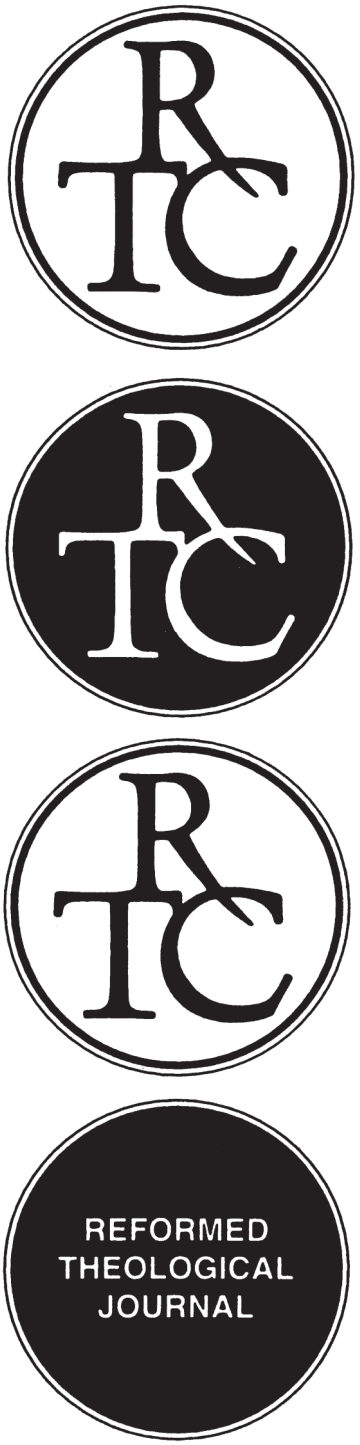

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE BETTER COVENANT OF HEBREWS CONTEXTUALLY UNDERSTOOD AND PASTORALLY APPLIED

Robert L. W. McCollum

Robert McCollum is College Principal and Professor of Pastoral Theology and Homiletics at the Reformed Theological College, Belfast, and retired minister of Lisburn Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The word 'covenant' is a key biblical word. It occurs seven times in Hebrews chapter 8. It is found 286 times in the Old Testament and 25 times in the New Testament. To understand the 'better covenant' of Hebrews chapter 8 the complete revelation of God must be considered, especially with reference to God's eternal Covenant of Grace.

At a wedding the minister will say to the happy couple after the wedding ceremony, 'as a sign of the covenant into which you have entered these rings are given and received'. The bridegroom and the bride have just exchanged vows and entered into a binding agreement, a covenant, to live together in the holy estate of marriage as long as they both live. The marriage covenant has been described as a 'bond of love'. The two parties, to this marriage covenant, have entered into the legal obligations of the covenant, not in a cold, detached manner but in a warm and loving manner, expressed in their deep affection for each other.

Throughout redemptive history God relates to his people in terms of covenant, and when God makes a covenant he always takes the initiative. He is the Sovereign Lord who freely decides to enter into covenant. It must always be understood that God's Covenant with His people is never an agreement between equals. As David McKay has pointed out in his book *The Bond of Love*:

> God and man do not sit down together to hammer out the terms of their relationship, like management and trade union negotiators. No. God decrees the terms. It is for man to accept them humbly and willingly.[1]

In marriage the covenant entered into is sealed by the exchange of rings. In the ancient Near-East covenant treaties between rival nations were common. Such a covenant treaty was a solemn promise of peace that was confirmed by oath and sealed by blood sacrifice. We have an illustration of this in the covenant ceremony described in Genesis 15. This points forward prophetically to the sealing of the covenant by Christ's blood shed at Calvary.

In Hebrews 8 the writer speaks about a New Covenant which makes the first one obsolete, and this New Covenant is described as 'better'. How are we to interpret these references? Since the word 'testament' is the Latin translation of the biblical words for 'covenant', some have concluded that the Old Covenant (Testament) is obsolete, having been superseded by the New Covenant (Testament). To demonstrate that that is not what Hebrews 8 is saying or implying the text must be considered in the light of the wider context of Scripture and then in the nearer context of Hebrews.

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[1] David McKay, *The Bond of Love: God's Covenantal Relationship with his Church*, (Mentor, 2001), p.12.

1. THE WIDER CONTEXT OF THE BETTER COVENANT

The Scriptures teach that only one Covenant exists between God and his people. This Covenant is known as the 'Covenant of Redemption' with reference to eternity, and the Covenant of Grace with reference to time.

The Covenant of Redemption was entered into by the three persons of the Godhead - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - when they covenanted from all eternity to save a people (the elect) from among the fallen sons and daughters of Adam. In that Covenant, God the Father ***decrees*** the Covenant, God the Son ***executes*** its terms through his work of redemption, and God the Holy Spirit ***applies*** it by his work of regeneration and sanctification. Michael D Williams put it very succinctly:

> The triune God acts covenantally in history: the Father creates, the Son redeems, and the Holy Spirit recreates.[2]

Christ speaks of his faithfulness to his covenant obligations when he said in his high priestly prayer to the Father, 'I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do' (John 17:4). It is because of this Covenant that Paul could write to the Ephesians and say with reference to the Father, 'he chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world' (Ephesians 1:4).

This is the eternal dimension of the Covenant. When the Covenant entered history, it is known as 'The Covenant of Grace'. Louis Berkhof gives a useful definition of the Covenant of Grace as:

> that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience.[3]

The essence of the covenant promise is summed up in the words of Leviticus 26:12 'I will walk among you and will be your God, and you will be my people'. This promise speaks of the relationship that God enters into with his people. It is warm and loving, often described as a family relationship. It is repeated five times in Jeremiah (7:23, 11:4, 24:7, 30:22, 31:33), four times in Ezekiel (11:20, 14:11, 36:28, 37:27) and twice in Zechariah (8:8, 13:9), as well as occurring in Hebrews 8:10. It will be the relationship of heaven. 'The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son' (Revelation 21:7). 'He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God' (Revelation 21:3). It is because of this basic and fundamental covenant promise that the Covenant of Grace has been described as the 'unifying theme in the unfolding of God's redemptive purpose'.[4] In other words, the Covenant of Grace is the key to understanding Scripture.

Though conceived in eternity the Covenant of Redemption entered history in Genesis 3:15 where we see God, not announcing a panic measure to save something out of the unholy mess into which Adam and Eve had plunged the world, but revealing his eternal plan to save a people through the seed of the woman (Christ) in what has been called the 'mother promise'.

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[2] Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse is found: The Covenant Story of Redemption*, (P & R, 2005), p.xi.
[3] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Edinburgh, 1985), p.227.
[4] David McKay, op. cit., p.25.

This verse reads, as God addresses Satan, 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.' Robert Reymond comments on how the Westminster divines understood this promise:

> They were aware that though God's redemptive plan was initially disclosed with the divine *protevangelium* of Genesis 3:15, its fuller revelation was progressively unfolded on "the principle of successive Berith – [covenant-] makings, as marking the introduction of new periods" of "salvation history.[5]

The promise of redemption in Genesis 3:15 is the Covenant of Grace in the form of a rose bud. In the rest of Scripture, in what is described as progressive revelation, the rosebud gradually opens. More and more of the Covenant of Grace comes into view until it is seen in full flower in the 'new covenant' or 'better covenant' referred to in Hebrews.

O. Palmer Robertson concludes:

> The blessings associated with the new Covenant therefore cannot be regarded as the development of a perspective previously unknown to God's people. Instead, this Covenant shall bring to fruition the redemptive intentions of God displayed throughout the ages.[6]

It is important to consider how God, in the history of his people, revealed his will through Covenants, especially in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants - all of which are aspects of the eternal Covenant of Grace.

- **The Abrahamic Covenant** (Genesis 12:1-3)

The Abrahamic Covenant is often called the Covenant of Promise. Abraham is called by God to leave behind the gods which his ancestors worshipped and trust the Lord who promised 3 specific things: offspring, land and blessing

a) The promise of offspring

God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as the dust of the earth that cannot be counted (Genesis 13:16) or like the stars of heaven or the sand on the seashore, innumerable (Genesis 22:17). This promise was fulfilled only to a limited extent with reference to his biological descendants. However, Romans 2:28, 29 points to the fact that it is in a spiritual sense that the fulfilment is to be found. This is confirmed in Galatians 3:29 which reads, 'And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.' It is only when the apostle John is given a vision of heaven that this aspect of the covenant promise made to Abraham is ultimately fulfilled. Revelation 7:9 'After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb…'

The promise to Abraham of a 'seed' or 'offspring' ultimately points to one man, the God/man, Jesus Christ. In Galatians 3:16 Paul points out, 'Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings", referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring", who is Christ' - and so Christ is at the very heart of the Abrahamic Covenant.

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[5] Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, (Nelson, 1998), p.406.
[6] O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (P & R, 1987), pp.275, 276.

b) The promise of land

The initial fulfilment of this relates to Canaan, although it would be many generations before the conquest took place under Joshua. God's choice of Canaan as a land for Abraham was intentional and also central to the redemptive mission for which Abraham was chosen. O. Palmer Robertson writes,

> As a narrow land bridge connecting the continents of Africa, Europe, and Asia, this place and no other was rightly situated for the extension of God's Covenant blessing to the entire world.[7]

It is therefore not surprising that New Covenant believers are commanded to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Abraham of course saw beyond earthly real estate. By faith he looked beyond Canaan to the fulfilment. We see this described in Hebrews 11:10, 'For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.' This aspect of the covenant promise to Abraham will ultimately be fulfilled in the new heaven and the new earth which Christ will usher in at his return - the paradise of God where Christ will dwell with his people.

c) The promise of blessing ('I will bless you')

The great blessing that Abraham received was salvation. He came to enjoy this blessing through faith. When the apostle Paul is teaching in Romans that sinners are justified by faith alone, and not by the works of the law, he points to Abraham as an illustration and quotes Genesis 15:6, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness' (Romans 4:3b). This led Paul to say about Abraham, that he is 'the father of all who believe', (v 11), both Jew and Gentile.

By faith Abraham saw that his salvation did not arise from an animal slain on an altar, but from 'the seed of the woman'. We know this because in Jesus' debate with the Jews he said to them, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad' (John 8:56). And of course every believer in both the Old and New Testament eras, and until Christ comes, will experience the blessing given to Abraham (the man of faith). When writing to the Galatians Paul makes reference to the death of Christ and its purpose: Galatians 3:13, 14 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" - so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.'

- **The Mosaic Covenant - the Covenant of Law**

In the time of Moses God's covenant was not with one individual but with a nation - with Israel. The 10 Commandments, written by the finger of God upon tablets of stone are described in covenantal terms by God, for example in. Exodus 34:28b 'And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments', or again in Deuteronomy 4:13 'And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten

[7] O. Palmer Robertson, op. cit., p.115.

Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone'. Also, in Deuteronomy 9:11 'And at the end of forty days and forty nights the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant'.

The Law was never intended to function as a principle of salvation by works. It was given to God's redeemed people to reveal to them how they should live in response to God's gracious deliverance - how they should live for God's glory. It is important to remember the preface to the 10 Commandments, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery' (Exodus 20:2). It was on the basis of what God had done for them that they were to respond in covenant faithfulness. They were not saved by keeping the Law, but they were saved to keep it. Covenant grace always precedes covenant obedience. The 10 Commandments were not set aside in the New Covenant fulfilment. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount shows that the Commandments were not merely to be observed in an outward and physical way as the rabbis had taught, but also in an inward and spiritual manner. As the 'words of the covenant' they remained in force in the New Covenant era.

There was however more to the Mosaic Covenant than the Decalogue. God also revealed to Moses on Sinai his design for Israel's worship which would be known as the ceremonial law. Ceremonies are worship acts that are signs of who God is (the Holy Sovereign Lord), who we are (sinners) and how God receives sinners into his presence, and then sustains them as his people. In Exodus chapters 25-27 God gave Moses very specific instructions for the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture 'Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it' (Exodus 25:9). Clarke Copeland comments:

> All details for making the tent and its furniture were very specific, for God alone directs his worship.[8]

Along with the physical structure, detailed instructions were given about the priests who were to serve at the altar, the garments they were to wear, who was to officiate in the offerings and tabernacle services, etc. Practically everything about the tabernacle had significance - from the altar opposite the entrance gate (God could only be approached by way of sacrifice) - to the bronze laver for washing. Those who approached the Holy One must be washed - cleansed from all impurities. Within the tabernacle was the holy place, with the golden candlestick, the table of showbread and the altar of incense. Beyond the Holy Place was the Most Holy Place, or Holy of Holies, in which sat the Ark of the Covenant symbolising God's presence. The Most Holy Place was separated from the Holy Place in the tabernacle by the veil. Nothing but the finest materials were to be used in the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture - materials such as acacia wood, pure gold, silver, bronze and fine linen. There were ram skins and goat skins, ropes and cords as well as aromatic oils and precious stones, and what an array of colours the worshipper would have beheld - blue and purple and scarlet, white and gold.

In the days of Solomon the Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple, which, although it was the same basic pattern, was much more magnificent. This Temple was destroyed in 586 BC by Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army. It was rebuilt after the exile in the days of Zerubbabel, at the instigation of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and completed in 516

[8] E. Clark Copeland, *Our Covenant God*, (Cameron Press, 2009), p.53.

BC. This Temple was superseded by Herod's Temple - the main structure of it being completed about 9BC. This is the Temple referred to in the New Testament. Jesus spoke about destroying this temple, which astonished his disciples and scandalised his enemies. The charge was made at his trial, 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands"' (Mark 14:58). When Christ died the curtain of the Temple was torn in two. This was to symbolise that the Temple era was over, along with all its rites and ceremonies, along with all its feasts and sacrifices. In that sense Christ destroyed the Temple and in his resurrection built a new one - a new way of approach to God the Father. Not through an earthly priest but through himself - the one Mediator between God and man - the Mediator of the New Covenant. Therefore with respect to the Mosaic Covenant - the Covenant of Law - there is both continuity and discontinuity as we enter the New Covenant age of fulfilment. The moral law continues - showing how God's redeemed people are to live. The ceremonial discontinues - having been fulfilled in Christ.

- **The Davidic Covenant - The Covenant of the Kingdom**

The essence of the Davidic Covenant is that David's dynasty would last for ever (2 Samuel 7). For 400 years the line of David continued in the Southern Kingdom up to the exile, through 20 kings. After the return from exile the Davidic line was still alive although the crown was no longer functioning. The covenant pointed to fulfilment in David's greater Son of whom the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, 'and behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end' (Luke 1:31,32). Jesus Christ is now seated upon that throne - King of kings and Lord of lords. He pointed out to his disciples prior to his ascension, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Matthew 28:18).

David's greater son, King Jesus, is now seated upon his holy throne. He is king of the nations and he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (1 Corinthians 15:25). Because he reigns, all who are in him will be more than conquerors, and 'if God, be for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:32).

The Covenant of Grace entered history in Genesis 3:15. It was then, as already stated, like a rosebud whose full majestic glory had yet to be revealed. Progressively in various covenants God revealed further aspects of his eternal covenant as that rosebud gradually opened through the Abrahamic Covenant - the Covenant of Promise, through the Mosaic Covenant - the Covenant of Law, and through the Davidic Covenant - the Covenant of Kingdom. The rosebud however had not yet fully opened. That occurred with the coming of Christ, through his life, death, resurrection, ascension and glorification. The coming of Christ and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost marked the inauguration of the New or Better Covenant of Hebrews chapters 7, 8, 9.

In Christ and through Christ the Covenant of Grace has opened into full flower. Its glory is magnificent; its scent is filled with fragrance. Christ is the New Covenant. The Old Covenant, in all its aspects - Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic - was pointing forward to him. Christ is the fulfilment of them all. Christ is the seed of Abraham, the one through whom 'all the families of the earth shall be blessed' (Genesis 12:3). 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes' (Romans 10:4). In Christ all the types and the

shadows of the Old Testament ceremonial in the Tabernacle and Temple were fulfilled. The altar and the sacrifices, the priests and the laver, the lampstand and the showbread, the incense and the veil, the ark and the mercy seat were the shadow, Christ is the reality. Christ is the Son of David who has entered into his kingdom, a kingdom of eternal duration.

The wider context of the better covenant of Hebrews has been under review. Consideration is now given to the better covenant with reference to Hebrews itself.

2 THE NEARER CONTEXT OF THE BETTER COVENANT

This letter to the Hebrews was written initially to Jewish converts to Christianity. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, at the end of his third missionary journey, he is told by the elders of the church, 'you see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed' (Acts 21:20). It is abundantly clear that the Hebrew Christians who received this letter were contemplating turning back to the shadows of the Mosaic administration, turning back to the temple, the priests, the sacrifices, the ceremonial and the rituals, something familiar to them and their ancestors for generations.

This conclusion is arrived at by reflecting on the many warnings found in the letter. 'Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it' Hebrews 2:1). 'How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?' (Hebrews 2:3). 'Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God' (Hebrews 3:12). 'For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end' (Hebrews 3:14). 'Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised' (Hebrews 10:35, 36).

Why were these professing Jewish Christians drawn back to what they had left behind - to the rites and rituals of the Old Covenant administration? At least 2 things are obvious from the text:

a) Persecution

The writer points out to them in Hebrews 12:4, 'In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood'. Paul was a Jewish convert to Christianity and he was particularly vilified by the Jews. These Jewish converts were obviously being targeted as well. If they quietly returned to the Temple and engaged in all the aspects of the sacrificial system, then the threats against them would be lifted.

b). Nostalgia

There was nostalgia for the 'smells and bells' with which they had grown up. Think for a moment of the contrast between what they had left behind and what was now their present experience. In temple worship they had the high priest dressed up in all his colourful robes. There was the fragrant smell of the incense which burned continually in the Temple. There was the continual spectacle of animals being sacrificed on the altar - never mind the magnificence of the Temple and its precincts. Left behind were all the Jewish festivals which had been observed by their ancestors for hundreds of years - the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, etc. Contrast this with the

sheer simplicity of worship in the house of Philemon or in the house of Nympha or in the house of Priscilla and Aquila - unadorned New Testament worship, worshipping the Lord 'in spirit and in truth', now offering up, not an animal sacrifice, but the 'sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name' (Hebrews 13:15).

The temptation facing these Jewish Christians can be easily understood. The writer of Hebrews sought to counteract this strong temptation. He kept pointing them to Christ. Over and over again he urged them to 'consider him'. In chapter 1 he drew attention to the excellencies of Christ who is 'the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature' (Hebrews 1:3). He further demonstrates with 7 references from the Old Testament that Christ is the One in whom they find fulfilment. Phil Arthur comments:

> If they chose to reject the message of the New Testament they could not pass this off as a return to the religion of their childhood and their ancestors. Reject what the New Testament says about Christ and you reject the message of the Old Testament along with it.[9]

It is clear from the succeeding chapters in Hebrews that it was to the Mosaic Covenant that these Jewish converts were yearning to return. Paul is at pains to show them, in chapter 3, the superiority of Jesus to Moses, eg Hebrews 3:5, 6 'Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son'. And then, bearing in mind the context, the challenge of his application in Hebrews 3:6 is clear: 'And we are his house *if indeed* we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.'

In Hebrews chapter 4 from verse 14, the writer demonstrates to his readers the superiority of Christ to Aaron. For example in verse 14 he writes, 'since then we have a great high priest [not Aaron but Christ] who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession'. Jesus Christ, he argues, is a high priest of an entirely different order - like Melchizedek – 'having neither beginning of days nor end of life' (Hebrews 7:3). Then he adds in Hebrews 7:11, 'Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, (rather than one named after the order of Aaron?'). Writing about the priests associated with the Mosaic administration of the covenant the point is made, 'The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever' (Hebrews 7:23, 24). It is in this context that the writer affirms, 'This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant'.

The author, in seeking to persuade his readers not to drift back into the Mosaic administrations of the covenant also emphasises the superiority of Christ and his sacrifice. Christ lives for ever to intercede - the high priests died (Hebrews 7:25). Christ is holy - the high priests were sinners (Hebrews 7:26-28). Christ is in Heaven serving at God's right hand - the high priests were serving a copy and shadow of the heavenly things (Hebrews 8:5). With respect to the Holy Place the high priest only entered once a year, only after the sprinkling of blood – 'the blood of bulls and goats that could never take away sins' (Hebrews 10:4). 'But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of God...for by a single offering he had perfected for all time those who are sanctified' (Hebrews 10:12, 14). By this means the writer presses home to his readers the

[9] J. Philip Arthur, *No Turning Back: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Grace Publications, 2003), p.42.

absolute superiority of Christ to all that had been foreshadowed in the Mosaic administration. Do not, he exhorts them, drift back to the shadows. Do not be satisfied with copies when in Christ you have the reality. 'This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant' (Hebrews 7:22).

3 THE NEW WITH REFERENCE TO THE BETTER COVENANT

What about the use of the word 'new' in the quotation from Jeremiah used in Hebrews 8:13 'in speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away'? Is this a covenant that is absolutely new, unique and different from anything that has preceded it? The answer is a definite 'no', since in Christ the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic and the Davidic Covenants is crystal clear. The writer to the Hebrews has already clearly informed his readers that Christ fulfilled all the types and shadows of the Mosaic. In that sense it can be said that they are all an integral part of the New Covenant. How then is this reference to 'new' to be understood? Michael Williams provides an excellent explanation: 'New means new in *quality* rather than new in time or origin.'[10]

The use of 'new' in this sense can be illustrated by the use of 'new' in Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1 with reference to the new heavens and the new earth. There will not be the creation of a replacement heaven and earth, but such a cleansing and purging of the present creation that will make it like new. Michael Williams comments:

> The world to come will be a startlingly new world, for the Adamic curse of sin and death will be forever put away (Rom 5:21), but it will also be the very same creation that God called into being in Genesis 1:1.[11]

We could say the same about the 'new' with reference to the new birth in John 3. The person born again is so radically changed as to merit the description of having been given a new birth. Ezekiel 36 speaks about the new heart. In regeneration our hearts are so radically transformed as to merit the description 'new'. So it is with the 'New' Covenant. The old administration of the covenant is so radically fulfilled in Christ as to be called 'new'. Again to quote Michael Williams:

> The new Covenant is not, after all, categorically new, the difference is redemptive-historical. That is to say, it is not a difference between two categorically different religions, or two different sorts of covenant relationship between God and humankind. It is rather a single unfolding covenant story that moves towards greater levels of fulfillment of divine promise.[12]

The rosebud of Genesis 3:15 is, in Christ, in full bloom - displaying its beauty and its glory in the gospel - the message of the New Covenant that is to be proclaimed to the whole world. In that sense it is a 'Better Covenant'.

