

SOUTHEASTERN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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Southeastern Theological Review

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Introduction

Benjamin L. Merkle

STR Editor

This volume of *STR* is dedicated to the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his *95 Theses* on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany (October 31, 1517). Although many other factors were involved in igniting the Protestant Reformation, Luther's nailing his *95 Theses* is viewed as the landmark action that both solidified and catapulted the Reformation. For Luther (and others), his protest against the Roman Catholic Church was not based on his desire for power or prestige. Rather, it was a longing for a return to the unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by the apostle Paul. But there always remains the question for us: Did the Reformers go far enough?

The first essay in this issue is by Ray Van Neste, Professor of Biblical Studies and Director of the R. C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University. In his essay, "The Mangled Narrative of Mission and Evangelism in the Reformation," Van Neste disputes the notion that the Reformers had no concern for missions. This view, originally promoted by Gustav Warneck, has found its way into many missions textbooks but is largely unfounded. Van Neste demonstrates through the works of Martin Luther, Martin Bucer, and John Calvin that, although their concern for missions may not be as robust and we might hope, these Reformers show significant concern for the spread of the gospel to the nations.

In the second essay, Nathan Finn, Professor of Theological Studies and Dean of the School of Theology and Missions at Union University, relates Baptist identity to the five solas of the Reformation and the priesthood of all believers. He argues that using retrieval theology in relation to the Reformation will help Baptists solidify who they are in relation to (1) regenerate church membership, (2) believer-only baptism, (3) congregational polity, (4) local church autonomy, and (5) religious liberty.

In the third essay, Malcolm Yarnell, Research Professor of Systematic Theology and Director of the Center for Theological Research at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, discusses the development of Baptist ecclesiology in relation to the churches of the English Reformation. In particular he explains the ecclesiology of Southern Baptist churches in relation to (1) their people (structures), (2) their God (activities), and (3) to others.

The next essay is somewhat of a departure from what might be expected in *STR*. This essay, by Stephen Eccher, Assistant Professor of Church History and Reformation Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, is a reflective account of an eleven-day study tour to Germany and Switzerland during the summer of 2017. Eccher not only describes the significant historical locations they visited, but, more importantly, offers an honest evaluation of world of the Reformers—both their positive contributions and also their shortcomings.

As with some of our previous issues, the final essay of this issue is an interview—this time with Jennifer Powell McNutt, Associate Professor of Theology and History of Christianity at Wheaton College. Because Dr. McNutt specializes in Reformation studies, she is a perfect candidate to interview. She received her PhD from the University of St. Andrews under the supervision of Bruce Gordon. Reformation history is her primary focus with a special emphasis on John Calvin.

The Mangled Narrative of Missions and Evangelism in the Reformation

Ray Van Neste
Union University

In the nineteenth century, Gustav Warneck, often considered the father of missiology, argued that the Reformers had no concern for missions. This idea has been picked up and repeated by a long series of evangelical missions textbooks and popular writings. However, there is a significant amount of research on the Reformers that disproves this widely held idea. This article examines Warneck's arguments exposing various weaknesses. Second, it examines the writings and work of Martin Luther, Martin Bucer, and John Calvin, noting the significant concern for the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

Key Words: evangelism, Gustav Warneck, John Calvin, Martin Bucer, Martin Luther, missions, Reformation.

Over the past century, many of the books dealing with the history of Christian missions have declared, with varying degrees of certainty, that the Protestant Reformers were derelict in their duty to spread the gospel throughout the entire world. Writers have accused the Reformers of both inactivity and indifference. This unverified opinion has become a virtual certainty among the popular audience. However, is this a fair assessment of what the Reformers did and taught? In this essay I will trace the history of this deleterious account of the Reformers in regard to missions and evangelism, critique the methodology of this view, and then present the writings and actions of three Reformers: Martin Luther, Martin Bucer, and John Calvin.

A Negative Interpretation

The Reformation has long been considered by Protestants as a great spiritual revival and doctrinal renewal of the church. However, some writers have argued that the Reformers failed to grasp the missionary imperative of the church and have even accused the Reformers of leading the church astray. This view appears to originate with German missiologist Gustav Warneck (1834–1910), a pastor and missions enthusiast whom many regard as the father of Protestant missiology. In his influential survey, *Outline of the History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present*

Time, Warneck stated that although the conclusion was “painful,” nevertheless it is clear that Luther and Calvin’s “view of the missionary task of the church was essentially defective.”¹ Warneck concedes that Luther preached the gospel earnestly himself, but “nowhere does Luther indicate the heathen as the objects of evangelistic work.”² Furthermore, Luther “never gives an intimation from which it can be inferred that he held direct mission work among the heathen to be commanded.”³ Warneck concludes “the mission to the heathen world had no interest for [Luther] or his fellow-labourers.”⁴

What evidence does Warneck produce to ground such a conclusion? He acknowledges the many obstacles confronting any worldwide effort from Protestants in the sixteenth century including persecution, lack of contact with “heathen” nations, lack of infrastructure, and inability to travel to newly discovered lands since Catholic countries (e.g., Spain and Portugal) held sway over the oceans. Still, Warneck faults the Reformers for not lamenting such limitations, suggesting that if they really wanted to reach such far away areas, there would be indications in their writings of strong yearnings to break through these obstacles to mission.⁵ Instead, according to Warneck, we find among the Reformers no idea or activity of missions “in the sense we understand them today.”⁶

According to Warneck, faulty theology caused the Reformers’ defective perception of the imperative of missions. He specified three problematic ideas. First, Warneck says Luther believed the apostles had fulfilled the Great Commission so it no longer applied to the church of his time. However, Warneck acknowledges that Bucer and Calvin did not believe this. Second, Warneck says the Reformers’ doctrine of election kept them from sensing any missionary duty. Even though Bucer and Calvin did not think the Great Commission was fulfilled, their belief that the

¹ Gustav Warneck, *Outline of the History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time* (Edinburgh: J. Gemmell, 1884), 17. Three of Warneck’s ten German editions were translated into English in 1884, 1901, and 1906.

² *Ibid.*, 12.

³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵ Gustav Warneck, *Outline of the History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time* (Chicago: Revell, 1901), 8–9. The various editions of this book remain consistent in the critique of the Reformers. I drew the first several quotes from an earlier edition because Warneck’s points were made more succinctly there.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

work of salvation was God's work meant there was no human responsibility for the work of missions. Third, the eschatological views of the Reformers inhibited missionary thinking. "Luther and his contemporaries were persuaded that the end of the world was at hand . . . so that no time remained for the further development and extension of the kingdom of God on earth."⁷

Warneck's negative representation has been echoed by others through the years. Kenneth Scott Latourette says the Reformers were indifferent to the task of world missions due to their faulty theology, though he does not mention election specifically.⁸ Herbert Kane marvels that "spiritual forces released" in the Reformation failed to produce *any* missionary activity, and he blames the same three points of theology that Warneck lists.⁹ Stephen Neill finds "exceedingly little" interest in missions from the Reformers.¹⁰ Neill says little about the reasons for this deficiency but does comment that the Reformation churches did not feel that missions was an obligation on the church. William Hogg says the Reformers "disavowed any obligation for Christians to carry the gospel."¹¹ Michael Nazir-Ali charges the Reformers with abandoning the responsibility of world missions and blames this on their understanding of election and the idea that the Great Commission no longer applied.¹² According to Ruth Tucker, during the Reformation "the urgency to reach out to others was not seen as a top priority," and she suggests the Reformers did not acknowledge the responsibility to evangelize those without the gospel.¹³ She also roots this problem in faulty theology. Gordon Olson says the

⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), 27. Latourette focuses on Luther but does not quote Luther on any of these points. He simply cites Warneck as proof.

⁹ J. Herbert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Missions from Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 73.

¹⁰ Stephen Neill and Owen Chadwick, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin, 1990), 189.

¹¹ William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth Century Background* (New York: Harper, 1952), 1–2. Hogg cites Warneck as his support.

¹² Michael Nazir-Ali, *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Witness* (London: Flame, 1990), 42–43.

¹³ Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 20. According to Tucker, only in the eighteenth century did Protestants begin "acknowledging their responsibility to evangelize those without the gospel" (98).

Reformers did "virtually nothing to advance the cause of world evangelization," and he blames the Reformers' theology, mentioning the same three points as Warneck.¹⁴ Johannes Verkuyl blames the Reformers' lack of missions activity on their belief that the Great Commission no longer applied, but he does not reference election or eschatology.¹⁵ Justice Anderson, in a standard missions textbook, attributes the Reformers' lack of missionary zeal to a misunderstanding of the Great Commission and eschatology.¹⁶

This negative interpretation of the Reformers appears commonly in more recent theological writings as well. For example Ed Stetzer writes, "The church that 'reformed' lost touch with the God who sends, and the mission of the church suffered."¹⁷ Missions professor Al James says that "the Reformers' theology had little or no room for missions activity" and "a faulty theology served as a hindrance to the early Protestant Church being involved in missions."¹⁸ David Allen refers to the "general consensus" that the Reformers had almost no missionary vision.¹⁹ Paige Patterson, in a column posted at the website of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board, charged the Reformers with being ineffectual in missions and cited their doctrine of election as the reason.²⁰

¹⁴ C. Gordon Olson and Don Fanning, *What in the World Is God Doing? Essentials of Global Missions: An Introductory Guide* (Lynchburg, VA: Global Gospel Publishers, 2013), 103.

¹⁵ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, trans. Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 18–19.

¹⁶ Justice Anderson, "Medieval and Renaissance Missions (500–1792)," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: B&H, 1998), 194–95. Anderson, like several other Free Church authors, says the connection between state and church in the Magisterial Reformers hindered missions since a state church's mission is confined to national interests. However, this fails to account for the missionaries sent out from Geneva to various countries throughout Europe.

¹⁷ Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 23.

¹⁸ R. Alton James, "Post-Reformation Missions Pioneers," in *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices for the 21st Century*, ed. Mike Barnett and Robin Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 251, 252.

¹⁹ David Allen, "Preaching for a Great Commission Resurgence," in *Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 286.

²⁰ Paige Patterson, "The Anabaptists, Evangelism, and Missions," May 29, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/2017/05/29/anabaptists/>.

In an essay contained in his highly influential textbook, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Ralph Winter says Christians of the Reformation era sent no missionaries, “did not even talk of mission outreach,” and did “not even try to reach out.”²¹

Clearly, Warneck’s argument took root. Few of these works present their own primary source research on the topic. They simply cite or allude to Warneck or to someone who has followed him. Rarely is there evidence of Warneck being read critically. Typically Warneck’s view of the Reformers is simply asserted or assumed as one of the proven facts of historical scholarship. However, this raises the question of whether Warneck was correct or even if he has been properly understood. Thus, we now turn to critical interaction with Warneck, particularly how he defined missions and his appraisal of the Reformers’ theology.

Warneck’s Definition of Missions

In popular theological literature and conversation, a common assumption is that the Reformers had no concern for the salvation of souls or the preaching of the gospel. However, this is not what Warneck argued at all. In fact, he concedes that the Reformers were effective in Christianizing Europe and, in this sense, the Reformation “may be said to have carried on a mission work at home on an extensive scale.”²² Warneck also concedes that Luther encouraged any who were taken captive by the Turks (a real threat in the sixteenth century) to be prepared to be a gospel witness to their captors. Luther urges such Christians to faithful living and witness that they might “convert many.” This would appear to demonstrate significant mission-mindedness, but Warneck dismisses it as simply “the spirit of Christian testimony” rather than proper “missionary work” since this comes from the scattering of persecution rather than the systematic sending out of missionaries.²³ Elsewhere Warneck quotes a long excerpt from an Ascension Sunday sermon of Luther’s where he describes how the gospel will go out to the whole world “sped ever farther by preachers hunted and persecuted hither and thither into the world.” This, however,

²¹ Ralph D. Winter, “The Kingdom Strikes Back: Ten Epochs of Redemptive History,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 224.

²² Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions* (1901), 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15. Yet, the original spread of the gospel in Acts resulted from an outbreak of persecution.

cannot be understood as an interest in world missions, Warneck says, because there is “no reference to any systematic missionary enterprise.”²⁴ These are just two examples of many that show that Warneck is operating with a very narrow, even anachronistic, view of missions. To be reckoned as “missions,” Warneck believes, it must be a systematic work, preferably by an institution outside the church that consistently sends missionaries to previously unevangelized areas.²⁵ As a result, Warneck completely discounts numerous mission-minded statements made by various Reformers because they do not call for the establishment of a missions agency. For example, Martin Bucer’s rebuke of Christians for their attitude towards Jews and Turks is diminished because “there is little trace of earnestness as to how one may win their souls to Christ our Lord.” Bucer prays for church leaders who will help the church labor for the salvation of Jews, Turks, “and all unbelievers to whom they may ever have any access.” Warneck concedes that this sounds like “a direct summons to missions,” but it only appears so since Bucer neglects to say anything about “instituting missions.”²⁶ What Warneck means by this is clarified later when he faults Bucer for failing to see the need to devise an “institution for the dissemination of Christianity.”²⁷

Warneck fails to find any evidence of mission activity or thinking in the Reformers essentially because he has defined “missions” in accordance with what he and others were doing in the nineteenth century.²⁸ His arguments prove that the Reformers were not participants in a nineteenth century missions agency! But they do not prove that the Reformers had

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁵ See also Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 45–46. Schulz describes Warneck’s conception of mission this way, “Warneck promotes a sociological and organizational concept of mission that encourages a ‘sending’ pursued deliberately by an institution, such as a mission society or a core group of individuals, and that works in geographic terms of leaving one territory for another, preferably across an ocean” (46).

²⁶ Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions* (1901), 18.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸ Jean-François Zorn has shown that the word “mission” was first used in regard to global gospel outreach in the sixteenth century by Roman Catholics. This is why this specific term is not used by the Reformers—it was a new term coined by those in opposition to them (“Did Calvin Foster or Hinder the Missions?” *Exchange* 40 [2011]: 179–81).

little or no concern about the worldwide spread of the gospel or the salvation of people from all over the world.²⁹

This begs the question of a proper definition of “missions.” Yet such a definition is a topic of debate among contemporary missiologists. David Bosch warns against defining mission “too sharply and too self-confidently.” He states, “Ultimately, mission remains undefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections.”³⁰ Instead of defining missions, he expounds the various elements of missions. He clearly believes that missions involves taking the gospel to a world in need, preaching, planting churches, discipling, and meeting needs in Jesus’ name.³¹ Bosch argues there is no theological basis for distinguishing “foreign” and “domestic” missions. He refers to the myth “that travelling to foreign lands is the *sine qua non* for any kind of missionary endeavor and the final test and criterion of what is truly missionary,” and says this idea has been demolished.³² Bosch’s survey suggests that modern missiology has turned away from the narrow definition that governed Warneck’s analysis. At the core, missions is the Church joining in the mission of God to bring people into fellowship with himself by gospel proclamation, church planting, discipleship, and living out the ethical implications of the gospel.³³

²⁹ The charge that Warneck’s critique of the Reformers’ view of missions is anachronistic is also made by Robert Kolb, “Late Reformation Lutherans on Mission and Confession,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 20 (2006): 26. For a thorough critique of Warneck’s conception of “mission” see Elias Medeiros, “The Reformers’ Commitment to the Propagation of the Gospel to All Nations from 1555 to 1654” (PhD diss., Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS, 2009), especially pp. 15–111.

³⁰ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 9.

Bosch, 9.

³¹ See his table of contents as well as his closing comments on p. 519.

³² Bosch, 10.

³³ This is similar to the definition suggested by Justice Anderson, that missions refers to “the conscious efforts on the part of the church, in its corporate capacity, or through voluntary agencies, to proclaim the gospel (with all this implies) among peoples and in regions where it is still unknown or only inadequately known” (“An Overview of Missiology,” in *Missiology: an Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie C. Smith, and Justice Anderson [Nashville: B&H, 1998], 2). See also Bruce Ashford, ed., *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011).

Warneck’s Assessment of the Reformers’ Theology

Even if Warneck’s definition of missions is too restrictive, is there truth to the claim that the Reformers’ theology kept them from seeing and embracing the missions mandate of Scripture? We will take up each of the three points of theology Warneck and others have listed as problematic.

First, did the Reformers teach that world missions was no longer an obligation for the church? Calvin explicitly rejects this idea in his commentary on Matt 28:20: “It ought likewise to be remarked, that this was not spoken to the apostles alone; for the Lord promises his assistance not for a single age only, but *even to the end of the world*.”³⁴ Furthermore, lecturing on Mic 4:3, Calvin stated, “The kingdom of Christ was only begun in the world, when God commanded the Gospel to be everywhere proclaimed, and . . . at this day its course is not as yet completed.”³⁵ Whatever one thinks of Calvin’s theology or mission involvement, he certainly did not teach that the Great Commission had been fulfilled in the apostolic era.³⁶

Neither is it true that Luther taught that the day of missionary obligation had passed.³⁷ Writing on Matt 22:9 Luther stated, “This [time for missions] is not yet completed. This era continues so that the servants go out into the highways. The apostles began this work and we continue inviting all. The table will be full at the advent of the last day and when the Gospel has been made known in the whole world.”³⁸ He also stated, “It is necessary always to proceed to those to whom no preaching has been

³⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, vol. 17 of *Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. W. Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 391 (emphasis original).

³⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on Micah*, vol. 14 of *Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. W. Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 265.

³⁶ Part of the problem with this misrepresentation of the Reformers is that later readers expect the Reformers to speak of missions from the same texts modern readers do (e.g., Matt 28:19–20).

³⁷ John Warwick Montgomery stated, “To attribute such views to Luther is, however . . . to fly directly in the face of the evidence” (“Luther and Missions,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 3.4 [1967]: 193–202).

³⁸ WA 17/1:442.46ff., cited in Ingemar Öberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study with Special Reference to Luther’s Bible Exposition* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 134. Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 386, has a helpful discussion of how Luther’s comments have been misunderstood as suggesting the era of world mission closed with the apostles.

done, in order that the number [of Christians] may become greater.”³⁹ In contrast to Warneck’s accusation that Luther thought there was no need to take the gospel further because it had already reached the whole world via the apostles, Luther says,

Their preaching went out to the whole world even though it has not yet reached the whole world. This outcome has begun and its goal is set though it is not yet completed and accomplished; instead, it shall be extended through preaching even farther until the Day of Judgment. When this preaching reaches all corners of the world and is heard and pronounced, then it is complete and in every respect finished and the Last Day will also arrive.⁴⁰

Luther anticipates that people “will be sent by God among the nations as preachers and thus draw many people to themselves and through themselves to Christ.”⁴¹ Luther specifically called for the gospel to be taken to the Bohemians, the Russians, and the Muslim Turks.⁴² Within a short time after his death, Luther’s disciples had set out on mission work to all of these groups.⁴³ And these men, like those sent to other parts of Europe, went out knowing they were likely to be executed.

Second, did the Reformers’ doctrine of election prevent them from doing mission work? Warneck says that since Luther saw salvation as a work completely of God’s grace, he did not think a “human missionary agency” was part of God’s plan.⁴⁴ He asserts the same of Bucer and Calvin. For proof he simply cites one statement by Calvin without context:

³⁹ Cited in Elert, *Structure of Lutheranism*, 389.

⁴⁰ Ascension Sermon, May 29, 1522. WA 10/3:139.17–140.16. Cited in Volker Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003), 24. See also Luther’s Sermon on Titus 2:11–15, Christmas Postil, 1522. WA 10/1.1:21.3–23.14 (cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 98–99) where he clearly says the work of taking the gospel to the whole earth is not yet completed.

⁴¹ *The Prophet Zechariah Expounded*, LW 20:305–6. Cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 97.

⁴² Warneck also critiques Luther’s idea of world mission by saying Luther thought the mandate was simply that the gospel be preached to all people, not that they would necessarily believe. Warneck is bothered that “the Reformer [Luther] does not understand the progress of the Gospel through the whole world in the sense that Christianity would become everywhere the ruling religion, or that all men would be won to the gospel” (*History of Protestant Missions* [1901], 13).

⁴³ Öberg, *Luther and World Mission*, 498–99.

⁴⁴ Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions* (1901), 16. Once again Warneck sees missions only in terms of a sending “agency.”

“We are taught that the kingdom of Christ is neither to be advanced nor maintained by the industry of men, but this is the work of God alone; for believers are taught to rest solely on His blessing.”⁴⁵ Later writers often make this same assertion, citing the same quote without context or any mention of where it is found.⁴⁶ It is a strong statement, but anyone familiar with Calvin’s writings will recognize his affirmation that salvation and the advance of God’s kingdom ultimately depends on God alone. However, even a cursory reading of Calvin will show that he also strongly emphasizes human responsibility as well as recognizing that God works through means.⁴⁷ For example, Calvin states that the “gospel does not fall like rain from the clouds, but is brought by the hands of men,” and God “makes use of our exertions, and employs us as his instruments, for cultivating his field.”⁴⁸ Warneck does not demonstrate how Calvin’s understanding of election hindered missions. Neither do later writers. It is assumed that the doctrine of election “made missions appear extraneous if God had already chosen those he would save,”⁴⁹ or “if God wills the conversion of the heathen, they will be saved without human instrumentality.”⁵⁰ Yet, we have already seen various statements from Luther and Calvin that called upon believers to proclaim the gospel so that people might be saved. Furthermore, if this doctrine made foreign missions moot, why did it not stifle mission work within Europe? Even Warneck concedes that this work was significant. Why would a belief in God’s sovereignty

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 20. I have not been able to find the source of this quote. In the books I have found, authors quote it without citation or simply cite Warneck.

⁴⁶ E.g., Kane, *A Concise History*, 74; Olson and Fanning, *What in the World Is God Doing?* 103.

⁴⁷ Zorn, “Did Calvin Foster or Hinder the Missions?” 178, 184, is especially helpful on Calvin’s emphasis on the necessity of means. See also David Calhoun, “John Calvin: Missionary Hero or Missionary Failure?” *Presbyterion* 5.1 (Spring 1979): 18–20.

⁴⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, vol. 19 of *Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. W. Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 399; *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, vol. 16 of *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 121. Elsewhere Calvin also says the fact that ministers help rescue souls from death “ought to be no small encouragement for godly teachers to stir up the heat of their . . . desire, when they hear that they call back miserable souls from destruction, and that they help those who should otherwise perish, that they may be saved” (*Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 19 of *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 98).

⁴⁹ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 97. See also page 20.

⁵⁰ Kane, *A Concise History*, 74.

prevent the Reformers from trying to evangelize overseas but not preclude them taking the gospel to France (or other areas of Europe) at the risk of their lives?

Last, Warneck asserts that the Reformers did not believe there was much time for mission engagement since the world would end soon. Latourette, Kane, and Tucker all repeat this claim without any citations from Luther or any demonstration of how the idea shaped actions other than saying the Reformers (particularly Luther) did not think there was time for mission work. However, Warneck conceded that Luther nowhere says the imminent end of the age was a reason for not doing missions. Thus, this connection is merely a guess. However, Warneck says the reason why Luther never made the connection is that even apart from his eschatology Luther knew nothing of a duty for world mission.⁵¹ So, Luther's eschatology kept him from missions, and we know this because even though we cannot link his views on eschatology and missions, Luther was ignorant of a missions duty anyway. This is a convoluted argument, and yet people have repeated it for over a century.⁵²

Thus, all three areas of doctrinal critique fail. Whether or not one agrees with the specific doctrines in view, the arguments fail to prove that these doctrines either were held by the Reformers or that they hindered mission thinking or work.⁵³

Evaluation of the Reformers Themselves

Now we must turn to the deeds and writings of three Reformers to see what evidence we find of missions involvement and evangelistic impulse. Since we have critiqued Warneck's narrow definition of missions, in the Reformers' words and deeds, I will look for an active calling of people to faith in Christ and a concern for the gospel to reach the nations.

Mission within Christendom

One key problem in Warneck (and those who follow him) is his failure

⁵¹ Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions* (1901), 16.

⁵² See Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 51–52, for further refutation of the idea that Luther was certain of the imminent end of the world and that this hindered missions.

⁵³ It will not do to argue as Gordon Olson does that at least we know some people have used the doctrine of election to stifle mission endeavors. Practically every positive doctrine has been abused by someone over the years (*What in the World Is God Doing?*, 104). The question in view is whether the doctrine hindered mission work in the Reformers themselves.

to recognize the missionary setting for Protestants in Europe in the sixteenth century. The gospel was largely unknown by the vast majority of people in Europe, and the Reformers labored to get this gospel message to as many people as possible. Calvin's preface to his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* declares that his writing was intended to aid his fellow countrymen in France, "very many of whom I knew to be hungering and thirsting for Christ; but I saw very few who had been duly imbued with even a slight knowledge of him."⁵⁴ Calvin expounded the Scriptures to help people know Christ. This is why one biographer says, "Calvin in Strasbourg or Geneva was also a missionary, an envoy."⁵⁵ Luther also said that many of the people who attended the church services "do not believe and are not yet Christians." Thus, he said, "the gospel must be publicly preached to move them to believe and become Christians."⁵⁶

Scott Hendrix's *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* has been particularly helpful in demonstrating the mission element involved in the Reformers' work in Europe.⁵⁷ His basic premise is that the "Reformers saw themselves in a missionary situation in which the faith had to be taught to a populace they judged to be inadequately informed."⁵⁸ The entire program of the Reformers was to re-evangelize their native lands. Calvin, for example, saw himself as a missionary, laboring "to turn nominal believers into real Christians."⁵⁹ Of course, Hendrix grants, it took some time before full-fledged international mission work began in Reformation churches, but this developing outward reach was an organic result of Reformation ideas. "The Reformation's own sources state plainly how Reformers saw their enterprise as a missionary campaign to renew and replant Christianity in European culture."⁶⁰ Nineteenth-century scholars working in a largely Christianized Europe could miss the fact

⁵⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 20.9.

⁵⁵ Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 138.

⁵⁶ Luther, "German Mass," LW 53:62–64. Cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 44.

⁵⁷ Scott Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard: The Reformation Agendas of Christianization* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 95. Hendrix also cites the revised preface of the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* where Calvin says, "God has filled my mind with zeal to spread his kingdom and to further the public good" (88).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 163–64. Theodor Bibliander (1509–1564), was a biblical scholar from Zürich, who, according to Hendrix, was probably the best informed among the Reformers about Islam. He published a book on how Christians should respond

that in the mind of the Reformers the majority of Europe in their day was in need of evangelization.⁶¹

The training and sending out of pastors that occurred in Geneva and Wittenberg should be understood as an essential element of the Reformers' missionary campaign. The missionary zeal of these pastors is underscored by the fact that many or most of the areas to which they went were hostile to these pastors so they went out at the risk of their lives. Under Calvin's leadership, Geneva became "the hub of a vast missionary enterprise"⁶² and "a dynamic center or nucleus from which the vital missionary energy it generated radiated out into the world beyond."⁶³ Protestant refugees from all over Europe fled to Geneva; they came not merely for safety but also to learn from Calvin the doctrines of the Reformation so they could return home to spread the true gospel. The Register of the Company of Pastors in Geneva records numerous people sent out from Geneva during Calvin's time to "evangelize foreign parts."⁶⁴ The records are incomplete, and eventually, due to persecution, it became too dangerous to record the names of those sent out, although it numbered more than one hundred in one year alone. Bruce Gordon refers to the sending of such a large number of missionaries into France the "most audacious missionary effort" undertaken by the Genevan church.⁶⁵ By 1557 it was a normal part of business for the Genevan pastors to send missionaries into

to the Turks as well as published the first printed version of the Koran in Latin. He "emphasized that God willed all peoples, including Muslims, to be saved" (166–68).

⁶¹ Today we can also easily miss that in the sixteenth century various distinct cultures and people groups existed within what is now the boundary of a single country.

⁶² Raymond K. Anderson, "Calvin and Missions," *Christian History* 5.4 (Fall 1986): 23.

⁶³ Philip E. Hughes, "John Calvin: Director of Missions," in *The Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. J. H. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 45. Portions of this section of the essay are taken from Ray Van Neste, "John Calvin on Missions and Evangelism," *Founders Journal* 33 (1998): 15–21.

⁶⁴ Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin, a Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 182. Cf. Philip Hughes, ed. and trans., *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 308.

⁶⁵ Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 312. David Calhoun states, "The degree of commitment of Calvin and the pastors of Geneva to this missionary outreach is nothing less than amazing" ("John Calvin," 28).

France. Robert M. Kingdon called it a "concentrated missionary effort."⁶⁶ Philip Hughes notes that Geneva became a "school of missions" that had as one of its purposes "to send out witnesses" who would take the gospel "far and wide." Hughes describes Geneva as "a dynamic centre of missionary concern and activity, an axis from which the light of the Good News radiated forth through the testimony of those who, after thorough preparation in this school, were sent forth in the service of Jesus Christ."⁶⁷ Zorn suggests Calvin developed a "missionary theology for Europe."⁶⁸ For good reason Hendrix concludes, "The Reformation was a missionary campaign that envisioned a renewed Christian society in Europe."⁶⁹

So, there is no need to discount the words and deeds of the Reformers in regard to the evangelization of their neighbors and neighboring lands, as Warneck did. In fact, given the persecution they faced and the difficulty of travel, we should commend their work. Let us then turn our attention to a sampling from the writings of Luther, Bucer, and Calvin, as representative Reformers, to see the attention given to concern for the salvation of others.

Martin Luther (1483–1546)

Although it does not seem to have been picked up in most evangelical missions textbooks, substantial attention has already been given to Luther's comments on evangelism and world mission. Volker Stolle's *The Church Comes from All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission* gleaned significant sections from Luther where he advocates for the task of taking the gospel to all people.⁷⁰ Robert Kolb hailed Stolle's work as "more historically sensitive" than Warneck, and it "demonstrates Luther's interest in the spread of the Christian faith."⁷¹ Werner Elert has also drawn from the rich resources of Luther's mission-oriented comments to demonstrate Luther's concern for mission, noting how his conception of mission differed from (and was healthier than) Warneck's view.⁷²

⁶⁶ Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvinist Religious Aggression," in *The French Wars of Religion, How Important Were Religious Factors?*, ed. J. H. M. Salmon (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1967), 6.

⁶⁷ Hughes, *Register*, 25. See also Michael A. G. Haykin, "John Calvin's Missionary Influence in France," *Reformation and Revival* 10.4 (Fall 2001): 35–44.

⁶⁸ Zorn, "Did Calvin Foster or Hinder the Missions," 178. Zorn's article is perhaps the best one on Calvin and missions.

⁶⁹ Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard*, 174.

⁷⁰ Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*.

⁷¹ Kolb, "Late Reformation Lutherans on Mission and Confession," 40.

⁷² Elert, *Structure of Lutheranism*, 385–402.

Also, Ingemar Öberg, in his *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study with Special Reference to Luther's Bible Exposition*, demonstrated thoroughly Luther's drive to get the gospel to all people.⁷³ Robert Kolb commended Öberg's work, stating that he had mined a "wide variety of sources within Luther's writings with great care and acumen."⁷⁴ As a result, Kolb said, Öberg showed the wealth of insights to be found in Luther's writings "for sound mission thinking."⁷⁵

There is no need or space for restating all that Stolle, Öberg, and Elert have gleaned from Luther, but in what follows I will draw some examples from their work and my own observations to demonstrate Luther's evangelistic and missionary concern.⁷⁶ Luther's correspondence, alone, was a missionary endeavor as he wrote to people all over Europe urging gospel truths and counseling leaders and others in how to advance the cause of Christ.⁷⁷ Furthermore, Luther taught his people to pray for the conversion of unbelievers and for the gospel to be preached over the whole world. In his brief work written to teach his people how to pray he instructs them to meditate on each petition of the Lord's Prayer, turning that into specific prayers. Luther provides an example of how one might pray from each petition, and in the first three petitions he explicitly prays for the conversion of unbelievers.⁷⁸

This evangelistic concern can also be seen in Luther's exposition of the Lord's Prayer in his Large Catechism. Discussing the second petition, "Your kingdom come," Luther explains that this teaches us, among other things, to pray that the kingdom "may gain recognition and followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world." Later in the same question he says this petition teaches us to pray both that believers might grow in the kingdom and that "it may come to those who are not yet in it." Concluding, he writes, "All this is to simply say:

⁷³ Öberg, *Luther and World Mission*.

⁷⁴ Robert Kolb, foreword to *Luther and World Mission*, by Öberg, viii.

⁷⁵ Ibid. See also, John Warwick Montgomery, "Luther and Missions," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 3.4 (1967): 193–202.

⁷⁶ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 46–47 n. 3, lists more works which highlight the mission emphasis in Luther's writings.

⁷⁷ For a fascinating graphic display of the geographic distribution of Luther's correspondence, see Ernest G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times: The Reformation from a New Perspective* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 4. Plass calls Luther's correspondence "a missionary influence, as was the University of Wittenberg" (Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says, An Anthology* [Saint Louis: Concordia, 1959], 958).

