerations. *First*, merely because something is moral does not mean it must be publicly expressed. Wisdom might dictate that it ought to remain a private matter. Even if it could be proven that homosexual desires are moral, at least some kinds of public expression still

I personally remember the sharp criticism they received for making such a claim" ("Not So Gay," 198). Recently, one study that demonstrated change was possible received such emotional negative feedback that the journal editor wrote an entire article on it (see Kenneth J. Zucker, "The Politics and Science of 'Reparative Therapy,'" *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32 [October 2013]: 399-402). The California legislature has been so receptive to homosexual activists that it has passed a law that prohibits any attempt at reparative therapy, which is a clear example, incidentally, of the state defining its own religious beliefs as discussed in the first section of this proposal.

²⁰ Such are the words of Bertrand Russell in his essay, "A Free Man's Religion," which he wrote in 1903. He published the essay in the following: *Mysticism and Logic* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917) 45ff. Russell honestly expressed the foolish but terribly logical consequence of the modern pagan worldview.

²¹ See discussion of Mortimer J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes* (New York: MacMillan, 1985) 108-27.

might not be acceptable. Red Cross blood donation rules, for example, prohibit homosexuals from donating their blood due to the unhealthy consequences of their behavior. In establishing these rules, the Red Cross is not thereby calling homosexuality immoral any more than it is calling immoral the potential donors who have visited certain geographic areas and are therefore also prohibited from donating. *Second*, expression and repression are not the exclusive options. There is a third option: personal desires can be supplanted by other desires, as in Christianity. Buddhism proposes yet another option; it strives for a final state wherein there is a loss of all desire. P3 prematurely confines the discussion to two options when there are more; it therefore commits the “either-or” fallacy.

Summary of the Internal Critique

The internal critique of the case for full public acceptance of homosexuality proves that its underlying paradigm, *even on its own terms*, is plagued with ambiguity, arbitrariness, and logical fallacy. For a paradigm that has been the foundation of the homosexual lobby’s victorious public campaign strategy, it is surprisingly unconvincing; it amounts to them saying, “We experience homosexual feelings so everyone should not only accept our behavior but embrace it.” The homosexual rationale could have been widely challenged on a logical basis. Instead, either because of intimidation or because of laziness, the nation’s superficial culture was simply enthusiastic regarding the activity as the result of a very clever strategy that appeared to create an unchallengeable moral position. When explaining the principle of biblical marriage in wedding services, pastors need to keep these things in mind because it can be assumed that a significant number of attendees believe the homosexual lobby’s propaganda. Moreover, if they have, they are already predisposed to interpret the biblical wedding as a biased and unjust practice.

Using more of the wisdom of Proverbs, one should now consider the second approach to examining the gay paradigm. Proverbs 26:4 reads, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him.” The proverbial advice directs the reader to pursue an external critique. One separates entirely from the presuppositions of the fool, and formulates a response based upon biblical presuppositions founded as they are in the kind of universe the Bible presents. Instead of the pagan metaphysic of one level of existence, a grand impersonal Nature within which are all things – gods, mankind, animals, plants, rocks, and purposeless processes – , one begins with two levels of existence: the Creator and the creation. Instead of locating ultimate epistemic authority in collective mankind (e.g. the state),

one begins with locating ultimate epistemic authority in God’s historic revelation preserved in Scripture. Instead of trying to overcome the subjective character of relativistic ethics by securing them in some sort of Platonic idealism, evolutionary legacy, or public opinion poll, Christians affirm the imperatives of divine revelation as their source of ethics. The Lord used this kind of reasoning with Job, in chapters 38—41. Paul warned the believer to submit one’s reasoning to God’s revelation – supremely in Jesus Christ – in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 and Colossians 2:8-9. Therefore, in one’s support for biblical marriage against the new state mandate, the Christian consciously chooses to identify with Moses against the “divine” Pharaoh, with ancient Israel’s prophets against the corrupt state religions of Jeroboam and Ahab, with Daniel against imperial Nebuchadnezzar, with Paul against the civil bureaucrats of his day, and with the recent martyrs against the utopian delusions of fascism, Communism, and Islamic Sharia. Pastors in wedding services should fearlessly but graciously explain precisely those features of biblical marriage that directly challenge the shoddy pagan paradigm.

An External Critique of P1

The idea that “homosexual feelings are natural” should be critiqued with the comprehensive biblical idea that in this fallen creation all sorts of feelings, attractions, and desires are natural. The major problem here is that the homosexual paradigm completely ignores creation and the Fall, and their implications. Therefore, in addition to being ambiguous, P1 builds upon a false view of reality. Genesis 2:18-25 and 3:16-19 (in addition to the book of Proverbs) is unambiguous that man and woman are both created in God’s image and both suffer from the Fall *in sexually distinct ways*. Therefore, depending upon the particular wedding service, the officiating person ought to mention the distinctly different nature of man and woman from creation, and how the male and female natures suffer differently from the Fall. Human sexual differentiation as revealed in the Bible is so profound – not only anatomically but also psychologically and in ways not known – that even homosexual behavior cannot totally erase it.²² The profound biblical distinction in human male and female

²² In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul used two words to describe the homosexual relationship: one for the partner exercising the “male” role and for the other partner exercising the “female” role. There remains *a heterosexuality in homosexual relationships that demonstrates God’s creation design cannot be totally suppressed*. Paul referred to this in Romans 1:26-27 where — in spite of the

natures accurately describes an undeniable feature of intelligently designed reality. Moreover, if one defines normalcy as the state of original creation, then after the Fall everyone lives in an abnormal existence. Although natural, all feelings, therefore, cannot be said to be normal. One is expected to control abnormal feelings because actions will be judged accordingly (Gen 4:6-7). *The truth that one's sexual identity is determined by design, not by desires, needs to be prominent in any presentation of true marriage.*

An External Critique of P2

The idea that “what is natural is moral” should be brought under the dominion of God’s transcendental ethics. He is the Designer of all things and thus is alone competent to declare what is and is not moral. As the Creator of human sexuality, only He determines what appropriate sexual behavior is because He alone knows all the consequences of violating his intelligent design. Marriage as He has designed it, is revelatory of the special relationship between Yahweh and Israel (Hos 2);²³ it also reveals the relationship between Christ and his Body, the church (Eph 5:22-32).²⁴ The one-man-and-one-woman design alone is analogous to those relationships; it must be preserved as a component of general revelation lest the capacity to understand those relationships be lost.

Rejecting the homosexual paradigm’s reliance upon man-centered epistemic and ethical authorities, Christians proceed with God’s historic

attempted suppression — the “natural use” of human male and female sexuality continues to be known, else the perversion would not be recognized. Homosexual apologists attempt to argue that this passage only addresses pagan temple prostitutes because they interpret the worship language in 1:25 as specific ritual. They ignore Paul’s use of these very same words in 12:1 which proves that he used them in reference to the entire sphere of life, not just what one might do while in a temple ritual.

²³ See discussion in Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2001) 828-36.

²⁴ Here, if one honors a literal hermeneutic of the sacred text, one observes the consistent wisdom of God in how he created woman (Heb. *isha*) from man (Heb. *ish*), which is revealed in a special way in the Genesis 2 narrative, unlike how He created the sexual distinction in animals. The divine act established a conceptual perspective of the profound distinction between man and woman that reveals much with regard to God’s redemptive relationship to mankind which otherwise would not be understood. This entire matter of humanity’s sexual design is destroyed when marriage is redefined.

revelation as the epistemic authority and its imperatives as their ethical authority. Asserting such a proposition, one discovers an unsavory immoral cause of, at least, some homosexual feelings; it has been widely observed that homosexual feelings often arise in a person after he or she has experienced physical, emotional, or most commonly sexual child-abuse.²⁵ Such abuse is a violation of God's design for the family to produce a godly generation of successors. Child-abuse, though it may be "natural" in a fallen world, certainly is not moral. As one thinks regarding homosexuality, one needs to reflect upon what is occurring among families. Are they nourishing their providentially-assigned children, or are they creating circumstances for the very thing that is opposed?

A biblical analysis also exposes the natural consequences of homosexuality. Poor health effects of homosexuality are well known: greater-than-normal sexually transmitted diseases, higher suicide rates, and greater mental disorders.²⁶ Tragically, the very child abuse that often causes homosexuality produces yet more child abuse. Publications by the gay community, the academic community, and the American Psychological Association clearly state the relationship between homosexuality and pedophilia (with pedophiles characterized not as child abusers but people who want to help children express their sexuality). Pre-pubescent children "expressing their sexuality" may be natural in today's world, but they are not moral. Alas, the long-term damage of deviating from God's design in such a manner is completely ignored in those publications.²⁷

Homosexual couples who decide they want to adopt children necessarily share with single-parent families the absence of one or the other sex. The absence makes it very difficult for children to learn the vital roles that God has designed for both men and women: namely, how each

²⁵ See discussion in the following: Helen W. Wilson and Cathy Spatz Widom, "Does Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, or Neglect in Childhood Increase the Likelihood of Same-Sex Sexual Relationships and Cohabitation? A Prospective 30-year Follow-up," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39 (2010): 63-74. Biblical counselors report the same thing. See the account of a multi-month long counseling ordeal of helping a 25-year old Christian young man escape homosexual bondage in the following: Kevin Carson, "'Jason' and Homosexuality," in *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God's Resources in Scripture*, eds. Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2012) 227-55.

²⁶ See discussion, with bibliography for each of these categories, in Anderson, "Not So Gay," 199.

²⁷ Sears and Osten, *Homosexual Agenda*, 87-92. The latest term for pedophiles is "minor-attracted persons." See defenses of such terminology by B4U-ACT [online] (Living in Truth and Dignity, 3 August 2013, accessed 23 January 2014) available at <http://www.b4uact.org>.

sex complements the other in living diverse roles. Homosexual families thus inherit some of the worst features of incomplete or dysfunctional straight families. Commenting upon the increase in “unconventional families” deliberately based upon a single parent for *both* reproduction and child rearing (by both homosexuals and heterosexuals), Elizabeth Marquardt argued, “Such a family structure is seen as being fine for children. And the only reason this change has occurred is because—increasingly in the eyes of society’s leaders—an adult’s right to children outweighs children’s hardwired need for their mother and their father.”²⁸ Given this mode of thought, one wonders if children have now been reduced to a new kind of pet and/or status symbol.

The explanation of biblical marriage during a wedding service, therefore, needs to reinforce *the supremacy of Scripture as the ultimate ethical authority over all human authorities – including civil government – in directing the couple’s life together*. None know enough concerning God’s design of marriage, with its resulting actual or virtual family (e.g. a childless couple who adopt children or minister to children), to make decisions without his guidance. The consequences of violating God’s design of human sexuality are the increase of destruction throughout the social order. Too much damage from foolish decisions already exists in the culture. More is not needed. C. S. Lewis wisely wrote,

The most dangerous thing you can do is to take any one impulse of your own nature and set it up as the thing you ought to follow at all costs. There is not one of them which will not make us into devils if we set it up as an absolute guide. You might think love of humanity in general was safe, but it is not. If you leave out justice you will find yourself breaking agreements and faking evidence in trials “for the sake of humanity”, and become in the end a cruel and treacherous man.²⁹

²⁸ Elizabeth Marquardt, “Do Fathers and Mothers Matter?” *Propositions* 3 (April 2011): 7. Published by the Institute of American Values quarterly, this article specifically focused upon the new movements, Single Mothers by Choice and Single Fathers by Choice. The two movements resort to such practices as women choosing their child’s father from a sperm bank and men relying upon a female “egg donor” to conceive with their sperm and upon a surrogate womb mother to bring the fetus to birth.

²⁹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (C. S. Lewis Signature Classics) (New York: HarperCollins, 2009) 11-12.

An External Critique of P3

The homosexual lobby’s insistence upon overt public expression is why it demands a “marriage” status from state legislatures and why it is not willing to compromise by accepting a “civil union” status. Behind this demand for total acceptance is an all too infrequently admitted resignation to the lifelong inevitability of overwhelming homosexual desires. Vitagliano described the martyr-like frustration of “gay and lesbian friends who sadly say, ‘Do you think I would choose this lifestyle for myself—with all the mockery and suffering it has brought me?’”³⁰ In addition to this frustration, there is often a sense of shame that explains the widespread use of the word “pride” in public announcements of gay events (a “feel-good” use of the exact antonym of shame). A troubled conscience needs a proud face. The gay life in reality is not consistently “gay.”

The idea that homosexuality “ought to be publicly expressible and not repressed” needs to be reinterpreted by the doctrines of biblical anthropology and regeneration in Christ. With an authority that no academic or psychological group possesses, God revealed the universal human condition and his miraculous work.

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, just as the others (Eph 2:1-3).

The fallen condition is true of all humanity, not just homosexuals. All mankind is subject to constant temptations toward evil, and everyone is held accountable for his or her responses to these solicitations. If one yields to temptations and publicly expresses them in behavior, one commits personal sin.

Biblical anthropology acknowledges that while originally created in God’s image, humanity is also fallen beings in need of redemption. The biblical concept of depravity includes what are termed feelings, desires, dispositions, and mental attitudes (not just outward behavior). The principle that pre-behavioral lusts are more needful of attention than overt behavior was revealed in Jesus’ exposition of the Ten Commandments within the Sermon on the Mount. In Romans 1, Paul’s critique of pagan

³⁰ Vitagliano, “Piercing the Gay Paradigm,” 10.

society included not only homosexual behavior but also the homosexual “lusts” and “passions” that precede such behavior, in addition to similar propensities toward other sins (1:24-27, 29-32). Some Christians assert a distinction between the inner propensity toward homosexual desire, which they consider ethically neutral, and the outward behavior, which they deem as sinful; but that distinction is not scriptural. Though the temptation or solicitation toward homosexuality is not sinful, mentally entertaining it and lusting for it are as sinful as they are for any other area of life.

There is one thing special about homosexuality. Paul ended his analysis in Romans 1 with this statement regarding depraved humanity: “who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (Rom 1:32). Notice, in his statement, that *approval* of the social expression of the mental attitude sins, sins of the tongue, and overt sins listed in 3:29-31 is worse than the expression itself! When pagan society morally approves of the public expressions of sin that it did not previously, they are observing what the late U.S. Senator Daniel Moynihan 20 years ago called “defining deviancy down.”³¹ Senator Moynihan proved that when social behavior morally deteriorates, the common social standards judging such behavior also necessarily worsen. According to Paul, when homosexuality appears widespread enough to warrant special attention, it is evidence that God is withdrawing his restraints. As that happens, social ethical standards deteriorate universally.³² Homosexuality is thus a kind of “litmus test” for the spiritual state of a society. Due to the frustration and shame it causes, those overwhelmed by its power formulate their entire personal identity around it in a manner that is unlike those with other sinful addictions. Homosexuals tend to see themselves primarily as homosexuals, not as ordinary members of a fallen race who are sinful like everyone else. Their political agenda, therefore, demands free expression that requires that society publicly approve of them (as Paul stated).

Beyond biblical anthropology is biblical redemption. The biblical response to those who grapple with homosexual feelings should differ fundamentally from how society at large would respond. Biblical anthropology and redemption in Christ make a difference. As trained Bible-

³¹ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “Defining Deviancy Down,” *The American Scholar* (Winter 1993): 17-20.

³² For a concise one-hour presentation of Romans 1:18-32, see John MacArthur, *When God Abandons a Nation*, Immanuel Bible Church, Springfield, Virginia, 6 October 2013 (available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=qOUHmt3q8YE).

believing counselor Pastor Kevin Carson approached a homosexual counselee called “Jason” (not his real name), he described how he analyzed Jason’s responses to his queries concerning his behavior.

Do I see him as the product of his biological make-up or his genetic code, the result of a poor relationship with his same-sex parent, the outcome of early sexual stimuli, or one fearing rejection by others due to low self-esteem? If I accept contemporary secular explanations for homosexuality as part of the cause, then I am ultimately accepting culture as the authority for understanding and helping Jason. *Or* I can take the perspective that the ultimate cause of Jason’s homosexual behavior is his sinful heart and that all of these important pieces of data make up various significant influences or pressures to which his sinful heart responded.³³

Carson’s discussion of sin is not hate-mongering, but quite the opposite; it is actually good news for the homosexual because it means he can be free of the annoying burden just like any other believer can be freed from sin. Will he have a prolonged and difficult journey? Yes. However, the rewards are many because homosexual feelings are but a part of a larger amalgamation of spiritual problems that the person possesses. As Pastor Carson discovered, Jason’s problem was not just homosexuality. Describing the combination of problems, he wrote this list:

- lives for his feelings;
- craves attention from others;
- longs for affection, affirmation, relationship, acceptance;
- some rebellion against the legalism of his church and against his parents; and,
- anger

Carson continued, “As you scan this initial list, you will notice a striking absence: the sin of homosexuality is not even on the list yet. This is because it is one issue among many.”³⁴

After difficulties during many months of weekly counseling, Jason learned how to manage and overcome his homosexual feelings. Commenting upon his progress toward the end of this period, Carson wrote:

³³ Carson, “‘Jason’ and Homosexuality,” 231.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 240.