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[10] Michael D. Williams, op. cit., p. 288.
[11] Michael D. Williams, op. cit., p. 289.
[12] Michael D. Williams, op. cit., p. 219.

CONCLUSION

It is important to emphasise the glorious benefits of the New Covenant as described in Hebrews 8:10-12 to new covenant believer; to remember these blessings of the covenant ushered in by the life, death and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. There is:

a) A new relationship with the law

'I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts' (Hebrews 8:10b).

The comment in Matthew Henry's commentary is illuminating:

> He once wrote his laws to them, now he will write his laws in them; that is, he will give them understanding to know and to believe his law; he will give them memories to retain them; he will give them hearts to love them and consciences to recognize them; he will give them courage to profess them and power to put them into practice; the whole habit and frame of their souls shall be a table and transcript of the law of God. This is the foundation of the covenant; and, when this is laid, duty will be done wisely, sincerely, readily, easily, resolutely, constantly, and comfortably.[13]

The Lord by the Spirit works in his people a disposition towards obedience. It must be said that such a concept was not unknown under the Old Covenant. 'And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart' (Deuteronomy. 6:6). 'I will keep your law continually for ever and ever' (Psalm 119:44). 'For I find my delight in your commandments which I love' (Psalm 119:47). 'Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold' (Psalm 119:127).

David may have been the exception rather than the norm. Prior to Pentecost the members of God's covenant community tended to have a rather cold, servile and detached attitude to God's commands. This is illustrated repeatedly in Israel's history.

b) A new relationship with God

'I will be their God and they shall be my people' (Hebrews 8:10).

This Old Covenant relationship is repeated over and over again in the Old Testament. However, with the covenant's fulfilment in Christ, in the age of the New Covenant, this relationship takes on a dimension hitherto never known or experienced. The conception of adoption into the family of God is now more fully realised and understood. What a blessing to be in such a relationship.

c) A new knowledge of God

'And they shall not teach, each one his neighbour and each one his brother, saying, "Know the Lord" for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest' (Hebrews 8:11). In the age of the Old Covenant everything tended to be dim and shadowy. The ceremonial and the rituals were never fully understood. The priests seldom if ever preached. Therefore,

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[13] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (Hendrikson, 1991), p. 2392.

knowledge was limited. In the age of the New Covenant fulfilment the Spirit has been fully given, the Scriptures have been fully revealed, and the preaching of the Word is being carried out by a multitude of preachers - all of whom have been commissioned to make Christ known in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

d) A new appreciation of forgiveness

The Old Testament believer had to look through the dim, shadowy rites and rituals of the Old Covenant ceremonial to a coming Messiah through whom forgiveness could be found. For some in the Old Covenant age this forgiveness was an experience fully understood and deeply cherished. This is exemplified by the Psalmist in, for example, Psalm 32:5, 'I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin'; Psalm 103:12, 'as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us' and Psalm 130:4, 'But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.'

Forgiveness was certainly experienced under the Old Covenant, but now in the age of the Spirit, with Christ's redemption accomplished and applied, the believer has a much richer experience of forgiveness - something that far surpasses anything enjoyed by his Old Testament counterpart.

In summary, the Better Covenant, the New Covenant, is not after all categorically new. There are essential differences between the 'Old' and the 'New' Covenant. The 'Old' is the administration of the covenant prior to Christ's coming. The 'New' is the administration of the same covenant after Christ's coming, in the age of the Spirit. As someone has aptly put it, 'Christ is the New Covenant' and in him are to be found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Christians in the twenty-first century are New Covenant believers. To fully understand and appreciate the New Covenant, the Better Covenant, and the benefits and blessings associated with it, it is absolutely essential to discover its roots. This one covenant was conceived in eternity before the world was when the triune God covenanted to save a people for his own glory.

This Covenant entered time in the Garden of Eden, in the mother promise of Genesis 3:15. It was progressively revealed through the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant. And of course, the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms developed and explained these covenants. This covenant was fully revealed in Christ. The Old Testament was continually pointing to him – 'our Passover Lamb' (1 Corinthians 5:7), the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. All Old Covenant believers were looking through the shadows to Christ. All New Covenant believers enjoy the noonday sun of God's complete and final revelation in Christ and so see Christ in all his brilliance and in all his glory. It is in this Christ, the Christ of the Covenant, that everyone must trust and then, and only then, the covenantal relationship of heaven will be experienced in the life to come.

'And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God"' (Revelation 21:3).

NEGLECTING NOAH?

The Noahic Genealogy in the 21st Century

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Introduction

Of all major, redemptive-historical, biblical covenants perhaps it is that which God made with Noah which is the least perfectly and familiarly understood. Yet, as I hope to demonstrate, the Noahic Genealogy, and the body of revelation it unfolds, is a vital interconnector in the scriptural storyline, in Genesis 6:9-11:26. Having addressed preparative, personalized, preservative, proclamatory and participative aspects of the Covenant with Noah, I will make some brief concluding remarks.

1. Preparation for the Noahic Covenant

Moses cast minds back to a dim and distant past. The sequelae of Eden that befell Adamites form a gloomy, heartbreaking, backdrop for rekindling hope on earth. Genesis 4 portrays an antediluvian culture that was rapidly civilized: urbanization, construction, husbandry, entertainment and industry all played a part and advanced past rudiments, in 4:16-22. 'Garden-Gate' revealed religion was less primitive than some think – 3:20-21, 4:1-6, 4:26, 7:2 and 8:20 provide tantalizing hints. Yet brutality, mortality and depravity scarred this now-lost, ancient, world (4:8-16, 4:23-25, 5:1-31 and 6:5-7). In days of cultural progress but spiritual regress, two elements stand out against a race-in-freefall backdrop:

(i). Prognostication in Genesis 5:28

Despite significant risks posed by inter-seminal war, Yahweh's purpose triumphs - God preserves a godly line. Lamech is last-but-one in a long-line of eminent pre-Flood prophets. A smoking flax of 'Snake Crusher' faith could not be snuffed-out. Its sigh is audibly heaved in an anxious, post-partum, prediction-prayer. The boy born to this saint, in his 182nd year, is named 'Noah' in hope that God will bring earth to rest at last: doubtless Lamech yearned for celestial fellowship presently enjoyed by progenitor Enoch (5:24). He seems to anticipate some catastrophic event, as Jude 14-15 suggests. Noah-for-Messiah is dad's election vote. Kneeling he cries, 'May Noah undo the Edenic curse!' (3:14-19, 5:29). Moses records or inserts the prophecy-prayer that tradition preserved and the Spirit exhaled:

> When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son, and called his name Noah, saying: 'Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands' (Genesis 5:29).

If genuinely prophetic, Lamech never lived to witness its partial, literally, post-Flood fulfilment. Noah's drunken disgrace (9:20-22), is intended to demonstrate that Noah Ben Lamech was at most a new racial head and at best a type of Christ. Viewed as a Noahic Nostradamus, Lamech's prayer proved inaccurate – neither Noah, Moses, Joshua, Gideon nor

David brought final, utopian, rest. A Nazarene must be crushed to relieve sinners from the curse.[1] If 'Lamech treasured the promise'[2] there would be no final disappointment.[3]

(ii). Pollution in Genesis 6:1-7

If this mini-Mosaic corpus in Genesis may fall slightly short of explicitly stating a fully-orbed New Testament doctrine of original sin, Paul harnesses Genesis 5 to teach the federal 'graveyard' effect of Adamic sin on the race (in Romans 5:12-14). Categorical certainty of the meaning of 5:3 is elusive: it may simply hint that divine image is now irreparably scarred, or that a defaced relic is preserved and passed down:

> When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own image, and named him Seth…Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died…Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.

Nor does subsequent defection of the other siblings of Noah explicitly teach this truth. Though, from the earliest times, a variety of interpretations has been proffered for Genesis 6:1-7, there are strong textual and contextual reasons for rejecting notions both of angelic copulation[4] and despotic intimidation.[5] The most coherent and satisfying explanation is that holy and unholy seeds were mingled by intermarriage – Moses' initial audience is Israel in the wilderness, called to be holy, but soon to be enticed by Moabite wiles. If a seedline

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[1] A full range of possible interpretative options is given by G. Aalders, *Bible Student's Commentary: Genesis*, Volume 1, pp.142-144.

[2] Philip Eveson, *The Book of Origins: Genesis simply explained*, (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 2001), p.146. So also John Currid, *Genesis*: Volume 1, (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 2003), p.168.

[3] The comments of C.F. Keil, *Pentateuch* Volume 1, in Keil & Delitzsch, *Old Testament Commentary*, p.80 sum up the matter nicely. So also, quite prosaically, Kenneth A. Matthews, *The New American Commentary, Genesis* Volume 1, (Broadman & Holman, 1996), pp.316-318.

[4] In my judgment the view of Allan P. Ross given in his commentary, *Creation & Blessing, A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, pp. 180-183, is simplistic and exegetically deficient. It is surprising that such a capable Hebrew scholar appears to have overlooked basic matters of syntax and substance contained in the text of Moses. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis* Volume 1, (Waco: WBC, 1987), pp.138-141, is equally curious. A fairer, detailed, survey of the terrain is given by Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis* Volume 1, pp. 261-272, though he stops short of going where the evidence appears to lead. Eveson, pp.173-175, convincingly argues the case for the traditional interpretation – if we add to this Hamilton's observation that the frown of the LORD falls on the union not the offspring, and the consideration of the audience for whom Moses rites and Israel's existential threat (which seems to have been generally ignored), then both text and context argue for the 'seedline' interpretation.

[5] The only argument of any that can be said to favour of the idea of angels seeking forbidden flesh producing a race of semi-human giants, or Nephilim, is the fact that in the bible angels are one of 3 main groups described as 'sons of God'. Close scrutiny of 2 Peter and Jude reveals that only erroneous, careless exegesis of these passages could enlist them in support of what is a fantastic, bizarre, last resort. Slightly more sane, but again contextually jarring, is the pre-diluvian despotic view, which in more recent times was advanced by Meredith Kline. Careful attention to Hebrew syntax (sentence structure) should make it clear that there are two distinct matters referenced in Genesis 6:1-8: firstly, a divinely provocative action of marriage partners for sons of God, and secondly, side-by-side, the presence of Nephilim on the earth – the structure Moses employs, in v4, is a parenthetical 'Oh, by the way…' clause. Moses mentions two problems that threatened the antediluvian race namely, the intermarriage of saints and, the presence of people of great strength. The explanation of this passage which I believe takes most of the details into account is that Moses wants to remind that even though these two factors posed an existential threat to the seedline of the Church, the judgment of God was used to wipe them out – so Israel must take head but not lose their head, for when they enter Canaan the sword of the LORD will prevail once again.

snake-crusher is the keynote in Genesis, this disputed passage is a case of covenanter perversion.[6] If the comments of Christ are pertinent, it is a little surprising to have referred to the innocuous-looking norms of pre-Flood marriages.[7]

Noah, clearly, was part of a huge extended family. His brothers, sisters, and cousins, disowned the godly heritage handed down by Enoch and Lamech. They either abandoned the earliest church or welcomed godless brides into the household of faith. No realistic hope remained for preservation of pulpit truth. With the holy seed jeopardized, God the LORD must judge:

> Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters…When men began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh. His days shall be 120 years' (Genesis 6:1-3).

Immanent oblivion! Total immersion! Moses did not miss with his intermarriage threat! For cosmos, church and Christ, a holy seedline was integral to furthering the Yahwistic redemptive purpose. There can be no toleration for cumulative perversion and pollution!

> The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on earth, and it grieved Him to His heart. So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens for I am sorry that I have made them' (Genesis 6:5-7).

If full-blown, historical, proof must await a Pauline catena of Old Testament quotes,[8] pervasive depravity is implied by Moses' shockingly strong vocabulary: not mere outward acts but pollution of secret thoughts, nor mere occasional blips but unremittingly crimes, is the gist. Each recipient of Adamic spiritual DNA is painted in the darkest colours – there is no hint of hope, bar divine redeeming grace!

The message conveyed by this bad, blackest, Noahic, backdrop is so prescient of and pertinent for our day. It should send a pessimistic chill up the spine of all church leaders, Christian parents and covenant youth. Alarm bells should ring, high-risks must be recalled, and marriage ambitions kept aligned to truth. Dalliances or alliances outside the true Church, is inexcusable treachery and defection: if domestic catastrophe and personal desolation almost always ensue, religious declension and church corruption are most-to-be-feared twin sequelae.

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[6] John Calvin *Commentaries Volume I: Genesis*, Translated by John King, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), pp.237-239. His comments are pertinent. 'It seems at first sight frivolous that the sons of God should be so severely condemned, for having chosen for themselves beautiful wives from the daughters of men. But me must know, first, that it is not a light crime to violate a distinction established by the Lord; secondly, that for the worshippers of God to be separated from profane nations, was a sacred appointment which ought reverently to have been observed, in order that the church of God might exist upon the earth; thirdly, that the disease was desperate, seeing that men rejected the remedy divinely prescribed for them. In short, Moses points it out as the most extreme disorder.'

[7] Matthew 24:37-38.

[8] Romans 3:9-20.

No doubt in dealing with problems on the ground, maturity, discretion and courage is required. It has long been understood that a practical solution is to provide denominational space for the building of relationships. If camps and youth events will allow friendships to flourish for some, others, perhaps less social will need another means of grace. Moses has given this means – alarm within church ranks to be impressed upon our hearts. Accompanied by prayer instruction and discipline of pastors and parents and progeny, decay will be arrested and defection also diminished. More optimistically, we are warned, if defection is widespread, and Western pollution cumulative, God has not finished yet, and there is gospel for the Church to both perpetuate and propagate. More so in our day, on the far side of Calvary and Pentecost, our Mediator rules, and God's throne of mercy is still replete with grace. Sinners and saints alike are called to Christ for rest.[9]

2. Personalization of the Noahic Covenant

With the axe of judgment laid to the root of the tree of his antediluvian peers, the dove of God's particular grace is found to nestle on Noah. Noting text markers is vital: v8 belongs to the previous section of antediluvian guilt, and is a parenthetical 'by the way…' that marks Noah, alone, as exceptional; v9, by using a forward-looking 'Toledoth' ('these are the generations') formula, Moses signals a new paragraph in 'the Life and Times of Noah'. The seed of grace is planted, v8, and later we see fruit, v9 – grace, in Noah, grows into a righteous, blameless, godly walk.

> But *in spite of what the entire race deserved* it was Noah – he alone found grace in the eyes of Yahweh (italics added to express one view of the significance of a little Hebrew prefix 'and' together with the emphasis and stress of the text)

To find 'grace' is to be an unworthy object of a merciful, favorable, disposition. Applied to God, covenantal kindness is painted in the colours of a rainbow of sovereign grace. There are a number of things, by way of exposition, that we can note about the 'favour' that was found to settle on Noah.

(i). Noah found Sovereign Grace

It was more that grace found Noah, as Alec Motyer put it. Noah's selection and salvation were utterly gratuitous. Like the rest of the antediluvians, and sons of godly Lamech, Noah was a natural child of wrath and deserved deluge deletion.

(ii). Noah found Predestining Grace

Though glossed over by Moses this is demanded by theology. Ancestors had guarded the Garden-Gate Gospel deposit. Creation, Fall, Promise, Blessing and Curse, Paradise, Coming Judgment, Moral Law, Regulated Worship, Marriage, Work, Sabbath Observance and Cultural Mandate were staple diet in Noah's religious education. His goodly heritage of a godly covenant home was a means of grace to draw Noah to the truth. Both general and special revelation were instilled in his heart, as an outflow of God's choice, with early or late effect. Parents, pastors and progeny take note!

[9] Matthew 28:28-30.

(iii). Noah found Regenerating Grace.

This is inferred from the fruit in Noah's life. Verse 9 informs of how spiritually, morally and ethically Noah was a lone-star case. Ezekiel asserts that Noah was one of three stellar Old Testament saints who exhibited righteousness. His godly walk was not the source but sprang from regenerating grace.

> These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

(iv). Noah found Justifying Grace

There are several factors which indicate that by describing Noah as 'righteous' Moses has life saintliness, not legal status, primarily in view.[10] Firstly, in keeping with progressive revelation, Moses intentionally mutes 'justification through faith by imputation' until Abram: Abraham is the Mosaic model for the faithful; secondly, a parallel with 'blameless' focuses not on inward state but outward life. Yet Hebrews 11:7 evidently picks up on the implied forensic state:

> By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

(v). Noah found Sanctifying Grace

'Blameless' is a translation of the plural Hebrew adjective *tammim*. Though not meaning sinless, it may be translated 'perfect'. Outward freedom from blemish (like unspotted lambswool fleeces) is the New Testament elder standard, and captures well Moses' Semitic semantics. Coupled with 'righteous' it suggests a high degree of moral, ethical, rectitude as measured by divine norms.[11] Noah, was man at whom, even if unpopular, no-one could fairly point a finger. This distinctive triliteral root has a flavour of wholeness, soundness, integration. Our 'well-rounded' encapsulates the thought. Nothing jarred in his character that was consistent and harmonious: swimming against a tide, on the precipice of the abyss, the Gospel of Free Grace worked, in Noah a life of authentic holiness. Saints today, with far more gospel light, have really no excuse for not subduing error in the heart and passions of the flesh by learning to put on Christ.

(vi). Noah found Sustaining Grace

The godly life of the Ark Architect was one of covenant fellowship. His prevailing age and culture virulently and vehemently opposed his godliness on every front and at every turn. Yet, like great-grandfather Enoch, consistently over three centuries, 'Noah walked with God' devoutly and true righteousness survived. Close-walking is the key to strong swimming against the tide of post-modernism. As Ezekiel puts it twice in 14:14-20:

> Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness declares the LORD.

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[10] John Currid, p.182.
[11] Victor Hamilton, p.277.

(vii). Noah found Persevering Grace.

While waves of secularism sweep many away today, Noah conceded no ground, but refused to compromise. Devoid of a Holy Book, without friends for fellowship, grace made Noah stand – Moses salutes this saint. He continued to press the unwelcome truth of 'ship salvation through judgment' from the pulpit. There is only one credible explanation for this incredible, stubborn, stance – the same grace that found Noah also kept Noah doing all the LORD commanded, 6:22, 7:1, 7:5, 7:9 and 7:16.

> …He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly (2 Peter 2:5).

(viii). Noah found Saving Grace

When the Deluge arrived, the entire world was drowned.[12] There was only one man spared, along with his household flock. As Moses depicts it, for this Noahic octet, salvation from judgment was unique:

> He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark - Genesis 7:23

(ix). Noah found Covenantal Grace

After Adamic breach, no mercy comes to sinners, beyond the bounds of the Covenant of Grace - its Noahic phase is a vital, integral, foundational premise and part of this. When warned of impending wipe-out, Noah built the requisite boat. This gopher escape vessel would rise above coming wrath: the Noahic racial remnant disembarked on renewed earth:

> But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female (Genesis 6:18-19).

This minute, mighty, monosyllabic word 'grace' should raise a triumphant shout through believers in dark days. If utterly unmerited favour could make one saint stand without Scriptures, by building and boarding a ship, how much more will Christians stand by Calvary grace, washed in the blood of Christ? Grace has power to elect, draw, regenerate and justify. Grace working through chosen means will thoroughly sanctify and keep saints in their course until renewal of the cosmos. Pastors can nourish hearts of less isolated saints, with wonder-working grace, now signed, sealed and shipped, in blood of the New Covenant.

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[12] In spite of the attempts of most to localise the Flood on grounds of lack of fiducial incredulity, archaeological evidence, phenomenological language or parallel accounts, it is hard to imagine how Moses could have employed any stronger language to convey the fact of world-wide, total, global inundation and submersion. This is born out by New Testament parallelism – how can the unity of Noahic race and the covenant blessings pledged be upheld unless this is maintained?

3. Preservation in the Noahic Covenant

The watchword of this redemptive administration is preservation of life. God spared eight Adamites, together with sample-pairs of land-species, from being swept away and submerged. Following the flood Moses lauds Yahweh's pro-life stance. The LORD's love of life, as Creator and Sustainer, pulses through the account. This has a surprisingly high degree of relevance for God's 21st century states and churches.

(i). Preserving Human Life

Six things, or more, mandate God's Church being pro-life 'Friends of the Earth'. Firstly, sparing four human pairs, who disembark from the Ark, secures global repopulation; secondly, a restated creation mandate, identifies Noah as a 'New Adam' blessed with power to generate seed; thirdly, by provision of nutrition – meat is supplied to supplement fruit and veg; fourthly, by banning ingestion of blood, cost-of-living is inflated; fifthly, life is forfeited by animals guilty of goring; sixth, universal sentence is passed on the capital crime of murder. Moses makes quite transparent, for every place and race, homicide demands execution of life.

> And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image' (Genesis 9:5-6).

If the precise nuance of 9:5 lacks certainty, then 9:6 plainly adjudicates that the death penalty is required. This has nothing to do with macabre, vengeful, barbaric spite, but grounds civil government and targets love for life. It goes beyond a pure act of retributive justice. Sanction is due to the seriousness of this sin. To slay the image of God is an attack on the LORD Himself.[13] This has obvious ramifications for how we treat God-given life today.

