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THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM: *The Keystone of Biblical Architecture*

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Certain times and texts in the unfolding revelation of God in the Bible are so crucial to its fundamental, central message that they constitute turning points that launch that message into trajectories it would otherwise not have traversed. This is eminently true of the Abrahamic Covenant and its significance to the salvific purposes of God for Israel and the church. How one understands the nature and function of this covenant will largely determine one's overall theology and most particularly his eschatology.

THE CANONICAL SETTING OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The importance of the Abrahamic Covenant is seen in the fact that it is the topic first introduced in the patriarchal narratives that immediately succeed the so-called "primeval history" (Gen 1—11).¹ After a brief introduction to Abram as a son of Terah with whom he had left Ur for Haran (11:27-32), the author hastened to arrive at Abram's call to leave his land and family in order to fulfill some great destiny God had for him. In the span of only three verses (12:1-3) the essentials of God's call are delineated and the foundation is laid for a covenant that will actualize God's promises to the patriarch.

The call comes none too soon for the primeval history is essentially the dismal record of the Fall (3), the Flood (6—9), and the attempt by mankind at Babel to supplant God and to rule in His stead (11:1-9). Only the genealogy between Shem and Abram offers hope of a better age to come for it links the Noahic Covenant (9:1-17) with the Abrahamic (12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-21), the covenant in the former case made with all mankind and in the latter with a single man who would sire a nation of salvific intermediaries. The placement of that covenant at precisely this point

¹ Eugene H. Merrill, "The Peoples of the Old Testament according to Genesis 10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (January—March 1997): 9-10; cf. Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27—50:26* (New American Commentary 1B) (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 84-85.

communicates not only Israel's assessment of its significance but, more important, that of the ultimate Author who inspired and communicated the texts that enshrine it.

THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

According to the best reading of biblical chronology, Abraham was born in 2166 BC and the covenant followed some hundred years later.² That period marked a seismic shift in the affairs of the great nations of the ancient Near Eastern world, one comparable to the times of the incarnation, ministry, and redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Gal 4:4-5).³ The Sumerians had recovered from their oppression by barbarians from the eastern mountains, the Egyptians were emerging from the dark ages of the First Intermediate Period, and the Amorites and other semi-nomadic peoples were penetrating all parts of the eastern Mediterranean world, both enriching and disturbing the status quo. Canaan was at the crossroads of the international movement of armies and caravans and was therefore a breeding ground for whatever ideas were also being introduced. No better time and place could be imagined in the ancient world for God to advance the radical idea of world redemption.

THE THEOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

If the covenant of Genesis 6:18 (“I will establish My covenant with you”) refers to the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 (and there is good reason to believe so), then the one with Noah is the second in the sequence of covenants.⁴ The creation mandate explains why mankind was created and outlines his responsibilities as the image of God: “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it” (Gen 1:28, HCSB). However, human sin (and the Fall precipitated by it) short-circuited that process almost before it began, so another covenant (one with Noah) had to be implemented in the post-flood world. That covenant was modeled after the first in many respects but

² Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 41-43.

³ Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000—330 BC* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1:56-70, 154-61.

⁴ W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 32-33.

because of the altered conditions of creation the covenant could be accomplished only partially and imperfectly. The problem was no longer just one of accomplishing the dominion mandate but how to do it given man's miserable state.

The answer lay in still a third covenant arrangement, one that provided a means of reconciliation of the world to the Creator so that mankind as a whole could recover its status as the unimpaired image of God and its role of ruling over all things under His sovereignty. The instrument that was fashioned to accomplish this—the so-called Abrahamic Covenant—was made this time not with the collective world of humankind but with one man. However, that man would generate a seed that eventually would issue in a nation and then, ironically, once more in a Man, this time perfect who could at last achieve the accomplishment of God's creation objectives.

The covenant seed, first Isaac and then Jacob, found national expression in Israel and royal expression in David and his descendants. With both of these the Lord also made covenants, the Mosaic and Davidic respectively. The Mosaic Covenant was established at Mount Sinai just after the exodus from Egypt and was expanded and reaffirmed, as the book of Deuteronomy in Moab, just prior to the conquest. It was not of the type of the Abrahamic, however, but was a covenant of service, one labeled by modern scholarship as a "suzerain-vassal" treaty.⁵ It was designed not to make Israel the people of God but to call Israel as a people to serve God as witness-bearers to His plan of redemption articulated in the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Davidic Covenant was both a subset of the Mosaic and an extension of the Abrahamic. It was created to provide monarchic leadership of the nation Israel and to fulfill the Abrahamic promise of kings to come who would govern first God's own people and then all the nations of the world.⁶ That latter aspect would find realization in eschatological times in Jesus Christ, Son of David, through the instrument of the New Covenant.

This brief survey of the various Old Testament covenants suggests how foundational and central the Abrahamic Covenant is to the whole apparatus of God's dealings with a fallen world. It will now be helpful to

⁵ For its form and historical roots, see Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 283-99.

⁶ For the complicated relationships among these various covenants, see Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 437-40.

examine that covenant in detail and to see more precisely how it relates to all those that follow.

THE NATURE AND SUBSTANCE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

A rather general consensus maintains that Genesis 12:1-3 is not part of the Abrahamic Covenant *per se* but is a brief narrative in which Abram was called to make a decision as to whether or not he will accept God's offer to make him the recipient and transmitter of covenant promises. He was comfortably settled in Haran, having left his birthplace Ur many years earlier (Gen 11:31). Following his father's death Abram heard the heavenly call—expressed in strongly imperative terms (*lek-lékâ*)—to get out of his country and away from his extended family and to go to a land the Lord would show him. There the Lord would add to the promise of a land another one—that Abram would be progenitor of a nation and that he would be a means of blessing “all the clans of the earth” (12:2-3).

Nothing in the passage suggests that Abram had to meet any conditions whatsoever in order to receive the covenant except to leave his land and family.⁷ This he did by faith, as the author of Hebrews emphasizes (Heb 11:8-10). This leads to a consideration of the nature of the Abrahamic Covenant in a technical sense, an avenue of investigation that has been illuminated by the discovery of secular texts of a similar kind, especially those described as “royal grants.”⁸ In these texts that are roughly contemporary with the period of Abram, great kings offered to certain of their subjects blessings and benefits requiring no reciprocal action whatsoever in order for them to take effect. The king had merely seen some trait or deed of heroism or loyalty on the part of the vassal and he wished to reward him accordingly. The parallels between these documents and the Abrahamic Covenant are patently obvious. The Lord in His sovereign wisdom and grace had seen in Abram a spirit of faith and loyalty and thus called him to a place where He could bestow on him the blessing of an unconditional grant. All Abram had to do was to assent to it and to move to the land where the blessings of the covenant could become operative. However, as will be evident, though the covenant itself was an inalienable

⁷ John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 1:198-199.

⁸ The basic study is by Moshe Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and Ancient Near East,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 184-203.

grant, ongoing blessings attached to it demanded a life of obedience and continuing commitment.

The remaining principal covenant texts and allusions in Genesis are 13:14-18; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:9-19; 26:1-5, 23-25; 27:27-29; 28:3-4, 13-17; 35:9-15; 46:2-4; and, 49:10. Space constraints preclude careful exegesis of any of these but it is important to attempt at least to see how they amplify the three main constituents of the promises to Abram: land, people, and blessing.

After Abram had parted from Lot because of squabbles over pasture lands, the Lord showed him all the land in all directions from where he stood and promised, “I will give you and your offspring all the land that you see. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth” (Gen 13:15-16). He then commanded him to walk throughout the land, asserting thereby his dominion over it all.⁹ Wherever Abram placed his foot, that land would be his.

The issue in Genesis 15 primarily concerns the lack of a son through whom Abram could find covenant succession. The Lord therefore promised Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven (15:5). In response, “Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness” (15:6). Again, no effort or meritorious deed was prerequisite to this grant but only acquiescence. The verb “believed” can be literally rendered “he put his trust in,” an attitude so transparently authentic that the Lord regarded Abram’s faith tantamount to righteousness, a singularly New Testament concept (cf. Rom 4:22-24).¹⁰ At the end of the passage the Lord once more confirmed the land promise as well: “I give this land to your offspring, from the brook of Egypt to the Euphrates River” (Gen 15:18).

Genesis 17 raises one more the dilemma of Abram’s childlessness, a problem all the more acute since the patriarch was now ninety-nine years old. The Lord commanded him to “Live in My presence and be devout. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you greatly” (vv. 1-2). The grammatical construction allows an inferred conditionality here (“[If] you live in my presence and are devout . . . I will establish”) but the plain text does not state it thus. Indeed, the command and

⁹ The stem of the verb here (Hithpael, *hithallēk*) suggests walking as indicative of asserting rule. See Eugene H. Merrill, “לָלַךְ,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:1032-1035.

¹⁰ The root of the verb is *’āman*, meaning in the Hiphil stem (as here) to “put one’s trust in” (cf. Exod 14:31; Numb 14:11; 20:12; Deut 1:32; Jon 3:5). See *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 64.

the promise appear to be unrelated except in the sense that Abram, as the servant of the Lord, was expected to follow an obedient lifestyle by virtue of that relationship.¹¹

The promise of offspring in its narrowest sense is that Sarai (now Sarah) would bear a son, thus fulfilling the pledge of a seed in the immediate future (17:15-16, 19). However, that single seed would also be the progenitor of nations and kings (17: 4-6, 16). Israel certainly was in mind but the plural also hints of nations beyond Israel, that is, the Gentile nations of the New Covenant. This even prompts a name change, for the patriarch will no longer be Abram (“exalted father”) but Abraham (“father of a multitude”) (17:5). Moreover, the covenant will be everlasting, putting to rest the idea that it was exhausted with the end of the Old Testament or with the destruction of Herod’s temple in AD 70. Three times the covenant is called everlasting (17: 7, 13, 19; cf. Ps 105:9-10) and once the land of Canaan as Abraham’s possession is so described (17:8). Therefore, seed and land are juxtaposed and both are said to be without ending.

The reference to “kings [who will] come from you” (17:6; cf. v. 16) is of more than passing interest. The earliest of the covenants had to do with human dominion (1:28; 9:1-2) and the Abrahamic Covenant develops this theme by narrowing it historically to the descendants of Abraham, that is, to the kings of Israel in succession to David, the first and greatest of the line until its culmination in Christ, the Son of David. Kingship, then, was not inimical to the covenant purposes of God. Indeed, it was the plan of God all along but only at the proper time and in the proper person (1 Sam 8:6-9; 13:14; 16:13-14).

Following Abraham’s testing at Mount Moriah regarding the sacrifice of his covenant son Isaac, the Lord appears to have guaranteed the continuation of the covenant because of Abraham’s obedience. “Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son,” He said, “I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand of the seashore. Your offspring will possess the gates of their enemies. And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed My command” (Gen 22:16-18). The passage begins and ends with an adverbial conjunction, thus strengthening the causal idea.

However, the covenant itself is not thereby at risk but only its blessings. Abraham and his descendants would continue no matter what, but the great promises of innumerable offspring, dominion over the nations, and

¹¹ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 334-35.

the means of blessing the world would have been jeopardized had Abraham failed this almost incomprehensible test. R. W. L. Moberly harmonized the unconditionality of the covenant itself with the need for Abraham's obedience as a precondition to its blessings in the following manner: "A promise which was previously grounded solely in the will and purposes of Yahweh is transformed so that it is grounded **both** in the will of Yahweh **and** in the obedience of Abraham."¹² This is analogous to the idea that salvation is a gift of God by grace through faith and yet the relationship established in this manner demands subsequent and authenticating obedience if it is to achieve its highest potential. After Abraham's death, the covenant was by no means annulled but in fact was reaffirmed to his son Isaac (26:1-5, 23-25; cf. 17:19; 21:12; 25:11). Once more all three elements are there—land, seed, and a means of blessing. And once more Abraham's obedience is stressed as essential to the continuation of the blessing. The Lord promised Isaac that all the terms of the covenant would come to fruition "because Abraham listened to My voice and kept My mandate, My commands, My statutes, and My instructions" (26:5). The same connection between the irrefragable promises of God and human responsibility is reiterated in the pledge of the Lord, "I will bless you and multiply your offspring because of My servant Abraham" (26:4). That is, Abraham's obedience not only ensured the blessings of the covenant to him personally but it became the basis upon which the blessings would rest upon his descendants in the ages to come.

The same idea is repeated with respect to the Davidic Covenant. For example, Solomon was threatened with the loss of the kingdom but the Lord said to him, "I will not do it during your lifetime because of your father David; I will tear it out of your son's hand. Yet I will not tear the entire kingdom away from him. I will give one tribe to your son because of David and because of Jerusalem that I chose" (1 Kgs 11:12-13; cf. 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19; 19:34; 20:6; Ps 132:10; Isa 37:35).

The Abrahamic Covenant was bequeathed to Jacob in a gradually unfolding manner. First his father Isaac blessed him with the prayer, "May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you," followed by the promise, "Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed" (Gen 27:29). Later Isaac pleaded, "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you"—a clear reminiscence of the ancient creation mandate—and may you "possess the land where you live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham" (28:3-4). The land promise was

¹² Cited in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (Word Biblical Commentary 2) (Dallas: Word, 1994), 112.

reiterated in even stronger terms in Jacob's vision of the heavenly staircase: "I will give you and your offspring the land that you are sleeping on. Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth . . . and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring" (28:13-14). This encapsulates all the principal elements of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Upon Jacob's return from Paddan Aram the Lord changed his name to Israel and commanded him to "Be fruitful and multiply," promising him that "a nation, indeed, an assembly of nations, will come from you, and kings will descend from you. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you. And I will give the land to your descendants after you" (35:11-12). The reference to kings provides an obvious connection to the Davidic Covenant yet to be revealed.

This survey of references to the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis alone secures beyond any doubt the fact that the basis for all subsequent promises concerning land, a people, and the blessing of the nations rests squarely upon it. The covenants to follow are either subsidiary to it or elaborate upon it. The reader will be directed now for at least a brief glimpse of each of these.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ABRAHAMIC AND MOSAIC COVENANTS

The Mosaic Covenant followed very closely after the miraculous deliverance of Israel—the seed of Abraham—from Egyptian bondage. Its connection to the Abrahamic Covenant is evident from the very beginning of the Exodus narrative. First, the people "were fruitful, increased rapidly, multiplied, and became extremely numerous" (Exod 1:7). This collocation of terms most pointedly suggests a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham concerning his abundant offspring. Then came oppression because of Israel's burgeoning population, oppression so severe that God "heard [Israel's] groaning, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (2:24). This set in motion God's intention to deliver Israel and return them to that "good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (3:8; cf. vv. 15-17). Reference to the land and to the named inhabitants calls to mind Genesis 15:18-21, one of the great Abrahamic covenant texts.

Even more telling is the explicit connection between the patriarchs and the Mosaic Covenant in Exodus 6:2-5. Alluding to the fathers the Lord told Moses, "I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan . . . and I have remembered My covenant." Then follows the

promise of exodus deliverance (vv. 6-8). The Abrahamic Covenant would be so foundational to the Mosaic that when Israel in the future proved unfaithful and lapsed into indifference or even overt idolatry the promises to Abraham would ensure Israel's repentance and restoration (Lev 26:40-45; cf. Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27-29; 2 Kgs 13:22-23). Mark Rooker correctly observed, "God will remember the Abrahamic promises even though Israel has not obeyed the stipulations of the Mosaic Law."¹³

The question yet remains: How does the Mosaic Covenant *relate to* the Abrahamic? The answer lies, first of all, in the identification of the Mosaic Covenant as one formally separate and distinct from the Abrahamic. The latter has been labeled an unconditional "Royal Grant" on the basis of similar ancient Near Eastern historical and literary models. The Mosaic, however, is of a conditional type known as a "Suzerain-Vassal" treaty text. It is analogous to well-known examples from Hittite sources of the Late Bronze Age.¹⁴ Such treaties were initiated by so-called "great kings" with less powerful ones whom they had conquered or had otherwise brought within their ambit of control. Usually in these secular contexts such arrangements were involuntary and disloyalty to the "great king" wrought serious consequences.¹⁵

In the case of the Lord and Israel, the covenant was offered by the Lord and accepted willingly by Israel (Exod 19:5-6, 8). Moreover, it was not a covenant whereby Israel became the people of the Lord. They were already His people by virtue of their descent from Abraham, a point made explicitly even before the giving of the covenant at Sinai. The Lord had said to Moses, "I have observed the misery of My people in Egypt" (3:7) and He informed him, "I am sending you to Pharaoh so that you may lead My people, the Israelites, out of Egypt" (v. 10). Even more explicitly, the Lord made the remarkable declaration, "Israel is My firstborn son" and therefore Moses must instruct Pharaoh, "Let My son go so that he may worship Me" (4:22-23; cf. Isa 63:16; 64:8; Hos 11:1).

¹³ Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus* (New American Commentary 3A) (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 320.

¹⁴ See the still important work by Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 27-30.

¹⁵ In a treaty between the Hittite king Muršili and Dubbi-Tešub, his vassal, the king warned, "All the words of the treaty and the oath which are written on this tablet—if Dubbi-Tešub [does not keep these] words of the treaty and of the oath, then let these oath gods destroy Dubbi-Tešub together with his head, his wife, his son, his grandson, his house, his city, his land and together with his possessions." *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2:98.

If the Mosaic Covenant is not a Royal Grant but a Suzerain-Vassal treaty, what does that mean *vis-à-vis* the Abrahamic Covenant? The answer lies in both its form and function. As already noted, from a formal standpoint it is of the type by which a superior offered certain benefits and advantages to an underling who in turn promised loyal service and other reciprocations. Functionally—and specifically with reference to the Mosaic Covenant—it stated clearly the role the vassal must function under its terms. In the context of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic was designed to grant to Israel, the seed of Abraham, the privilege and responsibility of being the particular means by which that seed could be the means of blessing all the nations. That is, Israel, the son of God, was being invited to serve Him by presenting to the world the message of reconciliation embodied in the Abrahamic Covenant.¹⁶ The details of its outworking lead now to a consideration of the Davidic and New Covenants.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ABRAHAMIC AND DAVIDIC COVENANTS

The Abrahamic Covenant speaks generally of kings who would descend from Abraham, paving the way for human monarchy (Gen 17:6, 16). More particularly, in Jacob's blessing of the tribes he prophesied that "the scepter will not depart from Judah, or the staff from between his feet, until He whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples belongs to Him" (49:10; cf. Num 24:17). The kings of promise would become a single, ideal king and the source would be not only Israel but also Judah specifically. The Deuteronomic version of the Mosaic Covenant was preparation for kings to come (Deut 17:14-20) and Israel's subsequent history reveals a yearning to have a king like all the other nations (Judg 8:22-23; 9:6; 17:6; 18:1; 21:25; 1 Sam 8:5). At last in God's own time, He selected David, a Judahite, a man described as "a man according to His heart," that is, the man of His sovereign choice (1 Sam 13:14).¹⁷ Therefore, the royal seed promised to Abraham made his historical appearance.

The relationship between the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenants is complicated by the fact that by form the two are generally construed as royal grants but by function the Davidic not only fulfills the promise of

¹⁶ Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion*, 255-58.

¹⁷ The phrase "according to [God's] heart" suggests not that David was selected because his heart was right or that he had any other commendable quality but that God chose him according to His [God's] act of pure grace. See P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel* (Anchor Bible 8) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 229.

human monarchy given to Abraham but also does so within the framework of the Mosaic Covenant. That is, David and his descendants were offspring of Abraham who were given royal status but that status was historically exercised within and over the people Israel before becoming universalized in Jesus Christ. Brief attention to its unfolding will make this clear.

The text that makes the connection most explicitly is Jeremiah 33:25-26: “This is what the Lord says: If I do not keep My covenant with the day and with the night and fail to establish the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I might also reject the seed of Jacob and of My servant David—not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Here the Lord vowed to maintain the Davidic Covenant as an instrument whereby David’s dynasty will rule over Israel (“the seed of Jacob”), the special offspring of Abraham.¹⁸

The Davidic Covenant is first articulated in 2 Samuel 7 (cf. 1 Chron 17) where the Lord promised David that He will build for him an everlasting house (i.e., dynasty). He will magnify his name (v. 9), secure the land of Israel for his people (v. 10), and guarantee the everlasting duration of the Davidic kingship in a single occupant of the throne (vv. 12-16). This is the Son of David already hinted at in Genesis 49:10 and elaborated upon in Psalms 2, 72, and 110. Consequently, the dynasty of David the Israelite will issue in a single ruler who, as the descendant of Abraham, will have dominion not only over Israel but also over all of God’s creation.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT AND THE “NEW” (NEW) COVENANTS

The term “New Testament” is a somewhat misleading way of describing the “New Covenant,” a concept referred to as such a number of times in the New Testament (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24). It is no doubt reminiscent of the only occurrence of the term in the Old Testament, namely, Jeremiah 31:31. In this passage the Lord promised that He would “make a new covenant with **the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**” (emphasis added). It will be unlike the Mosaic, not because it will differ in essence and purpose, but because it will become internalized, written on the heart rather than on stone tablets (vv. 32-33). This will guarantee an ability to keep it and the universality of its acceptance by the whole community (v. 34). Ezekiel, referring to the same

¹⁸ Stephen G. Dempster, “The Servant of the Lord,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, eds. Scott J. Hafeman and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 154.

covenant, spoke of Israel's "new heart" and "new spirit" the Lord would give them so they can walk in perfect compliance with His statutes and ordinances (Ezek 36:26-27). As a result, the nations will be impressed to know that He is the Lord (v. 23) and that He has kept His ancient covenant promises to His people (v. 36).

Without adequate opportunity here to argue the case in detail, the author's proposes that the "New" Covenant of Jeremiah is not precisely the same as the New Covenant of most New Testament texts but that nonetheless both flow from the Abrahamic Covenant. Jeremiah's covenant is made explicitly with a renewed, eschatological Israel and Judah (cf. Jer 31:1, 17, 23, 27, 31) whereas the New Covenant of the New Testament is universalized to include not only Israel but also all the nations who turn to the Lord in repentance and faith.¹⁹

The New Covenant is mentioned first in Luke 22:20 where Jesus spoke of the cup of "the new covenant established by My blood." Paul, in the context of the church, cited the Luke passage thus broadening "New" Covenant to a dimension larger than Jeremiah's scope (1 Cor 11:25).²⁰ He enlarged on this idea further in 2 Corinthians where he referred to the stone tablets of the Mosaic Covenant being inherently inferior to the work of the Spirit in the human heart (3:6-11). However, the Apostle appeared merely to be comparing the modal and effectual differences between law written on stone and law written on the heart (as, indeed, did Jeremiah) without denying the reality of a "New" Covenant with Israel. His lengthy discourse in Romans 9—11 is sufficient to demonstrate his understanding of the permanent nature of God's covenant relationship with Israel even in the era of the church.