⁷⁸ Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012).

'Dear Father, we pray Thee, give us thy Word, that the gospel may be sincerely preached throughout the world and that it may be received by faith and work and live in us.'⁷⁹ People who pray regularly for the conversion of people around the world are a mission-minded people. Pastors who teach their people to pray this way are mission-minded pastors.

As noted previously, Warneck conceded that Luther "with all earnestness" urged "the preaching of the gospel, and longs for a free course for it" but said "nowhere does Luther indicate the heathen as the objects of evangelistic work."⁸⁰ However, preaching on Matt 23:15, Luther says, "The very best of all works is that the heathen have been led from idolatry to God."⁸¹ Furthermore, the conversion of the "heathen" was a significant theme in a number of Luther's hymns, including this one based on Psalm 67:

Would that the Lord would grant us grace, with blessings rich
provide us,
And with clear shining let his face, To life eternal light us;
That we his gracious work may know, And what is his good pleasure,
And also to the heathen show, Christ's riches without measure
And unto God convert them.⁸²

Here is another Luther hymn based on Mark 16:15–16 and Luke 24:46–49.

Christ to all his followers says: Go forth
Give to all men acquaintance
That lost in sin lies the whole earth,
And must turn to repentance.
Who trusts and who is baptized, each one
Is thereby blest forever;
Is from that hour a new-born man,
And thenceforth dying never,
The kingdom shall inherit.⁸³

In another hymn based on Simeon's song in Luke 2:28–32, Luther also

⁷⁹ Luther, *Larger Catechism*, 2.51–54; in Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 427.

⁸⁰ Warneck, *History of Protestant Missions* (1901), 12.

⁸¹ Cited in Plass, *What Luther Says, An Anthology*, 957. Also in Elert, *Structure of Lutheranism*, 390.

⁸² LW 53:234, cited in Öberg, *Luther and World Mission*, 496. Öberg provides other examples as well.

⁸³ Cited in Öberg, *Luther and World Mission*, 496.

taught his people to embrace world evangelization.

It was God's love that sent you forth
 As man's salvation,
 Inviting to yourself the earth,
 Ev'ry nation,
 By your wholesome healing Word
 Resounding round our planet
 You are the health and saving light
 of lands in darkness;
 You feed and lighten those in night
 With your kindness.
 All God's people find in you
 Their treasure, joy and glory.⁸⁴

Luther's hymns were central to the piety of Christians who embraced his teachings. These hymns were sung in families and at work, thus significantly shaping the thinking and living of the people.⁸⁵ The inclusion of such explicit mission themes in these hymns is significant.

Luther is abundantly clear about the duty of believers, not just magistrates or official clergy, to share the gospel with others. He says, "One must always preach the Gospel so that one may bring some more to become Christians."⁸⁶ Furthermore, "It would be insufferable for someone to associate with people and not reveal what is useful for the salvation of their souls."⁸⁷ Indeed, Luther says, "If the need were to arise, all of us should be ready to die in order to bring a soul to God."⁸⁸ Luther recounts his own conversations with Jews where he sought to demonstrate Jesus is the Messiah and to call them to faith.⁸⁹ Luther states, "It is certain that a

⁸⁴ "In Peace and Joy I Now Depart" (Lutheran Worship 185.3–4); "Lobgesang des Simeon" (Hymn of Simeon) 1524 Evangelisch-Lutherisches Kirchengesangbuch 310.3–4 WA 35:439.8–20. Cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 49–50.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Robin Leaver, *The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017) and Christopher Boyd Brown, *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁸⁶ Sermon on the Good Shepherd, 1523. WA 12:540.3–15. Cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 26.

⁸⁷ Sermons on the First Books of Moses, WA 24:261.26–262.11. Cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 16.

⁸⁸ Plass, *What Luther Says*, 28–36.

⁸⁹ Sermon on Jer 23:6–8, November 25, 1526. WA 20:569.25–570.12. Cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 61. Luther's interaction with the Jews

Christian not only has the right and power to teach God's word but has the duty to do so on pain of losing his soul and of God's disfavor." Luther then answers the objection that someone might raise that all are not ordained to pastoral ministry. He says that if you find yourself in a place where there are no other Christians, then one "needs no other call than to be a Christian . . . it is his duty to preach and to teach the gospel to erring heathen or non-Christians, because of the duty of brotherly love."⁹⁰

Here are a few extended sections which demonstrate Luther's concern for personal evangelism and his desire to stir up others to this task.

For this reason, however, he lets us live that we may bring other people also to faith as he has done for us. . . . This is part of being a priest, being God's messenger and having his command to proclaim his Word. You should preach the "good work," that is, the miraculous work that God has done as he brought you from darkness into light. This is the highest priestly office. Consequently, your preaching should be done so that one brother proclaims to the other the mighty deed of God: how through him you have been redeemed from sin, hell, death, and from all misery, and have been called to eternal life. You should also instruct people how they should come to that light. Everything then should be directed in such a way that you recognize what God has done for you and that you, thereafter, make it your highest priority to proclaim this publicly and call everyone to the light to which you are called. Where you see people that do not know this, you should instruct them and also teach them how you learned, that is, how one through the good work and might of God is saved and comes from darkness into light.⁹¹

For once a Christian begins to know Christ as his Lord and Savior, through whom he is redeemed from death and brought into His dominion and inheritance, God completely permeates his heart. Now he is eager to help everyone acquire the same benefits. For

is too large a subject to delve into here. He urges gentleness toward them for the sake of evangelism in his early work. His later, harsh work is theologically, not racially motivated, where in frustration he calls for punishments with the aim of drawing them to Christ. This is misguided evangelistic zeal with terrible consequences.

⁹⁰ *The Right and Power of a Christian Congregation*, 1523. LW 39:309–10. Cited by Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 21.

⁹¹ Sermons on 1 Peter, first edition, 1523. WA 12:318.25–319.6. Cited by Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 20.

his greatest delight is in this treasure, the knowledge of Christ. Therefore he steps forth boldly, teaches and admonishes others, praises and confesses his treasure before everybody, prays and yearns that they, too, may obtain such mercy. . . . He constantly strives and struggles with all his might, as one who has no other object in life than to disseminate God's honor and glory among the people, that others may also receive such a spirit of grace.⁹²

Far from being concerned only about his own locale, Luther provides a model for missional engagement today. He warns people about getting too caught up with their own setting or language so that they are unable to reach others.

I do not at all agree with those who cling to one language and despise all others. I would rather train such youth and folk who could also be of service to Christ in foreign lands and be able to converse with the natives there, lest we become like the Waldenses in Bohemia, who have so ensconced their faith in their own language that they cannot speak plainly and clearly to anyone, unless he first learns their language.⁹³

As Herbert Blöchle said, "Luther did not speak just on occasions and periodically to the questions about mission to the heathens. His entire theology is rather permeated by a 'missionary dimension.'"⁹⁴

Martin Bucer (1491–1551)

Earlier we noted that Warneck quoted some strong missionary statements from Bucer. Furthermore, his book *Concerning the True Care of Souls* is filled with evangelistic pathos and exhortation. He even rebukes the church for failing to mount a more serious missionary endeavor to the "Jews and Turks" and says that the current threat from the Turks is God's judgment for their failure.⁹⁵

Bucer calls for earnest, zealous, evangelistic labor. To pastors he says,

⁹² *Exposition of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Chapters of the Gospel of St. John*, LW 24:87–88. Cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 23.

⁹³ *German Mass*, LW 53:62–64. Cited in Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations*, 43.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 48.

⁹⁵ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, trans. Peter Beale (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009), 87. Hendrix also notes that in spite of the known difficulty and dangers "a sixteenth-century mission to the Turks was nonetheless supported by Erasmus, Luther, Bullinger and Bibliander" (*Recultivating the Vineyard*, 168).

"True carers of souls and faithful ministers of Christ are not to miss anyone anywhere out with the word of salvation, but diligently to endeavor to seek out all those to whom they may have access in order to lead them to Christ our Lord."⁹⁶ Bucer calls for perseverance in sharing the gospel with people who do not readily accept it: "Faithful members of Christ are not to give up lightly on anyone."⁹⁷ In fact, Bucer says, "One should be so persistent with people [in calling them to faith] that to the evil flesh it seems to be a compulsion and urgent pressing."⁹⁸ For Bucer, zealous missionary work is rooted in God's desires and stirred by the example of Paul:

He [God] desires that they should be sought wherever they are scattered, and sought with such seriousness and diligence that one should be ready to be all things to all men, as dear Paul was [1 Cor. 9:22], and even to hazard one's own life, as the Lord himself did, so that the lost lambs might be found and won.⁹⁹

Bucer affirmed God's sovereign election of souls to salvation, but did not see this as conflicting with energetic missionary enterprise:

But it is not the Lord's will to reveal to us the secrets of his election; rather he commands us to go out into all the world and preach his gospel to every creature. . . . The fact that all people have been made by God and are God's creatures should therefore be reason enough for us to go to them, seeking with the utmost faithfulness to bring them to eternal life.¹⁰⁰

Combining the pastoral care noted previously and evangelistic zeal, Bucer prayed,

May the Lord Jesus, our chief Shepherd and Bishop, grant us such elders and carers of souls as will seek his lambs which are still lost¹⁰¹

John Calvin (1509–1564)

Contrary to the impression or assumption of many, Calvin exhibited

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 76. "Carers for souls" is Bucer's typical phrase for pastors, even though a term for "pastor" was available.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

deep evangelistic concern.¹⁰² Refugees came to Geneva, fleeing persecution, with many coming to be trained in order to return to their countries as gospel preachers. Pete Wilcox states, “Even if not all of those who attended Calvin’s lectures were missionaries in training, the majority were caught up with him in an evangelistic enterprise.”¹⁰³

In 1556 Calvin and his fellow ministers helped to support the first mission endeavor to target the New World, with a group sent to Brazil.¹⁰⁴ Warneck discounted this as a mission endeavor because he questioned Calvin’s involvement or sympathy and doubted whether the aim was really to evangelize indigenous people or just to provide religious services for the European settlers. However, we have a good account of the Genevan church’s actions in the personal journal of Jean de Léry, a member of the church in Geneva. A man seeking to establish a French colony in Brazil sent a letter to Calvin and the Genevan church asking for ministers of the gospel to accompany the settlers. According to de Léry the letter specifically asked for preachers and other people “well instructed in the Christian religion” so that they might teach the other Europeans and “bring savages to the knowledge of their salvation.”¹⁰⁵ The firsthand account we have of the event makes the missionary element of the endeavor crystal clear. Furthermore, the response of the church to this request is striking. De Léry records, “Upon receiving these letters and hearing this news, the church of Geneva at once gave thanks to God for the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ in a country so distant and likewise so foreign and among a nation entirely without knowledge of the true God.”¹⁰⁶ This is not the response of a church that has no heart for missions, a church concerned only with stabilizing itself. Rather, this is the result of teaching and preaching that held up the responsibility to proclaim the gospel to all people.¹⁰⁷ Here we see the longing for opportunity to engage in world

¹⁰² Indeed, Benoît could state of Calvin, “From the outset his theological work is an effort of evangelization and of witnessing” (J. D. Benoît, “Pastoral Care of the Prophet,” in *John Calvin, Contemporary Prophet*, ed. Jacob Hoogstra [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959], 51).

¹⁰³ Pete Wilcox, “Evangelisation in the Thought and Practice of John Calvin,” *Anvil* 12.3 (1995): 212.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. R. Pierce Beaver, “The Genevan Mission to Brazil,” in *The Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. John H. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 55–73; Kenneth J. Stewart, “Calvinism and Missions: The Contested Relationship Revisited,” *Themelios* 34 (2009): 63–78.

¹⁰⁵ Beaver, “The Genevan Mission to Brazil,” 61.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Beaver says Calvin was not in Geneva when the church decided to send

missions which Warneck says is missing.

Warneck also says the Brazil mission does not qualify as a mission endeavor because it did not last long enough. It is true that through treachery the effort came to an end. However, obedience and not success has always been the call. While the Brazil mission was still ongoing, a letter was sent to Calvin from one of the missionaries. He described the difficulties of their evangelistic efforts but said, “Since the Most High has given us this task, we expect this Edom to become a future possession of Christ.”¹⁰⁸ Not only was this clearly a mission endeavor, the missionaries themselves persevered in a most difficult task buoyed by confidence in a sovereign God.

What kind of preaching led to a church which had such missionaries as these and which responded so jubilantly to mission possibilities despite the difficulties? Calvin’s sermons have been too much neglected by scholars, but in his sermons we find the type of exhortation and prayer which would propel evangelistic activity as he regularly and earnestly urged his people to seek the salvation of the nations.¹⁰⁹ For example, preaching on Deuteronomy, Calvin said, “If we have any kindness in us, seeing that we see men go to destruction until God has got them under his obedience: ought we not to be moved with pity to draw the silly souls out of hell and to bring them into the way of salvation?”¹¹⁰ In his sermons on 1 Timothy, preached in the year leading up to the Brazilian mission, Calvin regularly concludes with a prayer for the salvation of the nations.¹¹¹ He tells pastors that God has made them ministers for the purpose of saving souls and thus they must labor “mightily, and with greater zeal and earnestness” for the salvation of souls.¹¹² Even when people reject the salvation offered to them, Calvin tells pastors that they must continue to “devote” themselves

these ministers (“The Genevan Mission to Brazil,” 61). However, Wilcox corrects this point showing that Calvin was in Geneva and, thus, included among the celebrants (“Evangelization in the Thought,” 216).

¹⁰⁸ Beaver, “The Genevan Mission to Brazil,” 64.

¹⁰⁹ T. H. L. Parker’s, *Calvin’s Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992) provides a moving description of Calvin’s preaching and its power.

¹¹⁰ John Calvin, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1583; facsimile repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 1219 (from a sermon on Deut 33).

¹¹¹ John Calvin, *John Calvin’s Sermons on 1 Timothy*, ed. Ray Van Neste and Brian Denker 2 vols. (Jackson, TN: CreateSpace, 2016). For more on Calvin’s evangelistic prayers, see Elsie McKee, “Calvin and Praying for ‘All People Who Dwell on Earth,’” *Interpretation* 63.2 (April 2009): 130–40.

¹¹² Calvin, *Sermons on 1 Timothy*, 2:133.

to this evangelistic work and “take pains” in calling people to faith so that they might “call as many to God as they can.” Calvin urges, “We must take pains to draw all the world to salvation.”¹¹³

Calvin expounds Paul’s call to pray “for all men” (1 Tim 2) with application to the church’s missionary responsibility to the world: “Call upon God and ask him to work toward the salvation of the whole world, and that we give ourselves to this work both night and day.”¹¹⁴ Throughout this sermon Calvin calls for fervent prayer and persistent action for the salvation of souls, urging his people to “have pity and compassion on the poor unbelievers.”¹¹⁵ He tells his people, “The greatest pleasure we can do to men is to pray to God for them, and call upon him for their salvation.”¹¹⁶ It is no surprise, then, that at various places in these sermons Calvin speaks of the salvation of our neighbors as being “dear to us.”

This evangelistic compassion is rooted in the character and action of God, as Calvin states in his sermon on 1 Tim 2:3–5:

Let us mark first of all when the Gospel is preached to us that it is just as if God reached out his hand (as he says by the prophet Isaiah, Isa. 65:2) and said to us, “Come to me.” It is a matter which ought to touch us to the quick, when we see that God comes to seek us, and does not wait until we come to him, but shows that he is ready to be made at one with us, although we were his daily enemies. He seeks nothing but to wipe out all our faults and make us partakers of the salvation that was purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. And thus we see how worthily we have to esteem the Gospel, and what a treasure it is.¹¹⁷

Some have said that the ministry of the Reformers was concerned only with teaching further the Christians who were in their midst. These sermons demonstrate how wrong this is about Calvin. He stated, “It is not enough for us to teach other men faithfully, unless we have a zeal to edify and care for the salvation of all men.”¹¹⁸ He tells his congregation that believers “must draw their neighbors to God in such a way that they must go with them.”¹¹⁹ Specifically speaking to pastors Calvin encourages them to ask, “Why has God placed me here? To the end that church should

¹¹³ Ibid., 2:141.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 1:156.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1:159.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 1:193.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 1:130.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 2:130.

increase more and more, and the salvation of men be always sought for.”¹²⁰

Some have argued that Calvin’s view of predestination prevented any evangelistic impulse. But notice that Calvin is not inhibited from calling all who hear him to Christ.

So often as we preach the doctrine of salvation, we show that God is ready to receive all who come to him, that the gate is open to those who call upon him, and to be assured that their inheritance is prepared for them there above, and they can never be deceived of it.¹²¹

Commenting on Jas 5:20 Calvin also states:

To give food to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, we see how much Christ values such acts; but the salvation of the soul is esteemed by him much more precious than the life of the body. We must therefore take heed lest souls perish through our sloth, whose salvation God puts in a manner in our hands. Not that we can bestow salvation on them; but that God by our ministry delivers and saves those who seem otherwise to be nigh destruction.¹²²

In fact, Calvin strongly rebukes those who lack evangelistic concern.

So then let us mark first of all that all who care not whether they bring their neighbors to the way of salvation or not, and those who do not care to bring the poor unbelievers also, instead being willing to let them go to destruction, show plainly that they make no account of God’s honor. . . . And thus we see how cold we are and negligent to pray for those who have need and are this day in the way to death and damnation.¹²³

Rather than someone who was merely concerned with organizing the new Protestant church or for deeper teaching, we find in Calvin a true shepherd who cares for his people and yearns for the salvation of souls.¹²⁴ As he stated, “We cannot bestow our lives and our deaths better than by bringing poor souls who were lost, and on their way to everlasting death,

¹²⁰ Ibid., 2:127–28.

¹²¹ Ibid., 2:388.

¹²² John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, vol. 22 of *Calvin’s Commentaries* trans. W. Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 361.

¹²³ Calvin, *Sermons on 1 Timothy*, 1:201.

¹²⁴ See also Michael A. G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Calvin’s Missional Vision and Legacy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).

to salvation.”¹²⁵

Conclusion

In his history of Christian missions, Stephen Neill says, “When everything favorable has been said that can be said [about the Reformers commitment to mission], and when all possible evidences from the writings have been collected, it amounts to exceedingly little.”¹²⁶ This brief article has shown this to be untrue, and I have not been able to include the large number of quotes others have cited in the writings of the Reformers on this topic. It is time for the narrative to change. The evidence is ample; the conclusion is clear. The charge of apathy regarding missions among the Reformers is common but unfair. If we reject an anachronistic, narrow, unscriptural definition of missions, it is obvious that the Reformers were significantly mission-minded and present to us a largely untapped resource for mission strategy, especially as the West is once again increasingly devoid of the gospel. Of course, they did not launch full blown overseas mission projects as later Christians would, but that is due to the limitations of their time and not due to a lack of concern for missions.¹²⁷ Indeed, their work laid the foundation for the later expansion of world mission endeavor. Rather than denigrating these forebears, we need to examine their work afresh to see what lessons they may have for us in this hour of great need for gospel advance.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Calvin, *Sermons on 1 Timothy*, 1:297.

¹²⁶ Neill and Chadwick, *A History of Christian Missions*, 189.

¹²⁷ Scharpff was correct: “Luther was a man of his times. For this reason and for reasons already mentioned elsewhere, evangelism could not be carried on as we do today. Nonetheless, Luther no less than the modern evangelist, appealed directly to the individual and invited him to decision” (Paulus Scharpff, *History of Evangelism: Three Hundred Years of Evangelism in Germany, Great Britain, and the United States of America* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966], 12).

¹²⁸ Schulz seeks to tease out some of these lessons and states, “It would be a fatal mistake to ignore the fundamental contributions that this period [the Reformation] has brought to the Church and her mission” (*Mission from the Cross*, 67).

Baptist Identity as Reformational Identity¹

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This essay contributes to contemporary discussions of Southern Baptist identity by offering a reformational exposition of core Baptist distinctives. It draws upon both Scripture and Reformation theology and emphases, especially the five solas and the priesthood of all believers. The essay represents a partial, preliminary exercise in retrieval theology for the sake of renewing contemporary Southern Baptist identity, though much of what is argued can also be applied to other Baptist groups. The purpose of the essay is to contribute to the ongoing renewal of Southern Baptist identity in the aftermath of the “conservative resurgence” that took place from 1979 to 2000, an important task in an increasingly post-denominational age.

Key Words: baptism, Baptist distinctives, Baptist identity, priesthood of all believers, Reformation, regenerate church membership, sola fide, sola gratia, sola Scriptura, solus Christus

Introduction

For as long as there have been Baptists, there have been writings about Baptist identity. Baptists have been debating and refining their identity ever since the founding of the earliest Baptist churches in the seventeenth century. Baptists have always written confessions of faith to distinguish their beliefs from other movements around them. They have drafted church covenants that identified their congregations as free communities of disciples rather than parishes of an established church. And they have written hundreds of treatises about their identity, reflecting upon Baptist distinctives as a form of “confessional theology.”²

What is true of Baptists in general is true of Southern Baptists in particular. William Estep suggests that, “the Southern Baptist historical experience can best be understood as a search for identity.”³ Most of the

internal controversies Southern Baptists have experienced boil down to debates about Baptist identity.⁴ Southern Baptists publish a steady stream of books and essays about their identity, while seminaries and universities host periodic conferences on the topic. The nature of Baptist identity remains a pressing issue for Southern Baptists in a post-denominational age.

This essay contributes to contemporary discussions of Southern Baptist identity by offering a reformational exposition of core Baptist distinctives, drawing upon both Scripture and Reformation theology and emphases, especially the five *solas* and the priesthood of all believers.⁵ In doing so, it represents a partial, preliminary exercise in retrieval theology for the sake of renewing contemporary Southern Baptist identity, though much of what is argued applies to other Baptists as well.⁶ These reflections are intended to be more pastoral rather than polemical, and more constructive rather than controversial. The purpose is not primarily to win contemporary debates, an agenda that too often leads to simplistic views of Baptist history.⁷ Rather, revisiting the Reformation with a sympathetic, yet critical eye is for the sake of contributing to the ongoing renewal of Southern Baptist identity in the aftermath of the “conservative resurgence” of the previous generation.⁸

People in a Free Land: Essays in Baptist History in Honor of Robert A. Baker, ed. William R. Estep (Fort Worth, TX: Evans, 1976), 145.

⁴ Nathan A. Finn, “Debating Baptist Identities: Description and Prescription in the American South,” in *Mirrors and Microscopes: Historical Perceptions of Baptists*, ed. C. Douglas Weaver (Bletchley, Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015), 173–87.

⁵ The five *solas* include *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), *solus Christus* (Christ alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), *sola fidei* (faith alone), and *solus Deo gloria* (the glory of God alone). They are commonly cited to summarize the key theological differences between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

⁶ Retrieval theologians argue that earlier doctrinal insights function as diagnostic tools to identify alleged “misdirections” in modern theology and provide resources for overcoming them. See John Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 585. See also W. David Buschart and Kent Eilers, *Theology as Retrieval: Receiving the Past, Renewing the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

⁷ For more on this theme, see the essays in Keith Harper, ed., *Through a Glass Darkly: Contested Notions of Baptist Identity, Religion and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2012).

⁸ See Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2000); Paige Patterson, *Anatomy*

¹ This essay was originally delivered as a paper at the Reformation 500 Conference, Union University, March 11, 2017. It has been revised for publication.

² R. Stanton Norman, *More Than Just a Name: Preserving Our Baptist Identity* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2001), 24.

³ W. R. Estep, “Southern Baptists in Search of an Identity,” in *The Lord’s Free*

The Baptist Distinctives

Baptists affirm the Lordship of Christ and the supreme authority of Scripture. Though these two principles are not unique to Baptists, they are foundational to how Baptists understand their distinctives.⁹ Most of the classic Baptist distinctives are ecclesiological, and they have been shaped, sometimes implicitly, by the reformational principles of *sola Scriptura*, which Baptists apply to matters of church order, as well as an expanded view of *solus Christus* that speaks not only to salvation but also to Christ's total Lordship over believers and local churches.

Almost all Baptists affirm the same cluster of beliefs as central to their identity, though they differ at times over finer points of nuance. The five Baptist distinctives include regenerate church membership, believer-only baptism, congregational polity, local church autonomy, and liberty of conscience. While none of these convictions are found only among Baptists, they are normally considered principles that distinguish Baptists from other traditions. Wherever you find these distinctives affirmed as a coherent identity, you find a "baptistic" church, even if that congregation does not call itself Baptist, participates in diverse ministry networks with non-baptistic churches, or even claims to be non-denominational.¹⁰ The remainder of this essay introduces each Baptist distinctive, engages with reformational emphases that inform the distinctive, and offers some initial constructive suggestions regarding Baptist faith and practice, with emphasis on post-resurgence Southern Baptists.

Regenerate Church Membership

Most Baptists affirm the doctrine of the universal church. However, Baptists have always emphasized the priority of the local church, which is

of a Reformation: The Southern Baptist Convention, 1978–2004 (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill Press, 2004).

⁹ Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 325–44. This essay's summary of the five Baptist distinctives draws from this chapter.

¹⁰ For example, see Keith G. Jones and Ian Randall, eds., *Counter-Cultural Communities: Baptistic Life in Twentieth-Century Europe*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2008). Stan Norman is less convinced that baptistic groups evidence all of the Baptist distinctives, or at least does so with the same consistency, as convictional Baptists. See R. Stanton Norman, *The Baptist Way: Distinctives of a Baptist Church* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2005), 186–88.

a contextual expression of the universal church and an embassy of Christ's kingdom that is already present but awaits its full consummation.¹¹ In both the New Testament and the Baptist tradition, the normative practice is for believers to identify with the one body of Christ through membership in a local community of disciples who are intentionally walking together for the sake of worship, witness, and service.

Baptists believe a local church's membership should be comprised only of individuals who provide credible evidence of regeneration. This ecclesiological principle is called the believer's church or, more commonly, regenerate church membership. Baptists argue that regenerate church membership is evidenced in several biblical passages (Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:26–27; Acts 2:39–47). Equally important, however, Baptists argue a regenerate membership is assumed throughout the New Testament and regularly and uniformly implied by the text of Scripture.

Many Baptist scholars agree that regenerate church membership is the foundational Baptist distinctive; for example, John Hammett calls this principle "the Baptist mark" of the church.¹² Regenerate church membership argues that formal identification with the body of Christ is for those who have acknowledged Christ's Lordship over their lives by faith. Believer's churches take the reformational principles of grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and make them prerequisite to membership. While interested or curious unbelievers should be welcomed into many church activities, and while the unconverted children of members should be considered an important part of the faith community, membership and its privileges is reserved for those who claim to have been justified by grace through faith.

The reformers rarely embraced regenerate church membership during the Reformation. Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anglicans were clear on the *solus* in question, but assumed a mixed assembly of both believers and unbelievers and offered forms church membership to unconverted children. For their part, the Anabaptists required personal faith for membership, but were sometimes unclear on the *solus*. Many of the Anabaptists still affirmed an essentially Catholic view of justification based upon both

¹¹ For more on the idea that local churches are kingdom embassies, see Jonathan Leeman, *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ's Rule* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

¹² John S. Hammett, "Regenerate Church Membership," in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*, ed. Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing, Malcolm B. Yarnell (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2007), 21. See also John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2005), 81–131.

faith and works that flowed from faith.¹³

Today, numerous trends undermine regenerate church membership. Two examples will suffice, each of which is common among Southern Baptists. The cheap grace offered by easy believism, as well as a general lack of discipleship among new believers, have combined to erode regenerate membership and redemptive church discipline.¹⁴ For example, as of 2016 the Southern Baptist Convention claimed around 15.2 million members, but only about 5.2 million people were regularly present for weekly worship.¹⁵ One doubts that all of the absentee members are devout believers who are sick, homebound, traveling, or deployed for short-term military service on any given Sunday. Furthermore, the number of attendees includes non-members such as young children and visitors; fewer than 5.2 million *members* attend weekly worship on average. In addition to serial non-attendance, many churches having active members who are engaged in unrepentant sin that is widely known and perhaps scandalous, yet are not subjected to biblical church discipline. The lack of discipline is astounding in a denomination that once championed the practice as a virtual ecclesial distinctive.¹⁶

Fortunately, numerous Southern Baptists have written on the importance of recovering meaningful church membership, including the practice of church discipline.¹⁷ Perhaps more important, in 2008, the SBC

¹³ See James A. Patterson, “Anabaptist Kinship Revisited: Implications for Baptist Origins and Identity,” in *Reformation 500: How the Greatest Revival Since Pentecost Continues to Shape the World Today*, ed. Ray Van Neste and J. Michael Garrett (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 31–44. For an alternative perspective, see Michael Whitlock, “Justification by Faith and Early Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013).

¹⁴ Easy believism comes in many forms, but in Southern Baptist circles the most common form emphasizes a momentary spiritual decision rather than emphasizing that faith is a matter of repentance from sin and trust in the saving work of Christ that leads to a lifetime of discipleship. The classic evangelical critique of this form of easy believism is John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). For a recent critique from a Southern Baptist perspective, see J. D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart: How to Know for Sure You Are Saved* (Nashville: B&H, 2013).

¹⁵ See “Fast Facts about the SBC,” available online at <http://www.sbc.net/BecomingSouthernBaptist/FastFacts.asp>.

¹⁶ See Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁷ For example, see *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*; Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); idem, *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus*

Annual Meeting adopted a resolution “On Regenerate Church Membership and Church Member Restoration,” signaling a wider recognition among Southern Baptists that these are problems that need to be addressed.¹⁸ Recovering a robust commitment to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is a key ingredient in the antidote to easy believism and truncated discipleship. Furthermore, a commitment to *sola Scriptura* should lead Southern Baptists to take church discipline more seriously, since the practice is clearly taught in Matt 18:15–20, 1 Cor 5:1–13, 2 Cor 2:5–7, and Gal 6:1.

Believer-Only Baptism

While regenerate church membership is the foundational Baptist distinctive, baptism is almost certainly the most recognizable Baptist belief. Historically, Baptists have focused their attention mostly on the subject and mode of baptism. For example, Baptists wrote numerous treatises on the topic during the height of interdenominational debates with pedobaptist groups in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Modern works also treat the subject and mode of baptism, though they often frame these topics in wider discussions about biblical covenants, the history of baptismal practices, and the recovery of meaningful membership.²⁰

(Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); John S. Hammett and Benjamin L. Merkle, eds., *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012); Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); Andrew M. Davis, *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017).

¹⁸ “On Regenerate Church Membership and Church Member Restoration,” SBC Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, IN, at <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1189/on-regenerate-church-membership-and-church-member-restoration>.

¹⁹ Examples of this genre include Adoniram Judson, *A Treatise on the Mode and Subjects of Christian Baptism* (Worcester, MA: William Manning, 1818); Alexander Carson, *Baptism in its Mode and Subjects* (New York: C.C.P. Crosby, 1832); Patrick Hues Mell, *Baptism in its Mode and Subjects* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1853); John E. Massey and J. D. Coulling, *Baptism: Its Mode, Subjects and Design* (New York: Sheldon, 1861).

²⁰ See Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); Fred A. Malone, *The Baptism of Disciples Alone: A Covenantal Argument for Credobaptism Versus Paedobaptism* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders, 2003); Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, eds., *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007); Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015).

In terms of the subject of baptism, Baptists affirm believer-only baptism, which is applying baptism only to individuals who bear credible testimony to personal faith in Christ. Baptists argue there is no evidence in the Bible of a *known* unbeliever being baptized; of course some professing Christians turned out to be false believers (2 Cor 11:13–15; 2 Tim 4:10; Titus 1:16). In terms of baptismal mode, the first generation of Baptists poured or sprinkled water over one's head, practices that were carried over from adult baptismal rites in the Church of England and possibly confirmed by interaction with Continental Anabaptists. However, since the early 1640s, Baptists have almost universally practiced immersion as the only valid form of baptism and have codified this view in their confessions and catechisms.²¹

Baptists argue believer's baptism by immersion is the closest contemporary practice to New Testament baptism because the Greek word *baptizo* literally means to immerse, dip, or submerge something in water. When pedobaptists argue that believers and their children should be baptized, Baptists typically respond that any attempt to argue infant baptism from the New Testament amounts to eisegesis rather than straightforward exegesis. Furthermore, Baptists point out that pedobaptists cannot agree among themselves on a theology of infant baptism; Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and the Eastern Orthodox disagree with each other on why they baptize infants. To Baptists, infant baptism seems like *a practice in search of a theology to support it*.

