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"vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo"
Colossians 3:3

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THE END IN THE BEGINNING:

A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL CATECHISM FOR YOUNG AND OLD

Deuteronomy

James T. Dennison, Jr.

What is the fifth book of Moses?

> Deuteronomy

What does "Deuteronomy" mean?

> It is derived from a compound Greek word (the actual title of the book in the Greek OT/LXX)—*deutero nomion* which means "second law".

Why this strange name for the book?

> Because of Deuteronomy 5 which contains the second listing of the decalogue or Ten Commandments (cf. Ex 20:1-17).

What is the name of the book in the Tanach/Tanakh (Hebrew Bible)?

> *devarîm* which means "words" from the initial words of v. 1—in Hebrew *'êlleh haddevarîm* ("these *are* the words")

Whose words are we reading?

> The words of Moses reviewing and renewing the words of God

What is the narrative setting or location for the rehearsal of the words of Deuteronomy?

> The wilderness across the Jordan on the east bank of that river (1:1)

Who are the recipients or hearers/rememberers of these words?

> "all Israel" (1:1)

What is the narrative plot of these words?

> Under God, Moses and all Israel look back to the day they exited Egypt and review the dramatic events of the past forty years in the wilderness

So this book is a retrospective review of redemptive history from Egypt to the Jordan?

> Yes

Why?

> To actualize or vitalize the story of Israel in (and out) of Egypt, Israel in the wilderness and Israel on the brink of the Promised Land

So this present recital is a re-existentializing of the past experience.

> Yes, Moses' review and renewed rehearsal of the past dramatizes the participation of all Israel outwardly in the benefits of the Exodus and the sojourn in the wilderness. They do not reach the present story without the past story.

And what about the future?

> The present anticipates the future in prospect. Deuteronomy prepares them for the new beginning of entrance into the land promised to their fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Notice the bracket-like feature of this pledge at the beginning (1:8) and the end (34:4) of the book.

This narrative therefore consists of an organic continuum?

> Yes, unfolding God's rich grace in Exodus deliverance/redemption, his gracious preservation of his pilgrim people in the wilderness and the future gracious prospect of settlement in their inheritance

You are saying that Deuteronomy is the narrative review of the grace of God for his sojourning people?

> Yes; grace brings them out of bondage; grace carries and provides for them in the wilderness; grace will bring them over Jordan to the bounteous (in grace) land of milk and honey

You are also saying therefore that there is no works-merit paradigm in this retrospective, existential, prospective continuum?

> How could any people or nation of sinners (Israel was by nature a nation of sinners) merit or deserve or earn anything from God's hand (1 Cor 4:17; Rom 11:33)?
>
> How could any people or nation of totally depraved sinners (Israel was by nature totally depraved)—and therefore totally unable sinners (i.e., Israel was by nature totally unable to perform an act deserving God's merit)—how could such a people depraved and disabled by nature earn any reward in this life or the life to come from Almighty God. To suggest that they were able to merit, even if restricted to temporal merit, is not only to implicitly repudiate what the Bible says about the effects of original sin, but it is also to implicitly repudiate the first of the Five Points of Calvinism (all mankind is totally depraved in sin and thus totally unable to earn any merit from a holy God).

Thus, we read Deuteronomy with our understanding that "all Israel" on "the plains of Jordan" is, by nature, totally depraved and totally unable to merit any favor or blessing or reward from a sovereign and holy Triune God.

How do you find this in the book of Deuteronomy itself?

Deuteronomy is organized explicitly on a grace-faith paradigm, the very antithesis of a works-merit paradigm.

Where does this pattern of grace (God's free [sovereign], undeserved/unmerited [unearned] favor [kindness]) begin?

In Deut 4:37—"because he loved your fathers, therefore he chose their descendants after them. And he personally brought you from Egypt by his great power." God's great power (not Israel's non-existent merit) as an act of sovereign grace delivered Israel from the bondage of Egyptian slavery (so totally unable were they to deliver themselves or even contribute to their deliverance by their temporal works or efforts). God's choice or election or predestined foreordination of the Exodus was conditioned on nothing in Israel; no word or deed performed by Israel; no blessing temporal or eternal earned/merited by Israel. It was solely and only by the undeserved grace of God's sovereign, electing love for her "fathers" and their undeserving "descendants". There is no human merit at the base of God's election, predestination, foreordination. No human act (of Israel or any other son or daughter of Adam) is able to earn, deserve or merit divine election, predestination to deliverance, foreordination of liberation from bondage. An exodus comes from electing grace *alone*, not from merit in sinners, nor from grace in God and then subsequent merit in sinners. Israel in Egypt is totally in bondage and totally unable to redeem herself from that state of bondage.

NB: The Reformed faith has always drawn an analogy between total depravity and total inability and the state of Israel in Egypt—totally subject to bondage and totally unable to free/save/redeem/liberate themselves from that estate/condition.

Where is the next reference to this grace paradigm?

Deut 7:6-7—"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples." Here the number of Israelites is a non-factor in God's gracious electing choice of the nation. Not their great population (which was in fact puny, "few"), but God's love (emotion of grace, v. 8) and oath (promise of grace) was the redeeming (not earning or meriting) grace (not works) basis for manumission from the house of slavery. Nothing in Israel is the ground of her redemption; the condition is in God's love (his love is unconditional—i.e., no sinner could

perform the condition); the divine person alone is the pledge and assurance (not Israel's conditional or derivative obedience, pledge or oath to God, but God's unconditional promise and pledge of grace to Israel). The radical antithesis is between what God provided in his gracious love and promise and what Israel receives from him (cf. 1 Cor 4:17) in redemption and release apart from human merit or deserving or worthiness. The grace of God's love is antithetical to the merit of human sinners (which is, in fact, non-existent, temporally or eternally). Total depravity and total inability in Israel require sovereign grace and divine activity in God the Lord.

Where is the next reference to this grace paradigm?

> Deut 9:4-6—"Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,' but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the Lord is dispossessing them before you. It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the Lord your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Know, then, *it is* not because of your righteousness *that* the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people." Here an act is disqualified as the condition for the "giving" of the Promised Land. This act is even described as an act of "righteousness". Thus, even a "righteous" act of Israel was not the basis or ground of possession of the land of Canaan. In fact, because of their "stiff-necked" "stubbornness" (i.e., their inherent and actual sinfulness; NB: that total depravity and total inability is evident in vv. 7-8 of Deut 9), their so-called "righteousness" was as "filthy rags" (Isa 64:6, KJV) and unworthy of temporal or eternal reward. Hence, any boasting in "righteousness" or claim of "uprightness of heart" as a ground for laying claim to the Promised Land (either now or in the future temporally) is vain and putrid like dung (Phil 3:8, KJV). God sovereignly gives possession of the land to Israel (even as he sovereignly dispossesses them from the land later) out of his favor, his gift, his grace, his promise—not out of merit (temporal or eternal), worthiness, deserving or earning power. Total depravity and total inability in Israel make possession of the Promised Land a gift of divine grace alone with no human merit of any kind involved at all at any point in the whole span of the history of redemption, the Mosaic era included.

Where is the next reference to the grace paradigm in the book of Deuteronomy?

> Deut 10:15—"Yet on your fathers did the Lord set his affection to love them, and he chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day." This verse echoes Deut 7:7 and reiterates God's sovereign grace in choosing or electing a people unto himself in love (cf. Eph 1:4). We are reminded again that sovereign election is grounded in the grace of God's affection for an undeserving people—a people in an estate/condition of total depravity and total inability. They are unable to love God because of their sinful

depravity and enmity against him. They are unable to choose God because of their sinful depravity and bondage to willing choices against him and his righteousness. Israel on the plains of Moab is a people by nature totally depraved and totally unable to choose or love God unless he graciously first elects and loves them. Only God's act of electing and loving grace (not Israel's temporal or eternal merit) could bring his gaze of affection upon them. Total depravity and total inability requires sovereign grace—electing love out of God's act not man's demeritorious temporal or eternal acts.

If total depravity and total inability in Israel in the wilderness and on the plains of Moab is pervasive (demeritorious sin affects every aspect of their mind, heart, will and actions), how is it possible for them to even grasp and possess the sovereign grace which is repeatedly declared to be God's prerogative and paradigm alone?

God must give them a heart changed by his electing and loving grace so as to change or transform their hearts which are in a demeritorious and depraved and disabled state/condition by nature.

But Deut 29:4 says—"Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear."

If God had not changed their demeritorious hearts of sin and they were unable (because totally disabled) to change their hearts of sin, what hope was there for them?

Deut 10:16 contains the exhortation—in fact, the requirement—that they circumcise their hearts. "Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more."

But they are in a state of demerit (temporal and eternal) on account of their sinful, stiff-necked disposition. How are they able to do what God requires?

They are not able on account of their total inability (both temporal and eternal).

Then why does God require of them a condition which they are unable to perform?

This is a very important question and is foundational to understanding divine commands/demands/exhortations and human responses to those divine commands/demands/exhortations.

How can God ask sinners to "circumcise" their hearts when they are unable (on account of their own sinful nature and desires) to circumcise their hearts?

In the same way as Paul can demand or command the Philippian jailer (when he asks, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30) to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," Acts 16:31.

How does this very important question go back to Augustine (354-430 A.D.) for the correct answer?

> Augustine realized his own sinful inability (total inability due to his sinfully depraved heart). But he also recognized God's right to demand of him as a sinner what he as a sinner was obligated (though unable) to do. "You have a right to demand of me that I circumcise my heart. For you are sovereign, Lord, and I owe you what you demand. But since I am unable to do what you require (even though it is right and proper for you to demand it of me), then I ask you to perform in me what you demand of me. By your grace, O Lord, make me able to hear your voice and with a changed heart (by your gracious Holy Spirit) do in me what you command me to do." Augustine's famous slogan was: "command what you will, O Lord, and give [by grace] what you command." Therefore, God has the right to demand that Israel on the plains of Moab circumcise their hearts even though he has not given them the ability (because of total inability) to circumcise their hearts.

But where is the gracious ability God supplies to perform the condition he requires?

> Deut 30:6—"the Lord your God will circumcise your heart." The Lord commands that Israel circumcise their hearts, then graciously pledges to give what he commands—*he* will circumcise their hearts.

But is this not Israel performing a work of righteousness in God's sight, i.e., they do circumcise their hearts?

> No, God does it in them, for though commanded to do it, they are unable to perform the condition commanded and thus must rely on sovereign and transforming grace from God to enable them to possess a circumcised heart.

What is a "circumcised heart"?

> It is a regenerated heart; a heart born again and cut off from the disabling power of sin and enmity against God and the Lord Jesus Christ by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

So when Paul commands the Philippian jailer to believe, that jailer is unable to believe without a new heart of repentance and rebirth.