In a recent conversation I asked him how his struggle was going. To my delight we talked for 30 minutes as he expressed many different pressure-filled situations, but same-sex attraction never came up. It was not even on his mind as one of his most pressing struggles. . . . When we stop to minister to someone like Jason, we must be vigilant to see his sin for what it really is—not what the culture teaches. . . . The reality is that every one of the issues surrounding Jason’s life could be equally true of heterosexuals.”³⁵

God’s Word through its gospel message of redemption in Christ establishes an entirely new option to the homosexual besides the “either-or” dilemma of P3. God can work today in lives of homosexuals as he worked 2000 years ago in Corinth (1 Cor 6:9).

Summary of the External Critique

The gay paradigm has been subjected in this external critique to biblical authority and content rather than examining it internally (as with the internal critique). The three propositions not only suffer from internal logical problems, but they are also based in a false view of reality (P1), a denial of God’s capacity to reveal how human sexuality is designed to function (P2), and ignorance of the power of redemption in Christ (P3). The pastor or other officiating person in the wedding service can assume that some attendees are unaware not only of the logical fallacies of the homosexual propaganda but also of the pertinent biblical truths – even those attendees who have attended biblically-based church services for years.

To summarize this section addressing the homosexual case for altering the definition of marriage, one may conclude that its persuasive power has been due not to its underlying logic but to its manipulative use of connotative words that create the illusion of moral superiority. To cite Francis Schaeffer, terms like “fair,” “equal,” and “just” have given the American public the illusion of communication and content. Consequently, the ruling political and media elite and an increasing number of citizens at large think that it is fairer to adjust marriage to meet these demands than to leave it as an unalterable institution designed by God for one man and one woman. A biblical wedding service which presents marriage as a divine institution now directly conflicts with civil authority.

³⁵ Ibid. 254ff.

SEPARATING CIVIL MARRIAGE FROM ECCLESIASTICAL MARRIAGE

Marriage, civil government, and the church are divinely-designed and divinely-authorized structures according to the Bible. The separate spheres of governance differ profoundly, however, in that marriage began at creation and is therefore an integral part of human life. Furthermore, marriage was made to endure until the end of mortal history. Civil government, conversely, came millennia afterwards as a result of the Fall and subsequent failure of early human civilization; it is God’s means to manage man’s depraved social existence. The church also came later – at Pentecost – as the community of believers separate from the rest of mankind for this age under the authority of Christ and the Bible. Therefore, marriage has the prior claim; it consists of a loving personal relationship between one man and one woman for the growth of civilization.

As part of its divinely-commissioned function to restrain societal chaos, the state supports the marriage institution by establishing licenses or contracts. Marriage contracts define responsibilities for things like property ownership, child-rearing, terms of dissolution (divorce), and tax payments. In recent times, as the U.S. civil government has absorbed more of the messianic Babel vision, its efforts to regulate marriage now include specifying qualifications for civil benefits. The church’s concern for marriage differs from that of the state; believers are concerned with evangelizing unsaved couples, nourishing marriages of believers as part of the sanctification process, and injecting biblical wisdom concerning the purpose of marriage into society, including having a political influence where participatory citizenship exists.³⁶ The church’s historic interest in marriage is called the *ecclesiastical* component and the state’s interest is called the *civil* component.

William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* is a classic text that put English common law into consistent written form and became a primary source for colonial American law. The following citation from Blackstone addresses the distinction between the separate interests of civil law and ecclesiastical law pertaining to marriage.

OUR law considers marriage in no other light than as a civil contract. The Holiness of the matrimonial state is left entirely to the ecclesiastical law: the temporal courts not having jurisdiction to consider unlawful marriages as a sin, but merely as a civil

³⁶ By political participation, one should not think here with regard to institutional participation by churches but participation of individuals and groups of Christian citizens *as citizens*.

inconvenience. The punishment therefore, or annulling, of incestuous or other unscriptural marriages, is the province of the spiritual courts; which act *pro salute animae* [for the health of their souls]. And, taking it in this civil light, the law treats it as it does all other contracts; allowing it to be good and valid in all cases, where the parties at the time of making it were, in the first place, willing to contract; secondly, able to contract; and, lastly, actually did contract, in the proper forms and solemnities required by law.³⁷

The state's interest in marriage is based upon the legal contract and restraining the neglect of the contractual responsibilities. The church's interest is based upon whether the marriage is biblically authorized and growing spiritually. The role of Christian church officials in establishing (solemnizing) the civil marriage contract in England at the time was viewed by Blackstone as a peripheral matter for the convenience of the state rather than as something required by biblical law.

It is held to be also essential to a marriage, that it be performed by a person in orders; though the intervention of a priest to solemnize this contract is merely *juris positivi* [of civil law], and not *juris naturalis aut divini* [of natural or divine law]: it being said that pope Innocent the third was the first who ordained the celebration of marriage in the church; before which it was totally a civil contract."³⁸

A Christian wedding expresses the church's interest in establishing a biblically authorized marriage and securing a commitment for it to grow in wisdom and love of God. The wedding is conducted within a gathering of interested persons with, at least, a core of believers to witness the taking of oaths and to hear a scriptural explanation of what constitutes the marriage relationship. Accompanying that is the challenge for believers to support the new relationship with all the assets that Christ has given to his body. The pastor thus acts chiefly as an under-shepherd of Jesus Christ. Within the sphere of a biblically-submissive fellowship of Christians, the new marriage can mature in a positive manner. The church's interest thus exceeds the civil state's negative interest which is merely a restraining concern against social chaos. The pastor's role as an agent of civil government in a wedding, while convenient logistically, is actually

³⁷ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England (1765-1769)*, Book 1, Chapter 15, "Of Husband and Wife" [online] (LONANG Library , 7 August 2013) available from <http://www.lonang.com/exlibris/blackstone/bla-115.htm>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

supplementary to the most important event as far as church interests are concerned.

However, by acting as an agent of civil government, the pastor necessarily comes under the authority of his state. The right to pronounce the formation of a legally binding contract of a couple “by the laws of this state” only can be granted by the state. The state controls what its agents can, cannot, and must do. Currently, states which have adopted same-sex marriage have granted “exception” clauses to “allow” ministers to officiate in establishing contracts where the couple remains one-man-and-one-woman. However, this granted right could be removed at any time by the civil authority of the state. With the new approach by a state that treats marriage as a changeable social construct, the pastor as an agent of that state can potentially be required to perform marriages where the parties could be two homosexuals, three or more polygamists, or some other combination. Bizarre? Yes, but it was only a few years ago that same-sex marriages would have been considered bizarre. Reports have already appeared from Europe where civil authorities are contemplating forcing ministers, particularly those in state churches, to perform same-sex marriages.

Under these circumstances, the interests of the state and of the church come into increasing conflict. As mentioned in the first section of this article, the ever-present tension between these two spheres of authority is evident once again. The state that redefines marriage is no longer trustworthy as the protector of God’s design so the church should no longer solemnize its marriage contract. Christians rely here upon the separation of church and state which predates the First Amendment. Eighteen hundred years previous to that Amendment, the Lord Jesus taught that believers are to render unto Caesar his rightful due and unto God his due (Matt 22:21; Luke 20:25). A number of evangelical groups are already looking at separation from civil policies that are aimed at destroying God-designed marriage.³⁹ Marriage between one man and one woman is God’s design and the church must do what it can to nourish and strengthen it. All other things being equal, living in accordance with God’s designs has superior economic, health, and social benefits compared to pagan lifestyles.

Once the local church leadership decides upon this separation, there are some procedures that should be taken. Church bylaws should be revised explicitly to declare the biblical definition of marriage and that

³⁹ The North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention has announced it is prohibiting Baptist military chaplains from performing, attending, or supporting same-sex weddings, either on or off base.

only that definition will be considered for wedding services. The Pacific Justice Institute, a nonprofit legal defense group that specializes in church-state issues in California has a website of suggested wording for such bylaws.⁴⁰ Alliance Defending Freedom also provides information on this topic in addition to marriage law in general.⁴¹ Church leaders should also consult with legal counsel on whether to end any policy for renting the church property for weddings to the general public. Renting can be considered a business, and recent court decisions compel Christian business owners to compromise their faith and accommodate all public persons. Generally, it is considered wise for churches to get their beliefs in writing before a dispute arises; otherwise in a court of law it could appear as if something were done after the fact as an attempt to hide hostility to gays. Furthermore, it is also a wise step to formally notify state authorities that the church is no longer acting as their agent in conducting wedding services.

Sadly, this action will require the couple to go to other agents beyond the church (e.g. justices of the peace) to establish their civil marriage contract. The church does not cause the logistical inconvenience; it is caused by the state in replacing biblical marriage with a changeable social construct.

SUMMARY

In response to recent state governments changing the definition of marriage and thereby affirming that marriage is merely a social construct subject to change, the proposal herein is that local church leadership in those state jurisdictions cease performing the civil function of solemnizing the civil marriage contract. Church and state are separate spheres of divinely-authorized governance. One should not intrude upon the other's sphere. When the state enforces same-sex marriage upon its citizens, it has intruded upon the domain of the church by denying that marriage is exclusively for one man and one woman and potentially requiring the pastor or other officiating person to accept that definition. By so doing, the state claims authority over God's authority in defining marriage.

⁴⁰ "Sample Policies & Bylaws to Help Churches Defend Biblical Marriage" [article online] (California Southern Baptist Convention, 11 July 2013, accessed 23 January 2014) available from <http://www.csbc.com/article370250.htm?title=1body=1>.

⁴¹ "Marriage and Family" [online] (Alliance Defending Freedom, accessed 23 January 2014) available from <http://www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/issues/marriage-and-family>.

The homosexual lobby is chiefly responsible for redefining marriage. The article herein has demonstrated that its case has been persuasive only because of its skilled manipulation of terms like "just," "fair," and "equal" to give the appearance of moral superiority over biblical marriage. However, appearance is not substance. The underlying paradigm is ambiguous, arbitrary, and logically fallacious. Moreover, it relies upon a false view of reality, a denial of God's capacity to reveal how human sexuality is designed to function, and ignores the power of redemption in Christ. The ruling and media elite accepted the homosexual agenda emotionally and thoughtlessly. As a result, an increasing percent of the public influenced by them is now predisposed to view biblical marriage as unjust, unfair, and unequal.

Local church leaders in same-sex states, therefore, should take appropriate action now to defend biblical marriage, protect their religious freedom, and formally notify their state authorities that they no longer will serve as agents of their state regarding marriage. Weddings should include a robust and persuasive defense of one-man-one-woman marriage for those attendees who either have accepted the new view of marriage or are not certain how to speak as an ambassador for Christ (see Appendix 1). The pastor and any other officiating person should cease functioning as an agent of the state in establishing its marriage contract. Couples seeking to marry will have to go to other state authorities to establish their civil contract. To make it apparent to their state civil leadership that the church will no longer support the civil component of marriage, the church should formally notify the governor and its legislative representatives (see Appendix 2).

APPENDIX 1: WEDDING SERVICE SUGGESTIONS

Each wedding is different depending upon the circumstances. One of the common circumstances, however, is the attendance of those who now are predisposed to view a biblical marriage – being a relationship exclusively for one-man-and-one-woman – as unjust, unfair, bigoted, and simply old-fashioned and outdated. Other attendees, even those who have attended Bible-believing churches for years, might feel uncomfortable or poorly equipped to defend biblical marriage to their peers and acquaintances. Therefore, the current wedding service has become an ideological “battleground” subtly or overtly.

However, the wedding service also is the pastor’s “home turf.” He is the officiating authority representing Jesus Christ. The pastor cannot control the media messaging the attendees have heard, but he can control what they hear during the service. He has to be careful not to fulfill the homosexual lobby’s caricature of Christians as gay-haters so in the limited time he has in the wedding service he cannot engage in a direct refutation of same-sex marriage. An indirect strategy is wiser. Herein is the reasoning with some suggestions that follow.

An indirect strategy will present biblical truths that imply conclusions opposite to the homosexual paradigm without explicitly saying as much. In internal and external critiques of the paradigm provided earlier in this article, some primary targets for biblical counterattack were mentioned.

Target #1: False view of reality

- Reference creation as a literal historic event, which exposes a metaphysical gulf between the Bible and popular evolutionary nature religion.
- Reference how man and woman are sexually differentiated (Gen 2) and how that differs from that of animals (Gen 1). Sexual differentiation in mankind is *greater* in mankind than in animals; it includes the psychological and spiritual besides the reproductive aspects. Moreover, it reveals spiritual truths of how God relates to man (cf. Hos; Eph), which implies that marriage is based in God’s design and is not merely a social construction by human society.

- Reference the Fall as a literal historic event that affects men and women in sexually distinct ways (Gen 3), as this reinforces the *depth* of human sexual design.
- Conclude that *human sexual identity in the Bible is by God’s objective once-for-all design, not by subjective changing feelings.*

Target #2: Assumed silence or non-existence of God and the speculations of man

- Reference the historic, logically-consistent, self-disclosure of God in word and action over millennia of time to a diversity of people, which exposes an epistemological and ethical diversity between the Bible and the widely-varying speculations of man.
- Reference how God as Creator alone has perfect knowledge of how humanity ought to think with regard to marriage, as this implies that the imperatives of the Bible are superior to the moral musings of man, especially fallen man, and superior to social consensus expressed in civil law (note the epistemic implication of Rom 3:4).
- Reference the purpose of marriage of man and wife to support civilization either through birthing and raising godly children, or exercising godly influences on adoptive or other children, as this implies that both sexes are necessary to fulfill marriage’s purpose.
- Conclude that *God’s Word alone is sufficient for entering into and fulfilling the designated purpose of one-man-one-woman marriage, not the conjectures of limited man.*

Target #3: Hopelessness of being ensnared by homosexual feelings

- Reference the universal need for personal redemption in Christ. Present the gospel with an emphasis upon the “universal” aspect that communicates a situation “fair” to all so that homosexuality is not seen as something so unique that it is unrelated.
- Reference the hope of spiritual growth (sanctification) that can overcome every spiritual obstacle whether an addiction, depression, or anger. By not mentioning homosexuality, the focus remains upon generic sin as already mentioned in the pastoral counseling example,

which again undermines the claim that homosexuality is somehow unique.

- Reference the possibility that the marriage never ought to end in divorce, if both man and woman submit to God's revealed instructions for family life, as this denies that someone could be "ensnared" by some sin pattern.
- Conclude that *no test, no pressure, no addiction has the power to confine and halt the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit in those who have believed in Christ for eternal life.*

Finally, the church ought to create a formal document replacing the marriage license, which certifies that marital vows were exchanged under the authority delegated to the pastor from God through the Bible. The document could also mention the pledge by those present to support the new marriage with prayer, encouragement, and other aid. At the end of the wedding service, the couple would then possess two formal documents: the civil license and the church certification.

APPENDIX 2:
A SAMPLE LETTER TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES

There are, at least, two reasons to inform the state authorities of a church’s decision to resign from participation in the civil marriage procedures. *First*, it alerts them to several important truths they often overlook. One truth is that changing the law *never* eliminates discrimination because by definition *every* law specifies behaviors that society will not tolerate and will therefore punish. Changing a law, therefore, merely redirects discrimination against different behaviors. In the case of adopting same-sex marriage, the state refrains from discriminating against same-sex marriages but continues to discriminate against incestuous, polyamorous, and pedophilial marriages while adding a new discrimination against those who limit marriage to one-man-one-woman in public speech and actions. Another overlooked truth is that no less than two entire worldviews are in conflict here so that the state cannot find a place of neutrality; it *has* to rule on either the pagan side or on the Judeo-Christian side. In the case of a same-sex marriage state, the civil authorities have unwittingly begun an official persecution against the Christian faith. They need to be reminded that the new law forces their Bible-believing Christian constituents to deny their faith and live in the public square as virtual pagans.

A *second* reason for an official letter is that it formally establishes a date when the church’s pastor no longer can be considered an agent of the state; it thus eliminates any further state requirements regarding civil marriage for him to meet. Moreover, it also eliminates any claim of discrimination by a gay couple whose same sex wedding the pastor refuses to conduct. The pastor becomes completely free to conduct wedding services authorized by God in Scripture without any state controls and compromises. Such a letter implements the true version of separation of church and state taught by Jesus long before modern First Amendment controversies. In those states where a federal judge has ruled that the state cannot ban same-sex marriage and the state has proceeded to legalize it as a consequence of the judge’s decision, it might also be prudent to address an official letter to that judge in addition to the governor and pertinent state legislature representatives. The following sample letter should be typed on official church stationery.