By contrast, nearly all credobaptists contend that baptism is for professed disciples alone because it is a symbolic depiction of the gospel, is an outward sign of the new believer's spiritual transformation, and marks the public identification of a believer with the body of Christ. Baptists draw upon numerous New Testament texts to articulate their doctrine of baptism. Matthew 28:18–20 and Acts 2:39–47 evidence the pattern of belief before baptism. Acts 8:26–40 points to both believer's baptism and the mode of immersion. Romans 6:3–5 demonstrates how baptism testifies to spiritual transformation resulting from regeneration, using language that is more consistent with immersion than either sprinkling or pouring.

For Baptists, believer's baptism is closely tied to regenerate membership, and as such the practice is also informed by the reformational themes of grace alone, faith alone, and Christ alone. A key purpose of baptism is to make public the fact that the one being baptized claims to have been justified by grace through faith in Christ, and the church has

²¹ Chute, Finn, and Haykin, *The Baptist Story*, 18–25.

recognized that claim as valid based upon credible evidence of regeneration. Furthermore, because Baptists appeal to New Testament example for their baptismal convictions rather than speculative theological systems or the weight of church tradition, the principle of *sola Scriptura* is also important in the Baptist view of baptism. Baptists remain unconvinced of the validity of infant baptism because they see no clear biblical example of an infant being baptized.

As with regenerate church membership, many threats undermine believer-only baptism. The aforementioned easy believism is certainly a problem, as evidenced in several trends such as unclear gospel presentations, appeals for intellectual assent to some facts about the gospel without calling for repentance, manipulative or quasi-sacramental understandings of practices such as the sinner's prayer and the altar call, and insufficient discernment of evidence of regeneration in practices such as so-called spontaneous baptismal services. Another threat is the trend of baptizing children at increasingly younger ages—sometimes under five years of age. While few would question that God converts very young children, baptism is reserved for those who give credible evidence of regeneration. It is at best difficult to discern such evidence in young children who make few independent decisions and are prone to want to impress parents, pastors, and teachers.²²

As with regenerate church membership, recovering the reformational principles of *sola fide* and *sola gratia* will go far toward cutting the legs out from under easy believism and mitigate against the temptation to rush small children (or anyone else) into the waters of baptism. A firm commitment to *sola Scriptura* should stave off the temptation to either baptize infants or make normative any mode of baptism besides the full immersion of a professed disciple.

Congregational Polity

Polity is a word used to describe a church's basic structure and patterns of leadership. Congregational polity, or congregationalism, argues that local churches are governed by their own membership. The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) offers a concise summary of congregationalism:

²² One Southern Baptist church that has put careful thought into child baptisms is Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, KY. See Jared Kennedy, "When Should We Baptize Kids?" Sojourn Kids, February 11, 2011, <http://www.sojournkids.com/blog/2011/02/when-should-we-baptize-kids>. This blog post also links to recent debates about childhood baptism, as well as Sojourn's position paper on the topic.

“Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord.”²³ Congregationalism differs from presbyterian polity, which invests final authority in church courts comprised of elders, and episcopal polity, which affirms the final authority of bishops. Historically, congregationalism carried over into the Baptist movement from the English Separatists, a group that practiced congregational rule and eventually evolved into the denomination later called the Congregationalists (with a capital “C”).²⁴

Discussions of church polity should include an important caveat: no model, including congregationalism, perfectly mirrors New Testament polity.²⁵ The polity of the earliest churches could best be described as a combination of congregationalism and the direct rule of apostles; the specifics varied somewhat, depending upon context. Congregationalism is an attempt to adapt the polity of the earliest churches to a world without apostles in the New Testament sense of that office. Baptists and other congregationalists believe their views represent the most faithful adaptation of New Testament polity.

Several New Testament passages imply a form of congregationalism. In Matt 18:15–20 and 1 Cor 5:1–13, two aforementioned passages related to church discipline, the entire church is called upon to excommunicate a wayward member. In Acts 6:1–6, the entire Jerusalem church sets apart seven men to serve the congregation in a diaconal role. In 1 Tim 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9, churches are provided with specific qualifications by which to vet potential pastors and deacons. Based on these passages, Baptists argue that, at minimum, the Bible suggests the entire church is responsible for maintaining its membership and selecting church officers. Prudentially, most Baptist churches also affirm the church budget and approve major expenditures by the will of the full congregation; other matters are contextual and vary from church to church.

²³ The Baptist Faith and Message (2000), article VI: The Church, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

²⁴ For more on the English Separatists, including their congregationalism, see B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1971), and Hunter Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism: Church Power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638–44* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2015).

²⁵ This is admittedly a minority view among Baptists, most of whom argue (or at least imply) that the New Testament includes a fully developed congregationalism.

For Baptists, congregationalism is a corporate expression of the reformational principle of the royal priesthood, more often called the priesthood of all believers.²⁶ Presbyterian theologian Kevin Vanhoozer has argued that the royal priesthood “amounts to a virtual sixth *sola*: *sola ecclesia* (church alone),” by which he means, “*the church alone is the place where Christ rules over his kingdom and gives certain gifts for the building of his living temple.*”²⁷ While Vanhoozer is mostly concerned with how the royal priesthood influenced interpretive authority, his insights can also be retrieved in service of Baptist identity; indeed, his language might even reflect a crypto-baptist reflex in his own thinking.

In Exod 19:6, the Lord refers to Israel as a “kingdom of priests,” and in 1 Pet 2:9, Peter calls the church a “royal priesthood.” Based on this theme, the Reformers argued against the “sacerdotal” view of medieval Catholicism that affirmed a special priestly class that mediated God’s grace to the laity through administration of the sacraments. The Reformers argued for what might today be called an “every-member ministry” that affirmed the dignity of all vocations as ways to glorify God, proclaim the gospel, and serve others. Anabaptists, English Separatists, and Baptists alike each filtered their understanding of the believers’ priesthood through Matt 18:15–20, which they understood to point to congregationalism. For Baptists, congregationalism is a corporate expression of the royal priesthood.²⁸

Sometimes Baptists use democratic language when they speak of congregationalism, such as in the Baptist Faith and Message, but this can be misleading; this is why Baptists need to intentionally draw upon the reformational themes of faith alone and Christ alone.²⁹ Rather than a spiritual

²⁶ For helpful brief introductions to the royal priesthood written from a Southern Baptist perspective, see Timothy George, “The Priesthood of all Believers and the Quest for Theological Integrity,” *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (Spring 1989): 283–94; Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “The Priesthood of Believers: Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Royal Priesthood,” in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*, 221–44.

²⁷ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 29 (emphasis original).

²⁸ The classic historical survey of Reformation and post-Reformation understandings of the royal priesthood is Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (1960; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

²⁹ See the critique of democracy language in Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology, Doing Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 100–04; Jonathan Leeman,

democracy, each local church is a “Christocracy” under the ultimate kingship of Christ and is to be comprised only of believers who take ownership of the church’s mission. Healthy congregationalism thus assumes a church is committed to Christ’s Lordship and is striving to maintain a regenerate membership. When these priorities are not affirmed, congregationalism can easily devolve into a *mere* democracy where various special interest groups try to outvote one another in church meetings. However, when congregationalism is practiced correctly, the church’s members confirm to each other Christ’s plan for their church as they seek to follow his will through submitting to his written Word.

Today, congregational polity has become perhaps the most controversial of the Baptist distinctives among Southern Baptists. One reason is because of a perceived incompatibility of congregationalism and pastoral authority.³⁰ According to 1 Thess 5:12–13 and Heb 13:17, Christians are to honor and submit to their leaders; many wonder how this can be done when a pastor’s employment is dependent upon the will of the members. Another reason some Baptists downplay congregationalism is experience with unhealthy expressions of this polity. Many have endured combative church conferences where the congregation evidenced little love for Christ or one another. Others have witnessed (or endured) mean-spirited votes of “no confidence” in a pastor or other staff members, often for unbiblical reasons. Still others have seen ineffective congregationalism where the members voted upon even the most mundane decisions.

Unhealthy versions of congregationalism are troubling, but the answer is not to abandon congregational polity. *Congregationalism comes down to trust*. The membership selects and holds accountable her pastors, so there is indeed a sense in which the members have authority over their pastors. But it is also true that the members select pastors *to lead them*. Pastors are not mere employees, but are leaders who are called upon to “shepherd the flock of God,” “oversee” the church, and “rule well” (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1–2; 1 Tim 5:17–19). So there is also a sense in which pastors have authority over their members. The congregation trusts the pastor or pastors who lead them, and the pastors trust the members not to act in an unbiblical manner toward their leaders.

Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 9–12.

³⁰ For works that balance congregational authority and pastoral authority, see Leeman, *Don't Fire Your Church Members*; Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds. *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2014); Phil A. Newton and Matt Schmucker, *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2014).

A culture of trust, in the context of a regenerate membership in submission to Christ’s final authority as revealed in Scripture, will help to ensure that congregationalism is expressed in healthy ways that focus on kingdom priorities. To that end, consider the following “organizational chart” as embodying a healthy, Christ-centered congregationalism:

Each local church should be ruled by Jesus Christ,
governed by her members,
led by her pastor(s), and
served by her deacons

For Baptists, congregational polity is simply living out the priesthood of all believers in the context of the local church, which is a community of disciples formed by grace alone through faith alone, and is under the Lordship of Christ alone.

Local Church Autonomy

Local church autonomy claims that every church is free to determine its own agenda apart from any external ecclesiastical coercion. Baptists believe local church autonomy reflects the biblical pattern when the office of apostle is not taken into consideration. As Stan Norman notes, “The Bible makes no reference to any entity exerting authority above or beyond the local church.”³¹ Positively stated, churches have the freedom to follow the Lord’s leading in their worship and witness. Put more negatively, no denomination or convention or association can force a church to do something she does not wish to do.

Local church autonomy is rarely considered a reformational principle. The magisterial reformers all held to some version of the territorial church where secular leaders played a role in proscribing the religion of their subjects. In fact, this principle is the reason that Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anglicans are considered *magisterial* reformers: the magistrates, or public officials, were key allies in implementing and enforcing religious reforms. During most of the sixteenth century, local church autonomy was identified more with the so-called radical reformers, especially the Anabaptists who founded free churches without the support of magistrates, frequently resulting in their persecution at the hands of magisterial reformers and Catholics alike.

However, in England, radical Puritan movements were abandoning their efforts to reform the Church of England by the 1580s and beginning to form autonomous churches that were in the broader Reformed tradition rather than identifying with Anabaptism. These included the English

³¹ Norman, *The Baptist Way*, 104.

Separatists from whom the first Baptists emerged in the generation between 1609 and 1645. Thus, some second-generation reformers, at least within English Nonconformity, rejected magisterial support in favor of local church autonomy. This principle is also influenced by reformational emphases at least implicitly through its relationship to the other Baptist distinctives. The whole congregation of regenerate saints (*sola fide* and *sola gratia*) takes ownership of the church's ministry (the royal priesthood) with the understanding that Christ alone is Lord of the church (*solus Christus*) and his will as revealed in the Scripture is the ultimate standard by which the church's faithfulness is measured (*sola Scriptura*).

The greatest threat to healthy local church autonomy is what might be called the "soft sectarianism" of overemphasizing a church's independence. Some Baptists, especially in North America, have sometimes stressed that local church autonomy means any ecclesial relationships beyond the local church are unbiblical.³² Some Landmark and fundamentalist Baptists have held this position. More common is the view that interchurch cooperation is undertaken for purely pragmatic reasons, which is probably the majority opinion among Southern Baptists. For example, one often hears this argument: the local church is primary, but we ought to cooperate in associations or conventions because we can accomplish more for the kingdom when we work together than when we go it alone. Though this idea is undoubtedly true, it is questionable whether this is the best case for autonomy.

Historically, English Baptists valued congregational freedom, but also affirmed a robust doctrine of the church universal and inter-church cooperation. For example, the Second London Confession says,

To each of these Churches thus gathered, according to his mind declared in his word, he hath given all that power and authority, which is in any way needful, for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline, which he hath instituted for them to observe; with commands, and rules for the due and right exerting, and executing of that power.³³

³² See Stanley K. Fowler, "Churches and the Church," in *Recycling the Past or Researching History? Studies in Baptist Historiography and Myths*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Bletchley, Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005), 25–49; Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, 104–8. See also Samuel Daley Tyson, "Dependent Independence: Toward a Theology of Southern Baptist Associationalism" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017).

³³ Second London Confession, Chapter XXVI: Of the Church, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed., ed. William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2011), 285–86.

This is a strong statement of the freedom of local churches to determine their own spiritual agendas. However, that same confession also claims the following concerning cooperation:

As each *Church*, and all the members of it, are bound to pray continually, for the good and prosperity of all the *Churches of Christ*, in all places; and upon all occasions to further it (every one within the bounds of their places and callings, in the Exercise of their Gifts and Graces) so the Churches (when planted by the providence of God so as they may enjoy [*sic*] opportunity and advantage for it) ought to hold communion amongst themselves for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.³⁴

The adopters of this confession affirmed the necessity of associations, not only for pragmatic considerations, but because cooperation is healthy and embodies the type of unity that will one day characterize Christ's church when it assembles at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6–10). Associational cooperation is as much about ecclesiology and eschatology as it is mission and fellowship.

This view of ecclesiology carried over into colonial North America. The churches of the Philadelphia Association adopted a lightly amended version of the Second London Confession, including its affirmations of both autonomy and associationalism.³⁵ Many British Baptists continue to affirm the older ecclesiology, but during the course of the nineteenth century a majority of American Baptists moved in a more independent direction, especially in the South and Southwest. There are likely many reasons for this trend.

The American emphasis on freedom and individualism certainly played a role; Baptists frequently applied these principles to both congregationalism and autonomy. So did Landmark sectarianism, especially the frequent (but not uniform) denial of the universal church. Both liberalism and fundamentalism contributed to the trend. While these two movements differed greatly on doctrinal matters, both were thoroughly "modern" in that they placed a high premium on individual and congregational

³⁴ Second London Confession, Chapter XXVI: Of the Church, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 288–89 (emphasis original).

³⁵ See Francis W. Sacks, *The Philadelphia Baptist Tradition of Church and Church Authority, 1707–1814: An Ecumenical Analysis and Theological Interpretation* (Lewis-ton, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989).

freedom, albeit unto different ends.³⁶ The tendency among Southern Baptists to equate cooperation with financial stewardship since the advent of the Cooperative Program in 1925 has only furthered an overemphasis on independency and a mostly pragmatic understanding of cooperation.³⁷

Reformational emphases offer some resources to aid Baptists in finding a healthier balance between autonomy and inter-church cooperation. One of the ongoing conversations during the Reformation was over the marks of a true church, a discussion that can inform how Baptists think about other ecclesial traditions and other churches within our own tradition. The Reformation was first and foremost about the recovery of the biblical gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and all the reformers agreed that the right preaching of this gospel is a necessary condition of a true church. Baptists should affirm this principle and recognize all churches that affirm the gospel are true churches and all people who embrace this gospel are true believers, even if they might disagree with those churches and individuals over secondary and tertiary theological matters.³⁸

In addition to proclaiming the gospel rightly, various reformers also looked to the right observance of the sacraments as a mark of a true church. In the original historical context, this mark made sense because medieval Catholicism had intermingled soteriology (the gospel) with sacramentalism (the practice of the sacraments), as well as ascribed sacramental status to several practices that were either not instituted by Christ and/or were not material illustrations of the gospel. But evangelical renewal movements since the eighteenth century have rightly tempered at least some of the party spirit that has plagued Protestantism. While Baptists and other traditions take seriously their views of baptism and the Lord's Supper, they are—or at least they should be—far more hesitant to “de-church” a congregation because of deficient sacramental practices. Put another way, Baptists should affirm that incorrect understandings of

³⁶ See “Re-Envisioning Baptist Identity: A Manifesto for Baptist Communities in North America,” which is included as an Appendix to Curtis W. Freeman, “Can Baptist Theology be Revisioned?” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 24.3 (Fall 1997): 303–10.

³⁷ See Andrew Christopher Smith, *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919–1925*, America's Baptists (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2016).

³⁸ Al Mohler helpfully addresses this issue with his paradigm of “theological triage.” See R. Albert Mohler Jr., “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity,” [albertmohler.com](http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/), July 12, 2005, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>.

baptism and the Lord's Supper only threaten the true churchliness of a congregation if those aberrant views undermine the gospel itself. Baptists need a more fully developed category for true churches that are simply wrong about baptism—a serious matter, to be sure—but not one that results in a church becoming “not church,” provided that the gospel is being rightly affirmed and proclaimed.³⁹

Furthermore, Baptists should also look for as many ways to cooperate with fellow believers in other traditions in evangelism, ministries of justice and mercy, and cultural engagement. However, cooperation becomes trickier when it comes to placing pastors and planting new churches; those are matters best left among churches with a shared ecclesiology, including sacramental practices. For Baptists, this is where bodies such as associations and conventions come into play, as well as informal partnerships between two or more churches. Churches can and should cooperate with like-minded congregations so that they can accomplish more together than any one church can do alone, though this is not the only reason for inter-church cooperation. Local churches do not exist in isolation, but in most places they are part of the wider body of Christ in that county, town, or city. Churches need each other, especially when they are of substantially like faith and practice. Baptists need to come alongside one another when hurting churches have needs that can be served by sister congregations. Churches must be *humble* enough to ask for help, *selfless* enough to serve sister churches, and *biblical* enough to heed the sound counsel of other churches who lovingly point out errors and faults in theology or methodology.

Rather than viewing autonomy as equivalent to independency, it is better to see autonomy as a means to greater freedom to proclaim salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Autonomy guarantees the freedom of individual churches to proclaim the gospel in whatever ways they see most fitting, in submission to the Lordship of Christ and with guidance from the Scriptures. Baptist associations and conventions should help churches to cultivate this sort of gospel-centered cooperative autonomy. Local church autonomy should spur churches on to greater faithfulness rather than tempting them to strike out in their own direction, as if the wider church does not exist and Christ is not the Lord of the whole church, wherever it gathers in local congregations.

Liberty of Conscience

Baptists have always argued that every person is free to follow his or

³⁹ Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 64–65.

her conscience in religious matters without any human coercion. The Abstract of Principles (1858) offers a good summary of this conviction:

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful things commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.⁴⁰

Baptists have sometimes called this principle by other names such as “soul competency,” “soul freedom,” or “soul liberty.” These terms are more or less synonymous historically, though in recent years they have taken on different nuances, depending upon who is employing which phrase.

Liberty of conscience is not so much a clear biblical principle as it is a broader emphasis that undergirds the other Baptist distinctives. As Stan Norman argues,

Our convictions about and commitment to biblical authority, the lordship of Christ, and the nature and practice of a New Testament church require that we advocate soul competency and religious freedom. Understood this way, religious freedom and soul competency are doctrinal corollaries of our other distinctive principles.⁴¹

Not only is soul liberty a doctrinal corollary of the other Baptist distinctives, but it is also a corollary of the reformational principles of Christ alone and the priesthood of all believers. It may seem unusual to tie liberty of conscience to the Reformation—after all, the magisterial reformers affirmed territorial churches, executed perceived heretics, and persecuted Anabaptists, the one group that did argue consistently for soul liberty. Nevertheless, though captive to some of the regrettable traditions it inherited from the medieval church and blinded by the nature of the religious and political conflicts of the era, liberty of conscience is a reformational principle. Three brief examples should suffice.

In 1521, Martin Luther affirmed soul liberty when he claimed that his conscience was captive to God’s Word rather than the opinions of popes and councils.⁴² Luther knew he would answer to Christ alone for his reli-

⁴⁰ The Abstract of Principles, article XVIII: Liberty of Conscience, available online at <http://catalog.sebts.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=336>.

⁴¹ Norman, *The Baptist Way*, 158.

⁴² Luther’s famous speech before the Diet of Worms, where he made this

gious convictions. Throughout his public career, John Calvin tried unsuccessfully to disentangle the Genevan Reformation from the ever-changing whims of the magistrates so that he and other pastors would be fully free to reform the churches according to their understanding of Scripture.⁴³ By the 1580s, some Puritans were leaving the Church of England, in part out of concerns that the Crown had no right to force individuals or churches to conform to the *Book of Common Prayer*. When it comes to liberty of conscience, what the Reformation seeded, however imperfectly, came to full bloom in the Baptist movement about a century later.

Liberty of conscience functions at a personal level similarly to local church autonomy at the corporate level. Thus, it faces some of the same temptations toward an over-emphasis on individualism. Some Baptist thinkers, especially E. Y. Mullins, have been accused of reading American individualism into their understanding of soul competency, resulting in a view of freedom that is at least potentially untethered from accountability.⁴⁴ Though it is debatable whether or not Mullins was too individualistic in his views—he also championed congregational accountability—some Baptists have claimed his mantle in advancing highly personalized views of soul freedom.⁴⁵ Many progressive Baptists consider soul competency the most important Baptist distinctive, though their interpretation is strongly influenced by enlightenment views of human autonomy.⁴⁶ The

claim of a conscience bound by Scripture, is recounted in Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 144.

⁴³ This more critical stance toward magistracy marked a clear difference between Calvin and the earlier Reformed theologian Ulrich Zwingli, who had a more positive view of magistrates. See William G. Naphy, “Calvin’s Geneva,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 25–37.

⁴⁴ See Curtis W. Freeman, “E. Y. Mullins and the Siren Songs of Modernity,” in *Through a Glass Darkly*, 84–111; R. Albert Mohler Jr., “Baptist Theology at the Crossroads: The Legacy of E. Y. Mullins,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3.4 (Winter 1999): 4–22.

⁴⁵ For a defense of Mullins against his critics, see C. Douglas Weaver, “Introduction,” to E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, ed. C. Douglas Weaver (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 21–29.

⁴⁶ See Alan Neely, ed., *Being Baptist Means Freedom* (Charlotte, NC: Southern Baptist Alliance, 1988); Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1993); H. Leon McBeth, “God Gives Soul Competency and Priesthood to all Believers,” in *Defining Baptist Convictions: Guidelines for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Charles W. Deweese (Franklin, TN: Providence 1996), 62–70.

result is an anthropocentric understanding of soul freedom too often separated from *solus Christus* and *sola Scriptura* and, at times, Christian orthodoxy.⁴⁷ A healthy view of liberty of conscience does not mean personal religious autonomy, though both believers and non-believers should be free to follow their convictions concerning ultimate things. For Christians, soul liberty is the freedom to follow Christ's will as it is revealed in Scripture, remembering that one day we will each stand before him to give an account for our faith and practice.

Liberty of conscience is difficult to maintain unless one is in an environment that values the convictions of all individuals (both believers and unbelievers), churches, and other religious organizations. For this reason, Baptists have historically argued that the best way to preserve soul liberty is to promote a formal separation between church and state. As the *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) says, "A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power."⁴⁸ This principle goes further than mere religious toleration, an idea with which many reformers had made peace once it became clear that the presence of Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and radical sects in Europe necessitated some degree of religious pluralism. Church-state separation means no state churches of any sort—even tolerant state churches that grant at least some individuals and religious movements the right to dissent.

Over the past four centuries, no other group of Christians has so consistently advocated religious liberty as a basic human right as the Baptists. Globally, Baptists have championed this principle and, alongside evangelism, made it central to a distinctively Baptist approach to mission.⁴⁹ Baptist thinkers have defended religious liberty in treatises, tracts, sermons, and confessional statements. Thousands of Baptists have been fined, jailed, tortured, and sometimes even killed for their commitment to this

⁴⁷ For two noteworthy examples of progressive Baptist departure from Christian orthodoxy, see R. Kirby Godsey, *When We Talk About God . . . Let's Be Honest* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1996); David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 2nd ed. (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Book, 2015).

⁴⁸ The Baptist Faith and Message (2000), article XVII: Religious Liberty, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

⁴⁹ For example, the Baptist World Alliance prioritizes a holistic mission that includes both evangelism and discipleship on the one hand and human rights issues such as religious liberty advocacy on the other. See the resources available at the Baptist World Alliance, available online at <https://www.bwanet.org/>.

principle—often by traditions with historic ties to the magisterial Reformation. Today, most Christian traditions in the West have embraced liberty of conscience and its corollary, religious liberty for all.

Baptists have normally been willing to make cause with others who affirm church-state separation, though Baptists advocate religious liberty for spiritual rather than secular reasons. For Baptists, church-state separation is not intended to promote "a naked public square" devoid of religious voices.⁵⁰ Though different Baptists apply the principle of church-state separation in different ways, most agree that Christians are called to be "salt and light" who engage the broader culture (Matt 5:13–16). Southern Baptists have consistently challenged secularist visions of church-state separation that seek to undermine the public influence of Christians and other religious adherents. A proper understanding of church-state separation allows people of all faiths and no faith to live out their convictions without fear of coercion and persecution.

Russell Moore argues religious liberty is ultimately about the Great Commission.⁵¹ Baptists believe church-state separation preserves their rights as individuals and churches to freely follow Christ's will as revealed in Scripture—Christ alone through Scripture alone! From an evangelistic standpoint, church-state separation also protects the freedom of Christians to proclaim the gospel to non-Christians and make disciples from people of all nations—grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone!

Conclusion

This essay has retrieved reformational themes such as the five *solas* and the royal priesthood and put them in constructive engagement with Baptist distinctives. The goal is to strengthen contemporary Southern Baptist identity by more intentionally rooting some of its core convictions in reformational thought. Baptists are heirs of the Protestant Reformation, even if they "reformed the Reformation" by advocating a view of the local church more consistent with Reformation theology (and Scripture!) than

⁵⁰ Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

⁵¹ Russell D. Moore, "Conservative Christians in an Era of Christian Conservatism: Reclaiming the Struggle for Religious Liberty from Cultural Captivity," in *First Freedom: The Beginning and End of Religious Liberty*, rev. ed., ed. Jason G. Duesing, Thomas White, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 163.

views advocated by the magisterial Reformers.⁵² However, this reformational identity is only one of the “building blocks” of Southern Baptists’ “DNA” and other historic themes also need to be retrieved for the sake of renewing contemporary Southern Baptist identity. These include catholic convictions about primary doctrines that are rooted in the “Great Tradition” of classical Christianity, a restorationist impulse to recreate the best of the New Testament churches in today’s churches, and evangelical emphases such as the full truthfulness of Scripture, the centrality of the gospel, and the importance of mission. Southern Baptists should strive to embody all of these aspects of their identity for the glory of God alone—a biblical and reformational theme that should be cherished by all Baptist and every other follower of Jesus Christ.

⁵² Nathan A. Finn, “Reforming the Reformation,” *Light* 3.1 (Summer 2017): 27–30.

From Reformation London to Contemporary Nashville: Changing Baptist Views of the Church

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How did Baptist views of the church develop from the English Reformation? And how have those views since changed? The author first traces the earliest Baptists' grounding of ecclesiology in Christology. He then provides a phenomenological description of contemporary anthropological ecclesiologies held among Southern Baptists. He then offers a concluding critique.

Key Words: Baptists, Church, English Reformation, humanity, Jesus Christ, Southern Baptist Convention

Periodically, Southern Baptist theologians are asked to explain and even defend their theological positions to other Baptists, to other evangelical theologians, or to representatives from the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. The alternation between raised eyebrows and furrowed frowns, followed by intense questioning, indicates how this apparently exotic but vibrant expression of Christian communal life is perceived by other Western Christians.¹ The following essay responds to such queries by explaining both the commonalities

¹ Alongside the academic research cited below and in other articles, the post-seminarian experience that informs this essay includes six years in pastoral ministry, five years pursuing graduate research in non-Baptist universities (Duke University and Oxford University), and seventeen subsequent years in academic ministry. The author's ecumenical involvement includes active participation and leadership roles in both Baptist and interdenominational ministerial associations while serving as a pastor, followed by several years on the continuing committee of the Anglican Communion-Baptist World Alliance International Conversations, more than a decade with the North American Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue, and trustee service at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Wroclaw, Poland, all while serving as an academic. The author's ministry continues to include numerous speaking and worship opportunities beyond the local academy in both domestic and international Baptist and non-Baptist contexts alongside membership in numerous Christian academic societies. The author also significantly enjoys regular worship with and Bible exposition in a local Baptist church.

and peculiarities of contemporary Southern Baptist church life as it developed historically and theologically out of the fertile milieu of the European Reformation.

The Southern Baptist Convention represents the largest convention of Baptist churches in the world—there are over 40,000 Southern Baptist churches with a reported membership of some 15 million. The Southern Baptist Convention also fields full-time and temporary domestic and international missionaries in the tens of thousands. Moreover, they completed, with the turn of the century, a major theological realignment known as the “Conservative Resurgence” or “Conservative Reformation” by the political victors, but as the “Fundamentalist Takeover” by the vanquished.² Yet, in many ways, alongside their amazing numerical strength, vigorous missionary efforts, and concern for doctrine, Southern Baptists are perceived, and properly so, to be somewhat different.

Southern Baptists developed from the English Reformation, which made three overarching doctrinal claims: the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation; a typically high view of the Bible; and a great concern for the nature, composition, and role of the church. Much could and should be written on Southern Baptist participation in transitions in the first two doctrines, soteriology and Scripture, but we shall be concerned with the third doctrine. The emphasis is ecclesiological, because it is in the doctrine of the church that Baptists have differed most significantly from other Western churches. To elucidate changing understandings of the nature and role of the church, the development of Southern Baptists from the English Baptist tradition, which itself is a product of the Reformation-era Church of England, shall be considered. The story of the churches now represented institutionally in Nashville arguably originates in Reformation London. Their fluid ecclesial development continues to the present day and not without grave consequence.

After historical reflection upon the beginning of Baptist ecclesiology as essentially Christological in nature, the more functional beliefs and practices of Southern Baptists shall be summarily treated in a systematic manner. The functional role of the church is considered through a broadranging survey in relation to the churches' structures, the churches' activities, and the churches in their relations to others. It

² For a summary of Southern Baptist theological developments in the latter half of the twentieth century, see the journal issue entitled, “Southern Baptist Theology in the Late Twentieth Century,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 54.2 (Spring 2012).

will become evident that those Baptists who arose through the southern colonies appear by and large to have traded the early Baptists' Christological ecclesiology for a functional or programmatic ecclesiasticism.

The Historical Development of Southern Baptist Ecclesiology

In order to elucidate the changes in the understanding of the nature of the church according to Southern Baptists, we must first explore the Baptist basis in, and subsequent departure from, the established church in England during the "long Reformation" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³

Baptist Foundations in the Reformation Church of England

Baptists share a common doctrinal and ecclesial heritage with their religious relatives in the Reformation Church of England. The leading documents of that church were shaped at the hands of the evangelical martyr, Thomas Cranmer. We shall examine three documents in particular, each of which were partially or wholly formulated while Cranmer was resident at his archiepiscopal palace in south London: the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the *Ordinal*.

Many of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, collected by Cranmer into forty-two articles during the short Protestant reign of Edward VI, and later edited and authoritatively promulgated during the long reign of Elizabeth I,⁴ are quite acceptable to Baptists—indeed, some are considered necessary. The definition of the Trinity found in the first five articles (and in the creeds affirmed in the eighth article) did not stir controversy among the theological forerunners of the Baptists. More importantly, articles six and seven on the Bible would have received hearty approval by the early Baptists. It might be argued that their desire to know and proclaim Scripture, which "containeth all things necessary to salvation," is what began the drive towards separation.

Article six's statement that nothing is required for belief, except for what is found in the Bible, was emphasized by the Puritans in their regulative principle—nothing is to be practiced in the church beyond

³ On the need to think in terms of a "long Reformation," see Nicholas Tyacke, "Introduction: Re-Thinking the 'English Reformation,'" in *England's Long Reformation: 1500–1800*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke (London: UCL Press, 1998), 1–32.

⁴ Gerald Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1994), 284–311.

that which is commanded by Scripture. The Calvinist regulative principle is distinctly different from the Lutheran principle of indifference or *adiaphora*. English conformists, though Calvinistic in soteriology, adopted the less literal principle of indifference in their struggle with the Puritans. The early Separatists took the Puritan position and radicalized it, in the words of Robert Browne calling for a scriptural "reformation without tarrying for any."⁵ When Browne and like-minded radicals were denied episcopal preaching licenses, they looked elsewhere for the authorization they so desired. This internal compulsion to discern, discuss, and defend the doctrines of the Word, alongside their bishops' refusal to renew a sanctioned outlet for that desire, is what first drove the Elizabethan radical Puritans toward a separating ecclesiology. In a significant move with far-reaching implications, the English Separatists located authority, according to the detailed research of Barry White and Stephen Brachlow, in the covenanted congregation.⁶

John Smyth, the first English Baptist pastor, went a step further than Browne, advocating not only a separated and gathered covenantal church but also a covenant entered through the exclusive practice of believers' baptism. The English Separatists and their Baptist descendants did not disagree with their Church of England brethren about the basic theological doctrines of the Christian faith, for the official church's doctrines of Trinity, Christology, and Scripture were received largely intact.⁷

⁵ Robert Browne, *A Treatise of reformation without tarrying for anie* (1583), in *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*, ed. Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953), 150–70.