> Yes, and God wonderfully and graciously supplied that heart to the jailer so that he was saved.

The grace paradigm pervades the book of Deuteronomy, not the works-merit paradigm suggested by some today (i.e., Israel at Sinai operates under a "meritorious" covenant in matters temporal, namely her "continuance in the land" of Canaan via her "works" of obedience).

> Yes, in all the passages cited above, there is not even a hint of merit in sinners whether that merit be supposed to be temporal or eternal. Some today have suggested that Israel operates

under a system of "congruent merit" (a Roman Catholic notion) with respect to temporal blessings in the Promised Land. Such suggestions are insults to the pure, sovereign, sweet and wondrous grace of God to the "fathers", to Israel in Egypt, to Israel at Sinai and to Israel on the plains of Moab. It is always grace alone, never merit in any way or manner whatever in the whole history of redemption. This alone exalts God in his grace and favor, his election and predestination, his gifts of reception and possession (temporal and eternal).

In what sub-paradigm is the grace paradigm embedded?

The rehearsal of the journey paradigm in the "space in between".

What do you mean?

The whole book of Deuteronomy, from beginning to end, is structured as a review of the journey from Egyptian bondage to Canaanite settlement.

Where do you find this, since many others regard Deuteronomy as a suzerainty treaty/covenant paradigm?

That is correct—many evangelicals impose an Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) treaty paradigm upon the contents of Deuteronomy. However, the text of the book does not support this eisegesis.

Please explain.

Let us take the first element of the ANE suzerainty treaty pattern, i.e., the preamble. The preamble in Hittite, Assyrian and other NE treaty documents identifies the suzerain (or lord) making the treaty with the vassal (or subject) whom he has conquered or allied himself. The ANE suzerainty preamble gives the name of the sovereign and (often) some of his honorific titles (cf. Ex 20:2 for a Biblical example: "I am the Lord your God").

Does the book of Deuteronomy open with a preamble?

No, the book opens with a five-verse inclusio (vv. 1 and 5, "across the Jordan").The Lord's name does not appear in the inception, nor are any of his titles provided. (Yes, his name is mentioned in v. 3, but not in first person suzerainty categories.) The person whose name does appear is *not* the divine covenant making suzerain—it is Moses (vv. 1, 3, 5). Hence, those who label Deut 1:1-5 a treaty or covenant or suzerainty preamble are inventing a label/category which is wholly bogus. Read the text—it has ***no*** suzerainty preamble/title(s)!!

The second element in an ANE treaty paradigm is the historical prologue. Explain this please.

It is a description of the past acts of history in which the suzerain lord has benefitted the vassal subject (for a Biblical example, cf. Ex 20:2, "who brought you out of the land of

> Egypt, out of the house of bondage"). The suzerain's past acts of history (historical benevolence) are catalogued as a basis for his right to enter into a treaty covenant with his vassal subject. Deut 1:1-5 has no rehearsal of God's past acts of benevolence (a la Ex 20:2; cf. Deut 5:6). It is, in fact, a report of journey's end ("the fortieth year," v. 3) after the Exodus, the wilderness sojourn and the encampment on the plains of Moab, "across the Jordan." Read the text—it has ***no*** suzerainty historical prologue.

Thus, you are dismissing ANE treaty paradigms as the pattern Moses borrowed to construct the fifth book of the Law.

> Yes

Well then, what pattern are you proposing for the structure of the fifth book of Moses?

> A journey paradigm concluded by a testamentary farewell

Outline this for me.

> The book falls into two sections, broadly speaking: chapters 1-28:68 and chapters 29-34:12. Notice the literary markers which inaugurate these two sections: "these are the words" plus "Moses" (1:1); "these are the words" plus "Moses" (29:1). These markers may be labeled anaphoras, i.e., an illustration of recursion (or duplication) marking the beginning of a narrative or literary unit.

What other pattern do you notice in these two narrative/literary units (1:1-28:68; 29:1-34:12)?

> The first is more retrospectively focused, rehearsing the forty years of wandering as well as the covenant at Sinai/Horeb.
>
> The second is more prospectively focused, anticipating the crossing over Jordan and settlement of the Promised Land. It too contains a covenant rehearsal—the covenant at Moab (29:1, 9, 12)

What is the journey paradigm?

> It is the detailed itinerary given in chapters 1-5 of the sojourn of Israel from Egypt to the "land of Moab . . . across the Jordan" focusing on the covenant at Horeb/Sinai (cf. 29:1) via the anaphora in 1:1. The anaphora of 29:1 focuses on the covenant at Moab as Israel's wilderness journey ends on the Transjordanian side of the Promised Land.

What is the testamentary farewell?

> Deut 33—the so-called farewell "blessings" of Moses to Israel

Why do you label it a "testamentary farewell"?

It is a farewell declaration because Moses dies after it is delivered (Deut 34:5-7).

It is a testament because it bequeaths the Lord's gracious blessing (all of grace-faith, none of works-merit) to the heirs of the covenant at Moab according to the election of grace. It takes its place alongside the "farewell testament" genre of the Bible—Gen 49, Josh 24, John 14-17.

This 'last' word of Moses anticipates the beginning of the new world for the people of God.

Yes, the end of Moses' testament is the beginning of the promise of a land of rest in prospect. And this is true for all the testamentary declarations in Scripture—Jacob's last words are the beginning of endless covenantal promises; Joshua's farewell marks the beginning of an era fraught with the abundance of the promised possession/settlement; Jesus' last words to his disciples are full of the new beginning which the place he has prepared and to which he goes on their behalf is and will be their possession. In each case, the end is as the beginning with the protological coming to pristine eschatological fruition, provisionally and consummately to faith.

What happens to the legal material of Deuteronomy 12-26 on your paradigm?

It too is folded into the protological and eschatological pattern. As it is legislation for the era of the Israelite theocracy, it has a provisional and final aspect. The theocratic era is a provisional reflection of the law of the (eschatological) kingdom of heaven—sin and holiness are antithetical and legally described (respectively) as contrary to and characteristic of the kingdom of heaven. We have previously discussed these patterns in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.

Does the Mosaic theocracy project its own end (fulfillment, completion, displacement)?

Yes, in two important texts: the Israelite monarchy replaces the Israelite theocracy (Deut 17:14-20); the eschatological Moses replaces the protological Moses (Deut 18:15).

Please explain.

Consider the death of Moses; as with the author of the theocracy (Moses), the era is destined to pass away. Redemptive-historically, this will occur when it is replaced (in organic continuum) by the Israelite monarchy and then the Israelite exile (586 B.C.) and finally the Israelite revelation of the kingdom of God ushered in by our Lord Jesus Christ. The death of Moses and his entrance into heaven (cf. the Transfiguration) testifies to the impermanence and non-finality of the earthly theocracy he recorded. As with Moses himself, so with the theocracy in him. Something better was prepared for him and for it. He would be gathered to the eschatological theocracy as in the fullness of time Jesus would reveal and bring the eschatological 'theocracy' ("the kingdom of heaven" has come and is

in our midst—a kingdom not of this world, a heavenly theocracy of the Triune God's eternal glory, holiness and grace).

But traditionally, what is described as moral, ceremonial and judicial law is reflected theocratically in the pages of Deuteronomy.

That is correct. What is eternal and perpetual (i.e., the moral Ten Commandments, Deut 5:6-21) is an ethical mirror of the eternal and perpetual moral character of God himself in his heavenly glory-kingdom. It can no more pass away than he can. For example, it is never moral to commit adultery because no (unrepentant) adulterer is present in heaven. Christ himself is the eternally faithful bridegroom of his precious and faithful bride, the church. No other paradigm can exist in their marriage arena.

What is temporal and ephemeral (i.e., ceremonial/sacrificial/ritual law) is designed as type (i.e., typology) and endures until the eternal and eschatological Tabernacle-Temple Sacrifice and Priest performs and finishes his work (i.e., Jesus Christ, eternally begotten Son of God).

What is temporal and political (i.e., the judicial law) is designed for the nation of Israel as a temporary and localized phenomena. When Israel ceased to exist as a redemptive-historical state and politic (certainly by 70 A.D., if not before), these judicial elements ceased as well (except for any residual elements of natural or general equity present in them).

How do you sum up Moses' last book?

It contains a review of the culmination of all his five books—the organic continuum from "the beginning" (4:32) to "the plains of Moab" (34:8). While specifically featuring the history of redemption from the Exodus from Egypt, it carries within it the mirror of the eschatological nature of God's own arena in moral-ethical character (holiness), in vicarious intercessory nearness unto God (ceremonial), in righteous judgment of what is fitting in that eschatological arena (judicial).

It also contains an expectation of "better things" beyond the present—a future passage through the waters and an entrance into a God-granted inheritance land. Even the latter will prove provisional as sinners sin their own exile from it, leaving it in ruins and are scattered abroad looking for (as their protological "Hebrew" did, Gen 14:13) the eschatological city and land whose builder and maker and owner is the Lord (Heb 11:10).

In Christ Jesus, all believers in Christ possess that city, that land, that Triune Lord God because he is the eschatological seed of Abraham; he is the eschatological Passover lamb of God's eschatological Exodus; he is the eschatological sojourner in the land "in between" who obeys perfectly the will of his Father and does not succumb to the Temptations of the wilderness; he is the eschatological law-keeper upon whose heart the moral law of the Ten Commandments is engraved as it is in heaven; he is the eschatological One who passes through the waters dividing the old from the new, the former things from the better things, the protological from the semi-eschatological with the consummately eschatological in view and possession to faith; he is the One greater than Moses whose gospel age is more wonderful that the Mosaic theocracy, whose own sojourn by life, death and resurrection finishes once and for all the sojourn of Moses and the former Israel of God while completely fulfilling the book of Deuteronomy, as well as the "five books of Moses".

Night and Day

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

Night and day the Accuser makes no
pause,
Day and night protest the Righteous
Laws,
Good and evil witness to man's
flaws;
Man the culprit, man's the desperate
cause,
Man midway to death's devouring
jaws
And the worm that gnaws.

Day and night our Jesus makes no
pause,
Pleads His own fulfilment of all
Laws,
Veils with His perfections mortal
flaws,
Clears the culprit, pleads the desperate
cause,
Plucks the dead from death's devouring
jaws
And the worm that gnaws.

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"Death, Be Not Proud"

Hosea 13

Scott F. Hunter

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so

This is a well-known line from a poem by the 17th century English poet, John Donne. In this poem, Donne mocks death. He accuses death of being unjustifiably smug in its alleged mastery over man. For death is merely the entrance into glory for those in Christ. Thus, finding no grounds for boasting, Donne exhorts death to "be not proud."

