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"vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo"—Col. 3:3

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Narrative Art and Biblical Theology in the Book of Ruth

James T. Dennison, Jr.

Arguably the loveliest book in the Bible, Ruth has attracted romantics, scholars, poets, artists, literary critics, even Hollywood film directors. All agree—this little book is a gem. The Germans call it a *Novelle*—a novelette—a little novel or short story. While it is a mini-drama, Ruth has all the marks of a large canvass panorama or a magnificent ornamental tapestry. The larger picture is the place of the book of Ruth in biblical theology—in the history of redemption—in the intersection of divine revelation and human story. That intersection is the interface between the vertical and the horizontal—the eschatological and the temporal. And in that interface, God enters into the life of his people—in a Bridegroom and a Bride and a Son.

Let us examine the narrative and literary artistry of this Hebrew masterpiece, while keeping our eye upon the wider range of redemptive-historical revelation—while keeping our eye on the son of Ruth, son of David, son of God.

Framed Chapter 1 and Chapter 4

The book of Ruth begins with a mini-inclusio in chapter 1, verses 1-7. This narrative unit is framed by the word "land" (v. 1—"famine in the land" [*'eretz*]; v. 7—"return to the land" [*'eretz*]). Alongside the inclusio or framing device of "the land" is the proper noun "Judah" [*jehûdah*]—v. 1 and v. 7. Having noted

the structural artistry of the opening section of the book of Ruth, we flip forward to the end of this tiny gem.

The book of Ruth ends in chapter 4 with a genealogy—a stylized list of begatitudes (4:18-22). The literary form of this genealogy is repetitive: each name in the genealogy occurs twice, save the last name, David. And you will notice that each name occurs twice over through an interconnected formula: X begat Y and Y begat Z. There are nine duplicate names: Perez, Perez (v. 18); Hezron, Hezron (vv. 18 and 19); and so on. There are nine "begats" [*hôlîdh*]; there are nine markers in the Hebrew of the direct object (the particle *'eth*). The end of the book of Ruth displays an artistic literary structure devoted to genealogy—a carefully constructed genealogy which concludes in a singular name—*Dawidh*/David.

Genealogical Bracket

Before we return to chapter 1, let us note some additional details about the genealogy. Perez, whose name begins the sequence in v. 18, also appears in v. 12 of chapter 4. The name Perez forms a bracket around v. 12 and v. 18. Now, notice the three names which conclude the genealogy in v. 22—Obed, Jesse, David. Those names also conclude v. 17. Thus we have another bracket! Verses 17 and 22 are framed by Obed, Jesse, David. The book of Ruth ends with two Hebrew narrative framing devices: Perez encloses verses 12-18; Obed, Jesse, David enclose verses 17-22. Two framed literary units at the conclusion of this lovely book. One framed literary unit at the opening of this lovely book.

One more observation on the Davidic genealogy in 4:18-22. It is proleptic—that is, the book of Ruth ends open to the future—the future of the monarchic, Davidide (the Davidic Monarchy). Now did you notice how the book of Ruth opened in chapter 1, v. 1—it opens to the past—it is analeptic—that is, reflecting back on the tumultuous theocratic days of the Judges. Future monarchy—past theocracy. But I do not want to direct your attention primarily to this linear, book-end paradigm; that is, the past-future (chapter 1 *and* chapter 4) book-ends to the present (chapter 1 *through* chapter 4). In other words, before Ruth 1 and after Ruth 4 bracketing Ruth 1 to 4. Not Ruth the transition between two dramatic redemptive-historical eras. Not Ruth the keystone be-

tween the theocracy and monarchy. Rather I want you also to notice the similarities between the initial narrative unit of Ruth 1:1-7 and the concluding narrative unit of Ruth 4:13-17. Note: Naomi appears in Scene One, chapter 1—wife, mother, displaced person, widow, mother-in-law, childless, empty. Naomi appears again in the final scene, chapter 4:13-17—widow, grandmother, mother-in-law, grandson on her lap, restored to the Promised Land, full. It is the child which is central to both these narrative panels: 1:5—Naomi's two defunct children; 4:16—the child, the grandchild, of Naomi's old age. Only here in the book of Ruth do these Hebrew terms for child [*yeledh*] appear. But the verb "to beget a child" ("was born" in some English versions) explodes nine times on the page in 4:18-22. And the mother of the longed-for child is the daughter-in-law (1:6 and 4:15). The sons of whom Naomi is bereft are replaced with the son of Ruth and Boaz. Only in these two panels (1:1-7 and 4:13-17) do the terms "son" and "sons" [*ben/benê*] appear (1:11 and 12 excepted [*banîm*]). Also observe that the terms "wife" and "wives" [*'îša/našîm*] only occur in these two panels: 1:1 and 4; 4:13 and 14. In chapter one, the sons of Naomi take wives (v. 4); in chapter 4, Boaz takes Ruth as his wife (v. 13).

Finally, we have the word—the powerful word—return [*šûb*] which dominates this book. It is a key word (or *leitworter* as the Germans call it) for the entire book of Ruth. And in our opening and closing narrative panels, the dominant key word is found in 1:6 and 7 and 4:15. In 4:15, the Hebrew text reads literally "turning back" Naomi's life; or returning (yea, restoring) Naomi's *full* life to her.

Foreshadowed Inception-Conclusion

I am suggesting that the literary genius of the Hebrew writer uses a narrative panel to open the book which foreshadows the narrative panel which closes the book. And the relation between the beginning and end of the drama in this book is centered upon what the Lord does: what the Lord does in chapter 1 (he visits his people drawing Naomi back [return!]—back to the Promised Land); what the Lord does in chapter 4 (he provides a kinsman-redeemer—the Hebrew term is *go'êl*, in v. 14); the Lord provides a *goel* even as he enables Ruth to conceive the long-desired heir (v. 13). Notice also that the

journey or sojourn motif transitions in chapter 1 are theocentric (God-centered); the rest or *no*-sojourner motif transitions in chapter 4 are theocentric. It is God the Lord who brings Ruth to Bethlehem, even as it is God the Lord who makes Ruth the wife of Boaz—the great-grandmother of David—the ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:5).

Chapter One

Let's look further at chapter 1. The initial narrative sequence of chapter 1 ends where it begins. The family in Bethlehem (v. 1) sojourns to Moab, but only one of the family returns to Bethlehem (v. 22). Naomi's story ends where it begins—an inclusio of location framing Ruth chapter 1. Between the bracket inclusio (v. 1 to v. 22) are transitions—shifts of location, shifts of relation, shifts of religion. In the redemptive-historical shift, in the transition from theocracy to monarchy—Ruth! Ruth herself a redemptive-historical shift. A pagan widow shifts from unbelief to faith in the Lord. A Gentile woman shifts from cut-off-from-Israel to grafted in to Israel. In the redemptive-historical shift—nestled between the end of the chaotic theocracy and the inauguration of the emergent monarchy—a shift from Moabitess to mother in Israel. If we begin our narrative in Bethlehem—if we end our narrative in Bethlehem—it is because Bethlehem of Judea is the site of the ultimate redemptive-historical shift—one narrative—one story—one in *the One* from Bethlehem Ephrathah (4:11).

The way in which chapter 1 begins and ends—Bethlehem (v. 1), Bethlehem (v. 22)—is a mirror projection of how the entire book of Ruth begins and ends (1:1 with 4:17; with 2:4 and 4:11). We begin and end the book of Ruth *at Bethlehem*—our drama takes place *in Bethlehem*. In Bethlehem, we are present with a man, a woman, a child—at the transition of the history of redemption. "O Bethlehem Ephrathah . . . " (Mic. 5:2)!

Chapter Two

If the pattern of inception is as the pattern of conclusion, then we begin again with chapter 1 verse 22. The sojourn motif begins and ends symmetri-

cally in chapter 1—*and* the end is a beginning again. A new beginning in Bethlehem in the home of Ruth's mother-in-law (2:1). And as she begins to glean in Bethlehem, moving to the fields from her mother-in-law's home (2:3), so she returns from the fields in Bethlehem to her mother-in-law's home (2:23). But Naomi and Ruth are joined at the beginning and end of chapter 2 by Boaz—Boaz (2:1); Boaz (2:22). The new beginning in Bethlehem includes a new character at Bethlehem. Boaz of Bethlehem becomes the singular male focus from the beginning of Ruth chapter 2. And the *end* of Ruth in chapter 4? Boaz (4:21). But the concluding male figure—the last male figure—the final name—the *last* name of the book of Ruth is the singularly mentioned David (4:22). You see it, don't you? the author will not let your eye release from David!!

Chapter Three

The second chapter, which is framed with Ruth and Naomi and Boaz, shifts from the mother-in-law's house in Bethlehem (vv. 1-2) to the fields of Boaz outside Bethlehem (v. 3)—then back to the mother-in-law's house in Bethlehem (v. 23). And the place where we conclude chapter 2 is the place where we begin chapter 3—the mother-in-law's house (3:1). This third episode in our narrative drama will end in 3:18—in the home of the mother-in-law (v. 16).

You will observe that the narrative frame brackets Boaz at the beginning and end of chapter 2; then draws the camera down to Boaz and Ruth in the threshing fields at the center of chapter 2. The narrative frame brackets the home of the mother-in-law at the beginning and end of chapter 3; then draws the camera down to Boaz and Ruth at the threshing floor at the center of chapter 3. The male hero and the female heroine become the center of the drama in the central chapters of the narrative.

But you will also observe another framing device at the antipodes of chapter 3. Verse 1—she said "My daughter"; verse 18—she said "My daughter". Naomi's remarks to Ruth define the beginning and end of chapter 3—a precise parallel in the Hebrew text; "and she said, my daughter" (v. 1); "and she said, my daughter" (v. 18).

Chapter Four

And now, chapter 4 where Boaz forms the literary frame of the final drama in our little gem. Boaz in v. 1; Boaz in v. 21—and the camera folds down upon Boaz in v. 5 ("And Boaz said"); v. 9 ("And Boaz said"); v. 13 ("And Boaz said"). Boaz is at the center of the drama in this final chapter; he frames the narrative of Ruth even as he shadows her under his wings (2:12)—even as he takes her to be his wife, the mother of his son, the heir of the blessings of Judah. Gentile and Jew and the son begotten in time of both—proleptic of *the* Son begotten before time for both Jew and Gentile.

Literary Narrative Summary

I have made the case that each of the four chapters of this marvelous book is surrounded by a literary framework indicating that each chapter is a discreet unit of a narrative tapestry. The four individual tableaus are seamlessly woven together to form a perfect romance—a lovely narrative masterfully composed by a master storyteller. And each individual tableau? It is a story in itself. Like Otorino Resphigi's musical 'church windows', each chapter of the book of Ruth is like a framed church window. Chapter 1—Ruth and Naomi in loyal embrace framed by the little town of Bethlehem. Chapter 2—Ruth and Boaz in the harvest fields framed by Naomi's house in the little town of Bethlehem. Chapter 3—Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor framed by the mother-in-law's house in the little town of Bethlehem. Chapter 4—the *goel*-redemption of Ruth framed by Boaz at the gate, in the house of the heir of Judah in the little town of Bethlehem.

Inside Chapter 1

Let's now venture inside each of the framed four chapters for rich, additional literary and narrative artistry. One of the fundamental narrative elements in any story is characterization. The author presents the characters in his drama through their words, their actions, their relational positions. Each of the

characters in the book of Ruth is a full-bodied, dynamic character. To use E. M. Forster's classic terminology, they are 'round' as opposed to 'flat' characters. Ruth, Boaz, Naomi—each is a well-developed personality in our narrative. Let me illustrate this by our author's characterization of Ruth and Orpah in chapter 1. In 1:8, both daughters-in-law join Naomi at the inception of her return to the Promised Land. When Naomi urges them to return from her return—to turn back from her turning back—Orpah complies and goes back; Ruth refuses and goes on. The author has featured this particular scene as a cameo of the character of Ruth and Orpah. We are given a window into the soul of each of the daughters-in-law as we watch their response to the departing Naomi at the edge of the plains of Moab.