DATE:

TO: [Governor, State Legislator(s)]

Dear [Proper title of address]

The enclosed letter is to inform you of [church's name] carefully considered response to the redefinition of marriage [would be best to name the piece of legislation exactly with its date] by the State of [state name]. By redefining marriage, the State of [] has made it impossible to affirm in the wedding service both the biblical view of an unalterable divinely-established institution and the new civil view of an alterable social construct. We therefore have decided to separate the civil and ecclesiastical components as defined in English common law by William Blackstone. We must respect the teachings of Jesus Christ that distinguish your civil authority from God's authority ("Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's," Matt 22:21). Your authority extends over the civil aspect of marriage. Our authority as a local church of Bible-believing Christians extends over the ecclesiastical aspect.

Therefore, we will henceforth refer couples seeking to be married to justices-of-the-peace and others under the state's authority for licensing of the marriage contract. Our pastors will no longer act as agents of the State of [] by conducting civil marriages. The state, therefore, cannot require them to perform same-sex or other unbiblical forms of marriage. They will instead perform only ecclesiastical marriage services according to biblical doctrine.

Since the state's action appears to have been taken without any serious discussion of the reality and truth claims underlying this new, historically unprecedented view of marriage, we want to include the reasons for our response. Contrary to what has often been emotionally stated, as Bible-believing Christians we do not hate homosexuals. People can love while adhering to diverse ethical standards, as any family well knows. However, like all residents of [state name] we do try to live by an ethical standard that we believe is true to reality. We certainly consider that ethical standard when we are called upon by [state name] to accept a radical alteration in the very basic structure of our society.

Our ethical standard is based upon the biblical claim of divine revelation, which encompasses more than three millennia. Since this Judeo-Christian tradition has always been opposed by pagan culture, the current ethical differences between adherents of each view are not new or surprising. The Bible states that God established marriage at creation, not arbitrarily, but based upon divine design of the human male and female — a design that purposefully includes anatomical, psychological, and spiritual differences for the advancement of civilization. In our view, therefore, it cannot be considered as a construct by human society and thus is not subject to arbitrary changes.

Civil marriage and family law (as with all legislation) necessarily discriminates against, and thereby restrains, destructive behaviors that would weaken the institution and thus undermine a moral society. Therefore, when those laws change, the discrimination criteria also change. Therefore, it is not surprising that the biblical view of marriage is increasingly being discriminated against in government, business, and education. We recognize that those in civil positions of authority – regardless of your personal viewpoint – must enforce the new law and discriminate against our belief. To minimize conflict between the church and state, therefore, we have decided to avoid participating in the civil aspect during our wedding services.

We recognize the extremely difficult job you face in trying to govern a society with such profoundly conflicting worldviews. We will continue to honor your office by respecting your civil authority and will pray for you as the Bible commands.

Respectfully,

[signed by church leadership]

APPENDIX 3:
A SAMPLE EXCHANGE WITH A FEDERAL LEGISLATOR
CONCERNING THE MANIPULATIVE USE OF WORDS

In early January 2014, the U.S. Congress was considering two bills a result of the Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decision in *United States vs. Windsor* regarding the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) that had defined marriage at the federal level as the union of one-man-one-woman. While invalidating the definition part of DOMA, that decision *did not redefine marriage for the nation and left that action to the individual states*. A more recent bill, H.R. 3829, attempted to prevent the bestowal of federal benefits for same-sex couples residing in states that had not changed the traditional definition of marriage. One of this author's sons urged his Congressman to support that bill, entitled "State Marriage Defense Act of 2014."

Notice, in the following reply, that the Congressman avoided that bill entirely and then attempted to agree with my son using a second, completely different bill (H.R. 2523, "Respect for Marriage Act") that would allow federal benefits to same-sex couples if they were married in a state or U.S. territory that had changed the definition of marriage but now resided in a state that had not changed the definition. The two bills accomplish opposite objectives. The first and third paragraphs are standard text that many federal legislators use in their replies to constituents. In the second paragraph, however, the Congressman used the expressions "equal rights for all Americans" and "marriage discrimination" in the manipulative method discussed in the second section of this article.

The text below is the actual response my son received on official letterhead from the Congress of the United States, House of Representatives, Washington DC. Inclusion of that letter's content is intended to be illustrative – not to indict any particular party nor to vilify one particular member of Congress (as there are certain many others who would reply similarly) – and thus the specific Congressman's name has been obscured.

January 10, 2014

Mr. Jonathan Clough
8917 Arley Drive
Springfield, VA 22153-1504

Dear Mr. Clough,

Thank you for contacting me with respect to gay marriage. I appreciate the opportunity to hear from you about this issue. Your views are important to me.

I believe in equal rights for all Americans, and I will not support attempts by government to control decisions of churches or other places of worship with respect to this issue. I am a cosponsor of the Respect for Marriage Act, which would eliminate marriage discrimination.

Once again, thank you for expressing your concern on this very important issue. I appreciate hearing from you. For more information on my views on other issues, please feel free to visit my website at [http://\[REDACTED\].house.gov](http://[REDACTED].house.gov). I also encourage you to visit the website to sign up for my e-newsletter.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Member of Congress
[REDACTED] District, Virginia

My son perceived the semantic manipulation and responded to the lack of logical argument in his Congressman's use of the word "discrimination." Note how the response demonstrated that *discrimination is not eliminated by such "progressive" legislation; it is only relocated (i.e. the truth has been totally suppressed in all the marriage redefinition propaganda).*

Sent: Friday, January 10, 2014 11:59 PM
To: Congressman [REDACTED]
Cc: Jonathan Clough
Subject: RE: Responding to your message

Congressman [REDACTED],

Thank you for your response, sir, but it's clear you did not read or understand my original correspondence that prompted your letter. So, please allow me to repeat myself and hopefully clarify my message.

I requested that you support the State Marriage Defense Act of 2014 (H.R. 3829), not the doublespeak-labeled "Respect for Marriage Act" (H.R. 2523), which, as you well know, is specifically designed to nullify DOMA, effectively "un-defining" and disrespecting natural marriage as understood for all of recorded human history, not to mention specifically discriminating against anyone who holds this historic/traditional view.

And yes, it *will* discriminate against them -- one only has to look at states that have endorsed gay "marriage" to observe the legal juggernaut brought to bear against small businessmen and women seeking to live within the dictates of their conscience on this matter (e.g. Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Denver, CO, Barronelle Stutzman of Arlene's Flowers in Richland, WA, Aaron & Melissa Klein of SweetCakes by Mellissa in Gresham, OR, or Blaine Adamson of Hands On Originals in Lexington, KY, to list a few.)

While you and your staff can slyly employ platitudes like "eliminate marriage discrimination", you know very well such verbiage is devoid of real meaning. Every law discriminates, by definition -- they discriminate against behaviors or relationships deemed harmful to individuals or communities at large. All you're doing is seeking to change what categories of relationships the Federal government discriminates against.

The Federal government discriminates against incestuous, poly-amorous, and pedophilial marriages today, and it will continue to do so, even if the "Respect for Marriage" act is ever passed. So please, let's agree to communicate with clarity on this issue, and drop the rhetorical camouflage. Marriage discrimination will continue to occur, and it must for marriage law to have any

distinct meaning whatsoever. The question is whether the Federal government continues to discriminate natural marriage from unnatural gay "marriage", along with the other perversions listed earlier.

In light of blatant Federal over-reach (exemplified as recently as today's Department of Justice recognition of Utah's briefly legal same-sex "marriages" in spite of a still-pending court ruling on the matter), I am requesting you throw your support behind the State Marriage Defense Act. This bill will reaffirm what the Supreme Court affirmed in their *U.S. v Windsor* ruling, namely:

"The recognition of civil marriages is central to state domestic relations law applicable to its residents and citizens."

"The definition of marriage is the foundation of the State's broader authority to regulate the subject of domestic relations..."

"Consistent with this allocation of authority, the Federal Government, through our history, has deferred to state law policy decisions with respect to domestic relations." (all quotes from page 17, Opinion of the Court, *U.S. v Windsor*)

As I'm certain you were a fan of this ruling, I'm confident you will agree with the Court's opinions regarding State authority on the matter as noted above and offer your support to the State Marriage Defense Act. I strongly encourage you to do so.

Otherwise you are putting Virginia's state constitutional amendment banning gay "marriage" at grave risk.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Clough

While nothing legislatively significant may result from this exchange, at least, two consequences follow. One or more of the Congressman's staff will become aware that some constituents now perceive the attempts to distract from the issues. Secondly, those who read this exchange will gain skill to challenge the semantic manipulation should they encounter it and to compel conversations toward a more rational and mature level.

HERMENEUTICAL KEYS TO THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

Part 2: Lukan Eschatology (Luke 21)

Ray M. Wenger

Throughout the years there have been many debates regarding the meaning of the Olivet Discourse, wherein Jesus described in detail the events of the future. Since the Matthean account is longer than the corresponding material in Mark and Luke, much of the work has been focused upon Matthew.

SIGNIFICANT DEBATES REGARDING MEANING

One of the issues debated is whether the church will experience the Tribulation.¹ Posttribulationist Robert Gundry² asserted that Jewish Christians are in view in Matthew 24—25. Bruce Ware critiqued his work, and demonstrated that it is *possible* that some of the details of Matthew 24:4-28 could refer to Christian Jews, but that Gundry has not *proven* that it must be so. In addition, Ware demonstrated that some of the elements in those verses could not be appropriately applied to Christians.³

Another debate is focused upon the Rapture. Some pretribulationists insist that the Rapture is not mentioned in Matthew 24.⁴

* Ray M. Wenger, *Th.M.*, itinerant Bible teacher, Pinnacle, North Carolina

¹ The term “Tribulation” is capitalized to distinguish the great time of trouble corresponding to the Seventieth Week of Daniel, in contrast to the ordinary tribulation that all believers encounter (Acts 14:22; Rev 1:9). “End” is also capitalized when referring specifically to the events connected with the return of Jesus.

² Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973) 129-39.

³ Bruce A. Ware, “Is the Church in View in Matthew 24-25?,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (April—June 1981): 158-73.

⁴ For some examples, see Ron J. Bigalke Jr., “The Olivet Discourse: A Resolution of Time,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 9 (Spring 2003): 108; Neil D. Nelson Jr., “Three Critical Exegetical Issues in Matthew 24: A Dispensational Interpretation,” *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 11 (August 2007): 51-52; Larry D. Pettegrew, “Interpretive Flaws in the Olivet Discourse,” *The Master’s Seminary*

John F. Hart, however, who is also a pretribulationist, proposed in a three-article series that the Rapture is referenced in Matthew 24.⁵ A discussion of various evangelical treatments of Matthew 24:1-41 is found in an article by David Turner,⁶ which Neil Nelson referenced and summarized the complexities of the various views. In the following quote, Nelson included footnotes listing proponents of each view, and the variety in their formulations (which would be helpful to consult for introductory reference to the vast amount of material addressing the subject).⁷

Turner helpfully divided approaches of evangelical interpreters into four classifications based on how much of the discourse they assign to the AD 70 fall of Jerusalem and the Temple, and how much they assign to the end of the age. Preterist or historical interpreters believe Matthew 24:1-35 was fulfilled in the first century, especially in the judgment of God upon Jerusalem. While moderate preterists tend to believe that Matthew 24:36-25:46 discusses the end of the age and the second coming, full or extreme preterists believe that all the events in the discourse were fulfilled at the fall of Jerusalem and even the second coming, resurrection, and final judgment are all past events. Futurist interpreters, while differing as to whether Matthew 24:4-14 refers to the interadvent age, or wholly or partly to a future “great tribulation” period immediately before the end, assign all of 24:15-41 to the future. There are two types of mediating positions, the traditional and the revised preterist-futurist positions. The traditional preterist-futurist position understands 24:15-26 as a “double reference” prophecy referring in a perspective common to biblical prophecy in the near view to the events of AD 70 and in the far view to the end of the age. The revised preterist-futurist view of Carson sees AD 70 as the subject of 24:15-21 and the church age being addressed in 24:22-28.

Journal 13 (Fall 2002): 187; John F. MacArthur Jr., *Matthew 24-28* (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary) (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989) 70-76.

⁵ John F. Hart, “Should Pretribulationists Reconsider the Rapture in Matthew 24:36-44?,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 20 (Autumn 2007): 50.

⁶ David L. Turner, “The Structure and Sequence of Matthew 24:1-41: Interaction with Evangelical Treatments,” *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (Spring 1989): 3-27.

⁷ Nelson, “Exegetical Issues in Matthew 24,” 51-52.

Nelson continued his article, demonstrating in detail the inadequacies of the preterist position, and briefly outlined how the futurist position is a much better explanation of Matthew 24:15-28.⁸

Nelson then addressed various proposals regarding the meaning of “this generation” which Jesus said would not pass until “all these things are fulfilled” (Matt 24:34). He listed six proposals for “this generation” and addressed inadequacies. The *first view* is that Jesus’ contemporaries would actually see his second coming in glory (this makes Jesus a false prophet since it did not occur). A *second view* is that Jesus’ contemporaries would see Jesus coming in the events of AD 70 (a preterist reaction to the first view; this is inadequate because restricting the meaning to the AD 70 event does not fit the details of the passage). The *third view* is that the ingressive aorist view of the verb [γένηται] in Matthew 24:34 means that Jesus’ contemporaries would *begin* to see the events of the End (this obliterates the inclusive nature of the word “all” and relegates the statement to mean the generation would not pass before they see *some* of these things occur). The *fourth view* is that “this generation” means the Jewish race (the wording of the text then implies that the Jewish race will “pass away” once all is fulfilled). The *fifth view* is to understand “this generation” as referring to the people who characteristically oppose Jesus and his messengers, and such people will always be present until Jesus returns. Nelson affirmed this view, and argued that this was the view of Darby, and provided support from usage in other passages in Matthew and from the Old Testament for the negative nuance of “this generation.” Nelson failed to reckon with the fact that — in the synoptic presentations of the Olivet Discourse — “this generation” is *always* connected with timing, never with the moral condition of the people. The *sixth view* is to understand “this generation” as referring to the people who see the events of the Great Tribulation (i.e. all will be fulfilled within the generation who witnesses those events begin). Nelson considered this practically a tautology (as if it were saying the final generation is the final generation), and also because it ignores the negative nuance of “this generation” which was described in the view he prefers.⁹

Nelson’s objection regarding the failure to account for the negative nuance of “this generation” misses the point regarding timing (as mentioned previously), and his objection regarding tautology also demonstrates misunderstanding although he recognized that the proponents of this view were saying that the End comes quickly. The point is that the generation who sees those signs begin will see the

⁸ Ibid. 51-57.

⁹ Ibid. 58-64.

consummation of all things. Overall, this final view best harmonizes with the biblical texts.¹⁰ However, what opponents consider to be its weakness is its interpretation of “generation” which seems at first glance to be contrived.

Certainly, it is true that the natural reading of “this generation” would suggest Jesus’ contemporaries, which some authors dogmatically assert as making other views impossible. However, obviously, all of the contemporaries of Jesus are dead, and the final events have not occurred (which naturally leads people to believe that Jesus was referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70). However, the events associated with that destruction do not adequately deal with all of the data in Matthew 24:4-28. Consequently, many proposals have been made to relieve the tension. The confusion has percolated into the commentaries.

Commentary Proposals regarding “This Generation”

Hagner noted that Matthew consistently used “this generation” in reference to the contemporaries of Jesus, and that the alternative suggestions (generation living at the *parousia*, or human race) go against this meaning. However, his solution that a sinful generation fits the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70¹¹ ignores the comments by MacArthur in 1985, who demonstrated that details of Matthew 24 were not fulfilled by the AD 70 event.¹² Similarly, France asserted that the events of AD 70 provide an obvious solution, but failed to address the aspects that definitely were not fulfilled then.¹³

Nolland was even more emphatic, insisting that “all the alternative senses proposed here (the Jewish people; humanity; the generation of the end-time signs; wicked people) are artificial and based on the need to protect Jesus from error.” He even denied the infallibility of Christ by his claim that Jesus predicted things that did not occur as He anticipated.¹⁴ Nolland’s first mistake is his accusation that the alternatives are based

¹⁰ Note the arguments in Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 2:1691-92.

¹¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (Word Biblical Commentary) (Dallas: Word, 1998) 715.

¹² MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 63-67.

¹³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 930.

¹⁴ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 988-89.

upon the need to protect Jesus from error. Many authors making proposals are committed to the fact that Jesus spoke the truth, and they are simply grappling with how to understand all the data of Scripture. Even worse, it is very sad that a biblical scholar, confronted with a difficulty in Scripture, would fail to simply admit the lack of an adequate explanation, rather than accusing Jesus of error, especially when (in the immediate context) Jesus emphasized the absolute reliability of his words. Such actions support the case of scoffers who delight in accusing Jesus of not knowing what He was discussing.¹⁵

Renowned scholar Carson also insisted that other meanings for “this generation” are highly artificial, but rightly denied that Jesus made a mistake. Unfortunately, he solved the tension by claiming that all these things were actually fulfilled during that first generation, and in a very artificial manner, claimed that such early fulfillment is all that is required, and the actual *parousia* can occur much later. He also failed to adequately address specifics of AD 70 that do not literally fit the prophetic passage.¹⁶

Usually such proposals contain a fatal flaw that discredits the idea in the minds of their opponents. One finds it much easier to demonstrate how suggestions are inadequate than it is to make a truly convincing proposal. Even so, these discussions are valuable in clarifying the validity of the *reasons* for a particular proposal.