Hebrews 8, however, is the *locus classicus* on the matter of the respective New Covenants. Indeed, did the author have in mind a single New Covenant or is his presentation open to an interpretation that allows for both? He quoted Jeremiah 31:31-34 to argue that the ministry of Jesus as superior to that of Moses in that Jesus "is the mediator of a better (*kreittonos*) covenant, which has been legally enacted on better (*kreittosin*)

¹⁹ For a succinct and convincing case for the "new things" of the New Covenant and yet its continuity with the covenants of the Old Testament, see Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 231-35.

²⁰ Marshall proposed that Luke was referring to Exodus 24:8 rather than to Jeremiah 31:31 as the Old Testament basis for his new covenant idea. This leaves the Jeremiah text as alluding to a continuation of the covenant made specifically with Israel. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (New International Greek Testament Commentary) (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1978), 806-07.

promises” (v. 6). The basic nuance of the Greek term is “more prominent, higher in rank, preferable,”²¹ not necessarily suggesting that the thing being compared is flawed. The statement in verse 7 to the effect that the first covenant was not faultless is immediately qualified by the remark that the fault was with the people who could not keep it (v. 8; cf. Rom 7:7-12). A new covenant must be given in such a manner that people can obey it.

This notion is clearly akin to the unconditionality of the Abrahamic Covenant which did not depend on human initiative but purely on the prevenient grace of God. All that was required for the full enjoyment of its benefits was compliance with its terms. Employing the language of Jeremiah 31, the author of Hebrews proclaimed that the New Covenant in Jesus fulfills both God’s commitment to Israel and to the nations of the earth to whom Israel was to bear witness.²² Evidence of this lies outside the scope of Hebrews, being found particularly in the Pauline literature (Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 10:1-13; Gal 3:6-9; Eph 3:1-13).

CONCLUSION

This brief study has attempted to identify the Abrahamic Covenant as the means through which God revealed His plan for the reconciliation of the fallen race to Himself and as the instrument by which this salvific work could be accomplished. This covenant promised that an innumerable seed would occupy a geographic and historical place and become the channel of divine blessing to the whole world. That seed was Israel, the land was Canaan, and the blessing was God’s redemptive grace mediated through a single Seed who sprang from Israel and who will sit on the throne of restored Israel’s monarchy first occupied by David. The failure of Israel to fulfill its servant mandate in history has already been redressed at the Cross by Christ, the Suffering Servant who both died and rose from the dead in order to effect a New Covenant and who will come as King of kings to inaugurate God’s everlasting rule over a perfect recreation (Isa 52:13—53:12; cf. 42:1-4 18-25; 44:1-5; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; Rev 19:11-16).

²¹ William F. Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed., rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 449.

²² As Martens stated, “With that statement [of Jer 31:32] Jeremiah points forward to the Christ event, as the author of Hebrews explains (Heb. 8:6-13). But in giving the promise, Jeremiah also harks back to the beginning of Israel’s story, to the covenant at Sinai.” Elmer A. Martens, *God’s Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 221.

DUALISM, ONTOLOGY AND PAULINE AUTHORITY

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The origin of the Pauline project is not an unimportant question. Paul represented his doctrines as emerging not from human agency (Gal 1:1, 11) but from divinity, claiming an apostolic commission by way of direct encounter with the resurrected Jesus Christ (Acts 9; Gal 1:12), and subsequent visions and revelations of the Lord (2 Cor 12:1, 7). Paul betrayed no lack of confidence that his gospel and many following prescriptions are authoritative and thus should be heeded. Significantly he reckoned the source of that authority as the truth of Christ in him (2 Cor 11:10).

However, the Pauline claim of divine grounding does not go unchallenged. Assertions such as that of Bren¹—that Paul was driven by a fundamental dissatisfaction with the Law system and developed an original system to combat it [that Paul was in conflict with doctrines of the Old Testament], or of Boyarin²—that Paul was motivated by Hellenistic philosophical concerns [that Paul was influenced and directed by Platonic thought], are representative denunciations of the divinity factor as the sole impetus for Paul's doctrines.

It would seem an obvious reality that if these are accurate criticisms, and the doctrinal grounding is not divine, then the spiritual and ethical demands of Paul are merely theoretical and unbinding.³ Hence for an

¹ R. Bren, "The Ethics of St. Paul," *International Journal of Ethics* 13 (July 1903): 493-98.

² Daniel Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender," *Representations* 41 (Winter 1993): 1-33.

³ There is a third alternative that the Hellenistic and legal motivations were instruments utilized by God in Paul for the development of the Pauline project, and that the resulting doctrines are binding. In this case, Paul's doctrinal foundations are more psychological cultural than spiritual. This view should be regarded as untenable on several matters and inconsistent with Paul's own renuncements of his personal involvement in the formulation of the doctrine. If this third view were true, then Paul was seriously misrepresenting elements far too significant to his thesis. Such inconsistency would seem to preempt any divine influence (at least as Paul defined it), leaving the same result as that of the non-divine origin perspective. The plausibility of this third view, while a worthy topic of discussion, will not, due to the scope of this present project, be considered further here.

accurate appraisal of the authority and applicability of such central imperatives as the appropriation of the righteousness of God exclusively through belief in Jesus (Rom 3:22; Gal 3:22, etc.) and the subsequent walking in a manner worthy of such a calling (Eph 4:1; Col 1:10), such assertions—(1) that Paul was in conflict with the Old Testament, and (2) that he was directed in large part by Platonic thinking—will be considered in this article.

PORTRAIT OF PAUL

Paul was born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3), the capital city of Cilicia, which in addition to its status as an important trade center was a university city that produced such thinkers as Athenodorus and Nestor—men who were alive during Paul’s boyhood. Tarsus would have afforded him opportunity to interact with Hellenistic ideas, but evidently he did not spend much time there as he spent at least his formative years in Jerusalem studying under the guidance of the revered Gamaliel. He had a rich pedigree, being the son of a Pharisee, of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5), and a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-28). That pedigree and training gave him access to Hellenistic and Roman thought, but it is clear that his greatest influence was his Hebraic training, which culminated in his own position as a “Hebrew of Hebrews” and a Pharisee. He was a staunch persecutor of the burgeoning Christian church until his conversion (Acts 9), after which he became the central figure in the codifying of Christian theology.

The biblical account states with clarity that Paul received this theology by divine revelation (Gal 1:11-24) and that it represented a fulfillment of Old Testament Law rather than a contradiction of it (3:21-25). However, Paul was a Hellenized Hebrew who interacted with Epicureanism and Stoicism (Acts 17:18ff), and the theology he penned did represent impressive augmentation (to say the least) to the Law system. Additionally, Hellenistic influences were readily accessible in Paul’s day. According to Lange,

the writings of Plato, Xenophon, and later philosophers were widely disseminated throughout the Hellenistic world and especially in Alexandria, and many of their ideas by the first century B.C. had become the common property of educated men, though the source of these ideas was not always known.⁴

⁴ Stella Lange, “The Wisdom of Solomon and Plato,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 55 (December 1936), 293-302.

Does this environment legitimize suggestions that Christianity is a logical outgrowth of Hellenistic doctrines⁵ or justify the scholarly regard of Christianity as a fusion between Judaism and Hellenism,⁶ and thus favor an origin for Pauline theology inconsistent with the assertions of the biblical account?

Bren found Paul fundamentally dissatisfied with the Law, intimating that the Pauline project is a synthesis of Hebraic and Hellenic teaching:

the one thriving by self sacrifice, the other by self realization. These rivals, it is sometimes asserted, cannot form alliance. In Paul's writings we find together utter self surrender to the will of another ("I no longer live, but Christ") and the straining activity after perfection. These two live merely not side by side; they work in with one another; partners in the same business. . . .⁷

Paul's "theory," Bren said, was one "of great originality in his day."⁸ Consequently, in this thinking, such ingredients were combined to form an innovative path to right standing with God.

Ficino, following another stream of interpretation, observed connection between the later Platonists and the apostle Paul (and others), saying:

I have found beyond a shadow of a doubt that the principal mysteries in Numenius, Philo, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus were in fact received from St. John, St. Paul, Hierotheus and Dionyseus the Areopagite. For whatever the Platonists have to say about the divine mind, about the angels, and about other theological matters that strike one as admirable clearly they appropriated from them.⁹

Ficino's assertion was that the later Platonists gained much from Pauline thought, *finding it compatible with fundamental elements of Platonism*. Such an assertion is representative of assumptions (as Boyarin) that Paul was profoundly influenced by Platonic doctrines, if only indirectly. Being committed to Plato himself, Ficino viewed Plato as a kind of gentile prophet whose most exact followers are the Christian Platonists, since they complete what Ficino perceived to be anticipations of Christ and Christian theology,

⁵ J. Dashiell Stoops, "Ideals and Institutions—New Testament and Old," *International Journal of Ethics* 27 (October 1916): 82-90.

⁶ Lange, "Wisdom of Solomon and Plato."

⁷ Bren, "Ethics of St. Paul."

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Michael J. B. Allen, "Marsilio Ficino on Plato, the Neoplatonists and the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity," *Renaissance Quarterly* 37 (Winter 1984): 555-84.

rather than the neo-platonists who, despite their considerable contribution represented a stream of thought heretical to Plato's ideas. For Ficino, Plato was elevated nearly (at least) to the same level as the Hebrew prophets in anticipation of Christ.

Was Bren correct in citing Pauline disagreement with the Old Testament system, were Ficino and Boyarin correct in reckoning (primarily) Hellenistic motivations to Paul, or is Pauline theology indeed consistent with the biblical account? There are certain intersecting topics to be found in Pauline theology, Platonic conceptions, and Old Testament doctrine that shed light on this question. In particular this project will consider the respective dualistic outlooks in order to uncover (1) a dependence of Paul on Plato, (2) an inconsistency on Paul's part with the Old Testament, or (3) an independence of Paul from Plato and consistency of Paul with the Old Testament.

PLATO, THE OLD TESTAMENT, AND PAUL

Platonic Dualism

Plato's cosmogony, metaphysics, and epistemology represent a synthesis of two competing pre-Socratic views: Parmenides' monism—the idea that being is unchanged and understood only by reason; and Heraclitus' idea of the hidden reality of constant change (“one cannot step twice into the same river”). Plato seemed motivated by a desire to recognize a noumenal and unchanging world and still at the same time explain the appearances of change. Oakeley regarded this as central in Plato's metaphysics.

As a metaphysician Plato felt primarily the need of understanding the world as a unity. In him culminated the search of Greek thought for the One. But this One must be unity of value.¹⁰

Plato's quest for unity is apparent in his divided line theory, which puts forth metaphysical and epistemological foundations: that which changes is in the metaphysical realm of “becoming,” while the unchanging and intelligibly grasped is “being.” He could thus offer an explanation for the appearances, while at the same time acknowledging unchangeableness in being. He is recognized as “the first to make a sharp distinction between

¹⁰ Oakeley, “The Religious Element in Plato's Philosophy.”

visible, corporeal reality and an intelligible, incorporeal world of Ideas.”¹¹ His system can be charted as follows:

Knowledge	Pure Intelligence	A	Intelligible world of being
	Reason	B	

Opinion	Belief	C	Visible world of becoming
	Illusion	D	

The D and C levels represent opinion, and find their focus in the visible world of becoming. The B and A levels represent knowledge, and are interactions with the intelligible world of being.

On opinion and the visible world of becoming: the D level represents the lowest level. On the epistemology side, imagination or illusion, and on the metaphysics/ontology side, the interaction is with shadows, images, or reflections. This is where people commonly interact with the visible world of becoming. The C level is the realm of belief or perception where objects or the antecedents of images are perceived.

On knowledge and the intelligible world of being: the B level in epistemology represents deductive reason, while the metaphysics/ontology focuses on the lower forms (mathematics, etc.); the A level represents on the epistemology side, pure thought, and on the metaphysical/ontological side the higher forms—equality, justice, and including goodness—the highest of the forms.

If Plato’s metaphysics and epistemology assert a dualistic ontology, his cosmogony accounts for it. Nothing comes into being without sufficient cause, thus the visible, tangible cosmos came into being by divine causation (*Tim.* 28).¹² God¹³ fashioned a single living creature (the universe), as

¹¹ Bos, “‘Aristotelian’ and ‘Platonic’ Dualism.”

¹² Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Desmond Lee (New York: Penguin, 1981).

¹³ The existence of this unknowable and alien God is not explained by Plato’s causation statement, and is explained by some in an allegorical manner: “The introduction of a creative God in the *Timaeus* is, of course, purely allegorical. Nothing existed before Existence itself; and no external power was needed to combine the abstract elements into which it is decomposed by thought, as in reality they had never

perfect as conceivable (*Tim.* 29) and containing all life. The universe-god would then function as the creator of mortals (*Tim.* 69), demonstrating itself to be a visible and supreme god (*Tim.* 92). Good and evil find their balance likewise in these creative acts: good is ascribed of God in reality (*Rep.* 379a-c),¹⁴ yet the existence of evil must be explained by some causation other than God, as Plato was direct in his assertion that evil does not originate from God (*Rep.* 379c). The cosmos is God's only creation (*Tim.* 30-31), and that divine created being (his children) brought forth the physical realm (*Tim.* 69) as an expression of perfection. The physical realm, however, is inadequate for such a task, ultimately veiling (with "evil") the true goodness of God. Arguably the Platonic cosmogony was a significant factor¹⁵ in the later rise of the Gnostic dualism which exalted the (good) spirit over the (evil) flesh, being himself more inclined to an ascetic perspective¹⁶ leaning even to an "other-worldly side."¹⁷ Vlastos discussed evidence of such a leaning observed in Plato's theory of forms.¹⁸

Plato's Form-mysticism is profoundly otherworldly. The ontology of non-sensible, eternal, incorporeal, self-existent, contemplable Forms, and of their anthropological correlate, the invisible, immortal, incorporeal transmigrating

been separated. So much is now generally admitted" (A. W. Benn, "The Later Ontology of Plato," *Mind* NS11 [January 1902]: 31-53). Oakeley discussed a contrasting argument which presents the Timaeus as showing a kinship to Christianity: "Especially is the dualism of the Platonic conception emphasized—the picture of the Demiurges doing the best possible with a material only in part submissive to creative form—as essential to a truly religious view of the world. . . ." (Hilda D. Oakeley, "The Religious Element in Plato's Philosophy," *International Journal of Ethics* 37 [October 1926]: 67-80). In short, the debate is whether or not Plato's presented a truly 'religious' worldview or simply used a mythical mode to communicate a secular one. In either case, the dualism of Plato is inarguable as foundational for his metaphysical and epistemological conceptions.

¹⁴ Plato, *Republic, Books I-V*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); *Republic, Books VI-X*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Abraham P. Bos, "'Aristotelian' and 'Platonic' Dualism in Hellenistic and Early Christian Philosophy and in Gnosticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (August 2002): 273-91, as an example, suggested that Plato was perhaps not as much of an impact as Aristotle on this development, but viewed Plato as foundational nonetheless.

¹⁶ Hebert L. Stewart, "Was Plato an Ascetic?," *The Philosophical Review* 24 (November 1915): 603-13 defended such a statement in part based upon, among other factors, Plato's apparent negativity regarding important aesthetic conditions of his time.

¹⁷ Stewart, "Plato an Ascetic?"

¹⁸ Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 66-80.

soul, has far reaching implications for the mind and for the heart . . . all we can find here are images, copies, shadows of the real world which we shall fully know only when liberated from the ‘oyster shell’.¹⁹

This otherworldly interpretation perceives death as ally to enlightenment. However, what endures, body or soul? Plato was fairly specific in the *Gorgias*.

Death, it seems to me, is actually nothing but the disconnexion of two things, the soul and the body, from each other. And so when they are disconnected from one another, each of them keeps its own condition very much as it was when the man was alive. . . . [*Gor.* 524b]²⁰

He was specific again in the *Apology*.

For the state of death is one of two things: either it is virtual nothingness, so that the dead has no consciousness of anything, or it is, as people say, a change and migration of the soul from this to another place. [*Apol.* 40c]²¹

And finally, he was precise in the more mythical presentation of the *Timaeus*.

Anyone living well during his life would upon death return to his native star, while those failing to live in this regard would return for a second tour of duty, this time as a woman, and if there was further moral failure, the third coming would be as an animal. [*Tim.* 42, 90-91]

From this personal ontology of the soul and death, built on metaphysical dualism, rises the ethical principle that things done in the body are of significance to the soul, since the soul will subsist beyond the (original) body, while the body is merely an instrument to facilitate (or hinder) the virtue of the soul. Lange argued that Plato’s variety of asceticism was not an extreme one (if it can be labeled as asceticism at all).

Plato, unlike the Neoplatonists and other extremists, does not look upon the body as something utterly despicable and shameful but merely deprecates the limitations it imposes on the spirit. He is not an ascetic who would torture the

¹⁹ Ibid., 79

²⁰ *Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²¹ *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, trans. H. N. Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

body and deny the legitimacy of bodily needs (Rep., 571DE). He would merely train the body to be an efficient servant of the mind.²²

In Lange's reading, it is the physical body that limits the spirit, hence even if Plato is understood as less than ascetic, Vlastos' "otherworldly" appraisal would still be appropriate since the physical body has no eternity or value in itself, but serves as purely instrumental for the ordering of the spirit.

Old Testament Dualism

The Old Testament provides a radically different narrative on cosmogony and ontological dualism. The creation of all that is—corporeal and non—occurs at the very command of a preexistent God (Gen 1) with direct creative involvement of the Spirit of God (1:2) and One who calls Himself the first and the last (Isa 48:12) and identifies Himself as being distinct from the Spirit and the Lord God (48:16), yet being Deity.²³ Here, in contrast to Plato's conception, there is no intermediary and independent demiurge and no lacking in the created materials to reflect the goodness of God (note that only man himself was created in the image of God—not creation as a whole or in general), hence the culminating assessment of creation as "very good" (Gen 1:31).

While at this point a Creator/creation distinction is obvious, such a distinction was deliberate and not a result of demiurgic failure. The purpose of this created universe is delineated with precision as "telling of the glory of God" (Ps 19). This is, again, quite distinct from the Platonic universe intended as a direct reflection—the very image—of the divine. The Old Testament conception of corporeal reality is akin to what is often termed as "general revelation": that God has revealed Himself in to a certain degree and in limited fashion within that which is created. His rights as Creator and sovereignty over all nature (Isa 40) are made clear within nature. Therefore, the Old Testament attitude toward the purpose of corporeal nature is instrumental to a lofty end (telling the glory of God). This represents a marked contrast with Plato, whose corporeal nature is (at least to some degree) ineffectual and flawed from the start.

This cosmogony is a necessary piece for grasping the particular brand of dualism found in the Old Testament. The spiritual is exalted over the physical—but by design and within a teleological purpose. The

²² Lange, "Wisdom of Solomon and Plato."

²³ This, coupled with the plural pronouns referencing God (e.g. Gen 1:26), forms the basis for the later termed doctrine of the Trinity.

corporeal is instrumental and invaluable in allowing humanity to glimpse the glory of God. It must be noted at this juncture that such an instrument, sufficient to its designed end, is insufficient for the further end of providing human access to personal fellowship with the Creator. The Old Testament record never asserts creation as intended for such a purpose, and if such interfacing is desired by the Creator, more is needed, and due in no small part to the entrance of evil into the universe, an appearance which demands examination.

The account of the fall of man (Gen 3) presupposes the fall of the Serpent—an event initiated by five assertions of the created cherub’s will in opposition to God’s will (Isa 14) and simply characterized as the finding of unrighteousness in him (Ezek 28). In this context, unrighteousness is revealed as that which is counter to God’s holiness and first making its appearance in this cherubic rebellion. As for the origin of evil, one may discover this statement in Isaiah (45:6b-7): “I am the Lord, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these” (NASB).

The term calamity, translated from the Hebrew *ra’ah*, could be better rendered as *evil*.²⁴ Whether evil in this immediate context would reference moral evil or natural evil is inconsequential to the discussion of origin, as the less severe of the two (natural evil) would still offer a challenge to typical definitions of divine goodness.²⁵ While characterizing God as the author of sin,²⁶ *per se* would not be consistent with the Old Testament, it would be inconsistent with the Old Testament not to recognize God as injecting into His initial created beings (particularly the Serpent, as well as Adam and Eve) the ability to violate His goodness. It is no coincidence that each exercised that ability and failed morally. The resulting condition, mere generations after these offenses, is evident from the commentary of Genesis 6:5: “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Later characterizations showed no improvement on that

²⁴ Karl Feyerabend, *Langensheidt’s Hebrew English Dictionary to the Old Testament* (Berlin: Langensheidt, 1956), 322.

²⁵ Questions similar to these could include, for example: “If God is so good, how can He allow natural disasters which kill thousands . . . or famines . . . or man’s inhumanity to man . . . etc.?” The Epicurean trilemma presents challenges to classical definitions of goodness regardless of whether the evil discussed is moral or natural, thus an argument to soften the evil from moral to natural still accomplishes little to resolve the issue.

²⁶ One who would directly cause one to sin in particular by way of deception (as the Serpent did Eve).

condition: “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9) The human heart and mind, in this warped condition, needed further revelation to grasp the glory of God and to discern how to restore fellowship with the Creator. Special revelation served that purpose—direct verbal interaction by God with His creatures to make them aware of (1) their need for Him (Ps 32:3-4; 78:21-22; Isa 59:17-18; 64:6-7), (2) His provision for continued interaction and fellowship with them (Ps 32:5-6; 100:5; Isa 30:18; 53; 61:1-2), and (3) the means of appropriating that provision (2 Kgs 17:14; Ps 116:13; Joel 2:32). The hierarchy of general and special revelation is clear in the Old Testament (see Ps 19, etc.) but it does not create a dualistic devaluing of the corporeal in terms that would encourage asceticism. On the contrary, the Old Testament God showed Himself to be quite interested in both eternal *physical* considerations (e.g. Gen 13:15; Exod 32:13; Josh 4:24; 1 Sam 13:13; 2 Sam 7:13, 24; Ezra 9:12; Ps 23:6; 37:18; 48:8; 72:19; 78:69; 89:4, 37; 104:5; 148:6; Eccl 1:4; 3:14; Isa 34:17; 60:21; 65:18; Jer 7:7; Ezek 37:26-28; Joel 3:20) and temporal enjoyment of creation on the part of his creatures (e.g. Gen 2:15-16; 8:22; 9:7; 15:18-21; 28:14-22; Exod 11:2-3; 16:1-31; Ps 23; Eccl 5:18; 9:9; Jer 31:5) while still maintaining the primacy of spiritual devotion (Deut 6:1-9; Ps 90; 119:9-11; Eccl 11:9).