⁶ B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology 1570–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Lollardy, an older tradition of radicalism stemming from John Wyclif, excelled in criticizing existing structures. As they failed to offer a coherent positive ecclesiology, the Lollards left little trace of continuing community. However, for a fascinating study of commonalities found in geographical areas of strength shared by both late medieval Lollards and the early modern dissenting churches, see *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520–1725*, ed. Margaret Spufford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁷ If the bishops had not been so reticent to allow these radical preachers their preaching licenses, one wonders whether their logical search for an alternative basis of ecclesial authority would have ended in Separatism—perhaps the fracturing of the Church of England might have been avoided or at the least delayed.

In addition to a shared appreciation for the classical Christian doctrines, the forefathers of modern Baptists and the forefathers of modern Anglicans would have equally affirmed those official confessional articles dealing with justification. Articles nine through eighteen, which discuss this crucial Reformation dogma, could have been ascribed by most of the early Baptists, although the sacramental conclusion to article nine, on original sin, would have been troublesome if it led to an argument for infant baptism. Baptists concurred with the Reformation doctrines that repeated the Pauline understanding of election, sin, and salvation. The magisterially enforced doctrines of God, the Bible, and salvation did not violate the consciences of the early Baptists and their theological forerunners, the Separatists. Where then arose the cause for Baptists and other congregationalists to separate?

The division occurred with regard to the final twenty-one articles of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, which deal with ecclesiology.⁸ All Protestants were dependent upon an understanding of the visible church as *congregatio fidelium*, the congregation of the faithful, as first advocated by Martin Luther and defined at the beginning of the Anglican article nineteen. Disagreement began with the next few words, which define the marks of the church to be “where the pure Word of God is preached” and “the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance.” Besides the obvious disagreement over the application of the sacrament of baptism to infants, Baptists emulated the Puritans in affirming three marks of the visible church rather than two.⁹

The Separatists and their descendants, the Baptists, developed their radical ecclesiologies by absorbing and reacting to the political theology and ecclesiology of the Elizabethan-era Church of England. Most of their ecclesiological doctrines can be found in embryonic form in the

⁸ A careful reading of the confessions collected by William L. Lumpkin should bear this out (Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. [Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969]). Cf. James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 2–22; Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), chs. 1–2.

⁹ Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1991), 50–52; R. Albert Mohler Jr., “Discipline: The Missing Mark,” in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life*, ed. Mark Dever (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 43–61.

Book of Common Prayer.¹⁰ While they were radicals, they were nevertheless singing theology from the same book with the official church. They agreed that authority did descend as a gift of God and that that authority must be exercised responsibly. They, too, prayed for the Queen, her ministers, the clergy, and the people, at the morning and evening prayers. Like many Elizabethans, they embraced the ideal of a “mixed polity.” Using the Aristotelian political categories of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, they learned from such magisterial luminaries and political philosophers as William Cecil and Thomas Smith that the best polity was some combination of the three.¹¹ These early Separatists and Baptists were neither anti-monarchical nor thorough democrats. They simply reflected upon and furthered the prevailing political theories of their day.

While affirming mixed polity, they began to envision a way in which they might give greater honor to the King of Kings, who was lauded in the authorized prayer book. They wanted to reify in their local gatherings the line of the official prayer, *Te Deum*—“Thou art the King of glory, O Christ.” If these radical preachers and their followers were not authorized in their pursuit of godliness by the episcopal creatures of the Queen, where then could they find their divine, and thereby legitimate, authorization? At the end of both the morning and evening prayers as well as the litany, a collect of Chrysostom referred to the premier ecclesial text of the gospels: “when two or three are gathered together in Thy name.”

This reference to Matthew 18, one of two and arguably the more important, in which Jesus spoke of “the church,” played in the mind of these preachers. The presence of Christ had long been considered to contain the power of Christ.¹² In Matt 18:20, a text which served as the *locus classicus* for early Separatists and Baptists, it is explicitly stated that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst.” Where is Christ and where is his authority? There, in the gathered congregation.

In the confessions of the official prayer book, the people are called to approach the throne of grace with the priest as equals. Prayer is truly

¹⁰ *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI* (London: Prayer Book Society, 1999).

¹¹ Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *Royal Priesthood in the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 266–67.

¹² Cf. the soteriological and apotropaic claims of medieval Christians concerning the consecrated host as well as the political and theological claims of the Tudor monarchs as vividly portrayed on the flyleaf of the official vernacular Bibles.

a “common” and leveling exercise in Anglican theology. Prayer is likewise a “common” and leveling exercise in later Baptist theology. Prayer is the place where Baptists first found the authority they required to rebel against the perceived ungodly recalcitrance and illegitimate usurpation of authority by their bishops. If Christ and his authority are present amidst the people called to prayer, how can that authority be defined? At this point, the early Separatists and Baptists often turned to the Calvinist commonplace of the threefold office of Christ. Christ is prophet, priest, and king, and his people participate in his tripartite office. He is, in the words of the official communion alms prayer, “our only Mediator” and “our Lord.” It is he who dispenses the authority to preach, to pray, and to rule.

The official church’s doctrinal articles may have defined only two marks for the visible church, the Word and the sacraments, but the official *Ordinal* had the bishop pronounce three marks to the newly ordained priest: “Will you then give faithful diligence always so to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ?”¹³ Luther and the more traditional continental Reformers embraced only two marks and excluded the third mark, discipline, as a sign of perfectionism. John Calvin alternated between two and three marks, but Martin Bucer, Jan Łaski, and many later Calvinists elevated the mark of discipline. For these more thorough Reformers, the marks of the church must include the discipline of the church. “Discipline” was a synonym for “government,” even for “rule.”¹⁴

The Separatists and their Baptist disciples likewise spoke of three marks for the visible church, and these three marks were correlated with the threefold office of their ecclesiastical mediator, King Jesus.¹⁵ In his role as prophet, Jesus mediates the office of proclamation to his church. In his role as priest, Jesus mediates the office of intercession to his church. In his role as king, Jesus mediates the office of rule to his church. The church participates communally in the threefold office of Christ: they are the prophecy, the priesthood, and the kingdom.¹⁶ They

¹³ *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, 310.

¹⁴ J. William Black, “From Martin Bucer to Richard Baxter: Discipline and Reformation in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England,” *Church History* 70.4 (2001): 644–73.

¹⁵ E.g., *The Confession of Faith, of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists* (London, 1644), arts. 10–21.

¹⁶ Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “Congregational Authority and the *Inventio* or Invention of Authority,” *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 3.1 (2005): 110–

are, in the words of Peter, the prince of the apostles, a “royal priesthood . . . so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him” (1 Pet 2).

Another piece to the puzzle of the doctrines that formed the ecclesiology of the early Baptists is found in their localization of covenant theology. Christ’s atonement enables the church to participate in the soteriological covenant, and his threefold office enables the church to participate in the ecclesiological covenant. The application of covenantal theology had been promoted in English evangelical circles at least since William Tyndale, but the Separatists added the threefold office.¹⁷ How, then, does a church gather and make Christ present? The gathering of the church was accomplished through separation from the ungodly parishes and the adoption of a covenant. The ecclesiastical covenant could be neither reduced to a crass social contract, as in later Enlightenment political theory, nor elevated to a claim on God’s grace, as in more Pelagian forms of Arminian soteriology. God and his people came together in covenant to form the local church. This church is where Christ is, where his offices are shared, and where the recently de-licensed preachers found their desired authorization to proclaim the Word.

Some may consider this stringing of Anglican theological statements into a Baptist ecclesiology incomplete. After all, did not Baptists reject the authority of the magistrate as defined by the official formularies? This is true. Baptists did build on certain concepts and bypass others, such as the ecclesiastical authority of the monarch. However, such an expression of continuity and discontinuity was consistent with early claims in the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Reformation’s leading Archbishop of Canterbury believed the church “should keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stuffiness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it.”¹⁸ It could be argued that the early Separatists and Baptists were living out that belief through their radical yet Christological ecclesiology. However, it is also

35. After this essay was completed, Ian Birch published a book on the grounding of Particular Baptist ecclesiology in the kingship of Christ: *To Follow the Lambe Wheresoever He Goeth: The Ecclesial Polity of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1640–1660*, Monographs in Baptist History (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017).

¹⁷ Ralph S. Werrell, *The Theology of William Tyndale* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2006). Benjamin Hawkins, whose forthcoming doctoral dissertation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary focuses upon Tyndale, argues tangentially that Werrell overstates the covenantal structure of Tyndale’s theology.

¹⁸ Thomas Cranmer, “The Preface,” in *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI*, 3–5.

doubtless true that Cranmer would have been horrified by the fissiparous trajectory of these radicals.

Southern Baptist Foundations

As the seventeenth century progressed, two important events occurred that prepared the context for Southern Baptist life. First, the civil wars redefined English society and made room for both General and Particular Baptists to thrive. Second, the newly discovered American continent was opened for immigration. In England, the ecclesiological ideals of the Baptists found expression not only in the church but also in the state. Baptists joined with other congregationalists in pursuing the reification of the kingdom of God. They concluded that the closet Romanist, Charles I, was not their true king; rather, Jesus is King; and the one they viewed as a usurper lost his head, literally. After the demise of the more radical Baptists with the Interregnum and in certain sectors of the Fifth Monarchy movement, English Baptists sought respectability. They found a measure of comradeship by allying themselves with the Independents and the Presbyterians. The First London Confession reflects the older radical ecclesiology, while the Second London Confession reshaped Baptist thought and made it more presentable and less revolutionary. The Presbyterians' *Westminster Confession* and the Independents' *Savoy Declaration* helped the Baptists repackage their ideology in terms more acceptable to the resurgent official church.

The first American Baptists appeared in the northern colonies, where they sought to establish the kingdom of God by planting congregations in the wilderness. (The stories of Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, and John Leland have been told before and need not be rehearsed here.) The first Baptists to appear in the south originally came from the west of England and settled in South Carolina. Prior to the awakenings, the Baptists who inhabited the southern colonies immigrated either from established Baptist churches in the other American colonies or from Britain. During the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century evangelical awakenings, the "Regular [Particular] Baptists" and the "General Baptists" were joined by the fugitive "Separate Baptists." Together, they fought for religious liberty in the predominantly Anglican and Puritan colonies. Baptist support for the successful American Revolution won them important friends. Over time, Baptists were able to gain not only tolerance for their churches but also religious

freedom, which in post-revolutionary terms primarily meant the abolition of taxes to support their denominational opponents.¹⁹

With the growth of the American colonies came the movement of Baptists ever westward into the continent. As farms were established on large plots of land, many people found themselves isolated from one another and increasingly self-sufficient. Baptists, among others, brought the gospel to these frontier pioneers. In this heady environment of freedom and self-sufficiency, fortified by advances in technology and wealth, the Baptists were successful in establishing self-governing congregations. Local Baptists practiced a form of democratic government that correlated to a great extent with the forms of government common in the American hinterland, a phenomenon noted by the French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville of American churches generally and the German philosopher Max Weber of Baptist churches specifically.²⁰ These self-governing congregations were periodically susceptible to religious enthusiasm and doctrinal deviation. The Philadelphia Association, in response, sought to bring religious and doctrinal uniformity to American Baptists, but the need for a national organization was perceived. The first national Baptist organization, the Triennial Convention, was founded in 1814 to support foreign missionaries. It became the venue for discussions leading to American Baptist advances in higher education and missionary enterprises. The Triennial Convention was led in its first years by Richard Furman, a slave-holding southerner from Charleston, South Carolina.

Although they were integral to the foundation of the Triennial Convention and other national Baptist societies, Baptists in the south could not long remain in a national fold. The Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845 in reaction to the perceived encroachment of northern abolitionist values into the decision-making of the national missionary boards. Southern Baptists, for the most part, supported the Confederacy during the American Civil War, and some of their leading

¹⁹ On the historical development of religious liberty among Baptists in Europe and America, see chapters 2 and 3 of *First Freedom: The Beginning and End of Religious Liberty*, 2nd ed., ed. Jason G. Duesing, Thomas White, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016). More generally, see Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "The Development of Religious Liberty: A Survey of Its Progress and Challenges in Christian History," *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 6.1 (2009): 119–38.

²⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (New York: Penguin, 2003); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930).

pastor-theologians argued forcefully for a positive biblical opinion of slavery. (Most Southern Baptists, today, are somewhat ashamed of this episode, and the national convention has taken the step of apologizing for past offenses toward the African-American minority through public resolutions. In spite of their misappropriation of Scripture to subjugate the black population politically, Southern Baptists ironically saw great results from their religious influence upon the slave population.)

Through much of the nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth century, Southern Baptists were as concerned about orthodoxy in their ecclesiology as were their forefathers. Hints of the political philosophy and English Calvinist theology that influenced early Baptist development could still be found, but the general lack of education on the post-revolutionary frontier and in the post-bellum south, coupled with the self-sufficient nature of the churches, ultimately separated these later Baptists from their ideological roots. The original understanding of the nature of Baptist churches as congregations covenanted with Christ was eventually lost in the relative isolation and poverty of the predominantly rural American south.

The popular confessions and ecclesiological manuals available to nineteenth- and twentieth-century American Baptists tended to treat the church as a distinct locus primarily from a practical perspective using a cursory anthropological definition of the nature of the church. This can be seen in the work of John L. Dagg, the premier southern Baptist theologian of the mid-nineteenth century. Dagg left a detailed systematic theology that was accompanied with a book on church polity. Dagg's ecclesiology was functional and contained little ontological reflection.²¹ There are discernable traces in nineteenth-century southern (later, Southern) Baptist literature of the Christological foundation of Baptist ecclesiology; however, the focus definitely shifted to a functional ecclesiasticism. J. L. Reynolds' *Church Polity* is one of the few

²¹ J. L. Dagg, *A Manual of Theology* (reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Gano, 1982); idem, *Manual of Theology. Second Part. A Treatise on Church Order* (reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Gano, 1982). Dagg's ecclesiology was published separately and was more than three quarters the size of the systematic treatise. In the eighteenth century, John Gill began a trend by treating ecclesiology in a separate manual, but he was careful to ground the ecclesiology in the traditional three-fold office of Christ. John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity; or A System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* (reprint, London: M. & S. Hingham, 1839), book 5, chs 9–14; idem, *A Body of Practical Divinity; or A System of Practical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures. Which Completes the Scheme of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (reprint, London: M. & S. Hingham, 1839).

Christological pieces available on the nature of Baptist ecclesiology in America during that century, but even his discussion there is peremptorily shortened by more practical concerns.²²

In case the south seems unduly isolated, amnesia concerning the Christological basis of the ideological nature of Baptist ecclesiology had parallels among northern American Baptists. In his highly influential *Church Manual*, James Madison Pendleton, whose ministry began in the south and ended in the north, succinctly offered an anthropological definition of the nature of the church, before proceeding to functional matters.²³ Similarly, Edward T. Hiscox, whose *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches* was widely used throughout the United States, provided a primarily anthropological definition of the nature of the church before diving into practical considerations.²⁴ Both Pendleton and Dagg advocated the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* and provided a complete copy, with commentary, in their books. This widely adopted confession, which became the basis of the internationally influential *Baptist Faith and Message*, defined the church first, according to its membership, second, according to its functions, and third, according to its officers.²⁵

Anthropological, functional, and structural concerns, therefore, dominated American Baptist discussions of the church. However, as the medieval papacy learned much earlier, ecclesiastical practice requires a theology to justify its existence. Churches must have an ecclesiological ideology to justify their ecclesiastical practices. They may function for a time without a theological ecclesiology but they must eventually justify their ecclesiastical ways. In lieu of the Christological basis for the church, Baptists searched for new ideologies.

Among many Baptists, a type of succession of the persecuted, Landmarkism, provided the ideological glue needed by Baptists, but its tenure was attenuated by its historical implausibility and legal rigidity.²⁶ There was not a total amnesia, as attested by the research of Greg Wills

²² J. L. Reynolds, *Church Polity or The Kingdom of Christ, In its Internal and External Development* (1849), in *Polity*, ed. Dever, 298–305.

²³ J. M. Pendleton, *Baptist Church Manual* (1867; reprint, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), 5.

²⁴ Edward T. Hiscox, *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches* (1893; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980), 15, 20–22, 44–47.

²⁵ *New Hampshire Confession of Faith*, article 14, in *ibid.*, 556.

²⁶ James E. Tull, *High-Church Baptists in the South: The Origin, Nature, and Influence of Landmarkism* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000); James A. Patterson, *James Robinson Graves: Staking the Boundaries of Baptist Identity* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012).

on nineteenth-century Alabama Baptists.²⁷ However, the widespread loss of the original ideology that defined the nature of Baptist ecclesiology meant that functional concerns dominated discourse on the church. The functional ecclesiastical practices remained while ontological ecclesiology largely died off. Exegesis and polemic were focused on defending established practices rather than remembering and renewing theological foundations.

Francis Wayland, earlier in the north, and E. Y. Mullins, later in the south, helped supply a new ideology by appealing to the American experience of Individualism. Both men, brilliant and influential, admittedly lacked formal training in classical history and theology, and both embraced the currents of American culture as reflective of Baptist values. Mullins's emphasis on a solipsistic "soul competency," which is complemented by the atomistic doctrine of "the priesthood of the believer," coupled with a mild but cancerous anti-ecclesiasticism, convincingly appealed to those looking for the essence of what it means to be Baptist.²⁸ In the twentieth century, Southern Baptist literature on the church became functional on the one hand and ideologically individualistic on the other. By the 1930s this new ideology furthered the demise of the practice of church discipline, where church discipline was earlier considered a major indicator of communal integrity.

With the belated introduction of scholarly liberalism into Southern Baptist theological circles, the move to a crassly voluntaristic understanding of the nature of the church was nearly complete. The research of Ernst Troeltsch classified nineteenth-century Baptist churches as sectarian.²⁹ The best description of the dominant twentieth-century Southern Baptist ecclesial ideology in Troeltschian terms is neither church-type nor sect-type, but mystic. The Southern Baptist "mystic" is only loosely and suspiciously related to an association of like-minded people. At this point, we end our discussion of developments in the Southern Baptist understanding of the nature of the church and turn to a phenomenological description of the churches today.

²⁷ Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁸ Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "Mullins, Edgar Young (1860–1928)," in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 458–60; idem, "Changing Baptist Concepts of Royal Priesthood: John Smyth and Edgar Young Mullins," in *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism*, ed. Deryck W. Lovegrove (New York: Routledge, 2002), 243–49.

²⁹ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1931), 461–65.

A Functional Ecclesiasticism for Southern Baptists

The functional ecclesiasticism of Southern Baptist churches today shall be considered under three rubrics: the structures of the churches, the activities of the churches, and the churches in relation to others. The role of the church in relation to its own people may be partially discerned in its structures. The role of the church in relation to God may be grasped by examining its activities. The role of the church in relation to the rest of the world may be detected by an evaluation of its external values. From a philosophical perspective, this ecclesiology could be described as a form of pragmatism;³⁰ from a phenomenological perspective, it could be described as functional or programmatic. What follows is the author's phenomenological description of contemporary Southern Baptist church life. It is not intended to be exhaustive and particular but broadly descriptive and impressionistic.

Southern Baptist Churches in Relation to their People: Structures

Considered under the rubric of church structures are the local church, the officers of the church, and the members of the church. Southern Baptists emphasize the local church above any other expression of Christian community. Indeed, any communal expression other than *the local church* will likely find detractors rising to voice their objections that the authority of the local church is being compromised. Over the years, most denominational leaders (but not all, as I can personally attest) have distanced themselves from any centralizing rhetoric. Although our leading denominational body, the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, is located in Nashville, Tennessee, the leaders of that body properly identify the local churches and not Nashville as the headquarters for Southern Baptists. Local church "autonomy" is the doctrinal description that Southern Baptists have typically assigned to this attitude.³¹ To threaten this autonomy is to threaten the integrity of Southern Baptist ecclesiastical practice.

Baptists have always given some emphasis to the local church, but during the Landmark movement of the nineteenth century, Southern Baptists came to fear any external influences whatsoever. While most Protestant theologians would recognize the truth of both the local

³⁰ Pragmatism has its philosophical basis in the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, among others. Louis Menard, ed., *Pragmatism: A Reader* (New York: Random House, 1997).

³¹ *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 2000), article 6.

church and the universal church, it was not until 1963 that Southern Baptists officially recognized the existence of the universal church, and that not without resistance. Even today, Southern Baptists see their local churches as sacrosanct. Many are still reluctant to invite non-Baptist preachers to step into their pulpits, to accept non-Baptists into church membership, or to encourage open communion.

That said, even the most ardent defenders of Southern Baptist local church autonomy realize the influence the denomination can have upon the life of the local churches. This explains why proponents of local church autonomy, whether fundamentalist or conservative or moderate or liberal in orientation, found the recent battle for control of the conventions to be so important. The groups that control the national convention or the larger state conventions have an enormous amount of patronage at their disposal in the short term. Moreover, in the long term, they may set the theological direction of Southern Baptist seminaries and colleges, and thus influence the direction of the local churches. The colleges and seminaries train the pastors who will eventually lead the churches.

In most local churches, the ultimate authority is still held by the congregation. This authority was originally outlined in a church covenant, constitution, and/or articles of incorporation. While the doctrinal matters addressed by church covenants and constitutions are now often ignored, the issue of authority seems a perennial concern. There is a constant give-and-take occurring in the churches between various members. This is because operational authority in the church is variously delegated, officially or unofficially, to the pastor, the church staff, the deacons, the elders, or some powerful committee of laypersons. These operational authorities may be defined in the constitution and by-laws of the church. Where they are not clearly delineated or remembered, these operational authorities, exercised by church officers, can compete with one another, in healthy or unhealthy ways.

Generally, the congregation calls a pastor, the primary figure among the *church officers*, to lead in worship and business. The calling of a pastor is an important event in the life of the church, so important that the method of calling is defined in the constitution. A “search committee” is appointed by the church in one of its business meetings to begin accepting vitas and interviewing candidates. The hope is that the committee will soon discern “God’s man” and present that candidate to the church as a prospective pastor, usually after a sermon delivered to the church “in view of a call.” Unfortunately, some churches are in the habit of forming a search committee on an annual or bi-annual basis, either because of some type of disagreement or because the new pastor

has found “a better field of service.” Pastors are expected to have a real sense that God, and not only the church, is calling them to fill their role as the church’s spiritual leader. The qualifications applied to bishops and elders in 1 Timothy and Titus are used to determine the spiritual fitness of a candidate. For Southern Baptists, “pastors” are “elders” are “bishops.” The more intense examination of a new candidate for a pastorate usually occurs in an ordination council formed with the support of other local churches at the request of the local church that has decided to call the new minister.

Pastors are typically expected, though by no means required, to have a seminary education. Ordination involves ordained ministers from the association, who are invited to lay hands upon the ordinand. Female candidates for the role of senior pastor are officially discouraged by the denomination’s latest confession of faith, and many of the local churches would never consider a female candidate, whatever the national denomination determines.

Although most churches are small and can only support one ministerial staff member, larger churches will have a senior pastor who is aided by numerous staff members. These staff members are employees of the church and not the denomination nor the pastor, though they report to the pastor. Staff members can be either ministerial (ordained) or non-ministerial (support). Some churches call their ordained staff members “pastors” or “elders,” effectively resulting in a multiple-elder model, though most of the churches remain single-elder institutions. The most common ministerial staff members assist the pastor by leading in music, organizing the educational ministries of the church, ministering to the youth or some other age group, leading the outreach ministries of the church, or managing the non-ministerial support staff. A ministerial staff member’s tenure can be of various length and enjoyment, dependent upon reception by the senior pastor and/or the church membership.

Southern Baptists have traditionally affirmed two offices in the church, that of pastors and that of deacons. Periodically in Southern Baptist history, there have been movements away from this understanding. Recently, for instance, there has been a growing interest in the plural-elder model for the structure of the church. It is yet to be seen whether this is driven more by the questionable exposition of the plural in some New Testament passages or by the desire of some pastors to dilute the rival authority of these often troublesome deacons. Because there has been great turnover in the pastorate—some studies say the average tenure of a pastor is less than two years—the laity have been required to provide continuity of leadership in many churches.

Such congregations naturally look to their deacons for leadership during the interim between pastors. “Boards” of deacons have often lost their original purpose of aiding the pastor by serving the church’s more mundane needs and may even begin functioning as a corporate board of directors or trustees. (The latter trend is confused by the presence of a distinct body required by articles of incorporation, the literal “trustees” of the church.)

Theologically, the *members* of the church should be considered prior to the officers of the church. However, in practice, many Southern Baptist churches pay more attention to their officers than to their members. Indeed, in some larger churches, or “super churches,” which can contain multiple thousands of members, the pastor has been compared to a rock-n-roll or movie “star” and the worship service has taken on the air of a performance. The members are seen as “consumers” whom the ministries of the church serve with ever more elaboration in the concern that these consumers will find a better service provider in a competing church. Although one might be tempted to focus on the problems at the top end of the local church food chain, the impact of modern individualism (and postmodern pluralism) can also be detected in the older “First Baptist” urban and suburban churches and the smaller rural and inner-city churches.

New members usually join a church based upon “transfer by letter,” “transfer by statement,” or “believer’s baptism.” “Transfer by letter” describes the process of a sister Baptist church verifying that this candidate for membership has been a member in good standing. Such transfers of membership have often become rubber-stamps rather than indicators of whether the member was actually faithful and good. “Transfer by statement” can be of two types, either a statement from a church “of like faith and practice” that this church member is eligible for membership or a statement from the proposed member that he once belonged to a church “of like faith and practice.” This category is troubling as even cursory communal oversight is effectively bypassed. Membership “by believer’s baptism” is required of all new Christians. This form of membership is often, but not always, required of Christians who have been baptized as infants in another Christian tradition.

Over time, the membership requirements for becoming and remaining as members have been loosened by the churches. The old categories have been maintained but new definitions are being offered. “Open membership” no longer carries the stigma it once held among Southern Baptists, although the idea is still not officially countenanced. Similarly, it appears that all that is required to get on the rolls of many churches is to “walk down the aisle” during the “invitation” and have

the pastor declare one a new member by one of the above-mentioned forms. Some churches still maintain a separate vote during the monthly or quarterly business meeting, but even that can be perfunctory. Requirements made of those who have become members are no longer particularly measurable. Once a person is a church member, churches are reluctant to remove their name except in the event of death. These trends beyond even the individualistic association of like-minded individuals are probably a function of a number of factors: the non-judgmental nature of postmodernity, the desire of pastors on a career path to increase their membership sizes, and the anti-historical bias many Americans possess. The barriers to entering the community and maintaining membership are relatively low.

In their role of relating to themselves, Southern Baptists organize themselves primarily at the local level. The local churches choose church officers to lead the church in its activities. They now have comparatively low barriers to the granting and maintenance of membership. Now, let us examine the functioning of the churches through their activities.

Southern Baptist Churches in Relation to God: Activities

Considered under the rubric of church activities are the roles in the churches’ relation to God of worship and proclamation, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and church discipline. Southern Baptists in *worship and proclamation* are not liturgical, at least in the sense of a written liturgy. Worship, however, is important, so important that rearranging or omitting portions of the unwritten liturgy can be detrimental to a preacher’s tenure. Baptists typically worship in a formal way on Sunday morning; smaller numbers attend the less formal Sunday evening and mid-week prayer services, if they still exist. In the more traditional churches, the hymnal provides the musical portion of the service, while more contemporary churches choose popular short choruses, often with limited theological content. Prayers, mostly extemporaneous, are uttered by the pastor or a deacon or a special guest at the beginning of the service, before the offering, perhaps before the sermon, and as the benediction. The offering as an expression of tithing or sacrificial giving is periodically emphasized.

The affective zenith of the typical worship service is experienced towards the end of the sermon and during the “invitation.” The invitation or “altar call” became popular during the later evangelical awakenings as a time for public commitments by individuals, either members or visitors. A public commitment, also known as “walking the aisle,”

can be made when one accepts Christ personally as Lord and Savior, wishes to join the church, “surrenders” to the ministry, or “rededicates” one’s life to Christ. The invitation is now considered an essential aspect of public worship in many churches. Indeed, it would appear to the casual observer that walking the aisle rather than baptism is requisite for church membership.

The central place in a worship service is given to a sermon from the pastor or a special guest. The sermons are ideally scriptural expositions although the topical sermon is having a strong run in Southern Baptist pulpits. The quality of the sermon from the viewpoint of content or style is dependent upon the preacher. Some preachers are very committed to verse-by-verse exposition; others alternate book studies with topical studies; yet others are more than ready to preach “how to” sermons that appeal to their audience’s “felt needs.” The average sermon will begin with the biblical text. The body of the sermon will arrange the material under a few perhaps alliterative headings, explain the text, illustrate the text, and then apply the text to the audience. Explanations come from linguistic studies, commentary references, and the preacher’s personal encounters with the Word. Illustrations are pulled from the Bible itself, history, personal experience, or contemporary events. Applications are personalized to what the preacher perceives are the audience’s greatest spiritual needs.

The conclusion of the sermon usually includes a strong appeal to action. An evangelistic appeal to “invite Jesus into your heart” is to be expected from most. Some evangelistic appeals can be quite forceful in their psychical impact. A confident, boisterous style with a harmonic rise and fall in tone and pitch building to a climactic call to come to Jesus can temporarily overcome deficiencies in content. Strong content with a retiring style is appreciated but such preachers are rarely asked to appear before their fellows in preaching conferences. Church members expect a fresh, exciting sermon each Sunday morning. Sunday evening and week-day prayer meetings require less preparation. The sermon is the primary means of restoring human relations with God and because of their concern for personal salvation, Baptists give it pride of place in worship.

The “sacraments,” which Southern Baptists prefer to call “ordinances,” are celebrated, ideally, out of a sense of joyous obedience and responsive confession to the work of God in their lives. The ordinances are not necessarily effective means of grace although they may be viewed as providing a blessing to the church. Those who participate in the ordinances profess their initial conversion in baptism and their continuing fellowship with God and his church in the Lord’s Supper.

Baptism is a condition for church membership and is intended for believers only. After the new believer is greeted during the invitation and received verbally into the church, either by pastoral proclamation or a cursory church vote, the baptizand will conference with the pastor or a staff member. The basics of the faith—God, Christ, salvation, personal Bible reading, prayer, tithing, the meaning of baptism—will be reasserted by the pastor and affirmed by the baptizand. After the conference a date will be arranged for baptism in a public worship service. Baptism is not seen as a requirement for regeneration but as an expression of spiritual rebirth. It is performed by a minister or deacon or other designated church member.

The mode of baptism is full immersion, which symbolizes the convert’s identification with the death of Jesus (and personal death to sin) and with his resurrection (and commitment to live a Christian life and express hope in eternal life). The Trinitarian formula of the Great Commission is viewed as a proclamation of the convert’s identification with the Christian God. Southern Baptists have been steadily losing their insistence upon baptism for believers only as their primary distinctive. Although Southern Baptists have not experimented with paedobaptism, our churches are baptizing ever younger new members. Even if Southern Baptists are not guilty of “cradle” baptism, they might be accused of “preschool” baptism; some scholars question the effective difference. As an alternative to paedobaptism, many churches have “baby dedication services” in which God is thanked for the new arrival, to whom the church and the parents commit themselves to discipling.

The Lord’s Supper is sometimes called “communion,” rarely called “the Eucharist,” and never called “the Mass.” Most Southern Baptists appear to hold either a Zwinglian view of communion at best or a Schwenckfeldian suspension of meaningful celebration at worst. Often the Lord’s Supper is simply tacked on other worship services on a quarterly basis. If a sermon is preached on the Lord’s Supper, it will inevitably include a diatribe against the Roman understanding and an affirmation of memorialism. There is a rising sense among younger Southern Baptists that the Lord’s Supper should be understood in a Calvinistic sense as a spiritual communion with the risen Christ and his body and that it deserves a more central place in the life of the churches.

During the nineteenth century, the Landmark movement encouraged Southern Baptists in the middle and western south to serve communion only to the particular members of that local church in a practice known as “strict communion.” In the twentieth century, most churches would allow other believing baptized Christians to participate

in a local church communion in a practice known as “close communion.” Today, more churches are inviting any Christian to participate in a practice known as “open communion.” Reflecting their individualistic tendencies, the churches generally dispense the grape juice—wine is eschewed in deference to the temperance movement—in personal cups and the bread in separate small crackers. The communicant is usually exhorted to examine oneself for holiness and faithfulness prior to consumption; the older communal understanding of examination has been largely forgotten.