The brief survey herein reveals a tremendous variety of opinion regarding the meaning of the Olivet Discourse. The purpose of this article is not to interact in detail with all of these views; rather, the intent is to demonstrate that Luke’s accounts (chs. 17, 21) of Jesus’ eschatology provide hermeneutical keys, which can afford clarity for Matthew’s more lengthy presentation of the Olivet Discourse (and its close companion in the Gospel of Mark), and this provides a foundational basis for choosing between conflicting views.

HISTORICAL SETTING OF LUKE 21

The religious leaders of the nation of Israel outwardly appeared pious, but were actually in blatant opposition to Jesus. They wanted Him to rebuke

¹⁵ Recently after speaking with regard to the Olivet Discourse at a church in a university town, one of the elders (a professor at the state university) said that this is one of the most common complaints he hears: that Jesus falsely predicted that all would occur in his generation.

¹⁶ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 8:507.

the crowds (at the triumphal entry) who were fulfilling prophecies regarding his kingship (19:39-40). Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they had refused his ministry (19:41-44; cf. Matt 23:37-39). When the Lord Jesus cleansed the Temple, He rebuked the nation for perverting the House of Prayer into a den of thieves. The leadership wanted to destroy Him, but could not because the people listened attentively to Him (19:45-48).

The leaders continued their opposition by trying to discredit Jesus for not operating under proper authority. In his counter-question, Jesus exposed their fundamental dishonesty (20:1-8). Subsequently, the Lord taught the people a parable of the vineyard, which the leadership knew had been spoken against them, increasing their desire to kill Him (20:9-19).

The leaders responded by asking Jesus trick questions with regard to taxes (20:20-26) and the resurrection (20:27-40). Jesus asked them a question, which they were unable to answer, and then in the hearing of all the people, He warned his disciples against the leadership who loved external glory and the appearance of righteousness, but in fact were viciously devouring widows' houses (20:41-47). Immediately, the Lord looked and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and a poor widow casting in two small coins. He drew attention to the contrast, and emphasized that God viewed her gift as greater than all theirs together (21:1-4).

Subsequently, when some mentioned the beautiful stones and donations of the Temple, the Lord shocked them by saying that the days are coming when all those stones would be thrown down (21:5-6). His hearers naturally wondered when this would occur. Therefore, the immediate setting is the vast contrast in human and divine perspective. Man emphasizes the external; God emphasizes the heart. Man is impressed with proper procedures, proper channels, impressive gifts, and beautiful buildings; God is concerned about inner and ultimate reality. The setting of the Olivet Discourse prepares the hearers to focus their lives undistractedly upon what is truly important.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRUCTURAL INDICATORS FOR ACCURATE EXEGESIS

The authors of Scripture were very fond of the use of *inclusio* as a marker to indicate units of discourse. Western literature does not use this technique, so a Western reader may be inclined to think the biblical author is arbitrarily jumping from point to point and randomly repeating himself. Instead, it is a deliberately crafted literary notation to specify the beginning and ending of a particular unit. The following quote from Lane's

treatment of Hebrews illustrates the importance of utilizing an author's literary devices as a foundation for accurate exegesis.

Within the framework established by the formal announcement of the subject, the writer provides other literary indications that disclose the structure of his thinking. He makes use of the literary device of an *inclusio*, the introduction of the same expression or phrase at the opening and at the close of a paragraph of integrated thought. In the initial segment of his address two examples of this rhetorical procedure may be observed. The first serves to identify 1:5-14 as a unified paragraph:

1:5. "To which of the angels did God ever say...?"

1:13. "To which of the angels has God ever said...?"

The second *inclusio* establishes the limits of the development in 2:5-16:

2:5. "For it is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come."

2:16p. "For surely it is not angels that he helps."

Since the function of 2:17-18 is to announce the subject of the next major division, these verses stand outside the *inclusio*. Nevertheless, on the basis of the writer's rhetorical procedure, 1:5-14, 2:1-4, and 2:5-18 may be identified as separate but related paragraphs within the first major division of the address.

Relationship between the several paragraphs may be established by *catchword association*. At the beginning of a new paragraph, a word or expression may be repeated from the close of the preceding paragraph (Vaganay, "Le plan," 269-77). The initial presentation of the writer's argument (1:5-14), for example, is tied to the exordium (1:1-4) by reference to *the angels*:

1:4. "So he became so much superior to *the angels* [τῶν ἀγγέλων]."

1:5. "For to which of *the angels* [τῶν ἀγγέλων] did God ever say...?"

The two paragraphs are linked together by the repetition of the expression. As a result, the transition from assertion to demonstration is achieved smoothly.

Another literary device that serves to identify the limits of a larger unit of thought is *the repetition of characteristic terms*. This technique gives to a section a recognizable character that is altered only when the writer is prepared to introduce another section of his argument. In the opening segment of the discourse the characteristic term is *angels*; ten of the twelve occurrences of this term are concentrated in 1:1–2:18. The introduction of other characteristic terms after 2:16 serves to alert the readers that another line of thought is being introduced in 2:17–18.

These literary procedures are not incidental to the conceptual development in Hebrews. They were conventional techniques of composition upon which the writer could rely for identifying the course of his argument. They are used consistently throughout the document and furnish an invaluable support to the exegetical study of the text.¹⁷

Of particular interest for the present study is Lane's final paragraph: the writer could *expect* his readers to utilize these conventions in order to follow the course of the argument. Failure to do so can result in erroneous conclusions based upon incorrectly assuming that a near context is relevant to something in an entirely different paragraph.

Scholars frequently draw attention to the use of *inclusio* by biblical authors.¹⁸ If *inclusio* indicators are ordered inside one another it is called a *chiasm*. Luke's presentation of the Olivet Discourse very naturally includes three major sections, indicated both by content and by *inclusio* and *chiastic* indicators. Some subsections are also delineated by *inclusio*. Understanding the boundaries of these sections provides obvious definition for proper interpretation. Otherwise, there is the temptation to wander through the entire passage as if it were a considerable amalgamation of ideas from which similar items can be collected into whatever set of choices is desired.

¹⁷ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (Word Biblical Commentary) (Dallas: Word, 1998) 2-3.

¹⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 135, 237; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Word Biblical Commentary) (Dallas: Word, 1990) 384.

SECTION 1: WIDESPREAD DISASTER (VV. 8-11)

Jesus warned his followers not to follow deceivers, because many will come in his name, making false claims. Their falsehood will involve claiming to be the Messiah, and asserting that the time of the End is sooner than it actually is. Jesus warned his followers not to follow those making such claims (v. 8).

Jesus also warned his followers not to be terrified by wars and commotions, because these tumults are not a sign of an immediate consummation. The terminology “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” indicates international conflict (vv. 9-10). Subsequently, the Lord foretold cosmic signs: great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues. There will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven (v. 11), which evidently are incidents far more disturbing than normal astronomical events such as lunar and solar eclipses or meteorite showers.

The content of this section involves a broad scale (multinational conflict, disasters in various places, great signs from heaven — thus visible from widely separated places on the earth). The wide-ranging effect is in direct contrast with the local emphasis of the next section.

SECTION 2: EARLIER TROUBLES (VV. 12-24)

The beginning of verse 12 clearly defines the start of a new section: “But before all these things” indicates that something else will occur prior to any of the things that Jesus mentioned in verses 8-11. The second section is composed of two distinct subsections: (1) advice regarding the coming persecution (vv. 12-19); and, (2) details of events connected with Jerusalem (vv. 20-24). The content of the first subsection is entirely upon the subject of persecution. The delineation of the second subsection is made obvious by the *inclusio* “Jerusalem” in verses 20a and 24b.

The ending of this major section is indicated by three things: (1) the Jerusalem *inclusio* just mentioned; (2) the *inclusio* regarding things being fulfilled (vv. 22, 24); and, (3) the *chiasm* keyed to fear and signs from heaven (vv. 11b, 25a) which distinctly brackets verses 12-24. Therefore, the second section is pointedly isolated from verses 8-11 which precede it and from the third section which will follow. The ideas can be represented in outline form showing the *chiasm* surrounding Section 2 (A, B, B', A'), and the *inclusio* structures within this section (C, D, D', C').

- A. Fear: terrors (v. 11b)
 - B. Astronomical signs: signs from heaven (v. 11c)
 - Section 2: Earlier Troubles (vv. 12-24)
 - Subsection 1: Early Persecution (vv. 12-19)
 - (marked by a single topic)
 - Subsection 2: Jewish National Disaster (vv. 20-24)
 - Inclusio*: Jerusalem (vv. 20a, 24b)
 - C. Jerusalem surrounded by armies (v. 20a)
 - Sub-*inclusio*: fulfilled (vv. 22b, 24b)
 - D. Things written may be fulfilled (v. 22b)
 - D'. Times of the Gentiles fulfilled (v. 24b)
 - C'. Jerusalem trampled (v. 24b)
- B'. Astronomical signs: sun, moon, and stars (v. 25a)
- A'. Fear: dismay of nations (v. 25b)

Early Persecution (vv. 12-19)

The focus in the first part of this section is advice regarding individual response to the coming persecution. The source of persecution will be by both Jews (synagogues) and Gentiles (kings and rulers) (v. 12). Persecution is not cause for alarm, however, because it will be an opportunity for testimony (v. 13), indicating again how God's perspective is vastly different than ordinary human views of difficulty. Jesus advised his followers to avoid making plans for what to say at an upcoming court case, because at the trial "I will give you" (emphatic explicit pronoun placed to the front [ἐγὼ γὰρ δώσω ὑμῖν]) wisdom and words that your adversaries will not be able to contradict (vv. 14-15).

Jesus warned that his followers would be hated even by parents and relatives and friends to such a degree that some of them would be betrayed to death (v. 16). However, even though they would be hated by all (v. 17), they would be invincible because not one aspect of their being could perish ultimately (v. 18), and faithful endurance until death would guarantee life (v. 19). After the ascension, Stephen's defense in Acts 6—7 illustrates this prophetic paragraph in Luke (i.e. supernatural wisdom and power, 6:10, 15; fearless utilization of the situation as opportunity for testimony, 7:51-53; and, ultimate glory and reward even though his enemies stoned him, 7:54-60).

Jewish National Disaster (vv. 20-24)

The second part of this section gives specific directions for a special time of trouble for the Jewish nation (vv. 20-24). The identifier for when the trouble is soon to begin is when armies surround Jerusalem. The focus is a local situation in the land of Israel, a stark contrast to the global picture in the first section (vv. 8-11).

The military preparation for attack will be the signal that the desolation of Jerusalem is near (v. 20), and then everyone in Judea (local emphasis) must leave with utmost urgency (v. 21), because these are the days of vengeance so that all can be fulfilled (v. 22). The signals do not mean that all prophecy would be fulfilled by the AD 70 event, but that in order for all prophecies regarding the Jewish nation to be fulfilled, the AD 70 event must occur. The event would include Jesus' earlier prophecy of the dire judgment to fall upon his Jewish contemporaries who rejected their Messiah, and who were like their fathers in persecuting the messengers of God (Matt 23:29-36).

Jesus emphasized that the military attack against Jerusalem would be utterly devastating. Pregnant and nursing mothers would be unable to flee rapidly, and would not likely escape (v. 23a). There would be great distress upon the land (local emphasis again) (v. 23b), wrath to this people (namely the Jews, not all nations) (v. 23c). They would not only be killed by the sword (v. 24a), but the survivors would be led captive to all nations (v. 24b), clearly dispersing the local population to all parts of the world. The affairs of Jerusalem would be trampled underfoot by Gentiles for however long the time of the Gentiles would last (v. 24c).

Verses 20-24 were fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, and dispersed the Jewish nation. In the centuries since, they have been pursued from country to country, have suffered under inquisitions, and even today the recently reconstituted state of Israel is experiencing tremendous pressure from Gentile nations who interfere with Israeli management of internal affairs. The difficulties for Israel will continue indefinitely until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled by Jesus returning in glory to rule in justice.

SECTION 3: WIDESPREAD DISASTER (VV. 25-36)

As mentioned previously, the third section is especially delineated as separate from the previous section by the *chiasm* which is keyed by the concepts of fear and astronomical signs. Additionally, the third section directly connects the fears and astronomical signs of the first segment (v.

11) with the fears and astronomical signs that are characteristic of the widespread disaster (v. 25).

Therefore, the new section beginning with verse 25 addresses a subject matter different from the previous, and returns to the things Jesus discussed in verses 8-11 (prior to his inserting the paragraph beginning with the words, “but before all these things,” v. 12a), which initiated the second section (vv. 12-24). Clearly, in the third section, Jesus spoke regarding the time of the End (the Son of Man coming in glory, v. 27; redemption being near, v. 28; and, all things fulfilled in “this generation,” v. 32). Luke’s forceful linguistic connections to the first section demonstrate that verses 8-11 are speaking with regard to the time of the End, not concerning the years of the first century or the centuries between then and now.

Investigation of the third section (vv. 25-36) reveals two subsections. The first subsection emphasizes the utter terror of humanity (vv. 25-26). The final subsection (vv. 28-36) gives advice to believers regarding the time of the End. In the very middle of those two sections is the focal point of the End: the glorious personal appearance of the Son of Man (v. 27).

Section 3: Widespread Disaster (vv. 25-36)

Inclusio: two classes of humanity

A. Terrified unbelievers (vv. 25-26)

Focal Center: the Son of Man comes in glory (v. 27)

A'. Advice to believers (vv. 28-36)

The Terror of Unbelievers (vv. 25-26)

The terminology of Section 3 connects it to verses 8-11, in addition to the Old Testament imagery of the Day of the Lord.

The images Jesus employs are reminiscent of those found in v 11, again marking vv 8-11 as a prospective summary of the discourse as a whole; by means of this intertextuality we are also reminded that the ordeals Jesus enumerates are marked with eschatological importance. This interpretation is highlighted by the use of scriptural texts as a reservoir from which to draw the meaning-laden details for this eschatological portrait. Thus, the OT is the source for this mural’s astral phenomena (“signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars . . . the powers of the heavens will be shaken” — vv 25-26) [cf. e.g. Isa 13:11, 13; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31], distress and confusion among the nations (v 25) [cf. e.g. Isa 8:22; 13:4], the roaring of the sea (v 25) [cf.

e.g. Isa 5:30; 17:12; Jon 5:30], and the fear of the people (v 26) [cf. e.g. Isa 13:6–11]. It is of no little consequence that, especially when read against the background of their OT precursors, these images portend the advent of the Day of the Lord and, so, portray the coming of the Son of Man as a theophany. Jesus' eschatological discourse thus distinguishes the fall of Jerusalem and the coming of the End, denoting them as two separate phases in the realization of the divine plan. How far they are to be separated temporally, however, is not specified . . . (v 9).¹⁹

There are many contrasts to the earlier time of trouble (vv. 20-24). The extreme terror of humanity (vv. 25-26) is in contrast to the immediately preceding section where the terror would be confined only to the Jews under attack in Judea. There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars (v. 25a), clearly connecting to the “great signs from heaven” (v. 11b). The signs are worldwide indicators showing that here Jesus is returning to his previous discussion (v. 11b), which He interrupted with verses 12-24. The signs are global and astronomical, as opposed to a local sign of armies surrounding Jerusalem. Jesus spoke with regard to dismay among the nations, not just the Jews of Judea (v. 25b). There is perplexity regarding the roaring of the sea (v. 25c). Men are fainting for fear of what they expect to come (not what they already observe, which is a contrast to Jewish dismay at the attacking Roman army they already saw in AD 70); thus they expect something even worse (v. 26a). The reason for such overwhelming fear is the powers of heaven are shaken (v. 26b).²⁰ The terror corresponds to the desperate cry for rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of the One seated upon the Throne (Rev 6:15-17). The people know that God is the source of their troubles, and the prospect of his presence is more terrifying than any earthly disaster. Furthermore, these things are coming upon the entire inhabited world [τῆ οἰκουμένη], contrasting with what comes upon Judea and Jerusalem in verses 21-24.

The grand focal point of End-time events is the glorious appearance of the Son of Man (v. 27). The focus is emphasized by being inserted between the description of the terrified unbelievers (vv. 25-26) and the advice to believers (vv. 28-36). The audience in focus at the Lord's return is the same fearful unbelievers as in the first subsection (vv. 25-26): “then

¹⁹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 740.

²⁰ The *inclusio* — “sun, moon, stars” (v. 25a) pared with “powers of heaven” (v. 26b) — would suggest heavenly bodies as the more likely referent than evil angelic powers.

they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory (v. 27).