(ii). Capital Punishment

This mandatory sentence for murder predates the Law of Moses by millennia. Not only treason and terror, but all homicidal taking of life, from Flood to Return of Christ, requires calculating perpetrators and violators be put to death. From conception to coffin all image life belongs to God the Creator. Doubtless, various complexities enter into this debate, and must be taken into account. Pastoral wisdom will be required in preaching application. Reversing cheapening of life should help to stall the current epidemic of gun and knife crime. Prejudicial personhood theories should be promptly expelled from the educational mainstream. [14] Young mums, doubtless, may be distracted or ill-advised – those who abort often have issues that mitigate. Politicians and obstetricians that terminate, legislate or aid-and-abet, should be pursued by police, and be called to book by the highest supreme courts. Allowance for rare exceptions, such as tubal pregnancies (where embryos act as an enemy intent on suicide of self and homicide of mum) must be made. Mercy-killing cloaked in clinics is tantamount to murder. If cities were provided in Israel for fugitives falsely accused,

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[13] O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing 1980), pp.114-121.
[14] See Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), for a clear, up-to-date, wide-ranging, helpful, exposé of the dualism implicit in erroneous modern personhood theories. Her excellent book should be compulsory reading for all ministers and elders. It covers most if not all of the current hot potatoes of life, gender and sexuality.

checks and balances are required to ensure integrity of courts. Only God has the right to take a life. If he commands it, rulers cannot ignore it. Paul is crystal clear about why magistrates carry blades.[15] If justice miscarriages are impossible to preclude, it is misplaced sentiment that sacrifices all for one – it was one such murderous miscarriage, on a hill outside Jerusalem, by which God procured redemption. Without this command there could have been no Cross. Capital punishment is a *sine qua non* for salvation of the race. Blood still cries out, from sinks and sewers in the West, for vengeance on acts still punishable by death.

(iii). Climate Change

It should be obvious that despite frenzied, unwarranted, climatologist claims and a relentless media propaganda campaign, that ice or ground beneath our feet is not about to melt, and air we live in and breathe is not facing existential threat. Dogmas of pseudoscience or doomsday scenario-extrapolations can both panic and attract. If desertification spreads, wildfires incinerate, famines predominate, and flooding spread,[16] current small shards from the overall climate pot should not intimidate, for God will preserve earth until the coming of Christ.

Even a child should spot one giant 'logical' leap for mankind – the colourful multimedia link between ocean plastic and carbon footprints. Doubtless it grieves most to see marine life tangled up in discarded trawler nets; how sad to see gliding manta rays beclouded by synthetic jetsam rafts. Still, the pollution of the ocean with polymers of carbon bears little direct relation to a spike in global temperature, holes in ozone layers, melting of polar icecaps or a polar bear housing crisis. It seems to be well-established that climate has fluctuated widely during periods in past history. There is no need to deny statistically significant data and authentic climate research. What we must not do is take a leap of faith or wildly extrapolate: those who venture into the deep space of evolutionary ages are exercising blind faith in fanatical Darwinian presuppositions.

This doesn't mean of course we need to be conspiracy theorists – nor to assume that every climate scientist has some particular anti-evangelical axe to grind. It does mean, however, that where Scripture speaks, we must give due weight to this divine evidence. It may well be that coastal erosion continues and ocean levels rise – whether or not the two are related to man-made change is a theory approaching a faith which would be impossible to prove.

There are too many variables and unknowns to attribute normal climate fluctuation to humans – volcanic activity or solar flares seem to achieve more in a day that human CO_2 does in a year. The whole debate would be helped by humility on all fronts - scaremonger tactics and undemocratic censorship should be ruled out of court to allow open, honest, public debate.

Perhaps the greatest sadness in the current hysteria is averting public attention from the most pressing contemporary issue. Just as wrongheaded Noahic notions of angelic copulation and antediluvian despots make the church forget one of its greatest threats, so climate catastrophe delusions suppress knowledge of final judgment – more than anything else, sinners need the Saviour that God has revealed in the gospel.[17] The greatest threat posed to people by the year 2050 is not hundreds of melting glaciers, but billions who perish in guilt. That the public at large, or those in pagan lands, should fall into this error is hardly a surprise. That

[15] Romans 13:4. If he had done wrong, Paul stated, he did not refuse to die.
[16] Revelation 8:1-9:21.
[17] Romans 1:16-3:25.

evangelicals should insist it is vital the gospel turn green is to lose sight of its mission vocation,[18] and would be without excuse.

It is bordering on the outrageous to think that all the combined lungs of puny Adamites could puff out enough CO_2 to take charge of the climate. Not only is our climate decreed and controlled by Christ, but it is also thickly insulated by the Word that Noah received.

> While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease (Genesis 8:28).

All but wind and wave should not be branded evil energy. CO_2 and diesel are part of human resources freely granted by the Sovereign-of-History's most-wise, good, supply-chain and handiwork. It verges on blasphemy to call Christ-created carbon footprints bad. Presumably when God made cows and commanded them to breed, he knew they would make methane, yet he refused to berate beef. Doubtless the Lord uses means towards his goal: that it might require reduction in meat consumption, that God declares good, to comply with safety targets – that is hubris too presumptuous and fantastic be allowed to stand unchallenged. Let the scoffer deny the global flood extent, or that the LORD is coming to call all men to account;[19] let Christians recycle plastic and clear litter from our streets; but believers must rest in regular Noahic cycles, which the good LORD has promised, will be seasonal, diurnal, thermometrical and agricultural.

(iv). Devilish Diets

It is sad to see so many influenced, it seems, by the thinking of Eastern religions, and, to a lesser extent, health-freak fads. Even children in Christian homes are starting to embrace the false doctrines of 'veganism.' If it were not so tragic, it would almost be laughable to see carnivores becomes targets of 'climate-change' lobbyists. No doubt God gives us choices of diets we prefer,[20] but where we start to think that meat is somehow bad, or that beef, lamb and poultry should be off the menu (because it is cruel, harmful, or bad – to the animal or the eater), then that is, according to apostles, undoubted demonic doctrine. Both here in the Pentateuch, and later Acts, all food is pronounced clean, and nothing should be refused when gratefully received.

> Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood (Genesis 9:3-4).

It is true that Calvary lifts the ban on blood. If, after Pentecost, Jewish scruples were maintained, it was in order to avoid offence and promote table fellowship with Gentiles with varied tastes. The legislation of Moses was widely preached back then, so Greeks made a short-term concession to Jews who provided salvation.[21] Either way, if we give thanks, all are free to eat:

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[18] Matthew 28:18-20.
[19] Revelation 22:11.
[20] Romans 14:13-18.
[21] Acts 10:9-16; 15:1-33; Romans 14:1-23; 16:17-20; Colossians 3:16-23.

> There came a voice to him: 'Rise, Peter, kill and eat!'...the voice came to him again a second time: 'What God has made clean, do not call common' (Acts 10:13b-5).

Rules which, whether for ecclesiastical or environmental reasons, deprive the body of one particular food are totally valueless, if it bears God's royal seal.

> Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed (1 Timothy 4:1-6).

4. Proclamation through the Noahic Covenant

Some take a reductionistic view of the Noahic Covenant. While we do not deny that preservation is the distinctive feature of this covenant, we must not exclude an important redemptive, component. Many have laid stress on historical and typical redemptive elements.[22]

(i). Context

The Noahic narrative is located near the beginning of the unfolding drama of redemption. After announcing ultimate triumph of the woman's snake-crushing seed, God erected a world stage on which to enact the drama of salvation. The slate is wiped clean when the Flood blots out filth. The Ark saves one family and thus advances redemption. God pledges preservation until the end of earth.

(ii). Preservation

This promise is fleshed out in continued seasonal cycles, diurnal variations, agricultural conditions and temperature fluctuations. Earth's terror is assuaged by Moses' reassuring rhyme:

> While the earth remains (until all the days of earth), seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not ever cease (Genesis 8:22).

Since the fallen constitution of Adamites remain unchanged, a *terra firma* guarantee of flood defences was required.

> I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Never will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done (Genesis 8:21).

[22] Garry Williams, who lectures in London Seminary, has lectured extensively on the Noahic Covenant. I have, with permission, drawn from his material on the redemptive features in Noah, from unpublished lecture notes.

(iii). Nature

While it is possible that the antediluvian planet enjoyed an ancient 'greenhouse effect', and that massive climatic and tectonic shifts took place in parallel with inundation, the text itself is relatively silent. It should suffice to say that the post-cataclysmic globe has changed significantly from what it was before the Flood. Rather than seeing Genesis 8:22 as a radically new world meteorological order, the phraseology employed points more to a reinstitution of stable conditions that prevailed at Creation. Jeremiah points to statutes present from the start. If 33:20-21, 25-26 leave it an open question as to whether the days of Noah or Adam are in view, the astral reference in 31:35-36 harks back to Genesis 1:16 and therefore would seem to settle the matter:[23]

> Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar--the LORD of hosts is his name: 'If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever' (Jeremiah 31:35-36).

Recent scholarship[24] reinforces the belief that the Noahic Covenant is not a brand-new arrangement, or a biblical parenthesis, but an integral, stage-setting, part of an unfolding story of salvation which outworks the Garden-Gate promise – Noah preserves and prepares the world for the Abrahamic Covenant of Grace.

(iv). Certainty

Post-modern autonomous rebellion has perverted the Noahic Covenant sign and seal. It is probable that the rainbow existed prior to the Flood.[25] Not only does it preach a stay of execution for pollution, and declare divine longsuffering aimed to lead sinners to repentance: it also reminds all men of to whom they must give account, and that God has a means of refuge by which he offers escape. Its associated Ark points all sons of Noah, in 9:8-9 and 18-19, to seek mercy in Christ.

> I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh (Genesis 9:13-15).

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[23] O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, pp.19-21.
[24] Particularly see Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), pp.155-161 who employ linguistic arguments to argue that no new covenant was initiated or inaugurated by the Noahic revelation but this Covenant was but an extension of an already-existing arrangement.
[25] John Calvin, *Genesis*, p.299.

(v). Language

Universal-sounding vocabulary that first appears at the Flood resurfaces later in Scripture in connection with the Evangel. 'All flesh or every creature under heaven,' in 6:17 and 7:19, later is loaded with biblical-theological freight.[26]

> For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die (Genesis 6:17).
>
> And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered (Genesis 7:19).

As early as Deuteronomy 2:25, fear inspired by Yahweh's redemptive acts gets global exposure in the Ancient Near East Press. Daniel 7:27 promises universal dominion to subjects of God's Kingdom. In Acts, at Pentecost, all earth gets representation. Jesus' universal lordship has Noahic overtones:

> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Paul seems to see preservation in light of world evangelization. The spectrum above the Flood delimits horizons for his Gospel Free Offer. Christ stakes his claims where the rainbow flag is flown.

> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister (Colossians 1:21-23).

If we have not overestimated the significance of 'universal' language, it should help us untangle some tricky New Testament texts. Passages traditionally enlisted in a Liberal or Arminian cause can sound universalistic because their scope and language is Noahic. Forced Calvinism rarely convinces preachers or hearers. 2 Peter 3:9 seems to be a case in point.[27] Many unsuccessfully and uncomfortably have tried to restrict this to the elect.

> The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Admittedly there are a number of textual, grammatical and syntactical issues to deal with in this text. By referencing 'desire' passages in Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Christ, and carefully exegeting the text in question, John Murray has shown convincingly that it would be quite

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[26] While the cited texts employ the idea of 'under heaven' in various ways in general it is used as a universalistic signal in Exod. 17:14; Deut. 2:25; 4:19; 7:24; 9:14; 25:19; 29:20; 2 Ki. 14:27; Job 37:3; 41:11; Eccl. 1:13; 2:3; 3:1; Dan. 7:27; 9:12; Acts 2:5; 4:12; Phil. 2:10; Col. 1:23; Rev. 5:3, 13.

[27] O. Palmer Robertson, pp.121-123. I have developed the argument along similar lines as Robertson does in his footnote 18, p.123.

wrong-headed to snuff out the 'universal' evangelical element.[28] One additional factor in the passage, that Murray does not explicitly address, though he may assume it, is the self-evident Noahic context of the Petrine statement:

> For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:5-8).

There is undoubted mystery in God's decretive will which is not easy to reconcile with his declarative wish. Yet Yahweh's loving heart takes no pleasure if men perish – truly God delights that the wicked repent and be saved. Full salvation in Christ must be offered unreservedly to sinners and saints alike, for this is the appointed means to salvage God's elect and damn the reprobate.

> Romans 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9 may have believers particularly in mind, but, even so, the longsuffering mentioned in both passages involves the suspension of judgment over periods of time, and such suspension of judgment draws even the wicked and the reprobate within its scope.[29]

While a comprehensive survey of 'Noahic-Sounding' texts is beyond the scope of this paper, and careful exegesis would have to be undertaken to trace its full extent, this lens may give further insight into pseudo-universalist passages in the Fourth Gospel. Further, if a unified redemptive goal lies behind the divine will, then ingathering Noahic sons is not remote from the Great Commission goal. If world preservation is finally grounded in Christ's Mediatorial Dominion, optimistic preachers must maximize proclamation in this period of preservation.

> And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:18-20).

5. Participation through the Noahic Covenant

The Noahic 'Toledoth' concludes with a drunken episode, 9:18-28. The fact that this account is one of the most shockingly memorable in all of Scripture should flag up at once its disproportionate significance in the ongoing story of God's unfolding purpose.[30]

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[28] John Murray, "Free Offer of the Gospel" in *Collected Writings, Volume 4, Studies in Theology*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), pp.113-132.

[29] John Murray, "Common Grace" (pp.93-119) in *Collected Writings: Volume 2*, p.101.

[30] It was Arthur W. Pink, if I recollect correctly, who memorably flagged up the 'law of first mention' to warn of the dangers of imbibing alcohol. While the point he made is valid, given the central plotline of Scripture is Christocentric, and its trajectory eschatological, I suggest the importance of the event and subsequent prophecy is the big idea we should not miss.

The record is set within the context of global repopulation by the descendants of the triplex seed of Noah, 9:18-19. After a prolonged period of uncertain length, the godly man planted a vineyard and imbibed too much of its vintage, 9:20-21. When their father roused, a prophecy poured forth: son Canaan is cursed for Ham's publicity campaign, 9:22, 24-25; Shem and Japheth are blessed for backward steps to silence smears; 9:26-27 predicts the future course of history and sets the divine redemptive agenda:

> The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed. Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.' He also said, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant' After the flood Noah lived 350 years. All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died.

(i). Shemite Election

Misreading or over-interpretation of this passage is a danger. A careful study of the details is cautionary. Precise analysis of the prediction concerning Shem is illumining: it is a shock to learn that Yahweh, not Shem, is the one explicitly blessed. There are at least two reasons for this Godward benediction:

Firstly, when humans bless God in the Bible it generally signifies gratitude for divine blessing bestowed and received[31] – we were correct, after all, to see Shem implicitly blessed. Secondly, however, that still leaves the question open – one answer would be that Noah (or Moses) by the Spirit suppresses mention of Shem's bliss to avoid later confusion about the chosen vehicle of salvation: redemption blessings will come through Abram and his seed.[32] Unrestricted Shem, at this juncture, would confusingly multiply possible candidates for legitimate Messianic seed: soon Moses says all peoples are blessed through one.

If we delve a little further into the statement about Shem, the key point being made is Shem's election as family head. Japheth will dwell in his tents (in the short-term this probably meant two brothers lived close under Shemite headship; in latter days, after dispersion at Babel,[33] final resolution will bring glorious reunion [see below]). The Spirit points to the fact that Shem's seed is God's choice[34] – before Abram's Ur vocation, Moses makes clear from whom the 'Snake-Crusher' would come (not Ham, nor Japheth, but Shem) – so that when he came, all earth might believe, God's powerful Word produced, and Jesus is the Christ. Finally,

[31] Job 1:21; Psalm 113:2; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3.
[32] Genesis 12:1-3 & 22:15-19; Matthew 1:1; Acts 3:25-26.
[33] Genesis 11:1-9.
[34] Genesis 11:10-31.

when Noah identifies Yahweh as 'the God of Shem' he also implies, above election, a covenant relationship. The LORD will cut covenant with a Shemitic 'People of God'.[35]

(ii). Canaanite Enslavement

The tragic, drunken, exposure of fatherly infirmity became the grounds for this patriarchal prophecy. That in itself ought to alert us to the disproportionate importance of this sole Noahic verbatim report. Again, if we pay careful attention to textual detail, we see a number of important features emerge.

> Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servant shall he be to his brothers…let Canaan be his servant…and let Canaan be his servant.

Firstly, the curse is established on the testimony of three witnesses. Thrice we are told of the future servile status of Canaan. Secondly, the reprobation of Canaan is certainly implied – curse is the covenantal polar opposite of the divine saving favour and blessing. Thirdly, the degree of servility is unrivalled and unmatched. The traditional grammatical construction, servant of servants, like king of kings, or God of gods, describes a superlative: just a Nebuchadnezzar was the highest king of earth[36], and as the LORD was the God of gods[37], so Canaan will be the lowest slave there is. None stoops so low as the youngest son of Ham.

As to initial fulfilment of this word to Canaan, perhaps it may have been immediate – might Canaan, of all the grandsons of Noah, have been the boy assigned all the most menial chores in the camp? If so, perhaps, it might serve to explain how a seething resentment led him to later cast off the yoke of servitude and separate his tent from his brothers. As to final fulfilment, this was for the present remote - it helps to recall that the first audience for Genesis was Israel in the desert between Sinai and Shittim.[38] The new generation is about to possess Canaan. What the LORD announced before – both to Abraham (Genesis 15:16-21), and through Noah (Genesis 9:22) - God will now carry out. The full force of curse would be felt by seven wicked, Canaanite tribes that Israel was summoned, as a divine agent of wrath, to finally subjugate and drive out.

There are many things to learn from the cursing of Canaan. Instead of a God who is cruel, intolerant or unjust, mercy abounds even in pronouncing and executing this judgment. Firstly, Ham, himself, escapes the episode unscathed, with not so much as a slap on the wrist. He was the one who sinned and subjected his father to scorn. Whether he repented or hardened his heart, his judgment was delayed and his sentencing suppressed. Secondly, a sword of Damocles now hangs over the head of a third of the future race – instead of destruction we find delay and dilution of judgment. One third of nations that will branch out to populate earth have their Hamite ancestor spared. Still today, in this hiatus of gospel grace, the good, wise, God is kind to far-flung sons of Ham, Genesis 10:6-20. Thirdly, while it is true that the LORD let wicked cultures like Sodom and Gomorrah thrive for a time,[39] it would be remiss to forget magnificent Babylonian, Akkadian[40] and ancient Egyptian[41]

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[35] The formula "I will be your God and you will be my people" lies at the heart of the blessings of the Covenant.
[36] Daniel 2:37.
[37] Daniel 2:47.
[38] Numbers 25:1; Joshua 2:1; 3:1; Micah 6:5.
[39] Genesis 10:19.
[40] Genesis 10:10.
[41] Genesis 10:13.

cultures (not to mention Cush and Sheba[42]). His sparing of Ham displays lavish Common Grace, with all its treasures and gifts. Fourthly, Moses lends no support to the false teachings of slavery and apartheid. Such errors in the past were based on poor exegesis of the text (not to mention ignorance of the gospel and explicit New Testament texts). Fifthly, it is true that the future for Ham is left uncertain. Indeed, his seed soon swelled ranks of the enemies of God. Canaan's seed proved the most sinful, stubborn, hostile and inveterate.[43] Yet later OT teaching left their salvation an open question – if far-off Japheth lived at relative peace with Abram, it is hinted that even near enemies, if they take a lead from Japheth, can seek salvation in Shem.[44]

(iii). Japhethite Enlargement

During Israel's finest hour, Japhethites will be centrifuged out round the earth. After some uncertain period, whether hostile or friendly, a take-over bid occurs, with enlargement of floor-space: Shem will embrace an open-admission plan to embrace brother Japhethites, 9:27.

> May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.

The program is rolled out in Genesis 10-12. Japheth moves North-West (10:2-5). Ham largely heads down South (10:6-14) – his future looks antagonistic and hostile (10:9-10, 11:1-9) – whilst Canaan settles in lands which today are Palestine (10:15-20). Shem gradually drifts East (10:21-31), as the chosen, elect, line (11:10-26), to await a summons from Ur (11:27-12:3), and, after sojourn in Egypt, formation of Israel. Further hints of Gentile admission are given in the course of the Old Testament period,[45] but not till Pentecost does Japheth inundate Israel.

Curiously, one of my favourite biblical scholars, Walter Kaiser, takes issue with this view on a couple of scores.[46] First, he cites a list of authorities (some fairly questionable) who back his preference that '*God* not *Japheth* (subject is unexpressed) will dwell in the tents of Shem.' Second, he advances a four-point argument for denying the traditional reading,[47] concluding as follows:

> On balance, then, the best option is to regard God as promising to Shem a special blessing. He would dwell with the Semitic peoples.[48]

Negatively, if Kaiser is to be commended for attempting to tie together the Shekinah and Messiah, we beg to differ on numerous points.[49] Positively, wider reasons favour a

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[42] Genesis 10:7.
[43] Genesis 10:15-19.
[44] Isaiah 19:16-25 envisages salvation for both Egypt and Assyria.
[45] Psalm 67; Micah 4:1-13.
[46] Walter Kaiser, Jnr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), pp.81-82.
[47] I have summarised his argument as follows: 1. We should assume that the subject of the previous clause carries over into the next clause where the subject is left unexpressed; 2. Using the indirect object of the previous line as the subject of the next line would require strong contextual reasons for doing so; 3. In succeeding chapters Shem comes first in honour and blessing; 4. The phrase 'he will dwell in the tents of Shem makes little sense if expansion has already been granted to Japheth.
[48] Walter Kaiser, p.82.
[49] I think Kaiser is wrong for the following considerations: if his first point might be accepted as a general rule, in regard to the second we believe there are strong contextual reasons for supposing that object Japheth becomes

traditional take on this text. First, this is precisely how the Gospel promise turned out – the Gentiles are now co-heirs, united to Israel's Christ, to all spiritual blessing, which is God's eternal purpose.[50] Second, after Isaiah's seedless Servant suffers, in 53:8, 10, He is promised unspeakable spiritual descendants:

> By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him; He has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand (Isaiah 53:8,10).

Just a few verses later, the Shemitic canvas enlarges, in 54:1-3: this theme spills over onto 55:4-5:

> 'Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labour! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,' says the LORD. 'Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes, for you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities' (Isaiah 54:1-3).
>
> Behold I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and a commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that you did not know shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you (Isaiah 55:4-5).