Ruth clings to her mother-in-law (v. 14). Her embrace of her departing mother is a window into her soul. And her speech in verses 16-17 is an explanation of what is in her soul. She has been transformed—we would say converted/regenerated—she has been transformed by Yahweh/Jehovah, the God of the covenant (v. 17). And as she clings to the neck of Naomi, so she clings to the grace of the Lord God who has first clung to her. Our author has combined the "return" motif with characterization—Ruth will not return; Orpah will. And our author has done this in order to characterize Ruth as a believer—one who confesses the Lord God of the covenant—one who would rather die than be separated from the people of God, the land of God, the possession of God. And Orpah? Orpah is characterized as one whose soul goes back (v. 15)—back to Moab, back to her pagan Moabite culture, back to her Moabite idols, back to Moab where her husband and her father-in-law lie dead and buried. Orpah does not cling to Naomi; Orpah does not cling to the God of the covenant; Orpah clings to her pagan gods; Orpah detaches herself from Naomi. And so Orpah disappears; Orpah disappears from the narrative—her character is removed from the story, detached from the history of redemption—her soul content with idolatry, with paganism, with return to death. And as our author characterizes Ruth through the scene in which she hangs upon the neck of Naomi, Orpah is absent. Orpah has gone back. Orpah recedes back into the arena of death even as Ruth proceeds into the arena of life with her mother-in-law.

But our author has reinforced this broad portrait of characterization—he has reinforced the character contrast between Ruth and Orpah by a structural

pattern. I direct your attention to verses 9 and 14. "Then she [Naomi] kissed them [Ruth and Orpah] and they lifted up their voices and wept" (v. 9). Now v. 14: "And they [Orpah and Ruth] lifted up their voices and wept and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law." The duplication of the Hebrew phrases "and they lifted up their voices and wept"—the exact duplication of phrase is a framing device. The duplication of the Hebrew phrase places the spotlight on the two daughters-in-law and frames their personalities—their souls—their heart's delight. Notice who bestows the kiss in v. 9—it is Naomi. She detaches herself from Ruth and Orpah—she sends them back to Moab with a kiss while she breaks away to Israel. And they lifted up their voices and wept. And as Naomi pushes them away with her lengthy speech in verses 11-13, again they lifted up their voices and wept (v. 14). But *now*—who bestows the kiss in v. 14? Orpah! Who detaches herself from her mother-in-law and from Ruth? Orpah! Naomi breaks the relationship with a kiss—v. 9 return! Orpah breaks the relationship with a kiss—v. 14 and she returns. But Ruth? *she* does not return. Ruth? she bestows no farewell kiss. Ruth? she does not detach herself—refuses to detach herself. Ruth clings, Ruth hugs, Ruth holds fast, Ruth embraces Naomi. Ruth embraces Naomi's people, Ruth embraces Naomi's land, Ruth embraces Naomi's Lord. Ruth embraces Boaz, Ruth embraces David, Ruth embraces the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is brilliant characterization indeed—marvelously, artistically framed—featured by the structure of the inspired Hebrew text. Orpah and Ruth characterized by contrast.

Ruth's story goes on to the Promised Land and to Ruth's greater son, Jesus Christ, while Orpah disappears from the story—disappears into the land of death. Orpah will be reprised in her counterpart in chapter 4. The unnamed goel—the unnamed kinsman redeemer who refuses to redeem Ruth. He too will disappear from the story—so selfish his act of refusing to perform the levirate that he has no name—no name in the history of redemption. Ruth and Orpah characterized by contrast—chapter 1; Boaz and No Name characterized by contrast—chapter 4.

Notice too that Orpah never speaks. Ruth's confession of faith (1:16-17) is a profession of the new-born character of her soul. She loves the Lord God because he has first loved her; and her testimony to his marvelous grace in her

life flows from her mouth—her speech. Orpah's speechlessness by contrast tells us a great deal about her soul: no confession, no testimony, no love of the Lord God, nothing but silence!

Inside Chapter 2

I want to pursue this matter of characterization through speech—through dialogue—by examining chapter 2. When characters speak, we learn a great deal about their personalities. Thus narrative dialogue is a clue to how the author presents the character—even when the characters do not say a word. Orpah says nothing and her character is revealed by her not speaking. Mr. No Name in chapter 4 says "I will redeem it" when offered Naomi's land (4:4); *but* he hastens to say "I will not redeem it" when he finds that he must take Ruth in the bargain (4:6).

The dialogue between Boaz and Ruth is the center of chapter 2—a chapter you recall framed by the beginning and end of barley harvest (1:22 with 2:23). In fact, this central dialogue between Ruth and Boaz in 2:8-14 is also flanked by two other dialogues: the dialogue between Ruth and Naomi (2:2) and the dialogue between Ruth and Naomi (2:19-22). We have symmetry of setting—Naomi's house at the open and close of the spring grain harvest; and symmetry of characterization—dialogue exchange between Naomi and Ruth at the beginning and end of the chapter. When Boaz enters our narrative, he is carrying on a dialogue with his servants (2:4-7)—narrative characterization of Boaz through interchange with his field hands. There is symmetry once more when our hero departs from chapter 2—i.e., by means of a dialogue with his servants (2:15-16). And at the center of this artistically crafted, symmetrically balanced chapter, the first dialogue between our heroine and our hero: verses 8-14—"and Boaz said to Ruth . . . and she said [to Boaz]."

At the center of this mutual dialogue characterization is Boaz's recognition of the transformation that has occurred in Ruth (vv. 11-12). Notice carefully what Boaz says about her: you left your people (2:11). Did not Ruth confess that her people would be the people of the Lord (1:16)? Boaz says: you left your land (2:11). Did not Ruth confess that her land would be the land of the Lord's dwelling place (1:16-17)? Boaz says: you have come to dwell under

the wings of the Lord God of Israel [*Yahweh 'Elôhê yîsra'el*]" (2:12). Did not Ruth confess "your God, my God [*'elôhayik 'elôhây*]" (1:16), "Yahweh to me [*Yahweh lî*]" (1:17). Ruth confesses (chapter 1); Boaz acquiesces (chapter 2).

But we must pause to explore Boaz's characterization of Ruth as a person who has taken refuge under the wings of the Lord God of Israel (2:12). It was Israel as the people of God over whom the Lord "spread his wings" (Dt. 32:11). What the Lord did to Israel, he has done to this Gentile. The Psalmist exclaims "the children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings [O Lord]" (Ps. 36:7). What the Psalmist confesses is done to the children of men is done to this Moabite daughter of the sons of men. Again the Psalmist prays "be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me for my soul takes refuge in thee and in the shadow of thy wings I will take refuge" (Ps. 57:1). Surely Ruth had prayed "be gracious to me, O God, my soul takes refuge in the shadow of thy wings." Again the Psalmist declares "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty . . . He will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you may seek refuge" (Ps. 91:1, 4). Ruth had come to seek refuge under the wings of the shadow of Shaddai [*tahath kenâpâw teheseh Shaddai*]; Boaz declares "you have sought refuge under the wings of the Lord God of Israel" [*hasôth tahath kenâpâw Yahweh 'Elôhê yîsra'el*].

And the covering of the wings of the Lord? It is mirrored in the covering Ruth requests from Boaz on the threshing floor (3:9)—"spread your covering over your maid." Ruth—covered by the wings of the Lord God—asks Boaz to mirror that covering by placing her under the shadow of his *goel* redemption. You see, the Hebrew word for "wings" or "wing-covering" [*kanaph*] is used here in 3:9 by Ruth. The very word God uses to describe his winged-covering of his redeemed people; the very word the Psalmists use to describe the shelter of God's wings—his wings of grace which shadow, which canopy, which cover over, which hide his children—that word is the word Ruth uses to ask Boaz to shelter her, to redeem her, to cover her like a canopy—"spread your wings"—your *kanaph*—your covering, for you are *goel*, you are kinsman redeemer.

Ruth has given herself up to the grace of the God of the covenant; she gives herself up to the kinsman redeemer to meditate the tangibles of that grace to her. Ruth at the feet of Boaz (3:7) pleading—cover me with your covering;

canopy me with your canopy; redeem me with your redemption. And Boaz? Boaz says, "I will!" Beautiful! Simply beautiful!!

More Inside Chapter 3

Our author is a consummate literary artist. There are narrative devices which leap from the page of the Hebrew text. There are structural markers used as inclusios, framing paradigms, chiastic patterns. All of these techniques serve to heighten the poignancy, the loveliness, the romance of this Biblical gem. Notice what the author does with time in chapter 3. We noted previously that chapter 3 is framed by the house of Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law—Naomi's house (v. 1); Naomi's house (v. 18). But notice the sequence of time in this third chapter. The scene opens in the evening of the fateful day (vv. 1-5); the center of the drama takes place at midnight (v. 8); the morning dawns in v. 14 and we walk with Ruth back to the place where the chapter began. The central panel of chapter 3 is Ruth and Boaz at the midnight point between two days. The flanking panels of chapter 3 are Ruth and Naomi on the evening of the first day; Ruth and Naomi on the morning of the second day. The center of the chapter is the center of the drama: Ruth and Boaz, Boaz and Ruth.

The Lord God

But it is the Lord God who is the supreme center of this drama as he transforms a Gentile pagan by his wonderful grace—his undeserved favor [*hesed*]—his unmerited kindness—transforms her and grafts her into the trunk of Israel. His name is Shaddai (1:20); his name is Yahweh/Jehovah (1:21); his name is God of Israel (2:12); *he* is the *goel*—the great Redeemer of his people. And so he frames Ruth with the covering of his wings; he turns Ruth's heart back from her gods to the God who made her in his image; he places himself at the center of her story; he translates her from death to life. And to Boaz, the Lord brings this new-born Gentile widow, this outcast, this uncovenanted female—the Lord brings her to Boaz that together—Bridegroom and Bride—may bring forth life new-born in a Son predestined to marry Jew and Gentile unto himself for ever and ever. The union of Ruth and Boaz? it is proleptic of

the union between Christ and his Bride. And in that union, the confession of the Bride is—you are mine, and I am yours—my Lord, my God, my Redeemer.

Other Scholars

I have proposed a number of literary and narrative devices for penetrating the lovely plot and drama of this Biblical masterpiece. Scholars and commentators have suggested numerous organizing motifs from this four-chapter idyll. Donald Rauber's justly famous *Journal of Biblical Literature* article of 1970 suggests the barren to fullness motif which characterizes Naomi from chapter 1 (note v. 21) to chapter 4 (note vv. 14ff.).[1] The most recent commentary by André LaCoque—a deconstructionist version of the text—suggests it is *hesed* or "kindness" which forms the center of the drama.[2] Only LaCoque suggests this *hesed* arises from Israel's experience in the Babylonian Exile, making Ruth a political tract for Jews exposed to Babylonian Gentiles. All critical deconstruction (LaCoque's included) is actual a fantasy of reconstruction—a fantasy of reconstruction in this case by way of late 20th and early 21st century ideology. LaCoque does not write a commentary; he constructs a reinvention of Ruth so as to make her out a postmodern global-village immigrant.

Life to Death

I close with what I believe is the most poignant motif which hangs as a shadow over the book of Ruth. I acknowledge my debt to feminist scholar, Phyllis Trible, for this paradigm—though she is not the only one who has noticed it.[3] Please do not suppose I am endorsing Trible's feminist agenda when I recognize the truth of the paradigm she has identified. She may be

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[1] D. F. Rauber, "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 27-37.

[2] Cf. my review—*Ruth: A Continental Commentary* (Andrè LaCocque). *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 20/3 (December 2005): 48-50.

[3] "A Human Comedy: The Book of Ruth," in Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, ed., *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, Volume II* (Abingdon, 1982) 161-90.

correct about the paradigm, while incorrect about its modern cultural application (or reduction). I should also mention the excellent article by Murray Gow of New Zealand in the *Bible Translator* for 1984.[4] I am suggesting that the most poignant organizing motif of this literary gem of a book is: life and death. Notice the book opens with the living escaping the land of death (Bethlehem Judah) for the land of life (Moab). But there, the reverse greets them—they meet the reverse of life in the death of Elimelech, the death of Mahlon, the death of Chilion. They turn from death to life; they return from life to death. And as Moab becomes the opposite of what they found it, they return from death (Moab) to life (bread in Bethlehem Judah). What Naomi resolves to turn back from—to return from—is the land in which she leaves her dead husband, her dead sons, her dead hopes. And when Orpah retreats into that land, or rather when Orpah refuses to turn from that land to the land of Naomi's El Shaddai—Orpah recedes into death and the land marked by her husband's grave, her father-in-law's grave, her brother-in-law's grave. Orpah returns to the dead-land of her dead relations, her dead gods, her dead idols and their cult of death.