Advice to Believers (vv. 28-36)

The final subsection is composed of advice to believers (vv. 28-36); it is subdivided into two parts, each of which is delineated by respective *inclusio* notation. The *inclusio* in the first part is keyed to nearness of consummation, that is, the proximity of redemption (v. 28) and the kingdom of God, all fulfilled within a generation (vv. 31-32)]. The *inclusio* in verses 12-24 is keyed to admonition for alertness: the exhortation to be attentive (v. 34) and to keep watchful (v. 36). Inserted between these two emphases is the focal point applying to both paragraphs: Christ's words are more enduring than heaven and earth (v. 33). The structure may be outlined, in a visual portrayal of the preceding discussion.

Part 1 *Inclusio*: Nearness of Consummation

A. Nearness of redemption (v. 28)

A'. Nearness to the kingdom of God;
all things fulfilled in one generation (vv. 31-32)

Central Focus: Christ's words are more enduring
than the universe (v. 33)

Part 2 *Inclusio*: Admonition for Alertness

B. Be on guard (v. 34)

B'. Keep alert (v. 36)

Nearness of Consummation (vv. 28-33)

The believers of the time prophesied in verses 28-33 are admonished to focus upon the imminent appearance of their redemption (v. 28). They are to "straighten up" and lift their heads, not cowering in the midst of the difficulties surrounding them, but exultantly looking for their redemption (in contrast to unbelieving humanity).

To illustrate the fact that the redemption is both soon and certain, Jesus told a parable regarding trees budding in the spring of the year (vv. 29-30). When trees put forth leaves is literally "when they already put forth" (ὅταν προβάλωσιν ἤδη), then βλέποντες ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν γινώσκετε ὅτι ἤδη ἐγγὺς τὸ θέρος ἐστίν (v. 30b). The emphasis is "seeing for yourselves, you know that summer is already near," not that they merely believe a principle they have been told, but they see unmistakably what is occurring in their midst, and they know that summer is already near; it is not distant

by a year, twenty years, or even a century. Twice in verse 30, the Lord emphasized “already.” The clarity of understanding this natural botanical event is to emphasize the point that when they see these things beginning to occur (v. 28), then the consummation of all things is certain and very soon. The saints will be able to know that the redemption will be in a very near timeframe (i.e. they will not be guessing).

Subsequently, the Lord reemphasized the point by using different words. Jesus emphatically stated: “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place” (v. 32). The beginning word of the sentence [ἀμήν] emphasizes the importance of this declaration. Jesus spoke as the prophets often did, that is, from the perspective of being present at an event of the future (cf. Isa 33:17-24; 66:10-14; Zech 9:9).²¹ Jesus’ usage of the word “this” instead of “that” is in conformity with the entire discourse. He repeatedly addressed his audience as “you” even though at one point He was referencing the distant future (vv. 8-9). Jesus could speak regarding persecution coming soon (vv. 12-19), and then could give instruction regarding the attack of Jerusalem in AD 70 (v. 20), and a few verses later, Jesus provided instruction for escaping the terrifying events of the End and being prepared to stand before the Son of Man (v. 36). Readers today have the advantage of history, and therefore know that “you” in all these cases cannot refer to the same individual persons, because the specified events span twenty centuries. Similarly, “this generation” (ἡ γενεὰ αὐτή, v. 32) is specific for the timeframe of its own paragraph.

A parallel situation involving the same demonstrative pronoun but utilizing the dative case (ταύτη τῇ νυκτὶ) is found in Luke 17:34 (cf. ἡ γενεὰ αὐτή, Matt 24:34; Luke 21:32); however, several versions (see NASB, NIV, ESV, NKJV, NET, KJV) translate it as “that night” because of context. If it had been translated literally as “this night,” certainly everyone would understand that Jesus was speaking with regard to the context of the End, and none would try to claim that this special separation would occur that very evening in Judea. Therefore, the wording of the Greek text in Luke 17:34 confirms the appropriate meaning of “this generation” in the Olivet discourse as referring to the context for which it was spoken: the time of the End. The usage of the pronoun “this” brings the particular generation to the forefront: this very generation.

The careful structure of Luke’s account defines the timeframe of “this generation.” As noted in the foregoing discussion, clear linguistic signals divide the discourse into major sections: *Section 1*: The Time of the End; *Section 2*: Early Persecutions and the AD 70 Destruction of Jerusalem;

²¹ MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 63-67.

and, *Section 3: Continuing Description of the Time of the End*. The pronouncement regarding “this generation” only occurs in Section 3, the time of the End. Therefore, the meaning is defined only for the generation living then. Everything will be fulfilled within the generation that sees the events of the End beginning to occur (v. 32), and this utilizes the natural meaning of “this generation.” Jesus did not speak with regard to his contemporaries; He did not say the words of verse 32 concerning those who witnessed the AD 70 event. Jesus said it only when referring to those who live at the time of the End, which is demarcated by literary devices as separate from the events of verses 12-24. Therefore, “this generation” retains its precise natural lexical meaning, but is limited by Luke’s structural markers to those who live at the time of the End (a result that harmonizes with other prophecy). The book of Revelation, in addition to the Seventieth Week of Daniel, teaches that the horrific events of the End will occur within a seven-year period, confirming that indeed the generation who witnesses those events begin will see them all fulfilled.

The time limitation is an important contrast to many other prophetic passages where centuries elapse prior to the fulfillment of all details. For example, the devastating attack on the island fortress of Tyre by Alexander the Great came centuries after Nebuchadnezzar attacked the mainland city, but both are prophesied in Ezekiel 26, without an obvious time interval between them. The gap between the acceptable year of the Lord (Isa 61:2b) proclaimed by Christ, and the day of vengeance (Isa 61:2b) yet to come, will soon be more than twenty centuries (Luke 4:18-19). According to Revelation 20, a thousand years will elapse between the two resurrections of John 5:39.

Jesus’ statement regarding the rapidity of fulfillment within a generation is important as a special encouragement to believers during the most distressing years in all world history. The command to “straighten up and lift up your heads” is an encouragement to those who personally can expect redemption from the End time chaos (v. 28). The metaphor of standing straight and looking upward is pointless if fulfillment cannot be expected in one’s own generation. “Lift up your heads” is an encouragement that Jesus will come in glory within the generation of those witnessing the End time events. When those events occur, the kingdom of God is *near* because Jesus soon will be reigning visibly upon the earth (v. 31b).

The sign of the End is “when you see these things happening,” that is, the catastrophic events mentioned in verses 25-26. Jesus’ statement does not define the beginning of “this generation” to a supposed budding of the fig tree as being the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948. The focus in

not upon what date defines the beginning of the generation or how long a generation will last. The emphasis is that the generation witnessing the specified global catastrophes will also see the consummation of all things.

From the current vantage point in world history, one does not actually see the beginning of the intense global signs mentioned in verses 8-11, 25-26. However, one can now see the stage being set for the prophesied events, such as uncontrollable epidemics (bubonic plague on the brink of an outbreak, and new strains of bacterial infections unaffected by current antibiotics), nations against nations (national terrorist havens, threats of nuclear destruction, the potentially dangerous situations in the Middle East, and competition for earth's dwindling resources), ecological and climatic instabilities (inexplicable honeybee deaths, and desert expansions), and men's hearts failing them for fear (panic from worldwide financial crises, and terror produced by suicide bombers). Jesus guaranteed the certainty and accuracy of his predictions. Someday heaven and earth will vanish, but his predictions are guaranteed by something more enduring than the universe one inhabits. The guarantee is *his* own words, which absolutely will not [οὐ μὴ] ever be unreliable.

Keep on Your Guard (vv. 33-36)

The reminder of the veracity of Jesus' words (v. 33) also points forward to the second part of advice to believers, which is found in verses 34-36. However, two things in this text suggest a shift in focus. First, as previously noted, there is an *inclusio* (admonition for alertness, vv. 34, 36) distinguishing it as a subsection. Luke used such markers to specify a special paragraph. The second is the content itself. Although the entire section (vv. 28-36) has its focus upon advice to believers, the *content* of this subsection differs from that in verses 28-32, which for convenience is termed the "last generation subsection."

The admonition is to carefully guard one's heart. The section begins with a careful scrutiny upon self. "Beware of yourselves" and then, in addition, "your" modifies "hearts" in an emphatic position (Προσέχετε δὲ ἑαυτοῖς μήποτε βαρηθῶσιν ὑμῶν αἱ καρδίαι). The admonitions to guard one's heart against dissipation (distractions by what is temporary), drunkenness (indulging the flesh), and worries (absence of trust in God) are given because it is incredibly easy to have a heart that lacks focus upon God. Marshall made an important observation: "A warning against literal drunkenness is no doubt included, but the main force is probably

metaphorical, warning disciples against succumbing to the intoxicating attractions of the sinful world."²²

The inward focus is in contrast to the external focus required in the "last generation subsection." The "last generation" saints are to observe the signs being fulfilled, and therefore rejoice that their redemption is drawing near, and that the visible earthly kingdom of God will appear very soon. The circumstances that so terrify the rest of the world are actually an encouragement to the "last generation" saints because each catastrophic event verifies that Jesus is rapidly fulfilling the predictions which the prophets have specified must precede his glorious advent.

However, for those living during the time described in verses 34-36, guarding the heart will prevent that day from coming upon them suddenly as a "trap" (vv. 34b-35a). The "trap" metaphor conveys the idea of that day suddenly and unexpectedly capturing victims.²³ The victims are described as "all those who dwell on the face of all the earth" (v. 35). Notice the contrast: a trap for everyone on earth, but not for the believer. The description parallels the contrast between the raptured Christians (1 Thess 4:13-17), and the unbelievers who experience excruciating destruction from the Lord like the sudden onset of labor pains (1 Thess 5:1-4, cf. Matt 24:8, the beginning of birth pangs).

Luke's connection with Thessalonians is strengthened by identical terms utilized in both Luke 21:34-36 and 1 Thessalonians 5:3-7, such as "come" (ἐφίστημι), "suddenly" (αἰφνίδιος), "escape" (ἐκφεύγω), "the day" (ἡ ἡμέρα), and finally "be drunk" in Thessalonians (μεθύω) and "drunkenness" in Luke (μέθη). The connection is enhanced by the fact that αἰφνίδιος occurs in only these two passages in the New Testament.²⁴

Guarding the heart also means active pursuit of the positive by prayer (v. 36). There is a textual variant in verse 36 (καταξιοθῆτε and κατισχύσητε) with the latter having more support. The Nestle Aland apparatus lists some support for the former, but the United Bible Societies apparatus does not even mention the variant. The Louw-Nida lexicon lists two possible meanings for the usage of κατισχύσητε in verse 36: "1) in order that you may be strong enough to escape all these things that are going to take place, and 2) that you may be completely able to escape all

²² I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary) (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978) 782.

²³ Bock, *Luke*, 2:1693.

²⁴ Hart, "Rapture in Matthew 24," 50.

that is about to happen Lk 21:36.”²⁵ The standard Greek lexicon cites this reference with the meaning “be in a position [to].”²⁶ The latter two meanings fit better with the idea of “escape” also found in the verse.

The events of the End are major geographic catastrophes, with terrible signs in the heavens, disruptions of ordinary ecological processes, and extensive plagues. The believer is admonished to pray that he might be able to escape all these things which must occur. The things one escapes language (ταῦτα πάντα τὰ μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι) is terminology that parallels other statements speaking of happenings after the church age (e.g. ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα in Rev 1:19; cf. 4:1). The prophesied events can be escaped only by removal from the time of their occurrence (Rev 3:10), not by being clever or agile (cf. Amos 5:18-19). The goal of the prayer is that one may stand before the Son of Man, and this is elevated terminology which corresponds to the exalted position of the glorified church (cf. Rev 2:26-27).

Failure to utilize the linguistic keys (*inclusio*, contrast of theme) produces confused conclusions resulting from combining parts of the discourse that Luke has carefully separated. For example, although Bock recognized some distinctions that Luke made between the AD 70 event and the time of the End,²⁷ he stated:

The discourse closes with an exhortation, a final call to faithfulness in the midst of the pressure. The disciples are to keep their eyes constantly on the watch for these events. Ἀγρυπνεῖτε (*agrypneite*, watch) is a present imperative that with the phrase *at all times* calls for a constant watch. . . . Constant watch is necessary since the time of the return is unknown. With the constant watch comes the call to pray for the strength to endure temptation that will come from the persecution mentioned in 21:12–19, as well as from other pressures that disciples will face at the end.²⁸

Thus, Bock incorrectly connected verse 36 with the section addressing early persecution, which Jesus clearly stated is before the time of the End (v. 12). Bock’s emphasis upon pressure and the need to constantly “watch

²⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996) 1:699, 675.

²⁶ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 534.

²⁷ Bock, *Luke*, 2:1675

²⁸ *Ibid.* 2:1694.

for these events” is clearly connecting to verse 28 of Jesus’ advice in the “last generation subsection.” Nowhere in the New Testament are church saints admonished to watch for the events of the End. Instead, they are to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and look for the Savior from heaven (Tit 2:13), which also fits with the warning in Luke 21:34. As pretribulationists have often remarked, no specific event needs to be fulfilled before Christ comes for the church. Bock also is mistaken in specifying a focus for prayer that is different than the one in the text. Jesus admonished the saints to pray that they might be able to *escape*, but Bock speaks of them as praying in order to *endure*. The leap across Luke’s structural boundary forces Bock to think in terms of endurance rather than escape.

Escape terminology is a contrast to the “last generation subsection.” Those believers are not praying to escape all the things coming upon the earth; they know what prophecy teaches regarding the saints during the Seventieth Week, which is likely martyrdom (Rev 6:9-11; 7:14; 13:7, 15), or for a small percentage the privilege of being present on the earth when Jesus returns in glory. Escape is actually impossible, except through death. In contrast to the present age where life is to be desired as an opportunity for further ministry (cf. Phil 1:21-24), death in the Tribulation era is a special blessing for the believer (Rev 14:13). Even if an individual were not killed by plagues or earthquakes or famines or war, it would be impossible for him to escape the effects and trauma of all those things. For saints who manage to evade the malice of the Beast, they can rejoice that in only a few more months, or weeks, or days (depending upon the timeframe of signs being observed), the Redeemer of all saints will appear in glory.

Notice that the admonitions for those in verses 34-36 are particularly appropriate for saints prior to the Rapture (constant watch to avoid distractions), not for people grappling with the unrestrained Satanism led by the Beast, and with the intense disasters of the Tribulation. Jesus still spoke regarding the time of the End, but in the first case to Tribulation saints (vv. 28-32) who observe many specific signs of his coming (budding of the trees), and in the second case to saints of the church age (vv. 34-36) for whom ordinary life can suddenly be interrupted without any prior specific sign of how soon it will be. For both groups, certainty is guaranteed by the words of Jesus (v. 33).

The two subsections are both focusing upon the time of the End. The first advises saints who are within the period of history called the Tribulation. The second (clearly distinguished from the first by *inclusio*, contrast in themes, and usage of key words and phrases) advises saints

who are in that indeterminate moment immediately prior to the Tribulation beginning (viz. they are to pray to be able to escape all things that are coming upon the earth).

In the Olivet Discourse, the Lukan account is the only one of the synoptics to record the paragraph with regard to escape. Luke carefully delineated the structure to show separation from the “last generation,” so that one can clearly discern the contrast between the two groups of believers: one experiences the Tribulation, while the other escapes prior to that time of trouble. Therefore, Jesus did speak of the Rapture in the Olivet Discourse, and consequently, proper analysis of the presentations of Matthew and Mark must allow for the possibility that they reference it also, but include details that Luke did not mention.

Jesus Christ’s coming in glory is the pivotal center of Luke’s third major section (The Time of the End). This focus is made clear by the central position of verse 27 between the parts of the major *inclusio* defining two classes of humanity: unbelievers (vv. 25-26) and believers (vv. 28-37).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Utilization of Luke’s structural indicators enables the presentation of the following outline.

SECTION 1 (Widespread Disaster — Time of the End)

(vv. 8-11)

SECTION 2 (Time from AD 33 to AD 70 with Indeterminate Waiting)

(vv. 12-24)

Early persecution (vv. 12-19)

Jewish national disaster (vv. 20-24)

SECTION 3 (Widespread Disaster — Time of the End,

Continuation of Section 1) (vv. 25-36)

Terror of unbelievers (vv. 25-26)

Focal center: Jesus Christ returns in glory (v. 27)

Advice to believers (vv. 28-36)

Tribulation saints watch signs

as encouragement of soon fulfillment (vv. 28-32)

Focal Center: Jesus’ words are absolutely reliable
(v. 33)

Church saints alert for imminent Rapture

rescued prior to the Tribulation (vv. 34-36)

The Importance of Literary Structure

Proper understanding of ancient literary techniques is very important for correct exegesis of a biblical passage. Failure to notice the linguistic markers defining a particular paragraph frequently causes a mistaken judgment regarding context. Usually context is taken to mean simply the verses near the portion being explained. However, nearness is not enough, and this is particularly important in the study of prophecy, which frequently has elements in immediate proximity that are separated by significant periods of time.