If 54:1-3 is the most pertinent to quote, it would be remiss to neglect gravity-defying Gentiles who stream uphill to Zion in Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 2:1-5. If this is correct, Noah's 'Blessed-be' in Genesis 9:26 is a post-diluvian version of Paul's Gospel Doxology, in Romans 11:25-36. Calvin takes a similar viewpoint:

> Noah predicts that there will be a temporary dissension between Shem and Japheth…and that afterwards the time will come, in which they shall again coalesce in one body, and have a common home. It is however, most absolutely certain, that a prophecy is here put forth concerning things unknown to man, of which, as the event, at length, shows, God alone was the Author. Two thousand years, and some centuries more, elapsed before the Gentiles and the Jews were gathered together in one faith…For whereas God had chosen to himself a Church from the progeny of Shem, he afterwards chose the Gentiles, together with them,

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the unspecified subject (in fact 'Japheth' is not an indirect but a direct object [See Williams' *Hebrew Syntax*, 273b, p.108.], not to mention a flexible object-subject unstated use in 9:26 (yet Kaiser does not assume that Canaan will serve the God of Shem - construct subject - but only Shem). All agree on his third point which has little bearing on the matter – Japheth-Gentile inclusion assumes Shemitic priority. His fourth point is a little curious – clearly envisaged spiritual blessing (which as yet remains buried in history) trumps any geographical expansion (which is not thereby precluded or reversed): dwelling in tents, we suggest, is simply a metaphor for a bond of friendship and fellowship with the source of messianic seed-line blessing, which is the greatest bliss of all.

[50] Ephesians 1:1-10 and 2:11-22.

> on this condition, that they should join themselves to that people, who were in possession of the covenant of life."[51]

This Noahic prophecy has generally been suppressed, poorly exegetic, or even overlooked.[52] Taken to heart it breeds marvelling courage in saints. The curse of Canaan passage, and the scandalous lapse of Noah, reveal a sovereign determination that all events subserve God's salvific goal. Israel needs to remember not just that Abram was called as the Saviour of the World, but also that the demise of Canaan was previously foretold. If the son was cursed for paternal indiscretion, he shared Ham's love of lewd, as filthy Baalistic rites declared. Soon after Moses death, Shem was summoned to wield God's sword – Canaan is judged to clear a path for Japheth (and also for Ham if he heeds and seeks fraternal reconciliation). Each time Yahweh acts there is an announcement beforehand. Surely God does nothing without revealing it through his prophets. Not only does this prove God's matchless power to keep his Word to Israel in the wilderness: for Christians in the West, we must learn again that his purpose will prevail. Despite the world-wide web of oppressive disconnect, Christ will build his Church from his Mediatorial throne. In these Gentile times we should still brim over with faith.

Conclusion

Apart from Sabbath School stories, the Noah section in Scripture is often poorly understood and seldom grasped or preached. It will come as a surprise to many that, in divine providence, the teaching that Moses addresses should become so relevant at this late date. Who would have thought that the Church should hold the trump card in the climate change debate, or stand on firm ground to claw back the LGBTQ emblematic error? That Noah is able to silence veganism may shock. I hope, at very least, to have shown how relevant Noah is. In addition, those worried by 'climate-change rebellion' should calmly re-set their bearings on what is finally most important. Noah can also be used to educate the Church. Noah must be used to herald final judgment from rooftops. Heaven's variegated spectrum proclaims a patient, merciful God. If western and eastern culture is riper for repentance, we know we have redemption in the Ark made from Golgotha wood.

[51] John Calvin, Genesis, pp.309-310.

[52] It seems to me that this text has been suppressed or de-emphasized for one or all of the following reasons: first, a general ignorance of the contents of Scripture; second, a loss of confidence in the text of the Pentateuch as a result of the now-discredited, in 'death-throes', Documentary Hypothesis; third, a widespread denial of predictive prophecy by critical scholarship; fourth, as a result of Dispensationalist denial of the unity and progression of the Plan of Redemption in Scripture; fifth, by a lack of an approach which integrates texts from all part of Scripture, and a drift from the *Sola Scriptura* hermeneutic to atomistic interpretation; it would be unfair to charge Kaiser with many or any of flaws, yet I do believe my teacher has taken a mis-step.

ELDERSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

Bruce R. Backensto

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Having served as a Teaching Elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America since my ordination on May 31, 1972, it is my observation that it might be helpful to look again at what the Bible says the eldership is and does. The bulk of this article is taken from my contribution to the 1976 pre-synodic conference on *The Church and Her Ministry*.[1] This article argues that the Bible presents **the** office of elder as consisting of two primary functions.

Old Testament usage

To help us understand afresh the office of elder, the basic words to be considered in the New Testament are *presbuteros*, *episkopos* and *poimēn*, and the verbs derived from these nouns. Since both *poimēn* and *presbuteros* are used in the New Testament without any formal definition given to them, it seems they must have developed from their use in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament.[2] However, in the Old Testament nation of Israel the word *presbuteros*[3] is simply used with reference to a particular office or group of men in the community. In Genesis 50:7 is the first translation of *presbuteros* as 'elder'. The reference is to the elders of the house of Joseph and the elders of the land of Egypt going up to bury Joseph's father. It is not clear whether a special office is being spoken of or a specific group of 'senior citizens' representing the land of Egypt and the people of Joseph's household is intended.

There are eight previous references in Genesis where the term *presbuteros* is used; but these are simply when a younger and older person are contrasted. The development of the Hebrew word *zagen*, which translates as *presbuteros* in the LXX, has the meaning '"a man with a beard" to "an old man" to "older men…chosen (to form) the narrower colleges of elders which represent the tribes, city, locality or people'[4] The elders generally were not rulers or governing authorities but basically representatives. It is interesting, however, to notice they were assembled on important occasions when the will of Yahweh was given which would affect the whole nation or people of Israel. They went with Moses before Pharaoh concerning their emancipation (Exodus 3:16, 18; 4:29). They supervised the slaying of the family offering at the Passover (Exodus 12:21); they kept a sacrificial feast with Jethro (Exodus 19:7); and some witnessed the miracle of the water at Horeb (Exodus 17:5). Seventy of the elders saw the glory of Yahweh at Sinai when the covenant was made with Moses and

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[1] *The Church and Her Ministry*, chapter 3, *'The Parity of the Eldership: The Bibllical Basis and Application'*, Rev. Bruce R. Backensto, (The Board of Education and Publlication Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1976), pp.19-26.

[2] The term is not used much in either testament, but it is interesting to notice the words for which it was used in the Old Testament. This will be done at a later point in the article.

[3] *Presbuteros* generally is used in the LXX for the word *zaqen*.

[4] Gunther Bornkamm, 'πρέσβυς, πρεσβύτερος,…', *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Friedrich, Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. VI. (Grand Rapids: Wm. E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), pp.655.

his three companions (Exodus 24:1, 9). The elders went with Moses to punish Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16:25).

Other passages showing functions of the elders are Joshua 7:6, 8:10, 23:2, 24:1; Numbers 11:16f and 24f (many more could be added). In Deuteronomy *presbuteros* is defined more specifically as being an office. The men are given authoritative roles in connection with other officials and judges. However, most of their jurisdiction was limited to their own locality and even their own tribe. The office of *presbuteros* continues through the exile both in Jerusalem and Babylon (Jeremiah 26:17, 29:11, Ezekiel 8:11f, 14:1, 20:1, 3). Elders existed in the Israelite community and were helpers of kings, rulers or judges in a representative sort of way. Hence, even in the Old Testament the term *presbuteros* simply appears in a rather 'casual' way to designate a particular office.

As mentioned earlier, the word episkopos is used less frequently in the LXX, however it is worth noticing the different Hebrew words it translates. It is used to translate the Hebrew word for God (*El*), for *nagash* which is translated 'press, drive, oppress, exact; driver, taskmaster', and for *paqath* which is translated 'attend to, visit, master, appoint, appointed ones, officers, make overseers'. In Job 20:29 *episkopos* is used to translate *El* as 'overseer' and as such it came to refer to the sovereign Creator who watches over everything. Not only the Hebrews used this word; but also it is used in pagan religions in this way. The term is used in reference to officers appointed by Abimelech (Judges 9:28) and men who were to handle the money raised to repair the temple (2 Chronicles 34:12, 17). Basically, in the Old Testament *episkopos* is generally used to express the **function** one has of overseeing something or someone, and not a specific office.

The word *poimēn*, which is related to *episkopos* in the New Testament (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:2), is generally used to describe Yahweh as the Shepherd of Israel and then it came to refer to the expected Messiah who would watch the flock, Israel. In Jeremiah *poimēn* is used commonly for political and military leaders; however, surprisingly, it is never used as a title of the ruling king of Israel. This word, as does *episkopos*, refers more to a function performed than an office held. A political or military leader many times exhibited the characteristics of a shepherd of a flock while never holding the 'office' of shepherd.

Presbuteros

As these three words are used in the New Testament, they generally retain their Old Testament meaning and usage. They are, however, somewhat more specifically defined as the offices of the New Testament Church are developed. Beginning with the word *presbuteros*, it should first be noted, as was stated above, no formal definition is given but the word is simply used with the writer assuming the reader already knows its meaning. Jesus does this as he argues the point of washing before eating with the Pharisees (Mark 7:3, 5) and when he discusses his forthcoming death with his disciples and apostles (Matthew 26:3f). In the former case Jesus argues that the Pharisees were guilty of keeping the laws of the *presbuteroi* whom he simply calls *anthrōpoi* ('men') later in the same passage. The elders (*presbuteroi*) were also a part of the group who were to have Jesus crucified, as seen in the second reference above. This shows an awareness of an existing office of elder (*presbuteros*) in the Jewish 'church' system. Also, in Acts 4 when Peter is on trial before the courts of the Jewish 'church' he addressed the 'rulers and elders of the people' and stated his case (v.5).

Many other references in Acts could be cited to support the point that the office of *presbuteros* (elder) was commonplace in the Jewish 'church' system.[5]

It seems this office was simply carried over into the structure of the Christian Church. The first mention of *presbuteroi* ('elders') in reference to a Christian congregation is in Acts 11:30. Agabus, led by the Spirit, indicated there would be a famine in Jerusalem, which led to the gathering of supplies by the church at Antioch to be sent to the church at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas were singled out to take the relief supplies 'to the elders (*presbuterous*)' at Jerusalem. In Acts 14 Paul returns through some cities in which people had responded positively to his preaching and he 'appointed elders (*presbuterous*)' for them in every church (Acts 14:23).[6]

Of course, the monumental passage from which the Presbyterian view of church government is derived mentions that the court at Jerusalem consisted of apostles (*apostoloi*) and elders (*presbuteroi*) (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23). Especially notice verse 23, *'And they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren* ***who were elders*** (or *"the elders of the brethren"*), *to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings."'* Here the decision and concluding dispatch was signed by the authority figures of Jerusalem, the apostles (*apostoloi*) and the elders (*presbuteroi*) (cf. Acts 16:4). Other passages could be added to show that *presbuteros* was used to designate an office in the Christian Church; however, at this point consideration of *episkopos* and *poimēn* will be undertaken.

The main question to keep in mind is whether these two words are ever used to designate an office in the Christian Church or simply to refer to a function which men or officers (being mostly distinguished by some other word) perform, as was the case in the Old Testament.

Poimēn

Poimēn is used seventeen times in the New Testament and only once is it used in reference to an officer in the church (Ephesians 4:11). In Ephesians 4:11 Paul is telling the church that Jesus Christ has just given apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers (or pastors, *poimenas*) and teachers (*didaskalous*), with the word translated 'pastors' coming from *poimēn*) for the equipping of the saints to do the work of the ministry. Most Reformed exegetes would agree that the offices of apostle, prophet and evangelist (recognizing there has been serious study given to the office of evangelist being present today by Reformed men in the late twentieth century), as they existed in the age of continuing 'special revelation', were primarily limited to that age while the office of the 'pastor-teacher' (or the office of pastor, *poimēn*, and teacher) is in existence today. The Greek phrase *tous de poimenas kai disaskalous* is generally translated as *pastor and teacher* or better *pastor-teacher* because the article *tous* is understood to encompass both words simply separated by the conjunction *kai*. In the case of the words 'apostle', 'prophet' and 'evangelist', each word has its own article thus setting each apart as a separate entity. Not so with *pastor* (*poimēn*) and *teacher* (*didaskalos*). Yet *poimēn* and *didaskalos* speak more of functions that officers would perform, as will be seen by the way the verb forms of the words are used. *Poimēn* speaks of a shepherd or pastor, one who cares for sheep, while *didaskalos* refers to the instructing side of an officer's duties. Thus, the Old Testament usage of *poimēn* as a function of an office is

[5] Acts 4:8, 23; 6:12. Cf. Mt. 21:23, etc.

[6] Acts 14:19-28. This is the first reference to the appointing of elders (*presbuteroi*) in churches and it is quite possible more than one elder was appointed to each congregation.

carried into the New Testament. The use of the verb form of *poimēn (poimainō*) will be studied in more detail later in the article.

Episkopos

The word *episkopos* is used five times in the New Testament, while it only appears three times in its verbal form. Those five references are worth noting. Acts 20:28 will be studied later. In the letter Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, he addresses specifically the *overseers* (*episkopoi*) and *deacons* (*diakonoi*) (Philippians 1:1). In this case *episkopoi* (plural of *episkopos*) is used in reference to the office, which is contrasted with the office of deacon. Since the word *episkopos* is in the plural *episkopoi,* there likely were more than one *episkopos* ('overseer') per congregation. It is possible more than one congregation existed in Philippi, hence more than one overseer (*episkopos*) existed in Philippi, yet with there being only one per congregation.[7] Commenting on Philippians 1:1, Lenski says this about the word episkopos and how it relates to presbuteros, 'Elder expressed the dignity of the office, overseer, to the work.'[8] In 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7 Paul is discussing the qualifications for the office of *elder* while using the word *episkopos*. Paul calls *episkopos* an office in 1 Timothy 3:2; however, the word may still be said to be a descriptive word showing the work of the office used in place of the word *presbuteros* which specifically speaks of the office itself. The word is used in 1 Peter 2:25 in reference to Jesus as being the overseer of the Christian's life.

Presbuteros and episkopos

Before studying the passages which use the various verb forms of these nouns, here are a few comments concerning the relation of the nouns *presbuteros* and *episkopos* from various sources. Thayer says of *presbuteros*:

> That they did not differ at all from the (episkopoi) bishops or overseers. . . .is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately, Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7, and that the duty of the presbyters is described by the terms of ἐπισκοπεῖν…accordingly only two ecclesiastical officers, οἱ επίσκοποι οἱ διάκονοι are distinguished in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1, 8. The title ἐπίσκοπος denotes the function, πρεσβύτερος the dignity[9]

Moulton and Milligan support Hort's conclusions given in *Christian Ecclesia,* where he shows the word *episkopos* as used in the New Testament is not of an office but a function (Philippians 1:1).[10] This is the conclusion Beyer reaches in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. He notices two uses of the word *episkopos*. First, he sees it is closely related to the word *poimēn*, especially as used in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2. Second, he sees that the apostles, prophets and teachers are never called *episkopoi* and that it is only used where there are settled, local congregations. Beyer offers this comment regarding the relationship between *presbuteros* and *episkopos*:

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[7] Generally commentators say there was only one congregation in Philippi. Cf, Lenski, Hendriksen and Muller.

[8] R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961).

[9] J.H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. (New York: American Book Company, 1886), p.536.

[10] J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), pp.244-245.

> …all presbuteroi are called episkopoi not in virtue of their age but of their position and accreditation. And, in Titus 1:7, where we suddenly have episkopos instead of presbuteros, this is another proof that the two terms originally referred to the same thing, namely, the guidance and representation of the congregation and the work of preaching and conduction of worship when there was no apostle, prophet or teacher present.[11]

Such comments are contrary to the view held by J.A. and C. Hodge in their respective books, *What is Presbyterian Law as Defined by the Church Courts?* and *Discussions in Church Polity*.[12]

Combinations of terms

Now for a careful look at important passages which use these three words or two of them together at the same time. First, Acts 20:17-35, especially verses 17 and 28. Luke is recording Paul's discussion with the Ephesian elders as he addressed them from Miletus. Paul calls the *presbuteroi* of the church to meet him in Miletus. He addresses them as elders (*presbuteroi*). Then in verse 28 Paul warns them to be on guard for themselves and all the flock 'among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (*episkopoi*), to shepherd (*poimainein*) the church of God'. Notice the *presbuteroi* of verse 17 are now called overseers (*episkopoi*) and called to shepherd (*poimainein*) the church of God. Here the words are melted together to refer to one office and the functions of that office. If in Ephesus there was one congregation, clearly it had more than one elder who watched over and shepherded or pastored the flock. If there were many congregations and one *presbuteros* was taken from each congregation, then only one *presbuteros* is to exist in each congregation and not a session of *presbuteroi*. It seems from the account only one office is meant and many men of each congregation are involved in this office and they each carry out the duties of the office.

The same point may be made from 1 Peter 5:1-5, if the reading in *The Greek New Testament*, edited by Aland, Black, Metzger, and Wikgren, may be accepted. In verse 1 Peter addresses the elders (*presbuteroi*) and in verse 2 he reminds them of their function. They are to 'shepherd the flock of God by taking oversight (*episkopountes*) not under compulsion but voluntarily'.[13] From these two passages it is evident that *presbuteroi* are to oversee (*episkopein*) and shepherd (*poimainein*). Only one office exists and that is the office of elder according to these key passages.[14]

The final text to be considered is constantly drawn upon to argue for two offices, pastors and elders, or *teaching elders* and *ruling elders*. That text is 1 Timothy 5:17. It reads, 'Let the elders (*presbuteroi*) who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those

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[11] Beyer, ἐπισκέπτομαι, ἐπισκοπέω, . . . *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Vol. II. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), pp.616 & 617, respectively.

[12] J.A. Hodge, *What is Presbyterian Law?* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publishing and Sabbath School Work), 1910. He does this mainly because the Church of Scotland did, pp.45ff. Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1878, pp.128-133, 262-271. C. Hodge debates Dr. Thornwell who, in this writer's opinion, had the more biblical view. Robert Dabney holds a similar view to that of Thornwell. His work is entitled, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, and vol. 2 deals with elders.

[13] The Greek phrase is ποιμάντατε τὸ ἐν ὑμιν μοίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς ἀλλὰ θεον. A, P, Ψ, X etc. support this reading.

[14] There are two offices, elder and deacon. By saying there is one office in this context, the author is pointing out there is not the office of pastor (*poimēn*) and the office of elder (*presbuteros*).

who work hard at preaching (lit. 'in word') and teaching.' The question is whether this passage by the phrase 'those who work hard at preaching and teaching' (ESV, NASB).[15] means to constitute a separate office. Is it proper to construe from this view that two offices exist – those of ruling and teaching elders? Who is worthy of double honour? The passage says the *presbuteros* who rules will is worthy of 'double honour'. What is meant is that elders who rule well are to be held in honour. Now this honour is intensified in the case of those who 'labor in preaching and teaching'. Both receive double honour with intensification of honour for the labourer because of the intensification of function.[16] We would be on weak ground to seek to defend the idea of two offices existing from this verse when it is compared with all the above-mentioned verses.

Practical applications

This paper has sought to show that there are two offices in the church, that of elder (*presbuteros*) and deacon. In the office of elder there are various functions to perform: oversight (*episkopos*) and pastoring (*poimēn*) are just two, while 'to labour in word and doctrine' is another function, as is ruling. Not everyone in the eldership can teach, visit, counsel or preach at the same time to the same people, so different elders are assigned various tasks in accordance with their gifts, time and desires. The qualifications for the eldership are given in 1 Timothy and Titus so that a congregation will use them as a guideline when electing officers from their midst.

Here are some practical applications derived from the fact that the eldership consists of many functions within the one office of elder.

First, it seems all the elders (*presbuteroi*) should be chosen by the congregation (Acts 13:1-3). Elders will be elected according to the qualifications for the office being exhibited in their lives. Also, elders will be elected according to the gifts granted them by the Spirit to function as an elder. Generally, we speak of those elders who 'labour in word and teaching' as being 'teaching elders'. Similarly, those who 'rule well' are designated 'ruling elders'. As congregants observe the lives of the men within the congregation, they have the advantage of watching the men grow up among them. Our practice is, when we believe a man in the congregation is suited to be a teaching elder, the session requests the presbytery take the young man under care and begin a formal theological process of training him for the gospel ministry. Those men who do not manifest such giftedness, while manifesting the qualifications of an elder, are called upon by the congregants to be set apart to the eldership with the primary responsibility of ruling. Therefore, when a congregation is called upon to elect an elder given to 'word and teaching', they need to be sure they desire to be fed week-by-week from the pulpit by that man. When a congregation is called upon to elect an elder given to 'rule', they need to be sure they desire to be overseen by that man.

Second, from our consideration of the functions of elders, perhaps we should consider the adjective we assign to the man. Is this elder one who teaches/preaches? Is this elder one who rules/shepherds. Yes, the primary distinction between elders when it comes to function is that of teaching/preaching and ruling/shepherding. Listen again to Ephesians 4:11: 'And God

[15] Exegetical work needs to be done on the phrase ἐν λόγῳ διδασκαλίᾳ. Possibly due to the translation of λόγος and διδαλασκαλία as verbal nouns some want to read two offices into this passage. Basically the verse *may* be referring to men who study the Bible and teach as being worthy of more intensified honour.

[16] Robert Malarkey, Unpublished paper for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church Committee on Church Government.

gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers'. The two functions designated are *pastoring* and *teaching*. From 1 Timothy 5:17 the two distinctions are *ruling* and *labouring in word and teaching*. This being the case, why do we refer to the elder who preaches regularly as 'pastor'? Yes, the preacher/minister of the gospel shepherds the flock as he expounds the Word of God each Lord's Day and he may shepherd the sheep throughout the week as needed; however, is it not more biblical to understand the ruling elder is also known as the shepherding elder?

A practical out-working of this distinction between the *teaching/preaching elder* and the *ruling/shepherding elder* might manifest itself by dividing the members of the congregation into shepherding groups with each of the *shepherding elders* (I use *shepherding* in the place of *ruling* which we normally do, to make the point, the Bible seems to divide the eldership into two primary functions). We are accustomed to speaking of *teaching* and *ruling* as the distinguishing features of our elders. What happens if we begin speaking of *preaching* and *shepherding* elders? If a congregation is divided into shepherding groups, the *shepherding* elder who oversees 'his' group will build deep relationships with those in his flock. He becomes the elder who is called when a crisis befalls a family in his shepherding group. When this becomes the case, when there is an election of the traditionally named 'ruling elder' more care will be given to calling those men from whom the congregants will seek counsel – shepherding.