As has already been hinted at, *church discipline* has largely fallen into disuse. Baptist church members seemed more concerned to misinterpret Jesus’ statement, “judge not lest ye be judged,” as an undiscerning tolerance and to avoid the heartaches of controversy, than to reveal the church as the body of a holy Christ. It is rare for a church to practice discipline except in the case of the pastor or another staff member. Most churches find it scandalous to keep a minister who has fallen into open sin, but sinful laypersons are regularly countenanced. Many churches have embraced the goal of numerical growth, and, in an effort to bring in new members, they made the decision, consciously or unconsciously, to lay fewer requirements upon church members. It is not very common for a church to purge its rolls of non-attending church members. The purging of the rolls is seen as too radical, and some ministers have faced difficulty when seeking such.

In their role of relating themselves to God, the churches engage in worship, proclaim the Word, habitually practice the ordinance of believers’ baptism, haphazardly practice the ordinance of communion, and almost never practice church discipline.

Southern Baptist Churches in Relation to Others

By “others,” we mean those who are not members of this particular local Southern Baptist church. It cannot be emphasized enough that Southern Baptists have an impulse to emphasize the local churches. Those groups outside the local Southern Baptist church are the others. Considered under the rubric of churches in relation to others are the mission of the church, associations and conventions, religious liberty, and ecumenism. Southern Baptists define their mission as shaping their relation to the world. They form associations and conventions to cooperate with other Baptist churches. They emphasize religious liberty in their dealings with the culture and the state. And they have an intentionally limited view of what constitutes valid cooperation with other Christian traditions.

Southern Baptist churches define *the mission of the church* in an evangelistic manner: the churches make concerted and sustained efforts to reach those who are lost with the good news of the atoning death and powerful resurrection of the God-man, Jesus Christ. The mission of the church is accomplished on a local level by evangelistic outreach. Local evangelistic outreach may be accomplished through lifestyle evangelism, servant evangelism, and confrontational evangelism, and during worship. Local churches sometimes employ professional evangelists on a temporary basis both to call the church to revival and to appeal in crusades for the conversion of the lost.

The mission of the church is accomplished beyond the local church’s immediate area through the commissioning and support of both professional and short-term missionaries. Some non-SBC southern Baptist churches see the convention missionary boards as impinging on the local church’s autonomy and send and support their own missionaries. Churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention support missions through the Cooperative Program and through special annual offerings. Members of these affiliated churches may be encouraged to consider God’s call upon their lives to become missionaries. Those sensing such are put through a rigorous application process with the International Mission Board or North American Mission Board. Appointed missionaries are held in high esteem by the churches as they leave a comfortable culture to take the good news of Jesus Christ across national and linguistic boundaries. The impact of these mission endeavors, especially in the international arena, has been numerically positive. Other effects are best left to the judgment of the beneficiaries of these efforts. The ultimate judge, of course, is God.

In order to cooperate with one another, local Southern Baptist churches formed *associations and conventions*. Associations fulfill three primary purposes: the promotion of missions, the pooling of resources for higher education, and the enablement of benevolence ministries. In their cooperative model, Southern Baptists have opted for a “convention” method rather than the “society” method preferred by northern Baptists. Only churches may join a convention while societies are open to churches, individuals, and other organizations. There are three primary levels of cooperation between Southern Baptist churches: the local association, the state convention, and the national convention. There are other affinity groups, but these three are the most common.

For some churches, the local association is the place where the overhead projector is kept; for others, it is where doctrinal controversies are settled; for yet others, it is a lifeline of Christian fellowship and the Director of Missions is a resource of wisdom in times of trouble.

Churches place the association in their annual budget and send messengers to monthly and annual meetings. The association can exclude churches considered heretical or unethical, but the association has no coercive power or legal claim upon the local churches. It is a voluntary organization, though its voluntarism is not to be understood in a libertarian sense. The authority flows from the churches to the association. The same can be said of the state and national conventions.

The Cooperative Program is the financial lifeline by which the churches maintain the state and national conventions. Most churches put the state convention in their budget and a substantial percentage is passed by the state to the national convention. As a result of the Controversy and the Great Commission Resurgence that came later, these time-worn methods of funding state and national convention ministries have been changing. Indeed, in a number of states—Virginia, Texas, and Missouri being most prominent—rival conventions have been formed to compete for local church dollars and commitment. Southern Baptists cooperated in the establishment of the Baptist World Alliance, but the national denomination's relationship with the BWA has been severed. Some Southern Baptists have formed various societies to further their own particular doctrinal or missiological priorities.

Through various committees or commissions on public affairs, Southern Baptists relate themselves to issues that impact the wider culture. The primary cultural concern of Southern Baptists has been to promote *religious liberty*. With the rise of the conservatives, however, two different views of religious liberty came to dominate the discussion. The view of the now-eclipsed Christian Life Commission was to argue for the strict separation of church and state, but the new Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission favors an accommodationist position in which the state ideally makes room for the church to proclaim the Word and have a positive social influence. Under the previous moderate regime, Southern Baptists were equivocal on abortion and other hot-button cultural issues, except for the issue of racism, which they eventually opposed. Under the conservative regime, Southern Baptists declared themselves combatants in the culture wars, taking positions on the abortion issue as pro-life, on homosexuality as only allowing sexual relations in a faithful marriage between a man and a woman, and on the races as against bigotry. Southern Baptists have raised funds to combat world hunger.

Conservative Southern Baptists are more traditional in their views of the roles of men and women in the family while moderates are more attuned to the culture. Southern Baptists have tried to convince the American government to promote genuine religious liberty not only at

home but throughout the world. Interestingly, the sectarian nature of their forefathers has sometimes been forgotten as Southern Baptists have grown in number. So large have Baptists become that they have by default inherited the mantle of an established church in numerous communities in the south. This is disheartening to those who cherish the dissenting nature of their history but encouraging to those who see the church leavening society.

Southern Baptists have been typically reluctant to affiliate themselves formally with supporters of *ecumenism*. The article on cooperation in the *Baptist Faith and Message* states:

Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

The qualifying clauses are interpreted in an evangelistic and doctrinally orthodox manner. There is little desire for formal ecumenical discussions intended to lead to shared ministries and sacraments or ordinances. Southern Baptists are quite suspicious of any efforts to bring about structural unity. Currently, "spiritual harmony" is the best that other Christian denominations can hope for.

Conclusion

This historical review of popular Southern Baptist views of the changing nature and role of the churches raises three major theological concerns. First, the ontological grounding of the church in the three-fold office of Jesus Christ, which arose during England's long Reformation, has largely disappeared from contemporary popular discussions in Southern Baptist ecclesiology. In effect, the churches traded a Christological foundation for an anthropological one. We now see ourselves more as religious associations of independent persons than as the localized body of our Lord and Savior.³²

³² Discussions have wisely begun regarding the need for reviving a proper theological definition of the nature of the church in the Southern Baptist academy. Cf. W. Madison Grace, II, "The Church as Place in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theology" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary,

Second, sensing an ecclesiological lacuna, Southern Baptists cast about for a replacement ideology to justify their existence and practice. However, the two major proffered options, Landmarkism and Individualism, ought now both be deemed deficient. At their root each relies upon anthropological rather than theological resources. In the one case, the key is a succession of churches; in the other, an exaltation of individual human persons. Almost imperceptibly, the effective theological norm in Baptist ecclesiology has transferred from the Lord of the Church to one of two options focused on the human membership of the churches.

Third, because of these conceptual deficiencies regarding the nature of the church, the practices of the churches more easily depart from historic forms. Loosened from its Christological mooring, the ship of the local church is now restrained only by the relatively weightless anchor of anthropological conviction. Many departures from traditional practices, especially those dealing with the membership of the churches, the worship of the churches, and the relationship of the churches with others, indicate an ongoing diminution of ecclesiological integrity.

In this author's opinion, the problem will be resolved only through a return to those grounds revealed in Scripture and rediscovered during the Reformation. Baptist churches do not need to return to London, of course, but our doctrine of the church must again be grounded theologically. If Jesus is not entirely submitted to as the one Lord of the Church, who stands in his threefold Lordship over all of the churches' structures, activities, and relationships, our churches are, to state it bluntly, preparing for judgment.

2012). The major recent academic ecclesiological contributions of John Hammett, Thomas White, and Gregg Allison, *inter alia*, have been bracketed from this essay. These recent academic contributions, on the one hand, have not as yet reached deeply into popular discourse and, on the other hand, deserve more careful attention than space here allows.

A Walk with the Reformers: Reformation Reflections from Southeastern Seminary's Reformation 500 Study Tour

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2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. But while scores of events, conferences, and pilgrimages to Germany are being undertaken to celebrate the Reformation, what exactly is being commemorated? Moreover, how should Luther be remembered? And how does what took place five hundred years ago have any relevance to and impact upon the church today? The following essay is a reflective journal based upon an eleven-day study tour to Germany and Switzerland undertaken during the summer of 2017 through Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. This essay considers the perplexing and at times paradoxical world of the Reformers. It explores not only the Reformers' victories, but also their failings.

Key Words: Anabaptist, Buchenwald, Jews, Luther, Marburg, Protestant, Reformation, sola, Wittenberg, Worms, Zwingli

Introduction

The story of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation is a compelling one. It includes a tireless search for absolution before God, challenges to the known religious and cultural norms of the day, unwavering commitment to biblical truths in the face of death, and one monk's pursuit to find a gracious God and the assurance of his salvation. It is a drama of celebration, suffering, love, jealousy, bravery, and much more. The narrative is ready made for a Hollywood motion picture, but just as complicated as it is compelling. As celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation continue throughout 2017, certain key questions will shape how this story is told. Which Reformation will be remembered? The life and ministry of Martin Luther will undoubtedly dominate most reflections, but which Luther? How we choose to tell the story will shape not only our interpretation of the Reformation, but what we learn from it as well.

In the summer of 2017 I was privileged to lead a team of students, faculty, pastors, and friends of Southeastern Seminary on an eleven-day journey to Germany and Switzerland that afforded us an opportunity to

consider these questions. We made our way to Europe to engage the story of the Protestant Reformation in the very locales in which this grand narrative once took place five hundred years after Luther posted his *95 Theses* on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. We wanted to stand where history had been made, to walk where the Reformers once walked. Given the long shadow cast on both doctrine and church practice in today's church, we also wanted to consider the relevance of the Reformation to our twenty-first-century world. Why do events that took place five hundred years ago matter today? This was not to be an intellectual exercise of the mind alone, but one purposed to challenge our lives and ministries as well.

Given the multivalent nature of the Reformation story and our desire to be personally challenged, an itinerary was set that allowed us to experience the Reformation narrative devoid of hagiography. In other words, we set out to understand both the good and the bad, the intended as well as the unintended consequences, the clarification of the gospel and the splintering of Protestantism. It also required that the Reformers' own stories include their ecclesiastical triumphs framed alongside their egregious failings. As much as the Reformation was the triumph of God's Word in reshaping the ecclesiastical landscape, it also highlighted the deep depravity of humanity. Our journey began in Wittenberg, Germany where it all started on October 31, 1517. We continued by exploring those sites that helped shape the German Reformation and concluded in the Swiss cities of Zürich and Geneva, where a different form of reform was realized.

This essay invites readers along on our adventure and encourages them to take part in our journey without ever stepping foot on German or Swiss soil. While the experiences from our trip were too expansive to cover comprehensively, the major locales that shaped the Reformation story and offered life-challenging reflections for our team will be included. Each of those locales will be described, the historic importance of that place elucidated, and the practical connection to our contemporary world considered. The ultimate hope of this essay is that the reader might be inspired and challenged by the Reformers through these reflections just as our team was for those unforgettable eleven days in June 2017.

Martin Luther and Lutherstadt Wittenberg

Following a lengthy flight across the Atlantic Ocean and a brief stop at Berlin to take in the usual tourist trappings, our team finally made it to what was sure to be a highlight of our trip—Lutherstadt Wittenberg. The city itself is an amazing confluence of old and new. Narrow cobblestone streets still retain their medieval look, but are now lined with modern

shops, restaurants, and residences. Despite a number of retailers and businesses, Reformation sites dominate the town's skyline. The grandiose *Schlosskirche* (Castle Church), which continues to serve as the focal destination of pilgrimages to Wittenberg, towers above the town and serves as a constant reminder of what once took place here. Its unmistakable neo-gothic green spire, built by the Prussians during a reconstruction effort in the late-nineteenth century, stands bold and defiant. The words *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A mighty fortress is our God) wrap around the church tower and reflect a biblical truth that once served to support and strengthen Luther in his reforming efforts. On the north side of the building's main structure resides the place that started it all and sets the date for the Reformation's anniversary in 2017. There, emblazoned in dark bronze, are the "Theses Doors" that immortalize the words of Luther's 95 *Theses*.

St. Mary's *Stadtkirche*, which served as the parish church for the community, rivals the wondrous architecture of the Castle Church. The unmistakable white façade and dual spires stir a sense of austere reverence for a church building where Luther once offered thundering sermons. Outside of these two visual wonders, the Black cloister where Luther and his wife Katie once lived, the *Rathaus* (Town Hall) that stands watch over the incredible *Marktplatz* at the center of town, and the gorgeous homes of Philip Melancthon and Lucas Cranach all are visually stunning and harken back to a distant era.

However, for all the aesthetic beauty of today's Wittenberg, this was not the place Luther settled in 1511. Just like Luther before the Reformation, Wittenberg may best have been described as insignificant. In fact, prior to Luther's arrival, Wittenberg was an outpost more than a town, dwarfed by the neighboring Saxon cities of Erfurt and Leipzig. Even Luther once had a lowly opinion of the village. After moving there in 1511, Luther called it a town *in termino civilitatis* (on the edge of civilization). Wittenberg was of such little note that eventually some feared recourse if the town served as the hub of the Reformation. Just as the religious leaders of Israel once decried the thought of anything good coming from Nazareth, so too did Roman Catholic apologists lament that a serious challenge to the church might come from Wittenberg of all places. Fast forward some thirty-five years to 1546, the year Luther died, and Wittenberg had been transformed. Similarly, the vision of Wittenberg that we encountered the summer of 2017 hardly bore any resemblance to the dirty, poor village where Luther once reluctantly took up residence.

Outside the engrossing dramas related to Luther's life and his reforming efforts in Wittenberg, two things about the picturesque town that we encountered spoke volumes to our team. The story of Martin Luther and

Wittenberg is a shared tale of how one man transformed a simple village and then the world. Looking at Luther and Wittenberg in light of the Reformation, it is hard to imagine either being considered obscure or inconsequential. However, that was once precisely the case. Our appropriation of history can frequently cause us to focus on the noteworthy occasions, while forgetting formative, but lesser-known events and places. The truth is that much like Wittenberg, Martin Luther was once an irrelevant person; he was a simple monk living a commonplace life. That fact must never be forgotten in the reformer's story. However, Luther's anonymity was soon lost as his ideas set ablaze a Reformation fire that both the Roman Curia and Holy Roman Emperor could not snuff out.

In the early nineteenth century the famous Baptist missionary William Carey once said, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." This led him to the shores of India and a missionary endeavor that would leave a profound impact both on that country and missions history. The young Luther hardly thought that what he was doing in those earthly years in Wittenberg would elicit any expectation related to his role in reshaping history. Professionally he busied himself with the work of the church and university. Personally, he was trying to find assurance for his salvation and assuage the guilt that consumed him. However, these pursuits eventually led him to attempt reforming one of the oldest, well-established institutions in human history. It also led him to do one of the boldest things imaginable, to stand against the church and the Empire. This was a consequence of Luther pursuing what he believed the Bible taught. In all that he attempted, Luther chose to fear God rather than humanity. He was resigned to listen to the voice of God in the Scriptures, as opposed to the voices of humanity.

Those of us who journeyed to Wittenberg will likely never make a mark on history quite like Luther did. Our stories will not be included in church history books, nor will people travel to see the places we have lived and ministered. Still, Luther's story serves as a vivid reminder that one person can make a difference. One person can turn the world upside down. If we are honest with ourselves, we want to do that very thing, to have a lasting impact for Christ. We long to leave an indelible impression upon the people and world around us. However, there is a danger related to this noble hope. Our culture regularly tempts us to find worth in that which is fleeting. It entices us to measure success according to world standards. While our celebrity-focused culture entices us to find personal worth and value in notoriety, the Bible speaks of a more important measure of worth—God's economy. His value is placed on that which is eternal, life changing, and all efforts that promote his Kingdom, whether public or private.

To that end Luther's story is relatable even if his celebrity is not. In the throes of the Reformation Luther had no idea what was to come. In fact, that is precisely why his theology was so scattered. He wrote about a myriad of matters as issues came up, so his ideas were dictated by the occasion. The Bible always guided his thinking, but Luther's Reformation was constantly in flux from the outset. Amid the shifting seas of controversy, Luther clung to the Word and sought to apply its teaching in both his life and the life of the German Church. Followers of Jesus today would be well served to emulate such an example, to focus on faithfulness to the Word of God in the moment rather than seeking an end goal. This means that we embrace life and ministry as a process, instead of focusing attention on the end product. Such a mentality is freeing and will help Christians in areas like evangelism, discipleship, preaching, counseling, and many others. Here, the faithful evangelist does not bear the burden of winning another person to Christ, but focuses on the task of sharing the truth of the gospel. The pastor is not required to preach a sermon that elicits a radical, life-altering change in his audience every time he steps to the pulpit. Instead, he can focus attention on faithfully expositing the Word week after week, trusting that the Word of God will do its work by the Holy Spirit's power. Faithfulness in the moment is what matters most. In the end, the lives that are transformed through those faithful acts of love will matter to those around us as much or more than anything Luther did for the church. After all, one life changed is a profound thing.

Beyond Luther's impact on Wittenberg and the world, the town tells an equally important story about partnership in the gospel. Although Luther's name and face are nearly ubiquitous in Wittenberg, his story is not the only one told or celebrated by the town. In fact, Luther was not alone in facilitating the change that took place in Wittenberg, nor was he solely responsible for fanning the Reformation flame to other parts of Europe. Co-laborers and co-conspirators surrounded Luther and played critical roles in shaping the unique form of Christianity that radiated from Wittenberg.

For instance, Luther's famous statue at the center of the *Marktplatz* shares prominence in the town square with a depiction of Philip Melanchthon. Although the young prodigy did not arrive in Wittenberg until late-1518, Melanchthon's impression upon Protestantism is undeniable. Melanchthon took Luther's scattered, contextually responsive ideas and helped to organize and structure them into an intelligible corpus. He mediated Luther's doctrine to a culture clamoring for change and desperate to find God-given purpose and value in a world dominated by clerical elites. Melanchthon was also an important sounding board and initiator of ideas for Luther as he worked to build a church detached from Rome.

In truth, modern day Lutheranism owes its identity to Melanchthon as much as its namesake. It is no wonder that Melanchthon is celebrated in Wittenberg and beyond as the *Præceptor Germaniæ* (Teacher of Germany). It should not be forgotten that it was his words that were read before the Emperor at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, not Luther's. And years later it was his *Loci Communes* that inspired the organization of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Similarly, the Wittenberg court painter, Lucas Cranach the elder, played a crucial role in Luther's life and beyond. Cranach was a close friend and confidant to Luther. He and his wife, Barbara, were present at a private ceremony in June 1525 when Luther married the former nun, Katie von Bora. Cranach's portraits of Luther dominate modern perceptions of how the reformer is believed to have looked and are the earliest visions of Luther. But this alone does not speak to the invaluable nature of Cranach to the changes in Wittenberg and beyond. Just as Luther's German Bible helped to develop and normalize the High German language, Cranach's artistic renderings seared the Bible's world into German people's minds. From the earliest of Luther's September Testament of 1522, Cranach's pictorial illustrations brought Luther's Bible to life on paper, just as stained-glass windows had done for centuries. His imagination set the vision for what many people believed and understood about their world and the one beyond. Additionally, through his Renaissance-inspired paintings and woodcuts, Cranach brought an interpretation of Luther to an otherwise illiterate and uneducated society. Without Cranach's visual depictions, the pamphlet literature coming out of Wittenberg would have offered a bark without bite, their polemical reach muted in a culture largely without literary proficiency.

These are but two examples of many in Luther's close circle of friends that were crucial to the reformer's story. Johannes Bugenhagen spent years shepherding the Luther family as their pastor in the local parish church—a task undoubtedly burdensome given Luther's inner and external turmoil. Georg Spalatin mediated Luther's affairs with the Elector, Frederick the Wise, and helped the reformer navigate the tumultuous political waters stirred during the Reformation. The gifted Hebrew linguist, Matthäus Aurogallus, aided Luther in the painstaking and voluminous task of translating the Old Testament into German, while Justus Jonas not only edited and translated many of Luther's works, but also sat alongside the reformer when he took his dying breath in 1546. Perhaps most important of all was Luther's partner in ministry, Katie von Bora. Her story is a fascinating one that included serving alongside her husband by shouldering a myriad of responsibilities. She handled the family affairs, cared for the children, watched over the Luther garden, supported the

family financially by brewing German beer, oversaw the legion of boarders that came through their home, and much more. The stories of these key figures are inextricably intertwined with Luther's story. His successes and failings became theirs and vice versa.

Such is true today. Students at Southeastern Seminary are regularly reminded that ministry is about people. The focus of that important exhortation is set on the men, women, and children that receive spiritual care as a part of their ministries. However, the importance of people is not simply the focus of one's ministry efforts, but in the participation of the work itself. Ministry is not something done alone or in isolation. It is always accomplished through and sustained by community. At Wittenberg, our team began to reflect on the many people who have helped make us the men and women in Christ that we are today. These are the people that have walked alongside us as we have dealt with death, celebrated births, wrestled with sin habits, shared the gospel with the lost, and encouraged others to love and obey Christ. In a tangible way, our ministry became theirs and theirs became ours. In fact, for those that raised the prayer and financial support necessary to take part in this Reformation tour, the importance of a supporting cast to one's endeavors was immediate. Without the partnership of others, the life-altering trip we enjoyed would not have been possible. Still, being surrounded by friends and supporters in life and ministry does not necessarily mean that those same people are free to offer counsel and advice or that those supporters would be given an ear. This was sadly true in Luther's life as our team came to realize on the most difficult and painful stop on our tour.

Buchenwald Concentration Camp and Martin Luther's Anti-Semitic Writings

Following two days in Wittenberg we were blessed to visit Luther's birth town of Eisleben, reflect on the history of both the German Peasants' War and Germany's *Deutsche Demokratisch Republik* (DDR) at the Castle Allstedt, and visit Leipzig, the site of Luther's famous debate with Johann Eck. Our tour then turned toward the central part of Germany. As morning broke on day five of the trip and our team journeyed toward our first historic site of the day, we anticipated our most gut-wrenching experience. Buchenwald was the site of one of the largest concentration camps in Germany. Constructed in 1934, Buchenwald remained operational until the Allied invasion in 1945. As we entered the outskirts of the memorial site the winding, tranquil German countryside reflected more the beauty of Goethe's *Wanderer's Nightsong* than the horrors of Hitler's Nazi Germany. However, upon arrival, Buchenwald's jail cells and the crematorium furnaces served as a sobering reminder of the suffering and sorrow once

experienced by many in this place. In the end, more than fifty thousand people died at Buchenwald in just over a decade.

To describe our visit to Buchenwald as surreal would be a gross understatement. It is impossible to capture in words the flood of emotions we experienced there. Grief, anger, sorrow, disbelief, and confusion flooded our hearts, leaving our team emotionally and mentally numb. Quotations from survivors of Buchenwald, alongside the preserved stories of those who died at the camp with an undeterred hope, served as a respite from the onslaught of an otherwise grim experience. Sadly, the longer we spent at the memorial site the more commonplace the evil became. Our Southeastern team spent a couple of hours at Buchenwald and that was enough. To remain longer seemed almost unbearable.

Why include a visit to a Nazi concentration camp from the twentieth century when our team traveled to Europe to consider the people and events some four hundred years prior? The answer to that question has two parts, both linked to Germany's complicated history. First, although Germany could have minimized or forgotten their history related to the Holocaust, the people chose a different path. Thus, the iron entry gate at Buchenwald retains the greeting, *Jedem das Seine*, which implies, "to each is given what is deserved," a statement that embodied the Nazi's justification for their actions, even as contemporary Germans have collectively embraced the conviction "never again," a phrase championed at the Dachau camp located two hundred-fifty miles to the south of Buchenwald. And so it should also be with the Reformers and especially Martin Luther. The dark, regrettable sides of their histories must be preserved and told.

Second, our team's visit was initiated by the Nazis' purposeful link to Luther as part of their anti-Semitic propaganda campaign. In fact, *Reichsmark* coins minted by the Germans in 1933 on Luther's 450th birthday depict the reformer's impression on one side and Germany's Hindenburg eagle on the other. Ironically, the German phrase, "a mighty fortress is our God" flanks the coin's edge. The Third Reich believed that they had a forbearer in Martin Luther and it is easy to see why.

It is a well-known fact that at the end of Luther's life the reformer penned and preached some of the most hate-filled words imaginable about the Jews. In a 1543 work, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, Luther proposed some of the cruelest actions imaginable. Those prescriptions included the destruction of Jewish synagogues and homes. Jews were to be stripped of their wealth and livelihoods, while Rabbis were to be deprived of their right to teach and the Talmudic writings destroyed. Luther's animus toward the Jews was not confined to the infamous 1543 treatise alone. The reformer's lauded *Table Talk*, one of the last letters addressed to his wife,

Katie von Bora, and the final sermon of his life all bore anti-Semitic rhetoric as well.

Given Luther's sentiments, what are we to think? What do we do when a hero of the faith does something blatantly un-Christian? Before trying to understand Luther on this matter two things must be stated. First, this cannot and must not be whitewashed from the history books or redacted from Luther's corpus. Luther's words cannot and must not be forgotten. This is precisely why Buchenwald needed to be included in our itinerary, to tell this part of Luther's story. Second, regardless of intention or historical context there is absolutely no excuse for Luther's hate-filled words that were and remain an affront to Christ and his bride, the Church. These are two truths that must always frame any discussion about Luther's writings on the Jews.

Still, there are a number of things that may help us to better understand Luther and, hopefully, ourselves. Scholars at times have pointed to Luther's sympathetic work penned twenty years earlier, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*, as evidence of his movement on the issue. Certainly, Luther's later sentiments may be the consequence of years of frustration over the Jewish peoples' failure to embrace the gospel. It also did not help that in those final years Luther was suffering from a myriad of physical ailments that even forced him at times to dictate works from his bed. But can this be the only real explanation? Diving deeper into Luther's anti-Semitic language reveals more than just a bitter old man expressing frustration over a failure in life.

While his 1543 treatise is typically the focus of any discussion on Luther and the Jews, perhaps more questions need to be raised about his earlier work, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (1523). Here, Luther expressed great hope and optimism that the Jews might be won to the faith. Tragically, that 1523 writing is not just the outlier in Luther's corpus on the Jews, but for most of Christian history as well. An anti-Semitic bias has sadly been woven into the fabric of Christian history going back as far as the Patristic Period and remains even today. Christians have often blamed the Hebrew people for the death of Jesus, even as they sang hymns declaring their own culpability for Christ's death at Calvary. The historical amnesia and willful bias is staggering.

Similarly, setting Luther's words about the Jews alongside his other writings may also bring clarity. For instance, while the reformer's impassioned words have left many aghast, they were strikingly similar to the vitriolic polemic regularly aimed at Roman Catholicism and the Pope. In truth, the Turks arguably drew the harshest criticism from Luther's pen of any people. For Luther, the Jews willfully stood outside of the gospel, just as the Muslims and Roman Catholics had. Each group was a threat

to the church and had to be combated. Therefore, the reformer's ire was aimed at what he believed to be enemies of the gospel, not at a people for their ethnic heritage.

As hypothetical questions regarding the prevention of the Holocaust are raised, the same query may be asked of Luther. Could this have been avoided? Perhaps so, but this is where Luther was a victim of his own success and his own worst enemy at times. By the 1540s the same stubborn and persistent personality that once helped Luther in his earlier battles against things like papal indulgences, betrayed him when he was on the wrong side of an argument. The more Luther grew to see himself as a prophetic voice to his contemporary world, the more unassailable the reformer became. Even Philip Melancthon, his close friend and partner in the work at Wittenberg, recounted in his correspondence with a young John Calvin times even he could not talk with Luther about crucial matters like the Lord's Supper. Regrettably, insulation and isolation left Luther unapproachable and un-teachable on his view of the Jews and many other issues.

Luther had a blind spot regarding the Jews. One can appeal to context and intention to find a more nuanced understanding for Luther's words. However, in the end those are greatly mitigated by the consequence of his words. What he wrote and said is undeniable and without defense. Sadly, Luther was not alone in his failure to properly understand the damage done to his legacy or the Christian faith as a whole by one simple action or a spoken word. Just as Luther appeared oblivious to the anti-Semitic nature of his words, other examples tell a similar, regrettable story in Christian history. For instance, the Puritans were uncritical of their ownership of slaves even while God moved mightily during the First Great Awakening. Similarly, modern Christians have frequently made the mistake of conflating evangelicalism with the GOP to damaging political and religious ends. Regenerate followers of Jesus can and do err. At times those failings can be egregious and damaging to the faith.

Ironically, this was why Luther argued for the normative authority of Scripture in developing doctrine and church practice. The Word of God must serve as a lens to guide the church as it functions in a fallen culture. The Bible will serve as the rod that will correct the sinful distortions of humanity in a culture bent toward the elevation of self. This is also why contemporary followers of Jesus must nurture their faith in a community that is humble, self-reflective, and diverse. Being open to correction and reproof is critical here. The Bible must serve as the standard in this, but church members must still work diligently and intentionally to facilitate submission to the Word's timeless authority. Moreover, diverse assemblies will help the church to recognize when sinful bias has derailed the

mission of God. Such diversity offers an alternate perspective that is crucial in our context. It also helps us to view the church and its ministry through the unbiased lens of God. Should the church humbly embrace a correctable spirit and pursue a diverse makeup, the future will look decidedly different. A different narrative may be told.

Marburg Castle and the Protestant Division to Come

A celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation is an odd thing. Yes, we should celebrate the clarification of the gospel via justification by grace through faith alone, a stronger affirmation of the Scripture's authority, and expanding the laity's involvement in the church. Nevertheless, the Protestant Reformation brought division. That is part of the Reformation's enduring legacy. In fact, the division that was first sown between Protestants and Roman Catholics during the early years of the Reformation remains today. Sadly, that was only the first fruits of division. As a debate at Marburg in 1529 showed, fracture did not remain confined to the relationship between Luther and Rome.

As various manifestations of reform were realized in different places like Germany and the Swiss Confederation, divisions beyond the one already realized with the Catholic Church soon materialized. A host of differing beliefs and church practices separated the first-generation Reformers. Still, it was the sacrament that most embodied Christian unity, the Lord's Supper, which, ironically, engendered an internal Protestant schism and a deep divide that remains today. As the Reformers would soon realize, the Bible and their notion of *sola Scriptura*, which they championed, became catalysts to an irreparable schism.

Given effective political responses to the Reformation by Roman Catholics, alongside the imminent threat of the Turks to the East, it became clear that an alliance of the various reform movements was required to strengthen Protestantism's viability. The most important Reformers convened in 1529 at the *Marburger Schloss* to enact such an accord. Martin Luther and his brilliant young co-laborer in Wittenberg, Philip Melancthon, set out to meet with the leading Swiss Reformers, Huldrych Zwingli, Martin Bucer, Johannes Oecolampadius, and others. However, theological division threatened the colloquy before it even began. In fact, the hope of a unified coalition was doomed from the start.

By 1525 Luther was aware that Zwingli espoused a view of the Lord's Supper that included a non-corporeal understanding of Jesus' presence in the elements. The following years saw Luther vehemently oppose that interpretation, which he had earlier recognized as a problem in Andreas Karlstadt's theology at Wittenberg. Not only did those prior attempts to snuff out a non-corporeal view of the Supper fail, but the belief began to

spread to the other Swiss Reformers as well. Subsequent discussions had proven so fruitless that Luther did not want to come to Marburg once the invitations were sent. Luther knew that the theological divisions could not be bridged. Yet, he reluctantly traveled to Marburg not knowing the strain this meeting would put on the Reformation.

On day six of the tour, our team took the arduous walk through the winding cobblestone streets of Marburg up to an impressive eleventh-century fortification that sits high atop this university city. Deep in the recesses of the castle was the Great Hall where our team met to hear the story of the Marburg Colloquy that was once held in that same room. The hall, much like the castle itself, is a masterful architectural triumph. Beautiful hand-carved wooden portals offer multiple access points to the room. Sweeping curved flanges frame the low-lying ceiling. A staggered set of Gothic windows flooded the hall with light and offered picturesque views of the town below. Large round pillars separated the room and provided a visual reminder of the division once realized there. What took place in that majestic hall, and why it is pivotal to the Reformation story?