But Ruth returns from death to life. With Naomi, Ruth sojourns to the land of the living God and to the life of clinging to him, embracing him, holding fast to him—loving him. She detaches herself from death (her dead husband; her dead father-in-law; her dead brother-in-law) and Ruth attaches herself to life—to the land of life, to the bread of life, to the community of life.

And as she gleans in the fields of Boaz, she gleans from the life-abundance left for the stranger and the widow and the poor. And as she eats with Boaz and his servants, she receives the refreshment of life under the wings of the Lord God and his servants. And as she ventures to the threshing floor of Boaz, she pleads for the life-fruition of a redeemer, a husband, an heir, a child. And Boaz assures her that he will undertake the life-extension of Ruth in the levirate role of raising up life from her in the life of a son. And as Ruth waits for Boaz to fulfill the law; as Ruth waits for his kindness and favor to fill her life to the full with God's kindness and favor, so God gives to Boaz the life of Ruth as

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[4] Murray Gow, "The Significance of Literary Structure for the Translation of the Book of Ruth." *Bible Translator* 39/3 (1984): 309-20.

his own precious possession—his own precious bride. And God gives to Ruth the love of Boaz as her own precious possession—her precious bridegroom. And God gives in Ruth through Boaz, the life of a son—a child new-born in the land of the living. *And now* Ruth and Boaz sit at the feet of their son's greater Son—a Son of God—a Son of Life Everlasting—an Eschatological Son of Eschatological Life for Jews, for Gentiles, for male, for female, for rich, for poor—for all who hunger and thirst for life in a land of death—who hunger and thirst for Ruth's Lord—Jesus Christ—for Boaz's Lord—Jesus Christ—for Jesus Christ—son of Ruth, son of Boaz, Son of God. *He* is the end of the story—the end of the story begun in the beautiful book of Ruth.

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Athanasius on Salvation[1]

For [Christ] suffered to prepare freedom from suffering for those who suffer in him. He descended so that he may raise us up. He took upon himself the ordeal of being born that we might love him who is unbegotten. He went down to corruption that corruption might put on immortality. He became weak for us that we might rise with power. He descended to death that he might grant us immortality and give life to the dead. Finally he became human that we who die as human beings might live again and that death may no longer have sovereignty over us; for the apostolic word proclaims, "Death shall not have dominion over us."

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[1] Athanasius of Alexandria (ca.295-373) was the great champion of the orthodoxy of the Nicene Creed (325). This comment is from his "Festal Letter," X.8 for Easter 338. Our text is from the excellent new biography of Athanasius by Anatolios Khaled, *Athanasius* (Routledge, 2004) 70. Anatolios's book also contains fresh translations of excerpts from the most important of Athanasius's works. For another version of the *Festal Letter*, compare *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, 4:531. For yet another excellent book on Athanasius, see Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius* (1995). Pettersen provides a superb exposition of the theological mind of the great Egyptian church father.

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The Lamp Will Not Be Extinguished

II Samuel 21:15-22

Robert Van Kooten

In response to the liberalism that is so prevalent in our culture, we often hear Christians say, "I wish we could go back to an earlier time in our nation's history; back to the days when our nation was founded on Biblical principles, when George Washington was President."

That is how it was for the original readers of I and II Samuel. The books of I and II Samuel were written to people who lived during the time of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah. They longed for the old days when Israel was one nation under the rule of one king.

The authors of I and II Samuel knew this about their readers and that is why God inspired them to end the books of I and II Samuel with a four-chapter conclusion. If you are reading along toward the end of the book of II Samuel, you will notice that chapter 20 takes place at the end of David's life and that chapter 21 does not follow the chronological timeline. Chapter 20 takes place sometime during the life of David, but we are not told when. Chapter 24 also takes place sometime during the life of David, but we are not told when. Thus the last four chapters form a conclusion to the entire message of both books.

If you examine the following outline, you will notice that the concluding chapters form a particular chiastic structure.

II Samuel 21-24

A. A narrative on the Expiation of Saul's sin (21:1-14)

B. David's mighty men (21:15-22)

C. Song of David (22:1-51)

C.' Last words of David (23:1-7)

B.' David's mighty men (23:8-39)

A.' A narrative on the Expiation of David's Sin (24:1-25)

On the outer layers of the structure (A/A'), the readers are reminded that even when Israel had one king on the throne—King Saul in chapter 21 and King David in chapter 24—those kings sinned and brought harm and death to God's people. King Saul's sin led to a three-year famine. King David's sin brought a three-day plague. Thus in the peak of the chiastic structure (C/C'), God gives the people the answer to their longing for one king: God himself is their King. In these two songs (the second of which is the last words of David), David declares that God is his King. The concluding message of I and II Samuel then is that even though there is no united monarchy anymore, the people do not need to go back to the old days because God is their King.

So if the outer layer of the structure reminds us that even the kings were sinners, and the center portion reminds us that God is our King, what do we do with the stories of the mighty men of David (B/B')? How do these stories fit into the conclusion of I and II Samuel? Some say that the stories are only included here as hero stories to remind the people of what God did in time past. Some liberals say that since these stories seem out of place, the authors of Samuel must have found these stories lying around and did not know what to do with them, so they just stuck them on here at the end. But we know God inspired the Scriptures and these narratives were not just stuck on at the end by chance. God has a message for us in these verses and he has very carefully placed them in the conclusion so that we may understand that message. What is that message? Let's take a careful look at the structure of these verses.

You will notice that the passage begins with an introduction and a conclusion. At the beginning of verse 15, we read that *once again there was war between the Philistines and Israel, and David went down with his men to fight against them*. In verse 22 we have the conclusion to the matter, *these four were descendants of Rapha in Gath, and they fell at the hands of David and his men.* The introduction tells us there was war between Israel and their longtime enemy, the Philistines. The conclusion reports to us the result—the Philistines fell at the hands of David and his men. Thus, the introductory and concluding summaries set off the structure of our text.

But you will notice from the first part of the conclusion in verse 22 that these were not just any men who fell. These four were the sons of Rapha, or as some translations read "sons of the giant". That's because the sons of Rapha were giants. These men of Rapha were Philistine champions, they were fighters—champion fighters for the Philistine army, just as Goliath had been their champion fighter in I Samuel 17. In our text, these giants are clearly given the most attention. There is very little description of David's men, but the descriptions provided about the men of Rapha and their weapons are detailed.

The first man described in verse 16 is a man named Ishbi-Benob, one of the descendants of Rapha, whose bronze spearhead weighed three hundred shekels and who was armed with a new sword. The footnote in our Bibles tells us that three hundred shekels was about 7.5 pounds. That means the weight of his spearhead was like the head of a sledgehammer. And this man used it for a spear. A normal man might be able to handle one weapon that size, but this man is so large and strong that he can fight with two! He also fights with a new sharpened sword.

The third Philistine described is Goliath the Gittite (v. 19). Some commentators often question whether this was the same Goliath that David killed, or if there were two Goliaths? The King James Version even adds a phrase in italics that indicates he was the brother of Goliath the Hittite. The most likely explanation is that there were two different Goliaths. But regardless of the answer to this question, don't miss the point. The point is that the author wants you to see a connection between this Giant and the Goliath of I Samuel 17. The connection is confirmed with the description of his weapon—the exact same wording as that for the spear of Goliath in I Samuel 17:7. The connection reminds us

of the role these giants played in the Philistine battles. In I Samuel 17, Goliath is the mouthpiece of the Philistine army; he is their champion and he taunts Israel. This giant must have done the same. That he was enormous is indicated by the size of his weapon. The weaver's rod was the thickest, heaviest metal that could be made so that it was strong enough to handle the stretching of cloth for the weaver. For a normal man it would take two hands to hold such a weapon. The Goliaths used them as a spear.

The fourth Philistine on the list is a man with no name (v. 20). Yet he is described as a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot—twenty-four digits in all. The extra toes gave him better balance and the extra fingers gave him better aim. He too taunted Israel (v. 21).

As you can see, the giants are all fighters. Our narrative provides vivid descriptions of their weapons. But what about David and his men? How are they described? David's men are described not by their weapons or their physical presence. The only thing we are told about David's men is that they are related to David. Abishai is the son of Zeruiah (v. 17). Zeruiah was David's sister and that means Abishai was David's nephew. In verse 18, we read that Sibbecai is described as a Hushathite; this means he came from David's tribe, the tribe of Judah. In verse 19, Elhanan, son of Jaare-Oregim is from Bethlehem, David's hometown. And in verse 21, Jonathan is the son of David's brother, which makes him David's nephew too.

The summary provides one word about the battles (v. 22)—they "fell". In fact in each battle we are only given one or two words to describe the battle. In verse 17, Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, came to David's rescue and struck the Philistine down and killed him. In verse 18, Sibbecai, the Hushathite, killed Saph. In verse 19, Elhanan, son of Jaare-Oregim, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Hittite. And in verse 21, when the huge man taunted Israel, Jonathan, son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him. Two words are used to describe the first battle against the giant with two weapons; only one word is used to describe the battle of the three with the one. Struck and killed; killed, killed, killed; and in the summary (v. 22) they "fell".

Now if you are like one of my five sons, you are saying to yourself that is not enough. That is not enough of a description of the battle—i.e., only one or two words. After such a vivid description of the weapons and the size of these

men, we want to read more. We want to know how the battle took place and what David's men did to defeat them! We live in a "Lord of the Rings" generation and we want to see the battles take place against the giant creatures and men. But the author only gives us one word. Why? Why does God not give us more information?

Because there was nothing to write about! It was not even a fight! How dare these giants defy the living God with their taunting? How dare they think that they could kill God's king, the man after God's own heart? How dare they think that they could stand up against the living God and his people and his king? These giants were utterly destroyed by these servants of David, just as the first Goliath was killed by David in I Samuel 17. That first Goliath with all his powerful weapons taunted Israel and defied the living God; and David the shepherd boy took him on with his sling and five stones. With one stone, he struck him in the forehead and he fell. The first Goliath never raised his weapon just as these four giants never raised theirs. In fact the summary makes a change in the wording that makes it clear that there was nothing to write about. In verse 16, we read that Ishbi-Behob was one of the descendants of Rapha; in verse 18, we read that Saph was one of the descendants of Rapha; but in verse 20 and in verse 22, the Hebrew word changes to the word "born"? Why not stick with the pattern? Why does the author change the word to "born", especially in the conclusion (v. 22)? Because in the conclusion, the author is summing up their life's work. Their lives are not summed up in their battles or with the use of their weapons, their lives are summed up with their birth and their death—they were born and they fell! They were born to fall to David and his men. That was their purpose in life. That is all there is to say about their lives—they were born and they fell.

Yet you will notice that one of these stories stands out from the others. Notice that the first story in verses 16-17 is longer, which make it stand out from the others. We are told at the end of verse 15 that David has become exhausted. *Ishbi-Benob, one of the descendants of Rapha, whose bronze spearhead weighed three hundred shekels and who was armed with a new sword, said he would kill David. But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to David's rescue, he struck the Philistine down and he killed him. Then David's men swore to him saying, "Never again will you go out with us to battle, so that the lamp of Israel will not be extinguished."* What do they mean when the men describe

David as “the lamp of Israel”? If you go back to the beginning of the book of I Samuel, during the time of the Judges, you will find that phrase used in chapter 3. Eli is high priest of Israel and his sons are wicked. We are told in verse 1 that the word of the Lord was rare and there were not many visions. One night Eli’s eyes had become so weak that he could barely see (v. 2). And the lamp of God had not yet gone out (v. 3). According to Exodus 27, the lamp of God represents the presence of God with his people. It has not gone out because God raised up the boy Samuel to anoint David as king of Israel. And the mighty men of David (II Sam. 21) know it. They know that their victory is connected to David. They know that their victory is connected with God’s king. God is with his king and God is with Israel through his king. And if something happens to David, the lamp of Israel, God’s presence with Israel, will go out.