Pauline Dualism

Pauline usage of *soma* (body) in the epistles is extensive, with more than ninety references—the consistent theme is that the body is of value to God, is an instrument for good or evil, and is ultimately redeemable and eternal. Sin is not to reign in the mortal body (Rom 6:12). The body and its members are to be instruments of righteousness (6:13). The body represents a battlefield between spiritual and fleshly living (7:23). The believer is to put to death the deeds of the body (not the body itself) (8:13). The body will be redeemed (8:23). The body is purposed for the Lord (1 Cor 6:13). The immoral man sins against his body (6:18). The body is a temple of God (6:19). The believer is to glorify God in his body (6:20). The body is to be disciplined for service (9:27). Believers corporately constitute one body (10:17; 12:20; Eph 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, etc.). Christ gave His own valuable body on behalf of others (1 Cor 11:24-27). The body will be resurrected and transformed into an imperishable body (15:35ff; Phil 3:21). Believers will be judged for deeds done in the body (2 Cor 5:10). Christ can be exalted in the bodies of believers (Phil 1:20). Severe treatment of the body is of no value (Col 2:23). The body should be considered dead to impropriety (Col

3:5). The body will be preserved complete, along with spirit and soul (1 Thess 5:23).

These characterizations are not fully consistent with, for example, Boyarin's assessment of Pauline valuation of the physical.

Nevertheless the image of the human being that Paul maintains is of a soul dwelling in or clothed by the body, and, however valuable the garment, it is less essential than that which it clothes. It is "the earthly tent that we live in"; it is not *we*. The body, while necessary and positively valued by Paul, is, as in Philo, not the human being but only his or her house or garment.²⁷

While Boyarin's observation seems plausible initially, there is a very significant nuance that is overlooked in his observation: Plato's principle of transmigration of souls gave no consideration to physical permanence, but Paul, while he referenced the body as a temporary dwelling until death (2 Cor 5:1-4), recognizes that the body is in actuality a permanent fixture requiring a redemption not unlike that needed by the soul (1 Cor 15:50-58; 1 Thess 4:13-18). The Pauline doctrine asserts the believer to be rejoined eternally, after separation of death and physical resurrection and transformation, with *the original body*. This represents a markedly high priority in Paul on not just corporeal flesh in general, but the human body in particular.

If then the body was viewed so highly and necessarily by Paul, then upon what basis is Paul accused of a Platonic dualism? Boyarin's observation reveals a problematic grammatical equivocation.

Paul was motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of a universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy. This universal humanity was (and still is) predicated on the dualism of the flesh and the spirit, such that while the body is particular, marked through practice as Jew or Greek, and through anatomy as male or female, the spirit is universal.²⁸

Note the terms *flesh* and *spirit* used in the clause discussing dualism, while in the following clauses the ratio is completed with *body* (as particular) and *spirit* (as universal). The implication is that *flesh* and *body* are synonymous as *spirit* and *spirit* are equal. While this may be an innocently motivated interchange it is a vitally misleading one. Paul certainly held to a dualistic concept, yet the contrast in view is not between *body* and *spirit* but between

²⁷ Boyarin, "Paul and the Genealogy of Gender."

²⁸ Ibid.

flesh and *spirit*. Wilder, favoring a more naturalistic origin for the Pauline canon, nonetheless offered a critique to this error in another writer.

The author strangely makes the familiar and recurrent error of identifying the term “flesh” in Paul with the body, in those numerous and important uses of the term where something quite different is meant. He is thus led not only to a gross exaggeration of Paul’s asceticism, but to a misunderstanding of the profound moral and metaphysical dualism in the apostle’s thinking . . . the antinomy of “flesh” and “spirit” for Paul was not that of body and soul . . . and his struggle was not with bodily appetite, but with all the temptations of the lower nature.²⁹

Wilder’s critique is apt, since Paul referred in his epistles to the *sarx* (flesh) on more than eighty occasions, many of them referencing the physical body (as synonymous with *soma*) in a non-pejorative sense,³⁰ however, the term is also used, as Wilder observed, to reference a more-than-material force which competes with the spirit for control of the body. It is this lexical usage that provides the strongest evidence of Pauline dualism: fleshliness is associated with bondage under Law, irrespective of physicality (Rom 7:5-6). The flesh is a source of nothing good (7:18; Gal 5:19). The flesh is distinguished from the mind (Rom 7:25). One can (in the physical body) walk according to either the flesh or the spirit (8:4). Flesh and spirit are opposing directors of the mind (8:5; Gal 5:17). One “in the flesh” cannot please God (Rom 8:8). Believers are not under obligation of the flesh (Rom 8:12-13; Gal 5:24). The flesh can be offset by putting on Jesus Christ and walking in the Spirit (Rom 13:14; Gal 5:16). Fleshliness is associated with spiritual immaturity (1 Cor 3:1). The flesh cannot contribute to the sanctification of the believer (Gal 3:3).

These descriptions reveal an immediate and vital distinction between body and flesh and consequently show dissimilarity between Paul’s flesh/spirit dualism and Plato’s body/soul dualism, making Plato an unlikely source of Pauline inspiration due to (among other factors) the broad metaphysical implications. However, if Paul did not cultivate his dualism from Platonic and other Hellenistic influences, then from whence did it emerge? Is it framed on fundamental dissatisfaction with the Old Testament system, or did it come forth from that same system?

²⁹ Amos N. Wilder, “Paul through Jewish Eyes,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 12 (August 1944): 181-87.

³⁰ Second Corinthians 10:3 and Ephesians 6:12 provide important examples of the non-pejorative sense, indicating that the believer’s warfare is not fleshly; in other words, not an issue of body contra soul/spirit.

Comparative Ontology

Four noteworthy contrasts between Old Testament and Platonic ontology have been given consideration above, and can be illustrated as follows:

	Old Testament	Platonic
<i>Metaphysical</i>	sharp Creator/creation distinction	interconnectedness of (lower) creator and creation
<i>Teleological</i>	cumulative creation as revelation	cumulative creation as image
<i>Axiological</i>	corporeal nature as initially good	corporeal nature as initially/fundamentally flawed
<i>Ethical</i>	considers eternity of the body	considers temporality of the body

If Paul diverged from the Old Testament in any of these four areas, not only will questions of Platonic influence persist, but Paul’s own assertions, necessitating consistency (e.g. 2 Tim 3:16-17) with previous revelation, would be undermined.

First, on the relationship of Creator and creation, Paul presented God as fully sovereign and transcendent (e.g. Rom 8—9; Eph 1; Col 1:15-17; 3:1) while at the same time immanent and actively and directly involved with His creation (e.g. Rom 5:1-8; 1 Cor 15:9-28; Eph 1:7-10, 13-14; Col 1:17). The efficaciousness of the immanence is dependent upon the transcendence and holiness of God, without which the precisely defined motivation and activity pertaining to immanence would not be possible. There is therefore no ontological or *essential* interconnect-edness between Creator and creation, however, on account of the transcendence the relationship, which is possible, is of the very most intimate kind (e.g. Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 6:17; Eph 4:4). Paul recognized an evident Creator/creation distinction (Rom 1:18-25) while acknowledging (in consistency with the Old Testament record) God’s active involvement in the affairs of the world.

Second, in each instance that Paul discussed the intention of God in creation, the purpose is centrally defined as revelatory (Acts 17:22-31; Rom 1:19-20; Eph 1:8-10; Col 1:15-18 [“For Him . . . that He might come to have first place in all, and be seen in such fashion”]; cf. Phil 2:9-11)—even

the 'new creation' serves an important revelatory role³¹ (2 Cor 5:17-21). The image of God is found not in cumulative creation, but is only exactly found in Christ, Himself (Col 1:15) and represented in man in general, and whereas that image of God in man was tarnished at the Fall³², it can be restored only by right standing with God through divine intervention (e.g. Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10).

Third, Paul represented corporeal nature as initially fundamentally good but essentially flawed as consequence of sin (Rom 5:12-21), and fully redeemable by divine accomplishment (8:19-23; Col 1:20). The last Adam (1 Cor 15:45-50) provides evidence and example of the importance of the corporeal in God's eternal program. The dualistic problem (as previously discussed) is not corporeal versus noncorporeal (as in Plato, Hellenism, etc.) but is related to the influence and consequences of sin on all aspects of the human person.

Finally, Paul's ethical doctrines considered not just the spirit (although, as in the Old Testament, the primacy of spiritual devotion is evident) but also the eternity of the body. The doctrine of physical resurrection was, in Paul's own estimation, at the very heart of his gospel (1 Cor 15:12-20; 35-49ff) and the basis of the believer's hope (1 Thess 4:13-18) and pattern of living (Phil 3:8-21).

CONCLUSION

The Pauline doctrines considered here are resoundingly consistent with Old Testament thought (a prerequisite to the veracity of his divine revelation claim), typically offering a marked contrast to Platonic and Hellenistic conceptions. In areas where there appears some compatibility between Paul and Plato, Plato's views also corresponded to Old Testament thought. These cases provide evidence that Paul is not guilty of disagreement with the Old Testament and shows no evidence of Platonic influence.

³¹ This in the sense of revealing the reconciliation of God; albeit, not in the authoritative sense of special revelation.

³² Hence the reference to Adam's progeny as being in his image (Gen 5:3).

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY — PART II

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The first part of this study examined the doctrine of the Trinity from a theological perspective. It discussed many of the concepts which form the basis for a proper biblical definition of the Trinity, as well as some principles of interpretation for using the exegesis of a specific passage to construct a doctrine of systematic theology. With the preceding concepts in mind, the purpose of this study will be to analyze a key passage of Scripture to discover its contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity. This passage states: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27, NASB).

OVERVIEW OF JOHN 15:26-27 FROM A TRINITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

The Gospel of John as a whole contains a wide variety of Scriptural evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity and it could be described as the beginning of systematic theological thought concerning the nature of the Godhead.

Through John’s Gospel runs the richest vein in the NT for the Church’s doctrine of the trinity—a wide, deep, and subtle account of divine distinction-within-unity. In John, Father, Son, and Spirit/Paraclete are clearly distinct divine persons, who play differentiated roles in the general divine enterprise of life-giving and life-disclosing. Yet their primordial and unexplained unity is revealed and exemplified by common will, work, word, and knowledge, and by reciprocal love and glorifying. The same six phenomena that distinguish the persons—especially by subordination of Son and Spirit—also unite them. . . . In John’s Gospel one finds “the beginning of dogmatic reflection in the strictest possible sense,” for John displays real interest in what would later be called the mystery of the holy trinity. . . .¹

¹ Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:917-18.

Regarding John 15:26, Van Doren declared, “This verse furnishes decisive proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. Both the essential identity and the personal distinction of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit, are clearly stated (compare also xiv. 16, 18, 26; xvi. 7, 13; xx. 22).”² Lange elaborated on the importance of John 15:26 as a supporting passage for the Trinity when he said, “This is one of the principal proof-texts for the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Both the essential identity and the personal distinction of the Father (παρα του πατρος), of the Son (εγω πεμψω), and of the Holy Spirit (ελθη ‘ο παρακλητος) are very clearly stated, especially when compared with 14:16, 18, 26; 20:22. Our passage is also the *locus classicus* for the technical word *procession* of the Holy Ghost.”³

In regard to the place of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead, Turner and Mantey have stated: “This is one of the most important Paraclete verses. In this one verse one may find arguments for proving that (1) the Spirit came from the Father through the Son (the view of Eastern Orthodoxy) or that (2) the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son (the Roman Catholic view). This was one of the causes for the historical split between the eastern and western churches—the Great Schism.”⁴ It appears, then, that this passage contains some of the key essentials for the doctrine of the Trinity. It will be the task of the following sections to determine how the truths revealed in John 15:26-27 contribute to this doctrine.

Contextual Outline of John 15:26-27

It is important to understand this specific passage in light of the context and message of the Gospel of John as a whole. The Gospel of John contains much information about the relationships between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Son in John is on a mission: He does not do His own will, but that of His Father, the One who sent Him (4:34; 5:30, 38; 8:29). Though the Son has a will of His own (17:24), He subordinates it to the Father. The Spirit in John is

² William H. Van Doren, *Gospel of John: Expository and Homiletical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1981), 1157.

³ John P. Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: John* (1897; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 469.

⁴ George A. Turner and Julius R. Mantey, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 309.

subordinate in turn to the Son. He functions as pure agent, bestowed by Jesus (1:33; 20:22) and sent as Paraclete (14:26; 15:26; 16:13ff) to combine the functions of advocating legal assistance and comforter to the community of believers. Yet this very super- and subordination of wills that distinguishes the three also unites them. For only one divine will is expressed—that of the Father who sends the Son and (with the Son) the Spirit. . . . The functional subordination of Son and Spirit insures that only one message is taught. . . . [They] seem to function as ways of expressing distributive subordination of divine roles in life-giving and also as expressions of primordial divine in-ness or oneness (10:30, 38) of Father, Son, and Spirit. . . . There is little doubt that John presents a functional “hierarchy,” the Father ultimately in control. Son and Spirit seem relatively unoriginal in function. They are always sent. The Spirit never sends the Son on missions, and neither Son nor Spirit ever sends the Father.⁵

In looking at the events portrayed in the book of John, it becomes apparent that Jesus revealed Himself in “ever-widening circles (a few disciples, His mother and friends at Cana, to Jerusalem, ‘the land of Judea,’ Samaria, Galilee), but is rejected both in Jerusalem and Galilee.”⁶ When He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (declaring Himself as Messiah), the Greeks were drawn to Him but the Jews rejected Him. “So He *turns*—and this is indeed a *turning point* in this Gospel—to the inner circle, and tenderly instructs the Twelve in the Upper Room.”⁷

In the “Upper Room Discourse” Jesus comforted His disciples, admonished them, and explained to them what was to come. In the last section of John Chapter 15, Jesus told of the opposition and hostility of the world toward Him and toward anyone who followed Him. Bernard described the immediate context of John 15:26-27.

Verses 26-27 follow at once upon the rebuke (vv. 21-25) pronounced upon the enemies of Jesus. Their hostility was blameworthy. And in the future they will be proved in the wrong by the witness of the Spirit (v. 26) as well as by the witness of the apostles (v. 27). The rendering of ὁ παρακλητος by advocate is here demanded by the context, to which the rendering comforter would be quite foreign. Jesus had explained that the hostility of the Jews to Him was sinful, for they ought to have recognised His Divine mission in His words and works (vv. 22-24). They hated Him, not knowing Him, although they ought to have known Him. But when the Paraclete came, He would bear true testimony to Jesus, being indeed the Spirit of Truth (v. 26). The Paraclete is the Divine

⁵ Bromiley, *Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:917.

⁶ Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 441.

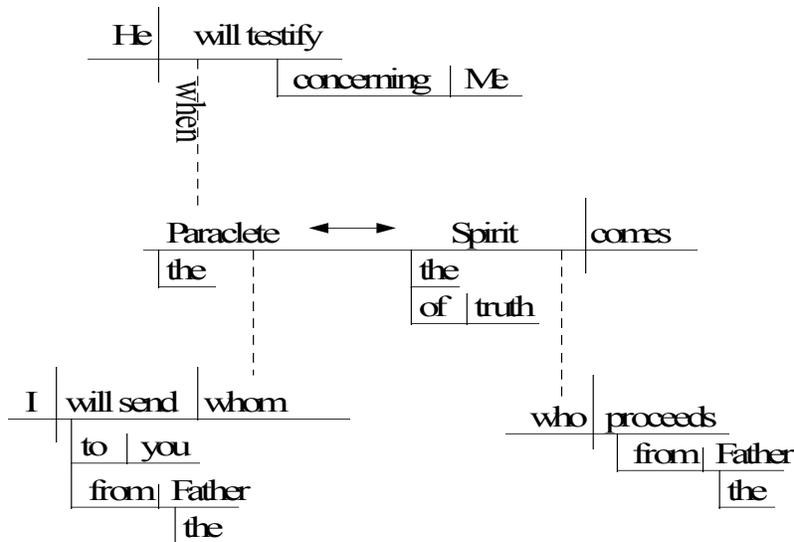
⁷ *Ibid.*

advocatus defending the Righteous One, and pleading His cause against false accusers. He is not, as at 1 Jn 2:1, represented as pleading the cause of man with God, but rather as pleading the cause of Christ with the world.⁸

The immediate context, then, of John 15:26-27 involves Jesus' response to the animosity and opposition of the world. He encouraged His closest followers with the important message of the coming of the Spirit of Truth to help them continue in His absence.

Grammatical Observations on John 15:26-27

Since John 15:26 is the key verse which contains concepts regarding the Trinity, a diagram has been constructed to show the relationships of the various parts of the sentence.



The main subject-verb in the clause is "He will testify," and this indicates that the emphasis of this verse is on the work of witnessing which the Holy Spirit will accomplish when He comes. However, the subordinate clauses contain several important truths about the Holy Spirit and His relationship to God the Father and God the Son. In the

⁸ J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), 2:498.

following sections, specific grammatical observations will be given for each phrase of this passage in order to explore its contribution to the doctrine of the Trinity.

“When the Paraclete Comes”

One feature of this phrase is that the second aorist subjunctive indicates an undefined time reference, and its position in the sentence emphasizes the *coming* action of the Paraclete. Morris added, “We should also observe that the ‘otan which introduces the verse leaves the time indefinite, whenever.”⁹ Another feature of this phrase is the use of the noun for *Paraclete*. Bernard provided some lexical insights and explained how exclusively the Apostle John used this word.

The term παρακλητος does not occur in the Greek Bible outside the Johannine writings. On the other hand, John does not use παρακαλειν or παρακλησις, the latter word being specially Lucan and Pauline, while the former is common to most of the N. T. writers. Etymologically, παρακλητος is a passive form, and is equivalent to the Latin *advocatus*, signifying one who is “called in” to give help or advise, and being especially used of the counsel for defense. In classical writers this is always the meaning. . . . Although the verb παρακαλειν does not appear in John, an examination of its usage throws some additional light on the meaning of παρακλητος. παρακαλειν is to call a person to stand by one (παρα), and hence to help in various ways, e.g. (a) as a witness, to be present when a thing is done; (b) as an adviser; (c) as an advocate. The verb is specially applied to the invoking of a god, and calling him to help. It appears from these passages that παρακλητος is naturally used for a Divine helper called in, either as a witness (15:26), or as an advocate (16:8), or as an adviser (16:13).¹⁰

When discussing the use of the word *Paraclete*, it should be stated that, although the Holy Spirit is more often in mind, the word was also used in reference to Jesus.

We should note that the first mention of the Paraclete in John speaks of him as “another Paraclete” (John 14:16), with the clear implication that Jesus is also a Paraclete. Inevitably we recall 1 John 2:1, the only passage outside of John 14-16 where the term occurs: If anyone sins we have a Paraclete with the Father,

⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 684.

¹⁰ Bernard, 496-97.

Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. Here Jesus is depicted as an intercessor in the court of heaven, representing the cause of his own, whereas the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete from heaven, supporting his own in the face of a hostile world. The ministries of the two Paracletes, however, are thought of not as simultaneous, but as successive. The Spirit-Paraclete takes the place of the Paraclete Jesus after Jesus' departure to the Father.¹¹

It is evident that in functioning as *Paracletes*, Jesus and the Spirit each have a different focus. They both serve as *Paracletes*, but not in the same respect. Regarding the role of the Holy Spirit, Burge stated the commonly held view of His function.

Parakletos (generally translated “Counselor” or “Comforter”) should be taken as “Advocate” since it is a judicial title describing someone aiding a legal argument. The Spirit-Paraclete will not only live in the disciples, enabling them to recall the words of Jesus (14:26); now he will become a witness, supporting their trial (either literally or figuratively).¹²

One further question is, “When will the Paraclete come?” The simple answer to this question is, “When He is sent,” and the sending of the Holy Spirit will be discussed in the next section.

“Whom I Will Send to You from the Father”

The first interesting feature of this phrase is the emphatic use of the pronoun ἐγώ, which underscores Christ's active role in the process of sending the Holy Spirit. Newman and Nida also demonstrated, “The locational relations in the clause ‘I will send him to you from the Father’ are rather complex; and since the role of Jesus as the agent is primarily causative, it may be necessary to translate this clause ‘I will cause him to go from the Father and to come to you.’”¹³

The standard Greek lexicon classified the use of πέμπω in John 15:26 under “the sending of human beings and other beings of a personal

¹¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 73.

¹² Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 421.

¹³ Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), 497.

character,”¹⁴ and it continued to state, “John’s gospel is dominated by the thought that Jesus is sent by God from heaven” and “Jesus, or God in His name, will send the Paraclete or Holy Spirit.”¹⁵ The usage of πέμπω in this particular case, then, implies the personality of the one being sent.

Regarding the time of the sending of the Spirit, Hendriksen declared, “The sending of the Spirit was a matter of the future. Pentecost had not yet arrived. Hence, the future tense is used: ‘I will send.’”¹⁶ Godet added this comment: “In saying: *whom I will send*, Jesus is necessarily thinking of His approaching reinstatement in the divine condition; and in adding: *from the Father*, He acknowledges His subordination to the Father, even when He shall have recovered that condition.”¹⁷ Morris also explained the time of the Spirit’s coming.

Jesus is surely saying that, when he leaves this earth to go to be with his Father, he will send the Spirit to them, the Spirit who is with the Father. There appears to be some emphasis on the fact that, even though it is Jesus who will send the Spirit, it is from the Father that he will send him. Indeed, it can be said that it is from the Father then the Spirit ‘proceeds.’”¹⁸

Just as the first phrase of John 15:26 emphasizes the active role of the Spirit in *coming*, this second phrase emphasizes the active role of Christ in *sending* the Spirit. Bernard introduced the different ways in which the sending of the Spirit is stated: “So also at 16:7, the promise is that Jesus will send the Paraclete; but at 14:16 He is to be given by the Father in response to the prayer of Jesus, and at 14:26 the Father is to send Him in the Name of Jesus. The Lucan doctrine is that Jesus sends the Spirit, the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49, Acts 2:33).”¹⁹ Morris also explained this issue.

¹⁴ Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 641.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 642.

¹⁶ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 317.

¹⁷ Frederick L. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (1893; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2:304.

¹⁸ Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 533.

¹⁹ Bernard, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 498.