During the early proceedings of the Marburg Colloquy, Luther and Zwingli were kept apart; their coarse personalities as much as their theological positions threatened to undo any agreement from the outset. Over the next few days those Reformers present sought to find agreement on doctrine. While they established an accord on numerous doctrinal positions, unity on the Supper eluded them. As anticipated, the controversial issue related to the nature of Jesus' presence in the elements. That may not appear to be divisive to those unfamiliar with the discussion. However, one's view regarding Jesus' presence in the elements reveals important underlying commitments to Christology, philosophy, and biblical interpretation. The question is not as simple as "is Jesus present in the elements or not?" Many related convictions are informed by one's answer to that seemingly innocuous question. Moreover, a related question about the purpose for the sacraments and who exactly was offering a pledge in the Lord's Supper left the Reformers at a theological stalemate. In the end, driven by the notion of *promissio* (promise), a tenet woven through his theology, Luther held fast to the simple belief that Jesus promised that he would be in the elements. That was enough for Luther. A corporeal presence must be affirmed. Additionally, given Luther's belief that God was the one acting in the sacraments, the reformer asked what greater assurance for one's salvation was there than the actual body and blood of Jesus that had made salvation possible? On the other hand, Zwingli was committed to the notion that Jesus was presently seated physically at the right hand of the Father following the ascension. This was an argument

drawn from Patristic theologian, Augustine of Hippo. Thus, Luther's doctrine of ubiquity was unfounded and flawed in its Christology, according to Zwingli. Moreover, following a humanistic hermeneutic, Zwingli believed that the most natural reading of the text necessitated a memorial understanding of Jesus' presence in the Supper. In fact, a corporeal presence not only reeked of paganism but also veiled the true importance of the Supper in the pledge made by the participant. A corporeal reading loosed the power and purpose of the sacrament for those partaking in the rite.

Despite lengthy and at times volatile discussion, the dialogue at Marburg proved unproductive, for deep theological and hermeneutical divisions lingered beneath the surface of the discourse. To make matters worse, many participating in the debate employed biting polemics to explicate their competing views. Frequently this left the competing camps at Marburg talking past rather than with each other.

The Reformers departed from Marburg without an agreement in place. Perhaps more importantly, the division evidenced at that colloquy foreshadowed what was to come. As the Reformation continued to push forward fragmentation ensued. Conflicting visions for reform, driven by divergent hermeneutics, unveiled church programs that looked vastly different. Soon things like worship practices, theological language, church government, and convictions regarding the pace of reform were added to the division over the Supper. The Protestant church splintered into several confessional heritages. As these groups manifested their particular correctives to Roman Catholicism, the fragmentation was set in stone.

The Roman Catholic Church predicted this division. Once *sola Scriptura* was embraced and applied by the various Protestant factions, schism became inevitable. Marburg exposed an important theological consequence of the Reformers' rejection of papal authority. Once the Bible dethroned the Roman Curia as the final, normative authority for the church, no one human arbiter was left to adjudicate theological confusion. Unknowingly, the Reformers had replaced one pope with an army of Protestant authorities. And each of those Protestant authorities read the Scripture differently. Thus, the Protestant church was left without a unified voice, especially given that there was no consensus regarding how to read the Bible. Such was the logical, theological corollary to *sola Scriptura*.

Our encounter at Marburg was formative and challenged our team on a host of levels. Much of our inner turmoil surfaced as we looked at the Marburg Colloquy through the lens of Jesus' words in John 17. A divided church fragmented into thousands of denominations may be our present reality, but the words of Jesus are a stinging reminder that this is not as it should be for his Bride. So, what are we to make of the legacy of Marburg?

Are we really to celebrate the Reformation that fostered such schism?

As we acknowledge that theological divisions are real and at times inevitable, nevertheless, there are many things that believers from all denominations can readily affirm. These are convictions related to the heart of the gospel and the foundation of the faith. They are bedrock beliefs uniformly affirmed by Roman Catholics, Protestants, and those in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. In fact, when we consider those shared convictions against the backdrop of other world religions, there is much that unites us as one body.

Still, as the Reformation demonstrated there are many things that Christians do not agree on. While believers should decry the division of Jesus' church presently, that schism should be tempered by our understanding of the fallen nature of humanity and of the appropriation of divine revelation. We may hate the division, but it is inescapable. Different readings of the Bible and views of church authority are not easily bridged. Moreover, the differing theological and practical convictions that grow out of those readings of Scripture confine believers to such a tendentious reality. Given such limitations, perhaps it is best that the various confessional heritages join arms together and embrace those areas where believers from different denominations may work together, while at the same time recognizing that worshiping together may not be realized in its fullest form until the return of Messiah. This would allow various churches to work collectively on issues related to the sanctity of human life and freedom of religion. However, things like missions and church planting, where major areas of division will inevitably surface, could be pursued in partnership with like-minded churches. Such an approach would allow shared cooperation across denominational lines, while also acknowledging those important theological differences that will remain until Christ returns.

One thing that is crucial to the viability of this model of shared cooperation is the way in which believers dialogue with and speak about those with differing views. Sadly, just as the Reformers often allowed volatile, pejorative language to dominate their discourse, the same may be said of discussions today. Careful language covered in grace and love may not bridge the theological divide. However, it may help to find understanding and appreciation, which will pay dividends in finding common ground to work together on shared matters of concern.

Reformation Monument in Worms and Personal Conviction

Following a memorable visit at Marburg we continued the day by heading south to the German city of Worms, the site of Luther's most

famous stand for the authority of God's Word during the most dangerous time of his life. We traveled to Worms to visit the world's largest Reformation monument. Here, a *Lutherdenkmal* designed and constructed by the German sculptor Ernst Rietschel in the mid-nineteenth century commemorates Luther's bold stance at Worms and acknowledges the roles other key figures played in helping to reshape the church during the late-medieval and early modern periods. The monument is a raised stone platform that offers a place for rest and reflection in a quaint downtown park. Martin Luther dominates the memorial as its focal point and stands high atop a single center pedestal. His likeness, cast in a green patina bronze, stands confident and resolved. Luther is cloaked in his typical monastic robe and clings confidently to a large Bible, emblematic of the same Scriptures that served to undergird the reformer at his most tenuous moments of the Reformation. Luther's gaze is set to the southwest of the location of the now lost Bishop's Palace, the site of his famous encounter with Charles V in 1521. This is how Luther is often remembered in relation to Worms, though the true nature of this encounter in the reformer's life was more agonizing for him in the moment.

The flames of controversy surrounding Luther's public burning of the papal bull, *Exsurge Domine*, in December 1520 had no sooner died down than political wrangling over the rogue monk ensued. The Emperor, Charles V, was ready to act swiftly against Luther, but the German Estates refused him until Luther was given a proper hearing. With the ink on Pope Leo X's papal bull of excommunication barely dry, Luther stood before the Emperor at an Imperial Diet in Worms and gave an account of his seditious actions.

By the time Luther made the journey to Worms, this once obscure Augustinian monk was now a popular, national figure. His doctrines had tapped into the underlying unrest of culture and brought a renewed sense of value and purpose to the laity. This garnered him a groundswell of support from the German populace, a support that was crucial to the long-term viability of his reforming efforts. In fact, a papal legate named Aleander recounted to Pope Leo X that ninety percent of the crowd in Worms greeted Luther with shouts of support and admiration, while the other ten percent shouted antagonistically against the Roman Curia. Luther was a celebrity of sorts, riding a wave of Reformation optimism as the landscape of the German Church was being recast according to his innovative ideas. Nevertheless, that did not mitigate the possibility that he could still be drowned under a squall of Roman or Imperial force. Thus, potential for disaster loomed at the Imperial Diet of Worms.

Luther came to Worms only after Frederick the Wise had first secured for his star professor a passage of safe conduct. Still, Luther's journey to

Worms was fraught with danger. Memories of the Council of Constance reneging on the same promise once afforded to Jan Hus in 1415 must have flooded Luther's mind with anxiety and concern. That Johann Eck made a theological link between Luther and Hus at the Leipzig Debate just one year earlier in 1519 made Luther's death seem all too plausible. Still, Luther went to Worms. The day after his arrival Luther stood before the Imperial assembly for what he thought would be a parlance about his beliefs. Such was not the case. Instead, Luther's writings were set before him and he was asked if he would recant his heretical teachings. It appeared that there would be no debate or dialogue at Worms. This was a moment of decision and the weight of that decision must have been excruciating. Still, his definitive pronouncement on the matter was deferred until the following day, as Luther was given the night to ponder the gravity of his reply. The next morning, having spent the evening measuring conviction against consequence, Luther offered arguably the boldest words of his entire career:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.¹

He once stood up against Pope Leo X and he now defiantly refused to submit before the Emperor, Charles V. In both cases Luther did so on the authority of God's Word.

Why was Luther willing to make such daring stands? By 1521 Luther had come to reject sacramental theology, a cornerstone of late-medieval Roman Catholic soteriology. Accordingly, humanity was no longer relegated to endlessly pursuing a right standing before God by participating in the prescriptions of Roman Catholicism. For Luther, such a position was rooted in a false gospel and without assurance. This had been precisely what plagued the monk in his monastic pursuits for over a decade. Instead, the gospel was solely a work of God whereby he declared sinners righteous on the basis of his grace. In what Luther would later characterize as a "sweet exchange," Jesus' righteousness was transferred to sinners. Simultaneously, their sin was cast on Jesus who shouldered its burden at the cross. This was the true evangelical gospel. Even the human response of faith that appropriated this salvific moment was a work of God, not of

¹ *Luther's Works*, vol. 32, ed. Helmut T. Lehman (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958), 112.

humanity. According to Luther, this simple yet profound truth led to his rebirth.

Justification by grace through faith alone became the foundational theological tenet upon which Luther's developing theology was built and a theme that drove his reforming efforts. Luther was passionate about this doctrine given that he believed it was clearly taught in the Scriptures. Now loosed from both the papacy's authority and a scholastic reading of Scripture, Luther found the Bible to contain the very words of life. This is why *sola Scriptura* became a watchword for both Luther and the other Protestant Reformers. The Bible was clear on how a sinner gained a right standing before God. Luther contended that the Roman Church had distorted that pathway. Such was the regrettable consequence of the papacy's willingness to embrace a second fount of revelation—church tradition. In the end Luther was beholden to the sacred Scriptures—the Bible alone. The words of popes, councils, and canon law must be subservient to the normative source of divine revelation, the Bible. Thus, to jettison his newfound beliefs at the hour of greatest trial at Worms would have been akin to disregarding the very voice of God.

A mere three months after Luther's defiant stand at Worms, the Dutch humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam said of the Wittenberg reformer, "Even had all [Luther] wrote been religious, mine was never the spirit to risk my life for the truth. Everyone has not the strength needed for martyrdom." What Luther had done was not lost on Erasmus, nor was the unique nature of the reformer's resilient conviction even when faced with death. Erasmus concluded that Luther had an internal resolve and fortitude that he did not, nor ever would have. Luther's unwavering belief in the authority of God's Word was not mere intellectual conviction along. It was a deep and abiding belief that directed his actions at Worms. The Word of God for Luther truly was a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. Worms was a formative moment for Luther in relation to the Scriptures. The Bible would direct the reformer in his attempt to reform the church; it also accompanied him through the darkest of life's trials.

Most of our team lives and ministers in an American context, so we have not, nor will likely ever face a trial like the one Luther did at Worms. Certainly, it is possible that missionaries in antagonistic contexts might be forced to stand before a governing authority with a similar decision hanging in the balance. But such instances are rare even for our students from Southeastern that serve around the globe in places hostile to the gospel. Still, the importance of the Bible's authority is relevant to each and every one of us that ventured to Worms that day. In fact, if we are not careful, biblical authority may be supplanted and superseded by other authorities. This is a change that happens all too often. Luther's stand before Charles

V has much relevance to us even today in the twenty-first century.

Our lives are constantly being driven and directed by authorities we take for granted. While followers of Jesus may be quick to affirm the ascendancy of Scripture, other influences creep in and direct our thoughts and affections. When this takes place, extra-biblical authorities begin to contend for our minds and hearts, to reshape what we think and love. Such a reorientation then directs the actions of our lives. The consequences of having the Bible's authority usurped are devastating, for the individual becomes repurposed away from the will and mission of God. What do these extra-biblical authorities look like? Context often dictates the forms they take. For evangelical Christians in America these may be things like science, reason, and culture.

Consider how often believers shy away from gospel encounters based on faulty assumptions that relate to our culture's commitment to reason. We may fail to share with that family member not simply to avoid relational conflict, but because previous instances did not secure a decision for Christ. Perceived failings become an expectation of future attempts. So why bother at all? We become convinced that people do not change. The law of cause and effect direct us more than any Scriptural exhortation. Others may fail to witness based on an assumed lack of apologetic knowledge. Our commitment to reason may leave us paralyzed and insecure in our own knowledge of the simple truths of the gospel. Somehow we become convinced that people are only intellectually won to the Kingdom. Isn't that how one appropriates truth after all? We forget that the Bible speaks of sin being a problem of the heart and salvation a work of the Lord. All the Bible asks of us is to carry the message to those who have not heard or do not embrace the gospel. Yet, too often the assumption that we cannot carry the intellectual burden of proof in a gospel conversation keeps us silent around those that need to hear the truth.

The same dangerous commitment to reason and science may be found in our understanding of repentance. All too often Christians remain in dangerous patterns of sin because they believe what other authorities have asserted, even if those claims subvert the truths of Scripture. Culture may also play a subversive role alongside reason in these cases. The vision of the good life intentionally normalized by media may slowly begin to give credence to the propaganda of those committed to authorities outside of the Bible. Here, the ideas of personal responsibility and victory over sin may be lost amid the indoctrination of our rationalistic culture. The Bible and its authority may be squelched by these other voices of influence.

If we were honest and introspective we would cede that culture dictates much of what we think and believe. While it may be easy to see when

secular progressive forms of culture skew from the biblical pattern, Christian forms of culture may be just as dangerous as substitutes for the Scriptures. Things like our understanding of acceptable forms of worship may be driven more by cultural norms within the faith than what the Bible actually prescribes. Here, if we are not careful we may take what we have experienced and been mistakenly told are the standard, correct patterns of worship and erroneously require others to follow them. Likewise, we may embrace a biblical view of gender relations, but argue for and apply views derived from an oppressive, non-biblical perspective. What one has been told to believe on such matters may displace what the Bible says and teaches.

In the aforementioned cases, the power of God to save and transform lives seem so irrelevant and obsolete in a world that operates according to the norms of rationalism and is driven by culture. If we are not careful, the truths of Christianity divinely given in the Bible may become lost under the weight of the known laws of this world. Here, our actions become a natural corollary that reveals our true convictions. When this happens, then the Bible ceases to be enough and one enters into a dangerous world that is subject to the whimsical and often erroneous perceptions of temporal authorities. However, if everything that we think and believe is filtered through the lens of Scripture, then we will see things as God sees them. This is what Luther did at Worms and it not only helped him stand against the currents of culture at his greatest hour of need, but it also directed all future reforming efforts.

Täuferhöhle and a Gathered Regenerate Church

As day number eight began, our team embarked on a four-hour journey from the picturesque medieval city of Heidelberg, where we had spent the past two nights, to the rustic countryside east of Zürich. This drive transitioned our tour from Luther's Reformation in Germany to the Swiss Reformation under figures like Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin. The day's excursion was not to include visits to visually stimulating gothic cathedrals or imposing medieval castles. Instead, we eschewed Zürich city center to tell the inspiring, yet sorrowful story of the Swiss Anabaptists. Accordingly, a more obscure and rural venue was in order.

When Zwingli began to reform Zürich in the early 1520s, a wave of gospel optimism swept across the Confederate territory. Much of the success in those early years was rooted in Zwingli's investment in a group of young humanists who partnered with the Swiss reformer in his work. However, despite their early cooperation, differing views on things like the pace and shape of reform initiated a rift between Zwingli and his un-

derstudies like Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz. Sadly, schism was inevitable once again.

Once Grebel, Manz, and others realized that their more expanded ideas for reform could not be realized through traditional channels, they took the decisive action to form their own church outside the auspices of the Swiss Church. Believers' baptism was embraced as the gateway into this visible church, which was to be characterized by discipleship, a strong emphasis on discipline, and a separation from the world that was increasingly perceived as evil. Most important, this new conception of the church was grounded in a believers' church ecclesiology. Those that gathered did so on the basis of a confession of faith and repentance. Thus, both infant baptism and the territorial form of the church were jettisoned.

Such a church may not seem all that unique in a twenty-first-century, western context. However, this was a radical departure from the norm in the early modern period. Accordingly, those in power pejoratively dubbed anyone that embraced this type of church as Anabaptists, which means "rebaptism." The Anabaptists' beliefs were religiously and socially scandalous. Accordingly, proponents of the movement paid dearly for their convictions, as participants in this new church faced persecution, imprisonment, and even martyrdom.

As the Swiss Church's response to Anabaptism intensified, many Anabaptists retreated to the hills in the rural communes outside Zürich. Here, amid the rolling Swiss hillsides, lush forests provided the necessary cover that offered sanctuary for the dissenting group and a place to freely worship. One such place was a famous *Täuferhöhle*, or "Anabaptist cave," that once provided a hidden locale for Anabaptists to worship. This was our destination for the day, a seeming detour not found on most Reformation 500 tour itineraries.

As one might expect, a cave once used to hide religious dissenters could only be found at the end of an arduous path. This most physically taxing day of the trip demanded that we walk through fields alongside grazing livestock and eventually deep into a dense forest. A steep incline challenged us for nearly the entire walk. Still, the effort was worth it, for deep in the Swiss forest a dirt path eventually led to the most astonishing of caves. High atop a winding ravine a thirty-foot wide cave lay nestled in the face of a stone mountain. A steady stream of water gently cascaded over the face of the cave and generated the unmistakable sound of a waterfall.

Once we caught our breath and snapped a few photos our team heard the story of the Anabaptists, about their beliefs and great sacrifices. We also sang hymns like "Amazing Grace" and prayed for those presently serving around the globe amid harsh persecution. It was a sweet time of

worship filled with emotion and inspiration. It also left us with much to consider about the nature of both worship and personal conviction.

As a father of four I can attest to the fact that gathering with my local church can at times be challenging. Yet, those obstacles pale in comparison to the ones faced by the Swiss Anabaptists. Wrangling restless children on a Sunday morning is my regular challenge. Avoiding persecution at the hands of civil authorities was the Anabaptists' challenge. And in the twenty-first century all around the globe countless followers of Jesus do the very same thing those dissenters were forced to do in the early waves of the Reformation. From house churches in China, to church plants in closed Muslim countries in the Middle East, every week Christians gather to worship the Lord of Creation. Honestly, there is something both simplistic and beautiful in that. Pipe organs, altars, pulpits, and pews were unmistakably absent for the Anabaptists, just as they often are in harsh modern contexts. Yet, believers remain free to worship King Jesus. No contextual circumstance may thwart the praises of His people. Our visit to the *Täuferhöhle* was a stirring reminder of that deeply profound theological truth.

Reflecting on the depths of the Anabaptists' convictions that had once led them to this isolated place also left our team with much to consider. Unwavering belief in things like a regenerate church, the separation of church and state, and believers' baptism had set the Swiss Anabaptists apart from the state church. They were steadfast in those convictions and so worshiping in a place like the *Täuferhöhle* was a small price to pay. Sadly, a new venue for worship was not the only thing surrendered to maintain their beliefs. The first few decades of the movement saw some of the most horrific executions imaginable. Suffering, sorrow, and death became both the lot and legacy of all too many who were simply unwilling to recant their beliefs.

Seminary is a formative time for students to consider not only what but also why they believe. They are challenged to move away from blind assumptions toward clear and certain convictions. Such is demanded of the next generation of gospel torchbearers. Yet, we had made our way to the *Täuferhöhle* to ask a different, more probing and personal question. How tightly should we hold to our beliefs? What are we willing to surrender for our convictions? This is a question rarely considered in a western context. But it is a question that is relevant to missionaries and church planters serving Christ in antagonistic contexts today. It was certainly germane to the Anabaptists. Hearing the stories of their martyrs and considering the Anabaptists' sacrifices pushed our team to do just that. Given the shifting currents of culture even in a place like America we need to be pushed to consider the depths of our belief. To that end, this exercise, much like the

visit to this amazing cave, would be something not soon forgotten by our team.

Conclusion

Our trip this past summer was an unforgettable journey to the past. We saw and experienced many amazing things during our eleven-day excursion through Europe. Every day brought something new to see and a different challenge from history to consider. Throughout the journey we were given much to reflect on regarding the Reformers' work during the Reformation and our present labors back home in the twenty-first century.

The Reformers lived in a place and a time that was undoubtedly different than ours. However, being able to walk the streets of their world and consider the complicated legacy they left for the church roused in us an unforeseen thought. The Reformers may be more like us today than we first considered before our journey to Europe. Much like Luther we too are imperfect people searching for reconciliation with God. Nothing has changed in that regard. In that pursuit we may do great things for Christ and his Kingdom, especially as our ministries are tethered closely to and driven by the Word of God. Still, just like those men and women who labored for change during the Reformation, we too are flawed people. Our lives and ministries may be flawed and marred by sin and error. In the end, our stories, much like those of Luther and the other Reformers, are complicated. Thankfully, the story of Christ's work in redemptive history, which was championed and made clear during the Reformation, is not so complex. His is a beautiful story of redemption, of taking the flawed, broken things of this world and making them whole again. This is a truth experienced by Luther and others during the Reformation that rings equally true today.

Interview with Jennifer Powell McNutt of Wheaton College

Dr. McNutt is a tenured, Associate Professor of Theology and History of Christianity at Wheaton College, IL (since 2008). She completed her PhD in Modern History at the University of St. Andrews in 2008 (Reformation Studies Institute) under the supervision of Professor Bruce Gordon. Reformation history is the primary focus of her teaching and archival research with a particular focus on John Calvin and the legacy of the Reformed tradition. One of the goals of her research is to explore and elucidate the history of Christianity from the Early Modern period through the age of Enlightenment. Her expertise focuses on the history of the clergy, church, and theology in the social, cultural, and political contexts of Europe.

What got you interested in Reformation studies?

Strangely enough, as a child of the manse, I discovered my interest in Reformation studies at the dinner table. Growing up in my Presbyterian household meant scripture, theology, and John Calvin's *Institutes* were a regular part of family conversation, and I was hooked. As I look back now, I can see how these formative conversations shaped my faith journey as well as piqued my interest in pursuing a deeper understanding of Reformation history and theology. Travel to Europe as a child further deepened that passion to learn more, and as a ninth grader touring Reformation sites in Germany and Switzerland with my parents, I experienced the opportunity to stand in John Calvin's pulpit as particularly momentous.

It was then as a student at Westmont College that my formal education in Reformation studies began. I was privileged to have the opportunity to spend a summer semester at the University of Oxford studying the Renaissance and Reformation with (among other faculty) most notably Professor Alister McGrath at Wycliffe Hall. Those months at Oxford involved reading widely in Reformation historiography and deeply in primary sources at the Bodleian Library. During that time abroad, I grew intrigued by how reform efforts inside and outside the Roman Catholic Church led to the reshaping of an entire society. For me, it was the overlap between Christian faith and politics, economics, and culture that drew my curiosity as I simultaneously came to better understand the theological and biblical facets of early-modern concerns and conversations. I did not realize it at the time, but I was developing a methodological fascination

with the interconnected nature of social history and theological history, which characterizes my scholarship and teaching to this day. The web of complexity that surrounds the Christian story of the early-modern period and the legacy of those changes on Christians and the Church in later centuries continues to fascinate and drive my work.

Who is your favorite reformer and why?

It will hardly surprise anyone who knows me and my work that the reformer who most shapes my thinking and occupies my scholarly attention is John Calvin. After all, one doesn't name their daughter "Geneva" without a considerable level of respect and appreciation for the man and his contribution to the body of Christ! Nonetheless, Calvin is not always an easy reformer to "favor."

It goes without saying that he was not a perfect man; certainly, aspects of his personality, his treatment of others, and his rhetoric do not always inspire warmth toward him. At the same time, caricatures of him too often abound today. The reduction of his thought to a harsh and even merciless providence in promotion of the doctrine of predestination is all too common. There is no substitute for reading first-hand his rich, thoughtful, and brilliant theological analysis in the context of his life and times. Calvin's contribution to the order of the church, to the enrichment of lay spirituality, and to scholarly advancement in biblical and theological studies deservedly warrant appreciation and further study from all who value Christian history.

Reading Calvin's prayers particularly provides valuable insight into the outworking of his theology in devotional practice. Through those prayers, which I read with my students at Wheaton each year, Calvin's regard for God as a loving and merciful father, who adopts and nurtures the growth of his children is prominent and endearing. A heartless, sovereign God is far from view here. Finally, Calvin's complex reputation as "tyrant" can hide the true story of one grappling with his vocational calling when the vision for his life and the opportunities that he received did not align as he expected. Here was someone seemingly not eager to stay in Geneva, not eager to return to Geneva after exile, and who faced tremendous xenophobic sentiment as well as years of internal resistance by some of the most politically prominent families. This was no easy parish ministry, and yet, Calvin chose to relinquish his own will in light of God's revealed will for his life according to the confirmation of his community. The relinquishing of his life to God is at points glaringly palpable in his theology though often overlooked. As he explained in his *Institutes*,

We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set

it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours . . . we are God's: let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God's: let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God's: let all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our lawful goal . . . follow the leading of the Lord alone.¹

Theological convictions as these can provide a glimpse into an enigmatic heart too rarely evident from the historical record, and these are the sides of Calvin that most often garner my “favor.”

What are you currently focusing on in your research?

My current archival research explores the history of the French Bible from the Reformation period through the Enlightenment with a particular focus on the origins, development, and legacy of the French Geneva Bible. Vernacular Bibles in general fascinate me because they offer the best of both worlds for studying the ideas and contexts of Christian communities as lay engagement with the Bible during the Reformation expanded. In many ways, a Bible—really any Bible—is both a reflection of the faith community that it intends to serve as well as an interlocutor in its own right with the opportunity to shape and form Christians in deeply enriching ways. For a community to adopt a particular translation is to read scripture communally with the potential to build cohesive Christian identity and shared theological conviction. In this way, Bible history is a topic that can open the door for understanding theological and exegetical development as well as Christian communities in their social, political, economic, and cultural contexts.

The story of the French Bible in particular is uniquely complicated and fascinating in large part because no authorized version was approved in contrast with English Bible history. Instead, the French Protestant Bible was developed, smuggled, and dispersed for a community facing tremendous persecution coupled with the challenges of diaspora that lasted well into the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the French Protestant Bible became a means of linking scattered communities to the vast network of francophone believers throughout Europe with the leadership of Geneva at its center. Now that's a story worth telling! Research grants and a sabbatical thus far have enabled me to study rare French Bibles in the archives at the Huntington Library, the University of St. Andrews, the University of Aberdeen, the University of Cambridge, and *Bibliothèque de la*

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 20 vols., trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), III.7.1.

Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français. The publication of my recent co-edited volume, *The People's Book: The Reformation and the Bible* (IVP, 2017), reflects my growing research interest and expertise in this field.

What is the relevance of the Reformation to the average man or woman in the church pew?

The relevance of the Reformation to the average person in the church pew is multifaceted. The events of the sixteenth century have shaped today's church and world in more cases than is sometimes recognized. In the church setting, if you sing hymns as a congregation on Sunday morning, you are following in the footsteps of the Protestant Reformation. If you bring your vernacular Bible to church with you or use it at home, you are benefiting from the legacy of the Protestant Reformation. If you hear a message of grace and justification by faith alone stressed from the pulpit, you are worshipping in the legacy of the Protestant Reformation. Talking about the Reformation anniversary in the church to the average Christian helps to show how practices and theological affirmations have a rich legacy that matters still today.

There is always value and benefit in congregants being better equipped to understand the history behind Christian theological affirmations, church governance, clerical practice, and liturgical approaches, to name a few. When we come to understand our Christian heritage and traditions we can better understand our faith and our faith community within the context of the larger body of Christ. In my experience, building the memory of the church's past for the average Christian is critical to inspiring, challenging, redirecting, and shaping the community of believers in the present. It is my hope that the Reformation anniversary can do that for us today in a variety of ways as the Holy Spirit leads, according to God's Word and to his glory.

How are we to rightly understand celebrating an event in the Reformation that produced such division especially in light of Jesus' prayer in John 17?

According to John 17, Jesus prays that his followers “may all be one” (v. 21) for the sake of the testimony of the church to the world. For those who study Christian history including the Reformation, however, the difficulty and even impossibility of this task in many cases is strikingly evident. Causes for disunity and disconnect are manifest throughout the church's history and not just in the sixteenth century. To believe that the church was unified before the Reformation and divided after is a common misconception. This view can stem from not evaluating the Reformation in the context of the larger global story of Christianity and/or not appreciating the complexity of unity and disunity present within the medieval

church.

Protestant Reformers believed in the necessity of church reform out of a priority for ensuring that the good news of the gospel and the assurance offered by Christ due to the sufficiency of his work and righteousness alone was proclaimed. They regarded their actions as legitimately falling within the bounds of the ecclesiological framework in the vein of Augustine that recognized a difference between the visible and invisible church. The visible church could err because it was led by human hands, while the spiritual or invisible church was headed by Christ and, therefore, could not blunder. For Protestant Reformers, that meant that the visible church must be “reformed and always reforming” in order to grapple with the realities of sin and human error in its midst. Meanwhile, because the church of the Reformation was so closely interconnected with every aspect of European society, reform necessarily impacted society, culture, politics, and economics in disruptive, complex, and even destructive ways.

All of this is true, but at the same time, the truth of our church history should never discourage us from praying as Christ prayed for the unity of the church for the sake of the good news of the gospel. This is a task worthy of pursuing because it is what Christ called Christians to do even as we appreciate the traditions that resulted from reform during the sixteenth century.

Given Martin Luther’s harsh words about the Jews, Huldrych Zwingli’s persecution of the Anabaptists, and John Calvin’s support for the execution of Michael Servetus how are we to consider celebrating these as “heroes” of the faith?

L. P. Hartley once famously wrote, “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” Never was a quote about history more on target. The truth conveyed here is that the past can be difficult to evaluate fairly. Understanding the various customs, cultural mindsets, and driving motivations can be elusive, and if we expect the values and manners of the past to measure up to the values and customs of our present then we will be disappointed.

It goes without saying that these Protestant “heroes” mightily fell short in word and deed over the treatment of Christians who differed theologically from them, a sad irony that is not lost on their legacy. We are disappointed and even angered by these examples not because they acted extraordinarily in their context—since they were very much men of their times in these ways—but because they did not rise above their times in their treatment of other Christians when perhaps they could have. The building blocks for Christian toleration were already evident in Luther’s thought in his 1523 text, *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*. He wrote there that the sword should not be used to overcome

heresy but that heresy should only be overcome with God’s word.² For Luther, because the sword had no function in the spiritual kingdom,³ temporal authority should not have the power to coerce the conscience. In fact, he critiqued this practice saying, “They are thereby presumptuously setting themselves in God’s place, lording it over men’s consciences and faith, and schooling the Holy Spirit according to their own crackbrained ideas.”⁴ In the end, these principles were left unmet in most cases by him and his generation as well as for many generations afterward.

Certainly every hero in human history was broken in some way except for Jesus Christ, and every society has had to grapple with problems of oppression, discrimination, and scapegoating of certain groups inside and outside the community even if the targets and methods have differed by period and culture. The harsh and lethal treatment of Anabaptists, Jews, and Anti-Trinitarians is not merely a Protestant problem or an early-modern problem but a human problem, though that does not excuse it. What it means is that it is more baffling to discover those moments when Reformers overcame the mentalité of their times and embraced a level of toleration than when they did not. Consider the time when Martin Luther welcomed Andreas Karlstadt into his home after their estrangement; or when the city of Strasbourg under the leadership of Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito refused to use capital punishment against Anabaptists; or when the Moravian Princes welcomed radical Protestant refugees to settle when they had lost their homes; or when agreement was achieved over justification at the Colloquy of Regensburg by Roman Catholic and Protestant Reformers. These moments of startling friendship, forgiveness, and toleration also deserve our recognition in the complex story of the Reformation.

Where do you see Reformation studies going in the next few decades and what do you see as the most fruitful areas of research in Reformation studies on the horizon?