As an interim moderator of a session after the congregation's teaching elder has been called by another congregation, it has become apparent how important this aspect of the eldership is. As an interim moderator who lives three hours away, it is very difficult to be the primary *pastoring elder* also. If the *ruling elders* are committed to faithfully *overseeing* the congregation (and specifically those in his shepherding group), an interim moderator (*teaching/preaching* elder) will not have to 'get up to speed' with the congregants immediately to be an knowledgeable *shepherding elder*.

As we consider the matter of parity of elders; i.e. one office, two primary functions, other questions arise for consideration. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America has taken the step of requiring teaching elders to be communicant members of the local congregation where he ministers the Word and Sacraments. When the Apostle Paul sent Titus to Crete to set things in order by appointing elders, one is hard pressed to find the practice of teaching elders being communicant members of a presbytery. Certainly, if teaching elders are to be admitted as such by a presbytery, it makes sense the credentials of the teaching elder reside with presbytery.

Perhaps by emphasizing the parity of the teaching and the ruling elders, because **all** elders are to be able to teach, the *pastoring elders* will *oversee* the preaching of the *preaching elder* more carefully. Simply because the *preaching elder* has been seminary- or theological-hall-educated, that does not make him superior in knowledge of the Bible. Sessions might spend time together deciding which book of the Bible needs to be preached, based on the needs of the congregation as reported by the *shepherding elders'* assessment of the spiritual well-being of the saints. Some *teaching/preaching elders* have men (*ruling elders* and others) with whom he meets regularly each week to go over forthcoming sermons to be preached.

Often as I have considered the period of the society meetings, I have wondered why in the absence of *teaching elders* the *ruling elders* were not permitted to administer the sacraments. As I think of the length of time between partaking of the Lord's Supper until a *teaching elder*

was on site, I am grieved the means of grace enjoyed by observing the sacrament was absent. When children were born, surely a *shepherding elder*, if present, would be able to baptize the covenant child. Think of the benedictions the people of God missed because it was not thought an *overseeing elder* should pronounce God's blessing upon the congregated saints for worship.

It is common practice for a session to be moderated by the *teaching elder* installed in a given congregation. Why is the *teaching elder* the only one thought able to moderate the session? The higher courts have enjoyed moderation by *ruling elders*, at least on occasion. It seems counter-intuitive to maintain the practice of *preaching elders* moderating courts instead of *ruling elders*, does it not?

Another practice which comes to mind with respect to practicing parity of elders is delegation to higher courts. Why is it when the clerk of presbytery or synod, when making up the roll, calls the *teaching elder* of each congregation and then the name of the delegated *ruling elder*? Yes, delegates to the higher courts are to be certified; however, when a session fails to send in the certificates, the clerk, it seems to this author, should call the name of the *teaching elder* of the session, and if he is not present, proceed to call the names of the *shepherding elders* on the roster of a given session to learn if there are two delegates present. I say two delegates because in the RPCNA each congregation is permitted two delegates in attendance and one more if there are more than one hundred members in the congregation.

Questions arise when ordination is being considered if a man who has been ordained in a congregation as an elder whose primary function is *overseeing, pastoring, ruling*. Yes, it does appear strange to list *pastoring* as one of the primary functions of the congregational elder we typically designate as the *ruling* elder, but from the study presented of the use of the words associated with the eldership, *pastoring* elder fits. Is such a man, if he is certified by a presbytery to receive a call to be a *teaching/preaching* elder, to be ordained again when a congregation calls him to minister in Word and Sacraments as their *teaching* elder? Dr. Wayne Spear considers that the Westminster Divines understood ordination to be to *function*.[17] If they are correct, clearly a man is ordained to the primary function of either *teaching* or *ruling* as we traditionally speak of elders in a congregation. This author is of the opinion that ordination is to office, not function. When Paul left Titus in Crete to set in order what remained, Titus was to appoint elders. It seems the men who met the qualifications to be elders would have been ordained as elders. Of course, we do not know how many of those elders served primarily in Word and Sacraments (*teaching/preaching* – labouring in *Word and teaching*) and how many served primarily in overseeing, ruling, pastoring. Of late, in the RPCNA when men have been called as *teaching elders*, if they have served as *ruling elders*, they are not ordained when becoming a *teaching elder*; though some have questioned this practice of not ordaining these men because they are changing their primary function. However, this author does not know of any *teaching elder* who has retired from serving as a *teaching elder* being called by a congregation to serve as a *ruling elder*, being ordained again. If this is universally the case, why so? Is there an implied hierarchy if the practice is to ordain a second time *ruling elders* who become *teaching elders*, but not to ordain a second time *teaching elders* if they become *ruling elders*?

[17] Wayne R. Spear, *Covenanted Uniformity in Religion: The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners upon the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly.* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013).

One final observation to be considered. Because the biblical teaching is for the parity of elders with two primary functions, those functions being *teaching/preaching* and *overseeing, ruling, shepherding*, why are we prone to refer to the *teaching elder* as the pastor? Fundamentally, based on Ephesians 4:11 where the two primary functions are *shepherding* and *teaching* and 1 Timothy 5:17 where the two primary functions are *ruling* and *labouring in Word and teaching*, it makes sense the function pairings should be that of *shepherding/ruling* and *teaching/labouring in Word and teaching*. We have ministers of the Word and Sacraments and shepherds of the sheep.

It is the author's prayer that food for thought has been provided for the glory of God and the growth of Jesus Church.

RETELLING IN CHRONICLES AND LUKE-ACTS: A STUDY IN HISTORICAL METHOD

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It is widely accepted that Luke – the author of the Gospel which bears his name and the Book of Acts[1] – was a Gentile. Luke and Acts contain a significant amount of evidence to support this conclusion.[2] From the Hellenistic preface of Luke 1:1-4 to the closing scenes of Acts, where Paul preached the gospel in Rome to Jew and Gentile alike (Acts 28:30-31), Luke's two books speak to the Greco-Roman world about a Saviour whose salvation is to be seen by 'all flesh' (Luke 3:6).

Having said this, Luke displays a deep knowledge of the Scriptures of Israel and a deep concern for the people of Israel. Moreover, his writing style displays a desire to imitate the style of the Septuagint (LXX).[3] The contrast between the Hellenistic preface of Luke 1:1-4 and the Hebraic style of the birth and infancy narratives of Luke 1:5-2:52 is particularly marked. The opening chapters of Luke's Gospel are rich in allusions to and quotations from the LXX. That influence, although less pronounced in succeeding chapters, continues in subtle ways.

Not only can a Septuagintal style be seen throughout Luke and Acts, there are many quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament and these indicate an underlying theology drawn from the Scriptures of Israel. Luke is no mean theologian and one of the major sources of his theology is the Old Testament.[4] As in the Old Testament, so too in Luke and Acts, God is the Creator and Ruler of the world. He has chosen Israel as his covenant nation and the blessings of salvation will come to Israel through the promised son of David who will deliver his people from oppression. It is also noteworthy that Luke gives evidence of attention to detail and a high regard for the authority of Scripture.[5] He has learned from the Lord Jesus to look at the Old Testament as a unified canon, of three parts, which bears a consistent witness to the necessity of his Messianic ministry (see Luke 16:16,29-31, 24:25, 44).

Granted that Luke held the Old Testament Scriptures in such high regard, it comes as no surprise that Luke chose to convey his theological message through the medium of historical

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[1] In this article it will be assumed that Luke's Gospel and Acts were not only written by the same author, but also share a continuity of purpose. These assumptions have been subject to recent scrutiny, see Andrew F. Gregory and C. Kavin Rowe eds, *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2010). A helpful summary of the issues concerning authorship of and relationship between Luke's Gospel and Acts can be found in Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume 1: 1:1-9:50* (2vols.; vol. 1; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), pp.4-7. and Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp.15f.

[2] Craig S. Keener, *Acts - An Exegetical Commentary. Volume 1 Introduction and 1:1-2:47* (4vols.; vol. 1 Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), p. 402.

[3] A Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible compiled over a period of several centuries beginning in the third century B.C..

[4] Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts* ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

[5] Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p.63.

narrative. Much of the Old Testament takes the form of historical narrative, and Luke is aware that the people of God were a people with a history to relate. In Luke 24:24 is seems very probable that Jesus related that story to the two disciples who walked with him to Emmaus, as 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke 24:27). The probability that this was a narrative of Israel's history increases if we understand 'all the prophets' to include a reference to 'the former prophets', the section of the Hebrew Bible from Joshua to Kings.

In two passages in Acts – Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin (7:2-53) and Paul's synagogue sermon in Pisidian Antioch (13:16-41) – Luke records at length a narration of Israel's history. Clearly he expects his readers to be aware of and interested in the details of Israel's history. There are at least two reasons why Luke takes such a keen interest in the history of Israel as it is recorded in the Old Testament. The first of these is that *Israel's history is redemptive history*. It is a record of God at work to redeem his people from the oppression of their enemies. The second reason is that *the history of Israel did not stop with the end of the Old Testament*, but rather continued and came to its climactic fulfilment in the life and ministry of Jesus. Even with the resurrection of Jesus, Israel's redemptive history has not come to an end. It continues in the witness of the Church.[6]

The question which this paper aims to address is: how does Luke continue the historiographical agenda of the Old Testament in his historical narrative? Granted that Luke describes the fulfilment of the promises of God embedded in the narrative of the Old Testament in a narrative work of his own, how did the Old Testament shape his work as a historian? In other words, what kind of historian was Luke?

Various answers have been offered in response to that question. As a result of the work of Henry J. Cadbury, Luke has, for many years, been compared with Hellenistic historians following in the footsteps of Thucydides, Xenophon and Polybius.[7] Parallels have also been drawn between Luke and the work of Hellenistic Jewish historians[8] such as Josephus, the Jewish historian who wrote a history of the war which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and followed that with a massive history of the Jewish people – *The Antiquities of the Jews*.[9] Yet surely more attention ought to be paid to Luke as a Biblical historian, continuing and completing the narratives of the Old Testament.

Much could be said in consideration of this subject, but the aim of this paper is to consider one characteristic feature of Old Testament narrative – repetition and retelling – and the extent to which it is replicated in the narratives of Luke and Acts. First of all, it will be necessary to define the literary terms used to describe repetition and retelling. Secondly, various examples of repetition and retelling in the Old Testament will be surveyed, with a view to comparing them with Luke and Acts. Thirdly, patterns of repetition and retelling in Luke and Acts will be described, with a particular focus on the most sustained example of narrative retelling in Luke and Acts – the three accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, 22

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[6] Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus - Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011).

[7] Henry J. Cadbury, "Commentary on the Preface of Luke," in *The Beginnings of Christianity; Part 1. The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake. (London: Macmillan, 1922).

[8] Carl R. Holliday, "Acts and the Fragmentary Hellenistic Jewish Authors," *NovT* 53(2011).

[9] Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos (sic), Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). A helpful survey of the points of contact between Josephus and Luke-Acts can be found in Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), pp.251-95.

and 26. Then finally, conclusions will be drawn about the nature of Luke's method and message.

The terms to describe repetition and retelling

In this paper I will use three terms to describe narrative recurrence. These need to be defined and distinguished as their use here will differ from their use in other studies. There is, in the three terms listed below, a progression from a more general concept to a more specific concept.

1. *Repetition* describes a wide range of literary phenomena, where a word, a theme, a metaphor or even a whole narrative occurs more than once in a text. Sometimes this is referred to by the term *redundancy*, which is simply 'information conveyed more than once'. However, it is questionable whether even the simplest repetition is truly redundant. For instance, the double vocative, 'Abraham, Abraham…' or 'Saul, Saul…' is more than mere repetition, as it adds pathos to the narrative. Witherup, in his study of narrative repetition in Acts, uses the term 'functional redundancy' to describe deliberate and purposeful repetition.[10]

2. *Recalling* is a more elaborate form of repetition, which first relates a narrative in some detail and at some length, and then subsequently recalls that narrative by means of a brief reference or summary of the event which was previously narrated at length. The first account is of ongoing significance in the narrative and its form is taken as read when subsequently recalled.

3. In contrast to the simple recalling of an event, *retelling* involves the *narration at length* (or of an equivalent length) of the same event. That event may be retold once, or it may be retold on multiple occasions. The more often it is repeated the greater the emphasis placed upon it. The more complex the retellings the greater the scope for a combination of verbatim and variant retellings which allow significant nuances to be introduced to the narrative.

Examples of Repetition and Retelling in Old Testament Narrative

1. Examples of *repetition* in Old Testament narrative.

Repetition takes many forms in Old Testament narrative ranging from simple to complex, and it will be possible in this section to list only a few representative examples. One of the simplest forms of repetition is the *double vocative address*, repeating the name of the person addressed. Examples are found in accounts of theophanies, see Genesis 22:11, 46:2, Exodus 3:4 and 1 Samuel 3:10. *Theologically significant phrases* are also repeated in narrative. For instance, the Lord makes the statement, 'I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God' in Exodus 20:5; a statement which is repeated by Moses in Exodus 34:15, Deuteronomy 4:24, 6:15 and Joshua in Joshua 24:19. *Similar events* which recur through the narrative present a persistent problem or challenge. For example Genesis recounts three accounts of a patriarch telling a local ruler that his wife is his sister (Genesis 12:10-20, 20:1-18, 26:6-16); and the cry of the

[10] Ronald D. Witherup, "Functional Redundancy in the Acts of the Apostles: A Case Study," *JSNT* 48, no. 1 (1992): pp.67-8. Witherup bases his concept on Meir Sternberg's term 'informational redundancy' (see Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp.365-440.) but prefers the term 'functional redundancy' because 'the purpose of such repetition is not simply to impart information.' It has a range of purposes, including the literary and historical.

Israelites unto the Lord in their time of distress is a recurring theme through the book of Judges (see Judges 3:9, 3:15, 4:3, 6:6-7, 10:10, 15:18 and 21:3).

Even within a single narrative episode a considerable amount of repetition can be found. Take for example the account of Goliath's defiance of the armies of Israel and David's response in 1 Samuel 17. Before David arrived, v.8-10 describe the daily routine of the Philistine giant, 'I *defy* the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together.' Shortly after David arrived, Goliath 'came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before' (v.23), though it is from the lips of the Israelite soldiers that David heard what Goliath said in v.25, 'Surely he has come up to *defy* Israel.' David then asks, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should *defy* the armies of the living God?' (v.26). David tells King Saul that he will rise to the challenge, '… for he has *defied* the armies of the living God' (v.36). Then in v.45 David tells Goliath himself that he has not just defied the armies of Israel, but 'the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have *defied*.' The echo of Goliath's words through this passage demonstrates the true nature of his challenge, and the justice of divine retribution as God himself responds to the words of a mere (albeit, very large) man.

2. Examples of *recalling* in Old Testament narrative

One of the most foundational events in Old Testament narrative is the call of Abraham, which is first narrated in Genesis 12:1-9. The importance of Abraham's call is demonstrated by a series of reminders in the succeeding narrative, as God repeats his promise to Abraham, see Genesis 13:15-7, 15:7,18, 17:4-8, 18:17-19, 20:13.

Another example of recalling is God's refusal to let Moses enter the Promised Land because he struck the rock in anger rather than speaking to it as God had commended. This is narrated in detail in Numbers 20:2-13. First of all, the Israelites' need for water and God's instructions to Moses are described in 20:2-9. Then the gathering of the Israelites at which Moses angrily struck the rock twice is described in 20:9-13. This passage is recalled to the reader's mind in a series of five brief references to this event in Deuteronomy 1:37, 3:25-6, 31:2, 32:50-53, 34:4. Here the event is recalled, but not retold.

In both of these examples, the event is recalled by a mention or allusion which is significantly briefer than the earlier narrative.

3. Examples of *retelling* in Old Testament Narrative

It is possible to give examples of passages in which an event is narrated and then retold at some length. In Genesis 24 Abraham instructed his servant to seek a wife for his son Isaac from 'the land of his kindred.' In Genesis 24:1-9 Abraham made his servant swear neither to take a wife for Isaac from 'the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell' nor to take Isaac back to the land from which he came. By way of explanation Abraham recounted how the Lord had taken him from the land of his birth and promised the land of Canaan to his descendants. This is the only point at which Abraham recalled how God had called him to leave his homeland in Genesis 12:1-3.

When Abraham's servant arrived in Paddan-Aram and was welcomed into the home of Laban, he explained the purpose of his visit by summarising the whole story of Abraham

since his departure from Paddan-Aram in 24:35-36, and retelling the events of 24:1-28 in 24:37-48. This is more than a recalling of the past, for it is retelling *at length*. It is however a *single* retelling. Moreover, it is contained *within* a single episode.

Retelling is also a feature of the Joseph narrative in Genesis. In Genesis 42:7-10 Joseph interrogated his brothers when they came to seek food in Egypt, and in 42:30-34 they report the meeting to their father. There is a briefer reference to that same conversation in 43:3-5 when they seek to overcome Jacob's reluctance to send Benjamin with the brothers as demanded by Joseph.

The point to note about these longer retellings – the journeys of Abraham's servant and Joseph's brothers – is that they are *singular*. There is only one example in the OT of the same event being retold at length on *multiple* occasions, and it is the series of four accounts in Chronicles which narrate the Lord's promise to David that his son would build a house for the Lord – the Davidic Covenant. It is narrated first of all in 1 Chronicles 17, and then retold by David in 1 Chronicles 22:6-16 and 1 Chronicles 28:2-21, and by Solomon in 2 Chronicles 6:1-11.

The distinctive features of the Chronicler's narrative thread stands out more clearly when compared with the parallel accounts in Samuel-Kings. Thus, before considering the Chronicler's accounts, it will be helpful to summarise the accounts of God's promise to David in Samuel-Kings. It is not possible here to discuss at length the authorship of Samuel and Kings and how they relate to each other.[11] It will suffice to state that they were compiled as a metanarrative of Israel's monarchy, hence the name given to them in the LXX – *Basileiōn* or Kingdoms.

The Lord's covenant with David is narrated at length in 2 Samuel 7 and may be summarised as follows:

- David's desire, 7:1-3
- The Lord's reversal, 7:4-7
- The Lord's promise, 7:8-17
- David's response, 7:18-29.

Patterns of repetition can be observed even within this passage. The narrative opens by noting that the Lord had given David '*rest* from all his surrounding enemies' (7:1), and in the promise which Nathan was to convey to David the Lord recalled the promise of *rest* to Israel (7:11). David's desire to build a house for the Lord is explained by reference to the fact that 'the ark of God *dwells in a tent*' (7:2). In his reversal of David's proposal the Lord states, 'I have been moving about in *a tent for my dwelling*' (7:6). The Lord described David as 'my servant David' (7:5, 8); and in David's response he describes himself as God's servant no less than ten times in 7:18-29. But perhaps most significantly David's prayer sums up the thrust of God's promise. David's prayer in 7:27, 'I will build you a house', repeats, with modification, God's promise in 7:11, 'Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will build you a house'). David's repetition underscores the significance of that promise, and indicates his personal reliance upon the word of the Lord.[12]

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[11] See the survey of critical issues in Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Donald J. Wiseman. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), pp.17-36.
[12] Peter G. Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel*, eds. P. R. Ackroyd, et al.. (Cambridge: CUP, 1977), p.82.

Thus, the account of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 employs patterns of repetition within a narrative which are typical of OT narrative. Moreover, this narrative is retold at length in Solomon's address to the people of Israel at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8:15-21. This follows the fourfold structure of the account in 2 Samuel 7.

- David's desire, 8:17
- The Lord's reversal, 8:18
- The Lord's promise, 8:19
- Solomon's response, 8:20-21

The single retelling of the Davidic Covenant in 1 Kings 8:15-21 is not an indication that the narrative of Samuel/Kings mutes the message of 2 Samuel 7. Far from it, for there are a number of brief but significant allusions to this promise and its fulfilments in the narrative. Significantly they are found at key turning points in the Samuel/Kings narrative: as Adonijah's plot crumbles in 1 Kings 1:48; in David's final words to Solomon in 2:4; and at the consolidation of Solomon's rule in 2:12. (See also 3:6, 5:3, 5:5, 6:12, 8:26 and 9:5). In 1 Kings 8:15-21 the historian highlights the importance of God's promise to David by *recalling* it on a number of occasions and retelling it once.

The Chronicler takes a different approach. He begins by narrating God's promise to David in 1 Chronicles 17, a passage which, in all probability, draws on 2 Samuel 7 as a source. The Chronicler's narrative also contains *brief allusions* to the Davidic Covenant in those parts of the Chronicler's Solomon narrative which are based on Kings. (See 1 Chronicles 29:1 and 2 Chronicles 1:8-9, 2:6, 12).

The first account of the Davidic Covenant in 1 Chronicles 17:1-27 is the longest of the four passages and it is presented by the narrator. It contains four narrative sub-sections, a structure which is followed in subsequent retellings.

- The Chronicler narrates *David's desire* to build a house for the Lord and Nathan's initially positive response (17:1-2).
- The Chronicler narrates *the Lord's reversal* of Nathan's permission, explaining that he did *not* want David to build a house for him (17:3-6).
- The Chronicler narrates *the Lord's counter-promise*, which Nathan is to convey to David (17:7-15).
- The Chronicler narrates *David's response* to God's promise with a prayer of amazement and thanksgiving (17:16-27).

This fourfold structure is followed when the narrative of the Davidic Covenant is subsequently retold in 1 Chronicles 22, 28 and 2 Chronicles 6. The three retellings can be summarised as follows:

(a) 1 Chronicles 22:6-16. David's first speech is addressed to Solomon on his own.

- David's desire, 22:7
- The Lord's reversal, 22:8
- The Lord's promise, 22:9-10
- David's response, 22:11-16

(b) 1 Chronicles 28:2-21. David's second speech expands and develops his first address to Solomon in 22:6-16, but this time he addresses the assembled leaders of Israel.

- David's desire, 28:2
- The Lord's reversal, 28:3
- The Lord's promise, 28:4-7
- David's response, 28:8-21

(c) 2 Chronicles 6:7-11. Solomon addressed 'all the assembly of Israel' at the dedication of the temple he had built for the Lord.

- David's desire, 6:7
- The Lord's reversal, 6:8-9a
- The Lord's promise, 6:9b
- Solomon's response, 6:10-11

Several aspects of this scheme of retelling make it of particular interest.