Notice that whereas in 14:16 Jesus said that the Father would give the Spirit in response to His prayer, and in 14:26 that the Father would send Him in Christ's name, now Jesus says that He Himself will send Him from the Father. Notice the use of the emphatic *ἐγώ*. . . . It is plain that the Spirit is regarded as being connected in the most intimate fashion with both the Father and the Son. The sending of the Spirit is an activity which concerns them both.²⁰

The question then becomes, "Who is sending the Spirit?" Is it the Father or the Son or both of them? Is there an actual inconsistency between these seemingly contradictory statements of Scripture? Van Doren observed, "The sending by the Father in answer to the Son's prayer, the sending by the Father in the Son's name, and the sending by the Son Himself, are thought of as one sending."²¹ Turner and Mantey have added:

In 14:16 Jesus will take the initiative in asking for the coming of the Paraclete but the Father sends Him; here Jesus will send Him. The significance lies not in the apparent contradiction but in the intimacy of the connection between Father and Son. Likewise in 14:26 the sender is the Father but the gift is in the name of the Son and in response to the Son's request as in 14:15. Here, although the Paraclete proceeds from the Father, he is sent by the Son and bears witness to the Son; so the association is very intimate indeed. As in Acts, so here, the function of the Spirit is to bear witness to Christ along with the disciples (cf. Acts 1:8; 4:29-33).²²

There do appear to be several ways of viewing the sending of the Holy Spirit based on these passages, and Morris clarified the issue.

Jesus says, "I will send" him and send him "from the Father." There is a variety of ways of looking at the sending of the Spirit, and elsewhere we find that Jesus prays to the Father that he would send the Spirit (14:16). Or it may be said that the Father sends the Spirit in Christ's name (14:26). Again, Jesus can say simply that he will send the Spirit (16:7). From all this it seems that in some way both the Father and the Son are involved in the sending of the Spirit. We ought not to think of division or of compartmentalization within the Godhead. Clearly these various ways of putting it bring out the truth that all three persons of the Godhead take part in bringing to believers the help they need as they seek to do their service of God in this difficult world.²³

²⁰ Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 684.

²¹ Van Doren, *Gospel of John*, 1157.

²² Turner and Mantey, *John*, 309-10.

²³ Morris, *Expository Reflections*, 533.

It is clear, then, that all of the Persons of the Trinity are involved in this ministry. The important truth expressed by Morris was that one must not think of any kind of division, partition, or compartmentalization within the Godhead. Even though there are several ways of stating the sending of the Spirit, they are all describing a single sending.

“The Spirit of Truth”

Here the Holy Spirit is characterized by the quality of truth. Lange explained how this revelation is built upon a previous statement of His qualities. “He is first promised as the Spirit of faith and of the living knowledge of Christ (14:16). Here He is promised as the Spirit of steadfast testimony for Christ.”²⁴ In describing why the quality of truth is emphasized, Godet declared, “Jesus here designates the Spirit as *Spirit of truth*, in order to place Him in opposition to the falsehood of the world, to its voluntary ignorance. The Spirit will dissipate the darkness in which it tries to envelop itself.”²⁵ This sense of the true testimony to be given by the Holy Spirit is certainly evident in this phrase, but there is also something deeper that reflects the very nature or character of the Holy Spirit, as Bernard demonstrated.

In these Last Discourses, [the Spirit of truth] is but another name for the Paraclete who is to be sent after Jesus has been withdrawn from the sight of men. The spirit of truth is the Spirit which brings truth and impresses it on the conscience of the world. In this passage the leading thought is of the witness of the Spirit to Jesus, infallibly true, however perverted the opinion of the world about Him may be. The phrase [the Spirit of truth] has a double meaning. Primarily (a) it is the Spirit which brings truth and gives true testimony, but (b) this is the case because the Spirit has truth as the essential characteristic of His being. So, also, the Logos is [full of truth] (1:14), and Jesus says, later in this discourse, [“I am . . . the truth”] (14:6).²⁶

Not only is the Holy Spirit the One who acts truly and testifies truly, but He is also the One who *is truth* at the essence or core of His existence. Abbott classified John 15:26 under the use of apposition to explain or define.

²⁴ Lange, *John*, 468.

²⁵ Godet, *John*, 304.

²⁶ Bernard, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 499.

Apposition is a method of expressing the phrase “that is to say” without writing it, by “apposing” a second word with a case—ending to the first word with the same case-ending. This construction conduces to brevity and force, but sometimes to obscurity. . . . In most of the instances the writer places at or near the end of a sentence some word or clause introduced without any preparatory or connecting word. . . . “But when the Paraclete shall have come—*the Spirit of truth*.” Emphasis is laid on the Paraclete, or Advocate, as not being one of the ordinary kind—the kind that takes up a client’s cause, good or bad, and makes the best of it—but being “holy,” and a “*Spirit of truth*.”²⁷

The *Spirit of truth*, then, is an important expansion on the meaning of the noun *Paraclete* that is introduced in the first phrase of this verse. In effect, this allows one to place an “equals” sign between Paraclete and Spirit, so that when Paraclete is seen elsewhere in the Gospel of John it will be clear that Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit. In this regard, Erickson said, “Jesus identifies the Counselor as the Holy Spirit. Thus, when he mentions the Counselor elsewhere, it is clear to whom he is referring.”²⁸ This phrase also allows us to impute the specific characteristic of “truth” to the Spirit/Paraclete, and the importance of this characteristic will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section.

“Who Proceeds from the Father”

A very interesting feature of this phrase is the tense of the verb “to proceed.” This present deponent middle indicative verb is between, on the one side, the undetermined future time implied by ἔλθῃ along with the future active indicative of πέμπω, and on the other side, by the future active indicative of μαρτυρήσει. An exegesis of this passage must somehow account for this interesting change of tense.

It must be observed that the second verb differs entirely from the first; *ekporeuesthai*, *to proceed from*, as a river from its source, is altogether different from *to be sent*: the *ek*, *out from*, which is added here to *para*, *from the presence of*, also marks a difference. But especially does the change of tense indicate the difference of idea: *whom I will send* AND *who proceeds from*. He whom Jesus will send (historically, at a given moment) is a divine

²⁷ Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), 37, 38, 40.

²⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *God in Three Persons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 206.

being, who emanates (essentially, eternally) from the Father. An impartial exegesis cannot, as it seems to me, deny this sense.²⁹

Godet understood the change to the present tense to imply the eternal nature of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. On the other hand, there are some that characterize the tense of this verb as a “futuristic” present tense.

Although *ekporeuetai* could imply either an emanation from a divine source or a procession on a mission, only *ek tou patros* would be appropriate to denote an eternal procession from the being of the Father, as the creeds testify, which read to *ek tou patros ekporeuomenon*. . . . Following *pempsō* and preceding *martyrēsei*, the verb *ekporeuetai* should probably be taken as a futuristic (not a timeless) present.³⁰

In contrast to this, Hendriksen explained why the procession should be viewed as a timeless present: “The procession was taking place at the very moment when Jesus was speaking (if matters which in reality transcend time may be viewed from the aspect of time); hence, the present tense is used. Not improperly in such a connection this present tense has been called timeless present.”³¹

Most of the controversy regarding the application of John 15:26 to the Trinity, and especially concerning the place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, is focused on this phrase. What does this verse teach concerning the relationships within the Godhead? Is the earlier *sending* to be equated with the *proceeding* here, or is something different implied by the *proceeding*? Does the present tense of *proceeds* indicate something of the eternal relationship between the Father and the Spirit (the Ontological Trinity), or is this a simple statement of the fact that the Spirit was coming to perform His ongoing work in the world (the Economical Trinity)? How is the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit to be defined, and how is this doctrine stated in the orthodox creeds of the Christian faith?

One commentator emphasized an important truth that should not be overlooked when wrestling with all of the questions regarding this

²⁹ Godet, *John*, 305.

³⁰ Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 3:1203.

³¹ Hendriksen, *John*, 317.

passage. Pink described how these statements express the unity of the Godhead:

That the Spirit is here said to “proceed from the Father” (a statement which has split the Greek and Roman Church, into whose differences we shall not here enter) is supplementary to what the Lord had said in 14:26. There the Comforter was to be sent in Christ’s name: here He proceeds from the Father. The two statements placed side by side, bring out the unity of the Godhead. This additional word also shows that the Spirit was not exclusively subordinate to Christ, as some have argued from 14:26, “another Comforter.” The Spirit would further Christ’s interests, and be unto the disciples (only in another way) all that Christ would have been unto them had He remained on earth.³²

This is an important reminder that, whatever the implications of “proceeds from the Father,” the unity of the Godhead must hold a central place in Christian thinking.

Sending versus Proceeding: Parallelism or Pleonasm?

One interpretation of the *sending* (“whom I will send”) and the *proceeding* (“who proceeds”) is that these two phrases were intended as parallel thoughts that represent the same concept. This position was taken by Beasley-Murray in his analysis of John 15:26.

The clauses relating to the Paraclete, “whom I will send from the Father,” and “who proceeds from the Father,” are set in synonymous parallelism, and so express the same idea in variation. This means that the latter clause must be interpreted of the sending of the Spirit on mission to humankind, and not of the so-called “procession” of the Spirit from the Father, as many Greek Fathers maintained, and as is represented in the historic creeds. The sending of the Spirit in many respects corresponds to the sending of the Son (cf. 8:42; 13:3; 17:8). The Spirit’s task is to “bear witness” concerning Jesus. . . .³³

Beasley-Murray demonstrated that if these phrases constitute synonymous parallelism, then it is an easy step to restrict their application only to the economical work of the Spirit. If these ideas are synonymous, then the procession must be interpreted in light of the

³² Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1945), 3:37.

³³ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary) (Waco: Word, 1987), 276.

sending of the Spirit to do the practical work of witnessing to the disciples and the world.

Synonymous parallelism is a commonly held view, but it is a view that is not without problems, as Godet explained: “The attempt is made to escape the charge of tautology by saying that the first clause indicates the relation of the Spirit to Christ, and the second His relation to God (Keil); as if in the latter were not already contained the *from God*, which repeated in the second clause, would form the most idle pleonasm.”³⁴ Synonymous parallelism has both the flaws of logical and grammatical redundancy.

The historical facts of salvation, to the view of Jesus, rest upon eternal relations, as well with reference to Himself, the Son, as to the Spirit. They are, as it were, the reflections of the Trinitarian relations. As the incarnation of the Son rests upon His eternal generation, so the mission of the Holy Spirit is related to His eternal procession from the very centre of the divine being. The context is not in the least contradictory to this sense, as Weiss thinks; on the contrary, it demands it. What Jesus sends testifies truly for Him only so far as it comes forth from God.³⁵

Godet’s argument was that these phrases do not express parallel or synonymous thoughts but that something additional is being communicated about the Spirit, especially regarding His ontological relationship to the Father. Godet would state that this additional idea is essential to the work of the Spirit, because the eternal relations in the Godhead are the foundation for His work in the world. There are essentially two views or interpretations of John 15:26 regarding the Spirit: the Economical Trinity view and the Ontological Trinity view.

Economical Trinity View

The Economical Trinity view maintains that this verse was never intended to make a statement about the eternal relations in the Godhead, but only about the coming, the sending, or the proceeding of the Spirit (variously stated) to continue the work of Christ in the world. One account of this view was provided by Brodie, who based his argument on the increasingly active role of the Spirit in the Gospel of John.

³⁴ Godet, *John*, 304-05.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 305.

The sense of the Spirit's involvement is heightened by the fact that, in contrast to the two earlier references to the Companion (14:16, 26), the picture of the Companion which is suggested here is quite active. These earlier references (esp. 14:16) had spoken of the Companion in a way that was rather passive, as one who was given and sent. But now (15:26) the Companion is described not only as being sent but also as "coming," and then, in a parallel phrase which puts intensified emphasis on the idea of an active role, the Companion is described simply as "proceeding" ("the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father"). The emphasis of the text then is not so much on the inner dynamics of God as on the increasing role of the Companion in the outer world, a role which consists of witnessing about Jesus.³⁶

Another statement of this view was given by Bernard, whose argument was based on the meaning of ἐκπορεύεσθαι as being synonymous with the *coming* and the *sending*.

ἐκπορεύεσθαι occurs once elsewhere in John, see at 5:29, where it is used of the dead "coming forth" out of their graves. Here it is used in the same way of the Spirit "coming forth" from God in His mission of witness. To interpret the phrase of what is called "the Eternal Procession" of the Spirit has been a habit of theologians, which has been the cause of endless disputes between East and West as to the "Procession" of the Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father. As far back as the fourth century, at all events, the clause τὸ ἐκ (not παρά) τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον has found a place in the Creed as descriptive of the Holy Spirit, and is taken from the verse before us. But to claim that this interpretation was present to the mind of John would be to import into the Gospel the controversies and doctrines of the fourth century. ὁ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται does not refer to the mysterious relationships between the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but only to the fact that the Spirit who bears witness of Jesus Christ has come from God (cf. Rev 22:1, where in like manner the river of the water of life is described. . . .³⁷

Additionally, Ryrie reminded readers of the change of tense from future to present in the context of John 15:26, and he believed that it is inappropriate to infer eternal relations from this tense change. "The idea of eternal procession has to lean hard on the present tense of the word *proceeds* in John 15:26, an emphasis which is in my judgment misplaced. The verse does not really seem to relate anything about the mutual eternal relationships within the Trinity but rather what the Spirit

³⁶ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 490.

³⁷ Bernard, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 499.

would do to continue the work of the Lord Jesus after His ascension.”³⁸ Another advocate of the Economical Trinity view is Morris, who based his argument primarily on the use of the word *para* rather than *ek* following the verb.

The Spirit’s relationship to the Father is brought out by saying that He “proceedeth from the Father. . . .” Probably not too much emphasis should be placed on the meaning of this verb. The passage is not concerned with the eternal mutual relationships of the Persons of the Trinity, but with the work the Spirit would do in this world as a continuation of the ministry of Jesus. The particular function of the Spirit which occupies us here is that of witness, and specifically of witness to Christ. When Christ is taken from the earth, the Spirit will continually bear witness concerning Him. The passage strengthens the conviction that the word translated “Comforter” has legal significance. The Spirit, so to speak, conducts Christ’s case for Him before the world.³⁹

In another place Morris also expressed the Economical Trinity view. He warned interpreters not to misapply the verse by stretching it to cover more than a close relationship between the Father and the Holy Spirit. “Jesus is clearly speaking about the Holy Spirit’s mission in the church (I will send . . .), whereas the theologians were referring to the eternal relationship between the Father and the Spirit. It was not really wise to take words that apply to one temporal activity of the Spirit and apply them to an eternal relationship. But the words certainly emphasize the close relationship between the Father and the Spirit, and that is important.”⁴⁰ Morris’ warning not to take words that apply to one temporal activity of the Spirit and apply them to an eternal relationship is valid if, indeed, the words were only meant to apply to a temporal activity. If the words were meant to tell something of the eternal relationship between the Father and the Spirit, then it would be incorrect not to apply them to that eternal relationship. In summary, the Economical Trinity view seems to be based primarily on the “synonymous parallelism” interpretation of “whom I will send” and “who proceeds from the Father.” However, this view does not adequately account for the change to present tense for the word “proceeds,” but rather minimizes its significance.

³⁸ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor, 1987), 54-55.

³⁹ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 683-84.

⁴⁰ Morris, *Expository Reflections*, 533-34.

The Ontological Trinity View

The Ontological Trinity view holds to the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father, which ultimately provides the foundation for the economical work of the Spirit in the world. Hendriksen expressed this view, basing his argument on the tense change of the verb.

Here in 15:26 the emphasis is on the activity of the Son in the sending of the Spirit, and on the fact that this Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father. . . . The procession was taking place at the very moment when Jesus was speaking (if matters which in reality transcend time may be viewed from the aspect of time); hence, the present tense is used. Not improperly in such a connection this present tense has been called timeless present. The inter-trinitarian relationship which is indicated here—the procession of the Spirit—is eternal, that is, transcends time.⁴¹

In this regard, Cook showed how the Economical Trinity and Ontological Trinity are both referenced according to the tense of the verb. “In contrast to the [sending], which refers to an act . . . (proceeds) is a present tense and may well refer to an eternal relationship (understanding this as a timeless present). If this be so, the two future verbs of the verse refer to the Spirit’s economical relationship to the Godhead, while the present verb refers to His ontological relationship.”⁴² Lange also represented this view and takes same the approach outlined by Godet that to view the *procession* as synonymous with the *sending* would form an unreasonable tautology. He stated that the economical or soteriological work of the Spirit must have an ontological or theological basis.

The noun [“proceeds”] nowhere occurs in the New Testament, and belongs to the ecclesiastical language, but it is legitimately formed from the verb . . . which is here (and here alone) used of the Holy Ghost, and denotes the characteristic individuality of the person (not the essence, which is the same in all Persons) of the Holy Spirit, as Sonship or eternal generation is the propriety of the Son, unbegotten paternity the propriety of the Father. The Nicene orthodoxy refers the procession of the Spirit to the eternal, metaphysical procession from the Father. Christ speaks here no doubt mainly of the Trinity of revelation and of the historic mission of the Holy Ghost in the Christian Church and in believers. Yet it is significant that while He speaks of His sending of the Spirit in the future tense . . . , He speaks of the procession of the Spirit from the Father in the present . . . , as if He intended to intimate a

⁴¹ Hendriksen, *John*, 317.

⁴² Robert W. Cook, *The Theology of John* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 64.

permanent relation of the Spirit to the Father. The effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is the historic manifestation of His eternal procession from the Father, and bears a similar relation to the latter as the incarnation of Christ does to the eternal generation. At all events we have a right to deduce the economical Trinity from the ontological or immanent Trinity; the former is the revelation of the latter; for God manifests Himself as He is.⁴³

In summary, the Ontological Trinity view adequately accounts for the change in tense of the verb “proceeds.” It also overcomes the charge of tautology in the synonymous parallelism approach and explains the difference in meaning between the phrases “whom I will send” and “who proceeds from the Father.” This view also fits the context of the verse regarding the witnessing work of the Spirit in the world, but it goes further by showing how the eternal relationships within the Godhead provide the foundation or basis for the work of the Spirit in the world.

The Doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Spirit

As Bernard has stated, the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit is taken from the verse before us (John 15:26). Walvoord defined this doctrine in the following words: “The doctrine of procession has to do with the being and eternity of the Holy Spirit in His relation to the Father and the Son. As a division of the doctrine of the Trinity, it affirms that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, the same in substance and essence, and equal in power, eternity, and glory. The proper statement of the doctrine is that the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son.”⁴⁴

The concept of procession cannot be easily explained, but it is a term that has been used to describe the internal relationship of the Spirit within the Godhead. Even if the term is difficult to define, it is also difficult to find a better term to describe the Spirit’s relationship.

The wide acceptance of the doctrine by theologians and church creeds is caused by specific Scriptural testimony to it. While in its precise nature the character of the procession is inscrutable, it provides a definition of the relationship of the persons of the Trinity. Important Scripture texts such as John 15:26 and Psalm 104:30 have been accepted as explicit proof. In John 15:26, the Comforter whom Christ promised to send is referred to as, “the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father.” The word for “proceedeth”

⁴³ Lange, *John*, 469.

⁴⁴ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 13.

. . . is in the present tense in the original, which has been accepted without much opposition as indicating the eternal and continuous relation of the Spirit to the First Person. . . . Among the several conclusions which form a part of the doctrine of procession is the fact that the procession of the Holy Spirit is eternal. The very nature of procession points to its eternity. Procession like the eternal generation of Christ is not a matter of creation, commencement of existence, or analogous in any way to physical relationships common in the human realm. It proceeds rather from the very nature of the Godhead, being necessary to its existence. Without the Holy Spirit, the Godhead would not be what it is. The procession of the Holy Spirit cannot be compared to the incarnation, as the incarnation was not essential to deity. . . . In speaking of the Son, the Scriptures affirm His generation eternally (Ps. 2:7), while in speaking of the Spirit, the word *proceed* is used, as we have seen. No human mind can improve on these distinctions, even if it be admitted that the terms are inadequate to comprehend all the truth which they represent.⁴⁵

Historically, much of the controversy about the doctrine of procession involved the question of whether the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. The earlier church creeds, particularly those of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), did not explicitly state the procession from the Son. At the Council of Toledo (589), where only the western church was represented, the phrase *filioque* (“and the Son”) was added, and this brought opposition from the Eastern Church which argued that John 15:26 only included procession from the Father. The Greek Church was right to assert this, but the task of systematic theology involves correlating all of the Scriptural evidence concerning a particular doctrine. This is exactly what the Roman church did in attributing the procession to the Son also. Regarding the church creeds that were intended to affirm the deity of the Holy Spirit, Lange remarked, “The original Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed affirms the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father not with an exclusive intent, but rather in opposition to the Pneumatomachi.”⁴⁶ The statements of the earlier creeds, then, were not intended to completely define the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, but were primarily intended to defend the deity of the Spirit. Hendriksen provided an excellent analysis of the issue of the procession of the Spirit.

Were we to say, “The fact that 15:26 states that the Son will send the Spirit proves that the Father does not send him,” we would be wrong (see 14:26).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

⁴⁶ Lange, *John*, 469.

Thus also, were we to say, “The fact that 15:26 states that the Spirit proceeds from the Father proves that he does not proceed from the Son,” we would be wrong (see Acts 5:9; Rom 8:9; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11; where the Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ). After all, is it so strange that Jesus speaking as Mediator between God and man, himself man, would during the period of humiliation speak of the Spirit as proceeding from the Father?⁴⁷

It is crucial to remember that it is the incarnate Christ who made the statement regarding the procession of the Spirit from the Father in John 15:26. Knox explained this important idea in the following words: “If our Lord had said ‘who proceeds from the Father and from me,’ He would have been speaking as God, without reference to His incarnate state, which was not His habit. The Holy Spirit does not proceed from the incarnate Christ as such.”⁴⁸ During His earthly life it was Jesus’ practice to attribute things such as this to the working out of the Father’s will and plan. If Jesus were to have made this statement at some time after He had returned to the Father’s side, it would probably have been worded differently. Walvoord provided a helpful concluding statement regarding the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit.

While the doctrine of procession may seem somewhat of a technicality except to theologians, it has a vital bearing upon the work of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Scriptures. In the case of Christ, His eternal generation involved the work of the Son which was accomplished in time, fulfilling the purpose of redemption. As Christ became an obedient Son in doing the Father’s will, so the Holy Spirit in procession became obedient to the Father and the Son. This subordination without detracting from the eternal glory and divine attributes which characterized all three Persons is taught specifically in the Scriptures (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The ministry of the Third Person is performed in His own power and gives testimony to His eternal deity and glory, but it is accomplished on behalf of the Father and the Son. Hence, the Spirit is sent into the world to reveal truth on behalf of Christ (John 16:13-15), with the special mission of making the things of Christ known and magnifying the Father and the Son. He is not seeking His own glory any more than the Son sought His own glory while in the period of humiliation. . . . While the nature of procession is largely inscrutable, it is an expression in human words based on the Scriptural revelation of the relationship of the persons of the Trinity to each other.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Hendriksen, *John*, 317.