The synoptic gospels do present some variation in the material they include as they chronicle the Olivet Discourse. The details each evangelist gave regarding the historical setting of the discourse make it obvious that all three are recording the same presentation by Christ. Jesus certainly taught all of what is contained within the combined synoptic accounts, but each author selectively chose what to include. Careful attention to what each author included or omitted enables one to clearly understand the total discourse. Luke brought clarity though literary structures.

Part A: Time of the End

Part B: AD 33 to AD 70,

followed by indeterminate waiting period

Part A': Time of the End, continued

The center section (Part B) is a prophecy that is fulfilled prior to the events of the End. The literal fulfillment of the near prophecy confirms the literal detailed fulfillment of the events of the End.

Clarification Brought by Luke's Version of the Olivet Discourse

The previously stated ideas are confirmed by the content of Luke's passage. The details of Section 1 (vv. 8-11) do not correspond with the situation in Judea prior to AD 70. False christs (v. 8) would have been unattractive to believers in those first decades because of their immediate knowledge of the spectacular ministry of the true Christ, and the presence of living Apostles. There certainly were false messianic type leaders, but these were not attractive to believers, but rather to the Jews who had rejected the true Messiah. Instead of wars and international conflicts (vv. 9-10), the early church experienced the *Pax Romana*. Moreover, there are no indications of terrifying signs from heaven different from normal

astronomical events or global earthquakes. For this section to be fulfilled by AD 70, *all* these events must happen.

The meaning of “this generation” becomes unmistakable in the light of Luke’s literary structures. The term occurs only in the final “time of the End” section. Therefore, it refers only to the generation alive when the catastrophic events that immediately precede the glorious appearing begin to develop. The natural lexical meaning of the term is retained, but is specifically limited by Luke’s lucid and very precise textual and linguistic markers (this removes the confusion of attempting to connect the glorious appearing of Christ with the generation of Jesus’ contemporaries). Jesus did not arbitrarily shift from one topic to another. Luke 21 gives information regarding both the glorious appearing and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The structure of Luke’s account clearly separates the two events. Luke’s presentation thus defines the meaning of “this generation” for the Olivet discourse, and therefore also for the presentations in Matthew and Mark where the structural definition is not as obvious.

Luke’s precision thus naturally removes exegetical difficulties associated with “this generation.” The evangelist’s language automatically eliminates (1) the impetus for the preterist view and its variations, (2) the incentive for seeing the fulfillment of “the abomination of desolation” in the AD 70 event (and ignoring the many discrepancies, and being unnecessarily imaginative to force all the details to correspond with one another), (3) the accusations that Jesus did not really know the future, and (4) the need to resort to an ingressive aorist approach for the verb γένηται. Furthermore, one may also remove (5) the idea that an evil group of people will continue to exist and resist God to the very end (when in all the gospels the context of “this generation” in the Olivet discourse is upon timing, not upon the moral deficiencies of “this generation”), (6) the impetus to understand “this generation” as the Jewish race, (7) the idea that Jesus’ contemporaries witnessed all the signs, but that this did not necessarily mean that the End would immediately follow, and (8) the thinking that the notion of “final generation” is a tautology or that it expands the meaning of “generation.”

Luke’s material on the final days corresponds with the time of the End as revealed in the book of Revelation (e.g. emphasis upon deception, peace removed from the earth, great signs in heaven, and worldwide earthquakes and plagues). As is explained by the books of Daniel and Revelation, the Seventieth Week is relatively short (seven years), bringing all things quickly to conclusion. Luke included a section of the Olivet Discourse (the material regarding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70)

that Matthew omitted. Luke's structure carefully separates different events, and thus it brings clarity to Matthew's account. Luke 21:12a clearly defines the first section (vv. 8-11) as beyond the AD 70 event, and has been demonstrated by means of the chiasmic connection to the third section (vv. 25-36) as referring to the time of the End. The precise parallel of verses 8-11 with Matthew 24:4-8 demonstrates that the Matthean discourse begins with the time of the End, and proceeds from that period. Matthew 24:4—25:46 does not address the AD 70 event whatsoever. There is a different key for fleeing: abomination of desolation. There is no mention of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, or of Jerusalem's desolation, or of the Jews being scattered among the Gentiles. Matthew included only information regarding the time of the End.

Similarly, the Lukan account is the only gospel that records Jesus' admonition for saints to guard their hearts and pray to be able to escape the terrible things that are coming upon the earth during the Tribulation. Luke's careful demarcation through literary and thematic markers sets this particular point in distinction from the saints of the Tribulation, giving specific advice to those who can expect to be raptured immediately prior to those terrible events. Summary of insight from Luke's account of the Olivet Discourse includes: (1) "This generation" is the one living during the Seventieth Week of Daniel; (2) Matthew's account speaks only of the time of the End, nothing concerning the AD 70 event; and, (3) Luke's account gives specific advice to those who will be raptured prior to the Tribulation. The final article in this series will analyze Matthew's presentation of the Olivet discourse in the light of these conclusions.

BOOK REVIEWS

Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament by John D. Currid. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. 153 pp., paper, \$17.99.

One of the thriving criticisms against biblical Christianity today is that much of Scripture, especially the Old Testament stories, was borrowed from ancient accounts found in pagan mythologies. Since there are numerous narratives within ancient Near East studies that are very similar to biblical stories (e.g. creation, the flood, the exodus), it is now accepted by secular and liberal scholarship that the authors of Scripture merely borrowed these myths and invented a Jewish monotheistic storyline (pp. 22-23). Therefore, biblical accounts of those stories are just as mythical as pagan accounts. Many evangelical scholars are being influenced to believe in such manner, claiming that the Old Testament stories are “firmly rooted in the worldview of its time” (Peter Enns) (p. 23). Due to this influence, John Walton stated, “The early accounts of Genesis are ‘culturally descriptive rather than revealed truth,’” which leads Currid to conclude, “Many evangelical Old Testament scholars emphasize the similarities and parallels between ancient Near Eastern literature and biblical writings, and they do not recognize, to any great degree, the foundational difference between the two” (p. 23).

Currid disagrees with these scholars. He explored the precise relationship of the Old Testament to Near Eastern literature and concluded that the Old Testament authors did not borrow from ancient Near East legends but actually challenged these myths by revealing the true account and the truth with regard to God. He called this “polemical theology” which “takes well-known expressions and motifs from the ancient Near Eastern milieu and applies them to the person and work of Yahweh” (p. 25). Furthermore, “the primary purpose of polemical theology is to demonstrate emphatically and graphically the distinctions between the worldview of the Hebrews and the beliefs and practices of the rest of the ancient Near East” (p. 25). In addition, “the biblical authors refuted the pagan myths by identifying the holy Lord as the true Creator and Ruler of the cosmos and of history” (p. 31).

Currid applied this approach to some of the best-known accounts in the Old Testament: creation (ch. 3), the flood (ch. 4), Joseph and Potiphar’s wife (ch. 5), the birth of Moses (ch. 7) and the exodus stories (chs. 8-10). His conclusion concerning the birth of Moses is representative:

“The writer [of the biblical story] takes the famous pagan myth and turns it on its head in order to ridicule Egypt and to highlight the truth of the Hebrew world-and-life view. At the heart of the polemic is a taunt of the Egyptian Pharaoh” (p. 86). Later, he wrote, “The biblical writer’s radical monotheism shines forth brightly through this polemic that taunts the false gods of Canaan” (p. 137).

Currid not only presents his case for polemical theology but also provides a wealth of information regarding the culture, worldview, and mythologies of the ancient Near Eastern societies (this information alone is highly valuable in helping the reader understand the times in which Scripture was written and ancient Israel lived). Obviously, in a mere 149 pages, including seven pages of index, the author has only briefly addressed this fascinating subject. However, in this readable and extremely interesting book, Currid has accomplished much. He gave the reader important context for better interpreting the Old Testament, and he successfully challenged the modern scholarship that removes, or at least diminishes, the truthfulness of the Old Testament narratives. *Against the Gods* is highly recommended.

— Gary E. Gilley
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One with Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation by Marcus Peter Johnson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. 256 pp., paper, \$19.99.

In 1973, New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce observed, “Union with Christ, as a moment’s reflection will confirm, is a major theme of New Testament teaching. The writings of Paul and John, in particular, present it as the essence of Christian life and witness. However, it figures only to a limited degree, if at all, in the standard Protestant textbooks of systematic theology” (“Foreword” to Norman F. Douty, *Union with Christ* [Swengel, PA: Reiner Publications, 1973] viii). In his book, *One with Christ*, Marcus Peter Johnson, assistant professor of theology at Moody Bible Institute, agreed with Bruce regarding both of his points. *First*, Johnson declared that union with Christ is the essence of Christian life and witness by noting that this union is the essential core of biblical salvation. *Second*, Johnson noted, “union with Christ has largely disappeared from the evangelical theological landscape, which is dominated by legal notions of salvation” (pp. 60-61, fn. 3). Apparently, not much has changed concerning this doctrine in the intervening forty years.

Johnson developed his thesis primarily from a Reformed theological basis, relying a great deal upon the writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin, particularly the latter. In fact, Johnson gave Calvin credit for bringing his attention to this subject while he was focusing upon the writings of the Reformer during his graduate studies. Johnson was then led to develop his studies further, which ultimately resulted in writing this book, when he realized, “when Calvin wrote of being united to Christ, he meant that believers are personally joined to the living, incarnate, crucified, resurrected Jesus. Moreover, I realized that this union with Christ, which Calvin described in strikingly graphic and intimate terms, constituted for him the very essence of salvation. To be saved *by Christ*, Calvin kept insisting, means to be included in *the person of Christ*. That is what salvation *is*” (p. 12). In the remainder of the book, Johnson offered a detailed explanation of this doctrine.

Johnson began by stating that he wrote the book to remedy an ever-widening division between the work of Christ and the person of Christ in evangelical thinking because failure to see the relationship between the person of Christ and the work of Christ severely impacts a biblical notion of all that salvation encompasses. Christians need to be reminded, “Christ’s saving work is of no benefit to us unless we are joined to the living Savior whose work it is” (p. 15). Johnson followed this declaration with a discussion of how contemporary evangelicalism has

neglected this profound truth because it has departed from the sense of mystery that Paul described as, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). For Johnson, the mystery of the believer’s union with Christ is central to an understanding of the gospel. Therefore, his book developed what union with Christ means and how it encompasses all of biblical soteriology. Johnson defined union with Christ initially as encompassing all that the Bible described relating to the phrase “in Christ” (e.g. justified in Christ, Rom 8:1; glorified in Christ, Rom 8:30; 2 Cor 3:18; sanctified in Christ, 1 Cor 1:2; and, many similar relationships).

Johnson continued by enumerating various reasons why evangelicals have diminished their understanding of the doctrine of union with Christ. For example, texts used for instruction in soteriology inadequately address the doctrine, or they relegate it to a secondary place of importance in their understanding of it. Johnson followed these and a few other reasons with a brief overview of the book.

In chapter one, Johnson discussed the nature of union with Christ. Although both John and Paul wrote extensively with regard to union with Christ, Johnson chose to focus upon Paul’s writings. Paul addressed union with Christ as a profound mystery, and for this reason, it is difficult to explain what is involved in the union. Nevertheless, Johnson assumed the task and has done a commendable job. He noted first that the importance of union with Christ lies in its involvement in the entire scope of soteriology. He noted, “The mystery is that Christ, the eternal Son of God in the flesh, is ‘in’ us (Col. 1:27); or, as Paul puts it elsewhere, we, the church, have become ‘one flesh’ with Christ (Eph. 5:31-32)” (p. 40).

Johnson further attempted to explain the mystery of the believer’s union with Christ as clearly and as thoroughly as he could. He began his explanation by stating, “that the one who took on our flesh unites that flesh indivisibly to his deity so that we experience fellowship with our Maker again” (p. 43). Johnson noted that the believer’s union with Christ is total incorporation not only of one’s spirit but also one’s body. As a result, Johnson affirmed that the union of the believer’s humanity with Christ’s humanity involves sharing in the whole person of Christ, and this involves sharing in Christ’s oneness with the Father. Believers are united to God the Father through God the Son.

Johnson developed this theme through a number of headings, such as: “Our Union with Christ is Vital and Organic,” “Our Union with Christ is a Profound Mystery,” and so forth. He took care to indicate that while believers are united to God as a factor of this union, believers are not deity in themselves (or as Johnson stated: we are not thus deified); rather, this union makes the believer truly human. Johnson concluded his discussion of

the nature of the union with Christ by noting again that this union “is the essence and foundation of salvation” (p. 57).

Johnson next developed what might be considered the most controversial assertion of the book when he addressed the analogy between sin and salvation, as reflected in the relationship between the headship of Adam and the headship of Christ. He correctly noted that the believer cannot discuss salvation apart from the context of sin nor sin apart from the context of salvation (and this is the doctrine in which the two headships possess vital roles). Consequently, Johnson noted the crucial contribution Romans 5:12-19 attributes to this doctrine. Johnson called that text, “both the source of the doctrine and the source of the mystery” (p. 61); it describes the fallen condition of humanity as a result of Adam’s transgression, although it does not explain the nature of humanity’s relationship with Adam in that transgression.

According to Johnson, to comprehend this relationship requires any view to address three interrelated questions: (1) How do the descendants of Adam become guilty of his sin? (2) How do these descendants inherit his polluted nature? (3) What is the relationship between the declaration of the guilt (condemnation) and the corruption of one’s nature (depravity) (p. 61)? To answer those questions, Johnson discussed the two major viewpoints of Reformed hamartiology: federalism and realism. He then offered a third viewpoint that he believes more adequately explains the mystery of the believer’s union with Christ: Christological realism.

Regarding the first two, Johnson identified the strengths and weaknesses of each. For example, federalism identifies Adam as the “federal head” (representative) of the human race representing them in his actions in the garden. When he sinned, therefore, Adam represented humanity in his sin; and as a result, God accounted all Adam’s descendants guilty and condemned. Theologians frame this relationship between Adam and his descendants in forensic terms, essentially meaning that Adam’s descendants are declared guilty by virtue of their relationship with him. The Adamic relationship, in effect, answers the first of Johnson’s questions. According to Johnson, federalists answer the second question by noting, “humanity also inherits a corrupt nature by reason of its solidarity with Adam” (p. 63). Johnson noted that federalists had differing responses to the third question but obtained them uniformly from the answer to the second one.

Johnson acknowledged the federalists have made valuable contributions to the doctrine of hamartiology. Nevertheless, he observed some “salient weaknesses.” One such weakness, he called alien sin (p. 64).

Federalists do not seem to have an adequate explanation for how posterity can be held guilty when they are far removed from actual participation in Adam's sin. A second weakness relates to the inheritance of a corrupt nature. "Guilt and corruption may both be real consequences of original sin," noted Johnson, "but it is not obvious they are related by cause and effect," (p. 65) as one would expect from the federalist position. Difficulty arises, he argued, regarding how a legal declaration of guilt could result in an actual transformation of nature (this, at best, shows fault with the forensic metaphor).

Realism, conversely, takes a more experiential approach. Quoting Augustus H. Strong, Johnson argued, "God imputes the sin of Adam to all his posterity, in virtue of that organic unity of mankind by which the whole race at the time of Adam's transgression existed, not individually, but seminally, in him as its head" (p. 65). Consequently, the human race was "realistically" present in Adam when he sinned. While realists construe this view in various ways, they agree that imputation of Adam's sin is based "upon a real rather than a merely representational participation in his sin" (p. 65). Henceforth is the realist's answer to the first question, How do the descendants of Adam become guilty of his sin?

Since realists advocate a genuine union between Adam and his descendants, Johnson explained, they also have a definite answer to the second question. Adam's descendants inherited a polluted nature because they actually existed in Adam at the time of his fall. Not only did they participate in his sin, they also participated in his corrupt condition. By its very nature, this explanation also addresses the third question: the relationship between guilt and condemnation. Since mankind existed in Adam and thus participated in his sin, they also participate in his condemnation for the same reason.

After his analysis of the realist position, Johnson identified weaknesses in the position. The first is a weakness of definition. How can they actually define the *nature* of the union that is coherent both metaphysically and ontologically (his terms)? Johnson stated it as follows: "What does it mean to say that humanity as a generic whole really existed in Adam?" (p. 67). According to Johnson, the realist position does not answer this question. Johnson noted that a second weakness is the failure of the realist to establish a congruency in the analogy Paul made in Romans 5 between Adam and Christ. While they posit a realistic union between Adam and humanity, they fail to address a similar union between Christ and those who belong to Him. For this analogy to be sustained, Johnson argued, there must be a valid parallel. Both of these positions, according to Johnson, have some valuable points, but their weaknesses leave many

questions. Johnson's book offers a third view that he believes provides a more coherent understanding and resolves any difficulties with the first two. He calls this third view Christological realism.