But what then of the original readers—King David is no longer living? They live in a divided kingdom. Has the lamp of Israel gone out on them? In II Kings 8 things are pretty bad in Israel and Judah. Wicked king Ahab’s son Joram is king of Israel (v. 16). Jehoram is king of Judah, and he walked in the ways of Ahab, for he had married Ahab’s daughter. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. *Nevertheless, for the sake of his servant David, the Lord was not willing to destroy Judah. He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever.* The lamp of Israel, God’s presence with his people, did not go out after David died. II Kings 8: 19 tells us that the lamp continued to burn in the descendants of David, as well as in those who are connected with God’s king. The writer of Matthew’s gospel, indicates how that line of descendants carried on all the way from King David, through the kings of the divided monarchy, through the exile, until the coming of the son of David, the son of Joseph, Son of God (Mt. 1).

Our Lord Jesus Christ was of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, born at Bethlehem. And God was not only with him, he was God! He came to earth not as a giant, not with powerful weapons like a new sword, or a spear like a weaver’s rod, nor did he have six fingers on each hand and each foot. He did not come to lead his people into military battle against the Romans. Rather he came to suffer, to be beaten and flogged and to die on a cross. And when he died on that Friday afternoon, the earth was darkened (Mt. 27:45); and Satan,

his enemy and our enemy, thought he had won. He thought that the lamp of God had been extinguished for God's promised King was dead.

But that was not the end. That was our King's victory! He took the curse of sin and death upon himself, yet his story was not over. For he rose from the dead! He came out of that grave! And on that Easter morning the light of his glorious resurrection shown bright as lightning (Mt. 28:3)! And today he sits in heaven on high, at the right hand of God, and his victory is forever. In Revelation 21:22-23, the apostle John looks into heaven and he writes, *I did not see the temple in the city, because the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.* The victory was achieved not by an army, not by weapons, but by God's King—by the promised eschatological Lamb. And the eschatological light of that Lamb will never go out.

You do not need to worry about the lamp of your King being extinguished. For your King, Son of David, Son of God is in heaven forevermore. God is your king and you are united with him. You are one of his people, one of his sons, and your victory is that you are connected to him. And you should know that because of that victory, no harm can come to you. Nothing can separate you from that victory: not giants, not weapons, not sin and temptations, and not even death (Rom. 8:38-39.). For that victory is yours forever because just as David's men understood, God saves through his King.

But what happens to God's enemy? During the time of David, there were five Philistine cities. When the shepherd boy David picked up five stones in I Samuel 17, he used only one. Those five stones represented the complete victory of David and his men over the five giants and the five Philistine cities. And what can be said of their descendants? All through our text we read of the descendants of Rapha the giant. But in the last verse—the summary in verse 22—we read they were born and they fell at the hands of David and his men. There are no more descendants of Rapha the giant because all of his sons are dead. Once the victory of King Jesus is complete, there will be no more Satan—all of his sons, his followers who have rejected God's Son, will harm God's people no more.

You do not need to be discouraged about the culture. You do not need to be discouraged about our nation's leaders. You do not need to go back to the time of George Washington. For God is your King through his son King Jesus. His victory is certain and secure. Indeed, you have nothing to fear.

Sovereign Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Oak Harbor, Washington

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Thomas Cartwright on Israel's Inheritance of the Land[1]

So that salvation is a portion among God's saints, which portion is in light (Col. 1:12), where we see that the state of God's children is compared to a part or portion, and that by lot, viz., an inheritance, as it was by lot. It is so said because in the old law the people of God used to divide their inheritances by

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[1] Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603) was a leader of the Elizabethan Puritan movement, especially the so-called Classical Presbyterian movement in Elizabethan England. He was educated at Cambridge University and became Lady Margaret professor there in 1569. In the spring of 1570, he delivered his sensational lectures on the book of Acts in which he challenged the episcopal polity of the Church of England. He was forced to resign his chair and traveled to Geneva where he fellowshipped with Calvin's successor, Theodore Beza. Back in England in 1572, he gave his support to the *Admonition* authors, John Field and Thomas Wilcox. Both the first and the *Second Admonition to Parliament* (1572), defended Presbyterian church government. Forced to leave England again in 1573, Cartwright remained abroad until 1585. On his return, he again promoted the fledgling Puritan Presbyterian movement, but was arrested in 1590 and imprisoned until 1592. He may have had a hand in the famous Millenary Petition of 1603, which was presented to King James I on his journey from Scotland to ascend the throne of England after the death of Elizabeth I. That document (alleged to have been advanced by a thousand Puritan ministers) humbly requested a further "godly reformation" of the Church of England, i.e., the maturing of Puritan hopes from the 16th century. Cartwright died before the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 in which James allegedly made his infamous remark that he would "make (the Puritans) conform themselves, or harrie them out of the land or do worse." James got his wish when many abandoned England for Holland and New England in the course of his reign. The excerpt above is from Cartwright's "Seventh Sermon" (on Col. 1:12-14), *A Commentary upon the Epistle of Saint Paul written to the Colossians* (1612) 47-48. The spelling and punctuation have been modernized.

lot, as in dividing of the land of Canaan, [in] which Joshua and the priests and the chief elders did cast lots for the inheritance of the tribes.

Seeing that it is an inheritance, it shows that it is by grace, and not by any merit. For even as the father gives the child his land and inheritance, not for any desert, but for his love to him, though he never deserved, nor never will deserve so much at his hands; . . . therefore the child does not have the inheritance by desert. And seeing it is no stipend, but an inheritance which we have of God, we do not deserve it.

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The Book of Hebrews: The Unique Legal Aspect of the Mosaic Covenant Grounded in the Covenant of Grace.

Scott F. Sanborn

In the following, I have summarized the basic points of my argument in a series of theses.

The Argument in Broad Outline

Thesis: The unique legal aspects of the Mosaic covenant are dependent in their very nature on the nature of the Mosaic covenant as a redemptive covenant of grace.

Thesis: The unique legal aspects of the covenant of grace are interwoven with the ceremonial and judicial laws.

Thesis: The ceremonial and judicial laws are dependent on the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of grace.

Thesis: For instance, the sacraments of the Mosaic covenant are signs and seals of the grace of Christ to come when received by faith. Thus the ceremonial law administers the grace of Christ to come.

Thesis: Since the unique legal aspects of the Mosaic covenant administer Christ's grace, the Mosaic covenant must be the eternal covenant of grace legally administered.

Thesis: The legal aspect of the Mosaic covenant administered blessings and curses to the people of God, but true old covenant saints only experienced these curses in terms of the external aspects of the covenant.

Thesis: This situation is the flip side of Hebrews 6:4-6, in which hypocrites externally participate in the external blessings of the covenant. Hypocrites only experience these blessings externally as borrowed capital from the elect and their justification. But hypocrites are themselves neither justified nor truly sanctified. This situation existed in the old covenant too, as suggested in Hebrews 6:4-6. However, the old covenant also expressed the flip side of this situation. In the old covenant, saints were truly justified and truly inwardly sanctified, but they could be externally cursed in relation to the visible earthly arena of Canaan. In this sense, they experienced the old covenant curses.

Thesis: These old covenant curses, as the saints experienced them externally, separated them from the historical arrival of the kingdom of heaven that would come with Christ. When Christ came as high priest, he took these external covenant curses away from his people and brought the historical arrival of the kingdom of heaven.

Thesis: Since the salvation of all saints throughout redemptive history is an intrusion of the eschatological kingdom to come, the same work of Christ was the ground for the arrival of the kingdom of heaven and its intrusion in previous redemptive history.

The Argument in Greater Detail

Thesis: Hebrews reveals that the ceremonial law was essential to the unique legal administration of the Mosaic covenant.

Thesis: According to Hebrews 8:8, the old covenant was a failure because God found fault with the people.

Thesis: This fault and its reversal reveal two things to which we must do justice in our formulation of the Mosaic covenant. It reveals that the unique legal aspects of the Mosaic covenant were grounded in the grace of the Mosaic covenant. It also reveals that the Mosaic covenant was uniquely legally administered in a way that the new covenant is not.

Thesis: When God found fault with the people, he was finding fault with the Aaronic priestly ministry. This ministry was integral with the ceremonial law which administered the eternal grace of Christ to come. Therefore, God found fault with the way his own grace was administered through actions of the priesthood.

Thesis: Though this fault is parallel, it is synthetically related to the fault God will find with those who reject the new covenant. Hebrews 8 suggests that the fault of Israel functioned in a unique legal fashion not found in the new covenant. For the writer (in conjunction with Jeremiah) suggests that this fault resulted in curses upon the saints of the old covenant (in some respect), while the curses of the new covenant only fall on those who despise the new covenant. The writer also suggests this when he implies that this fault resulted in something that the historical arrival of the new covenant will reverse forever. During the new covenant, it is impossible for the fault of the covenant people to result in precisely the same consequences in all respects.

Thesis: Hebrews 8:8 in context shows that the fault God found with Israel was integrally tied to the fault of the priesthood. Verse 8 begins with “for” (the second word in Greek), showing that it is dependent on the argument of the previous verse. Verse 7 also begins with “for,” bringing us back to verse 6. Hebrews 8:6 says, “now he has obtained a more excellent ministry by as much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.” Here the writer presupposes the inadequacy of the Aaronic priestly mediators of God’s grace. God finds fault with them.

Thesis: This is not only part of the context in Hebrews; it is also part of the context in Jeremiah 31:31, which Hebrews 8 quotes. Jeremiah 32:31-32 teaches that God will execute the curses of the covenant upon Israel and Judah for the sins of their kings and priests as well as the sins of the people. Here the fault of the people is interwoven with the fault of the kings and priests. It is likely that

Jeremiah is not simply referring to the kings and priests as individuals, but highlighting their failures in respect to their official duties. This would seem to be confirmed by Jeremiah 33:14-22. There the eschatological age will fulfill the promises made to David, bringing an eschatological king and priesthood (vv. 17-18). This eschatological service is presumably the reversal of the sin of the kings and priests in the Old Testament in terms of their official capacities. Therefore, Hebrews is contrasting a priesthood, which administered God's grace according to the old covenant order, to the priesthood of Christ who brings the eschatological kingdom of grace.

Thesis: The Mosaic covenant had a *unique legal aspect* (which we have shown was dependent on its nature as the eternal covenant of grace.)

Thesis: This is seen in the contrast between Hebrews 8:8 and 8:10-12. Because of the people's fault, God will put his laws upon their hearts and forgive their sins in a new way that he did not do in the old covenant.

Thesis: In the new covenant, God forgives the sins of his people in a new way, by not inflicting them with the external curses of the Mosaic covenant. By removing these curses and fulfilling eternal righteousness, Christ brings the eternal kingdom of God in history.

Thesis: That the new covenant reverses the eternal aspect of the covenant curses is found in the context of Jeremiah's prophecy. There we find that the new covenant will reverse this situation: "the father's have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (31:29). By contrast, in the new covenant "every man will die for his own iniquity." This latter statement interprets the former. In the old covenant, sons were dying for their father's sins.

Thesis: But how can this be, since the law of God forbids the killing of sons for their father's sins? We suggest it is connected with God's own execution of his covenant curses on the nation of Israel. Since the nation often suffered these curses as a whole, one person might die for the sins of his countrymen or his fathers before him. Those seeking an example of this may look to 2 Kings 21, where, as a result of Manasseh's sin, God promises to unleash his covenant curses on Judah in spite of the reforms of Josiah. That is, despite the righteousness of any of Israel's sons that follow, they will be judged for the sins of their fathers in the Babylonian Captivity. This is seen in

the deportation of Daniel and perhaps Jeremiah's own exile. They are cut off from the land of life and inheritance. They receive the covenant curses. And perhaps some of the righteous are even killed by the sword.

Jeremiah is suggesting that the new covenant will reverse the situation of the theocratic curses. This is one aspect of what Jeremiah means by his prophesy. God set his face against his people and unleashed his covenant curses upon them. Now he will forgive their sins forever (even to the extent of removing these external covenant curses from them, Jer. 31:34, Heb. 8: 12). Doing so, he will bring the historical arrival of the kingdom of heaven, administered by the new covenant.

Thesis: In Hebrews, the kingdom of heaven is otherwise described as the eternal inheritance. Therefore, the blood of Christ brings the eschatological inheritance (Heb. 9:15). In exile, God's covenant curses separated righteous Israel from her inheritance in the land. It separated them externally from something that was considered their inheritance in God.