Hosea 13 also speaks of pride. It speaks of it as a spiritual poison that had virtually become the creed of the nation Israel. Israel was a proud and arrogant nation, prone to trust in her own strength and the strength of her political allies, rather than place her faith in the strength of God. Note the reference to Ephraim's self-exaltation in vs. 1 and to their pride in vs. 6. We read in vs. 1 that Ephraim exalted himself and died; for death and pride share an inexorable bond. Pride is the natural outgrowth of a soul under the curse of death.

Notice how death plays a central role in this passage. Death is present at the beginning (vs. 1); it is present in the middle (vss. 7-9); and it closes out the chapter at the end (vss. 14-16). It brackets and forms the framework for this passage. Death drapes over and enfolds this text like a dark cloud. Hosea 13 reads like a literary tomb.

Yet the centrality of death here is ironic, for Israel had worked so hard and skillfully to secure life. They carefully crafted idols of silver to worship Baal; Baal, who was the Canaanite god of fertility and life! Note how the chapter opens with such devotion to Baal, worshippers even kissing the idols in verse 2 (cf. 1 Kings 19:18). Surely Baal must be pleased with such obedience from their hands and heart. Surely this will be a chapter teeming with life—long life, new life. Surely the blessings of Baal will bring fertility to the womb, abundant produce from the land, and lives full of years and prosperity. Surely Ephraim (a name that means "fruitful") will find his cup overflowing.

Except that Baal is no god; Baal is no anything; Baal is a myth. So this chapter opening with worship to the Canaanite god of life is ultimately enshrouded in the darkness and hopelessness of death. Centuries later, the apostle Paul would say in Romans 10 that Israel had great zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Israel rejected a life of faith and trust in the one God for a life which hungered for the earthly, the tangible, the fleeting, the impotent. Again in the words of the apostle Paul from Romans 1:22-23, "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the

glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."

Do you see Israel's problem? It was not a lack of religious energy. It was not their failure to do enough. Rather they failed to believe. They sought to barter their own sullied righteousness for divine favors. They tried to manipulate God which resulted in a bountiful harvest of self-righteousness, pride, and spiritual aloofness. From their heart came no longing for the nearness of the Lord, no hunger for heaven, no appetite for Immanuel. Where their treasure was, there was their heart also (Matthew 6:21). Hosea clearly expressed this pattern back in chapter 7:

> And they do not cry to Me from their heart when they wail on their beds; for the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves, they turn away from Me (Hosea 7:14).

God was viewed as giver, but not the gift. The blessing of Immanuel was effectively reduced to little more than the proximity of an impersonal power that could fill their bellies and satisfy their worldly wants upon their beck and call, as if he were nothing more than a genie in a bottle.

Israel's repeated unfaithfulness is dramatically captured in this chapter by a series of historical panoramas moving between past, present, and future.

Past	**Present**	**Future**
vs. 1		
	vs. 2	
		vs. 3
vss. 4-6		
		vss. 7-8
	vss. 9-10	
vs. 11		
	vss. 12-13	
		vss. 14-16

It's as if our eyes are sweeping across a timeline, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards. Why is this? It is because God's future dealings with us are rooted in history—our own history and the history of those who represent us. Note the transitional words translated "therefore" (*laken*) and "so" (w*a'ehi*) in vss. 3 and 7 connecting God's future dealings with Israel to their past unfaithfulness.

Verse 4 looks retrospectively back to the giving of the law, echoing the language of the Decalogue's first commandment (Exodus 20:2-3). Israel was to have no other gods before the Lord. The relationship between God and his people was to be characterized by exclusivity; he was to be Israel's God and they were to be his people. This initial commandment was not to be a burdensome duty but a natural corollary to the heavenly reward. What God has prepared for his people in glory is an exultation of such an order and degree as can only be found in God himself.

There is no treasure or delight in this place that can match what the Lord has made ready for those who love him. They are invited into union with God and participation in his life! They are drawn into a relationship that is profoundly and inherently intimate and devout. As such, the commandment steers Israel away from the spiritual adultery of earthly substitutes and orients her vision to the consummation of the Immanuel promise; embedded in the law is a foretaste of the eschatological goal. As God's glory is his own chief delight, so those he draws to himself will bear his likeness and revel in that divine glory, holding it as the object of their greatest interest and affection. The command to forsake all other gods is a call to participate in the fidelity of paradise; it is a call that both draws from and looks to the theocentric fulfillment of the covenant of grace in heaven itself.

Listen to the way in which Hosea expresses the tenderness of God in verses 4-5. "I am the Lord ***your*** (emphasis mine) *God* … I cared for you." In the wilderness, God shepherded them and loved them (*yada*, vs. 5). In the wilderness, that place of earthly emptiness, God cared for them. There in that wasteland they were to learn that he was their provision. As a Good Shepherd, he protected them and led them to pasture (vs. 6). In the giving of the Law, he opened himself up to them, not through arbitrary precepts, but through commandments that were a legal expression of his own character. The soul that embraced the Lord's justifying work by faith would find the law sweeter than honey (Ps. 119:103), while those who rejected righteousness through faith would be crushed under the weight of its demands (e.g., Rom. 2:1-13).

Yet, Israel did not respond to God's wilderness kindness in thanksgiving and worship but in an ever-increasing appetite for this world. Eternal union with God was rejected for the temporal embrace of a world alienated from the Lord. Such an embrace bore the spoiled fruit of pride and self-sufficiency. Note the stark contrast in vss. 5-6: "I cared for you … you forgot me." In their self-sufficiency, they forgot how God had loved them in the wilderness. They were overcome by horizontal desires and consequently ran after other gods when it appeared the world's treasures were withheld. It was the land and its earthly delights she desired, not God. God was a necessary means to acquire these treasures. He was something to be manipulated, not loved; he was to be appeased, not worshipped from the heart; and if someone or something else could satisfy their desires then God could be abandoned, cast out, even forsaken.

And so in vss. 7-8 we are given a brief, prophetic look into Israel's future. As they had rejected God's love, they would be exposed to the savagery of His wrath. The wilderness shepherd leading them to pasture would become the wild beasts who will tear them up! The proud hearts of verse 6 will be violently exposed in verse 8 ("I will tear open their chests and devour them like a lioness").

In verses 9-11, Hosea again revisits Israel's past. This time the retrospective view recalls the period when Israel demanded that Samuel appoint a king for them. God had revealed himself as Israel's help yet Israel wanted an earthly king like the other nations. They felt the strength of an earthly king would enable them to dwell in safety; with a strong king for them who could oppose them? Now they are to realize the terrifying reality that if God opposes them, no one can be for them!

The Israelites then suffered under periods of forced labor, high taxes, and foreign oppression because they rejected God as their king. This was an expression of God's displeasure and discipline; these divinely induced hardships should have driven them back to the Lord but still they rejected him. Consequently Hosea likened them to a child in the womb, enduring the distress of labor only to refuse entrance into the new life at the appointed time of birth (vs. 13). God's discipline was to lead to new life, but they foolishly refused.

Therefore God calls death and the grave forward to administer judgment. The east wind will destroy them (vs. 15, see also 12:1). That east wind will come from the wilderness (the place where God had cared for them). The Assyrians will come from the east; they will answer God's call to death and the northern kingdom will be no more. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians conquered Israel's capital city of Samaria. The vast majority were taken into exile; they never returned. The Canaanite deity Baal was to bring them fertility and life, but our passage closes with slain children and the murder of those with child. This horrifying image demonstrates the absolute impotence of Baal and is to awaken hearers from their slumber. We do not close with a picture of new life and fertile lands and prosperity. The future flows out of the past and Israel's rejection of God results in her death. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

Hosea's prophecy is one of profound reversals. God who was Israel's faithful and loving shepherd pursued them as a savage beast (vs. 7). The wilderness, the place where God loved them and gave them his law, would become the place from which the east wind of judgment blew and destroyed them (vs. 15). Israel pursued earthly kings to save them from their enemies; they lost their earthly king and gained God as an enemy. The worship of Baal was to give them life and fertility, yet we close in barrenness and death (vss. 1, 3, 16).

These reversals emphasize their hopeless state. Their efforts to find comfort in this world apart from God result in their forfeiting everything in this world and, much worse, any place with God. So verse 3 tells us "they will be like the morning cloud, And like dew which soon disappears, like chaff which is blown away from the threshing floor, and like smoke from a chimney." They will be fleeting. Like the Baal myth they pursued, they too will amount to nothing.

Reversals are a powerful and prevalent theme in the Bible. As seen here, the righteous justice of God profoundly reverses the prideful position of man. Indeed, he who exalts himself will be humbled. But there is another reversal in this chapter. It is a reversal fed by God's grace and mercy. It has been hinted at already in this book.

> COME, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him (Hosea 6:1-2).

In this chapter of death, in this lifeless tomb of a chapter, one of our historical panoramas exposes a ray of hope. Looking at it from Israel's perspective, it was not to be found in their past, not in their present, but in the future—in verse 14. In verse 14, "death" and "Sheol" are emphasized

through repetition. The specific focus of this verse is not the brutality in which death will be administered as elsewhere in this chapter, but whether death will continue to have abiding dominance. That such a question could even be raised here is unexpected, for this chapter has presented nothing in Israel's history that would anticipate any such expression of God's kindness. There is nothing in the resume of Israel's past that would lead to such a future.

This puzzle aggravates an already challenging problem in translation. The Hebrew in vs. 14 is written with a curious degree of provocative ambiguity. More specifically, the first two lines of verse 14 present a grammatical puzzle of sorts. Are the first two lines posing a question or stating a fact? The Hebrew can be taken either way. This is evidenced in translations like the LXX and NKJV where it is treated as stating a fact, while translations like the NASB and ESV render it a question.

- "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death" (NKJV)
- "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death?" (NASB)

Two separate images are produced depending on the choice made. If it is posing a question as to whether God will redeem them, then verses 15-16 provide the answer. God will not ransom or redeem, but rather send the Assyrian east wind of judgment. The reference to death and Sheol in verse 14 is then a call to the deserved punishment. However, if it is stating the fact that God will ransom them from the grave, then Hosea is prophetically projecting the Israelite reader into the distant future, well beyond the time of the Assyrians to the Messianic age. In that case, the repeated use of death and Sheol is understood as mocking death for its inability to ever sting again. These two options leave us with the question as to whether death is being called forth as executioner or the object of mockery. Perhaps the ambiguity is intentional leaving us with two overlapping images—the one image suggesting a temporal judgment may come in the form of Assyria, but the second image declaring that God will ultimately ransom them from that power of the grave by grace.