First of all, *the same event is retold at length and with a measure of narrative complexity*. We are not simply told that God made a promise to David, which would involve Solomon building the temple. Each account contains the elements of a dramatic plot. David's desire to build a house for the Lord is described. His desire is then frustrated by the Lord. However the Lord reveals an alternative plan which involves David's son building a temple and ruling an everlasting kingdom. Following this revelation the recipients and beneficiaries of God's promise respond with a prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

Secondly, the retellings are *located in the setting of a series of speeches* which are clustered at the central and climactic portion of the work. The three retellings move towards a climax as the story of the Davidic Covenant is retold first to Solomon (1 Chronicles 22), then to the leaders of Israel (1 Chronicles 28), and then to all the assembly of Israel (2 Chronicles 6). The Davidic retellings are found in a portion of 1 Chronicles which is unique to the Chronicler, and which emphasises David's preparatory role in the construction of the temple. David's speeches are significant because they explain the importance of the temple project in God's plans for Israel. The Solomonic retelling in 2 Chronicles 6 is also set in a series of speeches in 2 Chronicles 1-8. Although these clusters of speeches fall on either side of the division between 1 and 2 Chronicles they really belong to the lengthy core of Chronicles (1 Chronicles 9 – 2 Chronicles 9) which presents the ideal of a united Israelite kingdom under the two greatest kings of the Davidic line.[13] The unifying theme of these speeches is the intimate connection between temple and dynasty and the equal significance of David and Solomon in establishing the Kingdom of the Lord.[14]

Thirdly, the three retellings of God's promise to David demonstrate a *combination of verbatim and divergent patterns of retelling*. Notwithstanding the variations, which include expansions and omissions of detail, the first three elements of the narrative structure (David's desire, the Lord's reversal and the Lord's promise) are retold in terms very similar to each other and as well as to the initial narrative in 1 Chronicles 17. For instance, when David

[13] Richard L. Pratt, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 1998), p.100.
[14] Roddy Braun, "Solomonic Apologetic in Chronicles," *JBL* 92.4(1973).

explains his desire in 17:1-2 he mentions that the ark dwelt in a tent and Nathan told him, 'Do all that is in your heart.' In the subsequent retellings Nathan's role in relaying messages between David and the Lord is not mentioned, but his role is assumed as the words he spoke are assigned either to David or the Lord. Thus, it was in David's heart to build a house, according to 22:7, 28:2 and 6:7. David's purpose is variously described as building a house for 'the name of the Lord' (22:7, 6:7) and building a house for 'the ark of the covenant of the Lord' (28:2). The latter recalls David's context setting explanation in 17:1. The point to note is that these variations fall within a framework of consistent retelling.

There is a greater degree of variation in the reasons given by the Lord for refusing David's desire. In 17:3-6 the Lord told Nathan that he had not asked anyone to build him a house of cedar, but made no reference to David's role as a warrior king. David's wars and bloodshed are given by David as the reasons why the Lord did not allow him to build a house in 22:8 and 28:3. This is consistent with a gradual unfolding of God's purpose and the revelation of Solomon's role as a man of peace. In 28:4-5 David qualifies this self-characterisation as a man of war, with the statement that God had chosen him and his family to sit on Israel's throne. The last word on the subject in 6:8-9 is that David did well to desire to build a house, but the Lord had other plans. These are clearly differing but complementary perspectives on God's purposes for David and Solomon.

We can see a similar set of divergences when it comes to the core of God's promise – that a son of David would build a house for the Lord. In 17:8b-15 God promised that he would give David a great name, appoint a place for his people Israel to dwell, and adopt one of David's sons as his own son and establish his kingdom forever. Subsequent accounts of God's promise are briefer, but in certain respects more specific as they unfold and intensify the theological significance of the son of David. In 22:9-10 David identifies this son as 'a man of rest' and calls him by name – Solomon. Then in 28:6-7 he adds the concept of election ('I have chosen him') and the requirement that Solomon keep God's commands ('if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules'). Finally, in 2 Chronicles 6:9b, with the theological content of the Davidic Covenant established, Solomon gives the briefest statement of God's promise: 'but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.' The Chronicler's narrative proceeds by gradually unfolding his message in the narrative of history, but avoiding 'vain repetition'. [15]

The fourth element in the narrative structure differs significantly in each passage. In 17:16-27 David prays a deeply personal prayer of thanksgiving. In 22:11-16 David exhorts Solomon to faithfulness. In 28:8-21 David sets before Solomon and the leaders of Israel the enormity of the project ahead of them. In 6:10-11 Solomon acknowledges the Lord's faithfulness for a son of David sits on the throne and a house has been built for the Lord. The response is not formulaic, and allows for significant variation, as might be expected in each context. Yet the consistency of retelling is striking.

Examples of Repetition and Retelling in Luke and Acts

1. Examples of *repetition* in Luke-Acts.

[15] Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary* (ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), p.250.

Luke-Acts displays a range of repetitions similar to those found in Old Testament narrative. Double vocative addresses are a feature of the Lucan narrative.[16] Those so addressed include Jesus as Master (Luke 8:24), Martha (Luke 10:41), Simon (Luke 22:31), and Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14[17]). Apart from three occurrences,[18] this form of address is unique to Luke-Acts in the New Testament.[19]

Recurring theologically significant phrases are found running through significant passages and the work as a whole. For examples the phrase 'the day(s) of the son of man' is found three times in the teaching of Jesus about the coming of the kingdom in Luke 17:22, 24, 26. Possibly the most significant recurring phrase is the necessity that the son of man should suffer, see Luke 9:22, 17:25, 24:26, 46 and Acts 17:3, 26:23. Significantly, this phrase is echoed in Acts, in reference to Paul and others who preach the message of Jesus (Acts 9:16, 14:22).

The narration of similar events is another feature of the Lucan narrative. One of the distinctive features of the Lucan accounts of the trials of Jesus in Luke 22:66-23:16 is his appearance before the Council of Elders (22:66-71), the Roman Governor (23:1-4, 13-25) and Herod Antipas (23:6-12), and Pilate's threefold declaration that he found 'no guilt in this man' (23:4, 14, 22). This pattern is replicated in the accounts of Paul's trial in Acts. There Paul appears before the Council (23:1-10), the Roman Governor Felix (24:1-21) and an august gathering in the presence of King Herod Agrippa II and the governor Festus (26:1-32). This series of trials concludes with a declaration of Paul's innocence of all charges (26:31-32, see also 25:25), yet he is sent as a prisoner to face trial before the Emperor in Rome.

Within the narration of an individual episode, the repetition of spoken words and significant actions is a key indicator of the progress and message of the narrative. For example, the account of Peter's proclamation of the gospel in the home of Cornelius and the ensuing conversion of Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:1-48 draws a series of parallels between Peter and Cornelius. First of all Cornelius is prompted to send a messenger asking Peter to come to his home. 'About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say…"Your *prayers* and alms have ascended as a memorial to God"' (10:3-4). The next day 'when Peter went up to the housetop about the sixth hour to pray,' he too saw a vision from heaven (10:9-11). When Peter arrives at the home of Cornelius, he is told by Cornelius how he had been directed while praying. 'Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God…"' (10:30-31). Other threads of repetition could be traced

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[16] Craig S. Keener, *Acts - An Exegetical Commentary Volume 2 3:1-14:28* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013),p. 1635. Samuel T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Hoboken and New York: KTAV, 1987), p.410, notes that 'the double vocative is relatively common in Luke' and can be explained in terms of its Semitic background.

[17] The Old Testament background to this form of address is further indicated by the Semitic form of Saul's name – Shaoul rather than the Hellenised Saul.

[18] The double address is found in the plea of false disciples in Matthew 7:21, 'Lord, Lord'; and the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:37/Luke 13:34 ('Jerusalem, Jerusalem'), and Matthew 27:45/Mark 15:34 ('My God, My God').

[19] The influence of Luke on subsequent writing has been noted by Mark Goodacre, 'The Protoevangelium of James and the Creative Rewriting of Matthew and Luke', in *Connecting Gospels: Beyond the Canonical/Non-Canonical Divide*, eds. Francis Watson and Sarah Parkhous. (Oxford: OUP, 2018), p.70. With reference to the *Protoevangelium of James* he writes, 'Like Luke, and probably inspired by Luke, the author of *PJames* is writing in a Septuagintal style.'

through this passage, but the point to note is that Luke employs repetition within the narrative in ways that mirror the narrative techniques of Old Testament historians, not only by repeated names and theological motifs, and the repetition of similar scenes through his work as a whole, but also, as here, the repetition of significant words and phrases and actions within a single narrative.

2. Examples of *recalling* in Luke-Acts.

Several examples can be given of an event narrated at some length and in significant detail being subsequently recalled by a brief reference.

a. *The Crucifixion of Jesus.* Luke's Gospel narrates the rejection of Jesus by his own people, his condemnation in spite of his innocence and his crucifixion in a complex narrative in 22:47-23:49. This is subsequently and briefly recalled in apostolic preaching in Acts by the use of the accusatory phrases: 'you crucified' (2:23, 36, 4:10); 'you killed' (3:15, 5:30); and the striking statement, 'They put him to death by hanging him on a tree' (10:33). These brief statements are readily understood because the death of Jesus has previously been narrated at length. It may also be argued that, in spite of their brevity, they bind the narratives of Luke and Acts together.
b. *The Resurrection of Jesus*. Accounts of encounters between the risen Jesus and his disciples are narrated in Luke 24:1-49, and then in Acts 1:1-7. The resurrection of Jesus is then recalled in apostolic preaching in Acts 2:32, 3:15, 4:10, 5:30, 10:40-41, 13:30-31, 37. These are not generic references to an event widely known in the Christian community, but a reference back to the narratives of the resurrection appearances *in Luke*, as can be seen in the claims of Peter and Paul that the risen Jesus appeared to a select group who are now witnesses (2:32, 3:15, 13:30-31) and Peter's claim that the chosen apostolic witnesses 'ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead' (10:41).
c. *The Ascension of Jesus*. Luke narrates the ascension of Jesus twice. First, briefly in Luke 24:50-1. This anticipates the fuller account at the beginning of Acts, see Acts 1:9-11. Thereafter the Ascension is recalled indirectly in apostolic preaching in Acts 2:33-34, 3:21, 5:31; and in the account of Stephen's vision as he died, see 7:55-6.
d. *The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost*. The details of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are narrated in Acts 2:1-12. This has been anticipated by the words of John the Baptist in Luke 3:16-17 and the words of the risen Jesus in Acts 1:4-5. It is also subsequently recalled in Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-36. The charge of drunkenness is recalled in 2:15. The whole complex of pneumatic activity is recalled in the summary phrase 'this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing' in 2:33. Later, when Peter explained to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem why he preached in a Gentile household in Caesarea in Acts 11:1-18, he recalled both John's words of anticipation (11:16) and the gift of the Spirit "to us" (11:17). Addressing the Jerusalem Council in 11:7-11, Peter makes a similar brief recall of the gift of the Holy Spirit 'to us' (15:8b).
e. *The Jerusalem Decree*. The events leading up to and following on from the Jerusalem decree are narrated in Acts 15:1-16:5. In particular, the final decision of the apostles and elders assembled in Jerusalem is first of all narrated as a proposal from James in 15:19-2. James' proposal is then recounted in full, though with some modifications, in the record of the letter to be sent out from Jerusalem in 15:28-29. In the succeeding narrative the decision is recalled by phrases such as 'the letter' (15:30) and 'the decisions that had been reached' (16:4). Finally, this decision is recalled briefly by James when he welcomed Paul to Jerusalem in 21:25.

4. Examples of *retelling* in Luke-Acts.

Luke narrates the conversion of Cornelius[20] at some length in Acts 10:1-48. He also records in Acts 11:1-18 how Peter felt compelled to defend his willingness to enter the home of a Gentile before the believers in Jerusalem by retelling at some length that the Lord had shown him in a vision that he was not to call anything unclean which God had made clean (11:5-10), that an angel had prompted Cornelius to send for him (11:13-14), and that the Holy Spirit came upon the members of Cornelius' household 'just as on us at the beginning' (11:15). The structure of the narrative is different in that the focus is on the change in Peter's outlook, which results in Peter recalling and understanding the promise of the Spirit (11:16, cf. 1:5), but it is essentially a retelling of the same event. There is a brief reference to this event in Acts 15:7-9, where Peter does not mention Cornelius by name, but describes how 'the Gentiles' were permitted 'to hear the word of the gospel and believe.' This final reference is a recalling rather than a retelling.

Paul's conversion is the only example of an event being narrated (9:1-19a) and then retold at length and in detail on *more than one* occasion (22:1-21 and 26:1-13) in either Luke's Gospel or Acts. The variations between these three accounts have been the subject of much debate, as has the rationale underlying the repetition.[21] Luke narrates the conversion of Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9 as a key event in the history of the early Jerusalem Church, removing one of its most bitter opponents and resulting in a temporary lull in Jewish persecution of the Church. Saul of Tarsus was not only converted, but commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and on two subsequent occasions Luke records how Paul narrated the events of his conversion and calling in order to defend his ministry (Acts 22 and 26). Although there are significant differences between the three accounts they follow a similar structure.

(a) Acts 9:1-30

- Paul's hostility against the Church, 9:1-2
- Paul's encounter with the risen Christ, 9:3-9
- Paul's commission to preach, 9:10-19a
- Paul's post-conversion ministry in Damascus and Jerusalem, 9:19b-30

(b) Acts 22:1-21

- Paul's hostility against the Church, 22:1-5
- Paul's encounter with the risen Christ, 22:6-11
- Paul's commission to preach, 22:12-16
- Paul's post-conversion ministry in Jerusalem and to the Gentiles, 22:17-21

(c) Acts 26:1-23

- Paul's hostility against the Church, 26:1-11
- Paul's encounter with the risen Christ, 26:12-15

[20] It has been argued that this chapter also records the conversion of Peter to an outlook supportive of Gentile mission.

[21] For a summary of the various explanations for the reasons underlying the three accounts see Timothy W. R. Churchill, *Divine Initiative and the Christology of the Damascus Road Encounter* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), pp.218-22. An older, but still worthwhile, account is given by David M. Stanley, "Why the Three Accounts? Paul's Conversion in Acts," *CBQ* 15, no. 3 (1953).

- Paul's commission to preach, 26:16-18
- Paul's post-conversion ministry in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea and to the Gentiles, 26:19-23

It is now possible to compare the way in which the Chronicler narrates and retells the account of the Davidic Covenant with the way Luke narrates and retells the account of Paul's conversion and calling.

1. As with the four accounts of the Davidic Covenant in Chronicles, each of the three accounts is lengthy and composed of a series of narrative sub-units.

2. As with the four accounts of the Davidic Covenant in Chronicles, the subsequent retellings are in speeches delivered by a major character in the narrative – in Acts 22 and 26, it is Paul himself who tells how the risen Lord Jesus arrested his persecution of the Church and turned him around to preach the gospel. These two chapters are significant in that they mark the beginning and end of the section in Acts in which Paul faces trial in a series of Jewish and Roman courts, though the issues upon which Luke focuses are not so much legal as a vindication of Paul's ministry.

3. As with the four accounts of the Davidic Covenant in Chronicles, there is a combination of verbatim and variant repetition in the subsequent retellings. The core of each account of Paul's conversion is the dialogue between the risen Jesus and the stricken Paul.

'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14.
'Who are you Lord?' Acts 9:5a, 22:8a, 26:15a
'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.' Acts 9:5b, 22:8b, 26:15b.

However, in subsequent retelling, Paul includes additional information in his account of the dialogue.

'It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' Acts 26:14b.
'I am Jesus *of Nazareth* whom you are persecuting.' Acts 22:8
'What shall I do, Lord?' Acts 22:10.

More obvious differences include the decreasing amount of attention given to the role of Ananias in the restoration and calling of Paul. In Acts 9:10-16 the Lord's appearance to Ananias to send him to 'lay hands on him [Paul] so that he might regain his sight' sets the scene for a brief account of Ananias' visit in 9:17-19a. In Acts 22:12-16 Paul describes the visit he received from Ananias, during which he heard from the lips of Ananias that "The God of our Father appointed you to…be a witness for him.' In Acts 26 there is no mention of Ananias, but the words of his missionary commission are spoken by the risen Lord as Paul arose from the road outside Damascus, 26:16-18.

Most obvious are the differences between the accounts of Paul's post-conversion preaching. These vary according to the context of the narration and retelling. In Acts 9:19b-30 Luke gives a detailed account of Paul's attempts to preach in Damascus and Jerusalem, in the face of suspicion from the Church and bewilderment and hostility from Jewish unbelievers. This rounds out a section in Acts which shows how Jewish opposition to the gospel does not silence, but actually spreads the Christian gospel (8:1-9:31). In Acts 22:17-21 Paul concludes his testimony before the agitated crowd of Jerusalem Jews, with an otherwise unknown

account of Paul's subsequent temple vision in Jerusalem confirming his call to preach to the Gentiles. In Acts 26:19-23 Paul affirms before King Agrippa that he 'was not disobedient to the heavenly vision' and backs up his claim by summarising his ministry from the first steps in Damascus right up to the present. The settings are different and draw forth different data, but a remarkable consistency runs through all three accounts. Paul sought to preach the good news to Jews first, and only when rejected was he compelled to go to preach among the Gentiles, but he never lost his passion for the salvation of his own people. His final words in 26:26 are addressed to a Jewish king about God's plan of salvation for 'our people'.

I would argue that the divergences between the three accounts do not undermine their underlying consistency because Luke is pursuing a narrative strategy similar to that of the Chronicler in his four accounts of the Davidic Covenant in Chronicles. The verbatim repetition of core dialogue at the heart of the narrative and the presence of the same four narrative sub-units in each account build a framework of consistency which is able to stand firm even as details diverge in the context of subsequent retelling.

Parallels between the Chronicler and Luke

If, as I have argued, Luke uses a narrative strategy similar to that of the Chronicler, can it be said that Luke is relying on the work of the Chronicler? It is commonly accepted that Luke betrays the influence of the so-called Deuteronomistic historian in his work, both as a historian and as a theologian. Less attention has been paid to the possible influence of the Chronicler. Yet it may be argued that the parallels between the multiple retellings of the Davidic Covenant in Chronicles and the multiple retellings of Paul's call and conversion in Acts are one manifestation of a larger theme.

Several forays into this field are worthy of mention. Perhaps the most fruitful has been the study of the influence of the account of 'the good Samaritans' in 2 Chronicles 28 and the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.[22] F. Scott Spencer has noted that this is an exception to the almost complete neglect of the relevance of Chronicles to New Testament study.[23] Expositors of Chronicles have been more likely to note the link.[24]

A more systematic approach has been taken by Rick Strelan, who argues that Luke writes as 'a priestly custodian of Israel's traditions' in *Luke the Priest: The Authority of Author of the Third Gospel* (2008).[25] He characterises Luke as an interpreter of Scripture who was influenced by the Priestly literature of the exilic and post-exilic period, including Chronicles. He lists three ways in which 'Luke imitates the priestly Chronicler'[26] – genealogies and lists, an interest in the Levites and the Temple, and urging faithfulness to 'the God of our fathers.'

Strelan's list can be expanded and the augmented with additional examples of points of contact between Luke and Chronicles.

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[22] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke. Volume 2: 9:51-24:53* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), pp.1020-21, refutes the suggestion that 2 Chronicles 28:1-15 provided material from which Luke 'created' the parable. 'It coheres with Jesus' identification with the outsider'.

[23] F. Scott Spencer, "2 Chronicles 28:5-15 and the Parable of the Good Samaritan," *WTJ* 46(1984).

[24] Andrew Stewart, *A House of Prayer: The Message of 2 Chronicles* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2001), p.332.

[25] Rick Strelan, *Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

[26] Strelan, *Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel*, p.151.