Thesis: Since the removal of these curses brought the eternal inheritance historically, we may conclude that these external curses also held back the arrival of the kingdom of heaven. Only when God removed these curses did he bring the historical arrival of the eternal inheritance.

Thesis: The sacrifices of the law were not able to remove the covenant curses which separated God's people from the historical arrival of the kingdom. This is one aspect of what the writer means when he says that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins (Heb. 10:4). That is, they could not bring the age of perfection (10:1), which Christ brought (10:14). Instead, the sacrifices were a constant reminder of sins (10:3). This reminder is connected with God's covenant curses, for this reminder is reversed when God does not remember his sins against his people (10:17)—the writer once again quoting this new covenant promise.

Thesis: If this is the case, then the sacrificial system partially looked toward the removal of these covenant curses. And in some cases, it was the means by which God alleviated these curses, by cleansing the unclean, and bringing them back into a fuller participation of the covenant blessings. A careful study of Leviticus would reveal these connections, and further

strengthen the claim that the ceremonial law was an instrumental means of externally alleviating the covenant curses and bringing external covenant blessings. Thereby, the legal aspect of the Mosaic covenant with its blessings in contrast to curses was ultimately dependent on the administration of the covenant of grace through the ceremonial law.

Thesis: However, this entire process was not able to *mediate* the eschatological forgiveness of sins which brings the historical arrival of the eschatological inheritance. The *ground* of semi-eschatological forgiveness (Christ) must dispense it directly.

Thesis: The removal of the external curses of the covenant was only one aspect of the coming sacrifice of Christ. This work was also the ground of eternal salvation for all those who lived at any point in redemptive history. For all salvation is an intrusion of the eschatological kingdom. Therefore, the ground of both must be the same—i.e., Christ himself.

Thesis: When Hebrews connects the eschatological priesthood of Christ to better promises (8:6), it is speaking about the fact that Christ's priesthood brings the historical arrival of the eternal inheritance. The writer is thinking eschatologically.

Thesis: Hebrews is not denying that the Aaronic priesthood administered the eternal grace of God through types and shadows. As we have noted, the eternal salvation of all the saints throughout redemptive history was a foretaste of the eschatological age. This is true even though the grace of the semi-eschatological age possesses greater fullness than that foretaste. So nothing forbids the Aaronic priesthood from administering that foretaste, even though it does not bring and administer the greater grace of the new covenant. That is the point of the greater promises described in Hebrews. The Aaronic priesthood did not bring the semi-eschatological age. But this does not deny that they administered a foretaste of that coming age.

Thesis: In fact, Hebrews itself suggests that the old covenant was an administration of the eternal grace of God. This is seen when Hebrews teaches that there is a synthetic relationship between old and new covenants.

Thesis: This synthetic relationship is found in the connection of the judgment meted out in the old and new covenants.

Thesis: Hebrews 10:28-29 states: "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" This formula is similar to those found in Hebrews 2:2-3, 9:13-14, and 12:25. Hebrews 2:2, 10:28-29, and 12:25 suggest that the new covenant brings to fullness the eschatological judgments intruded through the Mosaic covenant. This suggests a real synthetic relationship of judgment. Real eschatological judgment intruded is now real eschatological judgment fully unleashed in the final judgment.

Thesis: This suggests that a similar synthetic relationship of grace lies behind the contrast between the old and new sacrifices in 9:13-14. This further implies that the real grace of God was administered through those sacrifices, though they also had relation to the legal aspect of the Mosaic covenant to cleanse the flesh.

Thesis: Hebrews 10:28-29 states that those who reject the new covenant are despising the sacrifice of the covenant of grace. The author's argument is dependent on the synthetic relationship between the old and new covenants. Therefore, the argument assumes that those judged by the old covenant despised the blood of that covenant. This synthetic argument is best maintained if the blood of that older covenant also administered the eternal grace of God.

Thesis: That the old covenant curses arose from rejecting the grace of God is revealed in Romans 6:4-6. Here the writer speaks of the new covenant people of God by drawing a synthetic relationship between them and the people of Israel who came through the exodus. The exodus generation experienced the heavenly light, tasted of the manna in the wilderness and the miraculous power of God in delivering his people. These were God's works of redemptive grace and his means of offering them eternal life. Therefore by rejecting these things, they were cursed forever.

Thesis: Those in the church who despise the new covenant despise the blood of Christ (Hebrews 6:6). In this instance, Hebrews 6:6 is parallel to 10:28-29. Both suggest that in the old covenant, apostasy involved despising the

blood of the covenant. The synthetic argument of this section is best maintained when the blood of both covenants administers the eternal grace of God.

Thesis: If the blood of the old covenant does not administer the eternal grace of God, there is no reason to believe that the curses for rejecting it were an intrusion of the eternal wrath of God. But Hebrews 2:2, 10:28-29, and 12:25 taken together clearly imply that the curses of the old covenant were an intrusion of the eternal wrath of God for rejecting the old covenant and its blood.

Thesis: This synthetic relationship between the old and new covenants implies that the old covenant punishments were a judicial intrusion of new covenant curses. That is, they are an intrusion of the judgment that falls upon those who despise the new covenant. If the Mosaic covenant administered an intrusion of wrath for rejecting the new covenant of grace, then the Mosaic covenant must itself have been a covenant of grace.

Thesis: Further, Geerhardus Vos has forcefully argued that the old covenant tabernacle was an intrusion of the real heavenly tabernacle that would come in fullness in the new covenant (Heb. 8:5). If the old tabernacle was an intrusion of the future reality, it certainly administered that reality through its sacrifices.

Thesis: The old tabernacle (which administered this reality) is an institution of the Mosaic covenant. Therefore, the Mosaic covenant administered the reality of the grace of Christ before the time.

Thesis: And again, finally, if the Mosaic ceremonial law was not an administration of the covenant of grace, then its sacraments were not sacraments of the covenant of grace. And Israel had no true heavenly communion with God through them.

Thesis: The writer of Hebrews compares the old covenant (in its legal relation) to the present cosmos. And so, as he draws us to the new covenant, he calls us to the heavenly city, to see how the glory of God and our inheritance in him surpasses all the glory of this world.

Thesis: This new covenant inheritance is the fullness of rest in God that was offered to the saints of old. God called them to open up their hearts to him, so turning aside their hearts from the world. So in the new covenant, God has

transformed our hearts in Christ by his eschatological work and glory, cleansing our hearts with pure water, and calling us to see by faith how much more glorious Christ is than the present cosmos.

Thesis: In this call to worship, Christ is the great high priest of his people. He brings the eschatological age. That age is embodied in himself, as the priest who worships the Father in the heavenly places. So in him, we are called to worship the Father, having come to an age of greater access in which we are not separated from the holy of holies by the old covenant curses. Instead, we have been bound to Christ in a bond of brotherhood, in which we worship in him, singing God's praises for his great and mighty work and his everlasting life. Our true inheritance and our everlasting reward is Christ Jesus.

[*K:NWTS* 22/1 (May 2007) 37]

John Calvin on the Covenant of Grace[1]

The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in mode of dispensation. . . . Here we must take our stand on three main points. First, we hold that carnal prosperity and happiness did not constitute the goal set before the Jews to which they were to aspire. Rather, they were adopted into the hope of immortality; and assurance of this adoption was certified to them by oracles, by the law, and by the prophets. Secondly, the covenant by which they were bound to the Lord was supported, not by their own merits, but solely by the mercy of the God who called them. Thirdly, they had and knew Christ as Mediator, through whom they were joined to God and were to share in his promises.

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[1] I was drawn to this quotation because it was underlined in the copy of the *Institutes* owned by my late brother, Rev. Charlie Dennison. That copy is now in the library of Northwest Theological Seminary. The citation is from the Battles/McNeill edition, 2.10.2, pp. 429-30 (—JTD).

[*K:NWTS* 22/1 (May 2007) 38-46]

Old Testament Historical Books: A Critical Review

James T. Dennison, Jr.

Bill T. Arnold & H. G. M. Williamson, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005. 1060 pp. Cloth. ISBN: 0-8308-1782-4. $50.00.

We have in this volume, a cross-section of mainstream, avant-garde evangelical and radical Old Testament (OT) scholars. Overall, it is not a pretty picture. It is a picture very familiar to those steeped in classic higher critical fundamentalism. It is a mirror of avant-garde doubters and nay-sayers of the liberal academy who have dominated religious scholarship for more than a century. But the mirror of this volume is now reflecting young-Turk evangelicals—smart and sophisticated, with well-heeled higher degrees from prestigious schools of unbelief; only now this mirror-reflection shows the arbiters and (near infallible) interpreters of the Word of God to the unsuspecting evangelical world. As one famous cartoon character quipped, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

IVP's *Historical Books* volume shows us clearly the enemy within the evangelical camp. It is the enemy of supernaturalism; the enemy of God-breathed revelation; the enemy of historicity and objectivity; the enemy of historic Christian doctrine; the enemy of the antithesis between Christianity and liberalism, Christianity and paganism, Christianity and multi-culturalism. The enemy is presently and obviously within the evangelical tent—a tent made large

enough to embrace Deuteronomistic History and other patch-work assembly-line theories of the composition of the OT (here a piece of Babylonian mythology, there a piece of Greek confederationism; here a Marxist proletarian, there a hoary ghost of Jewish nationalism; everywhere an ideology, an agenda, a contrivance, an invention—nowhere a God-revealed truth).

If we ask for the line-up of these evangelicals (after all, IVP has been associated with that constituency until recent years), we do note some authentic members of the club (Daniel Block and Edwin Yamauchi). But they are joined in these pages by the avant-garde pretenders who have lusted to rub shoulders with the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) dons and ladies and, having arrived, have assumed their pontifical right to tell the rest of the benighted and erstwhile orthodox world that we are, in fact, unenlightened ignoramuses (Oh yes! That is what they say as they sip their bourbon and soda in the back rooms of the academy!). These great pretenders include Peter Enns, Tremper Longman, the late J. Alan Groves, J. Gordon McConville and a host of others. How they preen and strut their academic proficiency even as they demolish historic orthodoxy. Alongside of these left-of-center evangelicals are the true blue radicals—Marvin Sweeney, A. Graeme Auld and William Schniedewind. How these despisers of all things orthodox enter under the banner of IVP will remain a mystery. One small redeeming element of our line-up are the true scholars (*not* the purveyors of agenda-based myth, ritual and nonsense): A. K. Grayson, the superb Assyrian expert; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, the master of Persian history; A. R. Millard, great trans-Levantine and Mesopotamian scholar; and K. A. Kitchen, world-renowned Egyptologist. Reading the all-too-few contributions of these giants is a refreshing breath of truth in a sea of fiction.

And a sea of fiction is what we find in this volume. For example, the omnipresent Deuteronomic History is taken as foundational to the origin of the Historical Books of the Bible (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther). But as one scholar (Roland Boer) has noted, the Deuteronomic History is the Defoe-Austen-Brontë-Eliot-Trollope-Ishiguru theory of the OT. That is, these writers of great novels (*Robinson Crusoe*, *Persuasion*, *Jane Eyre*, *Middlemarch*, *Barchester Towers*, *Remains of the Day*) are joined in imaginative creativity by the Deuteronomist. When Martin Noth coined the term 'Deuteronomistic author/historian' (cf. p.

219), he was justifying a written creation of the history of Israel every bit as imagined, invented, contrived and manufactured as one of these great works of fiction (above). Indeed, Boer was right on!! No work of fiction has enjoyed such widely accepted status as non-fiction than the bastard child of Julius Wellhausen called the Deuteronomistic writer. And yet so rigidly does this illegitimate myth enrapture the scholarly elite that any suggestion that it itself is a contrived, invented, manufactured fiction unleashes anathemas hurled from Mt. SBL and Mt. ETS (Evangelical Theological Society) upon any who dare suggest the Deuteronomistic writer has no substance, no historic proof (show me the beef! Opps, I mean, the text), no clothes. The Deuteronomistic writer is an academic croc—a scholarly dupe—a contrivance of brains opposed to the truth, even as the natural mind is enmity against God and his concrete, supernatural revelation.