The coming of the Messiah raises the second image to prominence. The Son of God came into this world, not to be served, but to give his life as a ransom. The threatened judgments of Hosea 13 fell on Jesus Christ in his suffering and death on the cross. On the cross, the darkness of death and Sheol draped over and enfolded Christ. But on the third day, death was plundered of its trophy. The resurrection of Jesus was a public declaration that Christ had defeated death; and though there may be a temporal encounter with death remaining for us, this great enemy will have to release us, the redeemed, just as it did our Savior.

Our eternal future is forged from real history, but not our history; rather our future is borne out of the completed work of Christ. The object of Paul's contemplation in 1 Cor 15 is our glorious hope of resurrection. With the resurrection in the forefront of his mind, Paul remembers Hosea 13. His mind is drawn to one more reversal in Hosea's chapter of reversals; death gives way to life!

> **1 Cor 15:52, 54, 55**—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet … the dead will be raised imperishable … then will come about the saying that is written, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

No longer under the curse of death, no longer in bondage to sin, we have been enveloped in the glory of the Son of God to forever enjoy him and be enjoyed by him. This tender, intimate, eternal union is called life—eternal life! For you who believe in the gospel of this Christ, your sins are forgiven and you possess the Spirit of that risen Son even now. You are being evermore enfolded into the joy of that heavenly union with your Savior.

Our Christian striving here is a journey of progressively pushing aside the realm of death and sin. It is an outstretched arm straining to grab hold of that fullness of joy that awaits us in glory. We have already been spiritually raised by the Spirit and are now called, in Lazarus-like fashion, to "come forth" and walk in newness of life. This striving of sanctification is not our attempt to earn God's favor, but is a real participation by the grace of God in that favor which is the fullness of life in Christ.

The brilliant light of resurrection glory transforms this chapter filled with corpses. It is perhaps the last place we would expect to find such abundant hope; for who looks for life in a tomb? Yet did not two angels in dazzling apparel say to the women, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen" (Luke 24:5f.)? In anticipation of that day, this chapter was emptied of death's sting much like Christ's tomb was emptied of his body and the place of death becomes a striking testimony to everlasting life. What a reversal—what a glorious reversal!

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

… One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

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The Living God Necessitates Transcendent Eschatology:

Semi-Realized Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians as Suggested by Acts

Scott F. Sanborn

In this article, we will suggest that Paul's claim that the Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9) can be grounded for its background in the proclamation of Paul in the book of Acts. We suggest that this background indicates that the designation "living God" indicates God's transcendent nature, which is most fully revealed in the resurrection of Christ to the transcendent throne-room of God. And this is in contrast to the idolatrous horizontalism of paganism in its worship of this age. In addition, as indicated by our title, we hope to show that the book of Acts teaches that God's transcendent nature necessitates a transcendent consummation of history. By God's gracious free choice, this has now been semi-realized in the resurrection of Christ. Some connections between Acts 14 and 17 and the latter's connection to Acts 7 leads us to this conclusion.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, Paul reminds the Thessalonian Christians "you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." These words conclude with the first of several eschatological markers in this letter (1:10; 2:12, 16, 19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23), suggesting their importance. The letter closes with the God of peace presenting believers without blame at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:23). This future salvation is connected to God's deliverance of his people from wrath (1 Thess. 2:16), introduced in 1 Thess. 1:10. Another indication of the importance of these two verses (1 Thess. 1:9-10) is that the already of Christ's transcendent resurrection into "heaven" is connected with the not yet of deliverance from future judgment. This is expanded in a central passage of this letter (1 Thess. 4:13) in which "the Lord himself will descend from heaven" to bring final salvation. In what follows, we hope to demonstrate that Paul's claim that the Thessalonians have turned to the living God from idols indicates that they have turned from an idolatrous preoccupation with this provisional arena to heaven. That is, they have been turned around to participate in the semi-eschatological life of the living God in heaven even now. There they serve him and his resurrected Son in glory (already), waiting for his return from heaven (not yet).

The one reference to Paul's preaching of the living God in Acts (Acts 14:15) shows God to be the transcendent Lord who made heaven and earth. This has implications for the transcendent nature of the eschatology that Paul was preaching in contrast to the idolatry of paganism. In Acts 14:15, Paul calls them to turn from these vain things to the living God, and the living God is described as the one "who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them". Thus, he represents God as the transcendent Lord who has given witness to his transcendence through the good gifts he (not Zeus) has given to human beings in rain from heaven and fruitful seasons. But even more

so, God reveals his transcendence as the creator of heaven and earth in his miraculous deeds (Acts 14:10) and the preaching of the gospel (Acts 14:7, 15) which was connected with them. In these mighty acts, God indicates that he is the living God, in contrast to all the impotent gods of paganism. The witness of God in nature (Acts 14:17) to the effect that he is the living God who made heaven and earth (Acts 14:15) is consonant with the witness of God in the gospel as witnessed to in miraculous acts (Acts 14:10). Both proclaim that God transcends this creation as the living God. As the living God who transcends creation, he is able to act in nature (giving good gifts) and in redemptive history (in miraculous acts). In this way, Paul sees the witness of nature and scripture as coordinate. We will suggest by a comparison to Acts 17 and 7 that this means natural revelation necessitates a transcendent eschatology, though it does not reveal the redemptive means in Christ by which sinners might enter into the blessedness of this eschatology. This is a matter of God's freely chosen grace revealed in redemptive history. Nonetheless, natural revelation requires that if God should redeem, it would be unto a transcendent eschatological blessedness and not one of an everlasting terrestrial nature.

There is one other element of Paul's sermon in Acts 14 that we will highlight at this point—its redemptive-historical character. "And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own way" (Acts 14:16). This suggests that (as in Acts 17 and 7 to follow) Paul preached the forbearance of God in times past in their rebellion against his transcendence. They had rejected God's transcendence as revealed in nature and instead clung to "vain" things (Acts 14:15), idols such as Zeus and Hermes who did not transcend this horizontal dimension. It is possible that Paul was cut off by the crowd before he could finish his speech, but in accord with Acts 17 it seems that he is going in the direction of preaching the transcendent resurrection of Christ. For he had indeed been preaching the gospel in this city (Acts 14:7), and thus also at the time (Acts 14:15) he healed the lame man (Acts 14:8-10). Thus, it seems that where Paul concludes in his sermon in Acts 17 (vv. 30-31) is where he began in his sermon of Acts 14 (v. 15). It is indeed this transcendent resurrection that was displayed when he healed the lame man saying, "Stand upright" (Acts 14:10). And it is this resurrection power that is displayed after Paul was stoned by this crowd and taken for "dead" (Acts 14:19), for as such "he arose" (Acts 14:20). These hints that Paul preached that the transcendence of God over creation requires transcendent eschatology will be more fully explored in Acts 17. Let the reader take note at this point, that this preaching elaborates what Paul means by the "living God" which we find in 1 Thessalonians 1:9.

In Acts 17, Paul gives a similar proclamation to that found in Acts 14. He addresses these pagans with "the God who made the world and all things in it". In Acts 17, Paul does not call God the "living God", but instead says he is "Lord of heaven and earth". "Lord of heaven and earth" like the "living God" points to his transcendence. In both, God's transcendence is indicated by the fact that he created the world (Acts 14:15; 17:24) In Acts 17, Paul uses this fact to preach God's transcendence over human temples; God "does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24). He then lays out in greater detail than Acts 14 the witness of God in natural history. There is much that might be said on this witness in detail, but here it is sufficient to point to three things.

First, this revelation accords with God's transcendence over history. Second, God reveals his own action in natural history by all that he has done in it. In this way, Paul presents God as the transcendent Lord over creation and thus as the first cause and main actor in it. Third, he did this as a testimony to his own transcendence that people might seek him as the transcendent God and so find him (Acts 17:27). This hints at an eschatological consummation presented to humanity through natural revelation. But all have sinned and rejected God's transcendence and clung to its polar opposite, to idolatry (Acts 17:16, 29).

In the midst of God's revelation in nature and its suppression, Paul then reveals God's redemptive-historical reversal in Christ. "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is declaring to men that all everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:30). Like Acts 14:16, Paul proclaims God's longsuffering before Christ, but here he is able to cap it off with God's declaration that all everywhere should "repent". Nonetheless, this was not entirely absent in Acts 14. In Acts 14:15, Paul said he was telling them to "turn" from these vain things to the living God, demonstrated in his miraculous acts. To "repent" (Acts 17:30) and "turn" (Acts 14:15), is to turn from the idols of this age (horizontalism) to the transcendent living God. And this transcendent living God has revealed himself most fully in Christ and the semi-realized aspect of his resurrection and present reign. It is this aspect of Acts 17 that we hope to undergird next by a comparison with Acts 7. Nonetheless, if it is true, it has significant ramifications for Acts 14, for Acts 14 has a many similarities to Acts 17; and in Acts 17 Paul appears to reach an eschatological climax that he did not explicitly reach at the close of his sermon as it has come to us. Instead, the climax of Paul's sermon in Acts 17 finds its closest parallel to the conclusion of Paul's preaching as he gives it at the beginning of his sermon in Acts 14: 15. That is, "we…preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth." If Acts 17 (and thus Acts 17:30-31) indicates a turning from an idolatrous horizontalism to Christ's semi-eschatological kingdom, it is reasonable to conclude that Acts 14:15 teaches the same. This would further reinforce the argument that turning to the living God involves turning to God in his heavenly transcendent arena in Christ. As this language of turning to God from idols is found in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, it would further indicate that Paul is articulating to the Thessalonians new semi-eschatological life in the risen Christ in these words. Thus, we turn to a comparison of Acts 17 with Acts 7.

Paul's statement in Acts 17: 24 ("The God who made the world and all things in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands") echoes Stephen's earlier speech in Acts 7:1-53 where Stephen says, "the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *hands*" (Acts 7:48). Like Acts 17, Stephen then notes that this follows from the fact that God made all things. "Was it not my hand which made all these things?" (Acts 7:50, quoting Isa. 66:2). Since Stephen is preaching to Jews, the context is somewhat different, focused as it is in the whole history of redemption from Abraham onward. Thus, it is after stating that Solomon "built a house for him" (Acts 7: 47) that Stephen also quotes Isaiah to the effect that "heaven is my throne, and the earth is the footstool of my feet; what kind of house will you build for me? Says the Lord" (Acts 7:49;

Isa. 66:1). The redemptive-historical movement in Stephen's sermon is focused on the mighty acts of God in history. He brings in God's transcendence to show that the present administration of God's kingdom in Christ transcends the Old Testament era and its temple. In other words, should God freely choose to redeem, the fact that "the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands" (Acts 7:48) requires a transition in the history of redemption that brings the kingdom of God to fruition in a more fully transcendent expression. We might call this the necessity of transcendent eschatology. God's transcendent nature requires transcendent eschatology. This is seen as Stephen traces out the onward march of God's promises and presence with his people through his prophets, whose words finally look ahead to the Righteous One (Acts 7:52). This culminates in God's own words expressing his transcendence to the temple: "heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool, what kind of a house shall you build for me?" (Acts 7:49, quoting Isa. 66:1, as we have noted). In accord with this, the prophetic promises looked ahead to the Righteous One (Acts 7:52). Thus, God's transcendence comes to expression historically in Christ's resurrection[1], as indicated when Stephen sees the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. The right hand of God is a designation of proximity to God in his transcendent throne room. "Heaven is my throne" (Acts 7:49) and thus Stephen sees "the heavens opened up" when he sees the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Here Christ is raised in the invisible realms of glory and thus not visible to others besides Stephen.