Retaining the sense of mystery addressed several times by Paul in his epistles, Johnson stated his view is "realistic" or "virtual" in the sense that the union between Christ and the believers, which has its analogy in Adam and his posterity, transcends the merely representational or virtual. "In an attempt to offer some conceptual clarity, I will describe this union with Christ as vital, organic, and personal" (p. 69).

Johnson attempted to demonstrate that the theology of salvation has practical implications because believers are one with Christ. Essentially, he argued first that mankind possesses an organic union with Adam that is real and consequential, not just abstract. By his analogy, salvation results in an organic union with the living Christ that is likewise real and consequential. "If we receive any benefit from being 'in Christ,'" Johnson noted, "it is because we have really been united to the person of Christ himself" (p. 70). When Jesus assumed his humanity in the incarnation, He literally joined Himself to believers; and as a result, believers experience all that salvation affords by being actually joined to Him in his crucified and resurrected humanity. Consequently, "the benefits of his incarnate life, death, and resurrection become ours" (p. 85). For Johnson, this best expresses the meaning of "in Christ," with all of its cognates, and clearly explains the reality of the believer's union with Christ.

The greater part of the book (following this discussion) details how Johnson's view comprehends the various phases of the doctrine of soteriology. Since believers are organically united to Christ, everything that applies to Him also applies to them. For example, believers are justified "in Christ" (Rom 8:1; Gal 2:16-17). Believers are sanctified "in Christ" (1 Cor 1:2, 30). Believers have their adoption and sonship "in Christ" (Eph 1:5; Gal 3:26). Believers are preserved in their salvation and ultimately glorified "in Christ" (John 10:28; Phil 3:20-21). Johnson even addressed the mystery of the church "in Christ" (Eph 5:29-30; Col 1:27) as well as the sacraments and their function within salvation. For example, "The Lord's Supper is God's assurance to us that we really do share in the One who, in flesh and blood, is our justification, sanctification, and redemption. All that He is *for us* He is *in us* as well" (p. 240). Johnson devoted a separate chapter for each of these aspects of soteriology and provided an extensive examination of these themes to reveal their integral relationship to the believer's organic union with Christ.

Marcus Peter Johnson has provided one of the most comprehensive studies available of union with Christ as it relates to the doctrine of salvation. His work is well-documented and offers an extensive bibliography for further inquiry. The book is heartily recommended to students and others interested in an in-depth study of their salvation.

— Kenneth R. Cooper
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Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship by John MacArthur. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013. 331 pp., cloth, \$22.99.

Websites on the Internet are abuzz with rebukes of the book claiming that John MacArthur condemns all Charismatics and caricatures them all with broad descriptions. The reviewer herein noticed, however, how he distinguished Word of Faith preachers from Jesus Only Pentecostals and classified a great number of Charismatics as preachers of a gospel by grace alone, in addition to proclaiming the orthodox doctrines of the faith. When discussing unbiblical affirmations of extremists, MacArthur was careful to use the word “some” (pp. 69, 85). He also used the word “most” (p. 127) and “many” (pp. xiv, 75). He carefully used the word “often” (pp. 5, 124) as well as “usually” (p. 6), which is definitely not using a broad caricature.

I do believe there are sincere people within the Charismatic Movement who, in spite of the systematic corruption and confusion, have come to understand the necessary truths of the gospel. They embrace substitutionary atonement, the true nature of Christ, the Trinitarian nature of God, biblical repentance, and the unique authority of the Bible. They recognize that salvation is not about health and wealth, and they genuinely desire to be rescued from sin, spiritual death, and everlasting hell [p. 81].

For the true believers at Corinth, the Holy Spirit continued to work in their lives in spite of their egregious error [p. 82].

The final chapter is devoted to MacArthur’s fellow Christians who are continuationists and not cessationists (like he and this reviewer). He clearly does not consign them to hell.

This final chapter is a personal appeal to fellow leaders in the conservative evangelical movement who proclaim the true gospel yet insist on remaining open to continuation of the revelatory and miraculous gifts in the modern day. . . . I want to emphasize, from the outset, that I regard as brothers in Christ and friends in the ministry all who are faithful fellow workmen in the Word and the gospel, even if they give a place of legitimacy to the charismatic experience. I have good friends among them.

Many have accused MacArthur of affirming that God does not still heal and that there are no providential miracles today. Although John does

not believe that there are contemporary Apostles or apostolic sign gifts that authenticate new revelations from God, there are, nevertheless, healings and supernatural blessings today in response to the godly prayers of the saints.

While the Lord still answers prayer and works in providential ways to heal people according to his will. . . . While the New Testament does instruct believers to pray for those who are sick and suffering, trusting the Great Physician to do that which is according to His sovereign purposes (cf. James 5:14-15) [p. 176].

The same Source of explosive power that brought the world into existence out of nothing is today at work in the hearts and lives of the redeemed. . . . To see a spiritually dead sinner made alive in Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit is to witness an actual miracle of God [p. 183].

No book is perfect, including those written by this reviewer. John MacArthur said that the Spirit “controls” the redeemed (pp. 206, 209). The reviewer herein believes that He empowers, enables, and influences believers to make right decisions and to complete those choices in godliness. One of the fruits of the Spirit (fruits of spirituality) is temperance, which is self-control. Fortunately, elsewhere, MacArthur correctly used words like “empowers,” “enables,” and “influences.” If the Spirit “controls” believers, then they would no longer struggle with sin. However, MacArthur wrote:

Of course, that does not mean Christians no longer struggle against sins and temptation. . . . The flesh is the enemy within, the remnant of the old man that wars against godly desires and righteous living (Rom. 7:23). To fall prey to the flesh is to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:28-31). . . . Conversely, if believers are to gain victory over the lusts of their flesh, and grow in holiness, we must function in the Spirit’s power [p. 208].

One may be pleased that, in his work, MacArthur clearly distinguished between positional sanctification from the condemnation of sin and the progressive sanctification on the believer’s part from the reign of sin in this life.

It was the Holy Spirit who set us apart from sin at the moment of salvation (2 Thess. 2:13). And as we submit to His influence each day, He empowers our victory over the flesh [pp. 208-09].

That conformity will only be fully realized in the life to come (Phil. 3:21; I John 3:2). But even on this side of heaven, the Spirit enables us to grow in Christ-likeness [p. 211].

The book is highly recommended to all cessationists because of the thorough endnoting and documenting of the continuationist's point of view, in addition to the statements and actions of the extremists. MacArthur's work is highly recommended to all continuationists because "iron sharpens iron." The reviewer herein trusts they will read the book with a mind receptive to new arguments and ideas.

— J. O. Hosler
Parkview Baptist Church (Benton Harbor, MI)

The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments by Thomas R. Schreiner. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. 714 pp., cloth, \$44.99.

Thomas Schreiner, professor of New Testament interpretation at Southern Seminary, has written what, in many ways, is a marvelous biblical theology. Biblical theology differs from systematic theology in its approach and purpose. In systematic theology, one is seeking to organize all Scripture around key doctrinal subjects, such as the Godhead, salvation, and Scripture. Biblical theology follows the historical timeline and encloses itself around a common theme, seeking to discern each biblical author's contribution to that theme. Schreiner believes the "kingdom of God" is the unifying theme for all the books of the Bible (p. xii). "Scripture unfolds the story of the kingdom and God's glory is the reason for the story" (p. xiii). Schreiner's definition of the kingdom of God is important as might be discerned. The author offered three components that comprise the kingdom: the rule of God, those being ruled (people), and a realm (the universe) (pp. xiii-xv).

With this theme as a grid, Schreiner systematically works his way through every book in the Bible, examining what it teaches as well as what each contributes to his central theme. The result is a comprehensive, often insightful, understanding of the entirety of Scripture. In an interview (found in *Towers*, a publication of Southern), the author envisions his book being used for private study and also in Old Testament and/or New Testament survey classes. When teaching through a book of the Bible, in the future, this reviewer will begin his study by reading the appropriate sections found in *The King in His Beauty*.

Schreiner understands God created mankind in his image, to rule the world for Him. As a consequence of the Fall, man temporarily lost his position and a battle began between the serpent and sin, and God and his kingdom. The battle is central to the storyline of Scripture and rages still today. However, the Bible is clear that God and his kingdom ultimately win, and the paradise Adam and Eve forfeited is restored with Christ reigning supreme for eternity (see pp. 6-12). Schreiner expended great effort to demonstrate how each book of the Bible records this drama, even though at times he has to extend the limits of what is possible, which leads to the main concern with *The King in His Beauty*.

Schreiner has written a book in which the kingdom of God is the unifying theme, but his theological position is amillennial; and thus, he rejects a literal millennial kingdom on earth following the return of Christ.

Consequently, this means that the author must handle the vast, copious sections of Scripture describing the kingdom in some way in which the clear teaching of a literal kingdom is rejected. He did this by giving symbolic meaning to these texts and interpreting them through his theological preunderstanding. If there is no literal kingdom, as amillennialism teaches, then all the passages that describe the literal kingdom must mean something else entirely (this is the approach taken by Schreiner). One of the principle ways he did this was by applying the “already, but-not-yet” hermeneutics throughout the book (pp. 341, 421). Whenever it is impossible to deny that Scripture speaks of a future kingdom, the author reverted to the idea that the kingdom is already here (inaugurated but not fully here, that is, consummated) (pp. 444, 446, 473, 491-92, 543-44, 549, 580, 583, 591, 637, 641-44). As might be expected, Schreiner understands the book of Revelation as a symbolic historical account of the time between Jesus and his coming again (i.e. the church age) (pp. 619-24).

The author rightly understands that the Mosaic Covenant is no longer in effect in the New Testament era (p. 61), and that Israel’s mission of “come and see” is vastly different from that given the disciples of Christ to “go and tell” (pp. 162-163). However, since he understands the kingdom as present and because of his amillennial presupposition, Schreiner, in this reviewer’s opinion, made some unfortunate interpretations. For example, Schreiner believes:

- The new creation is here (although more is coming) because it has been fulfilled in Christ (pp. 338, 341, 362).
- The new covenant is fulfilled in Jesus, and therefore, the Law has been written on the heart of his people (p. 362).
- “The kingdom, the new creation, the new covenant and the new exodus have arrived in Jesus Christ” (pp. 428, 434).
- Jesus is the true Israel; hence all who belong to Him are part of restored Israel (pp. 452, 539, 607, 640, 642).

How do these beliefs relate to Israel and the church? While Schreiner said that he does not believe the church actually replaces Israel (p. 497), his view is more complicated than that. Since Christ is the true Israel, and the Davidic kingdom has been restored in Christ, the church – composed of both the Jewish and Gentile people of God – is restored Israel (p. 497). “Jesus is the true Israel, and those who belong to Jesus belong to this restored and new Israel” (p. 539). Furthermore, “The church is the new Israel and the restored Israel. Promises and declarations in the O.T. related

to Israel are applied to the church, showing that the prophecies relating to Israel are fulfilled in the church” (p. 614). Even while claiming that the church does not replace Israel, in effect, the author sees ethnic Israel, with all its promises, curses, and declarations, as having been absorbed by the church, the one people of God.

There are a few other comments that also disturbed this reviewer. Even though Schreiner rejects works-righteousness (p. 614), he made some strange statements, such as: implying that salvation comes through baptism (pp. 482, 528, 575), “one must do good works to inherit the kingdom” (p. 599), and believers must persevere in order to be saved (p. 644). He understands the epistle to the Hebrews to be addressed to Christians but sees it possible that some will apostatize and experience God’s judgment (p. 595), implying that believers can lose their salvation, although he denied that when reflecting upon Roman 3:28-30. Schreiner is in danger of viewing perseverance as a work that contributes to the believer’s salvation. If he had written on page 644 that true believers *will* persevere, then he equates perseverance as a fruit of regeneration. If the Christian *must* persevere, Schreiner makes perseverance a work necessary for salvation. Consequently, with such an understanding of Scripture, the believer can never have assurance of salvation until death, for it is possible that at some point they might not persevere, which is a tragic notion in light of God’s desire that believers are to be assured of salvation (1 John 5:13).

The reviewer would love to give an unqualified endorsement of *The King in His Beauty* as there is much wonderful and helpful material found within it. However, due to the caveats already stated, this reviewer would have to recommend this book only to those who has a good understanding of Scripture and can discern when the author changes his hermeneutics from literal to symbolic, and when Schreiner forced his “already, but-not-yet” interpretation upon the text to accommodate his amillennial eschatology.

— Gary E. Gilley
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

Men Counseling Men: A Biblical Guide to the Major Issues Men Face, edited by John D. Street. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013. 442 pp., paper, \$19.99.

John Street, who chairs the graduate program in biblical counseling at The Master's College, is the general editor of *Men Counseling Men*. Twenty-two authors contributed a chapter, each addressing various subjects pertinent to Christian men. Most, if not all, of the contributors have or are pursuing a master's degree in biblical counseling (MABC) from The Master's College. As might be expected, there is a unified understanding among the authors that men's real problems result from sin, which must be dealt with forcefully through the appropriate use of the all-sufficient Word of God. Most chapters apply the normal methodology found within the biblical counseling movement, which is the "put off"/"put on"/renewal-of-the-mind principle. The approach, deduced from the epistles, especially Ephesians and Colossians, teaches one to "put off" sinful habits, replace them with biblical habits and virtues, and renew the way one thinks through careful study and application of Scripture. The volume is directed toward the biblical counselor who is counseling in a somewhat formal setting, although what is taught is applicable to any Christian man and would be helpful in more informal settings. The book will find its greatest value as counselors assign homework, having their counselee read appropriate chapters according to his need.

Chapters are somewhat uneven in quality, as with any multi-authored book. Depending upon the need of the reader and his familiarity with biblical counseling literature, some chapters will be more helpful than others. The reviewer found the first two chapters (which provide the foundation for biblical counseling) as the most helpful, in addition to chapter five (discernment), chapter seven (anger), chapter fourteen (parenting adult children), chapters eighteen/nineteen (counseling homosexuals) and chapter twenty-one (rebuilding a marriage after adultery). Nevertheless, it was surprising that more text was not devoted to sexual sins (esp. pornography). Wayne Mack's contribution (ch. 21) briefly addressed pornography, but given the magnitude of the sin today, an entire chapter would have been valuable. Overall, *Men Counseling Men* is a quality work that should be most useful to the biblical counselor as he seeks to help men with their problems. The chapters do not exhaust their subjects, but each does conclude with suggested resources for more in-depth study.

— Gary E. Gilley
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

Vertical Church: What Every Heart Longs for. What Every Church Can Be by James MacDonald. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012. 320 pp., cloth, \$22.99.

James MacDonald is the well-known pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, a mega-church near Chicago. Harvest's church planting ministry has founded numerous Harvest Bible Chapel churches throughout the United States and Canada. MacDonald wrote *Vertical Church* to encourage churches to return to a vertical focus upon Christ and his glory, which he thinks most churches have abandoned. The author believes the local church should be based upon four fundamentals: proclaiming the authority of God's Word without apology, exalting the name of Jesus through worship, believing resolutely in the power of prayer, and sharing the good news of Jesus with boldness.

Concerning worship, MacDonald mocked what he calls "shoulder-up" worship and calls for "whole-person," enthusiastic, loud worship (p. 173). He often claimed Harvest's worship services are "window-rattling, earth-shaking, life-altering experiences" (pp. 112, 186, 303), and that people wait outside the church building and rush to the aisles believing God is going to meet them (pp. 23-24, 192-93). MacDonald's style of worship, which he believes is the only acceptable one, has been greatly influenced by the charismatic movement, including the Calvary Chapels and the Brooklyn Tabernacle (pp. 174, 216, 285); it is important to understand what MacDonald means by people coming to meet God. Relying upon the Old Testament, the author seeks the "manifest presence" of the Lord to fall upon the congregation (see pp. 30, 69, 75-76, 78, 89-92, 106, 112, 132, 270, 302). MacDonald assures his readers, "church is supposed to be a tsunami of glory every Sunday" (p. 21). He rightly taught that at church services God should be the "main attraction" (pp. 27, 52, 56, 59), but based upon selective events found in the Old Testament and numerous out-of-context Scriptures, MacDonald expects for God to "show up" much as He did on a few occasions at the Tabernacle and Temple (pp. 75, 270).

At the Harvest Bible Chapel (the prototype of the vertical church), "People line up at the doors long before the service starts and rush to the front to get the best seats for passionate, expressive worship where voices are loud, hands are raised, tears are flowing, minds are expanded, and hearts are moved as Christ is adored by *everyone* in *every corner of the room* from the *very first note*" (p. 90) (emphasis added). Such exaggerated claims are so commonplace throughout the book as to render much of what MacDonald says questionable at best. On this point, such behavior

can be duplicated at rock concerts, but the manifest presence of God is certainly not there. Claiming everyone in every corner of the building is entering into this passionate worship is either naïve or fabricated. MacDonald is touting an experience for the gathered church which is not taught in the New Testament, although this model was common during the life of John Wimber and the early days of the Vineyard movement. The thought that God should be central and that He should be worshipped in truth and spirit is accurate and appreciated. The idea that MacDonald's method holds exclusive claim upon how to worship is arrogant at best. Indicating that the Lord must "show up," much as the Shekinah glory did on a handful of occasions in the Old Testament, is simply poor exegesis.