But we must move beyond our critical broadsides to actual cases, for this is a review as much as a well-deserved exposé and thrashing of a once-upon-a-time evangelical publisher. The sirens of the accepted, the degreed, the literati of the academy, the learned sophisticates have seduced the editors of this volume and its publisher. For shame, IVP! For shame!!

Let me begin with a bibliographical observation. J. P. Fokkelman began to publish his monumental 4-volume *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* more than 25 years ago (1981 to 1993). Now the alleged scholars of the articles on the "David" narrative in our review volume (198-215) show no awareness of Fokkelman's stunning work. So much for informed and up-to-date liberal evangelicalism. Neither the "David" articles, the "Samuel" articles (863-77) or the articles on "Poetry" (798-802) (Fokkelman has revolutionized the reading of Hebrew poetry with several powerful volumes) acknowledge this Leiden professor's work on the Hebrew text. Only in the piece on "Narrative Art of Israel's Historians" (708-15) and the "Goliath" (356-59) entry does Fokkelman make the list of sources used for constructing the article.

The article on "History of Israel 5: Assyrian Period" (458-78) (not, incidentally, by A. K. Grayson) informs us that the texts of the Bible for this period "can be used only cautiously, if at all, as a historical source for ancient Israel" (460). No, you are not reading Otto Eissfeldt, R. H. Pfeiffer, S. R. Driver, Walter Brueggemann, J. Albert Soggin, Werner H. Schmidt or some other authentic,

card-carrying liberal; you are reading an article in a volume by once-upon-a-time evangelical publisher IVP. But our article is not done. It goes on to tell us that "reconstructing the history of Israel in the Assyrian period" (461) is the task of the modern scholar. (And you thought I was over-reacting!) But there is more. Reconstruction of the Biblical account of the Assyrian interface with Israel comes from documents written in the Exilic Era (460). Now that assertion represents the pure canon of the Deuteronomistic approach. That is, all of Israel's historical books originate (or are finally redacted) in the period *after* 586 B.C. They are *not* contemporaneous accounts with the rise of the Late Bronze to Iron Age I (1500-1000 B.C.), the Neo-Assyrian Empire (900-612 B.C.), etc. Thus, when we read (472) about the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (701 B.C.), our article informs us that this report (2 Kings 18-19 and parallels) is tendentiously reconstructed along Jewish nationalistic ideological lines. That reconstruction post-dates 701 B.C. by hundreds of years, is invented by the post-Exilic Deuteronomic Historian and projected backwards to the 8th century B.C. as a fiction of Jewish supremacy and triumph over nasty pagan Assyrians. But when our author's treat the Assyrian record of this siege (Assyrian Annals), no such suggestion of tendentious reconstruction along ideological lines appears. The Assyrians, you see, are more trustworthy, objective and truthful than the Biblical writers (so our Ph.D.'d experts inform us).

The next article on "History of Israel 6: Babylonian Period" (478-85) omits the first invasion of Judah by Babylon in 605 B.C. in which Daniel and his three friends were carried off to captivity (480). The otherwise careful scholar, P-A. Beaulieu, has slipped up here. Anachronistically, K. A. Kitchen in this same volume (187) defends the 605 B.C. invasion. Perhaps the editors believe we should do some 'form criticism' of our own on these two articles in order to determine who has reconstructed what. Or perhaps we should just note that the editors did not care what was written!

The article on "Elijah" takes 6 pages (249-54) to tell us that the story never happened the way the Bible tells it. No indeed, the Elijah narrative is a cleverly constructed propaganda piece against pagan Baalism. Neat! Bet you never guessed that?! To add insult to this malarkey, the Ph.D.'d (Wowey! Zowey!!) author labels the great prophet of Mt. Carmel a "shaman" (251). Shamans are, well, like "witch-doctors". So much for this one raptured by the theophanic

chariot of the Lord. But, of course, that myth of a 'fiery ride to heaven' is a (Deuteronomistic) invention as well. This author gives us more of the same in the article on "Elisha" (254-58). If you are able to recognize the Biblical figures after reading this tripe, you have missed the point of our learned scholar. No, he wants you only to recognize how he has recreated Elijah and Elisha in his own scholarly, trendy (Deuteronomistic) image. Say farewell to Mendelssohn's "Elijah" as well as Jesus' and James's.

With respect to "Manasseh" (674-77), we learn that the apocryphal (i.e., extra-Biblical) "Prayer of Manasseh" was "shaped" by the Chronicler to suit his ideological purposes. In other words, the narrative of Manasseh in 2 Chronicles was "invented" to make a nationalistic and ideological point. And the point is—Voila! to endorse the Deuteronomistic reconstruction of the history of Judah and Israel (Surprise! Surprise!!).

Article after article (with few exceptions) follows this absurd paradigm. To add insult to heterodoxy, the volume is written in a bland and maudlin style. These are amateur wannabes. One might label this volume the "Anchor Bible Dictionary Lite"—but that would be an insult to the Anchor Bible Dictionary, which although as liberal, is at least engaging in its prose and responsible in its scholarship (not to mention, more informative, when used critically).

The publisher, of course, could not resist issuing an invitation to the current *enfant terrible* of the evangelical OT (un)scholarly world. Peter Enns, whose shrine at the recent ETS/SBL meeting in Washington, DC was adorned with a throng of nearly 150 devotees—with the smug doyen of Westmont, Tremper Longman front row center, alongside fellow votary, John Franke—gave his crowd of groupies precisely what they wanted—arrogance, sarcasm and heterodoxy. But, of course, the 21st century 'young evangelicals' (Richard Quebedeaux and James Davison Hunter take note!) are themselves full of this type of bravado—this type of narcissism—this type of ME *über alles* (as the Internet bloggers demonstrate).

Enns's contribution to our present volume is found under the heading "Faith" (296-300). We are informed that faith in the Historical Books "is not a matter of conversion . . . and not even primarily a comment on the disposition of the heart . . . . To speak of faith . . . overlaps considerably with notions

expressed in English words such as 'faithfulness, integrity, trust, reliability, loyalty, fear, obedience, covenant' and others" (297). NB: according to Enns, in the OT Historical Books, faith = a work of "obedience". Trust (= "covenant obligation", 298) is loyalty and integrity, not "primarily . . . the disposition of the heart." Faith is not defined by Enns as a response to what God does within a sinner's heart; rather faith, as Enns defines it, is a sinner's outward response to what God morally demands. This is, in fact, a radical redefinition of faith as moralism, semi-Pelagianism and potentially worse. Notice that Enns defines each Hebrew root related to faith in terms of "obedience" (297-98). Example: "to *love* God is a function of obedience" (298, italics in the original). "The most concrete manifestation of Israel's faith, and the one that recurs throughout the Historical Books, concerns Israel's obedience to God's commands, especially as they are enumerated in Israel's legal corpus" (299). More than 25 years ago, the institution in which Enns labors dismissed a professor of systematic theology for allegedly adding works to grace. In Enns, we have works without grace (the reader is urged to cull the article in question in search of the word "grace"; he will find that it is nowhere to be found. That is a supremely telltale omission!). As Bob Dylan reminds us: "the times they are a-changin'."

Throughout his treatment, Enns shows no relation of faith to grace received, grace anticipated or grace fulfilled in Christ Jesus. There is no biblical-theological dimension to this faith; no Christocentric aspect to this faith. This faith is a flat horizontal form of moralism, legalism and obedientialism. These OT 'faithful' are saved (if at all—keep in mind that Enns assures us that these 'faith' stories are not conversion narratives or saving faith narratives) by "obedience" to the covenant. This is neither Biblical, nor evangelical, let alone Reformed.

What is especially striking in this claptrap is the treatment of Rahab, the harlot, via Joshua 2 and Hebrews 11:31. Enns informs us that "appeal to the story of Rahab as an example of saving faith (Josh 2) . . . would be reading too much into a complex narrative" (296). Then comes the shocking statement: "Rahab is not converted." But Hebrews 11:31 says she was converted and saved—she possessed the "assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). But no—modern, learned, smarter-than-the-writer-of-Hebrews Dr. Enns tells us—"she is, in a word, afraid." She does not believe

in the Lord unto salvation; she is "afraid" of the Jewish god. Now if this sounds like comparative religions (*religionsgeschichte*)—Canaanite versus Jewish—that is precisely what learned Professor Enns is saying. And how does one reduce the story of Rahab to pagan religion versus Joshua religion? By anchoring the Rahab narrative in the Deuteronomistic History—a History contrived around the 'myth' (Enns loves that word) that Judaism was 'god'-ordained to strike fear into the hearts of her pagan neighbors (i.e., Canaanites at Jericho in Rahab's day). Thus the authors of the Rahab narrative have manufactured her story and projected it into the past mythologized history of Israel (Enns does not really believe the walls of Jericho came tumbling down!) so as to make the socio-religio-political point that the Jews were to be 'feared' by their non-Jewish neighbors. Faith has been redefined by the use of dialectics. It now means, in Rahab's case, "fear". Cornelius Van Til, who once taught in the hallowed halls where learned Dr. Enns now pontificates, called this dialectical sleight-of-hand unbelief. It was, of course, the 'new modernism' of neo-orthodoxy dressed up to look like Reformed theology. That neo-orthodoxy used the dialectic of Biblical higher criticism in tandem with the vocabulary of Reformed orthodoxy. But all that was a croc—as Van Til maintained. It was, in fact, a lie! It was just the same old, same old—liberalism/modernism/unbelief.

But learned Prof. Enns is not done. Let us see how he understands Hebrews 11:31 as interpreting Joshua 2. After all, he teaches in an institution whose Confessional Standard states—"The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself" (Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.9). This pre-critical, pre-Enlightenment, pre-Peter Enns statement is surely not the hermeneutic of our learned professor and his ilk. Here is what our learned critic writes: "The use of this story in these NT books clearly is a function of their specific rhetorical-theological contexts, which raises complex questions of its own, as does the whole matter of the NT's use of the OT. Appeal cannot be made to these NT texts to settle the issue of faith in the Historical Books . . ." (296-97).

Mr. Enns has told his readers (he undoubtedly tells his students and Sunday School classes, if he teaches Sunday School classes, the very same thing)—Hebrews 11:31 *does not* interpret Joshua 2. The Rahab of the epistle to

the Hebrews is not the rule of interpretation for the Rahab of Joshua 2. That is to say, Prof. Enns is telling us that as the Deuteronomist contrived the story of Rahab to support his mythological agenda, so the writer of Hebrews has contrived his story of Rahab to support his "rhetorical-theological" agenda. The whole point of this comparison is to demonstrate the various theological agendas of the 'creator' of the OT Rahab and the 'creator' of the NT Rahab. And poor, naïve Bible student you!—you thought both Rahabs were the same. Tsk! Tsk! You must listen to the learned professor.

Now what is so intriguing to me about this ostensibly evangelical and Reformed professor of OT in an erstwhile evangelical and Reformed theological seminary spouting this rot is that it is exactly what I was taught by my authentic liberal-critical OT professors 40 years ago. Surprise! Surprise (Again!!)! the avant-garde evangelical and Reformed gurus of our day have finally caught up to the liberals—only 40 years later. Ever the Johnny-come-latelies, but ever the prostitutes of critical-fundamentalist recognition, our modern evangelical and Reformed academics are indistinguishable from the crass and forthright radical-liberals of the generation of the 60s. Yes, evangelical and Reformed Christianity has finally come of age. Isn't it wonderful! We are all progressives now!!

But of course that means that objective, revelatory meaning is gone—completely gone.

We will now learn the meaning of a Biblical text from the current mythological whim of gurus like Dr. Enns and Dr. Longman and a whole host of Ray Dillard devotees. And out of it all, we will realize that the same acculturation and liberalism that eroded 'Old Princeton' is now eroding 'Old Westminster' (not to mention long-gone Fuller Theological Seminary and now Wheaton College and other erstwhile once-upon-a-time bastions of orthodoxy. James Davison Hunter was not so sure of the staying power of the 'orthodoxy' in so-called evangelical institutions more than 20 years ago. He is turning into a prophet!).