Also in Acts 17, Paul uses this transcendent nature of God to preach the transcendent resurrection of Jesus Christ. The echo of Acts 7 in Acts 17 also strengthens the suggestion that Acts 17 depicts Christ as a judge associated with the transcendent realm of God. As we have noted, after Stephen preaches the transcendent nature of God, he sees Christ transcendently raised to the right hand of God. The connection of Acts 17 to Acts 7 would be further strengthened if Christ's posture of standing indicates that he is Stephen's advocate, as some argue. As such, Christ would be standing as Stephen's judge, attesting to his justification before God's throne. In this way, Acts 7 would associate Christ's judicial role with his transcendent heavenly habitation. In addition, there are also points in Acts 17 itself which indicate the connection between Christ's resurrection as judge and the transcendent realm of God's judgment seat. God himself is said to judge the world in righteousness through the man that he has appointed. The transcendent God of heaven and earth judges, and the proof that he will judge through Christ is that Christ is raised from the dead. Christ is so associated with God in his judgment as transcendent Lord that it makes sense to associate Christ with the transcendent realm of the divine judge himself. That is, since God judges through Christ, Christ is presumably at God's right hand. Christ is in God's transcendent throne room. This fits nicely with Acts 7, in which Christ stands (perhaps as judge) in the transcendent realm of God's glory throne-room above.

As in Acts 7, Acts 17 presents the resurrection of Christ as the culmination of history. As we have seen, natural revelation (through its historical revelation) testifies to God's transcendent character.

[1] As an aside, if we connect the necessity for transcendent eschatology with Anselm's argument for the necessity of the God-man and his atonement, the necessity of Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven follows.

But human beings have suppressed this knowledge and made creatures an end in themselves (idolatry). In past history, God overlooked the times of ignorance (Acts 17:30) but "is now declaring to all men that all everywhere should repent" because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world for refusing to worship his transcendent nature. The man who will judge the world must be different. He must seek and lay hold of God in his transcendence (Acts 17:27). And in Acts what is the closest possible way that a human nature can do this without blurring the distinction between the divine and human nature? It is for that human nature to be raised into the invisible heavenly realm above (as indicated in Acts 7:56, 49). Therefore, that man who is raised from the dead as a judge is associated with the transcendent arena inhabited by God himself (Acts 17:31). In summary, Paul moves in Acts 17 from the transcendence of God as Creator to the transcendence of the kingdom of Christ Jesus in contrast to the this-worldly horizontalism of idolatry. The fact that God is "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17: 24) necessitates an eschatological consummation. Now by grace, God has freely chosen to offer a way of blessedness into this consummation through the resurrection of Christ.

It is interesting that Paul's sermon on the Areopagus comes shortly after Paul's first preaching in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9). And thus we come full circle to Acts 14:15 with its use of the "living God" that is instrumental to 1 Thessalonians (1:9-10). The Acts 17 sermon (by its connection with Acts 14) implies that Paul's intention in speaking of the living God who made heaven and earth in Acts 14 was to preach the transcendent kingdom of Christ. Thus, when Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 that they have turned from idols to serve the living and true God, we conclude that he is saying they have turned from the horizontalism of idolatry to the transcendent living God in Christ Jesus and his resurrection arena (1 Thess. 1:10). In 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, Paul is explicit in connecting the living God to the resurrection of Christ. It is the living God who raised Jesus from the dead (1 Thess. 1:9-10). This again suggests that Paul's preaching of the living God to Gentiles (as in Acts 14) was to lead them on to the transcendent resurrected Christ (as he also did in Acts 17). In 1 Thessalonians 1:10, the already of Christ's transcendent resurrection is connected with the not yet of deliverance from future judgment as it is in Acts 17:31. The already and not yet of the kingdom are part and parcel of the same fabric. But the future aspect of eschatology in 1 Thessalonians should not blind us to the already of semi-eschatological participation in Christ. Paul's language of *already* turning to the transcendent living God should lead us to see this. As such, this may help us further understand God's present activity among the Thessalonians. For we saw in Acts 17 that God presently manifested that he was the transcendent living God through his mighty works in history (e.g., the healing of the lame man, Acts 14:8-10). So also in 1 Thessalonians 1, God's living character is represented in his transcendent activity among his people. God's choice of them and Paul's ministry among them has been revealed "in power and in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:5). The present joy of the Holy Spirit has been at work in them in the midst of their tribulations (1:6). As a result the word of the Lord has sounded out from them (1:8). As a result of the activity of God among them, it is reported that they have turned to the living God. This makes sense since the living God is the transcendent Lord who is at work in history presently through his Holy Spirit. Thus, it is said of them that their work of faith and labor of love

and steadfastness of hope is associated with that arena where Christ is raised (1 Thess. 1:3). As living saints they live out these realities "in our Lord Jesus Christ". Thus, they live them out where he dwells "in the presence of our God and Father" (1:3). They live before the living God in his transcendent abode in heaven (1 Thess. 1:3 with 1:10).

In this chapter, we find three key elements that depicted the "living God" in Acts 14. The first two are God's transcendence and his mighty acts. Christians are intimately united to these mighty acts when God bring sinners into union with those acts through his Spirit. That is, through his Spirit, God brings sinners into union with his transcendent life (to the extent that creatures may inhabit it without blurring the creator/creature distinction). Third, as in Acts 14, God's transcendence and activity is placed in antithesis to idols (Acts 14:15, 1 Thess. 1:9). Thus, in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, we find the semi-eschatological antithesis between the transcendent living God and the horizontalism of idolatry. The only difference is that what Paul calls the crowd to do in Acts 14:15 (turn to God from idols) they have done in 1 Thessalonians 1:9. This eschatological antithesis is implicit in all that is found in 1 Thessalonians 1, for God expresses this antithesis through his Spirit's supernatural work among his people. For after noting God's work among his people (that we have sketched above in 1 Thessalonians 1:3-8), Paul says that this is an indication that they have turned from idols. That is, God's activity among them is not simply an indication that they have turned to their transcendent Lord in abstraction (without any consideration of his antithetical relationship to idolatry). No, this work is in antithesis to idolatry. And thus the work of God's Spirit among them manifests that they have turned to God from idols. In this way, 1 Thessalonians 1 reflects the three key elements associated with the "living God" that we have found in Acts 14.

This is only a further step on the journey of unearthing the semi-realized aspects of eschatology in 1 Thessalonians[2]. More can be traced throughout his two epistles to the Thessalonians. What a wonderful gospel it is, Paul's gospel to the Gentiles. In it he preaches the necessity of a transcendent eschatological consummation from the very transcendent nature of God himself. The rejection of this is idolatry. But God has overlooked this willful ignorance and has identified his Son with the eschatological death it deserves. Having satisfied God's wrath for idolatry, he is raised from the dead to idolatry's antithesis, the heavenly realms of God. There he lives before the transcendent living God. And from there he calls his church into union with himself, delivering them from idolatry, placing them in heaven for the worship and praise of God alone. In this they live, testifying to heaven's superiority to idolatry and waiting for their Lord from heaven. He alone is the living God and he will come.

[2] For further insights into the semi-eschatological dimension in 1 Thessalonians (most of which I have not repeated in this article), I refer the reader to James T. Dennison, Jr., "Eschatology and the Structure of 1 Thessalonians" in *Kerux* 19/3 (Dec 2004): 31-35. I am indebted to this article for the general point of view that led to my own present reflections.

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Jeremiah: Prophetic Narrative Biography and the Divine-Human Interface

James T. Dennison, Jr.

The book of the prophet Jeremiah is the largest single-author work in the Old Testament (OT). And this largest single-author work among the books of the OT records the greatest amount of biographical detail on the career of any canonical prophet. And this greatest detail of a canonical OT prophet lays out before the reader the greatest crisis of the OT—the great crisis of the destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC). Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians together razed the Temple of Solomon so as to leave not one stone upon another, together with the transportation, the deportation, the expatriation of wave upon wave of Judeans to Babylon.

Rightly branded the "weeping prophet" (cf. Jer. 9:1, 18; 13:17; 14:17; Lam. 1:16; 3:48-49)—an appellation which dominates his portrayal in literature and art—"Jeremiah sat down weeping . . . over Jerusalem" as we read in the heading to the book of Lamentations in the Septuagint (LXX, Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible). This weeping prophet, this prophet of tears, this prophet whose narrative biography is the most replete, the most complete, this largest book of the prophets with the greatest amount of biographical detail, this lachrymose prophet is the least known in the church. From the detail of his career recorded in Scripture, he is the best known of the canonical prophets from within the Bible. But outside the Bible, even in the places which revere the Bible, Jeremiah remains the least known of the prophets in the church. As one observer has noted, the most "accessible prophet" from within Scripture is the most "hidden prophet" to the church. And Jeremiah is the most open of the prophets—about his life, his feelings, his complaints, his sufferings; but to us, he remains the most obscure prophet. Jeremiah is the most familiar prophet to his contemporaries, but the most unfamiliar prophet to us and our contemporaries. Well known in his day (as his narrative biography testifies); unknown in our day.

And yet, the Lord Jesus Christ was thought to be Jeremiah. Jesus of Nazareth was considered to be Jeremiah alive from the dead—*Jeremias redivivus* (Matt. 16:14). Who did some people say that Jesus was? "Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Jesus Christ regarded as the eschatological Jeremiah. The protological (first) Jeremiah is recapitulated in the eschatological (last) Jeremiah. The protological weeping prophet is fulfilled in the eschatological weeping prophet. Jesus, our Savior, is identified with Jeremiah, the OT prophet. That is an identification which is profound, poignant, plangent, powerful! Powerful to attract you to the life of this OT prophet—this figure of Christ of the former era; this prophet who wept over Jerusalem, even as the Son of God wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).