⁴⁸ R. A. Knox, as quoted in Randolph V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 180.

⁴⁹ Walvoord, *Holy Spirit*, 16.

“He Will Testify concerning Me”

One of the questions this section must address is whether the personality or personhood of the Spirit is implied by this phrase. Regarding the emphatic position of the demonstrative pronoun “He” in this phrase, Bernard stated, “*ekeinos* calls special attention to the Spirit as the subject of the sentence, exactly as at 14:26. It is He, and none less than He, who shall bear august and true witness to the world about Christ.”⁵⁰ Godet agreed when he gave the meaning as “He, that Being, and He alone.”⁵¹

One of the questions that arises is, “Does the use of the masculine *ekeinos* denote the personality of the Spirit?” It is important to understand the grammatical implications of the use of this masculine pronoun in reference to the Spirit. Newman and Nida have stated, “Whereas in 14:26 the pronoun referring to the Spirit is neuter, here a masculine pronoun is used, indicating that the Spirit is thought of in personal terms.”⁵² Barrett also believed that the use of the masculine gender clearly implies the personality of the Spirit. “The gender changes; the occurrence in the previous clause of the neuter relative . . . shows that this is not simply a matter of grammatical agreement . . . ; the Spirit is thought of in personal terms.”⁵³

Taking a neutral position, Morris believed that although the use of the masculine *ekeinos* does not explicitly prove the personality of the Spirit, it does imply that the Spirit is perceived in a personal way: “The masculine . . . is noteworthy, for [the Spirit] is nearer than is [Helper]. It does not prove that the Spirit is personal, but it is an indication that John tended to think of the Spirit in personal terms. This, of course, accords also with the function ascribed to him here, that of bearing witness, for this is normally a personal activity.”⁵⁴

Others believe that the masculine *ekeinos* in no sense denotes the personality of the Spirit, but is simply required by the masculine antecedent of the pronoun. As previously illustrated in the sentence diagram, it appears that the logical antecedent of *ekeinos* is the masculine noun *paraklatos*. Cook stated, “It is true that the demonstrative pronoun

⁵⁰ Bernard, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 499.

⁵¹ Godet, *John*, 305.

⁵² Newman and Nida, *John*, 497.

⁵³ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 482.

⁵⁴ Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 683.

ekeinos (that person, or He) is used throughout these passages in the masculine gender, but its antecedent is not *pneuma* but *paraklaton* (Helper).⁵⁵ Wallace's comments clearly explain this view.

The use of ἐκεῖνος here is frequently regarded by students of the NT to be an affirmation of the personality of the Spirit. Such an approach is based on the assumption that the antecedent of ἐκεῖνος is πνεῦμα. . . . But this is erroneous. In all these Johannine passages, πνεῦμα is appositional to a masculine noun. The gender of ἐκεῖνος thus has nothing to do with the natural gender of πνεῦμα. The antecedent of ἐκεῖνος, in each case, is παράκλητος, not πνεῦμα. . . . Thus, since παράκλητος is masculine, so is the pronoun. Although one might argue that the Spirit's personality is in view in these passages, the view must be based on the nature of a παράκλητος and the things said about the Comforter, not on any supposed grammatical subtleties.⁵⁶

In light of this, the nature and work of the Spirit must be examined for the evidence of His personality. Bernard stated that since it is not known how the early church understood the idea of personality it cannot be stated with certainty that this is implied, but the verse does show that the Spirit was more than an impersonal force. "However little modern conceptions of personality and of what it implies were present to the mind of the first century, the repeated application of ἐκεῖνος to the Spirit in these chapters (16:8, 13, 14; 14:26) shows that for John [the Spirit of truth] meant more than a mere tendency or influence."⁵⁷ Lange commented, "His testimony is personal, and distinguished from the personal testimony of the disciples."⁵⁸ Van Doren also added, "He is sent, and cometh, and witnesseth, which things are proper to a person only. His witness concerning the Son is the witness of the Father Himself."⁵⁹ Swete also gave an extremely personal description of the work of the Spirit in John 15:26.

The Incarnate will not leave Himself without witness in the world. The testimony of His words and works, which the world has rejected, will after His departure be carried forward by other witnesses. First and chief among these will be the coming Paraclete, who, as the Spirit of Truth, cannot but bear

⁵⁵ Cook, *Theology of John*, 62.

⁵⁶ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 331-32.

⁵⁷ Bernard, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 500.

⁵⁸ Lange, *John*, 469.

⁵⁹ Van Doren, *Gospel of John*, 1157.

witness to the Truth. Hitherto the Lord has spoken of the other Paraclete only as the Teacher of the Church; He cannot teach the world while it continues to be such, for the world is not susceptible of spiritual teaching. But the Spirit may bear witness where He cannot teach as yet; and this He will do. The world had succeeded in silencing the voice of Jesus, and another generation might easily forget His teaching. But the Witness who was coming would not let the world forget, and no opposition could altogether silence Him.⁶⁰

Hendriksen expressed a similar thought as he described the very personal impact that the Spirit would have in transforming the lives of individuals such as the persecutor Saul into passionate missionaries for Christ.

The Holy Spirit is here called the Spirit of truth, just as in 14:17. That Spirit will testify (see 1:7, 8). In the midst of the wicked world he will testify against the world (16:8, 9). In the midst of mankind he will bear witness concerning mankind's need. In the midst of the Church he will comfort the Church. The sphere of his testimony must not be restricted. Whenever a true servant of God bears witness against the world, this witness is the work of the Spirit. Whenever a simple believer, by word and example, draws others to Christ, this too is the work of the Spirit. That Spirit always testifies in connection with the Word, the Word of Christ (14:26; 16:14, 15). By and large, the world that is openly hostile to Christ will not receive him (14:17). Nevertheless, there are exceptions. From among those who today are openly hostile some will be drawn. They will be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to that of everlasting light. Was there ever a fiercer persecutor than Saul (or Paul) of Tarsus? The Spirit was going to change him (and others like him) to become a zealous missionary for Christ!⁶¹

Beyond any specific grammatical evidence, then, the personality of the Spirit can be clearly seen in His character and in His activities.

***“And You Also Must Testify because
You Have Been with Me from the Beginning”***

One of the prevalent features of John 15:26-27 is the emphatic use of pronouns to call attention to the activity of the ones to whom they refer. Regarding the phrase currently under consideration, Burge commented, “*You* is emphatic in Greek here, underscoring that we are not permitted a

⁶⁰ Henry B. Swete, *The Last Discourse and Prayer of Our Lord: A Study of St. John XIV.-XVII* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 105-06.

⁶¹ Hendriksen, *John*, 317-18.

passive role. The disciples are witnesses and the Spirit will bear witness; the disciples possess the historical record of Jesus' words and work (*you have been with me from the beginning*, 15:27b), and they now will be empowered as they deliver that message to the world.⁶² On a similar note Godet remarked that the Greek therefore signifies: “‘And you also, *you* will have your special part in this testimony’ . . . and the more, since the particle . . . indicates a marked graduation (cf. vi. 51)”⁶³ It is clear that an intimate partnership is intended between the disciples and the Holy Spirit to bring the message of Jesus to the world.

Beasley-Murray described the close working relationship that is to exist between the human witnesses and the heavenly Witness.

The witness of the Spirit, conjoined with that of the disciples, is to bring to light the truth of the revelation of Jesus in his word and deed, and death and resurrection. Clearly this witness of the Paraclete is not a phenomenon apart from that of the disciples, but inseparably associated with it. The Spirit thus illuminates the hearers' minds as to the reality of that which is proclaimed by the disciples and brings its truth to bear on their consciences (cf. 16:8-11). . . . The disciples will be capable of doing this because they have accompanied Jesus “from the beginning,” i.e., from the outset of the ministry of Jesus to its close.⁶⁴

Bernard explained that “the qualification for ‘witness’ is personal intimacy. . . . ‘Ye are with me from the beginning,’ Jesus said, using the present tense here. The Twelve had been chosen, and they continued to be in close fellowship with Him.”⁶⁵ This close association with Christ was the basis for their authority. “The authority of the apostles lay chiefly in the fact that they had been with Jesus some three years and remembered his words and deeds. This human or natural authority of an eyewitness was tremendously enforced and amplified by the incursion of the Holy Spirit which revived their memory (14:26), clarified the Scriptures (Acts 2:17-31) and enabled them to press home their relevance with telling effect (Acts 2:36; 3:25, 26; 4:10-12).”⁶⁶

⁶² Burge, *John*, 421.

⁶³ Godet, *John*, 306, 305.

⁶⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 277.

⁶⁵ Bernard, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 500.

⁶⁶ Turner and Mantey, *John*, 310.

Godet provided a remarkable summary of the partnership that is designed for the disciples and the Holy Spirit to bring the message of Jesus to the world.

The apostles possess a treasure which is peculiar to them, and which the Spirit could not communicate to them—the historical knowledge of the ministry of Jesus from its beginning to its end. The Spirit does not teach the facts of history; He reveals their meaning. But this historical testimony of the apostles would, without the Spirit, be only a frigid narrative incapable of creating life. It is the Spirit which brings the vivifying breath to the testimony. By making the light of the divine thought fall upon the facts, He makes them a power which lays hold upon souls. Without the facts, the Spirit would be only an empty exaltation devoid of contents, of substance; without the Spirit the narrative of the facts would remain dead and unfruitful. The apostolic testimony and the testimony of the Spirit unite, therefore, in one and the same act, but they do so while bringing to it, each of them, a necessary element, the one, the historical narration, the other, the inward evidence. This relation is still reproduced at the present day in every living sermon drawn from the Scriptures. Peter, in like manner, distinguishes these two testimonies in Acts vv. 32: “And we are witnesses of these things, as well as the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.” We understand, after this, why, when the apostles wished to fill the place of Judas, they chose two men who had accompanied Jesus from the baptism of John even to His resurrection (Acts i. 21,22).⁶⁷

INTERPRETIVE CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE TRINITY

Based on this study of John 15:26-27, several conclusions regarding the doctrine of the Trinity can be stated. Of the theological concepts that must be included in any orthodox definition of the Trinity, several points of support can be gained from this passage.

Regarding the unity of the Godhead, a comparison of the larger context demonstrates that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all expressing a unified will and they are all intimately involved in accomplishing a unified purpose. Also, as Morris has stated regarding the sending of the Spirit, “We ought not to think of division or compartmentalization within the Godhead.”⁶⁸ It is clear that the unity of the Godhead is being expressed.

Regarding the distinction of the three members of the Godhead, this passage clearly identifies all three members and distinctly references

⁶⁷ Godet, *John*, 305-06.

⁶⁸ Morris, *Expository Reflections*, 533.

the roles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Cook affirmed, “The Holy Spirit is a distinct member of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is not merely another manifestation of Christ (John 14:26; 15:26). . . . The relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and Son is especially noteworthy in John 15:26.”⁶⁹

Regarding the personality of the members of the Godhead, this passage clearly portrays the work of the Spirit as the work of a person rather than that of an impersonal force. The use of *pempo*, which refers to sending beings of a personal character, and the choice of the masculine *parakletos* to stand in apposition to the neuter *pneuma*, lends further support to the personality of the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the deity of the persons of the Godhead, the Spirit is designated as the Spirit of truth just as Jesus earlier said of Himself that He is truth. Moreover, the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit clearly affirms His deity as the third Person of the Godhead who is identical in essence, power, and glory to the Father and the Son.

Regarding the eternity of the persons of the Godhead, the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit establishes His eternity, based on the Ontological Trinity view of the phrase “who proceeds from the Father.”

Regarding the existence of functional subordination within the Godhead, the Spirit was clearly portrayed as submitting to Christ’s sending Him into the world. Erickson provided a detailed explanation of the relationships within the Godhead.

Here something of the inner relationships within the Trinity is revealed. . . . In 15:26 he refers to “the Counselor . . . whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” In 16:7 he says, “It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” Not only does Jesus say that the Father will send the Spirit, but that he also will send the Spirit. The Spirit whom Jesus sends goes out from the Father. The Father sends the Spirit in Jesus’ name. Jesus sends the Spirit, who goes out from the Father. The Spirit will testify about Jesus and will remind them of everything Jesus has said to them. Jesus also says that the Spirit will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears (16:13). Yet Jesus’ words of which presumably the Spirit will remind them are not his own words. Rather, they belong to the Father who sent him (14:24). Conversely, however, everything that belongs to the Father is his (16:15). When looked at in light of these several considerations, John seems to be affirming or at least assuming or

⁶⁹ Cook, *Theology of John*, 64.

implying a number of tenets. The sending of the Spirit is by both the Father and the Son, or at least can be described in either of these fashions. Even when referred to as the agency of one of these persons, there is reference or at least allusion to the other. There evidently is a close relationship between the actions of the Father and the Son, and presumably also between them as persons. Further, the ministry of the Spirit is not independent of the other persons. It involves bringing to remembrance the teaching that Jesus has given. Yet in a sense these are not just Jesus' words, for he has received them from the Father. And one may deduce that this is why both the Father and the Son will make their home with the one who obeys these teachings, for they are the teachings of both the Father and Son. It is notable that the Spirit also will be in the believers (14:17), and it may be inferred that this is because the teachings that they obey are also his as the end point of the transmission process. Further, the designation of the Spirit as "another . . . Counselor" (14:16) suggests a commonality of ministry of the Spirit and of the Son. This also is implied in the fact that the Spirit can come to begin his ministry in the fullest sense only if and when the Son goes away (16:7).⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

John 15:26-27 provides many valuable pieces of Scriptural evidence supporting the doctrine of the Trinity. This data includes an emphasis on the unity of the Godhead; the distinctiveness of the three members of the Trinity; the functional subordination of the members of the Godhead; and especially the personality, deity, and eternity of the Holy Spirit. John 15:26-27 substantiates many of the essential concepts that must be considered when constructing an orthodox definition of the doctrine of the Trinity.

⁷⁰ Erickson, *God in Three Persons*, 206-07.

KING AND CULTUS: *A Suggested Framework for a Theology of Chronicles*

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When William Day Crockett completed his harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles in 1884, he determined that it was, so far as he could learn, the first and only one of its kind to have been done.¹ Since Crockett's day, others have attempted a similar analysis of these books.² Even a cursory review of each of these works indicates a great deal of material found in Samuel and Kings failed to find its way into Chronicles. So much material from these earlier works is missing from Chronicles that it is not surprising that the translators of the LXX called Chronicles *Paraleipomena*, "what was omitted."³ Chronicles contains a great deal of material not found in Samuel or Kings, which may explain the reference in Kings to the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, but it really does not fully explain the omissions and the reasons for them.⁴

For example, virtually all of 1 Samuel finds no parallel in Chronicles, except for the death of Saul in the last chapter of 1 Samuel which finds only an echo in 1 Chronicles 10. Many of the negative experiences of David and Solomon recorded in Samuel and Kings do not find any counterpart in Chronicles. For instance, David's conflict with Abner and Ishbosheth in 2 Samuel 1—4 or David's adulterous fling with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite in 2 Samuel 11—12. According to a colleague and former teacher, "Chronicles downplayed David's sin, etc., because Israel did not need

¹ William Day Crockett, *A Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles* (1884; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), v.

² For example, John C. Endes, William R. Millar, and John Barclay Burns, *Chronicles and Its Synoptic Parallels in Samuel, Kings, and Related Biblical Texts* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998) and James D. Newsome, *A Synoptic Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles: With Related Passages from Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezra* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986).

³ See William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 823, note 1.

⁴ The author read an earlier draft of this article at the National Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on 15 November 2007, in San Diego.

more guilt at [the point when Chronicles was written].”⁵ Furthermore, neither Solomon’s marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kgs 3) nor his many wives and enemies (11) find a place in Chronicles.

Conversely, the Chronicler added much more material than can be found in Samuel and Kings. For example, he added the genealogies that occupy the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles. Furthermore, the Chronicler added details of the return of the ark (1 Chron 13:1-5; 15—16), David’s arrangements for the Temple (22), David’s organization of Temple and civil workers (23—27), and the Levites’ loyalty to the Davidic line represented by Rehoboam when the kingdom divided (2 Chron 11:13-17). For a complete list of the omissions, and for more details on the additions, see the Appendix, Chart 1.

From a cursory review of Chart 1, it seems clear there are two more conspicuous themes in Chronicles than in Samuel and Kings, although both find references there. These two themes focus respectively on the Davidic line of regal inheritance and on the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem. Indeed, these two themes are inextricably woven together because the king, in this case primarily Solomon, the true heir of David, had the commission from God and hence the grave responsibility to build and to maintain the Temple. LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush noted, “The message of this immense work may be reduced to two verses which sum it up, 1 Chr 17:12 and 2 Chr 7:14. Each is set in a context of divine revelation, to David and Solomon respectively.”⁶ In the first verse, the prophet Nathan told David that Solomon would build the house of God, the Temple, and that God would establish Solomon’s throne forever, thus linking the king with the place of worship if not also with the cult that was practiced there. This could explain many of the Chronicler’s negative omissions from the Samuel—Kings corpus. He is focusing on the righteous character of the kings that God chose to establish His kingdom and His pattern of worship. While the chronicler includes enough details of their disobedience to remind his readers that David and Solomon were humans in need of God’s cleansing, they were still righteous in the eyes of God so as to accomplish God’s purposes through them.

The second verse LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush referred to focuses on the attitude of heart expected of God’s people when they have strayed

⁵ Rodger W. Dalman, email correspondence to the author, 6 March 2007.

⁶ LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 547.

from God's house and from His king. They must return to Him with humility and repentance in order to achieve restoration. Since it is likely that the Chronicler wrote his works sometime in the fourth century BC,⁷ he was also likely providing a treatise in favor of rebuilding the Temple. Indeed, Dalman noted, "Chronicles was written near the end of the captivity for a different purpose [than that of Samuel or Kings]. The big theme through Chronicles was God's grace. I think that Chronicles was intended to assist in rebuilding Israel's faith, rebuilding the land, and rebuilding the temple."⁸ Since the house of David had been commissioned by God to build the first Temple, the Chronicler focused upon the good moral and spiritual qualities of the house of David, because these qualities were required not only for access to the Temple but also for access to the presence of God. When God's people have strayed, they can only be restored through humility and repentance.

KING: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

It is not too difficult to understand that the main thrust of the theology of the two books of Chronicles developed around the themes of the king and his descendants as one aspect and the Temple and its cultic practices as another. Indeed, the two go together significantly not only in Israel but also across the ancient world. Folker Willesen noted, for instance, "the establishment of a sanctuary had to be one of the first tasks of a new king in order to secure the kingship of himself and his successors, and peace and wealth in abundance, cf. for instance Solomon's immediate start of such a work after his accession to the throne, or Jeroboam's shrines as a result of his newly established kingdom."⁹ From the beginning, the kings of Israel, too, exemplify this practice. For instance, David began his kingdom with a plan to build a house for God, a Temple. After the extensive genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1—9 and the death of Saul in 1 Chronicles 10, the Chronicler reported the establishment of David as the new king over Israel (1 Chron 11:1-3).

⁷ For a discussion of the date of Chronicles, see *ibid.*, 545. See also H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 16.

⁸ Dalman, email correspondence, 2007.

⁹ Folker Willesen, "The Cultic Situation of Psalm LXXIV," *Vetus Testamentum* 2 (1952): 291.

The next few chapters record David's initial acts of establishing his kingdom, including a list of his mighty men, the conquest of Jerusalem, and the building of his palace in Jerusalem (11:4—16:43). Then as he contemplated his own house of cedar, he had the idea of building a house for God. Willesen thought it was early in the establishment of his kingdom. He noted, "After years of warfare David's first thought is a house unto Jahwe, the creation of a kingdom has to be completed by a temple, and even though he is not allowed to build the house of the Lord, his own house is guaranteed."¹⁰ The reader does not know exactly how many years of warfare were involved here since David fought many enemies of Israel before he ascended the throne. However, it is clear that once he had established a measure of peace in Israel, he first thought of building a house for the Lord. "Behold, I am dwelling in a house of cedar," he told Nathan the prophet, "but the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under curtains" (17:1b). Consequently, it is easy to see that from the outset in the books of Chronicles, these two themes are inextricably woven together. Jeffrey Townsend noted, "The dual emphasis on the temple and on David's line in Chronicles can be properly understood *only* when David's line is seen *in connection with* the temple because of the covenant."¹¹ Townsend noted further that the covenant God made with David connects David's descendants with the Temple because in the covenant; David's descendant is identified as the one who will build a house for Yahweh.

King: By Divine Provision

Of course central to any theology is the focus on God Himself. God commanded the construction of the ark and of the Temple. God established the king, at least in Israel, and made the covenant with him. In most of the Ancient Near East, kings were directly related to the gods in some way or another. For example, King Keret in the Ugaritic poem "The Legend of King Keret," is considered a child of the god El. He was addressed as the "Lad of El" and was exhorted to sacrifice to "thy father El."¹² Additionally, an early Sumerian king list indicates "kingship was

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jeffrey L. Townsend, "The Purpose of 1 and 2 Chronicles," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144 (July—September 1987): 284.

¹² See "The Legend of King Keret," in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 143.

lowered from heaven, kingship was (first) in Eridu.”¹³ This gave the kings a divine sanction, in addition to an assumed divine power. Furthermore, as William Riley noted, “The sacral character of the ancient Near Eastern monarch manifested itself in the priestly functions of the king. . . . The reference to king . . . in Ps. 110:4 testifies to the survival of this aspect of kingship in Israel, even though the priestly nature of Israelite kingship remains ambiguous in some Old Testament texts.”¹⁴ In Israel, the very existence of the nation was divinely sanctioned. Long before they had a king, Yahweh made provision for a king in the Mosaic Law (Deut 17:14-20).

When Israel cried for a king like all the surrounding nations, therefore, Yahweh appointed Saul, the first king of Israel (1 Sam 8:22; 9:15-16). More importantly, when Yahweh later rejected Saul, He sent Samuel to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse to anoint David as Saul’s replacement. Indeed, David was not only God’s actual choice for King, but also he was naturally, therefore, God’s divine choice to replace Saul, as later Solomon was God’s divine choice to replace David. Roddy Braun noted, “. . . the Chronicler presents Solomon, like David, as a king by divine choice, that this divine choice was recognized enthusiastically and unanimously by all Israel, and that Solomon remained a faithful and dedicated servant of Yahweh and His cult, in particular the Jerusalem temple, throughout his reign.”¹⁵

This is most important when we realize that the Davidic line becomes the key not only to the theology of the Chronicles, but also of the kingdom of God. Williamson seemed to agree since he considered kingship in Israel as grounded in God Himself; and, therefore, noted that one “of the distinctive aspects of the Chronicler’s conception of kingship is his direct equation of kingship in Israel with the kingdom of God.”¹⁶ In his commentary on Chronicles, Braun noted, “The Chronicler’s concentration upon David has long been recognized, and hardly needs to be restated here. Von Rad’s classic monograph, *Das Geschichtsbild des*

¹³ Ibid., 265.