Let us have no doubt about the learned professor Enn's hermeneutic—it is not the hermeneutic of the Westminster Standards—it is not the hermeneutic of the 16th and 17th century Reformed Confessions (with which the

Westminster Confession agrees)—it is not the hermeneutic even of the early church fathers. But it is the hermeneutic of Julius Wellhausen, Herman Gunkel, B. S. Childs, John Van Seters, Martin Noth, Albrecht Alt and a host of related higher critical fundamentalists of the theological left. Enns is not giving us the Bible or Confessional orthodoxy; he is giving us a philosophical reconstruction of the history of Israel. The paradigm is NOT Scripture; it is philosophy imposed as a grid over the Scriptures. And underlying that philosophical rewriting of the OT is the evolutionary paradigm of the 19th century, now made more sophisticated by the developmentalism and acculturism (even politicization) of the 20th and 21st centuries. Reader: this is the *Phantom of the Opera* approach to the OT Historical Books—philosophy masquerading as Biblical explication. Don't bite. If you want fantasy, buy the novels listed above or the new DVD of the *Phantom*. In fact, your money would be better spent on that fiction than this tripe.

IVP has indeed published a volume in which it is clearly evident that "we have seen the enemy and it is us."

Reviews

[*K:NWTS* 22/1 (May 2007) 47-48]

Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*. Volume One: *From Paul to the Age of Constantine*. Volume Two: *From the Council of Nicea to the Beginning of the Medieval Period*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005. 455 pp. (v. 1); 754 pp. (v. 2). Cloth. ISBN: 1-56563-606-6. $99.95 (set).

This set presents the reader of English a translation in two volumes of a three-volume original. The series title, *Storia della letteratura cristiana antica greca e latina*, includes *Da Paolo all'età constantiniana* (1995) and *Dal concilio di Nicea agli inizi del Medioevo* (2 volumes, 1996). Moreschini and Norelli offer a survey of the church fathers and other early Christian literature (including poetry, monasticism, liturgy and historiography). They present individuals (or works), a short biography (or background sketch), written corpus with brief descriptions of individual contents, bibliography and special studies. However, the bibliographies and specialized studies are not exhaustive (or even thorough) and fall short of the standard found in Quasten's magisterial *Patrology*. Particularly irritating is the failure to cite the English translations of patristic works found in the *Fathers of the Church* series which began publication in 1947 (note the omission on page 436 of volume 1 and page 724 of volume 2—as well as throughout where that series is reflected in a given author's corpus).

To the credit of our authors, they have extended the range of coverage beyond volume four of the famous Quasten set (four volumes from the 1st to

the 5th centuries—Chalcedon [451] to be specific). Thus we have outline treatment of eastern and western figures to Leontius of Byzantium (fl. 6th c.) and Isidore of Seville (ca. 560-636). [Our text, 2:529, misprints the date of his birth as 520.] Hence we have a helpful survey of Christian history and writers into the early 7th century—a survey more extensive than that of the standard church history dictionaries.

The authors are straightforward in their analysis of the career as well as the theology of the individuals treated. If there is a hint of Roman Catholic bias, this is not surprising, as most survey treatments of patristics come with this orientation—John McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* and Everett Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* excepted. The treatment reflects modern discussion (to about 1994) and uses the best contemporary primary text editions of the writings in question. All of this gives the English-only reader a taste of the now-famous Italian school of early Christianity and patristics—which includes the noted Angelo Di Berardino and Manlio Simonetti.

All in all, a useful set to place alongside Quasten and the standard dictionaries of the early church (Ferguson, above, 2-volume second edition, 1997) and Angelo Di Berardino, *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (2 volumes, 1992).

—James T. Dennison, Jr.

[*K:NWTS* 22/1 (May 2007) 48-50]

Lyle D. Bierma, *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005. 223 pp. Paper. ISBN: 0-8010-3117-6. $29.99.

Have you understood that Casper Olevianus and Zacharius Ursinus wrote the Heidelberg Catechism? If so, this is a book you need to read.

The book is divided into two parts: Part 1 deals with the historical background of the Heidelberg Catechism; Part 2 deals with the introduction and translation of Ursinus's Smaller and Larger Catechism. Both of these catechisms

precede the publication of the Heidelberg Catechism. It is fascinating to compare them to the Heidelberg itself.

There are five chapters in Part 1 (The Historical Introduction). Chapter one, written by Dr. Charles D. Gunnoe, Jr., Chairman of the Department of History at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, discusses the Reformation in the Palatinate from 1500-1562. He reviews the political and cultural climate out of which the Catechism was born.

In chapter two, Dr. Bierma, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, discusses the purpose and authorship of the Catechism. I found this part of the book most intriguing. Through excellent scholarly work, he shows that the catechism, instead of having been written by two men, as has been believed, was actually a team effort that included many men. The purpose of using many men was to enhance its catholicity and bring together various teachings of those who resided in Heidelberg and vicinity. After establishing this unified voice of the earliest witnesses, Dr. Bierma shows how, in the course of history, the Heidelberg Catechism came to be attributed to Olevianus and Ursinus.

In chapter three, Dr. Bierma discusses the sources and theological orientation of the Catechism. There is no unified scholarly position with regard to the sources. It is assumed that there were many sources including, especially, Ursinus's Smaller Catechism. The initial question reads, "What is the comfort by which your heart is sustained in death as well as in life?" And the answer: "That God has truly pardoned all my sins because of Christ and has given me eternal life, in which I may glorify him forever." As to the theological orientation, Bierma makes the following statement: "Between the boundaries formed by various Roman Catholic and Gnesio-Lutheran teachings on the one side of the spectrum and several Anabaptist tenets on the other, the HC forges a remarkable consensus by highlighting common theological ground among the followers of Zwingli, and Bullinger, Calvin and Melanchthon" (81). He then goes on to support this position.

Dr. Karin Y. Maag, Associate Professor of History at Calvin College, writes chapter four. She deals with early editions and translations of the Catechism

including a list of editions from 1563-1663 in German, Latin, Dutch, English, French and other languages.

Chapter five is a bibliography of research on the Catechism from 1900 to the present, compiled by Paul W. Fields, Theological Librarian at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. This bibliography could be of great service to those who want to do modern research.

If you preach out of the Heidelberg Catechism, if you study the Heidelberg Catechism, if you for any reason are interested in the Heidelberg Catechism, this book is an indispensable tool for you to own.

—J. Peter Vosteen

[*K:NWTS* 22/1 (May 2007) 50-56]

Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. 267pp. Paper. ISBN: 0-664-22779-1. $29.95.

We can be thankful that John Knox has reprinted this work (originally published in 1960), if nothing else, for its influence on New Testament scholarship. It may also be helpful for those studying the documents of Vatican II. For as Leander Keck notes in the foreword, this book was circulating around discussions in Vatican II. Minear is Neo-Orthodox. At the time of this re-publication in 2004, he was still alive and writing at 98 years of age. He wrote this book originally at the request of the World Counsel of Churches to provide a book on the church that could be appreciated by a wide ecumenical audience. As a result, he has chosen to write primarily on areas where New Testament scholars from many traditions agree on issues of New Testament interpretation. This, with his Neo-Orthodox proclivities, suggests a book that is not theologically penetrating.

In spite of his desire to present a broad perspective, he does criticize other views on occasion, such as John A. T. Robinson's view that the church as the body of Christ is to be understood realistically rather than metaphorically. He

also presents his own view of the nature of the images, claiming that they cannot be used to provide a coherent metaphysical view. In this respect his view embraces ecumenical liberalism, but rejects orthodoxy. Minear does claim that these images reflect ontological reality. However, one feels that Minear would be comfortable with Richard Niebuhr's distinction between metaphysics (which Niebuhr rejects) and ontology (which he embraces). That is, because of the Kantian divide, our language cannot accurately describe reality. It cannot even do this by way of analogy through the use of univocal and equivocal language. As Minear claims, Paul uses images that are intentionally garbled. Scholasticism and traditional metaphysics are out. At least this seems to be the conclusion of Minear's view of metaphorical language as it was of his mentor Karl Barth, who reveled in contradictions.

As Minear puts it, "It does not matter that a logical contradiction appears in picturing expectant Israel both as the bride and *as* the friends of the bridegroom. This and other contradictions simply suggest that the truths being communicated lay at a level deeper than the shifting images" (57).

This view is conducive to his liberal ecumenical goals. For instance, Minear agrees with Canon (Alan) Richardson that the New Testament writers present disparate views of church polity. But unlike Richardson, he thinks this is a good thing because it turns the church away from seeking to conform itself to an imagined "primitive archetype," and focuses it on whether its apostolic, priestly, and ministerial character is manifested or obscured in its laity and its particular ministerial organization (264-65). Further, Minear implies that Rome focuses on the image of the temple priesthood, while Protestants focus on the image of the covenant (word). He states that the image of the temple is not the polemic of a high church wing and the covenant of another. Behind different images is the same motivation to portray the gospel. (This despite his more Protestant interpretation of Mt. 16:18.) All of this sounds a bit too much like Paul Tillich's view of symbol.

In fact, we may ask whether Minear's images are nothing more than Jungian archetypes. And at one point he notes Jung's view of archetypes without clearly distinguishing his own view from it.

Still, we may cheer in formal assent when Minear points out that moralists neglect the ontological nature of biblical images. Ah, does this imply that moralists are even more Kantian than this Neo-Orthodox Kantian?

Minear's book deals with New Testament images of the church, as the title implies. The Old Testament background to these images are rarely fleshed out, though he begins to do this on occasion as when he shows how the images of the vine, vineyard, fig tree, and olive tree are grounded in idioms from the Old Testament. But for the most part, he either briefly comments on OT background or simply assumes it. His allusions to extra-biblical materials in the ancient Greco-Roman world to elucidate these images are also sparse. He focuses primarily on the New Testament itself. Thus he deals with Colossians and the Pastorals, even if many question their Pauline authorship, because they are in the New Testament.

Minear begins his book with a description of the scope and method of his study. (Here he reveals his Neo-Orthodox assumptions.) He follows this with chapters on the minor images of the church, the people of God, the new creation, the fellowship in faith, and the body of Christ. Finally, he finishes the book with a chapter on the interrelationship of the images and a postscript. While Minear rarely engages in debates with other New Testament scholars in the body of the book, the footnotes show that he is familiar with the literature on this subject.

We can learn things from Minear about biblical images and their interrelationships, if we throw out his Kantian presuppositions—but perhaps not much if we are already familiar with Geerhardus Vos, Hermann Ridderbos and Meredith Kline. For then many of the images he draws from the text and their interrelationships will be familiar to us. Still, he has some insights to add and some exegetical points to consider (and sometimes to reject). And he even raises us to heaven on occasion. His reflection on our semi-realized participation in the Jerusalem above (90) has a heavenly and eschatological ring. And he suggests that this has implications for the Jerusalem of old—that the heavenly reality was manifest in it. Sounds like a true eschatological intrusion (if we cancel out his anti-metaphysical presuppositions). Still, in spite of this insight, at a later point he does not recognize a contrast between two cities (Gal. 4) as either

historical development (centered in Christ's work) or in terms of a distinction between the supernatural and the natural.

At the same time, in spite of Minear's metaphysical skepticism, (Leander) Keck (who rejected future eschatology in an orthodox sense) states in the foreword that Minear would not follow Bultmann's demythologizing of future eschatology. For Minear believed in God's sovereignty over the world and thus (presumably) his ability to bring an end to the cosmos. What are we to make of this?

The more Minear shows the interrelationships between images the more he provides grist for the mill. For instance, when discussing the image of Christ as the shepherd, he suggests that the connection between the shepherd and his lambs is found embodied together in Christ himself, the great shepherd and the lamb. Then he notes that Christ as shepherd reflects on the first exodus where God was the shepherd of his people. From this he suggests that the flock of Israel was united to the Passover lamb. Is he suggesting from these points that God himself identified with the Passover lamb and so with his people? This suggested union with God and his people in the first exodus would then find its eschatological fruition in the great shepherd/lamb of God.

Minear's discussion of the household of God brings together all the familial associations of the New Testament. His insights into the interrelationship of New Testament images is perhaps the most stimulating aspect of the book, and may be what moves the book forward, culminating in its seventh chapter, where the focus is the interrelationships that exist between the images previously discussed in the book.

As an existentialist, Minear assumes that formulating theology as an object of investigation is at odds with the view that God scrutinizes us as an object of investigation. Minear holds to the later view and thus rejects the former. Orthodoxy did not consider these things incompatible, as long as one acknowledges that God knows us before we exist and know him, and that God's knowledge of us is the metaphysical precondition of our knowledge of him.