- Both the Chronicler and Luke use **genealogies** as a way of describing God's concerns for all mankind. 1 Chronicles 1:1 begins with Adam, while Luke's genealogy of Jesus goes back to Adam.
- They both give a significant amount of space to **speeches and prayers**. It has been noted that speeches, sermons or prayers introduce narrative segments and convey the theological message of Chronicles.[27] Sermons of various kinds also serve to unify the message of Acts.[28]
- They both acknowledge their **sources**. We can compare the Lucan Preface (Luke 1:1-4) with 1 Chronicles 9:1, 27:24, 29:29; and 2 Chronicles 12:12, 16:11, 20:34, 24:27, 25:26, 27:7, 28:26, 32:32, 33:18-9, 34:14, 34:30, 35:12, 35:27, 36:8.
- The Chronicler and Luke both demonstrate an interest in Jerusalem and the temple and **the details of the temple administration**. 1 Chronicles 23-27 contains material unique to the Chronicler which demonstrates a keen interest in those who served in the temple. The Lucan narrative opens in the same location by describing the ministry of Zechariah, a priest from the division of Abijah (Luke 1:5f.). This is the only such reference to the divisions of the tribe of Levi in the New Testament.
- Both the Chronicler and Luke demonstrate an interest in **all Israel**. The Chronicler repeatedly uses the phrase 'all Israel' and maintains an interest in the northern tribes. Even after the fall of the northern kingdom, King Jehoshaphat reaches out to the northern tribes. Luke recalls that Anna came from the tribe of Asher (2:36). Paul refers to the hope of 'our twelve tribes' in (Acts 26:7). In spite of his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul in Acts never ceased to preach to Jew and Gentile alike, seeking the salvation of his own people and the nations.
- Both the Chronicler and Luke share an interest in **Samaria**. For the Chronicler Samaria was the centre of the northern tribes, and in 2 Chronicles 28 describes the prototype 'good Samaritans'. The language of this chapter is echoed in Luke's account of Jesus' parable about the Good Samaritan in Luke 12:30-37, a passage peculiar to Luke. The conversion of Samaria, an errant part of the nation of Israel, is a concern of the risen Lord (Acts 1:8) and the Jerusalem Church (Acts 8:1f).[29]
- Both Chronicles and Luke-Acts are large works which naturally **hinge into two parts**. The 'hinge' in both Chronicles and Luke-Acts describes the event which is the fulfilment of God's promise to his people; the promise to build a Temple in Chronicles, and the promise to vindicate his rejected Messiah raising him from the dead and exalting him into heaven in Luke-Acts. In both works retelling highlights a very significant theme within the overall framework of the narrative.
- **The pattern of allusions to Chronicles** in the NT is worthy of comment. The United Bible Society Fourth Edition of the Greek New Testament[30] notes in its index of quotations no direct quotations of Chronicles in the New Testament. However it notes 68 allusions; 16 in Matthew, 15 in Revelation, and 20 in Luke-Acts. The allusions in Luke-Acts draw upon a wider range of material from Chronicles than is evident in either

[27] Selman, *1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary*,pp. 31-34.
[28] Marion L Soards, *The Speeches in Acts. Their Content, Context and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).
[29] Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus - Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*, 103-8, describes the significance of preaching the gospel to a re-united Israel - both Judea and Samaria - before preaching to the nations.
[30] *The Greek New Testament*

Matthew or Revelation, and arguably indicate a deeper awareness of its distinctive message.[31]

Conclusions about Luke's Historical Method

In the light of this survey of narrative repetition in Chronicles and Luke-Acts the following conclusions can be presented.

a. The influence of the Old Testament on Luke-Acts can be seen, not only in Luke's literary style and theological content, but also his method of writing narrative history. Like the great historians of the Old Testament, Luke narrates history with the skill of a dramatist, as well as a forensic concern for consistency. Art serves to make the facts of history live. The consistency demonstrated in the multiple retellings of the Davidic Covenant in Samuel/Kings, but especially in Chronicles, is replicated in the three accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts. The framework of consistent retelling gives us confidence to believe those reports as credible historical narrative, even when they diverge in significant ways.

b. It is possible to discern the influence of specific Old Testament historians on the narrative of Luke-Acts. Among those historians is Moses, the author of the Pentateuchal narratives, and the unknown author(s) of the Joshua, Judges and Samuel/Kings.[32] To this list ought to be added the Chronicler, the post-exilic historian of Israel's restoration. The parallels between Chronicles and Luke-Acts suggest that Luke has adopted aspects of his method and imbibed aspects of his theology. The aspects of the Chronicler's theology which reappear most clearly in Luke-Acts include the promise of salvation through the line of David, the significance of the temple as the dwelling of God, and the unbreakable covenant between the Lord and 'all Israel'. The restoration of Israel through the saving work of Jesus the promised Messiah, therefore, continues as a priority for the New Testament Church.

c. The three accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts bear witness to the influence, not just of Chronicler's historical method upon Luke, but also of his theological vision. In fact it is worthy of note that the point at which the most distinctive feature of the Chronicler's narrative method – multiple retelling of a key event - is found in the narrative of Luke-Acts, we can also see the Chronicler's concern for the salvation of 'all Israel'. The three accounts of Paul's conversion come to a climax in Acts 26 as Paul, who was God's chosen instrument to carry the name of Jesus Christ to 'the Gentiles, and kings *and the children of Israel*' (Acts 9:15); who also seeks to persuade the Jews of Jerusalem of *his zeal for God and his Temple* (Acts 22:3, 17ff.); finally appears before the notional head of the Jewish nation, King Herod Agrippa II, to urge him to follow through his belief in the message of the prophets by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 26:28-29). Paul seeks the salvation of Israel's impotent King and perishing people through the proclamation that 'the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light *both to our people and to the Gentiles*.' (Acts 26:23).

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[31] For instance, 9 of the 16 allusions to Chronicles in Matthew are found in the genealogy of Matthew 1; and 11 of the 15 allusions to Chronicles in Revelation relate to one verse, 2 Chron 18:18, 'I saw the Lord sitting on his throne.'

[32] Keener, *Acts - An Exegetical Commentary. Volume 1 Introduction and 1:1-2:47*, p.482, draws attention to the influence of the Exodus and Davidic narratives.

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THE TRINITY FOR THE CHURCH TODAY

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There is so much religious confusion today in the Western world. For the first time in almost 1500 years Christianity has new religious rivals 'on the block', each one claiming its own god. Up until recent decades in the West, the religious question was generally one of choosing the Christian God or nothing at all; therefore the doctrine of the Trinity has not generally played a sufficiently prominent role in Christian discussion. However, a fresh articulation of the Trinity for church members, ministers and elders could help 'solve the riddle' today as to 'Who is God?' especially for people who engage with the world at large.

I want you to imagine a scenario. You are travelling on a train somewhere in the United Kingdom and you are sitting opposite someone of a different religion. They could perhaps be a practising Hindu, a Sikh or a Muslim for example. They strike up a conversation with you during which they discover that you are a committed Christian and they then ask you a valid question. After having explained to you the name of their god(s), they ask, 'What is the name of the Christian God?' They are asking this genuinely in a hope to be able to better understand the Christian religion. How do you answer and what would you say?

When I have posed this scenario to Christians in recent years, I have received a range of answers to such a possible question. These have included Yahweh, Jehovah, I AM that I AM, Jesus and Lord. However, imagine that this supporter of a different religion then met two such Christians in the same day. It is then highly likely that they would receive quite different and inconsistent answers to what should be a simple question.

The correct answer is supplied by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19: 'The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. This is the one name of God, one that names the three persons of the Godhead in unity. This truth is to be seen as the distinctive and unique revelation of God's name, one placed at the very centre of the Great Commission; and yet this aspect of the Great Commission, and the instruction we find in it, has been too often overlooked.

1. The Triune Name: From Circumcision to Baptism

After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, he gave his disciples the new covenant commission. At the very heartbeat of this teaching commission is the name of God, whereby the church is to spread the knowledge of this name to all nations. While it is true that the Holy Scriptures (Romans 1:2) reveal many different names for God, the one given here by the Lord Jesus Christ should be seen as the climax of biblical revelation as to 'who God is and what his name is'. It was the unique privilege of the only-begotten Son of God to reveal this new covenant name of God to the disciples.

And what God has permitted in Matthew 28:19 is biblical information that is essential to the church's mission, evangelism and worship. The new name of God given is 'the Father and

the Son and the Holy Spirit'. This one 'singular' name designates the three persons of the Trinity in their proper order, and the definite article 'the' before each of the persons identifies them with distinction, but without any division between them. This name of the one God is confessed in the Nicene Creed (381): '*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty…and in one Lord Jesus Christ…[and] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life…who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified'.*

Following on from the command in Matthew 28:16-20 the apostles were now expected to 'make disciples of all nations' (28:19), a call no longer restricted only to the house of Israel as Jesus earlier taught (Matthew 10:6). R. T. France explains that

> *ethnē* ('nations') is the regular Greek term for Gentiles', and the sending of the disciples to the Gentiles 'is merely to extend the range of their mission...moreover, the phrase *panta ta ethnē* ('all nations') has been used previously in 24:9, 14; 25:32 which probably all include Israel in this mission to 'the nations'.[1]

The sphere of ministry is enlarged and the means of initiating these disciples from the nations into the new Christian communities is also changed.

There is no mention of circumcision in this command given by the Redeemer in his instructions that he gave to the Eleven in the mountain in Galilee. It is assumed that baptism has replaced circumcision as the covenantal sign of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. France again explains that 'John's baptism was only a preparatory one (Matt. 3:11)' and that Jesus' own baptism foreshadows the later instituted Christian baptism where all three Persons - the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - are involved.[2] In summary the first-century local churches represented new covenant communities, ones with freshly defined commandments for new covenant ministry that were given after the resurrection of Christ. At the heart of this new covenant commission is not simply an emphasis on baptism and the command to make disciples, but a trinitarian motif is included at the very core of Jesus' instructions. An important question for us to evaluate is this: Is Matthew 28:19 the baptismal formulation or the new covenant name of God?

Our aim is to build on what we have discussed so far to demonstrate that 'the name' of 'the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' is more than a baptismal formulation. It is the culmination of redemptive history, and it marks the pinnacle of God's self-naming disclosure to humanity. It is extremely common for theological authors to restrict their description of this name to the rubric of a baptismal formula, but this is not the exclusive intent of this name in this commission.[3] But there is more than that; it is the new covenant name of God which is revealed.

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[1] R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Leicester: IVP, 1985, repr. 1992), pp.413-4.

[2] France, *Matthew*, pp.414-45.

[3] Richard Muller exemplifies this common assumption even though he is investigating the Triunity of God where he consistently refers to Matthew 28:19b as the baptismal formula. Richard A. Muller, *Post Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: Vol. 4, The Triunity of God*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003, repr. 2006), pp.154, 226, 298, 336, 353, 359, 368, 370-1.

2. What is the New Covenant Name of God?

God's self-revelation in the Bible is progressive, and as redemptive history unfolds there are divine names disclosed, especially in the context of covenants being made. In the Abrahamic covenant, for example, the name Almighty God (Gen. 17:1, *El Shaddai*) is revealed, and in the Mosaic covenant two new names are communicated directly to Moses. They are 'I AM WHO I AM' (Exodus 3:14, *HYH*) and LORD (Exodus 6:3, *YHWH*). Robert Letham correctly asserts that at 'every stage of the outworking of God's covenant, he names himself'.[4] Geerhardus Vos expounds further:

> In the Bible the name is always more than a conventional sign. It expresses character or history. Hence a change in either respect frequently gives rise to a change of name. This applies to the names of God likewise. It explains why certain divine names belong to certain stages of revelation. They serve to sum up the significance of a period. Therefore they are not names which man gives to God, but names given by God to himself. [5]

Once we recognize that the manifestation of divine names forms a significant part in the redemptive plan, it should not be a surprise that the Lord Jesus Christ brings forth new names of God to his disciples. The name Jesus itself represents salvation by which men and women are saved (Matthew 1:21, Luke 24:47, Acts 4:12), and the name Father is brought to the forefront of Christ's teaching about God (John. 17:5-6, 26).

The trinitarian name is somewhat different in that it is given after the resurrection and it combines all three Persons on an equal standing with each other. In commenting on Matthew 28:19b, John Calvin says,

> This passage shows that the full and clear knowledge of God, which had been darkly shadowed out under the law and the Prophets, is at length fully discovered under the reign of Christ...Thus we perceive that God cannot be truly known, unless our faith distinctly conceive of Three Persons in one essence.[6]

Letham presents the view that the Triune God unfolds revelation of himself progressively and that this name, linked with the new covenant sacrament of baptism, is 'God's crowning revelation of himself - all that went before points to this'.[7]

In order to establish the proposal that 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' equates to the new covenant name of God, it is necessary to take a panoramic view of covenant theology. Michael Horton explains that 'trinitarian theology has always been not only a central concept but an organizing motif in the classic Reformed systems' and that the 'two covenants executed in history are the covenants of creation and grace'.[8] J. V. Fesko puts forward the case that 'Adam was in covenantal relationship with God and that the relationship is properly

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[4] Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2004), p.59.

[5] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1948, repr. 2004), p.64.

[6] John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, Vol. 3*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, repr. 2005), p.387.

[7] Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, pp.411-12.

[8] Michael Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005), p.xi.

called a covenant of works'.[9] The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) explains this two-fold covenant structure through which God has a relationship with man; the first with Adam before the Fall known as a covenant of works, the second after the Fall, with successive administrations known as the Covenant of Grace. Christ is the central person in the covenants, the fulfiller of them, which culminate in the establishment of the New Covenant. Christ is the consummation of all the covenants.

O. Palmer Robertson spells out that there are four main Old Testament covenants between God and his people that administer what is commonly referred to as the Covenant of Grace (God's promise of redemption) prior to Christ's incarnation. They are the: Noahic (Genesis 9:8-17); Abrahamic (Genesis 15:18, 17:1-2, 9-14); Mosaic (Exodus 19-24) and Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7: 8-17).[10] All of God's covenants have conditions, but it is only in Christ that they are sure to be fulfilled.

'The Old Testament dispensation is a forward-stretching and forward-looking dispensation,' according to Vos and he writes that Jeremiah's promised 'New *Berith*' (Jeremiah 31:31-4) becomes the 'New *Diatheke*' sealed by the shedding of the blood of Christ.[11] Vos states that the words spoken by Christ in the Upper Room mark a 'new era in religious access to God' and 'a new period of divine self-disclosure.[12] Therefore, the new commission (Matthew 28:18-20) most probably reflects a new mandate, for a new covenant, with a new name for God. If this is the case, we should expect to see a range of covenantal links to establish a broad base of support for our case. Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra similarly perceive that 'after his death and resurrection Jesus inaugurates [Mt. 28:18-20] a new phase in the advance of the kingdom'.[13]

Christopher J. H. Wright correctly observes that there is in this passage the use of unmistakable covenant language and form, and he writes:

> The Great Commission is the command of the new covenant. It is Matthew, of course, who gives us, as the climax of his gospel, what has come to be known as the Great Commission. What is not so often noticed is how thoroughly covenantal and indeed Deuteronomic is the form and content of Matthew's record at this point. *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, as you go, disciple all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And look, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Mt. 28:18-20, author's translation).
>
> Among the key elements of the Old Testament covenant form were the self-introduction of God as the great King with all authority, the imperative demands of the covenant

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[9] J. V. Fesko, *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis 1-3 with the Christ of Eschatology*, (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2007), p.77. Chapter 3 is called 'The Covenant of Works' and Fesko persuasively puts forward that Adam was in covenant relationship with God from Creation as well.

[10] O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980).

[11] Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp.299-301.

[12] Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p.301.

[13] Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission*, (Leicester: IVP, 2003), p.181.

> relationship, [and the] promises of blessing. We can see how all three of these covenantal elements are contained in the words of Jesus.[14]

It is well beyond the scope of our study to explore fully this climax in the covenant manifested in this biblical passage, but some additional pointers are needed. References to the Abrahamic covenant are evident in Matthew 28. The extension of the gospel to all nations parallels what was promised to Abraham: 'in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:3, 22:18).[15] The covenant sign of circumcision given to Abraham (Genesis 17: 9-14) is replaced by the new covenant sign of baptism into the Triune name. The Davidic covenant finds its fulfilment in 'the son of David' (Matthew 1:1) with kingly authority introducing the mandate (Matthew 28:18), and the covenant promise of the presence of God among his people (Deuteronomy 31:8, 23; Joshua 1:5, cf. Matthew 28:20).[16] With the backdrop of this discussion on covenant theology we are led to question an interpretation of Matthew 28 that would limit the Triune name of God to a liturgical formula for baptism.

Peskett and Ramachandra certainly support an expanded concept for the use of this name. They write:

> It is likely that the word 'formula' is misleading in this context; centuries of Christian usage have focused minds on the issue of what liturgical words might have been used in a baptism service. It is far from certain that any of the words used in the New Testament in connection with baptism are meant to be interpreted in this way. It is more likely that "baptism in the name of …" is connected with an Old Testament phrase that implies calling upon or worshipping God; or that it is a phrase that means something like solidarity with, loyalty to, submission to.
>
> The community into which new disciples are to be initiated by baptism is marked by the Triune name;...and now Jesus gathers up all he has taught about the Father (a most common title of God in Matthew), about himself and about the Holy Spirit as the name (not names) of the God into whose service the disciple is enrolled once and forever.[17]

This article is in no way meant to undermine this name as a baptismal formulation, but instead contends for fresh terminology to expand our theology. C. K. Barrett does a similar thing as he chooses to adopt the phrase 'the trinitarian formula'[18] and this moves us closer to where we want to head.

Naming is important and care must be taken to ensure that we correctly handle this Triune name of God. It is clear that the New Covenant church is to have no other gods than the One True God (Exodus 20: 1-3), but how can this be if it is not clear on his name? To whom should worship be directed, and whose name does the churches represent? Indisputably, Jesus' is the New Covenant redemptive name with respect to salvation, but Scripture reveals

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[14] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God:Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, (Leicester: IVP, 2006), p.354.

[15] Fesko, *Last Things First*, p.174. Fesko writes (p.174) that 'the connection between the dominion mandate as it is given to Abraham and the Great Commission becomes even more evident when one compares the language of the LXX to that of verse [Mt] 19a, Genesis 22:18 parallels verse 19a'.

[16] Wright, *The Mission of God*, p.355.

[17] Peskett and Ramachandra, *The Message of* Mission, p.181.

[18] C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition*, (London: SPCK, 1947), pp.102-3.

that the New Covenant name of God is 'The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit'. This gives the church a clear identity, and it enables her to resolve many apologetic issues when, with a united voice, she proclaims her understanding of the name and character of God. This statement contends for the New Covenant name of God which embraces both 'baptismal' and 'trinitarian' formulations, while bringing all believers and all churches under the crowning point of new covenant revelation, which is the naming of God by the Son of God.

It is submitted that the neglect of the use of this name impoverishes the church's worship, its mission, and its practice. Although, the infrequent use of the trinitarian name may have occurred as a result of an overemphasis on the so-called 'Great Commission', a term derived from Matthew 28 and popularized, according to Robbie F. Castleman, by Hudson Taylor. Castleman nonetheless asserts that 'for the first 1600 years of the church, this passage was read and understood as the trinitarian foundation for ecclesiology, not as a fanfare for missiology' and that 'God's mission is an extension of God's character and Triune nature, God's essence, God's very self'.[19]

Further, even though this name is infrequently used in the Epistles, either as a greeting or in some other form, through the centuries, in churches across all traditions the name has seen near uniform use at baptisms. Gregory Nazianzen famously writes, 'When I say God, I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.[20] This is the heart of the Christian faith, and as the Bishop of Constantinople, in the city where he preached his *Orations* in the midst of Arian controversy, Gregory's 'constant theme was the worship of the Trinity'.[21]

W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison conclude that the climax of Matthew's gospel is profoundly apt in that it invites the reader to enter the story: 28:16-20 is an open-ended ending'. [22] To enter this story in the twenty-first century is to baptize and teach disciples into the New Covenant name of God - the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - a motif to be placed at the heart of the church's theology, worship, preaching and mission.

3. A Trinitarian Motif for the Church's Teaching

Debate regarding differing modes of baptism is not an issue for discussion in this paper, but the use of this name as the entrance point into the Christian community is. Why this name? What is the significance of its current use? Donald A. Hagner rightly comments that the Book of Acts uses the name of Jesus for baptism and asks, 'Why does Matthew's Gospel differ?' He explains that the 'threefold name was a liturgical expansion of the evangelist consonant with the practice of the day', that the 'early church suggests its historicity' and that this formulation is found in the *Didache*.[23] He also notes that this trinitarian formulation is consistent with similar formulations circulated by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:14 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.[24]

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[19] Robbie F. Castleman, 'The Last Word: The Great Commission: Ecclesiology', *Themelios*, vol. 32, 3 (2007).
[20] Gregory Nazianzen, "Select Orations of Gregory Nazianzen" 38.8, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, eds Schaff, Philip and Wace, Henry, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995), Vol.3, p.347.
[21] Philip Schaff, "Prolegomena" in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, p.197.
[22] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, (London: T & T Clark, 2004), p.549.
[23] Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*, (Dallas, Word Books, 1995), p.887.
[24] Hagner, W*ord Biblical Commentary*, p.887.

Generally there has been no dispute over the use of this name at baptism and the weight of church history supports its usage. Thomas F. Torrance observes that

> it was the institution and administration of baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit which, in accordance with the irreversible relation of the Father to the Son, established the trinitarian order regularly used in the church's proclamation, worship and tradition".[25]

Rather than embracing a wider angle lens for the name of God from Matthew 28, it can reasonably be argued that much discussion has limited the text to a baptismal formulation, particularly since the twofold thrust for making disciples here asserted by the risen Christ involves both teaching and baptism.[26] D. S. Dockery similarly states that 'Matthew 28:19 clearly joins baptism with teaching as partners in the process of making disciples'.[27] This new name for God so clearly revealed in this passage is striking in that it seems to be the locus of the whole commission for the new covenant dispensation inaugurated by the resurrection of Christ, and isolating our discussion of this name to the language of a 'baptismal formulation' may imprison our theological discussion. The acceptance of a view that the core of this discipleship passage is in fact a trinitarian motif for both baptism and teaching opens up many new possibilities so that this pregnant phrase can inform all of our theology for the ongoing work of the church.

It is submitted, therefore, that the threefold name - the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - should not be restricted to a baptismal service. Indeed, baptism into that name is actually an entrance point to the new covenant community, and more. It is a thread woven through the fabric of the church's theology, worship, preaching, sacraments and mission. This name should continue as a focal point throughout the whole process of new covenant discipleship, and the church is to be moulded by this trinitarian pattern, from beginning to end, according to Matthew 28:18-20. This single name of God revealed by Christ is in reality a golden nugget of theology that heralds an unfathomable wealth of divine glory. The new covenant commission recorded by Matthew marks a new plan for the gospel where the geography is extended and the knowledge of God is expanded.

The apostle Paul offers an excellent example among the New Testament authors as one who takes up this commission to teach the church by utilizing a trinitarian framework for discipleship. Letham persuasively demonstrates that 'in Ephesians Paul pervasively thinks of God in a ternary, or triadic, form'; he concludes that this pattern is not only clearly evident but 'it is at the very center of Paul's theology in the letter to the Ephesians'.[28] Even though the dogma of the Trinity was not formalized until the councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381), we may need to think more comprehensively about Paul's teaching

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[25] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, (London: T & T Clark, 1996, repr. 2006), p.72.

[26] Eduard Schweizer comments that 'everywhere except here baptism is spoken of as being in or through the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38, 8:16) so that the addition of the threefold name represents a later development'. Maybe this is not a later development but instead represents a motif for discipleship in 'the name' that includes but is not exclusive to baptism only. Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, trans. David E. Green, (London: SPCK, 1982), p.530.

[27] D. S. Dockery, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds Joel B. Green et al, (Leicester: IVP, 1992), p.58.

[28] Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, pp.75, 85. Letham writes a short chapter 'Excursus: Ternary Patterns in Ephesians', pp.73-85 to outline this significant outline to the contours of Paul's theology.

method. Instead of assuming that this letter to the Ephesians represents a primitive form of the doctrine of the Trinity, or that the Pauline corpus includes an unmistakable triadic pattern, we need to ask another question. Is Paul demonstrating obedience to the Matthean commission to teach in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?

The opening chapter to this letter to the Ephesians would seem to point in that direction, as Paul introduces his theological outline with a soteriological exposition, and he handles this divine activity by using the same order of Persons as given for the name of God in Matthew 28:19b. Furthermore, this connecting of the threefold name of God throughout the letter cannot be accidental; it is clearly a deliberate theological method, one that is derived from somewhere. The most explicit reference in the New Testament that could explain such a motive for an apostle is that one recorded by the Apostle Matthew at the end of his gospel (Matthew 28:18-20).