¹⁴ William Riley, *King and Cultus in Chronicles: Worship and the Reinterpretation of History*, JSOT Supplement Series 160 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 58.

¹⁵ Roddy Braun, “Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder: The Significance of 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29 for the Theology of Chronicles,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (December 1976): 581.

¹⁶ Williamson, *Chronicles*, 26.

Chronistischen Werkes, is arranged under the themes of David and the ark, David and the cult personnel, David and the temple, David and the cult, and David and Israel.”¹⁷ Braun noted the prominence of David through more than half of 1 Chronicles as the Chronicler emphasized David’s role both in developing the history of Israel and in the eschatological hope of Israel, both of which relate inextricably to the Davidic line of kings and to the Temple in Jerusalem.

David Noel Freedman noted that it is significant that the Chronicler began his history not with the story of the patriarchs or with Moses and the exodus (both of which were and are legitimate starting points for Israel’s history). Rather, Freedman noted that he began his story with the death of Saul and the enthronement of David. Freedman wrote:

The concern with the house of David as the sole legitimate possessor of royal authority in Israel is apparent throughout the Chronicler’s history. The related interests: the city of Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood, and the ordinances for worship in song and sacrifice, all nevertheless center in the person of David, and his descendants, beginning with Solomon and continuing down through the centuries to the end of the kingdom and beyond. It seems clear that the principle objective of the Chronicler was to write a history of the dynasty of David, not primarily in terms of its historical and political achievements (though these form the framework, appropriated from Samuel—Kings), but its accomplishments in the religious and specifically cultic areas.¹⁸

Freedman noted further that through his narrative of David and his descendants, the Chronicler established three legitimate institutions and their personnel for God’s people. These three institutions summarize the message of Chronicles: (1) the monarchy, represented by David and his house; (2) the priesthood, represented by Zadok and his descendants; and, (3) the city and the Temple in the Promised Land.

David: King in the Divine Plan

The last two items provide a significant context for the first item in the list. The Chronicler was less interested in the historical and

¹⁷ Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1986), xxxiii.

¹⁸ David Noel Freedman, “The Chronicler’s Purpose,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (October 1961): 437.

chronological development of David as king and the material kingdom of Israel (as important as they may have been at the time). Peter Ackroyd noted, the Chronicler's interest is "rather the embodiment of the David/Jerusalem theme no longer in political but in theological terms, in relation to the life and worship of the little Judean community of his own time."¹⁹ Ackroyd noted that the Chronicler regarded David as the ideal king. David established the unity of the people. David won the loyalty of all the people of Israel. And David expressed his intention to be the one to build the temple. Indeed, Riley noted, "The Chronicler has also portrayed David in the light of the ancient Near Eastern expectation that the king was the one responsible for building the national temples."²⁰ Although God clearly did not allow David actually to build the temple, Scripture clearly portrays David's desire to fulfill this task (2 Sam 7:1-17). Consequently, Ackroyd noted that David made all the preparations for everything that was needed to build the Temple according to Yahweh's divine plan (1 Chron 28:19). Ackroyd noted, "The temple site was divinely chosen as an act of grace in a moment of David's own failure and repentance (1 Chron. 21-22:1)."²¹

Furthermore, David later reinforced his role in blending the monarchy with the temple and its worship when he established the Temple guilds. Andrew C. Bowling noted, "Shortly before Solomon's accession to the throne (ca. 970 b.c.) David finally fixes or codifies many of the already existing religious and civil administrative arrangements."²² In a conversation with the author, Bowling noted that in thus establishing the guilds, David indicated that he was the founder of the Temple establishment in much the same way as Moses was the establisher of the Torah. Simon DeVries argued further that David was a cult *founder* in much the same way that Moses was a cult founder. In addition to establishing the guilds, David assigned the Levites to carry the Ark from Gibeon to Jerusalem, and appointed not only the singers for Temple service but also the gatekeepers to perform services at the temporary shrine for the Ark at Jerusalem and later at the Temple. DeVries noted, "Employing the wealth gained as booty in his wars, David provides

¹⁹ Peter R. Ackroyd, "History and Theology in the Writings of the Chronicler," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 38 (September 1967): 512.

²⁰ Riley, *King and Cultus*, 60.

²¹ Ackroyd, "History and Theology," 512-13.

²² Andrew C. Bowling, "1-2 Chronicles," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 275.

materials and prepares workmen (1 Chr 22:-2-5, 17-19), then enjoins his son Solomon for the eventual task of building a temple to take the place of the original tent-shrine (1 Chr 22:6-16; 28:9-21; cf. 17:16-27). A decisive step is taken when David purchases a new shrine site and dedicates the altar for the future Temple (1 Chr 21:1-22:1).²³ Both Moses and David were instruments in the hand of the Lord to accomplish His purposes for His chosen people, Israel. Jacob M. Myers further explained David's establishment of at least one of the guilds, the appointment of the Levitical singers. Myers noted that the Chronicler's report of the appointment "is an attempt to authenticate the position of the Levitical singers by referring the origin of their position to David. They are meant to be put on an organizational footing just like the priests and Levites. All were regarded as official cult personnel who owed their position to appointment by 'David and the cult officials.' Special emphasis is placed on Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (or Ethan) who were associated with musical guilds."²⁴ Gary Knoppers seemed to agree with this assessment. In his new commentary on 1 Chronicles, he noted:

Both the army commanders and the Levitical choristers are state employees. The projected sanctuary is to be paid for and endowed by the head of state with unbelievable amounts of wealth. The Chronicler's temple, when built, will be the most valuable edifice in the land. Who gets to serve in that institution is, therefore, not simply a sacerdotal or aesthetic issue but also a security issue. In this context, it is worth noting that some of the traditional Levitical duties, such as guard duty (23:32), are military in nature. Indeed, the book devotes significant attention to the gatekeepers, whom David appoints as the Temple's police force (26:1-19). In the ancient Near East and Egypt, sacral and martial affairs cannot be entirely disentangled. For example, in New Kingdom Egypt, it was easy for officials to move from military or civil service into priestly service, or vice versa. . . .²⁵

Although Knoppers did make passing reference to the Chronicler's Temple to be rebuilt under Zerubbabel, he clearly indicated that the text in Chronicles does refer specifically to David's appointment of Temple personnel. Moreover, he supported his last observation about

²³ Simon J. DeVries, "Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (December 1988): 632.

²⁴ Jacob M. Myers. *1 Chronicles*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965): 171.

²⁵ Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10—29*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 846-47.

the moves to and from priestly service by reference to 1 Chronicles 12:26, which records the Levites' sending 4600 men to David to serve him as soldiers as he established his kingdom upon the death of Saul. On that occasion, the priestly family moved to military service if only temporarily. In establishing the Temple guilds, David was then appointing Levites to assigned responsibilities in the Temple for religious service, to begin, of course, after Solomon built the Temple. In establishing these guilds, David further reinforced the Chronicler's theological theme of the blending of the monarchy with the cult from the beginning.

Solomon: King-Temple-Builder by God's Choice

Finally, Yahweh also confirmed Solomon as the royal Temple-builder because he was a man of peace as opposed to David, who was essentially a man of war. This would certainly explain why the Chronicler omitted all of David's conflicts in 1 Samuel and the significant rebellions and struggles of 2 Samuel that characterized his reign. In the return from exile, the people needed peace and harmony for their preparation to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Consequently, what David himself could not do, God arranged for the "House of David" to do through Solomon at the beginning, and at the post-exilic restoration through Zerubbabel, who was also of the line of David (1 Chron 3:1-19).

So far, little has been said about the role of Solomon, although Solomon's role (more than David's) accounts for a major divergence from the Samuel—Kings corpus. The theology of Chronicles seems primarily to aim for establishing the prominence of the House of David in the continuity of the covenant between God and His people. It is David's seed that God promised will continue forever. It is David who received the royal covenant from God; and it is the throne of His father David that God promised to Mary's child Jesus as a gift, and of *His* kingdom there will be no end (see Luke 1:32-33).

Nevertheless, Solomon's rise to the throne did mark a significant distinction in Chronicles. For example, Braun noted that in the Samuel-Kings corpus, Solomon's rise to power seems steeped in court intrigue, power plays, and, not least, the personal influence of Bathsheba on David. Braun noted, "In Kings, the major part of Solomon's activity is centered upon the construction of the temple (1 Kgs 6—8). However, the final evaluation of Solomon's reign is not based on this relationship to

the temple, but on his syncretistic worship practices.”²⁶ The king frequently visits the high places to build altars there. He also built high places for his foreign wives and these high places naturally became considerably idolatrous. Consequently, Yahweh became angry with him and his kingdom was eventually divided. However, this did not change the fact of Jerusalem or the Temple as the center of Yahweh’s worship, except for the rebellious northern tribes, whose history the Chronicler has appropriately omitted from his narrative.

On the other hand, Chronicles presented Solomon’s rise to power in a significantly different light. In Chronicles, unlike in Samuel and Kings, there seems to have been no court intrigue, Israel appeared to have almost immediately accepted Solomon as the heir to the throne, there were no power plays noted, and even before his reign began, God gave Solomon a greatness and “royal honor such as no king had had before him” (1 Chron 29:23, 25).

In support of this emphasis on the Davidic line in the theology and the history of Chronicles, it can be concluded with Townsend: “Most of the omitted material is either derogatory to or in opposition to the Davidic line. The chronicler’s burden is to present the endurance of the Davidic line, in spite of its faults.”²⁷ God uses humans to accomplish His plans and directs the events of their lives accordingly. We may also agree with Townsend that “Most of these additions [in Chronicles over Kings] relate to the establishment of temple worship and/or the evaluation of the Davidic line. Obviously the chronicler’s message revolves around these two great themes. It is significant that the chronicler began his history with David and ended with the temple.”²⁸

ARK: THE LINK BETWEEN KING AND CULTUS

In addition to the covenant with David, another item ties together the king and the Temple with its cult. That item is the return of the ark narrated in 1 Chronicles 13:1–5 and 15—16. Immediately following the capture of Jerusalem, the Chronicler noted David’s interest in uniting all Israel in the worship of Yahweh. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. noted, for instance, “David wisely understood the importance of tying the tribes to the new

²⁶ Braun, *Chronicles*, xxxiii.

²⁷ Townsend, “Purpose of 1 and 2 Chronicles,” 282.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

capital by means of their commitment to Yahweh.”²⁹ He established a beginning in this direction by enlisting the support of the entire nation, along with the priests and Levites, for the project of bringing the Ark of the Covenant to the people of God from its temporary location at Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem (2 Chron 1:4). David’s plea was to “bring back the ark of our God to us, for we *did not seek it in the days of Saul*” (1 Chron 13:3, italics added). This was an apt beginning because the Ark was the centerpiece, first of the Tabernacle, and later of the Temple. And all Israel supported David. First Chronicles 15—16, the passage that details the preparation for and the transference of the Ark to Jerusalem, played a vital role in the development of the Chronicler’s theology. John W. Wright noted, “In 1 Chronicles 15—16 David successfully brings the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. He ‘convokes’ . . . [1 Chr 15:3] ‘all Israel’ to bring the ark to Jerusalem. This cultic procession includes the king, nobility and the military (15:25) and culminates in the delivery of the ark, the proper cultic ceremonies (15:26—16:2), and a festival provided at the expense of the king (16:2-3). The assembly ‘convoked’ by David represents a cultic and civil activity, gathered to perform a national duty and celebrate a national festival.”³⁰

They brought the Ark from the house of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem with a great deal of ceremony, singing and dancing, shouting, music from various instruments, sacrifices, and a splendid display of joy (15:25—16:3). It is important to note that David arranged for this transportation of the Ark by establishing proper Levitical procedures for carrying and delivering it safely and correctly to Jerusalem. Braun noted, “With the participation of all Israel once again duly noted (15:3), six Levitical heads are instructed to sanctify themselves to bring up the ark (vv. 11-12), the ark is safely brought into Jerusalem (15:25—16:3), and David appoints Levitical assistants for both the Jerusalem shrine (16:4-5a) and the tabernacle.”³¹ Apparently, at this point, the Ark is separated from the Tabernacle and placed in a temporary shrine in Jerusalem until the Temple is built and the Tabernacle is dismantled for the last time.

²⁹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *A History of Israel From the Bronze Age Through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 246.

³⁰ John W. Wright, “The Legacy of David in Chronicles: The Narrative Function of 1 Chronicles 23—27,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (Summer 1991): 231.

³¹ Roddy L. Braun, “The Message of Chronicles: Rally ‘Round the Temple,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 42 (1971): 506.

This may warrant further investigation, but for the purpose of this article, it will be noted only that the Tabernacle remained at Gibeon (21:29; 23:26) and that the Ark was brought to Jerusalem. This was perhaps the first step toward the eventual building of the Temple for Yahweh in Jerusalem. Thomas Hanks noted how the Chronicler showed the connection of the Ark with king and Temple by the language he used. Hanks noted, “While the Deuteronomist speaks of it as ‘the ark of God,’ the Chronicler expands the title to ‘the ark of the covenant of the LORD’ (see 1 Chr 15.25, 26, 28, 29, etc.).”³² It is this covenant theme that keeps alive the house of David.

Although Gerhard von Rad objected that the Chronicler knows virtually nothing of a covenant theology, Jacob Myers insisted that the Chronicler intended to accentuate both the idea of the covenant and the idea of covenant love.³³ Myers noted, for instance, that the Chronicler reported “the observation of God’s love for His people as coming from outside (Hiram and the queen of Sheba). He is bound to them in the covenant (thirty-four times) which operates under condition of steadfast love (*hesed*)—a term that occurs some twenty-three times in the Chronicler’s work.”³⁴ Therefore, as Chart 2 in the Appendix indicates, the theology of Chronicles revolves around the themes of king and Temple linked together by Ark and covenant.

TEMPLE: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CULTUS IN ISRAEL

Focus upon Solomon as the Temple builder naturally develops to the second major theological theme of Chronicles, the Temple itself. In another place, Braun noted, “At the center of the books and of the concerns of Chronicles stands the temple. Sometimes the focus is on the temple per se, sometimes the concern is broadened to include the ministries and services of the temple. Sometimes these concerns are explicit; at other times they are partially obscured by the larger presentation of which they are a part, but of which they in fact stand at

³² Thomas D. Hanks, “The Chronicler: Theologian of Grace,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 53 (January—March 1981): 18.

³³ See Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 1:353 for discussion; and, Myers, *Chronicles*, lxvi for Myers’ discussion.

³⁴ Myers, *Chronicles*, lxvi.

the heart.”³⁵ Braun noted, for example, that five consecutive chapters of 1 Chronicles (23—27) along with many other sections of Chronicles deal with the priests and Levites because their function is the ministry of the Temple as it had once been of the Tabernacle. Braun also noted that it is the function of David, along with Solomon to build the Temple. David provided the materials in addition to the plans and the organization of the Temple itself and of Temple personnel, while Solomon supervised and handled the oversight of the actual building of the Temple.

Stressing the importance of the Temple in Chronicles, John Goldingay noted, “The temple is the life center of God’s people, ‘the hub of the Lord’s kingdom on earth’ (Myers I, lxviii). This being the case, how worship is conducted there matters, the *ritual laws* have to be taken very seriously, and Ch makes a point of noting that they were kept—for instance, he modifies the account of the temple dedication (2 Ch 7:7-10) to make it clear that the Day of Atonement was observed.”³⁶ Williamson added, “The Chronicler . . . portrays the completed temple as the fulfillment of all these [ritual laws and] various traditions, as the center to which they all have contributed.”³⁷ In connection with the Temple rituals, Goldingay noted further that worship and praise lie at the heart of the Chronicler’s message because this is what takes place at the Temple. And the Temple rituals reflect God’s demand for purity, for righteousness, for cleansing, for holiness, for repentance and reconciliation (restoration), in short, for the grace of God. As such, one can actually find elements of the Gospel in the books of Chronicles, such as, the sinfulness of man requiring purity and cleansing, cleansing of sin, holiness in life and character, obedience to God’s word, and so forth. Nevertheless, reflection on this aspect of the theme will be later.

Meanwhile, the Temple itself provides a significant part of the theology of Chronicles. Peter Ackroyd noted that in the section that concerns the reign of David and Solomon—1 Chronicles 10 to 2 Chronicles 9—the Chronicler united these two kings in “the theme of the temple, its ordering and its building—[and this section] is related as beginning in the failure of Saul (only the final disaster to Saul is related in 1 Chron. 10), and taken further in the judgment upon David which

³⁵ Roddy Braun, *Understanding the Basic Themes of 1, 2 Chronicles* (Dallas: Word, 1991), 5-6.

³⁶ John Goldingay, “The Chronicler as Theologian,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 5 (June 1975): 117.

³⁷ Williamson, *Chronicles*, 29.

issues in the choice of the temple site (1 Chron. 21-22:1). It is from a moment of judgment and disaster that the high point of Israel's history arises."³⁸ Apparently, Yahweh used these failures and judgments to accomplish His purposes and to stress that He is sovereign and that He can "cause all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom 8.28). For example, after the failure and death of Saul, God empowered David, barely anointed king as Saul's successor, to proceed immediately to take possession of Jerusalem from the Jebusites (1 Chronicles 11:1-9). This is significant because, as Braun noted, Jerusalem "was destined to become the seat not only of the dynasty but also of the temple,"³⁹ thus noting the blending of the two major theological themes in Chronicles.

From 1 Chronicles 17-21, the Chronicler surveyed David's concern for building the Temple, the oracle of Nathan expressing God's covenant with David in addition to God's declaration concerning the Temple, and the wars of David and the census he took in disobedience to God. These last two items explain in part why David could not build the Temple himself (1 Kgs 5:3; 1 Chron 22:8). David was a man of war. The Temple reflected, at least in part, that God was a God of peace. Therefore, Solomon, the man of peace in Israel, would be commissioned to build the Temple (1 Chron 17:11-14). Nevertheless, at 1 Chronicles 21, the Chronicler began the narrative of the construction of the Temple with David's purchase of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Much of the rest of 1 Chronicles outlines David's preparation of the materials for building the Temple and his organization of the Levites, priests, and singers for the service of the Temple. With 2 Chronicles, the Chronicler summarized the accession of Solomon to the throne, and then almost immediately turned to Solomon's own preparations for building the Temple (1—2).

Purpose of the Temple: Cultus Ritual and Worship

Braun noted, "Solomon's concern for the temple was foremost already for the writer of Kings (see 1 Kings 5—8). However, the Chronicler's concern is even more pronounced and exclusive than that of the

³⁸ Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Theology of the Chronicler," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 8 (October 1973): 106.

³⁹ Braun, "Message of Chronicles," 505.

Deuteronomist. Omitting most of the material of 1 Kings 1-4, the Chronicler introduces the subject of the temple already in 2 Chron. 2:1, and this theme remains dominant until his conclusion in 8:12-16.⁴⁰ Braun noted that the Chronicler significantly related Solomon's building project to the appearance of Yahweh to David recorded in 1 Chronicles 22:1. Furthermore, Braun noted that the transfer of the Ark and the prayer of dedication are the most important events associated with the Temple. These were set apart by certain divine appearances associated with them (2 Chron 5:14; 7:1-3). Underlying this account, however, is the stress on Solomon as God's choice to build the Temple. The Chronicler kept both king and Temple in the forefront of his message. Braun suggested, ". . . the major apologetic concern of these chapters [1 Chron 22, 28, 29] is surely to affirm that Solomon is the legitimate, God-chosen heir to the throne and therefore the legitimate temple builder."⁴¹ Ackroyd developed this further to stress the relationship between the temple and the throne.

The theme is not that of the monarchy, but a reinterpretation of the relationship between king and cult in terms of the absolute centrality of the worship of God. Such worship is possible only for the true people, whose nature is set out in genealogies, and whose continuity is made plain by the same device; it is a people which incorporates the whole faithful body of those who accept the worship of the temple and obedience to the law.⁴²

Ackroyd noted that along with king and Temple as major themes in the theology of the books of Chronicles, the Chronicler stressed appropriate worship practices engaged in connection with the Temple of Yahweh.

Neither David nor Solomon was interested in the building of a Temple for its own sake. David was concerned for a dwelling place for his God. He felt that God should not live in a tent while the king lived in a house of cedar (2 Sam 7:2). Just before he died, David told Solomon to "keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me. . . ." (1 Kgs 2:3-4a). When Solomon began to make his preparations for building the Temple, he

⁴⁰ Ibid., 507.

⁴¹ Ibid., 508.

⁴² Ackroyd, "Theology of the Chronicler," 107.

expressed his intention specifically in a word sent to King Hiram of Tyre: “And behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God. . . .” (5:5a). It was not just another house of God, but a house for the *name* of God, a house that represented all that God is for His people and a house in which the presence of God represented here by His name may dwell with His people. As such, everything about that house had to be pure and holy.

Once the Temple was established as a house of God, the rituals and cultic practices performed there must also be pure and holy to reflect the purity and holiness of God. Therefore, as a resident part of his theology, the Chronicler added facets of the cult once established for the Tabernacle. To this end, Goldingay noted that the Chronicler “is concerned to safeguard the holiness of the people of God. This affects his attitude to Judah, to northern Israel, and to foreigners.”⁴³ This would help explain why the Chronicler omitted any of the history of the ten northern tribes. These tribes had rebelled against God’s king and the capital of God’s kingdom. Furthermore, none of these illegitimate kings were holy or good in the eyes of God or in the eyes of the Deuteronomist who recorded their reigns in the Samuel—Kings corpus. For these northern tribes to be part of God’s kingdom, they would have to return their loyalty to God and to the king in Jerusalem. Goldingay noted, “It is David’s kingdom which can be identified with that of Yahweh: Ch fairly consistently alters Sa-Kg’s references to the former so as to describe the kingdom as Yahweh’s, and he makes the point quite explicit in Jeroboam’s challenge to Abijah: Yahweh’s kingdom is in the hands of the sons of David (2 Ch 13:8).”⁴⁴ Building on this theme, Goldingay noted that the holy city lies in Judah alone, and the true Temple is in the possession of Judah, as is the sole, valid ministry and worship of that temple (cf. 2 Chron 13:9-11).