Still, while existentialists are to be criticized for their ontology, metaphysical skepticism, eschatology, theology, and anthropology, they can have insights into the crisis of human existence, perhaps because this is all that is ultimate in their investigations. At the same time, we must acknowledge that these existential insights are colored and distorted by their existentialist ontology. However, these existential proclivities cause them to look for the existential engagement of the text. On occasion Minear points out how the text engages the church existentially. In such cases (brushing aside Minear's existentialist presuppositions), we can meditate on these pointers in the text itself and reflect on how they existentially engage the reader in Christ in the light of the context. However, if one is looking for existential insights into the text, he will be somewhat disappointed, as they do not run throughout the piece in a consistent way. Nor are they generally very penetrating.

At the same time, some of his existential insights ring true (at least formally) for the biblical theologian. When commenting on the existential dilemma of Israel's unbelief, Minear comments that inner decision is not the focus. All is dependent on the historical eschatological work of God. Is Minear beginning to recognize that the New Testament writers place Christ at the center rather than the sinner?

As noted, Minear sometimes elucidates the Christ-centered character of the text. He can say of the Old Testament idioms that Christ has converted them—that he is the center; that the whole history of Israel is summed up in the person and work of Christ. So he is the living link between Israel and the church.

Minear also moves in a Christ-centered direction (but not too far) when he notes that the disciples were scattered because of Jesus' death and gathered together after his resurrection. We might press his point a bit further by noting that to the degree that Christ's life involved carrying the cross and bearing the curse, he was undergoing exile (judicial scattering from the heavenly homeland), culminating in the cross. And his resurrection was the great semi-eschatological gathering in heaven (for himself and his people), which then involved the vital gathering of his people in him.

However, in considering the New Testament theme of the gathering of the people of God, Minear does not think this reflects upon the Jewish Diaspora, but on the idea of the 'scattered' before the Messiah would come. But (in this reviewer's opinion) this is an unnecessary distinction. Christ's salvation involves a new exodus in which he gathers those scattered as a result of the curse of the law (most poignantly represented in the Babylonian captivity), bringing them semi-eschatological justification, and raising them with Christ into heaven.

Again, because Israel saw the Babylonian captivity as a curse, Minear suggests that New Testament writers do not reflect upon it when they discuss the church's present dispersion. Instead, the New Testament has in mind Abraham's call from Haran and Israel's deliverance from Egypt. While we do not deny that these latter backgrounds may be involved, we think it most likely that the New Testament authors also thought of the Christian dispersion in continuity with Israel's dispersion from Babylon. This would involve the "not yet" of the fulfillment of the gathering (discussed above).

We must also take issue with Minear's claim that the "remnant" theme is unessential while the theme of "election" is essential. (It is not surprising that Minear adopts Marcus Barth's notion of election.) This view does not do justice to the eschatological implications of Romans 9. Here Paul indicates that the election of an elect remnant within Israel (in the Old Testament) was essential to display the truly supernatural character of election that would be revealed in fullness when God chose an elect people for himself from Jews and Gentiles. This later election is one that does not discriminate (in any respect) on the basis of national descent according to the flesh. Instead, God's choice to disregard national descent fully accords with the age to come, the source of all supernatural renovation.

For that eschatological election to be manifested in the patriarchal age (in which only those of Abraham's descent according to the flesh were chosen), it was necessary that only some of them and not all of them were elect. If all Abraham's children according to the flesh were chosen, then physical descent according to the flesh would seem to be the determining factor rather than the supernatural work of the Spirit. Thus, it was essential to choose some from Israel and reject others.

For without this supernatural character, biblical election does not exist, nor can it be historically embodied and organically unfold into the full revelation of election in the New Testament, where we have a choice that altogether disregards distinction according to the flesh. Thus, the Scripture's teaching about the remnant is essential to its teaching on election. Both are equally essential and interdependent.

Other points of Minear's exegesis are problematic, such as his distinction between the church and the kingdom in the vineyard parable, from which he questions whether the vineyard refers to the church because he notes that it speaks of the kingdom. Or his agnosticism about the symbolism of the Jewish water pots in John 2.

However, despite these problems, when he draws his book to a climax in chapter seven and suggests the interrelationships between the previous images discussed in the book, he seeks to draw all his images together in the eschatological Christ. And so he provides some stimulating reflections.

It is unfortunate that his presentation is grounded in an Enlightenment view of epistemology and symbolic representation. As he quotes Krister Stendahl to describe his own view of the images and their interrelationships, "Over against stringent logic (the way of thinking of later theology) stands the Jewish thinking in images, where contradictory facts and conceptions can be put together in a kind of significant mosaic" (252).

How much greater riches might he have unearthed if he had recognized in these images a true metaphysical unity in the person of the risen Christ; if he had taken a semi-eschatological perspective in Christ that is truly descriptive, redemptive historically dynamic, and thus more vitally engaging; one in which we are constantly drawn away from the idols of this age to the heavenly life in union with Christ Jesus our eschatological shepherd-king, lamb and priest, servant and Lord.

—Scott Sanborn

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Stephen Westerholm, *Understanding Matthew: The Early Christian Worldview of the First Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006. 166 pp. Paper. ISBN: 0-8010-2738-3. $16.99.

Stephen Westerholm is a Canadian who earned his B.A. and M.A. at the University of Toronto and his Th.D. from the University of Lund in Sweden. He teaches at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

Since I have been preaching through Matthew in morning worship services, I hoped, in reviewing this book, that I would find help for my sermons. I was especially intrigued by the subtitle. I thought, perhaps, I would find insights into the world of Matthew's time. However, the book's title does not accurately reflect its content.

Here is Westerholm's basic understanding of the message from the gospel of Matthew: "Jesus (Matthew wants us to know) is a fit object of devotion and discipleship" (14). He illustrates and supports this approach to the study of Matthew with references to the life and writing of Dietrich Bonhoeffer because: "Bonhoeffer was concerned not only to understand but also to practice the kind of discipleship prescribed in Matthew's Gospel; as a result, there is much in his story to illuminate the study of Matthew." Westerholm does stress "at the outset that Bonhoeffer's approach is only *one* of the ways in which the Gospel can profitably be read" (9). He also says, "Matthew wrote, as Bonhoeffer wrote, not to inform readers of the nature of Christian discipleship but to summon them to a *life* of discipleship. Readers who fail to note the difference, whatever their grasp of Matthean themes, will have fundamentally misunderstood the Gospel" (16).

Westerholm discusses, defines and illustrates worldviews in chapter one, explaining that is it important to understand the worldview of others from their own perspective. He concludes the chapter stating "the goal of a book such as this is that every reader will begin to understand how Matthew made sense of things, and to see how it makes sense to make sense of things that way" (26).

Westerholm then deals with Jesus' admonition in Matthew 6:24-34 where Jesus teaches his disciples not to worry because the benevolent God will take

care of them. He hopes his readers "may begin to see how for Matthew, Jesus, and millions of others, the world is charged with the glory and goodness of God. For Jesus, God's goodness is palpably real, and it governed his whole way of thinking" (37). Westerholm says, "The limitless goodwill of the Father in heaven is the point of Jesus' words" (38).

However, according to Westerholm, "the need for trust (or 'faith') in God is stated repeatedly throughout Matthew's Gospel. It is Jesus' most basic requirement. God's benevolence is assured; if people fail to experience God's favor, it is only because they fail to trust him sufficiently to bring their needs to him: 'According to your faith let it be done to you'" (38). Westerholm believes that sensing and trusting the limitless goodness of God causes one to love him and to devote oneself to God's service, and that one must trust God even when bad things happen (39, 40). He supports and illustrates these themes with stories from Bonhoeffer's life, excerpts from his book, *Discipleship*, and letters written to family and friends during his experience in a Nazi prison.

In "making sense of Jesus' demands" for human behavior found in Matthew's gospel, Westerholm puts it bluntly, "Jesus wants people to be good" (48). And for people who should be good as God their Father is good, the smallest evil is a sin against goodness (50). To help the reader understand Jesus' vision of goodness, Westerholm offers the following explanations of his demands: (1) "Jesus is telling his followers how to behave in a society that is far from ideal"; (2) Jesus expresses his requirements of a good life in parables, not literally; (3) Jesus understands goodness as qualities from the heart, inspired by the vision of the goodness of God; (4) Jesus is concerned whether one sides "with the goodness of God or with the evil that opposes it"; (5) Jesus' requirements for goodness are not for practical ends to make the world a better place, but are how one must live if he acknowledges the good God as his Father; (6) Jesus defines what is good for humans by the nature and purposes of the God who created them; (7) Jesus portrays God as extending to his children unlimited forgiveness and promises them God's forgiveness as long as they forgive others. "Forgiveness is denied only to those who refuse to let the goodness of God shape their own response to their fellow human beings" (51-55).

In tying the Jesus of Matthew's gospel to the history of the Jews, Westerholm focuses on "four moments in Israel's past that shaped Jesus' (and Matthew's) understanding of their present": (1) the call of Abraham—God's response to human waywardness, making Abraham's offspring his people to display his goodness to the nations; (2) parallels between Moses and Jesus with Jesus affirming and fulfilling the Mosaic law, correcting where Israel failed; (3) David and his descendants—God promised to be a father to the kings descended from David and Jesus is called Son of David, therefore he is Son of God; (4) the Babylonian Exile and the promises of restoration and peace that were yet unfulfilled (63-78). Westerholm explains that Matthew makes the point that all of Israel's history is "summed up and reaches its climax in the life and proclamation of Jesus" and that "with Jesus, the reign of God is dawning" (78, 79).

Westerholm interprets Jesus' proclamation in Matthew that "the kingdom of heaven has come near" to mean "God's goodness must assert itself"; and that "God is about to put things right and establish his righteous rule on earth" (82). He emphasizes, "The invitation to God's kingdom is extended to all—but it is an *offer*; the God who made people with minds of their own forces his kingdom on no one" (83). He also says, "No one is to be excluded who desires to be there. Past sins are no problem, provided people are willing to leave their past behind and come" (83). Westerholm says God is anxious to forgive, but each one must decide. And if one decides to join God's kingdom, he "must adopt a lifestyle in keeping with God's goodness, as Jesus demanded" (85). "People determine their destiny" (94).

In relating Jesus' acts of healing to "manifestations of the power of God's kingdom," Westerholm says: "As Jesus extends the invitation to the kingdom to all who will enter, so he makes available its power to all who seek it in faith. The faith of those who turn to God as their only source of aid is always rewarded by divine interventions" (92).

Westerholm believes that a new age will come when Jesus returns to earth. "All are now invited to the kingdom; but if the new age of goodness is not quickly to revert to the corruption of the old, only those willing to side with the good can gain entrance" (94). "It is not for us to choose what *is* good for

ourselves, although we all must choose whether we will *do* what is good or what is evil" (109).

Westerholm perceives a conflict in the person of Jesus in Matthew's gospel that he cannot resolve. Jesus "assumes the prerogatives of God yet is distinguished from God" (113). He figures Matthew deals with this problem by calling Jesus, God's "Son". "As God's Son he is distinct from the God who is his Father, yet free to speak on his Father's behalf and to claim the same allegiance that is due his Father" (113).

Summarizing his understanding of Matthew, Westerholm writes: "The mission of Jesus is to reclaim the world for Goodness by goodness. All the powers of Goodness are at his disposal, and they exceed by far the forces of evil; but love can only triumph through love" (122). "Everything in Matthew hinges on the truth of the claims that Goodness—not chaos, indifference, or evil—lies at the source of all life, that Goodness must therefore prevail in the end, and that Jesus is the One through whom divine Goodness reclaims its creation" (123). "The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of Jesus, but it is meant to inspire its readers to a life of discipleship. Jesus' call to discipleship is thus a summons to share, for the love of Goodness, in the fate of goodness in the world—with the assurance that the world does not have the last word" (124).

By now you can see that Westerholm does not rely on redemptive history or biblical theology to control his thinking; rather he is envisioning that Goodness must conquer evil in the reign of Jesus Christ. I am afraid that this book was of no help in preparing my sermons on Matthew.

—J. Peter Vosteen