There is still so much to be done in Reformation studies. Ongoing work exploring (as David Steinmetz once described them) the “Reformers in the wings,” the contributions and experiences of women, sixteenth-century Catholicism, Protestant engagement with Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy, the material history of the Bible, and the contributions of “radical” Protestant groups are all worthwhile avenues for further research and discovery. There is also space for exploring the intersection between

² Timothy F. Lull, ed., *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 430.

³ *Ibid.*, 437.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 432.

theology and social history since both of these facets are integral to the unfolding of the church's story during the period yet they are too often alienated from each other in historical analysis. Finally, in my own area of Calvin studies, while the dominant trend seeks to demote the impact of Calvin and his legacy, my work continues to uncover evidence of how Calvin's theological contributions and leadership continued to shape generations for centuries after the Reformation. Attention, therefore, to the legacy of the Reformation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a particularly fruitful area of research in my experience.

Book Reviews

Holger Gzella. *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam*. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1 The Near and Middle East 111. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015. xvi + 451 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-9004285095. \$214.00.

Aramaic is a gem, hidden in plain sight. Its written accounts span more than three thousand years—the longest duration of any world language still spoken today. These texts are significant for the world’s monotheistic religions—including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—consisting of sacred histories, biblical commentaries, pious stories, biblical translations, theological apologies, and even holy writ (major portions of Daniel and Ezra as well as *ipsissima verba* of Jesus and early Apostolic teaching). And yet, in many ways, the depths of its riches have not been revealed. Texts representing considerable segments of time, place, and dialect still remain unexplored and untranslated. Innumerable works are unknown to modern Western scholars, often languishing as hidden treasure in libraries and monastery collections around the world. What’s more, a general cultural history of this antiquarian language had not been written until the publication of the present work. For this reason, Gzella is due appreciation for his desire to facilitate “the informed use of Aramaic” for “interested non-specialists” (p. xi).

The volume begins with a brief survey of Aramaic research, an assessment of Aramaic within Northwest Semitic, and an abbreviated outline of the author’s general linguistic method. The descriptions of various Aramaic dialects follow chronologically from the earliest Syrian language to the multiple Eastern and Western varieties evidenced from northern Africa to Iran and end with Classical Syriac.

Readers would do well to note the helpful discussion of the outmoded terminology of “Chaldaean” and “Syriac” (p. 4). The former designation used to refer to Targumic and Biblical Aramaic texts written in the so-called Aramaic square script; the latter described the Aramaic dialect of the Christian polity located in Syria, originally centered in Edessa, represented by distinctive cursive scripts (*estrangela*, *serṭo*). Whereas script and region can play a role in designating language variance (see S. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, Champaign, IL: UI Press, 2009), Gzella provides a more thorough nuancing of Aramaic varieties using established methods of dialectology, comparative linguistics, and geo-political situatedness, but he also deviates from the widely-repeated model of Fitzmyer.

Gzella outlines three features of Northwest Semitic vis-à-vis Aramaic (for a general criticism of the exclusive use of shared innovation for genealogical classification, see L. Kogen, *Genealogical Classification of Semitic: The Lexical Isoglosses*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015): (1) phonological shift of initial *w to *y, (2) bisyllabic plural base *qVtal with external endings for singular pattern *qVtl nouns, and (3) the assimilation of *n in contact (p. 19). It should be noted, following J. Huehnergard (“Northwest Semitic Languages,” pp. III:408–22, in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Languages and Linguistics*, K. Versteegh ed., Leiden: Brill, 2007), that the internal plural pattern is found in non-Northwest Semitic languages (Akkadian, Ethiopic, modern South Arabian, and Arabic). The suggested innovation is the *obligatory* double marking of these forms with plural suffixes (Heb. *mālōkim* “kings” < *malakīma). Concerning the assimilation of syllable ending *n, Akkadian (*atta* “you” [m.s.] < *ʔanta; *iddin* “he gave” < *ʔindin; etc.) attests this phonological feature (albeit with exceptions that likely exhibit historical spellings). Additional shared isoglosses commonly discussed, but not mentioned in the present work, include the metathesis of the infixes -t of the verbal stems with initial sibilant roots (e.g., Heb. *yīštakkəhu* “they were forgotten” [< √ŠKH]; Ug. *yštāl* “he repeatedly demands” [< √ŠĀL]; Syr. *eštqel* “it was taken” [< √ŠQL]), and the assimilation of the initial consonant / with √LQH (e.g., Heb. *yīqqah* “he takes;” Ug./OA. *yqh* “he takes”). In sum, Gzella acknowledges that what is unique to Aramaic continues to evade clear explanation since “only [a] few specific linguistic traits can be posited for the entire chronological and geographical range” (p. 17). Further, an evolutionary, essentialist model (wherein all variations emerge linearly from one pure progenitor through discrete changes) is proffered (“the Aramaic languages would originally derive from one common ancestor,” p. 18) in spite of the recognition that at the earliest period there is multilinguistic diversity.

While certainly a desideratum, such a work requires a range of comments and is not without its detractions. First, most readers will find the grammatical descriptions tedious and belabored. For a cultural history, the book reads a lot more like a linguistic history—focusing on comparative and historical grammar to the exclusion of other cultural isoglosses. And yet, Gzella rightly describes studying language as “a tool for exploring a culture” which “sets the standards for more practical objectives” (p. xi). Second, Gzella following Beyer (as usual) claims unequivocally that unstressed short vowels are not lost until the middle of the third century C.E. (p. 42), the *terminus ante quem* of S. Kaufman (“On Vowel Reduction in Aramaic,” *JAOs* 104 [1984]: 87–95), with slight supporting evidence. Third, the suggestion that vowel letters (i.e., *matres lectionis*) were an Ara-

maic innovation (p. 59) may be supported by the Tell Fekheriyān inscription. An analogy to the non-linear letters of the extended Ugaritic writing system (ā, ī, ū) provides an intriguing (but unmentioned) parallel, especially in light of the connection between their usage in primarily foreign words (see P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 23). Fourth, Gzella demurs over the widely held position that the “short prefix” verbal forms (i.e., *yiqtuØ of the “*naw*-consecutive imperfect”) derive from a common source in Aramaic and Canaanite (p. 83). Fifth, the sections on contact between languages (particularly, pp. 119–24, 336–42, and 388–90) suffer from not engaging the expansive field of contact linguistics (for bibliography and a better example of methodological engagement, see A. Butts, *Language Change in the Wake of Empire: Syriac in Its Greco-Roman Context* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016]). Finally, concerning the Galilean dialect of Aramaic, purportedly spoken by Jesus, Gzella warns of over specification, because “there is practically no comparative material from the first-century C.E. Galilee” (p. 237).

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André Villeneuve. *Nuptial Symbolism in Second Temple Writings, the New Testament and Rabbinic Literature: Divine Marriage at Key Moments of Salvation History*. Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 92. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016. xii + 489 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-9004316034. \$210.00.

In the Scriptures, prophets such as Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah employ nuptial images to describe the covenant relationship between God and Israel. They apply the metaphor of marriage in connection with Israel’s Exodus experience but they also connect nuptial symbolism with the Temple in terms of harlotry and with Edenic traditions in Genesis 1–2 as the perfect archetype of divine-human love. In wisdom literature, the nuptial imagery is echoed in the female personification of wisdom, pushing the metaphor into novel theological territory.

The volume under review is a systematic treatment and thorough investigation of the nuptial symbolism as found in various biblical and extra-biblical traditions. Using an approach both synchronic (textual, intertextual, and narrative analysis) and diachronic (tracing the development of common themes in various sources across a long period of time), the goal of the study is to examine the meaning of the marriage metaphor against its Jewish background and as it threads through the important moments in the history of salvation. The study thus attempts to provide a

historical dimension to and sketch of the literary background and growth of Jewish ideas from Second Temple Literature before the composition of the New Testament.

According to Villeneuve, there are four key periods of salvation history in which the divine-human union, understood as a nuptial covenant, takes place. The first is the primeval and idyllic state of love between God and Israel that was later lost (creation and the Garden of Eden). The second is its restoration by a single salvific event described as “marriage” (Exodus and Mount Sinai). The third is the extension of this marital event into time through cultic worship and liturgical action in the Temple (the Temple on Mount Sinai). Lastly, there is the expectation of the future fulfilment and consummation of the union between God and his people at the end of time (eschatological end of times). The notion of *kedusha* or of sacred space and time undergirds the understanding of the covenant between God and Israel in terms of a nuptial union.

The core of the work looks at how the New Testament appropriates and employs the nuptial imagery in its understanding of the marriage between Christ and the Church. As significant framework, Villeneuve explores the use and understanding of nuptial symbolism in Sirach 24 (chapter 2), the allegorical writings of Philo of Alexandria on the cherubim (chapter 3), various pseudepigraphical compositions (chapter 5), and rabbinic literature (chapter 6) as they relate to the identified moments of salvation history.

The treatment of the New Testament begins by arguing that the various expressions and transformation of the metaphor of marriage, as applied to Christ and his Church in the Gospels of Matthew and John, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and the Book of Revelation, grew organically from its Jewish origins. Villeneuve then proceeds to examine closely the various manifestations and transmutations of the nuptial image in the aforementioned texts. In Matthew, there is a noticeable stress on the eschatological dimension of the wedding feast. Among the Gospels, John is the most consistent, or sustained, in employing the nuptial theology, portraying Jesus as the Bridegroom and the community of believers as the bride. John views this marriage as a new creation achieved at the crucifixion. The new temple is not only in the raised body of Jesus but also in the community of disciples who experience the mystical union in the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. In his Corinthian correspondences, Paul uses nuptial allusions to develop a theology of the body of the Christian as the temple of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians, the mystical marriage is immediate with the church already one flesh with Christ. Paul’s use of the nuptial symbolism in his letters is mystagogical, ecclesial, and anthropological. The final text, the Apocalypse of John, is a portrait of the future

fulfilment of the perfection and holiness of the bride, describing the ultimate consummation of the marriage between Christ and his church in the heavenly temple.

After mapping the nuptial motifs from many sources and their connection to the key moments of salvation history, the final chapter weaves the various threads together as they apply to the New Testament understanding of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Christ is typologically related to Gen 1–3 as the new Adam who reverses Adam's disobedience. His Paschal Mystery is viewed as the single redemptive event or the new Exodus that restores the lost relationship and covenant with God. In his saving sacrifice for his spouse, Christ establishes a new nuptial covenant. The love of Christ for his Church is actualized ecclesially in the church and mystically in the soul of the believer. Christ's Paschal Mystery is extended through time sacramentally and liturgically in baptism and in the Eucharist. This mystical union is not only a present reality but also looks forward to its definitive consummation when Eden is restored and access to the Tree of Life is reopened.

This work is an important contribution to biblical theology and deserves wide notice. Villeneuve successfully shows the intrinsic and organic connection of Old Testament nuptial symbolism to that of the New Testament. In so doing, he manages to model how to approach the problematic relationship between the Old and the New Testaments in a way that is fresh, balanced, and theologically sound.

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David P. Moessner. *Luke the Historian of Israel's Legacy, Theologian of Israel's Christ: A New Reading of the Gospel Acts of Luke*. Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft: Volume 182. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016. xi + 373 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-3110255393. \$111.05.

This book is a collection of twelve of David Paul Moessner's published essays on Luke-Acts. Its subject is the interpretation of Luke-Acts in light of Hellenistic and biblical historiography in order to discover how Luke designed his two-volume work to be read together as a comprehensive whole. The essays range in date from the late 1980s to the present. But they now comprise a tightly packed treatise by means of the author's addition of useful frames and a five-part sequence. The conclusion renders the logical sequence of the overall argument.

A brief introduction notes how Acts is often separated from Luke's Gospel. The two volumes are rarely read in accordance with the “–dash”

that putatively conjoins them. Yet Luke appears to invite readers to comprehend his two volumes together. So one must ask why Luke is not interpreted accordingly.

To answer this, Moessner alternates between examining Old Testament analogues as well as ancient Hellenistic authors who wrote multi-volume works as Luke did. Since the latter left us not only their works but also their explanations of narratological principles and arrangement designs, their intentions and execution can illumine Luke's. Moessner's thesis is that ancient analogues are often more useful for uncovering Luke's native historiographical poetics than modern methods.

Part I discusses the issue of genre. For Moessner, both volumes are *historia*, even Luke's Gospel. A classical *bios* is for the purpose of revealing the essence of the subject's character as illustrated by characteristic deeds and discourse. But Luke also tells of an entire movement that Jesus spearheads. Moreover, this movement is itself the culmination of the long-standing plan of God. So while Luke's Gospel focuses on Jesus, it is *more than* a biography of him. The existence of a second volume solidifies the case. One might say Luke-Acts is *historia* in the way a “biography” of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. can also be a history of the Civil Rights movement.¹

Part II deals with two key terms in Luke's Preface. Moessner shows that *parakoloutho* (“follow closely”) means Luke is more than just a careful researcher; he is also a long devotee of the movement who is intimately familiar with it from the inside. In the second chapter, *kathexes* (“in order”) refers to an event's most salient sequences that help audiences come to the right conclusions. When Peter re-tells the Cornelius episode “in order,” Luke's sense of the term's implications is evident. The proper order clarifies and convinces.

In part III, Moessner finds explanatory models in Aristotle, Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus to hone in on Luke's own poetics. The Hellenistic schemes for representing historical sequence, divine causation, and concurrent arrangement become analogues to how Luke presents his historical case to his audience. Luke need not have directly studied his forbears to be found doing as they do.

Part IV explores large-level OT narrative typologies: Jesus is the last and greatest of the persecuted prophets, and he is like but greater than David, the suffering righteous king. The parallels between Christ, Peter, Stephen, and Paul then move these same patterns forward into Acts,

¹ This example comes from Joel Marcus, but it is suggestive of what Moessner is driving at (Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 66).

where Christ is still the story line, albeit inscribed in the cruciform lives of his followers. Taken together, all these large multi-level patterns indicate that Luke's theology of the cross is worked through the entirety of Luke's narrative, which in turn resonates comprehensively with preexisting cruciform patterns throughout the OT. Therefore, the notion that Luke has a weak theology of the cross is a mistaken consequence of expecting compact enthymemes of atonement theology, whereas Luke's theology is more often the net effect of his large-scale narrative arrangement in light of the long-developing plan of God throughout Scripture. On this recurring point, Moessner is unassailable.

Part V takes up the important issue of whether Israel is "written off" or redefined. Moessner's answer is "neither." Israel remains as it ever was. Paul's quote of Isaiah 6 in Acts 28 is not meant to "write off" the Jews, as Haenchen believes, but to characterize Israel's and YHWH's covenantal confrontations for what they have always been. Israel's mixed response is both characteristic and expected. It is incorporated into God's ongoing plan. Indeed, a suffering Messiah only makes sense as a response to Israel's covenantal history. Moessner's final essay (in German) takes issue with Conzelmann's Bultmannesque charge that Luke has "historicized" the kerygma and muted its eschatological call to decision by moving toward a concept of *Heilsgeschichte*. On this, Moessner sides with Cullman over Conzelmann: it is found already in Paul and is not a novelty introduced by Luke.

Moessner's gift for organization is much appreciated, for his project is ambitious and his prose is sometimes overwrought. It is wise to read the conclusion as an orienting summary. The complexity and occasional oddity of Moessner's prose represent his attempt to capture the multifaceted connections across Luke's entire narrative. Moessner is to be commended for the effort. One might charge him with under-representing the Spirit's role in favor of his emphasis on the continuity of Christ across both volumes. As a positive, his execution neglects neither Luke's biblical nor Hellenistic milieu. This is no easy task. And his attempt to reconstruct a native narratology with which to read Luke is a useful corrective to the oblique renderings of both Redaction and Rhetorical Criticism. Moessner, for all his efforts, has left the impression that this project has just barely begun. But he has convinced the reader that it should indeed begin.

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J. P. Davies. *Paul Among the Apocalypses? An Evaluation of the 'Apocalyptic Paul' in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*. Library of New Testament Studies 562, ed. Chris Keith. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016. xiv + 219 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0567667281. \$122.00.

Paul Among the Apocalypses (PATA) is a "lightly-edited revision" of J. P. Davies's doctoral dissertation under Grant Macaskill at the University of St Andrews (p. xi). Davies (Tutor in New Testament at Trinity College, Bristol, UK) concedes that much of his work overlaps N. T. Wright's recent volume, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2015) but contends that *PATA* has "at least three important distinctives": (1) it "provides detailed exegesis of the relevant Jewish and Christian apocalypses"; (2) it engages important contributions by scholars not adequately covered by Wright; and (3) it approaches the issues from multiple angles whereas Wright's discussion is more narrowly focused on "apocalyptic versus salvation history" (pp. 2–3).

The purpose of *PATA* is to "evaluate the 'apocalyptic Paul' movement through an examination of its major theological moves in the light of the Jewish apocalypses *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* and the Christian book Revelation" (p. 1). Davies's overarching thesis is that the "apocalyptic Paul" movement is fraught with problematic false dichotomies that "screen out what Paul's apostolic thought affirms" (p. 1).

In chapter one, Davies takes his readers on a "helicopter tour" of the "apocalyptic Paul" movement from Schweitzer to Campbell. From this list, Davies selects J. Louis Martyn, Martinus de Boer, Beverly Gaventa, and Douglas A. Campbell as his interlocutors. Chapters two through five adopt a fivefold format: introduction, apparent dichotomies, survey of Jewish apocalypses, survey of Revelation, and implications; as well as trace four interrelated themes: epistemology, eschatology, cosmology, and soteriology. Chapter six (conclusions) summarizes the various dichotomies addressed. The thesis within each chapter is essentially the same: Davies's interlocutors set forth false/strict dichotomies that are unsupported in the apocalyptic literature and Paul's letters.

In terms of strengths, this work is lucid and well-written, and Davies argues his thesis well. Davies's approach in summarizing opposing views is balanced and charitable. Chapter one serves as a beneficial introduction to the "apocalyptic Paul" discussion. Chapter three was particularly well-argued—especially Davies's treatment of Revelation, which serves as a helpful corrective to Martyn's "what time is it?" approach to eschatology (pp. 102–5). Martyn sees Paul writing during God's irruptive "invasion" and commencement of cosmic warfare of liberation "from the powers of

the present evil age” (*Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010], 104–5). However, Davies notes God’s continued presence throughout salvation history—it is not merely a “punctiliar” invasion. Thus, for Davies, a better question would be “how long?” (p. 101; cf. Dan 8:13; 12:6; Rev 6:10).

Nevertheless, Davies’s work is not without weaknesses. It appears that Davies overstates his case at times. For example, Davies claims that his work, in comparison to Wright, “expands and deepens” the discussion of “apocalyptic Paul” (p. 3). While Davies does discuss a few scholars (e.g., Beverly Gaventa) in more detail, Wright offers a far more robust survey of the “apocalyptic Paul” movement (eighty-three pages) than does Davies (thirty-eight pages). Additionally, Davies appears to have overstated Martyn’s influence on Campbell (p. 21). In *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 846, Campbell distances himself from Martyn and does not describe himself as being as highly influenced by Martyn as Davies suggests. Moreover, in his list of “towering interpretive figures of Paul,” Campbell lists Leander Keck, who is curiously absent from the pages of *PATA* (p. 218). Has Davies “silenced the choir” somewhat regarding the major voices within “apocalyptic Paul” discussions? Lastly, Davies’s argument would have been strengthened had he engaged more (and earlier) sources.

In sum, Davies makes contributions in at least four areas: (1) he traces the flow of thought within the “apocalyptic Paul” movement; (2) he helpfully explains the complexities behind defining the “slippery” terms “apocalyptic” and “cosmology”; (3) he illuminates and corrects many of the false dichotomies apparent within this movement; and (4) he fills a lacuna in Pauline studies by reading Paul against the backdrop of select Jewish and Christian apocalypses. However, Davies appears to have missed an opportunity to critique the enterprise of an “apocalyptic Paul” *in toto* in his desire to investigate only those selective (and rather late) sources addressed by his interlocutors (p. 36). Hence, relatively little soil is plowed in a truly pioneering way.

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Cynthia Long Westfall. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. xix + 348 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0801097942. \$32.99.

Cynthia Long Westfall is Assistant Professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College. Her book *Paul and Gender* attempts to offer a consistent Pauline theology of gender based upon Paul’s life and letters as

well as the first-century cultural milieu. Westfall examines Paul’s understanding of both men and women. The book contains nine chapters dealing with a wide range of issues that are relevant for Paul’s theology of gender. The first two chapters deal with Greco-Roman cultural views of gender, the next six deal with theological motifs, and the last chapter is an exegetical analysis of 1 Tim 2:11–15.

In chapter one, Westfall argues that veiling in the first century was not a symbol of a wife’s submission to her husband but a symbol of “honor, status, and protection” (p. 42). Rather than subjugating women, Westfall argues that Paul advocated women veiling in church to create equality among the various social classes of women. In chapter two, Westfall argues that Paul made some stereotypical masculine and feminine behaviors normative for all Christians (p. 59). In Greco-Roman culture it was shameful to assign feminine behavior to men (or vice-versa), but Paul advocated that men serve their wives (a feminine stereotype) and that women engage in spiritual warfare (a masculine stereotype). Rather than fulfilling cultural paradigms, men and women are to gain their identity from Christ.

Chapter three makes the claim that Adam’s headship has to do with the fact that Eve was taken from Adam’s body. Nevertheless, since all men are born of women, men and women are interdependent (pp. 104–5). Chapter four examines Paul’s understanding of the Genesis account found in 1 Tim 2:11–15. Westfall argues that deception is not a characteristic of women only, but of all humanity. Yet, Adam’s rebellion or Eve’s deception do not define men or women who have been freed from the power of the Fall by the work of Christ (pp. 140–41). Chapter five makes the argument that in Paul’s writings believers’ identities correspond with their eschatological destinies and, therefore, to make a distinction between male and female roles is an attempt to control the Spirit’s calling and gifting (p. 176). In chapter six, Westfall demonstrates how Paul’s theology of the body stands in contrast to the view(s) of the body presented by Greco-Roman philosophers (p. 204). Furthermore, she demonstrates that Christian views about male and female bodies have been misconstrued by scholars who have been unduly influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy as well as their own perspectives (p. 180). In chapter seven, Westfall makes a case that one’s calling is given by the Spirit and determined by experience. Due to the priesthood of believers every Christian has equal opportunity to serve the church (p. 242). She also argues that churches that refuse to receive women in every position of leadership are guilty of resisting the Spirit. Chapter eight makes the claim that a non-hierarchical leadership structure, the authority of women in households

(where churches met), and the titles ascribed to women in the NT, indicate that Paul did not restrict leadership on the basis of gender (p. 277).

Finally, in chapter nine, Westfall examines 1 Tim 2:11–15 and argues that the text advocates gender equality in church leadership. First, Westfall argues that because 1 Timothy is a personal letter, missing background data is needed to understand its content (pp. 282–85). Second, Westfall postulates that women at Ephesus were responsible for promoting heresies, some of which had to do with childbirth. Westfall furthermore argues that rather than prohibiting women from speaking or leading in the church, the setting of 1 Tim 2:11–15 is the household and that men are to instruct their wives at home because many women in the first century were not accustomed to traditional learning environments (pp. 311–12).

One of the greatest benefits of Westfall's work is its excellent investigation of Greco-Roman views on gender. Westfall's portrayal of first-century attitudes toward women demonstrates how counter-cultural Paul's views on women in the church were. While gender in the church will continue to be debated, it is evident that Paul was counter-cultural and progressive by first-century standards. However, while Westfall's study has a number of strengths it is not without its weaknesses. In general, the book reads like a collection of essays on various gender issues rather than a coherent and cohesive Pauline theology of gender. There is a significant amount of repetition of material and argument throughout the book without much synthesis.

Beyond the general organization of the book, the primary weakness appears to be lack of evidence for certain claims. While one must read between the lines in order to reconstruct much of the background of Paul's letters, sometimes Westfall suggests possibilities and makes her case upon a conjecture. For example, regarding Paul's instructions for women to learn quietly in 1 Tim 2:12, Westfall postulates that the injunction could have been due (1) to women's noisiness while serving food, (2) their enjoyment of socializing, (3) the social dynamics of small groups, (4) lack of education, or (5) lack of classroom socialization (pp. 239–40). Yet she does not adequately dialogue with the traditionalist understanding of the text at this point. Moreover, in some cases, Westfall makes claims on the basis of sociological trends that greatly post-date the composition of 1 Timothy (e.g., veiling in Islam, pp. 28, 33). Nevertheless, *Paul and Gender* is an informative read and should be consulted by those who wish to grapple with 1 Tim 2:11–15, 1 Cor 11:2–16, or 1 Cor 14:34–35.

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Paul Hinlicky. *Divine Simplicity: Christ the Crisis of Metaphysics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. 256 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 978-0801048999. \$35.00.

According to Paul Hinlicky, Tise Professor of Lutheran Studies at Roanoke College, biblical monotheism does not imply that there is one, simple, divine substance. Rather, God is a divine community of persons united in love. Hinlicky argues that the strong simplicity thesis—that God is numerically one, indivisible, and self-identical—is a derivation of a faulty natural theology. Natural theology starts in the wrong place—by postulating a perfect being or First Cause—and ends up with a being that is only known through negative theologizing and describable through analogy. Hinlicky argues that we should conceive of simplicity in a weaker sense. Divine simplicity should be taken as a methodological rule that begins with positive revelation, particularly the incarnation, and only *qualifies* revelation with apophatic (negative) insight. Instead of beginning with reasoning *to* a First Cause, we should begin with revelation *from* God. In doing so we should conclude that God is a social community of persons whose unity is fully realized in the eschaton.

Hinlicky makes three general arguments for his conclusion. First, he blames the corruption of the self-revelation of God on theologians who have imbibed the assumptions of Hellenistic philosophy. Accordingly, theologians have succumbed to a naturalistic methodology that insists on using reason to ascend to a concept of divine essence, an ultimate, simple being. Such a view has some plausibility due to the intuition that God is utterly transcendent. However, it flies in the face of the biblical account of the persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hinlicky traces the origins of perfect being theology and Thomistic metaphysics to the philosophical heritage of the Greeks to explain the cause of the mistake. In doing so he hopes to weaken confidence in strong simplicity.

Second, Hinlicky argues that holding to a strong doctrine of divine simplicity leads to intolerable consequences. If we begin by stating positively what we can know about God only from what we know about nature, then we end up with agnosticism about the nature of God himself. Furthermore, if we posit God's nature as simple in the strong sense, then we end up with modalism and Nestorianism. Crucially, for Hinlicky, the strong version of simplicity is incompatible with the doctrine of the incarnation.

Third, Hinlicky argues that if God is simple in the strong sense, then God is strictly indescribable. The answer, according to Aquinas, was that God is only describable analogically. However, the problem with analogy is that it can only tell us *that* God is, not *what* he is. Yet this runs against

the clear assumption of revelation—to tell us something positive about God. Hinlicky infers from this that the strong simplicity doctrine is false. Hinlicky defends the view proposed by Duns Scotus. According to Scotus, we can speak univocally about God and his attributes. Accordingly, Hinlicky argues that both creation and creator fall under the same concepts, only differing qualitatively.

In *Divine Simplicity* Hinlicky raises clear objections to the strong version of divine simplicity: the doctrine downplays Scripture, appears to conflict with the doctrine of the Trinity, and entails a somewhat skeptical set of beliefs about our ability to know and describe God. Hinlicky enlivens the discussion by enlisting multiple theological voices to make his point, including an interesting exegesis of some Muslim scholarship. The strongest argument Hinlicky makes is that the strong view of divine simplicity is incompatible with the historical events relayed to us in Scripture.

The weakest argument Hinlicky makes against strong divine simplicity is his genealogical argument against natural theology. He attempts to show that since the source of the strong version of divine simplicity is Hellenistic philosophy and not biblical revelation, we should be suspicious of any import we allow it within our theology. In other words, the plausibility of the doctrine is directly related to the assumptions of a philosophical or theological method that is no longer assumed. It is not clear that this kind of argument succeeds, at least on its own. Knowing the source of one's views does not entail that they are false, even if the assumptions that went along with that source are no longer widely accepted. One would need a supplementary argument to demonstrate that the relevant views of Hellenistic philosophy are unsound.

In any event, *Divine Simplicity* serves as a good example of a theologian's objection to natural theology, rooted in the intuitive idea that the theological task begins with revelation and not with reason. Hinlicky's central opposition to the strong view of divine simplicity is not merely the doctrine itself, but the theological method by which one derives all doctrines. It is not clear, however, that *all* forms of natural theology begin in this way, nor is it clear that revelation itself opposes the use of our reason. As a result, the book does not always achieve its aim. In part, this is due to a somewhat polemical tone. But it may also be due to an inattention to positive arguments for some forms of natural theology.

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Oliver D. Crisp. *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. xviii + 190 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0801098093. \$17.52.

Oliver Crisp continues his magnificent contribution to the field of Christology with *The Word Enfleshed*. Crisp's book is an exercise in systematic theology from the vantage point of analytic theology. The main aim of this work is to "provide a 'joined-up' account of the person and work of Christ" (p. xi). The author explains that a "joined-up" account strives not to separate the person and work of Christ, but treats the atonement as a culminating moment of a work that involves eternity, incarnation, and death.

The first chapter deals with eternal generation. This classical doctrine differentiates the Second Person of the Trinity from the First Person. After dealing with a few historical challenges to the doctrine, Crisp argues why the Eternal Generation of the Son should be upheld in three points: (1) It is implied in Scripture; (2) It was canonized in the Church creeds; (3) It preserves the individuation of the persons in the Godhead.

The second chapter, "Christ without flesh," considers Robert Jenson's Christology of the *Logos asarkos* (or the non-existence of such). Although Jenson qualifies some of his earlier Christological work, when he equates Christ with the *Logos*, Crisp argues that he may end up rejecting divine simplicity and impassibility, because Christ has a body and a soul. Bodies are composite substances; therefore, an equation of *Logos* and Christ may pose composition in God. This discussion is carried on into the third chapter, where Crisp deals with models of the incarnation and God's incorporeality.

In the fourth chapter, Crisp gives a provocative account of the image of God. Here, he raises a few objections to the substantive and relational accounts and proposes a deeper Christological version of the image of God in man. For Crisp, man is in that image, because every man has in himself the possibility to be hypostatically united to a divine person. Following this description, in the fifth chapter, Crisp construes his desiderata for models of the hypostatic union. Building upon a Chalcedonian axiom (Christ has one of whatever goes with the person, and two of whatever goes with the natures) Crisp prefers a concrete—against an abstract—account of the incarnation, in which the dissimilarities of the natures are given attention.

The sixth chapter is a discussion of "Compositional Christology." Here Crisp defends a three-part composition of the incarnation—the second person of the Godhead and a human nature composed of a body and a soul. Although Crisp has good reasons for his defense of a three-part

composition, he admits some problems. For example, it is hard to see how the strategy of reduplication or the *communicatio idiomatum* (interaction of human and divine properties) can be more than just verbal predications.

In chapters seven and eight Crisp constructs a union account of the atonement. After surveying some theories of the atonement, Crisp provides a critique. His main worry is that the classical Penal Substitution Theory may lead to some sort of legal fiction. Then Crisp argues for a Realist version of union. In this version, humanity and post-lapsarian Adam are all part of this one metaphysical entity called fallen humanity. Since guilt cannot be transferred, the only way that Christ can *really* bear the sins of redeemed humanity is by uniting himself to them.

Although Crisp is a premier theologian in our era, what is not clear is his construction of union and atonement. What does Crisp buy when he rejects the imputation of Adam's sin? It seems he needs to deal more deeply with exegetical works from Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15. Simply rejecting the transference of guilt in philosophical presuppositions may not do justice to the biblical account.

In any event, *The Word Enfleshed* is a great contribution. Crisp's account of the incarnation here rehearses some of his earliest work. Perhaps the most constructive element is his fourth chapter, in which he deals with the image of God from the point of view of the hypostatic union. Most accounts of the image of God are usually wary of metaphysical starting points. However, I predict that Crisp's provocative chapter will have to be addressed from now on.

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David L. Allen. *The Extent of the Atonement: A Historical and Critical Review*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016. ix + 820 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433643927. \$59.99.

David Allen, who serves at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as the Dean of the School of Preaching, intends this work to "demonstrate historically, and then biblically and theologically, why universal atonement is a more excellent way" than formulations that argue for limited atonement (p. xviii). He defines universal atonement as "Christ's satisfaction on the cross for the sins of all humanity" (p. xviii). He contends it is superior not only because of its frequent attestation in the Christian tradition but also because of its scriptural warrant and his conviction that it best preserves the well-meant gospel offer.