We are dealing here with a marvelous philosophy of revelation—redemptive-historical revelation—revelation in protological and eschatological tandem—revelation knitting together the redemptive history of the former prophet with the redemptive history of the last prophet. Indeed, we are drawn irresistibly to a once-and-for-all weeping prophet who is more than a prophet, more

than a mere recapitulation, more than Jeremiah—a prophet who is very God of very God. That means that God is disclosing himself in his Son, Jesus Christ; but also in his prophet Jeremiah. And, grace upon grace, God the Son is disclosing himself in the prophet Jeremiah. This is magnificent redemptive-historical, recapitulatory, protological-eschatological prophetic narrative biography. The first weeping prophet and the last weeping prophet mirroring themselves in one another. Now that is sweet redemptive-historical union, is it not?!

The interface between the 6th century BC prophet and the 1st century AD prophet is the rippling narrative of the organic history of redemption—an unfolding drama which encloses antecedent and consequent, precursor and successor, first and last, Jeremiah and Jesus. Enfolds them both in a redemptive-historical drama of suffering, rejection, spurned proclamation, betrayal by their own, denunciation, mockery, arrest, imprisonment, scourging, condemnation.

Jeremiah is born of humble surroundings, raised in a rural village setting. The story of Jesus interfaces.

He is commissioned by the foreknowledge, the decree and the calling of God. The story of Jesus interfaces.

His preaching is the thunder and fire of God's judgment and the softness and warmth of God's grace in a new heart. The story of Jesus interfaces.

His message about the destruction of the Temple earns him the enmity of his listening audience. The story of Jesus interfaces.

His own people plot his death—seek to kill him. The story of Jesus interfaces.

He is arrested, beaten, imprisoned and bound over to death. The story of Jesus interfaces.

For telling the truth—the truth of God—he is condemned, an outcast, despised and rejected of men. The story of Jesus interfaces.

When Jeremiah preaches his famous Temple Sermon (Jer. 7), he is banned from the Temple (36:5). When he declares that the Lord will bring fire on the land of Judah, his own family plots to kill him (Jer. 11:21-23). When he prophecies that God will make Jerusalem like Tophet, Pashur, a Temple priest, strikes him, beats him and puts him in stocks overnight (Jer. 20). When his scroll containing prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem is read to King Jehoiakim, the arrogant monarch deliberately slices column from column and feeds them to the flames of his brazier (Jer. 36). When he predicts seventy years of captivity in Babylon, Hananiah, a pseudo-prophet, calls Jeremiah a liar and humiliates him in the presence of all the people (Jer. 28). When Jeremiah proclaims that Jerusalem will be given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, he is cast down into a cistern full of mud—muck into which Jeremiah sinks and would have suffocated to death had he not been rescued by an Ethiopian (Jer. 38).

Outlawed, censored, threatened, pummeled, imprisoned, derided, belittled, degraded, nearly asphyxiated, Jeremiah endures a range of abuses over the life of his more than forty-year career. And in the face of the near constant barrage of hatred and opposition and dislike and rejection, the prophet often cracks—shows his temper—is provoked to retaliate with complaints, confessions, commiserations. We are admitted to the soul of this prophet as we are excluded from the souls of virtually every other prophet. The humanization of OT prophecy is here in Jeremiah—this prophet of the Lord pressed down into the passion of his God—the pathos of his people: the pathetic passion of prophet and people.

Out of the soul, up from the heart of this weeping prophet, the complaints, the confessions, *le cri du coeur*—the soul of a man, prophet of the Lord, whose inner person, whose down-deep psyche is displayed to his readers—to those with hearts and souls to understand, to feel the depths of the anguish which Jeremiah, the prophet, feels. Here is religious feeling—religious affection (to borrow the phrase of Jonathan Edwards); here is the soul before God; here is the soul in God; here is the soul of a sinner at the brink of the Last Judgment on his own world. Though spared and exiled, he becomes a provisional mirror of the horror of the eschatological judgment on the cosmos.

And so, the poignant confessions of Jeremiah are a mirror of ambivalence—the tension and erstwhile contradiction between consent and complaint, between praise and protest, between benediction and malediction. It is the prophet's narrative—the narrative of the soul in collision with God, the Sovereign; collision with self—the pitiful narrative of the soul between God and self.

The narrative of the book of Jeremiah is the drama of the interface between prophet and people. The narrative ripples of Jeremiah in his own history and the history of Judah converge, intersect, overlap. And the narrative ripples of Jeremiah the prophet of the Lord and the Lord the giver of prophecy converge, intersect, overlap. The history of Jeremiah dramatically carries along the story of the man as it interfaces with the ripple effects of the story of the nation of Judah. And the Word of the Lord which the prophet expires is the Lord's Word which he inspires—the Word of the Lord in Jeremiah interfaces with Jeremiah in the Lord of the Word. Those ripples are the revelatory ripples of a divine-human drama: God the Lord disclosing himself to his servant; his servant disclosing himself to God the Lord.

We discover we are reading a prophetic narrative biography in which the story of the prophet and the nation-people is mirrored. Such is the redemptive-historical mirror. And we further discover that we are reading a prophetic narrative biography in which the story of the prophet and the Lord God is mirrored. Such is the incarnational mirror. So profound is the inter-relationship between Jeremiah and his Lord that the Word of the Lord in-dwells him even as he dwells within the Lord of the Word. Mirror ripples as mirror interfaces in narrative drama.

This prophetic narrative biography overflows with characters—dramatic, heroic, tragic, pathetic characters: Kings—Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah; Prophets—Uriah, Hananiah; Baruch, the Scribe; Ebed-Melek, the Ethiopian; Pashur, the Temple priest; Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuzaradan of Babylon—and a supporting cast of thousands. Narrative characterization literally abounds in this book.

It is also brim full of prophetic symbolic actions: Jeremiah's linen girdle (Jer. 13); the potter's vessel of chapters 18 and 19; the yoke he wears upon his neck (Jer. 27); the field he buys in Anathoth (Jer. 32); and the marriage he is forbidden to pursue (Jer. 16). Symbols of the impending acts of God in the acts of the prophet. There is that divine-human interface once more!

And this prophetic narrative biography ripples over and over with Jeremiah's "confessions"; or more trenchantly his "complaints" (Jer. 11:18-20; 12:1-4; 15:10-12, 15-21; 17:14-18; 18:19-23; 20:7-18). Scholars who prefer the term "confessions" compare Jeremiah's expostulations with Augustine's famous book of that title. In the case of the OT prophet and the North African church father, we have the soul laid bare—opened for all to see—plumbing the depths of human feeling and sensitivity. We read Jeremiah and Augustine and they touch our soul—our inner core of feeling and fallenness and shame and delight in our Lord and Savior. With Jeremiah, we journey inward to the narrative of the soul and the soul's narrative journey in to the presence of God and the tender union of his everlasting love (Jer. 31:3) in Christ Jesus.

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The Eschatological Jubilee

Luke 4:16-30

James T. Dennison, Jr.

There will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times he treated the land of Zebulun and Naphtali with contempt, but later on he shall make it glorious . . . Galilee of the Gentiles. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined (Isaiah 9:1-2).

This is a surprising narrative, is it not? No, I am not referring to its uniqueness—only Luke records this reading from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth. Luke's selection and positioning of this story is embedded in the redemptive-historical thrust of his two-volume work, Luke-Acts. There is something here in Jesus taking up the scroll of Isaiah which is programmatic for Luke and his readers. No, this pericope is not surprising from its uniqueness, it surprises from its antitheses—its polar opposites. Did you notice that basic opposition when I read the text? Look at the antithesis between v. 22 and v. 28. After Jesus reads, the listeners in the synagogue speak well of him (v. 22); but within a few short moments, the synagogue audience is filled with rage against him—to the point of trying to kill him (vv. 28-29). What a surprising—even shocking—about face! The same audience which commends him does a one eighty and condemns him. But perhaps what surprises us does not surprise Luke; perhaps the antithesis surrounding Jesus is programmatic; perhaps the antithesis is embedded in the history of redemption.

Antitheses

Antithesis has not been the theme of this gospel to this point—at least, not ostensibly. Luke's wonderful Christmas hymns inaugurate the opening two chapters: Mary's *Magnificat*; Zachariah's *Benedictus*; the angelic *Gloria in excelsis*; Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis*[1]. From Christmas hymns, Luke moves to Spirit anointing—the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at the Jordan in chapter 3. And now, after temptation in the wilderness, Jesus comes home—Jesus comes home to read the Bible. Especially at the Advent time of the year, we think of Luke's Christmas narrative with its nativity scene and angels hovering and shepherds wondering. These are scenes of great joy to us: peace on earth, good will to men. Any antithesis—any radical opposites seem far away from the hills around Bethlehem; far away from the exultant mothers, Elizabeth and Mary; far away from the theophanic voice at the Jordan, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (3:22). But what *seems* far away is only apparent. Aged Simeon prophesies, "This child is appointed for the rise and fall of many in Israel and for a sign to be opposed" (2:34)—"a sign to be opposed"! Satan assaults Jesus after his baptism with a barrage of antitheses—a three-fold staccato of

[1] Cf. the author's series on Luke 1-2 here: http://nwts.edu/audio/jtd/luke.htm . Also "Simeon's Farewell Song." *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 16/3 (Dec 2001): 10-17. Here: http://kerux.com/doc/1603A2.asp .

opposition (4:1-12). Jesus refuses each one, but the adversarial element has been foreshadowed at the outset of chapter 4. We know that Christmas is followed by Good Friday—the manger gives place to the cross. Even the baptism in the Jordan is a washing from sin and guilt and death—these ultimate antitheses vicariously assumed by the Son of God himself. Sin and guilt and death must be washed away from us—cleansed and washed by the substitution of the Son of God in our place. The antithesis of the Christmas story; the antithesis of the baptism story—the antitheses of our story are intimated in the first three chapters of Luke's story of Jesus' story.

Chapter 4

But here in chapter 4, and especially in our text, we have a dramatic, even shockingly surprising antithesis. And you will notice how Luke masterfully embeds this antithetical theme in the structure of the narrative—as if to indicate that narrative structure serves narrative theology; as if to indicate that narrative structure serves narrative biblical theology. I want to begin by pointing out how Luke has framed this pericope. In other words, there are narrative markers which set this section of the third gospel apart. Notice v. 16—Jesus comes to Nazareth. Now notice v. 30—Jesus departs from Nazareth (in v. 31, he comes down from Nazareth to Capernaum). Notice the antithesis—the opposite of Christ's arrival in Nazareth is his departure from Nazareth. And Jesus leaves Nazareth, his hometown, never to do the opposite again—never to return again. A narrative unit framed by the obverse—a narrative unit framed by the opposite directions: Luke brackets this story with its shocking opposition (his hometown wants to kill him)—Luke brackets this story of surprising opposition with opposites—to Nazareth, from Nazareth.