Temple: Character of Cultus Ritual and Ministry

It is the ministry and worship of the Temple that will now be addressed, as the Chronicler’s theology will be examined. James D. Newsome noted, “For the Chronicler, the purity and viability of the cult are almost

⁴³ Goldingay, “Chronicler as Theologian,” 119.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

as central a prophetic concern as are the activities of the king.”⁴⁵ Newsome noted that David adopted a prophetic mantle under which he nursed the cult of Israel back into existence as he made initial preparations for the building of the Temple. Both David and his successors worked diligently to ensure the integrity of the cult. The resulting prophetic message virtually stresses that Judah’s prosperity depends on her fidelity to the cult.

Perhaps among the Judean successors of David and Solomon, the developed theology of the cult can be seen more clearly. Indeed, upon careful examination, it appears that each of the four good Judean kings of Judah reinforced the connection between king and cultus by enlisting the aid of the priests and Levites to bring about their respective revivals. Townsend noted, for example, Asa was, like Solomon, a man of rest. According to Townsend, “Asa removed false worship (2 Chron 14:2-5; 15:8a) and reestablished true worship (15:8b-19), thus showing Davidic zeal for genuine temple worship.”⁴⁶ Braun added that Asa repaired the altar of Yahweh as part of his reforms and gathered to Jerusalem those who were faithful to Yahweh from both the north and south to execute a sacrifice with the aid of the priests and a covenant before the Lord (2 Chron 15:8-15). In addition to Asa, Braun noted Jehoshaphat and Joash as two other examples of David’s successors who attempted to maintain the integrity of the cult. When threatened by a coalition of his enemies, Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout Judah and established a prayer of faith to Yahweh in the house of God (20:6-12). Braun also noted, “The entire history of Joash revolved around the temple, for he was, according to Chronicles, raised secretly in the temple for six years during the reign of the wicked Athaliah by the wife of Jehoiada the priest (2 Chr 22:11-12), and then crowned as king in the temple with the support of the priests and Levites. He made plans to restore the house of the Lord, and reinstated the tax levied by Moses (2 Chr 24:4-14).”⁴⁷ Unfortunately, neither Asa nor Joash maintained their support of the Lord as Jehoshaphat did; and it remained to Hezekiah to initiate one of the greatest revivals of Yahweh’s cult in Israel.

⁴⁵ James D. Newsome Jr. “Toward a New Understanding of the Chronicler and His Purposes,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (June 1975): 213.

⁴⁶ Townsend, “Purpose of 1 and 2 Chronicles,” 289.

⁴⁷ Braun, *Understanding the Basic Themes*, 15-16.

Roddy Braun noted that the reign of Hezekiah stresses both the centrality of the Temple and its cult.⁴⁸ Braun noted further that Hezekiah's celebration of the great Passover is distinguished as a return to things as they were under Solomon. Additionally, the account of Hezekiah's reforms and the reinauguration of the cult of the Temple under his leadership is not only absent from the history recorded in Kings, but is also the high point of this period of Israel's history for the Chronicler. J. Oscar Boyd certainly agreed on the significance of Hezekiah for both Temple and cult. Boyd noted:

In Chronicles, while a space of four chapters is allotted to Hezekiah, three of them are occupied with affairs of worship, while into the fourth are crowded all the personal and political affairs that bulk so largely in Kings. The three chapters dealing with Hezekiah's relation to ritual, temple and priesthood are divided between an account of the purification of the polluted temple in the first month of the first year of the new reign; the celebration of a great Passover in the second month; and the royal provision for the maintenance of the cult thus reinaugurated.⁴⁹

Hezekiah apparently went to great pains not only to reinstate the cult but also to reinstate it properly. Furthermore, he did not limit his reinstatement to Judah alone. According to the Chronicler, "Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover to the LORD God of Israel" (30:1). Additionally, Hezekiah encouraged the Levites so they would administer properly the Passover sacrifice to the people (30:22). After this, Hezekiah initiated the destruction of the altars in Jerusalem presumably used to worship other gods. When they were finished with this celebration and destruction of altars, the people went to all the cities of Judah, as well as of Ephraim and Manasseh, and destroyed all the pillars that had been constructed for the worship of Asherah (31:1).

Finally, young king Josiah initiated a new cleansing of the land by not only destroying all the idols of Baal and Asherah, but also executing the priests who served them. Then he commissioned a repairing of the house of God. When the task was finished, Josiah "set the priests in their offices and encouraged them in the service of the

⁴⁸ See Braun, "Message of Chronicles," 509.

⁴⁹ J. Oscar Boyd, "An Undesigned Coincidence," *Princeton Theological Review* 3 (April 1905): 300.

house of the LORD” (35:2). Therefore, essentially in the reign of Josiah, as in his good predecessors, the link between the king and the Temple was clear and strong. Williamson summarized the significance of the regal/ritual relationship succinctly by noting, “Generally speaking, as the reign of Hezekiah and Josiah demonstrate most clearly, the Chronicler believed that a Davidic king was necessary for the successful maintenance of the temple cult even after the period of the united monarchy.”⁵⁰

Within the framework of Temple and cult themes, additional themes developed by the Chronicler can also be identified. For example, Braun and Dillard in particular discussed the theme of retribution.⁵¹ In several places, Braun also included a discussion concerning all the people of Israel as the people of God instead of only Judah, although the Chronicler concentrated on Judah in this role.⁵² A number of other theological themes related to these find mention in the Chronicler’s narratives, but perhaps the most significant in the context of king and cult is the theme of the Messiah, who is the ultimate heir of the Davidic dynasty.

Temple: Cultus, Kingdom of God, and Messiah

There is, however, some academic debate as to the presence of any real Messianic material in Chronicles. Braun, for instance, noted that there is little emphasis on the dynasty of David in the Chronicler’s narrative. Braun noted that the Chronicler emphasized the kingdom of God and noted that it is embodied in the “all Israel” who support the worship of the Lord through faithful obedience to the word of the Lord. Braun noted

⁵⁰ Williamson, *Chronicles*, 29.

⁵¹ Braun, *Chronicles*, xxxvii-xxxix; Braun, “Message of Chronicles,” 510-11; Braun, *Understanding the Basic Themes of 1, 2 Chronicles*, 69-90; Raymond B. Dillard, “The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14-16): An Example of the Chronicler’s Theological Method,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 (September 1980): 207-18; Dillard, “Reward and Punishment in Chronicles: The Theology of Immediate Retribution,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (Spring 1984): 164-72.

⁵² Braun, *Chronicles*, xxxv-xxxvii; Braun, “Message of Chronicles,” 510, 511-13; Braun, “A Reconsideration of the Chronicler’s Attitude Toward the North,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (March 1977): 59-62; Braun, *Understanding the Basic Themes*, 47-59; see also Hanks, “The Chronicler,” 24-26; J. N. Schofield, “All Israel in the Deuteronomical Writers,” in *Essays and Studies Presented to Stanley Arthur Cook*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (London: Foreign Press, 1950): 25-34.

also that some have nevertheless maintained that a Messianic hope is reflected in Chronicles, but he concluded, “With the increasing doubt of the unity of Chronicles and Ezra—Nehemiah, it seems wiser to assume that Chronicles viewed the work of the Davidic dynasty as essentially completed with the construction of the temple, in which the hopes of the kingdom of God among Israel now lay.”⁵³ Jacob Myers, while acknowledging a Messianic theme in Chronicles, noted that the features are different from those appearing elsewhere in the Scriptures. He noted that much depends on one’s definition of Messiah.

The Chronicler can hardly be said to have been a proponent of ordinary messianism as conceived in other portions of the Old Testament, notably by the prophets. He did not look into the distant future for the realization of a majestic dream in which Jerusalem was seen as the center of the world governed by Israel and to which all nations were welcomed. It was rather a conception of the saved people, those who had returned from exile, joined by those who had remained in the land and who were ready to accept the returnees’ direction and rule, dwelling in the chosen place of the Lord and maintaining their relationship with Him in purity and in a kind of magnificent isolation from other peoples.⁵⁴

Conversely, it is interesting to note that von Rad identified the Chronicler as the “guardian of the messianic tradition.”⁵⁵ Von Rad described the Messianic king as one who, according to the Chronicler, would combine the royal office with the priestly office, although in the priestly office, he would not function as priest himself, but would see to the care of the sanctuary and to the proper functioning of the cult practiced therein.

Thomas Hanks seemed to agree with von Rad on this issue. Hanks noted that unlike promises God made to David’s successors, the promise to David is unconditional. Hanks observed, “It is difficult to understand how the Chronicler could have continued to stress the authority of the prophetic oracles, including the fulfilment of their predictions, if the Davidic hope had been abandoned.”⁵⁶ Hanks suggested that the Messianic hope might have undergone a kind of development before the Chronicler completed his work. He noted that if

⁵³ Braun, *Understanding the Basic Themes*, 44.

⁵⁴ Myers, *Chronicles*, lxxxiv.

⁵⁵ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 351.

⁵⁶ Hanks, “The Chronicler,” 26.

this is the case, however, it only helps to explain the urgency with which Ezra and Nehemiah pushed for reform. In any case, a development in the Messianic hope does not negate a Messianic hope reflected in Chronicles. It only provides more stimulus for the academic debate. Furthermore, it also only places it more deeply within the context of king and cult.

It is in the framework of king, Temple, and cult that the main thrust of the theology in the books of Chronicles can be identified. The subjects of king and Temple form the body of the material. God's covenant specifically with David, although some would trace it to the covenant with Abraham, laid the foundation for developing the kingdom and the Temple with its cultic practices within this framework. David's transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem marked the first step in developing the theology of the Chronicler in a practical way that linked the dynasty of David with the Temple and cultic rituals practiced there. Furthermore, in developing his theme, the chronicler established a connotation of messianic teaching that also impacted the theology of his books. It is therefore possible to concur with Townsend's conclusion.

Chronicles has a decidedly messianic focus. The Chronicler's purpose was to show the returned remnant the vitality of hope they ought to have in the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. The warp and woof of his argument is Yahweh's faithfulness to the Davidic promise of an obedient Son to build the temple. His message to the returned remnant gathered around the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem could be stated as follows: The heritage of the abiding Davidic promises provides motivation for hopeful temple worship by the returned remnant. The message is clear. The Davidic king is coming to his temple; therefore the remnant should look for him as they worship.⁵⁷

It seems reasonable, therefore, that, taken together, the dynasty of David, the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple at Jerusalem form a viable framework within which to develop the full theology of the books of Chronicles.

⁵⁷ Townsend, "Purpose of 1 and 2 Chronicles," 291-92.

APPENDIX

Chart 1: Distinctions of Chronicles⁵⁸

Omissions in Chronicles	Additions in Chronicles
<p>Samuel (1 Sam 1—7) Saul's reign (8—15) David's exile (16—30) David's conflict with Abner and Ishbosheth (2 Sam 1—4) David's adultery and murder (11—12) Absalom's rebellion (13—20) Adonijah's struggle for the throne (1 Kgs 1—2) Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter (3) Solomon's royal palace (7) Solomon's wives and enemies (11) Northern Kingdom (1 Kgs 12—2 Kgs 17) Abijah's sinful character (1 Kgs 15:3—5) Jehoshaphat's campaign with Jehoram (2 Kgs 3) Hezekiah's tribute to Sennacherib (18:7—8, 13—16) Jehoahaz's evil character (2 Kgs 23:32) Jehoiakim's rebellion and enemies (2 Kgs 23:35; 24:1—4) Siege of Jerusalem and Zedekiah's captivity (2 Kgs 25:1—7, 18—21) Gedaliah's appointment and death (2 Kgs 25:12, 23—26) Jehoiachin's release (2 Kgs 25:27—30)</p>	<p>Genealogies (1 Chronicles 1—9) David's warriors (12:23—40) Details of the return of the ark (13:1—5, 15—16) Details of David's sinful census (21) David's arrangements for the temple (22) David's organization of temple and civil workers (23—27) Assembly at Solomon's accession (28—29) Levites' loyalty to Rehoboam (2 Chron 11:13—17) Rehoboam's fortifications and family (11:5—12, 18—23) Asa's 10 years of peace, covenant renewal, and sin (14:1; 15:1—7, 9—15, 19; 16:7—10) Jehoshaphat's fortifications, reforms, commissioning of Levites to teach, warning by Jehu, reforms, prayer, and deliverance from Moab (17:1—18:1; 19—20) Jehoram's killing of his brothers, invasions, and illness (21:2—4, 12—18) Jehoiada's death (24:15—16) Joash's sins (24:3, 17—19) Zechariah's stoning (24:20—22) Hazael's defeat of Judah (24:23—24) Amaziah's hiring of soldiers and sin (25:5—10, 14—16) Uzziah's army and building program (26:6—15) Jotham's defeat of the Ammonites (27:5—6) Ahaz's punishment by Edomites and Philistines (28:17—19) Hezekiah's cleansing and consecration of the temple, reviving of Passover, and other reforms, wealth and building of defences against Sennacherib (29:3—31:21; 32:1—8, 23, 27—30) Manasseh's captivity, repentance, and return (33:11—17) Josiah's early reforms (34:3—7) Cyrus's decree (36:22—23)</p>

⁵⁸ Adapted from *ibid.*, 281-82.

<p>Most of the omitted material is either derogatory to or in opposition to the Davidic line. The chronicler's burden was to present the endurance of the Davidic line, in spite of its faults.</p>	<p>Most of these additions relate to the establishment of Temple worship and/or the evaluation of the Davidic line. Obviously, the chronicler's message revolves around these two great themes. It is significant that the chronicler began his history with David and ended with the Temple.</p>
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Chart 2: Framework for a Theology of Chronicles



**GENDER ROLES IN THE CHURCH:
A Review of Evangelical Feminism:
A New Pathway to Liberalism?, by Wayne Grudem.
Wheaton: Crossway, 2006. 272 pp., paperback, \$15.99.**

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All agree that there are two types of human beings, man and woman, and the Genesis account of origins (Gen 1:26-27) explicitly mentions both “male and female” as creations of God. Beyond these basic statements, however, Wayne Grudem (research professor of Bible and theology at Phoenix Seminary in Scottsdale, Arizona) documented major misunderstandings about the roles of men and women in the church. Grudem’s study of gender roles spans the better part of two decades. It began with publication of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, co-edited with John Piper in 1991, which was a massive tome of 566 pages with 22 contributors. It broadly covered gender roles inside and outside the church. The present book is a more specific and updated focus on the roles of men and women in the church.

An old cliché states if two people are the same, one of them is unnecessary. This suggests that if men’s and women’s roles were really intended by God to be indistinguishable, it would be a contradiction in divine logic, for then God created two types of human beings where only one would do. Even the co-equal persons of the Trinity have different roles (p. 214), and the same is true of male and female who are each made in God’s image. The need for procreation does not require two sexes either, for God could have made humans to multiply asexually. Therefore, the evolutionary premise that procreation is the only essential gender difference fails to answer the question, Why man *and* women?

Grudem defined evangelical feminism as “a movement that claims there are no unique roles for men in marriage or in the church” (p. 12). This movement developed from the women’s liberation movement that swept across secular culture and into the mainline liberal denominations in the 1960s, first manifesting itself in evangelical denominations in 1974 (p. 43). Indeed, both the women’s liberation movement and the mainline denominations had essential foundations in evolutionary philosophy extending at least into the 1950s if not before. In the 1950s, for example, Philip Rieff, whose career linked various secular interests and the National Council of Churches (NCC), had

called for the abolition of the family, from which it followed that any difference in gender roles must be obliterated. Rieff was vehement in his denunciation of the family as one of the most dangerous elements of society. He wrote, “The chief institutional instrument of repressive authority is the family. As political revolution must overthrow the power of the state, moral revolution must overthrow the power of the family—all families. . . . A revolution must sweep out the family and its ruler, the father . . . However radical the revolution, so long as the family persists, authority will creep back.”¹

It was therefore only a matter of time before this ideology would find its way into the ordinary parishioner’s pew of the mainline churches, not to mention the seminaries associated with the NCC. Since many, if not most, evangelicals preparing for vocational ministry attend seminaries with mainline associations for at least part of their training, the emergence of women’s liberation in evangelical circles was inevitable. Less than twenty years separated Rieff’s call for the end of the family from evangelical calls for obliteration of gender roles in erstwhile “conservative” churches.

Grudem noted that since 1974 evangelical feminists have been seeking some twenty-five rationalizations justifying gender merging in the church. The liberal denominations had long “[denied] the complete truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God” (p. 12), so for them simply dismissing biblical gender role differences was straightforward. The Bible is merely a concretion of man’s writings and not divinely inspired, so one can reframe it to fit modern times, feminists would say. The evangelical feminist rationalizations of Bible teachings were more convoluted, because evangelical feminists, like their truly conservative evangelical forebears, generally continued to maintain that they believe the Bible is the inspired Word. How can one then argue successfully that the Bible does not really teach what the church thought it meant about gender roles for nearly 2000 years? An interesting question that Grudem does not address is: how far must a local church move from a biblical position before it ceases to be a “conservative” church, or even a church at all?

Any movement like evangelical feminism or its ideological antecedent, theistic evolution, claiming that the church missed the real meaning of the Bible for nearly two millennia, would appear to be suspect. After all, how could the Holy Spirit fail to illumine believers’ understanding for so long? This belief that modern society is the first truly enlightened age following eras of darkness is nothing more than the evolutionary premise that progress is ever upward and that humanity is *necessarily* more advanced than his ancestors. Alternatively, other evangelical feminists argue that the Bible was indeed meant to teach distinctive gender roles in the culture of the day, but now times have changed. However, one ought to suspect the notion that times have changed, when the

¹ Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 156.

only source for this idea is the women's liberation movement rather than the Bible. Claiming that one should follow the direction of women's liberation because they say times have changed is of course nothing more than arguing in a circle.

However, the human mind is adept at rationalizing (Jer 17:9), and many have been led astray with evangelical feminist sophistry. Grudem recognized the necessity of a careful response to each rationalization. Like the abortionists who euphemistically label their calls for obliteration of pre-born life as "pro-choice," the evangelical feminists euphemistically label their call for obliteration of gender roles as "egalitarian." Evangelicals favoring distinctive gender roles in the church are "complementarian," on the grounds that the sexes *complement* each other. Unfortunately, Grudem did not focus on the positive reality of God's intended blessings arising from gender complementarity. His stated purpose was to focus on the negative influence of the egalitarian agenda. This agenda ultimately calls for bans on any gender distinctions, which means the aggressive promotion of homosexuality in the church, a concern to which Grudem returned several times (pp. 28, 155, 159-61, 237-38).

Grudem wrote as a conservative evangelical, but his concerns span a much broader cultural sector. Author Leon Podles² has a Roman Catholic background and speaks mainly to conditions in the mainline denominations. He argued that merging gender roles leads to the exit of men from the churches, and that this has happened worldwide;³ and that although homosexuality has long existed in denominations practicing priestly celibacy,⁴ the egalitarian agenda for gender merging has made the problem worse. Podles, who is not an evangelical and certainly not a conservative or a fundamentalist, nevertheless credited the fundamentalist churches—as others have before him—with providing society what it really needs despite fundamentalism's famous role as a societal "whipping boy." Podles wrote, "Churches that can preach the Gospel without the modifications that make it easy and bourgeois have a great advantage in reaching men. The rawer fundamentalist churches and the more traditional revivalist churches reach more men than liberal or latitudinarian churches."⁵ This legitimate masculine appeal has societal consequences: "The presence of obedient, faithful men in the congregation, in proportion to their presence in the general population, would change the dynamics of obedience, and not create an atmosphere of subservient femininity in the church."⁶ The "obedience" Podles mentioned is the foundation of societal stability and ethics,

² Leon Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence, 1999).

³ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

whereas a “subservience” is the potential to be led by the first effective demagogue to appear on the scene. Indeed, the rise of Hitler in Germany was preceded by precisely the feminization of the churches which egalitarianism threatens today, for Germany was farther down the road of apostasy than much of the West at that time, and Nazism claimed to satisfy the inner yearning of men alienated from the German churches.⁷ From Podles one can sense the societal need to retain biblical gender roles in the church, and his book is a valuable complement to Grudem’s book.

One of the most popular egalitarian arguments is that Hebrew culture was patriarchal, so one must understand that the Bible cannot mean today what it was supposed to have meant when it was written (pp. 35, 42). This claim amounts to saying that God cannot control the use of the languages or words He created, and is the same ploy that theistic evolutionists use to argue that understanding of Genesis must now be evolutionary. However, the use in Genesis of the word translated *man* does not signify patriarchy, for *man* has always referred to all of humanity, not just the male gender. Jacques Barzun observed as follows:

In Genesis [in the KJV] we read: ‘And God created Man, male and female.’ Plainly, in 1611 and long before, *man* meant human being. . . . Nor is the inclusive sense of human being an arbitrary convention. The Sanskrit root, *man*, *manu*, denotes nothing but the human being and does so par excellence, since it is cognate with the word for ‘I think.’ In the compounds that have been regarded as invidious—*spokesman*, *chairman*, and the like—*man* retains that original sense of human being, as is proved by the word *woman*, which is etymologically the ‘wife-human being.’ The *wo* (shortened from *waef*) ought to make *woman* doubly unacceptable to zealots, but the word as it stands seems irreplaceable. . . . Besides, the would-be reformers of usage utter contradictory orders. They want *woman* featured when men are mentioned, but they also call for a ban on feminine designations such as *actress*.⁸

Awareness of etymology and of history in general seems to be sadly lacking in egalitarian writings. It has been rightly observed in another context: “If we read the words and attitudes of the past through the pompous ‘wisdom’ of the considered moral judgments of the present, we will find nothing but error.”⁹ The egalitarians commit the historian’s worst possible blunder of viewing the past through the filter of the present.

Egalitarians often perceive Genesis 1 and 2 especially to be malleable poetry with meaning relative to the cultural fashion of the day, if, indeed, it has any meaning at all. The egalitarians making this argument, professing to be evangelicals, are echoing the long-held liberal position on Genesis 1 and 2, in

⁷ Ibid., 192-93.

⁸ Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 82, 83.