Discussions about the atonement are often fraught with difficulty because of confused terminology. Allen correctly distinguishes between the intent, extent, and application of the atonement. His argument focuses primarily on the atonement's extent; in his framing, the critical issue is not whether there was a particular intention for the atonement. It is rather the need to answer the question, "For whose sins was Christ punished?" This almost singular focus on the atonement's extent allows Allen to place several diverse theological traditions together. He writes, "One of the main purposes of this work is to demonstrate the unity between moderate Calvinists, Arminians, and non-Calvinists" on the issue of the atonement's universal extent (p. xviii).

With an exhaustive historical survey, Allen attempts to present universal atonement as the majority position of the Christian church. In his reading, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, John Davenant, Moïse Amyraut, and Andrew Fuller all held to universal atonement in that they maintained Christ truly died for all people. While he admits that these figures sought in differing ways to limit the intent of the atonement, Allen categorizes them in the manner that he does because of their perceived willingness to speak of the atonement's universal extent.

Allen contrasts this position with perspectives that he believes unhelpfully limit the extent of the atonement. Though John Owen could argue for a universal sufficiency because of Christ's intrinsic worth, in Allen's judgment this understanding of sufficiency—what Allen considers intrinsic sufficiency—is too hypothetical because of Owen's strong focus on how God's covenantal design shaped the atonement's intent. For Allen, intrinsic sufficiency is inconsistent with the free offer of the gospel.

Allen's readers will make their own assessments about his interpretations of certain theologians and his assertion that the intrinsic sufficiency position cannot cohere with a free gospel offer. Most helpful to note here is the fact that Allen does adequately document the strong witness for positions other than strict limited atonement within the church's history. For example, he rightly highlights the British delegation at the Synod of Dort, a contingent of theologians who do not receive sufficient attention.

His narrow focus on the atonement's extent, however, can cause him to misinterpret theologians with whom he disagrees. Often, Allen does not adequately detail how his opponents' understandings of the intent of the atonement shaped their descriptions of its extent. To cite one example, Allen frequently warns against Owen's thought, but when he finally exposit Owen's theology, he devotes relatively few pages to the matter. Much of that material is not Allen interacting directly with Owen's work; instead it is Allen's summation of Richard Baxter's criticisms of Owen

and a paraphrase of a ThM thesis by Neil Chambers. Although Allen rejects Owen's doctrine of the *pactum salutis* (covenant of redemption), he provides little information about the sophisticated way in which the *pactum salutis* shaped Owen's understanding of the atonement's intent. This fact causes Allen to revive Richard Baxter's largely discredited allegation that Owen held to eternal justification. Moreover, because Allen relies on Baxter, when he describes Owen's commercialism he does not sufficiently document how debates over Grotius formed Owen's convictions. Tim Cooper, a Baxter scholar who is not sympathetic to Owen's understanding of the atonement, has documented that Baxter misunderstood Owen's description of the *solutio eiusdem* (identical satisfaction). Allen appears to follow Baxter's errors when he assesses Owen's commercialism. Allen could have avoided these mistakes if he had approached Owen's works more directly. Had he done so, he could have explored exactly how Owen arrived at his conclusions concerning the atonement's intent before he critiqued Owen's statements regarding its extent.

Still, *The Extent of the Atonement* is a passionate defense of universal atonement that merits attention. Allen's exhaustive research on the diversity of opinion regarding the atonement within both the Reformed tradition and Baptist life is helpful. He can on occasion interpret his theological opponents inaccurately. These inaccuracies are unfortunate, but one can commend Allen for his extensive exploration and valuable contribution.

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Larry W. Hurtado. *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016. xiv + 290 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1481304733. \$30.00.

Written from the perspective that the distinctiveness of Christianity is often overlooked by modern society, Larry Hurtado's *Destroyer of the Gods* attempts to "highlight some major features of early Christianity that made it distinctive, noteworthy, and even peculiar in the ancient Greek and Roman setting" (pp. 5–6). Hurtado, of course, is well-prepared for this task, having written several scholarly works in the fields of New Testament and Christian origins. Many of the subjects explored by Hurtado over the last several years are examined afresh in this volume in a format that readers will find accessible and engaging. The book is divided into five chapters, each of which explores a particular facet of the Christian faith that set it apart from other religious practices and belief systems during the Greco-Roman period.

The first chapter, "Early Christians and Christianity in the Eyes of Non-Christians," explores what might be known of the early Christian movement from notable non-Christian figures such as Pliny the Younger, Galen, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, and Celsus. As Hurtado reveals, Christianity was frequently opposed by Jews as well as Gentiles, though typically for different reasons. Jews often rejected the claims Christians made relating to the nature and mission of Jesus, while Greeks and Romans often struggled to acquire a well-informed understanding of the specific beliefs and practices of the Christian faith. He further observes that Greeks and Romans frequently regarded Christianity as a greater threat than Judaism given that it was not limited to a particular ethnicity and because its adherents were known for their zeal in confronting expressions of idolatry. The chapter is similar in many respects to Robert Wilken's work, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

The second chapter, "A New Kind of Faith," provides a helpful overview of the concept of religion in the ancient world. As Hurtado effectively demonstrates, the Greco-Roman world was profoundly religious. "From the lowest to the highest spheres in society," he writes, "all aspects of life were presumed to have connections with divinities of various kinds" (p. 47). Christianity, therefore, was not the target of opposition because it was a religion as such, but because it was monotheistic and inherently incompatible with the worship of other deities. As Hurtado emphasizes, the practice of following one particular faith at the exclusion of all others was uncommon in the Greco-Roman world outside of Judaism.

Chapter Three, "A Different Identity," concludes that with relatively few exceptions (e.g., the emperor cult, the mystery cults, and certain philosophical traditions) a distinction between religion and ethnicity was rarely apparent in the Greco-Roman world. Christianity, on the other hand, was distinct given its transethnic and transcultural appeal as well as the expectation it placed upon its followers to abstain from the worship of other gods. These observations lead Hurtado to conclude that "Christianity was the only new religious movement of the Roman era that demanded this exclusive loyalty to one deity, thereby defining all other cults of the time as rivals" (p. 86).

The fourth chapter, "A 'Bookish' Religion," discusses several of the topics addressed in Hurtado's prior work, *Early Christian Artifacts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). The emphasis on the study of Scripture and the production and reproduction of Christian writings, Hurtado concludes, was unusual in the Roman era outside of Jewish circles. In addition to discussing the influence of Jewish practices such as the public reading of

Scripture, the chapter provides a brief introduction to the world of first-century book production. Several peculiarities relating to the literary habits of early Christians are noted such as the early Christian predilection for the codex and the emergence of *Nomina Sacra* (sacred names) in the copies of biblical writings.

The final chapter, “A New Way to Live,” demonstrates that Christians from all walks of life were commonly admonished to maintain a lifestyle that was in many respects distinct in the Roman world. Rather than a mere conglomeration of theological or philosophical beliefs, “Christianity represented a distinctive kind of social effort to reshape behavior” (p. 172). To illustrate the distinctiveness of Christian morality, Hurtado provides a helpful discussion of practices commonly condoned in Roman society such as child exposure and the gladiatorial games and also considers the distinct views Christians maintained with regard to sexual ethics and marriage.

In sum, *Destroyer of the Gods* is an intriguing and wide-ranging examination of several key features of Christianity that distinguished it from the various religious beliefs and practices common in Greco-Roman society. Hurtado convincingly demonstrates that Christianity was in many respects an innovative and distinct faith, a thesis that challenges the persuasion of the history of religions school that Christianity was heavily influenced by various beliefs and practices that were prevalent during the first and second centuries. While some readers may conclude that certain subjects could have been addressed more exhaustively, the depth with which Hurtado discusses the subject matter is appropriate for those with a limited background in the study of early Christianity. Given its effectiveness in introducing readers to the distinct aspects of the Christian faith, the volume would serve as a valuable supplementary text for undergraduate or graduate courses in either New Testament or Church History.

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Mark R. Teasdale. *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists: Sharing the Gospel Authentically*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016. 143 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0830351669. \$20.00.

Evangelism is a word that awakens deep feelings inside church members, ranging from awkwardness to anger to anticipation. Everyone has an image of what evangelism is, but what should *authentic* evangelism be? Mark Teasdale suggests an evangelism-as-navigation metaphor to introduce and equip his readers for evangelism, even if they do not consider themselves evangelists. Teasdale’s years of wrestling with evangelism as

both a student and seminary professor make his insights into the practice of evangelism valuable.

Teasdale claims that evangelism is more than cookie-cutter prescribed techniques and argues for “the need to approach evangelism authentically” (p. 4). To do so, he describes a formula of four interconnected areas for readers to consider: “starting point + theological reflection + contextual awareness = creative practice” (p. 8). He is unsatisfied with stereotyped evangelists and canned evangelism and discusses how evangelism is colored by modernity, post-modernity, and fundamentalism.

Teasdale’s formula for authentic evangelism suggests practical steps for readers with the hope that they will be emboldened to build creative evangelistic practices. He begins by asking the questions, “Why do we choose to remain Christian?” and “What is the good that we believe God wants to accomplish?” (p. 31). Teasdale points out that many modern evangelism techniques start too small. Christians overcome this shortcoming, by “ground[ing] our starting point in the character and activity of God” (p. 40). Second, Teasdale encourages readers to set aside time for theological reflection by answering core questions about God and thinking through interpretation and various sources for interpretation. Here, Teasdale interacts with Rick Richardson’s seven models of evangelism, stating that understanding these various models can “help us appreciate the evangelistic power of one another’s perspectives” (p. 61). Third, Teasdale exhorts readers to examine their context, recognizing that both they and the one they are speaking with are shaped by individual, cultural, societal, and community factors (pp. 66–71). Interacting with Lamin Sanneh’s translatability and Andy Crouch’s methods to relate to culture, Teasdale applauds creativity in contextualization. Finally, the product of these three evangelistic steps leads to creative practice that is both authentic and timely—to believers and to those with whom they share.

Teasdale’s formula reminds readers that evangelism should come from an overflow of one’s relationship with God. Instead of canned responses and guilt-laden evangelistic endeavors, Teasdale beckons readers to return to the starting point—who God is—and move forward from there. To prepare for evangelism, Christians should seek to understand the God they serve and theologically reflect on him and his goodness. Evangelism, Teasdale attests, is not for the nonbeliever only, but also for the spiritual growth of both the individual believer and the local church.

While Teasdale’s book is an important contribution to the field, it should be read with caution. Teasdale’s main weakness is his reluctance to give precise definitions and draw clear lines. He defines evangelism as “a bias toward the good news” (p. 5). His definition is lacking not only because he omits the vital word-emphasized aspects of evangelism but,

more importantly, because he fails to define the very essence of the gospel. In doing so, he leaves definitions of soteriology and redemption ambiguous. Furthermore, he stifles the very theological reflection that is crucial to authentic evangelism. As church history attests, deep theological reflection often leads to hard boundaries and precise definitions.

Finally, Teasdale's book, while encouraging Christians to share the gospel, can also give them the excuse not to. By broadening his definition of evangelism, he lauds multiple models such as mercy acts, power demonstrations, and countercultural living. While these can be part of evangelistic encounters, they are in no way an entire gospel and, in fact, can be done by nonbelievers. Later, Teasdale states, "The Christian who embodies the good news of God creates a situation in which people can live into that goodness. As they do this, God can draw them to Jesus Christ through other evangelists in the Christian community" (p. 116). In other words, Christians can participate in safer methods of evangelism while waiting for other evangelists to finish the work. This idea assumes other evangelists will follow, but what if they never come?

In sum, Teasdale's book should be read cautiously by anyone interested in starting or growing in evangelism. His formula for navigating authentic evangelism is basic and memorable and has the ability, if followed, to revolutionize one's faith and evangelistic zeal, caveats notwithstanding. Within each step of the formula, Teasdale offers a wealth of knowledge and tries to help his readers understand themselves, their preconceived notions, their own theology, and the context around them in order to build an authentic evangelism.

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John Flett. *Apostolicity: The Ecumenical Question in World Christian Perspective*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016. 392 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0830850952. \$40.00.

Apostolicity by John Flett is one of five volumes that make up IVP Academic's new series, *Missiological Engagements*. The series is being produced to present interdisciplinary conversations concerning historical, theological, and practical topics related to Christian missions at the beginning of the twenty-first century. According to the book jacket, "Missiological Engagements reflects cutting-edge trends, research and innovations in the field that will be relevant to theorists and practitioners in churches, academic domains, mission organizations and NGOs, among other arenas."

In this book, John Flett addresses pressing questions regarding the unity of the church. Concerning the four-fold designation of the church

as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, Flett concentrates his research on the church's apostolicity. Throughout the text, he seeks to establish firm ground between two opposing interpretations of the apostolic nature of the church, namely its need to cultivate orthodoxy, and its missionary advance into different cultures. Flett's concern is that, historically, the concept of apostolicity has developed with reference to the western church. Worship styles, church government, and even the succession of the Episcopate has been discussed and defined without regard for the reality of world Christianity.

Flett opens the book by showing the need for a more holistic understanding of apostolicity, one that embraces the missionary advancement of the church and does not neglect the pluriformity of the world Christian movement. He follows this with a chapter that explores the significance of the schism between the Catholic and Protestant branches of the church. In this second chapter he demonstrates that the binary division created by the Reformation took place as an attempt to set the identity of "the Church." The related debates rested on questions of doctrine, structure, and successions. Though there have been attempts at unity, these issues remain important features in the discussion about apostolicity and the apostolic nature of the church. Confusion continues because the traditional use of the concept rests on continuity rather than advancement.

The remainder of the book is an exploration through various ecumenical councils and the relevant debates and discussions as related to the unity of the church worldwide. At each point, Flett shows how western churches have failed to appreciate the church in the majority world and, therefore, have been unable to embrace a genuine vision for church unity. At some points, the discussion is quite uncomfortable for those of us who are part of the historically powerful Christian church. However, this discomfort is necessary if movement is to happen. Flett includes quotes and discussion from majority world church leaders as a way of expressing the struggle and highlighting the need for a different definition.

Flett concludes by observing that the most acceptable, and useful, understanding of apostolicity is found in the history of world Christianity rather than in the church's established structures and symbols. He observes that in the New Testament the apostle is "one whose ground and calling is Jesus Christ" (p. 291). The mission of the church and the church's missionary movement is the history of the work of the resurrected Christ as empowered by the Holy Spirit. The church's apostolicity is realized as the community of Christ advances.

This interpretation is different from the traditional understanding of the term. This expansion is Flett's contribution to the discipline of missi-

ology. He has shown that the church's identity, rather than being threatened, is validated by the plurality of form demonstrated through world Christianity. Christ is one, and the church as his body must express itself diversely. This is true because the church has been given a mission to the nations.

In many respects, Flett's book is a theological exploration of the topic Roland Allen began over a century ago. Allen's concern was that the controlling nature of western traditions hindered the advancement of the church in mission areas. Flett has similar worries, but his desire is that rather than removing barriers to advancement, the western church should embrace world Christianity as the real and legitimate expression of the faith. Any other position, he claims, falls woefully short of the missionary vision presented in the NT. As such, it is a welcome contribution.

This book is the product of Flett's *Habilitationsschrift* (Post-Doctoral thesis) at the Kirchliche Hochschule in Wuppertal/Bethel in Germany. As such, the material requires significant previous knowledge of the subjects discussed. This limits the contribution of this work to those familiar with the field. However, the biggest problem with the book is not its complexity but its lack of clarity and concision. The argument and readability (and in the end, the helpfulness) of this book would benefit if greater attention had been paid to readability of the text.

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William A. Dyrness. *Insider Jesus: Theological Reflections on New Christian Movements*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016. ix + 164 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0830851553. \$20.00.

William A. Dyrness's *Insider Jesus* considers a recent phenomenon in global Christianity—so-called emergent and insider movements. As Dyrness portrays them (albeit without any personal experience of insider groups), they feature people who “have set off with Christ on a journey of discovery” (p. vii) but “necessarily reflect their widely different, indigenous religious traditions” and even “resist the forms of Christianity they have inherited” (p. viii). He thus calls for in-depth theological reflection on such movements, centered on the question, “What might God be doing and intending in this new global religious world?” (p. viii).

In principle, this is an entirely valid theological question. However, one would expect Dyrness, a self-proclaimed evangelical Protestant (p. 113), to do at least two things as he answers it—to base his theological reflections solidly on the overwhelming thrust of Scripture, and to consider the possibility that insider movements might be something other

than the work of God. Unfortunately, he does neither. He does *use* Scripture—selectively—as he writes off any attempt to find a text's original meaning as “an artifact of the last two hundred years of Western history” (p. 24). He also acknowledges—but effectively dismisses—approaches that would balk at giving insider movements unqualified support or see them as merely temporary (pp. 138–39). However, he shows his true colors when his question on what God *might* be doing, becomes a call for “concerted prayer and support for the new things God *is* doing around the world” (p. ix, emphasis added).

In fact, his claim about the work of God (in insider movements) leads him to *insist* (his term, p. 143) that, “At his deepest being and self, God hears the call of the Minaret, Temple chants, Buddhist prayers as human aspirations for relationship with the divine. The Christian message is that Jesus is the human face of God welcoming all true religious aspirations” (cited approvingly from Kang-San Tan's “Beyond Demonising Religions: A Biblical Framework for Interfaith Relations in Asia” in *Church and Society in Asia Today* 15 [December 2012]: 192). In other words, a culture's religions have life-giving properties (even if they are not salvific [p. 114]—whatever that means when a text's original meaning is excluded), not least because “the perennial human search for God animates culture” (p. 39). So, while Dyrness acknowledges the need for the Spirit's renewal, he argues that it happens in tandem with cultural renewal. Consequently, “the renewal that God intends will be a regeneration of . . . [the] logic and structure” of a culture, *as expressed in its religions*” (p. 43).

This understanding, then, drives his “theological reflections.” It allows him to turn from the traditional “creation—fall—redemption” model. In its place, he inserts “creation—disobedience—re-creation, with a new opportunity for all the nations to obey God's summons” (p. 34). What this means is Adam and Eve's sin is removed from its central role (though it is acknowledged—as a disruption), repentance as such is nowhere to be seen, and Christ's work turns out to have “brought the whole created order to a new place where the goods of culture (and religion) are given fresh valuation” (p. 34).

Valuing a culture's religions, of course, has implications for missions. It thus becomes a rather short step to his conclusion that, “Witness for us surely must be centrally one of solidarity, encouragement, and prayer” (p. 149). Conspicuous by its absence here (or anywhere in the book) is the Apostle Paul's bold witness to King Agrippa, that the Gentiles should “turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18) and that Jews and Gentiles “should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance” (Acts 26:20, ESV). Nu-

ances aside then, Christian witness for Dyrness is not challenge, but affirmation.

As a missiologist, I am acutely aware of the complexities of different cultures (detailed by Dyrness) where we seek to make disciples. One cannot barge into another culture with poorly-considered western (as opposed to biblical) presuppositions and habits and act as if we know it all and have nothing to learn. And to be fair, this is where Dyrness has useful insights, such as “the way [unbiblical] racist attitudes have dogged the development of Christian worship in America” (p. 125), or, in contrast, how leaders of an independent Christian movement in Kenya, impelled by a Scripture translation in their own language, rejected “not only the practices of witchcraft and sorcery but also Western ways of dressing and eating” (p. 76). In fact he captures a key truth in this regard when he notes that faithfulness “to Christ will surely sooner or later put us out of step with our own culture” (p. 148).

However, in all honesty, the radical nature of the gospel—and Scripture—is not the thrust of the book. And it does not help to assert that nothing he says “should be understood to undermine the authority of Scripture” (p. 122) when significant omissions and disturbing theological reflections effectively negate what it says. Sadly then, whoever Dyrness’s insider Jesus is, he bears little resemblance to the Jesus of Scripture.

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Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker. *Ministering In Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016. 291 pp. Paperback. 978-0830851461. \$24.00.

In this work, Jayson Georges and Mark Baker provide anthropological concepts of honor-shame cultures coupled with illustrative stories, but the stories make it distinctive. The book begins with captivating accounts reflecting honor-shame issues and a survey of contents. In broad terms, the contents are divided into three sections: Cultural Anthropology, Biblical Theology, and Practical Ministry. Each chapter within these sections concludes with discussion questions.

In the Cultural Anthropology section, Georges and Baker acknowledge that all cultures have concepts of both guilt and shame, but the authors use “honor-shame culture” to refer “to a context where the honor-shame dynamic is dominant” (p. 35). To clarify what this means, “honor is a person’s worth in society” (p. 40), whereas “shame means other people think lowly of you and do not want to be with you” (p. 42). Common honor-shame expressions are identified as patronage, indirect

communication, event focus, purity, social roles, and hospitality, but the uniqueness of the discussion is that each of these is offered with positive interpretations, in contrast with the negative interpretations of guilt-based cultures. The section concludes with an analysis of the five phases that a person will probably go through when encountering honor-shame cultures: unknown, positive, negative, critical, and balanced. The authors contend, “The ideal posture is one of balance, noting the positive *and* the negative aspects of honor-shame cultures” (p. 63).

The Biblical Theology section starts with the Old Testament. The authors warn the reader not to simply think of honor-shame as an “exegetical tool” but rather to see that “honor and shame are foundational realities in God’s mission and salvation that flow through the entire Bible” (p. 67). The authors boldly state, “Ultimately the story of the Bible is about God’s honor and God’s face, not just ours” (p. 67). The authors maintain that biblical theology must address honor-shame because the biblical cultures revolved around these understandings—even if the actual words were not used, the concepts were present. The authors provide honor-shame understandings of key biblical doctrines that in Western cultures are normally seen only from a guilt-based perspective. Also, in rapid fire succession, they highlight Old Testament stories and familiar verses to reflect the honor-shame understanding that was present. Adam and Eve were guilty before God but they also were ashamed before God. The story of Ruth is highlighted to reflect the issues of honor-shame. When Nathan confronted David, guilt over sin was present, but also God was dishonored, while David was shamed before God and Nathan. The authors conclude that “any Christian theology of sin devoid of the theme of shame is clearly sub-biblical” (p. 73).

Georges and Baker deal with Jesus in the final chapter of the Biblical Theology section. For instance, Jesus’ healing of lepers removed the shame associated with the dreaded disease. They expand the story of the Prodigal Son by focusing on the Prodigal Family, with explanations dealing with honor-shame themes that were implicit even if not explicitly stated in the Bible. The chapter concludes with an examination of the atonement from the perspective of honor-shame cultures. The authors anticipate objections and state that “to articulate the atonement in honor-shame terms does not imply that other articulations are wrong” (p. 107). However, the concept of “sin is an illegitimate claim to honor that dishonors God and shames ourselves” (p. 110).

The final section deals with Practical Ministry and is the longest portion of the book. The six chapters focus on spirituality, relationships, evangelism, conversion, ethics, and community. Each chapter frames the subject by way of explaining the nuances from an honor-shame cultural

perspective through various stories and applications. For example, when dealing with spirituality, the authors begin by discussing western shame in general and then in the church. The futility of learning a new language produces shame. A spiritual leader experiences shame by feeling inadequate. “Shame is often Satan’s scheme to deactivate God’s people from mission by getting them to feel unqualified and unworthy of the calling” (p. 124). There is nevertheless a healthy sense of shame that should produce humility and confession of sin. In contrast, shame could destroy spirituality, but “the promises and love of God obliterate misplaced shame” (p. 126). Finally, after working through the other five practical ministry expressions, the authors deal with community and come to a rather abrupt conclusion, praying that “this book provides you with helpful trail makers to guide you on the path of mission in honor-shame contexts” (p. 245).

In conclusion, Georges and Baker provide three excellent appendices, namely Key Scriptures on Honor-Shame; Biblical Stories Addressing Honor-Shame; and Recommended Resources. An extensive name and subject index is provided, as well as a Scripture index.

I do not think the reader will agree with all of the biblical interpretations and applications, but I do believe the reader will grow in an understanding of biblical culture as well as contemporary cultures which have honor-shame predominantly in their focus. And that understanding should produce more sensitive cross-cultural workers and strategies.

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Thomas Pink. *Self-Determination: The Ethics of Action*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xi + 298 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0199272754. \$70.00.

Self-Determination and *Normativity* (forthcoming) comprise Pink’s two-volume work on the significance of action for ethics. Focusing on the psychology of human action and how those actions relate to responsibility, *Self-Determination* argues that responsibility does not depend on some ability to do otherwise but on our power to control, or to self-determine, our actions.

Chapters 1–4 explain how our actions are practical exercises of our general rationality. Some of these are self-determined, distinct from other rational states that are passive. The first four chapters also distinguish between the goal-directed elements of motivation and voluntariness in actions and argue that decisions and intentions are nonvoluntary actions. In chapter 5, Pink critiques Hobbes’ voluntariness model of action, which

says that one does an action based on passive motivations determining that action. Chapters 6–8 are devoted to special problems associated with the concept of freedom. Here, Pink presents his important noncausal (i.e., not *efficiently* causal) view of freedom. The heart of the book is found in chapters 9–13, presenting Pink’s practical reason-based model of action as an alternative to Hobbes’ voluntariness model and scholastic volitionism. Of particular importance is his distinction between intentions, as nonvoluntary practical exercises of our reason, and voluntary actions, as practical exercises of reason made on the basis and as the object of our intentions. Pink then critiques event-causal and agent-causal theories of free will in chapter 14, arguing that both succumb to the randomness problem. Finally, in chapter 15 Pink argues that his practical reason-based model of action best explains phenomenologically our intuitions about self-determination, freedom, and responsibility.

The key strength of Pink’s book is his analysis of Hobbes’ voluntariness model of action, which treats all motivations as passive and voluntary actions as caused by those motivations. Because of this, the Hobbesian tradition has tended to believe that we do not have freedom (which Pink defines as the power to determine alternatives) and that freedom is irrelevant to responsibility. Responsibility is reduced to determining our own voluntary actions, which is fully compatible with our actions being caused by our passive motivations. (Readers interested in the history of theology might find Pink’s brief treatment of Calvin as a progenitor of Hobbes’ views on action intriguing.) Pink points out that the voluntariness model has been widely held since Hobbes’ day. It is one embodiment of a larger ambition to give a naturalistically reductive account of freedom—by explaining freedom as a power found more widely in nature and not peculiar to human nature or agency.

It is difficult to say if Pink also means to critique the voluntariness model. It seems he wants readers to conclude from his analysis that freedom does in fact matter for responsibility. In many places, he treats freedom and self-determination as one and the same. Without freedom, we cannot self-determine our actions, thus entailing that we cannot be responsible for our actions. But Pink thinks that freedom and self-determination are technically distinct, which prevents us from concluding that the voluntariness model is problematic because it cannot explain how we are responsible.

Pink’s argument utilizes a phenomenological approach to defend his practical reason-based model. Though some might take issue with this, the most significant drawback of the book does not concern his approach but his model of action. Pink’s model is a version of noncausal libertarianism (despite the fact that Pink claims his view commits him to neither

compatibilism nor libertarianism). Noncausal libertarian theories generally are criticized for being unable to explain how we control our decisions, and Pink's model is unfortunately no exception. Pink is correct to distinguish between intentions and desires as different kinds of motivation; although both are nonvoluntary, desires are passively acquired whereas intentions are not. But his explanation of how nonvoluntary intentions and voluntary actions are related to one another is deeply problematic. Pink claims that these are two aspects of one intentional action (as opposed to two ontologically distinct actions): intentions are practical exercises of reason, and voluntary actions are practical exercises of reason made as the object of intention. I am not entirely sure what this means, but it seems that he wishes to say that an intention and its voluntary action comprise a single intentional action that is in some way both nonvoluntary and voluntary.

Given that Pink never clearly explains how intentions and voluntary actions are different except that the former is nonvoluntary and the latter is voluntary, we are left with a single intentional action that is both nonvoluntary and voluntary. This is tantamount to saying that intentional actions are those over which I lack control and over which I have control. Even if this is somehow not contradictory, it does not explain *how* it is that I control my actions. At another point in his argument, Pink differentiates between desires and intentions. Desires are felt as something coming from outside my will, whereas intentions are felt as coming from my will. That may be true, but this passive way of explaining my intentions does not explain *how* it is that I control my actions. Saying that my will does something to me does not explain how I bring about something. More could be said on this point, but the above suffices to show that Pink's model of action suffers from the same problem generally plaguing noncausal libertarian theories: they ultimately fail to explain how we control our actions.

Self-Determination is a book for those who are already familiar with most of the philosophical discussions in free will and action theory. Pink's analysis of Hobbes is enlightening, helping to explain the current philosophical climate on these subjects. Other libertarians will also find Pink's criticisms helpful in assessing their theories. Regrettably, however, the book does little to improve the appeal of noncausal libertarianism.

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Bob Cutillo. *Pursuing Health in an Anxious Age*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016. 196 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1433551109. \$17.99.

In April of 1969, Christian ethicist Paul Ramsey delivered a masterful analysis of modern medicine in Yale Divinity's Lyman-Beecher lectures that later scholars would mark as the beginning of bioethics. Identifying a dehumanizing bent to cutting-edge treatments and research, Ramsey beckoned physicians to affirm "the patient as person," and in the five decades since, the call has loomed large. Indeed, much of the history of bioethics may be read as a discourse on the problem of medical depersonalization, and this includes Christian physician Bob Cutillo's recent book, *Pursuing Health in an Anxious Age*.

Setting up his analysis, Cutillo identifies two issues of particular concern: "Why do we fragment a patient into pieces to give good medical care? And why do we segregate the rich and insured from the poor and uninsured to deliver good health care?" (p. 15). These concerns—patients fearful of a medicine that "forget[s] them as persons" and an "unjust health care system" that neglects the poor—both reflect, in Cutillo's judgment, a spiritually adrift culture. He thus proposes a "theological investigation" working from the ground of "orthodox Christian belief" (p. 16).

On substance, *Pursuing Health* has much to offer, beginning with its guiding premise that health is a gift from God to be nurtured and not mastered (p. 27). According to Cutillo's analysis in the book's first two chapters, much of what goes on in medicine today assumes the latter—"health control," he calls it, in service to a misguided presumption that "we can flourish on our own terms" (p. 34). Surveying recent treatments on medical ethics, one will find the charge sticks as appeals to human autonomy are commonplace and generally treated as decisive. Cutillo, however, will have none of it and instead points his reader to the facts of Creation with a call in Chapter 3 for medicine to embrace human contingency and dependence upon God.

In the book's second section, Cutillo echoes Ramsey as he laments a general failure of today's physician to treat "the patient as person." Medical "disembodiment," he contends, manifests in two principal ways. First, there is a "reductive clinical gaze" (Chapter 4) that reduces the patient to a particular body system, part, or function, and to the list we could add disease. Thus, one might hear in medical hallways reference to "the diabetic," "the Down's," or, perhaps most egregious, "the vegetable." Second, there is the "statistical gaze" (Chapter 5) that views patients as data points and then stigmatizes the "outliers." For Cutillo, statistics is not to be repudiated *en toto*, but instead, with every other tool physicians might employ, it is to be channeled within a "gospel gaze" (Chapter 6) that views

embodied life with its inherent limitations as “doubly good.” That approach, he contends, flows from the Incarnation wherein God “chose to become like us and accept life in a human body” (p. 98).

While challenging the polar errors of euthanasia and medical vitalism (we extend life because we can), Ramsey keenly observed in his seminal lectures that either approach may follow when God is presumed irrelevant to ethics. Cutillo delivers a similar conclusion in his book’s third section as he attributes the divergent programs of euthanasia and the grasp for immortality through biotechnology to disbelief in a God who is active in this world. “We live in the shadow [fear] of death,” he writes, “because no one is acting for our good in the impersonal universe that we inhabit” (p. 120). In response, Cutillo points to the Resurrection (Chapter 8) and its message that “the path to life is through death” (p. 127). Living in the sure hope of life after death, there is no pressure, Cutillo rightly argues, to extract immortality or eternal happiness from this life.

In the book’s final section, Cutillo proposes we “reimagin[e] the good of health,” and as a first order of business, he raises the issue of justice in healthcare delivery. The problem, he asserts, is not a genuine scarcity of medical resources as many presume, but rather, it is an unjust distribution spurred by “self-absorption” that obscures our “shared vulnerability” (p. 140). The issue, most would agree, is complex, and with only one chapter to address it, Cutillo predictably delivers a thin analysis. The same is true of the next chapter that devotes thirteen pages to a discussion of faith and medicine in cooperation.

Across the pages of *Pursuing Health* though, Cutillo’s promise to deliver a work of applied theology reflecting an orthodox faith bears true. The book is well-written, well-organized, well-edited, and largely free of jargon, thus presenting an easy read for a wide audience. Raising issues highly relevant to the current debate over healthcare and doing so with genuine empathy for patients, a commitment to biblical authority, and a preference for clarity over erudition, Cutillo offers a truly refreshing and useful contribution to the bioethical literature.

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