On a collateral note, for a pastor who talks much with regard to expository preaching, and rightly so, he did not carefully examine biblical texts addressing the church as found in the epistles; rather, he commonly depended upon the Old Testament, and cited verses from both Testaments out-of-context (e.g. pp. 23, 26, 71, 73, 79, 80-82, 132, 161, 169, 175, 187, 241, 261, 278, 295, 300). A book on the purpose and practice of the church should be developed from careful analysis of the appropriate New Testament texts, not from out-of-context proof texts and supposed experiences of the presence of God, which has been the method used by charismatics and cults for decades to support whatever claims they choose, and should be rejected by those who say they are promoting biblical Christianity.

Of a more positive nature, MacDonald's chapter on preaching is good, and his approach to evangelism worth consideration. While being highly critical of any other method, the author believes evangelism works best when believers witness to those ripened for the gospel, who he calls "red apples" (pp. 247-54). However, his claim that Harvest baptizes hundreds of people some weekends, giving each person time for a testimony (p. 256), is suspect. If, for example, 300 people were baptized, (taking only two minutes each) it would take ten hours for the baptisms alone. Add an hour of music and an hour sermon at each service, and something just does not compute mathematically.

MacDonald's enthusiasm for prayer is commendable, but his boast that "he has prayed great prayers that literally shook the foundations of our church" (p. 270) is another exaggeration and prideful, if taken literally. MacDonald has a considerable emphasis upon volume — not only in music (pp. 180-182) but also in prayer (pp. 285-289, 293). He claimed loud public praying was always true in Scripture and should be true in the believer's private and public prayers today (this is forcing his assumptions

upon thousands of biblical prayers). The reviewer herein confesses difficulty in believing that Jesus shouted throughout John 17.

MacDonald believes that worship music should impact the culture (p. 148) but not be dictated by culture (p. 185), yet he allows this very thing. For example, he rejects hymns as being too complex (p. 176), even calling them tacky medieval music (p. 258). MacDonald touts simple, repetitious modern songs (p. 178) and minimizes the clear New Testament teaching that the purpose of music is to teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16), opting instead for simplistic worship (p. 178). He claimed that Scripture demonstrates that this is the kind of music God prefers and cited Psalms 119 and 136 (p. 178) as proof. By doing so, he ignored the vast majority of the Psalms which are complex and abounding in detailed theology. Finally, MacDonald affirms many contradictions.

- He fervently criticizes the seeker sensitive church paradigm (p. 24) but is endorsed by both Bill Hybels and Rick Warren, the creators and designers of the movement (p. 215; cf. opening endorsements of the book).
- He does not want to be perceived as having arrived or promising success (p. 25) yet constantly promotes himself and his methods as the way to success (see pp. 61, 89, 294, 300). For example, even as MacDonald admitted that numerical growth proves nothing and can be a trick of the devil (pp. 142-43), at the end of each chapter, a short story of a Harvest church plant is given and is complete with phenomenal growth statistics.
- He criticized selfish pastors who take too much salary and are not accountable (p. 138), yet he lives in a two million dollar house and has an income estimated to be close to one million per year. Harvest is also presently in turmoil largely due to MacDonald's lack of accountability.
- He is ruthless regarding leaders of his own spiritual heritage which he calls "old-school fundamentalists" (pp. 128, 271, 274) yet admitted God was at work through those fundamentalists in his own life (p. 271).
- His stories are questionable. The pastor of the church in Crystal Lake experienced some problems and seemingly made an

amiable choice to move to Orlando and grow a church from 30 to 900. However, MacDonald does not mention that the former church encountered bankruptcy and had to be rescued by Harvest, bringing great financial tension upon that church. Harvest's own financial woes are treated as success stories. When facing bankruptcy, MacDonald proudly threatened a steel company with a lawsuit (p. 294). Even if legal action was warranted, MacDonald's approach hardly represents the glory of Christ.

In a book in which general themes are appropriate, it is sad that so much is distorted, unbiblical personal opinion. Many church members who read this book naïvely will no doubt be dissatisfied with their own churches. Undiscerning pastors and church leaders who read the book will promote pragmatic methods, many of which lack biblical foundation. Discerning church leaders may find parts that are valuable if they can distinguish the hype from reality.

— Gary E. Gilley
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

Finding the Balance in World Missions by Steven E. Ray. Dallas: Primedia eLaunch, 2012. 130 pp., paper, \$14.95.

Steven Ray, founder and director of Messiah Missions, seeks to offer a biblical balance to the ever changing world of missions. The reviewer believes, in many ways, he succeeds. He first, and rightly, dealt with evangelism, offering clear insights and analysis of various evangelistic approaches (pp. 13-26). He demonstrated the dangers of syncretism, which is becoming more acceptable in evangelism today (pp. 37-42). Ray also dealt extremely well with the social gospel and compassion ministries (pp. 43-68) showing that social concern should be a natural “fruit” of the gospel, but it is not the gospel (p. 46). The author also gives a valuable understanding of and need for the indigenous church (pp. 109-22).

Ray offered much that needs to be contemplated and digested by all interested in missions: home and abroad. Unfortunately, the reviewer believes he stumbles in some matters. He took a few scriptures out-of-context (Ps 19:7 on p. 81; John 14:27 and 16:13 on p. 99). He spoke favorably of the Franciscans (p. 29), Charles Finney (p. 73), David Yonggi Cho (p. 94), and laying on of hands to heal people (p. 98). He also used Paul’s example – rather than the biblical mandate – to teach that ministers should have an income-producing trade (p. 119). The author believes one should not confuse the compulsion of the flesh with the leading of the Holy Spirit in the matter of evangelism (pp. 95-100). However, he did not inform his readers how to do this; for, in fact, Ray cannot. His proof texts dealt with direct revelation from God and out-of-context Scriptures. He offered this unclear and unwise quote, which is a statement very similar to the tenets of modalism: “The Holy Spirit is the present tense of God” (p. 88). Unless he is an “oneness Pentecostal,” the quote needs explanation. Nevertheless, even with these important concerns recognized, the commendable features of the book are worth pondering.

— Gary E. Gilley
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne. Kingsford, Australia: St Matthias Press, 2009. 202 pp., paper, \$9.99.

The Trellis and the Vine is an excellent resource, not only concerning the importance of concentrated discipleship efforts in the church but also for ideas, methods, and the practical “how to” in developing disciples. The authors understand the church’s mission as “a commission that makes disciple-making the normal agenda and priority of every church and every Christian disciple” (p. 13). The thesis of the book could be stated as follows: “We will be arguing that structures don’t grow ministry any more than trellises grow vines, and that most churches need to make a conscious shift—away from erecting and maintaining structures, and towards *growing people who are disciple-making disciples of Christ*” (p. 17). The authors further develop their thesis in comments such as the following:

The *first* is that the growth of the gospel happens in the lives of people, not in the structures of my church. Or to put it in terms of our opening metaphor, the growth of the trellis is not the growth of the vine. We may multiply the number of programs, events, committees and other activities that our church is engaged in; we may enlarge and modernize our buildings; we may re-cast our regular meetings to be attractive and effective in communicating to our culture; we may congratulate ourselves that numbers are up. And all of these are good things! But if people are not growing in their knowledge of God’s will so that they walk ever more worthily of the Lord seeking to please him in all things and bearing fruit in every good work, then there is no growth to speak of happening at all [p. 82].

The quotes cited herein accurately reflect the authors’ convictions, which are firmly based upon and supported by Scripture. Their convictions have not come without experience. As those who have served for many years in gospel ministries, mostly in Australia, they have applied their views and methods in the most active and important expanses of ministry, and are in a position to offer wise and seasoned counsel. For example, they indicate that this type of discipleship ministry can be chaotic and muddled (p. 9), and that substantial shift in mindset and church structure will often be necessary to develop true disciples effectively (pp. 17-28). Models of pastoral ministry must also be evaluated and perhaps adjusted (pp. 94-101).

The primary component in Marshall and Payne's program is training. However, unlike some who use business models, spiritual-gift inventories, and the like, they rightly view such preparation as training in righteousness based upon sound doctrine (pp. 71, 85). They regard training as both taught and caught (pp. 76, 193). The authors' emphasis upon expending much time into those wanting to be trained – yet not ignoring the spiritual and physically needy within the congregation – is of great significance (pp. 111-117). Additionally, insight regarding how to select what they call “people worth watching” and training is given (p. 122).

While rejecting a specific, subjective call to ministry (pp. 130-134), the authors believe that potential ministers should be identified and taken through a two-year apprenticeship program prior to formal theological study (pp. 143-50). The authors do not leave the launching of such discipleship ministry to the reader's imagination but offer both suggested plans (pp. 158-65) and numerous resources (pp. 185-202). Indeed, Marshall leads a ministry called Vinegrowers and Payne heads Matthias Media for the express purpose of training believers in the principles of their book (p. 185).

The Trellis and the Vine is decisively biblical, extremely practical, and is perhaps the overall best book this reviewer has read concerning how to scripturally train disciples for Christ. *The Trellis and the Vine* is highly recommended for every pastor and church leader. The reviewer's elders are reading and discussing it together.

— Gary E. Gilley
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence by Sarah Young. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004. 382 pp., cloth, \$15.99.

Jesus Calling and its many sequels and other products – such as *Dear Jesus*, *Jesus Calling Devotional Bible*, *Jesus Lives*, *Jesus Calling (Devotional for Children)*, *Jesus Today*, *Jesus Calling for Teens*, and *Jesus Calling (Bible Storybook)* – are among the bestselling books in the world today. Young offers people something they want to hear which is that they can experience the very presence of Jesus, and He will speak to them personally. The subtitle of the book is well chosen, for in this daily devotional the word “Presence” (of God or Jesus) is found over 400 times and the word “Peace” approximately 155 times, with synonyms such as rest and joy used routinely. One may find it noteworthy that both words are always capitalized, signifying that (apparently) Young views Presence and Peace as God himself, or at least representative of God.

As one might imagine, the devotionals are extremely redundant. If one reads any ten, in essence, one has read all that Young has to say; it does not take much analysis to realize that Young is a woman who struggles deeply with fear and anxiety. The vast majority of the supposed revelations from Jesus are words given to comfort her. Repeatedly, Jesus had to promise her that He will never leave or forsake her (e.g. pp. 24, 32, 73, 80, 103, 146, 156, 218, 224, 237, 265, 342). Jesus often invited Young to “rest snugly in My everlasting arms” (pp. 235, 373, 377), “gaze into My eyes” (p. 270), “rest in My loving gaze” (p. 299), and He informs her that He loves “to enfold you in My arms” (p. 303). While reading the book, with these constant references to Young’s obvious need for peace, rest, comfort, security, hope and assurance, one cannot help but have empathy for her. She is an anxious woman seeking comfort and, based upon her popularity, she is not alone. Sadly, she is focusing her life around her problems rather than Christ, despite her constant references to Jesus. The emphasis is upon what Jesus can do for her rather than the glory of Christ himself; of course, this is the attraction of *Jesus Calling*.

There are far greater concerns than those already stated. The actual problem is Young’s premise that Jesus is speaking constantly to her, and that one can have the same experience if one will duplicate her methods. In the introduction, Young was unambiguous concerning both her journey to and her understanding of her supposed direct communication from Jesus. As a young woman seeking to understand God, she had her first experience of the presence of God; it was “as if a warm mist enveloped me. I became aware of a lovely Presence, and my

involuntary response was to whisper ‘Sweet Jesus’” (p. vii). The following year she claimed to have had another encounter with the Presence of God, but then 16 years transpired before she had any more experiences (pp. viii-ix). In between those years, she received her master’s degree from Covenant Theological Seminary (a conservative Reformed school in St. Louis) and served eight years with her husband as missionaries in Japan. In addition, she earned a degree in counseling from Georgia State University. Subsequently, she read Andrew Murray’s *Secret of the Abiding Presence* and began to seek God’s presence for herself, which was a difficult time for Young with ministry changes (they moved to Australia), cancer, four surgeries, and intense pressures. One morning she “visualized God protecting each of us . . . which looked like a golden light. When I prayed for myself, I was suddenly enveloped in brilliant light and profound peace. I lost all sense of time as I experienced God’s Presence in this powerful way” (pp. x-xi).

After another similar experience, she began reading *God’s Calling*, a devotional book written by two anonymous “listeners.” “These women practiced waiting quietly in God’s presence, pencils and paper in hand, recording the messages they received from Him” (p. xi). Duplicating the methods of these authors, Young changed from merely writing her thoughts in a journal (what she called one way communication with God) to “listen[ing] to God with pen in hand, writing down whatever I believed He was saying” (p. xii). Young, from that point onward, has regarded her journaling as a dialogue with God, and soon she was receiving frequent messages from God. Young said that she knows these messages are not as inspired as Scripture (p. xii), which is both interesting and troubling, because every true communication from God is inspired or “God-breathed.” God never communicates in any other manner, although not everything God has said has been written in the Bible. Whatever caveat Young may offer, the fundamental issue is that she claims divine inspiration for her writings. She claims direct revelation from Jesus, nothing less. Either she is receiving revelation, and is thus, an inspired author of divine truth, in which case one needs to add her writings to Scripture; or, these supposed revelations are resulting from another source, such as her imagination, or, are fabricated, in which case Young is a deliberate false teacher. There is no area of compromise or possible agreement between those two divergent experiences. Young’s message is that God “still speaks to those who listen to Him” (p. xiii; cf. p. 317); therefore, the reason most do not hear his voice is they will not be still and quiet enough to listen, as she is (pp. 317, 352, 367 370, 378).

The idea that Jesus will speak to any who will be quiet before Him, and that He does so continuously (p. 317), is the great danger of Young's teaching. The attraction is the promise of an overwhelming felt experience of the presence of God. Jesus told Young, "Let My Love enfold you in the radiance of My Glory. Sit still in the Light of My Presence and receive My Peace" (p. 26), "Look into My Face and feel the warmth of My Love-Light shining upon you" (p. 278), and "Sit quietly in My Presence, allowing My Light to soak into you and drive out any darkness lodged within you" (p. 294; cf. pp. 104, 259, 276, 284, 355). The assertions sound inviting, yet one may ask, "Is it biblical?" Nowhere in Scripture does one find God promising such experiences.

Christians walk by faith, not by the felt presence of God. Even Young warns that discernment is needed lest one be deceived by supposed voices and experiences that may be from other sources (pp. 66, 102). However, to Young, and those who follow her, experience supersedes Scripture. While acknowledging that the inner voices she hears are not equal with Scripture, she states nevertheless, "They were helping me grow closer to God" (p. xii). "This practice of listening to God," she wrote, "has increased my intimacy with Him more than any other spiritual discipline, so I want to share some of the messages I have received" (p. xiii). Obviously, to Young, Scripture is insufficient; new revelation is needed, and that is why she wrote *Jesus Calling*.

What has been stated herein is not to affirm that Young is always unbiblical with her assertions. Given her theological training, much of what she wrote is truthful. She used Scripture, although it is often paraphrased to the point of changing its meaning, or used out-of-context (e.g. pp. xiv, 15, 21, 45, 78, 91, 134, 177). Young's emphasis is not explaining the Word of God but adding her supposed revelations to the Word of God. *Jesus Calling* and its entire progeny are among the most dangerous writings in the evangelical community today.

— Gary E. Gilley
Southern View Chapel (Springfield, IL)

Unmasking the Antichrist: Dispelling the Myths, Discovering the Truth by Ron Rhodes. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2001. 244 pp., paper, \$13.99.

Ron Rhodes, president of Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries, has written a resolute book from a dispensational understanding of end times with particular focus upon the Antichrist. Rhodes addressed many issues in this very readable volume, including:

- An overview of various views concerning the Antichrist (chs. 2, 5—7);
- Historical identifications of the Antichrist (chapter 3);
- Discussion of who or what the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2 is (ch. 9);
- The character, names, and titles of the Antichrist (chs. 11—12);
- The Antichrist's role and function (chs. 13—14, 16);
- The false prophet (ch. 15);
- The mark of the beast (ch. 17); and,
- The final destiny of the Antichrist (ch. 18).

Unmasking the Antichrist is obviously focused upon the Antichrist; but along the way, Rhodes also provides a helpful understanding of end time events, especially those involving the Tribulation period in which the Antichrist initiates his diabolical scheme against God and humanity. Rhodes provides an excellent postscript demonstrating how the believer is to live in the presence of those future events. The postscript is followed by an appendix – addressed to any reader who might not be a Christian – in which a short gospel presentation is given. *Unmasking the Antichrist* is a valuable presentation aimed not at the scholars but at the average believer who is looking for intelligible answers to questions with regard to God's revelation of coming events.

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