So, in a unit of narrative antithesis, a narrative antithetical marker. But Luke provides even more structural clues to his thematic antitheses. Jesus stands up to read (v. 16); Jesus sits down after reading (v. 20). Opposites! Jesus is handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (v. 17); Jesus hands back the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (v. 20). Opposites! Jesus opens the prophet Isaiah (v. 17); Jesus closes the prophet Isaiah (v. 20) Opposites! Luke carefully delineates narrative opposites in framing the quotation from Isaiah 61 in vv. 18-19. And he structures this narrative frame antithetically because opposition is the narrative motif of this narrative unit. I remind you once more of the striking opposition—the furious antithesis—between the reaction to Christ in v. 22 and the reaction to Christ in v. 28. Luke is drawing out clues for us; in fact, Luke is drawing out biblical-theological or redemptive-historical clues for us by framing this narrative with opposites (v. 16 with v. 30), by framing the Isaiah reading with opposites (vv. 16-17 and v. 20). The opposition to Jesus which surprises us in the synagogue at Nazareth is framed in a narrative pattern of structural antitheses.

But I invite you to look one step further for reinforcement of Luke's antithetical paradigm. I direct you to Capernaum in v. 31 where Jesus descended after departing from Nazareth. You will note he enters a synagogue there (v. 33) and in that synagogue is a man possessed by the antithesis of Jesus and his kingdom—the man is demon possessed. After the opposition in Nazareth, demonic opposition in Capernaum. And before his arrival in Nazareth? before the opposition of the

hometown crowd? Luke 4:1-13—Satanic opposition. Before the opposition from the synagogue at Nazareth, opposition from the supreme opponent himself. The Devil opposes Jesus with the most insidious of antitheses *before* Jesus faces opposition from the worshippers in the synagogue at Nazareth. Luke has surrounded this Nazareth pericope with opposition to Jesus: opposition to Jesus from Satan himself and from Satan's demons. The glorious Christmas hymns of Luke 1 and 2 seem a distant memory when we come to Luke chapter 4. Simeon's prophecy is being fulfilled—this child will be for a sign to be opposed. Satan opposes him; the demons oppose him; his own neighbors oppose him. The Christmas hymns are songs of *doxos* (doxology); but they must be balanced by the songs of *pathos* (sorrow). We must not lose sight of the rest of the story—even at Christmas, Luke will not let us.

Why the Opposition?

So far, I have side-stepped the reason for the opposition in the synagogue crowd at Nazareth. Why the well-speaking (v. 22) reversed in evil-seizing (v. 28)? The antithesis in the crowd's reaction cannot be explained from the hometown boy syndrome. No, the hometown boy syndrome appears to be what grants Jesus the permission to read from the Isaiah scroll. Well then, why are they so furious with him? The answer lies in the combination of antitheses here in chapter 4. Jesus opposes the Devil in Luke 4; Jesus opposes the demons in Luke 4; and Jesus opposes his hometown crowd in Luke 4. Jesus comes home from being opposed by Satan; Jesus will leave home for Capernaum to be opposed by Satan's minions; and sandwiched between, at home, Jesus returns to the village where he was raised—to the synagogue where he customarily worshipped each Sabbath day—Jesus returns to oppose his neighbors.

Now you will notice how I phrased that last statement—Jesus returns to oppose his neighbors. I have been detailing the opposition to Jesus, but here I state Jesus' opposition to his neighbors. Is this not the reciprocal of the antithesis: Satan opposes Jesus—Jesus opposes Satan; the demons oppose Jesus—Jesus opposes the demons. Now, in vv. 16-30, Jesus opposes the synagogue crowd in Nazareth; the synagogue crowd in Nazareth opposes him. Christ's opposition to Satan and his imps is easy enough to grasp. But his opposition to the synagogue crowd? What is going on here?

The key to this incident is yet another antithesis. Notice what enrages the synagogue crowd. The reading of Isaiah 61 itself? No. What enrages the synagogue crowd is the participation of Gentiles in Isaiah 61? Jesus folds down the uncircumcised Gentiles into his reading from Isaiah 61. And the crowd goes ballistic! Jesus says God's grace includes a Syro-Phoenician widow and her son and the crowd goes berserk! Jesus says God's grace includes a Syrian leper and the crowd becomes murderous! Notice that it is after Jesus specifies the gracious beneficiaries of the miraculous power of God through Elijah and Elisha that the synagogue audience becomes enraged. Elijah bypasses the widows of Israel; Elisha bypasses the lepers of Israel. Foreigners—Gentiles, non-Jewish foreigners receive God's grace and mercy and the synagogue at Nazareth flies into a rage. God's grace and mercy is for Israel. It is for us says the synagogue crowd. It is not for Gentile sinners; it is not for those outside Jewish synagogues. God's grace is not for those opposed to us—those we

oppose. If you declare God's grace is for them, Jesus, you are not one of us—even if you are a hometown boy. The kingdom of God is within Jewish borders; it is reserved to Jewish synagogues; the kingdom of God is us—no one opposed to us—no one else but us. And because you include some persons other than us, Jesus, you oppose us. And because you oppose us, we are antithetical to you—you and your inclusive Jewish-Gentile kingdom of God.

Thus, we reach the bottom line—the fundamental antithesis—the redemptive-historical antithesis—the eschatological antithesis. Or is that not what Jesus brings? With his Christmas hymns, with his theophanic baptism, with his wilderness temptation—does he not bring the redemptive-historical antithesis ("unto you is born this day, a Savior"—antithetical to a Curser; "Thou art my beloved Son", Spirit anointed—antithetical to the Spirit-less, not my sons, not my daughters; "worship the Lord your God and serve him only"—antithetical to the kingdom of anti-Christ). In the synagogue at Nazareth, the redemptive-historical, the eschatological antithesis is found in the reading from Isaiah 61. An eschatological Spirit-possesser declares the dawn of the eschatological gospel with attendant eschatological liberation and concomitant eschatological sight in the eschatological year of Jubilee.

A declaration of the eschatological turning point of the ages is proclaimed in the synagogue at Nazareth, even as it is declared to the shepherds in Bethlehem and to the penitents at the Jordan and to Satan in the wilderness. Isaiah 61:1-2 with Luke 4:18-19 signals the advent of the eschatological Jubilee-year of the Lord. Jesus says so in v. 21, "Today this text—this prophetic eschatological text has been fulfilled in your hearing." But not an ordinary Israeli Jubilee year; this Jubilee from Christ's advent and announcement includes those outside Israel. It includes those inside and outside Israel captive to the opposition—enslaved by the forces antithetical to the good news of the gospel—blinded by the dark light of the prince of darkness—imprisoned and crushed by the tyrants of evil. The bringer of Jubilee brings the opposite to all those who were once upon a time antithetical to him and to his kingdom and to his Jubilee. The opposite of the antithesis comes with him: good news, emancipation, sight, liberty, the year of God's grace.

Eschatological Jubilee

Jesus proclaims the eschatological Jubilee. Proclamation is sufficient. Or is it? In the season of incarnation, what good are prophetic promises as proclamation alone? In the season of incarnation, what good are angel hymns without embodiment? In the season of incarnation, what good is theophanic announcement without filial enfleshment? In the season of incarnation, what good is opposition to Satan without historical actualization? What good are the words without the reality? They are abstractions, impersonal theories, intellectual games, ideas without substance. This is the malaise of much modern preaching and preaching theory—abstract, impersonal, moralistic, applicational, not existential—not experiential, not affectional. The words of Luke 4:18-19 are abstractions, intellectual idealisms, empty sophistries, if they are not incarnated—if they are not embodied—if they do not become part of redemptive history, part of Christ's story; if they do not become part of the story of those united to Christ. Abstract preaching—even abstract redemptive-

historical preaching—is mere intellectualism. It is a form of an ego trip; it lacks any incarnational vector, any true participatory identification. Union with Christ is real. It is a sublimely real, existential, experiential, affectional ecstasy. And it is that ecstasy which is missing in so much Reformed and evangelical preaching of the 21st century.

Now I want you not just to hear what Jesus proclaims in Luke 4. I want you to fell how he incarnates what he proclaims. I want you to feel as surely as you were leaning on him, clinging to him. Because he incarnates the proclamation, your life is different. Because Jesus embodies this Jubilee proclamation, your life of bad news, your life of bondage, your life full of blind darkness, your life full of oppression—because of Jesus' life in history, your historical life is different.

Do you see what happens here? The antithesis seizes Jesus; the opposition presses in upon Jesus. Jesus is opposed and he does not resist. Jesus is the victim of the antithesis and he does not escape. And Jesus does not resist, he does not oppose the antithesis so that he may join you to himself and carry you along with him into the eschatological Jubilee.

In Luke 4, the center of the antithesis—the focus of the opposition—is Jesus. The opposition focuses upon—seizes Jesus. Jesus becomes the embodied antithesis of Isaiah's proclamation. And Jesus becomes this reversal for you and for me and for all who are afar off.

Jesus Embodies What He Proclaims

Jesus proclaims good news, but the opposition proclaims bad news. And that bad news is our biography—our story. Jesus says, "I will make your story my story." And he enters into the antithesis; Jesus allows the antithesis, the bad news to seize him, to arrest him, to nail him, to kill him, to bury him. Jesus participates in the antithesis, even proleptically in the synagogue at Nazareth because he knows there is no other way to deliver his loved ones—his elect loved ones from the antithesis—from the bad news—from raging death and Satan and Hell; no way except he submits to the opposition in their place. There is no good news except Jesus makes your bad news story, my story, our story his story; and so makes his good news story your story, my story, our story.

Jesus proclaims liberation and freedom, but the opposition proclaims bondage and slavery. And that bondage and slavery is our biography—our story. Jesus says, "I will make your story my story." And Jesus enters into the antithesis; Jesus allows the antithesis—the bondage and the slavery—to seize him, to bind him, to shackle and chain and enslave him. Jesus participates in the antithesis, even proleptically in the synagogue at Nazareth because he knows there is no way to liberate his loved ones—his elect loved ones—from the antithesis, from the bondage, from raging, oppressive, tyrannical, Satanic, Hellish slavery—no way save he bends himself to the opposition in their place. There is no freedom from bondage except Jesus makes your bad news story, my story, our story his story; and so makes his good news story your story, my story, our story.

Jesus proclaims sight to the blind, but the opposition proclaims darkness, even darkness which might be felt. That dark blindness is our story. Jesus says, "I will take your darkness and make it mine." And so his eyes are shut with darkness; into the realm of darkness he descends—no light in those all-seeing eyes. Jesus allows the darkness—the blindness, the antithesis—to shut out the light because he knows there is no way for the light to shine unless the darkness first overcomes it. And then, on that glorious Easter morn, break forth O beauteous light! No more darkness now! There is no light except Jesus makes your story—your dark story, my dark story, our dark story his story; and so makes his story—his Light of the World story—your story, my story, our story.