⁹ Stephen L. Carter, “Getting Past Black and White,” *Time* 172 (14 July 2008): 57.

which Genesis, especially chapters 1-11, “is not addressed to sophisticated modern people like ourselves who have lost the taste for simple story-telling [and know] nothing about abstract doctrines.”¹⁰ However, Genesis 1 and 2 are not poetic sections (p. 38),¹¹ and indeed are laden with concrete doctrine, including the first teachings on the distinction of the genders. Learning about the cultures in which the Bible was written can be an enriching exercise, but there is also the danger of forgetting that the God who inspired the Bible intended His Word to be a timeless and universal statement which supersedes all the cultures He created.¹²

The focus of egalitarian ire in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which some egalitarians simply say should not be in the Bible (p. 49). However, as Grudem italicized, “*not one manuscript has ever omitted these verses*” (p. 51). Other egalitarians say, “our ultimate authority is found not in what is written in Scripture but in developments that came after the Bible” (p. 53). Grudem responded, “This means that our authority is the point toward which the New Testament authors were progressing in a trajectory, not what the New Testament actually taught.” This is a clever rationalization, because it does not deny that the New Testament says what it says, but it is saturated with the evolutionary presupposition that all is evolving, including intellect and understanding. This is also the position of the Roman Church in its assertion that authority arises from the Catholic Church and Catholic Tradition,¹³ both of which arose after the New Testament. The subtitle of the book reviewed here asked whether egalitarianism is a “new pathway to liberalism,” but one wonders whether for some it might be a new pathway to Romanism as well, depending on the degree to which one assumes that “tradition” trumps Scripture. Grudem’s concern with gleaning doctrine from tradition recurred (p. 115).

Variants of seeking doctrine in tradition (*past* events and teachings) are the searches for doctrine in *present* events expressed as personal experiences (p. 119), a “call” (p. 132), or “prophecies” (pp. 136-37). The person trusting these often asks, “Why would my ministry be blessed if God did not approve it?” (p. 119). Grudem (p. 120) rightly responded, “It is not surprising that there is some measure of blessing when women act as pastors and teach the Word of God . . . This is because God’s Word is powerful” and God is not limited in His work by

¹⁰ John C. L. Gibson, *Genesis*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Saint Andrew Press, 1981), 1:2.

¹¹ Jonathan Henry, “Did Death Occur Before the Fall?: A Further Critique of the Progressive Creationism of Hugh Ross,” *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 40 (December 2006), 160-61.

¹² Jonathan Henry, “Ye Shall Be as Gods: The Modern Search for Extraterrestrial Life,” in *When Christians Roamed the Earth: Is the Bible-Believing Church Headed for Extinction?* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2001), 182.

¹³ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 26.

human disobedience. History in general shows that God frequently blesses ministries, peoples, and nations long after persistent disobedience has become a pattern. The Bible explains that God withholds final judgment to provide opportunity for repentance (2 Pet 3:9-10), so certainly this is true on a smaller national, ethnic or personal scale. It is therefore foolishness to believe that blessing ever signifies God's approval of disobedience. Blessing instead signifies God's mercy on humanity. Furthermore, how much more blessing would arise from obedience? It is impossible to "immediately see all the consequences of disobedience" (p. 126).

A variant of the belief in tradition is the belief that even God could not have risen above the culture of the time (p. 59). This makes culture, like tradition, the arbiter of truth. Asserting that God's Word must have been bound by the patriarchal bias of the ancient fallen world is reminiscent of the evolutionary accommodationist's belief that the Creator God could not have created by fiat but must have been constrained by His own physical laws. Both the cultures and the laws therefore rise above God's ability to control or govern them.¹⁴ In other words, God is not all powerful. This belief originates most strongly in denial of fiat creation in Genesis 1, which is really a negation of the power of God to create via His spoken word. If God is not all-powerful, then certainly He may be subject to constraints of culture and physical laws.

Egalitarian William Webb had devised eighteen esoteric criteria that allegedly demonstrated that the biblical writers endorsed slavery; so if the Bible could be this wrong on the slavery issue, then why should one challenge the egalitarian claim that the Bible wrongly endorsed oppressive patriarchy? However, Webb's criteria was entirely extra-biblical, demanding a knowledge of antiquity that does not exist. Grudem asked (pp. 70-71), "Who knows the history of ancient cultures well enough to make these assessments? . . . If the evangelical world begins to adopt Webb's system, it is not hard to imagine that we will soon require a new class of 'priests,' erudite scholars with expertise in the ancient world" who will say what the Bible really meant when it was written. However, is this not a thumbnail sketch of how the Roman Catholic hierarchy arose? Extra-biblical dogmas needed rationalizing, but since the Bible's teaching on key doctrines is clear, the rationalizations had to be sufficiently convoluted as to require explication by officially appointed scholars.¹⁵

Even the egalitarian assertion that the Bible endorses slavery reveals once again an almost complete lack of historical awareness. Corrupt capitalism and communism have propagated slavery worldwide, but Christianity practiced

¹⁴ Jonathan Henry, "Using Care in Defining Evolution as Mere Change in Astronomy and Biology," *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 40 (September 2003): 125.

¹⁵ On the growth of papal supremacy and papal infallibility, for example, see Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy* (New York: Crown, 1988), 248-52.

biblically has led to abolishing slavery and other abuses. Grudem (pp. 78-79) documents that Christians *consciously* following biblical doctrine (as opposed to professing or genuine Christians unthinkingly following the cultural mores of their day) consistently opposed slavery. According to Vishal and Ruth Mangalwadi, the fruit of William Carey’s missionary efforts in India “culminated in the birth of Indian nationalism and . . . India’s subsequent independence” because as a Christian missionary he realized that “it was oppressed humanity—not idols—that ought to be served.”¹⁶ Carey did not understand the gospel only “as a means of private salvation” but as a “public truth” which was “the means of organizing a decent society.”¹⁷

Another egalitarian rationalization is to dismiss key gender-role passages as “disputed” (p. 88). A proponent of this argument is Cindy Jacobs who has been published by Regal Books. Interestingly, Regal Books is a division of Gospel Light Publications, which was founded by Henrietta Mears. Mears taught mixed Bible classes with thousands in attendance for about thirty years starting in 1928. She was a very gifted and charismatic teacher and a prolific writer.¹⁸ However, rather than following the biblical order, Mears adopted an attitude of expediency, “[taking] authority even over the elders of her church . . . [Though] Mears believed that the position of preachers is for men only, [her] work was to teach men to be preachers.”¹⁹ Since Mears was extremely influential—Billy Graham wrote that Mears exerted more influence on his ministry than any woman except his wife and mother²⁰—it can be argued that Mears’ operational expediency was at least one of the factors leading to the pragmatism which plagues the church today. Mears’ expediency remains the position of modern egalitarians. Grudem responded with emphasis, “But Paul did not say, ‘*Respect the general principle of male headship in your church.*’ He said, ‘*I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man*’ (1 Tim. 2:12)” (p. 104).

Grudem (p. 110) offered practical advice on the application of this instruction for parachurch organizations, saying they “*should follow New Testament commands written to churches when those organizations are engaged in the activities that the command is talking about.* . . . [The principle in 1 Tim 2:12] should apply not only to meetings in local churches but also to Bible conferences, weekend retreats, and annual meetings held by parachurch organizations or denominations. For similar reasons, I do not think it is

¹⁶ Vishal Mangalwadi and Ruth Mangalwadi, *The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for the Transformation of a Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1999), 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁸ For example, Mears wrote a Bible handbook entitled, *What the Bible Is All About* (1953; reprint, Ventura: California, 1990), which is still in print and a useful study aid.

¹⁹ Al Dager, “The World Christian Movement: Evangelism vs. Evangelization,” *Media Spotlight* 22 (April 1999): 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

appropriate for women to hold Bible teaching positions in Christian colleges and seminaries [when teaching] the Bible to a mixed group. . . .” However, a woman could legitimately teach a mixed group a skills-oriented class, such as missionary skills or beginning Greek focusing on translation skills.

Some egalitarians justify gender neutrality as a pragmatic response to the perception that life is more complicated today than ever before, saying that these supposedly stressful “circumstances” trump Scripture (p. 140). It seems to be a common belief—actually a common *mythical* belief—that people are more stressed today than ever. Such a view once again reveals a regrettable ignorance of history. During the Black Death pandemics in Europe, spanning three centuries from 1346 to 1666, bubonic plague killed an estimated one-third of the population.²¹ The Black Death “was probably the greatest European catastrophe in history.”²² Nothing even remotely dire is stalking the earth today, but so rapid was the progress of the disease that people then were daily terrorized by loved ones and friends being apparently well one day and dead often no more than forty-eight hours later.²³

Even without the Black Death, European cities were horribly unhygienic and unsanitary well into the 1800s,²⁴ and the *waning* of the Black Death under these appalling conditions is still a mystery.²⁵ The mortality rate of young children was enormous. Parents could expect that few if any of their offspring would survive childhood. Nothing even remotely similar exists today to stress modern populations. Horses as transportation in New York City, as late as the 1890s, released tons of manure waste daily, which in dry weather formed dust which blew into houses. Not only New York City but also all large cities experienced this air pollution until the advent of the automobile. However, moderns are constantly told that they are “stressed” because of living in the “information age” in which all are “drowning” in terabytes of data, allegedly for the first time in history. However, no one can indeed “point out . . . an age in human history that was not an age of information,”²⁶ for humanity is the communicators made in God’s image. One wonders whether the egalitarians and others saying how “stressed” humanity is have simply projected their own frenetic lifestyles onto the culture generally.

When the egalitarians or their hearers become fearful by focusing on modern times as uniquely stressful, complicated, or “different,” and therefore

²¹ Frederick F. Cartwright, *Disease and History* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972), 40.

²² *Ibid.*, 38.

²³ Peter DeRosa, *Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy* (New York: Crown, 1988), 86.

²⁴ Barzun, *Dawn to Decadence*, 492.

²⁵ Cartwright, *Disease and History*, 53.

²⁶ Albert Rosenfeld, “Phenomena, Comment, and Notes,” *Smithsonian* 13 (July 1982): 16.

unstable, the stability found in biblical teachings is forgotten and so these teachings are more easily jettisoned under the onslaught of peer pressure from secular and liberal sources. The egalitarians should be much better students of the Word, for in the midst of geopolitical chaos and upheaval—“though the earth be removed”—Psalm 46 teaches that God is in control of all these, and verse 10 commands, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

The egalitarians’ historical ignorance appears again in the claims that there were female bishops in the early church, a claim without historical foundation (pp. 216-18). Ultimately, as Grudem demonstrated, the egalitarian mentality is driven by a dislike of the masculine (p. 223). Jesus Himself was a man, so ultimately this dislike is an attack on Christ Himself. In like manner, the abortionists disdain the life of the preborn, while the Bible celebrates life, both physical and spiritual. The Bible celebrates children (Ps 127:5), but the world says there is too many and that population is exploding, beliefs widely accepted but long known by responsible demographers to be false.²⁷ Satan hates God, and he also hates man who is made in God’s image. If indeed the egalitarian movement culminates in a broader-than-ever acceptance of homosexuality, then the attack against the propagation of human life made in God’s image will have reached its zenith.

Seeing these future trends developing, Grudem rightly denounced the gender-neutral Bibles which are growing increasingly popular (pp. 224, 259-60) and which serve to further rationalize evangelical feminism. God, however, has promised to preserve His Word no matter what the attacks on it (Matt 5:18), just as He has promised to preserve the earth as a habitation for life (Isa 45:18). Is the church therefore to be complacent, passively living while waiting for the Lord’s return? Absolutely not, for though the “battle is the Lord’s” (1 Sam 4:47), the church is instructed to “occupy” till He comes (Luke 19:13). Let the church then “occupy” in love and good cheer borne of confidence in her Creator, Savior and Preserver. And as the church occupies, may all Christians avail themselves of excellent tools such as Wayne Grudem’s *Evangelical Feminism*.

²⁷ Max Singer, “Demographics: The Population Surprise,” *Atlantic Monthly* 284 (August 1999): 24; Gregg Easterbrook, “Reproductivity: Overpopulation Is No Problem—In the Long Run,” *New Republic* 221 (11 October 1999): 22; Joel Garreau, “300 Million and Counting,” *Smithsonian* 37 (October 2006): 97, stated “[T]he big news in demographic circles today [is] not catastrophic population growth. It’s [imminent] population shrinkage.”

BOOK REVIEWS

What Does Jesus Say About..., by Cecil Price, Chattanooga: AMG, 2008. Xvii + 1899 pp., cloth, \$29.99.

Price is senior research fellow with Christian Information Ministries of Richardson, Texas. The subtitle to this reference work is *Christ Speaks to Us Today*. It is a masterful concordance endorsed by scholars such as Don Campbell, Robert Jeffress, Jack Graham, Charles Dyer, Kerby Anderson, and Darrell Bock. The book lists every significant noun (and a few verbs, such as “hate”) appearing in the four Gospels. However, it does more than just list them, it also provides the setting for that particular occurrence (Sermon on the Mount, Jesus accused by the Pharisees, etc.), presents the passage in question using the updated NASB, and provides cross references, some of which are found outside the Gospels. This volume makes an excellent supplement to any concordance.

Charles Ray, Tyndale Theological Seminary

The Gospel of Matthew, by R. T. France. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 1233 pp., cloth, \$60.00.

This volume is the most recent in the New International Commentary on the New Testament series. France is honorary research fellow in the department of theology and religious studies at the University of Wales. He is generally conservative in his views (the Apostle Matthew is the author; written in the 60s; etc.). The bibliography lists many commentaries, other books, and articles. The translation of the Greek is the author’s own. He purposely had little interaction with historical or form criticism, the Synoptic problem, or with other commentaries. What little interaction there is in the footnotes, France wanted his work to be as simple as possible. The introduction is somewhat short (twenty-two pages) because the author did not want to repeat his views that are found in his book *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*. However, the outline is quite detailed.

France’s view of some specific passages concern his understanding of Matthew 3:15. He understood Jesus’ words of “fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” to indicate at least two things. *First*, it is to show that the Lord was assuming John’s ministry of repentance and forgiveness. *Second*, Christ was identifying with the people as their representative. The audience for the Sermon on the Mount started with just the Twelve yet it is actually for all who have responded to the “good news of the Kingdom” (p. 153). They now need to be instructed in Kingdom living. France preferred the term “Discourse on Discipleship” to Sermon on the Mount because the latter involves not just

ethics but kingdom living. As an example, he looked to Matthew 5:48 which asks Jesus' followers to be perfect. In Matthew 13, the author interpreted the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven to exemplify the growth of the kingdom. The buried treasure and the pearl signify that the kingdom is of great worth. France stated that there is no eschatological sequence to be found in the Olivet Discourse. He rejected any dispensational understanding of the passage (pp. 901-02). This is not a particularly fantastic commentary but it does present a commendable, generally conservative perspective on Matthew.

Charles Ray, Tyndale Theological Seminary

Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook, by Mark Futato. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. 234 pp., paperback, \$20.99.

This is the second volume of a projected six volume series called "Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis." (Robert Chisholm's *Interpreting the Historical Books* was the first in the series.) Futato is the Robert L. Maclellan professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando. In the series preface, the editor, David Howard, emphasized, "there is no one-size-fits-all approach to interpreting Scripture" (p. 13). He stressed that the genre of the Old Testament passage in question must be taken into consideration. On the same page, he listed six genres (narrative, law, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, and apocalyptic); hence the six titles in the series. There is no mention of the utilization of a literal hermeneutic.

The issues addressed in each volume follow the same pattern. "The first chapter in each handbook introduces the genre(s) covered in the volume. The second chapter covers the purpose, message, and primary themes in the individual books and canonical sections under consideration. The third chapter includes such diverse matters as historical and cultural backgrounds, critical questions, textual matters, and a brief annotated bibliography of helpful works. The fourth chapter sets forth guidelines for interpreting texts of the genre(s) under consideration. The fifth chapter details strategies for proclaiming such texts. The final chapter gives one or two hands-on examples of how to move through different stages of the interpretive process, in order to demonstrate how the principles discussed previously work out in practice" (p. 14).

This particular volume addressed the interpretation of the Psalms but can be utilized wherever poetry is found in the Old Testament. Futato used the NIV and NLT. A working knowledge of Hebrew is helpful but not necessary. The volume concluded with a glossary. One highlight of this work is the numerous examples presented and explained. Dispensationalists can benefit from this handbook when read with discernment.

Charles Ray, Tyndale Theological Seminary

Exodus, by Philip Graham Ryken. Wheaton: Crossway, 2005. 1247 pp., cloth, \$39.99.

Ryken is senior minister at Tenth Presbyterian Church. He has assembled a commentary on Exodus which should prove very helpful, especially for preachers. One of the indices in the back categorized and listed all the sermon illustrations found through this massive work. It is divided into more than 100 chapters, some covering material as short as one-half verse (chapter 47 discusses Exodus 20:2b) while others involve as many as twenty verses.

The author regarded both Gospel and Law in the Old Testament (pp. 535-38). The exodus event pictures liberation from sin. He was correct in saying the Law reveals sin (and thus a need for a Savior) but is wrong in stating that the Law came in a covenant of works. A few lines later he admitted, “the Israelites were saved by grace through faith” (p. 542). One must be careful in teaching what is the content of the Gospel in the Old Testament, and to maintain clarity regarding issues of continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments.

On page 589 and following, the reader learns that the Sabbath is still to be observed today. The implication is that the Sabbath is now Sunday. No proof is given because none exists. It is mere opinion that this change has occurred. Upon looking at a calendar one sees that Saturday is the seventh day of the week. If Ryken were correct, then he violates the Sabbath himself because he works on that day. Other refutations could be given.

On the positive side, the work espoused that the exodus occurred in 1440 BC and not in 1260 BC as claimed by some. Ryken did not avoid problem passages. He addressed most if not virtually all of them (story of the midwives, hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, the strange passage of 4:24ff, etc.). Perhaps the best feature of this work is the author’s frequent applications; many are given throughout the commentary.

Charles Ray, Tyndale Theological Seminary

Salvation through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believer’s Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 29), by Daniel G. Powers. Leuven: Peeters, 2001. 267 pp., paperback, €35.

The research and writing of this volume is based upon the author’s doctoral dissertation—under the tutelage of Prof. Dr. H. J. de Jonge, which was defended successfully in the Faculty of Theology at Leiden University in 2001. The study is intended as an examination of different aspects in the earliest Christian writings of the corporate understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Primary concern of the work is upon the corporate implications of the

“Christ died for” formula. The introduction mentions the scholarship of H. Wheeler Robinson whose theory of “corporate personality” (an individual’s identity in ancient Israel was associated with the community) has been “thoroughly challenged.” Nevertheless, Powers believes “the validity of the conception of corporate personality” is an important aspect of Jewish theology. The author then summarized the problems of identifying New Testament language of the atonement in the Old Testament sacrificial theology, pagan literature, or Isaiah 53.

Chapters 1–3 address Paul’s understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and therefore the importance of the believer’s “corporate unity” in Christ. The opening chapters (pp. 35-110) are the most important for understanding the believers’ corporate unity with Christ. Powers first considered examples of the *Sterbensformel*—the so-called “death (dying) formula”—in 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Romans. The author affirmed the “general consensus among scholars that this phrase does indeed represent a very, early, traditional, pre-Pauline formula” (p. 38). His conclusion was that ὑπέρ should not be understood that Christ died “in the place of” believers, but that He died “on behalf of” the believers. Therefore, the primary idea of the atonement is not in terms of substitution but representation. “For Paul, Jesus is the representative of believers in his death as well as in his resurrection” (p. 109). “For the earliest believers, salvation – namely, justification, reconciliation, peace with God, forgiveness – was indeed a result of their participation in the fate of their representative” (p. 110).

It is true that Christ is the representative of believers in union with Him, and this union (characterized by the prepositional phrases “in him” and “with him”) does entail corporate significance. However, the death of Christ in particular has an aspect that is representative, but it cannot be adequately understood other than in terms of substitution. The inadequacy of this work is a distortion of biblical teaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus that does not adequately consider both the exclusive substitutionary aspects and the inclusive representative aspects. Powers is a reflection of the division in modern theologies to divide extremely the forensic and participatory aspects of the Pauline theology of the atonement, which is a dilemma that would be rejected by the entire corpus of the New Testament.

Chapter 4 is a consideration of the “surrender formula,” wherein “it is said of Jesus that he ‘gave’ himself ‘for’ others or ‘for’ their sin” (p. 111). Use of the surrender formula in the Pauline corpus (Gal 1:4; 2:20; Rom 4:25; 8:32) was examined. The conclusions that were made regarding these passages necessitate (and even presuppose) “an existing solidarity or [corporate] unity between Christ and believers. . . . Christ shares the fate of the believers in regard to the believers’ sins – namely, Christ dies – and as a result, the believers share in the fate of Christ’s death and vindication – namely, the

believers die with Christ and receive life [resurrection] and justification.” (p. 142). Chapter 5 examined several texts (1 Thess 4:14-17; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:20-22; Rom 6:5; 8:11) “that are generally considered to reflect the idea that the believers’ eschatological resurrection is related to Jesus’ resurrection” (p. 143). Chapter 6 examined Paul’s references to the Lord’s Supper (pp. 169-92), which were regarded as a representation of the death of Jesus and of the salvation of believers who have corporate unity with Christ.

The final chapter, “Jewish Antecedents of the Soteriological Notion of Participationism,” examined passages in Second Maccabees, Assumption of Moses, Prayer of Azariah, and Judith (pp. 193-230). Powers believed these texts prove “that an individual’s death or willingness to die results in a beneficial effect for the group to which he or she belongs. Furthermore, the individual’s group is viewed as participating in the victory or vindication of the one individual” (p. 195). According to this view, several consequential things occur: (1) an individual dies on behalf of others (not in the place of others); (2) God vindicates the death; (3) the individual’s group is benefited; (4) the group participates in the vindication of the individual; (5) the individual represents the group; and, (6) the group experiences solidarity with the martyr (p. 194). The apocryphal writings and pseudepigraphal work were examined as representative of Jewish antecedents that are similar to the effects of Jesus’ death in the Pauline corpus. “Two remarkable differences” between the Jewish and biblical texts included: (1) “the notion ‘people of God’ undergoes a certain shift of meaning” and (2) “the effectiveness of Jesus’ death and resurrection for the salvation of believers was considered by the earliest believers to be indefinite” [as opposed to being limited to Paul’s contemporaries] (p. 225). Powers’ alleged correspondence, however, between the Jewish and biblical texts has many deficiencies. One notable example is that the Jewish people did not share in the death *and* resurrection of the martyr.

The conclusion (pp. 231-36) reveals several matters that could have been researched in greater detail (e.g. pp. 232, 235). There is much repetition of the arguments in this volume that could be edited. The work functions essentially as a study of Pauline theology. Throughout the work is an ongoing attempt to deny the substitutionary atonement of Christ. Surely, the author was incorrect in stating “Jesus’ death . . . provoked God’s grace not only toward Jesus . . . but also towards Jesus’ followers” (p. 169). Jesus’ death certainly did remove God’s just wrath but the cross was predestined as the initiative of God’s love. Despite this reviewer’s disagreement with the theological conclusions of the author, his work could be commended for attempting to consider “Jewish Hellenistic writings” in relation to Pauline theology (as opposed to secular Greek texts; pp. 22-23).

Ron J. Bigalke Jr., *Eternal Ministries*