For Your Sake

Does this not affect you? Are your affections—your emotions—not moved with love—with passionate love—for this Savior? who faces the opposition, endures the antithesis, vicariously assumes the evil and the bondage and the darkness and the wrath you and I deserve. This is Luke's post-Christmas story to us—to include you and me—Jews and Gentiles—in the eschatological Jubilee. His narrative structure; his narrative theology; his biblical theology; his eschatology—his story of Jesus at the synagogue of Nazareth is to fold you in to Jesus, to draw you into Jesus, to unite you unto Jesus, to affect you with love for Jesus—love for his good news, love for his capturing captivity, love for his eye-opening mercy, love for this new-beginning year—this beginning of the eternal year of God's grace and favor. Not an abstraction, not an intellectualization—a real, intimate union with Christ and his story in the synagogue at Nazareth.

This is your eschatological Jubilee—if you are united to this story, to his story, to the story of your Savior.

> For the Spirit of the Lord is upon him
> Because he has been anointed to preach to you who are poor, the good news of the gospel
> He has been sent to proclaim release to you who are captives
> And recovery of sight to you who are blind
> To set free you who are downtrodden
> To proclaim to you the favorable year of your Lord

Reviews

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Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. 736pp. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0-8010-2685-0. $54.99.

Weima's commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians is thorough, stimulating and well researched. Pastors, students and scholars of all sorts would be benefited by using it. In this work, he considers various interpretations of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, analyzes them and gives solid reasons for his opinions. Because of the detailed nature of this commentary, some will think it gets bogged down in detail at certain points. But many others will appreciate the fine tuning in their attempt to understand the text in all its richness. The commentary is written within the Reformed tradition, but its scope is broad and deep, interacting with top scholars in the field such as Abraham Malherbe and many others.

In fact, one of his more interesting discussions is his interaction with Malherbe and the school of interpretation that followed him on 1 Thessalonians. Malherbe argued that Paul was not defending himself, but instead was simply giving himself as an example for the Thessalonians to follow. Weima presents extremely detailed exegetical arguments to show that Paul in fact is defending himself in this epistle, thus bringing serious questions to a major aspect of Malherbe's claim. In our opinion (and perhaps even in Weima's), this does not mean that through his apology Paul does not also present himself as an example to be followed, as long as we recognize that it is in Christ Jesus that he presents himself. That is, Paul as a representative of Christ draws the believers in Thessalonica into union with himself so that they may be drawn into union with Christ (e.g., 1 Thess. 1:6; 3:12; 5:5).

We have a couple of reservations about the work. The first involves Weima's tendency to use epistolary analysis to the neglect of rhetorical analysis. This may be a matter of conviction on Weima's part, but numerous New Testament scholars have shown that the analysis of letters using epistolary criteria does not exclude rhetorical analysis. That is, while there are unique conventions of letter writing in antiquity, those trained in rhetoric might use the rhetorical skills to expand and develop their letters. Many New Testament scholars believe this is represented in the apostle Paul, who writes some of the longest letters of the Roman era.

Second and more importantly, we would encourage Weima to reflect more deeply on the present and transcendent aspects of eschatology as they are semi-realized in the life of the church (in 1 Thessalonians). There is an already as well as a not yet to Paul's eschatology. And Paul places this already in antithesis to the structures of this world. For instance, in accordance with his latter use in Romans (Rom. 15:33; and the "God of Hope" bringing present peace, Rom. 15:13), the "God of Peace" (1 Thess. 5:23) has an already (2 Thess. 3:16) dimension as well as a not yet perspective (Rom. 16:20, 1 Thess. 5:23). The fact that the "God of Peace" (1 Thess. 5:23) spreads his wings backward (so to speak) to the present is suggested by the fact that it is the God of Peace who

sanctifies his church, even now (1 Thess. 5:23), leading up to their final sanctification at the last day. Paul's present encouragement to peace in the same chapter (1 Thess. 5:13) is an encouragement to live out of the God of Peace who sanctifies them. This peace is a semi-eschatological realization of the final peace of God. As such, this present peace partially stands in antithesis to Rome with its promises of present earthly peace and safety (found at the beginning of chapter 5, 1 Thess. 5:3). (Weima expounds this latter verse in its historical context with clarity.) There are certainly more clear hints of semi-realized eschatology in this letter. Unearthing these would encourage Weima and others to also reflect more on the Christocentric aspect of the text. As we see it, Christ is present from heaven above for the sake of his church (1 Thess. 1:10) in contrast to the idolatry of this age. From heaven, Christ calls the church to further participate in his life through his apostle (1 Thess. 1:6; 3:12; 5:5).[1]

Weima has certainly shown himself to be an able exegete, following the evidence and changing his position when the text presses him to do so. One example that we were pleased to see is that solid arguments have led him to change his interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 1:5 since his shorter 2002 commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians in the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. There Weima took a more recent interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 1:5, arguing that the church's "afflictions" (2 Thess. 1:4) are "a plain indication of God's righteous judgment". That is, even though they are Christians they must experience in their suffering God's judgment. In the present commentary under review, Weima lists scholars holding this view and presents sounds arguments showing that this position is mistaken. Consistently with Paul's other writings, the suffering of Christians are not an expression of God's judicial punishment. Other interpreters, including Gregory Beale, believe that it is "your perseverance and faith" (1 Thess. 1:4) that are a plain indication of God's righteous judgment, thus avoiding the interpretation that the Christian's sufferings are a sign of God's wrath. Along the lines of this interpretation, one might argue that Christians (in their perseverance and faith) are an indication of God's righteous judgment in that these characteristics indicate that they have been justified in the midst of their sufferings. (By contrast, the suffering of the wicked indicates that they will be condemned.) Weima does not move in this direction. Instead, following the 2006 commentary of Ben Witherington, Weima now takes the view that the "indication of God's righteous judgment" refers instead to what follows. When God repays "with affliction those who afflict you" (2 Thess. 1:6) and "gives relief to those who are afflicted" (2 Thess. 1:7), this will be an "indication of God's righteous judgment" (1 Thess. 1:5). We are not here intending to adjudicate between Weima's interpretation and Beale's, but instead to note that Weima has changed his view when the evidence (primarily that Paul does not view Christian suffering as an expression of God's wrath) has pressed him to do so. Whether the alternative he suggests (following Witherington) is the best alternative remains up for discussion. The point is that here we see how the careful spade work of this diligent exegete has lead him to

[1] For further reflection on the semi-eschatological dimension in 1 Thessalonians, we refer the reader to James T. Dennison, Jr., "Eschatology and the Structure of 1 Thessalonians" in *Kerux* 19/3 (Dec 2004): 31-35.

develop his own understanding of these two epistles. And his commentary (which is the result of this labor) is sure to have the same effect on many of its readers.

All in all, Weima's commentary is an important work, exemplary of his careful and painstakingly scholarship on 1 and 2 Thessalonians, a labor of love for the church. Weima is to be commended for his work and this commentary should not be neglected. It is a gift of God to his church, which we should appreciate and learn from with great thankfulness in God in Christ Jesus.

—Scott F. Sanborn

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James R. Edwards. *The Gospel According to Luke*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015. 831pp. Cloth. 978-0-8028-3735-6. $65.

This is a worthy and helpful addition to the voluminous commentary literature on the third gospel. It should have an honorable place beside Bovon, Fitzmyer, Green (Meynet's stimulating work was published after this release; cf. notice here http://kerux.com/doc/3002R1.asp), even with its heavy dependence (documented in the footnotes and indices) upon the German commentary of Michael Wolter (a work now being translated into English and scheduled for publication in the U.S. by Baylor University Press this year). All of this places Edwards in the center of the exegetical and theological discussions of the largest of the four gospels. If his attachment to a "Hebrew Gospel" *vorlage* is idiosyncratic (and if he is occasionally careless, i.e., placing Nazareth *north* of Sepphoris, p. 44; citing Gal. 4:6 instead of Gal. 4:4 on p. 57), he at least reminds us of the Semitic background to Luke's work. The OT alone would suffice for this "dependence", so the Hebrew Gospel theory is Edward's attempt to solve, in part, the issue of sources behind the construction of the gospel. Leaving this aside, Edwards works over the narrative as we have it with care and reverence. He espouses a high Christology and a refreshing emphasis upon saving grace throughout the book. He takes fairly "conservative" positions on most critical matters and honors the integrity of the story which Luke unfolds. With his emphasis on the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ (all veritably historical), he allows the student and the pastor to enter into the Lukan narrative which is, after all, the story of our "Savior who is Christ the Lord".

—James T. Dennison, Jr.

J. Patout Burns, Jr. and Robin M. Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of its Practices and Beliefs*. Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014. 670pp. Cloth. 978-0-8028-6931-9. $55.

This large volume is a review of the practice of Christianity in North Africa (excluding Libya and Egypt) during the first six centuries—that is, essentially the Roman period (180-455 A.D.), succeeded by the era of the Vandals (455-533) and the Byzantine states (533-698), to the spread of Islam (698). It treats the sacramental theology especially of the North African figures from Tertullian (ca. 160-225 A.D.) to Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580-662 A.D.). The book is not a survey of the history of doctrine for this period (though it does contain brief surveys of the historical and doctrinal narrative); rather the work is a detailed examination of the two distinctive Christian rituals (baptism and the Lord's Supper) from the surviving archaeology of the region (there is a beautiful section of 154 color plates featuring these remains) and the extant works of the Christian writers of this period (especially those native to North Africa, i.e., Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, etc.).

After more than 500 pages of meticulous detail (very thoroughly footnoted) on the ritual practice of baptism (including infant baptism, cf. pp. 110, 168, 179-80, 212, 229f.) and the eucharist, one longs for the simplicity of NT worship and practice in the first century A.D. While this volume may not be intended as an apology for Roman Catholic sacerdotalism (Jesuit, J. Patout Burns, Jr., notwithstanding), it details the ritualistic superstition and rigamarole which entered the Christian communion from contemporary Roman pagan culture (cf. especially the telltale second paragraph on p. 233). All of which reinforces the observation that the church in North Africa from the late third century on was influenced by attenuation—that is, the syncretism of NT Christian worship to Roman imperial cult ritualism. Sadly, the pagan worldly culture with its superstitious religious rites pressed its stamp and image upon the church, and, more sadly, the church conformed to its world (the "present age" at the time).

We can only observe (and 600 plus pages confirm) that in the North African church's conforming to the (Roman) age, she was deforming the inspired and sole-sufficient Word of God. All of which causes those of the Calvinistic Reformation to rejoice in the re-discovery of the plain simplicity of NT worship and sacramental practice, while abandoning the "rags" and rituals of "popery".

—James T. Dennison, Jr.