In Ephesians 1:3-14 he expounds the soteriological involvement of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit using the same order as Matthew, and in Ephesians 4:4-6 he demonstrates a trinitarian fabric inherent to the church's faith. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians explains that the whole Trinity is participating in the bestowal of gifts upon a local church (1 Corinthians 12:4-6), and in the second letter to the church in the same city he concludes with a rich benediction combining the divine attributes particularly with each of the Persons of the Trinity.

Furthermore, the Matthean passage teaches us that theology, ecclesiology and missiology are inextricably linked and should not be treated as isolated units of thought. Yet surprisingly most missionary thinkers make no reference to this name of God. David J. Bosch writes a whole chapter called 'Matthew: Mission as Disciple-Making' and yet omits to mention the uniqueness of 'the name' given at the heart of what is commonly called the Great Commission.[29] John Piper in *Let The Nations Be Glad* calls his reader's attention to making God supreme in missions, but in his explanation of the mission mandate (Matthew 28:18-20) his call for outreach to unreached peoples overlooks the significance of the name of God to be communicated among the nations.[30] Wright makes a corresponding omission to the significance of the trinitarian formulation in *The Mission of God*.[31]

The three main verbs associated with this commission are making disciples, baptizing new believers, and teaching converts. The effectiveness of these undertakings are tied to a trinitarian understanding of the Gospel.

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[29] David J. Bosch, 'Matthew: Mission as Disciple-Making' in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1991, repr. 2005), pp.56-83.

[30] John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993, repr. 2004), pp.166, 186, 193, 195n41. Part 3 of this book addresses matters that include the role of worship in missions and yet the thrust appears to be directed toward the idea that the identity of 'God' among the nations can be taken for granted.

[31] Wright, *The Mission of God*.

4. The Trinity and Evangelism

There were five key biblical texts which were foundational for the early church to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity[32]. These were:

I. Matthew 28:19 'Make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'
II. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 'Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.'
III. 2 Corinthians 13:14 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship [communion] of the Holy Spirit be with you all, Amen.'
IV. Galatians 4:4-6 'But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"'
V. Ephesians 4:4-6 'There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.'

These texts are representative of the trinitarian fabric and substructure that is characteristic of the New Testament in general. And even though the order of the three persons of the Trinity may be given in a different order in different passages, the overall sequence of revelation, as shown in Scripture, is that everything proceeds from the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit.

With this as the foundation for the New Testament trinitarian name of God - the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - it is appropriate to consider the appropriate name on which we are to call for purposes of evangelism. Luke makes clear in Acts 4:12 that 'there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.' This is the name of Jesus, the only way of salvation.

In the very early stages of the development of the church, it is clear that it was the name of Jesus that was the chief stumbling block to parties opposed to the gospel. The Jewish religious leaders were 'greatly annoyed because they [the apostles] were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead' (Acts 4:2). Peter responded and preached that 'Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you' and yet they did not listen and 'charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus' (Acts 4:11, 18).

History is clear: sinful men have always done all they can to suppress the truth concerning the very person of Jesus Christ, God's Son. It is his redemptive name that is given to the church for prayer, preaching, administration of the sacraments, and evangelizing the lost. Many in the Western church have failed to embrace and proclaim the power of the name of the incarnate Redeemer, the one who is the Second Person of the Trinity.

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[32] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons*, p.71. He lists five triadic formulations from the New Testament in order of their influence; these came to have special theological importance in the developing tradition of the early church. These are Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13: 14; 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6; Galatians 4: 4-6; Ephesians 4: 4-6.

Therefore in evangelism and preaching, the church must seek to recover the connection between the name of Jesus - the Mediator who stands between men and God (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:6, 9:15, 12:24) - and the new covenant name of God, which is: 'The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit'. This Christ-Trinity hermeneutical connection is needed for evangelism and worship so that the church may rightly explain the gospel and the person of God himself. This should be a circular movement between Christ as mediator and the Triune God, providing a clear apologetic for the mystery of the Trinity.

Too often in the church's worship and evangelism, the Son of God appears disconnected from God. The church must make plain that the Son of God is the Second Person of the Trinity who came to this world, and he took upon himself the name of Jesus, the equivalent of the Old Testament name Joshua, which simply means 'God is salvation' or 'God saves'. The church's charge is to present that name to our lost world.

While it is true that every generation needs the gospel, the way it is articulated in every generation needs to be clearly thought through in order to address the issues of any given day. There are several contemporary challenges which include religious multi-faith claims, political correctness in relation to sexual ethics and a postmodern attitude that seeks to deny that there is such a thing as the existence of truth, period.

It is submitted that a freshly understood presentation of the gospel with a more robust trinitarian framework will strengthen the church in our day. Pressures abound on every side, including feminist influences which seek to strip away masculine language concerning the Trinity. However, the Second Person of the Trinity is designated as 'the Son', and this designation is not subject to cultural revision.

Other worldly pressures seek to coerce the church into diluting the uniqueness of the Son's message. Yet Jesus said in John 14:6 that 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.' There is no compromise with the world or other religious claims on this fact, particularly since Jesus further said that 'No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him' (John 14:6). This statement connects the Father and the Son, and biblical evangelism embraces this reality. Jesus Christ is the 'way' to the First Person of the Trinity, who is God the Father, and this teaching in evangelism excludes all other religious claims. The church needs to 'join the dots', metaphorically speaking, to connect Jesus to the Trinity by proclaiming him as the Second Person of the Trinity, the one who is the only mediator between God and men.

5. The Trinity in Public Worship

'*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*' (1 Timothy 2:5).

'*For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both*' (Job 9:32-33).

Inasmuch as a mediator is an intermediary between different persons, the whole biblical concept of a mediator presupposes the existence of a Triune God. In addition, a sole mediator between God and mankind thereby excludes any illegitimate competing religious

philosophies. The truth of Holy Scripture is that there is only one mediator, 'the man Christ Jesus'.

The Book of Job offers valuable insights into the nature of this mediator. Jesus Christ, through his death on the cross and his later burial, resurrection and ascension, is the only one who is worthy to be able to lay his hand on sinners for reconciliation. This glorious message is worthy and needful to be preached in our day.

It is clear, therefore, that the Trinity needs to become much more central to public worship and preaching. Each stage in the order of worship should be richly infused with the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant, who is the Second Person of the Trinity, and of the Trinity itself. So that the church will be prepared and equipped to evangelize in a religiously multi-faith world, preaching should seek to draw out a more strongly trinitarian understanding of a person's relationship with God. Each aspect of public worship requires a fresh appreciation for the Trinity, the effect of which will be to enhance our theology and to make all believers more effective in responding to the mission needs of our own day. I have written elsewhere that a 'Trinity-Christ' connection needs to be made much more plain in public worship.[33] On some occasions I have worshipped in evangelical churches and have been left with the impression that the church is 'unitarian' in its doctrine. That is, the only person of the Trinity addressed was the Lord Jesus Christ, with barely any reference at any point to the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is an unbalanced, unbiblical presentation of God. We should pray for a recovery of the Trinity in worship that we may bolster our worship in a biblical and doxological manner.

Let us consider how the Trinity can be exemplified in just two aspects of public worship, as a way of examples to illustrate this point: the practice of the Christian Sabbath and the opening part of each public worship service, the call to worship.

I. The Christian Sabbath

'There are two memorial ordinances in the New Testament, and there are only two' according to John Murray, and these are 'the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day. The one celebrates the Lord's death, the other His resurrection'.[34] This 'sign character' of the Lord's Day not only points people to faith in the resurrection of Christ, but the imagery accomplishes more, as well.[35] This illustrates that the church has moved forward from the Old Testament's stage of redemption, so that now the first day of the week is commended (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2; Revelation 1:10), instead of the Jewish Sabbath (Exodus 20:8 - 11).[36]

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[33] Kevin J. Bidwell, *"The Church as the Image of the Trinity": A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Volf's Ecclesial Model*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), p.239.

[34] John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977, repr. 2001), Vol.2, 376.

[35] Richard B. Gaffin, 'Westminster and the Sabbath' in *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century*, ed. J. Ligon Duncan III, (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2003), Vol. 1, 123-44.

[36] The Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 59.

Accounting the 'Sabbath a delight' (Isaiah 58:13–14) is sanctioned by *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God* (1645), something that was produced at the Westminster Assembly (1643-53). This document affirms that the 'whole day is to be celebrated as holy to the Lord'.[37]

The church is 'an image of Christ and the Trinity' when it celebrates the Lord's Day because this observance remembers creation by the Triune God (Genesis 2:1–4), Christ's redemptive work, the resurrection (John 20:1–29), and our eschatological fellowship with the Triune God in the new creation. R. Scott Clark confirms that the three main lines of Reformed teaching from Calvin to Hodge on the Lord's Day are 'rest, worship and anticipating heaven'.[38] Thus public worship on the Lord's Day is a pivotal truth to recover,[39] for in this way the church represents itself as an image of Christ and the Trinity in a multicultural world.[40]

II. The Call to Worship and the Invocation

Martin Luther, on the occasion of the launch of the Reformation in Leipzig in 1539, preached (from John 14:21–3) that 'the entire Trinity dwells in the true church'.[41] He proclaimed that the true church is composed of people where the Word of God is spoken, heard and loved; and that such a place is where the Three Persons of the Trinity make their home among us (John 14:23). He declares,

> These are fine heart-warming words - that God wants to come down to us, God wants to come to us and we do not need to clamber up to him, he wants to be with us to the end of the world: Here dwells the Holy Spirit, effecting and creating everything in the Christian Church.[42]

When God's people assemble on the Lord's Day, the minister calls the gathered people to anticipate the presence of the Triune God among them.

This doctrine of God's presence is similarly expressed in *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God* which affirms the need for a clear call to worship at the beginning of each church service and it teaches:

> The congregation being assembled, the minister, after solemn calling on them to the worshipping of the great name of God, is to begin with prayer. 'In all reverence and

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[37] The Directory for the Public Worship of God, 'Of the Sanctification of the Lord's Day', 1650.

[38] R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety and Practice*, (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2008), p.321.

[39] Walter Chantry, *Call the Sabbath a Delight*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991, repr. 2000); Hughes Oliphant Old, 'The Lord's Day' in *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), pp.23–32; Benjamin B. Warfield, 'The Foundations of the Sabbath in the Word of God' in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), Vol.1; Jonathan Edwards, 'The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath' in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), Vol.2, pp.93–103.

[40] Murray, 'The Relevance of the Sabbath' in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976, repr. 2001), Vol.1, pp.225–8.

[41] Martin Luther, 'Sermon in Castle Pleissenburg, Leipzig, 1539' in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger, (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), p.241.

[42] Luther, 'Sermon in Castle Pleissenburg, Leipzig, 1539', pp.241–2. Note that church-service in German is *Gottes Dienst*; this implies that God wants to serve us and then we serve him.

> humility acknowledging the incomprehensible greatness and majesty of the Lord ... all in the name and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ'.[43]

This statement links the 'great name of God' to the mediation of Christ in a way that we propose. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), which was drafted later, explicitly states that 'religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...in the mediation ... of Christ alone'.[44] Therefore it is crucial that a Christian minister, at the beginning of public worship, through prayer, exhortation and the use of Scripture, makes it clear that worship is addressed to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, through the mediation of Christ Jesus.

In summary, the minister must move the public worship of congregations in a trinitarian-Christological direction, beginning with the invocation and continuing all the way through to the benediction. This direction is facilitated when worship commences with a doctrinally clear introductory statement. Two such examples are: 'We worship God on this Lord's Day, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit through the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ' or 'This gathering is for the Triune God, in that we the covenant people of God are called to worship on this Lord's Day, through Jesus Christ our Mediator of the New Covenant'. Such clarity at the outset of public worship produces an impetus for worship for the believers and clarity for the unconverted in the midst of the church. The unsaved are left in no doubt as to whom the congregation is approaching. This is none other than the Holy Trinity through the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

It is the objective of this article that the church in our day will seek a greater and more energetic trinitarian recovery for the church, in every aspect of her work in the Western world, in our own day. It is no exaggeration that there is significant catching up to do on the doctrine of the Trinity generally, inasmuch as appreciation for this doctrine has lagged behind other areas of robustly recovered doctrines since the Reformation, such as justification by faith, sanctification and indeed covenant theology. Public worship on the Sabbath Day is the most visible aspect of the church's work, and it is in worship where a glorious understanding of the Triune God and Christ the Mediator should be clearly connected and the light of these truths shine the brightest.

The transition in salvation history from the Old Covenant to the New has many implications, and one of the most obvious is that baptism replaces circumcism as the covenant sign of entrance into the kingdom. A central verse to the argument made in this paper is that Jesus, in directing his followers to make disciples and to teach all nations, told them to do so 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19). It is the argument of this paper that this Triune name is the new covenant name of God, and faithful ministers should enthusiastically seek the recovery of the name for use in theology, public worship, evangelism, and apologetics.

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[43] The Westminster Assembly, 'Of the Assembling of the Congregation, and Their Behaviour in the Public Worship of God' in *The Westminster Directory of Public Worship: Discussed by Mark Dever & Sinclair Ferguson*, (Christian Focus: Fearn, Ross-shire, 2008), p.83.

[44] The Westminster Confession of Faith, 'Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day', 21.2.

BOOK REVIEWS

Beginning at Moses - A Guide to Finding Christ in the Old Testament, Michael P. V. Barrett, Reformation Heritage Books, 2018, pbk, 322 pages, £14.99.

The title of this book invites the reader to ponder and reflect on the lesson given by the resurrected Christ to the two disciples on the Emmaus road:

> *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself* (Luke 24:27).

Students of the Old Testament may occasionally have envied Cleopas and his friend, being given such Old Testament Christological insights. In the wisdom of God that precise discourse was not recorded. Nevertheless, we have the New Testament which reveals how portions of the Old Testament were interpreted messianically, we have the Holy Spirit who helps us interpret the Old Testament and we have this superb book by Michael Barrett!

The author recognizes that the Old Testament is either totally neglected, badly interpreted or simply used to provide biographical illustrations for sermons preached from the New Testament, Christ being totally ignored. This book addresses that major flaw. In the opinion of this reviewer Barrett excels in achieving his objective of providing a guide to finding Christ in the Old Testament.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, 'Whom to Look For,' consists of three chapters which concentrate on the person and work of Christ. Very appropriately Barrett points out that it is only by having such a profile of Christ that we know precisely who or what we are looking for in the Old Testament.

Part two, 'Where to Look,' takes us to the Old Testament and shows the thoughtful reader how Christ is the key who unlocks its meaning and message. To provide structure the author uses a thematic approach. The seven chapters in this section show how Christ is clearly revealed - in 'the Covenants', in 'His Person', in 'His Names', in 'Word Prophesy', in 'Picture Prophesy' and in 'Song'.

The chapter on 'covenants' is particularly helpful. The Covenant of Grace is shown to be the one overarching covenant which provides the thread that weaves its way from Genesis to Revelation and provides the theological key for sound biblical exegesis, interpretation and application. The reader is then shown how this eternal covenant (and Christ) is progressively revealed through the Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic covenants, until we come to the New Covenant, when God's eternal covenant is given full expression. The author concludes this section with the bold but accurate statement, 'Finding Christ in the covenants is a sure thing.'

Most of the chapter on the 'Person of Christ' is taken up with pre-incarnate appearances of Christ in the Old Testament, described as christophanies. These christophanies, we are clearly shown, provide 'a visible token and foretaste of Christ's mediatorial works as the ideal Prophet, Priest and King.'

The messianic names attributed to the Second Person of the Godhead in the Old Testament are a key to understanding the messianic mission. 'Branch' is one of the titles brought to our attention and through its use in five Old Testament texts various aspects of Christ's redemptive mission are brought into sharp focus.

Among Christians there are different opinions as to what constitutes 'a type of Christ' in the Old Testament. Chapters 8 and 9 provide helpful principles for identifying types, as well as objective guidelines for interpreting them. Types, which range from Old Testament prophets, priests and kings to the tabernacle/temple and its furniture, are described as 'picture prophesies of Jesus Christ'.

This book reaches a climax in the final chapter, 'Christ in song'. The best way to give a flavour of this chapter is to quote directly from the author.

> What the tabernacle taught in type, the Psalms teach in verse and song. The Psalms were an effective means of keeping Christ before the people and intensifying the desire for Him by making Him the theme of song, prayer, and worship. There is hardly a doctrine about Christ that in one way or another is not part of the Psalms' messianic theology. His humanity and deity, His death and resurrection, His mediatorial offices (prophet, priest, and king), and His first and second advents are all part of the message of Psalms. Psalms, the book of song and worship, is a good place to find Christ.…It is paramount to stay on 'Christ alert' as you read the Psalms.'

This book is essential reading material for every student preparing to preach the gospel. Those already in the ministry will discover that after reading this book their preaching will be enriched and become more Christocentric. If that is the outcome, Barrett will have achieved his goal and, more importantly, Christ will be glorified and his Kingdom advanced.

Robert L. W. McCollum

Royal Books and Holy Bones: Essays in Medieval Christianity, Eamon Duffy, Bloomsbury, 2018, hbk., 366 pages, £25.

This is a collection of essays on numerous aspects of medieval Christianity, most of which have appeared previously in a variety of publications. While demonstrating the author's academic prowess, it is also extremely readable and should appeal almost as much to the general reader as it does to the scholar. Eamon Duffy is Emeritus Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Cambridge and is regarded as one of the leading authorities on the history of the Church in the Middle Ages and at the time of the Reformation.

The title of the tome, *Royal Books and Holy Bones*, is definitely an eye-catching one although it does not fully capture the wide-ranging nature of the topics under consideration. The headings given to the main sub-sections in the book give a clearer picture: Books, Crises and Movements, Saints, and On the Eve of the Reformation.

One very positive feature of the book is the inclusion of a series of colour plates, although it would have been better if these had been inserted in the relevant chapters rather than placed together in the middle. Nevertheless, these colour illustrations add greatly to demonstrating

what the blurb calls 'the richness of late medieval religion'. One in particular, bearing the caption 'the power of Mary's prayers', is most evocative. It consists of a 15th century Nottingham alabaster showing the Archangel Michael weighing souls! Demons seek to weight the scales against the soul undergoing judgement, to drag it down to hell; but the Virgin Mary lays her rosary on the scales tipping the balance in favour of the sinner being weighed. This is a most vivid illustration of the medieval confidence in the power of Mary's intercession, and a reminder to us of why the Reformation emphasis on Christ as sole Mediator should be treasured.

While appreciating Duffy's erudition, discernment needs to be exercised in relation to two aspects of his work. First of all, there is his stance in relation to the truth claims of Christianity. His relativistic approach is evident from his approval of the following:

> historians are less inclined to privilege a particular story line, and more prepared to view 'mainstream' accounts of Christianity as the version of the foundation myth that happened to win out.

Secondly, readers of Duffy's work should be keenly aware of his critical attitude towards the Reformation. Three of his previous books, and in particular *The Stripping of the Altars*, reveal his anti-Reformed tendencies. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find a chapter in this book entitled 'Brush for Hire: Lucas Cranach the Elder' in which the economic self-interest of this prominent Reformation painter is highlighted. Having said that, it is worth reading this in order to keep us from adopting a hagiographical attitude towards key Reformation figures - they should be portrayed 'warts and all'.

Overall then, a reader with a Reformed perspective will find much to disagree with in Duffy's essays, but at the same time there is much of value to those who read them with care and discernment.

Raymond Blair

*Confronting Old Testament Controversies: Pressing Questions about Evolution, Sexuality, History and Violence***,** Temper Longman III, Baker Books, 2019, pbk., 294 pages, $19.99.

This book certainly does what it says on the front cover: Longman neither ducks the issues nor minces his words in attempting to confront four 'Old Testament Controversies', albeit with various degrees of success.

To begin with the positives, this book is really well written. Though it runs to nearly 300 pages, its style is easy, its manner homely. The author handles some complex issues with a deft touch and simple eloquence – clearly, this scholar, has mastered his subject. The book is divided into 4 main sections.

His second chapter addresses questions concerning the historical nature of Exodus and Conquest. The account is lucid, compressed, and fairly conservative, while his summary of archaeology is a real bonus – the latter will offer a valuable, reliable, short-cut to busy pastor-teachers.

His third chapter deals firmly, but thoughtfully, with concerns about Old Testament divine violence. Longman, it should be noted, is a leading scholar in this field. He refuses to yield an inch to the neo-orthodox or neo-marcionite. His mini biblical theology of the 'Divine Warrior' theme alone justifies the price-tag on this volume, pp.176-194. His succinct outline of the biblical data, which plots its eschatological trajectory, helps us confidently embrace the Hebrew God of Wrath – this LORD, it is insisted, is most fully seen at the Cross.

The closing (fourth) chapter might rightly raise concerns. Here again, with aplomb, Longman ably rebuts most objections that are raised against orthodox, biblical, sexual ethics. In fact, at a popular level, you will travel far and wide to find any clearer, more cogent, summary of principles of general equity with respect to Pentateuchal case law, pp.219-234. He concludes quite brilliantly:

> …attempts to soften the Bible's message on judgment do nothing to promote the Bible's message to people today. We don't get to make God in our image; we must understand God in the way he reveals himself to us in his Word (p.205).

Having said all this, if I read Longman correctly, in the realm of application he says some things which will are highly questionable and extremely controversial. In seeking to apply what look to me like sound principles, he inexplicably opens the door to a raft of dangers. It is true that we must welcome all kinds of sinners, regardless, with dignity and respect. Yet I cannot understand why he guns down a Christian baker who declines to provide a service for a same-sex union couple. He writes:

> Every Christian has to think through these issues and act according to their conscience, but as I argued above, I personally think it is wrong-minded for denominations and churches to try to change the law of the land. I also think it is wrong-minded in most cases for Christians to refuse services to gay couples that they would offer to non-Christian heterosexual couples (p.254).

Some may indulge him as separating Church and State: the U.S. constitution, in my U.K. opinion, should not be used to cover over a multitude of sins. This and other statements make this book unhelpful at best and at worst entirely unsuitable for young people without parental guidance. His 'sexual' reading of the Song of Songs is well-known to most by now, but still does not convince. This is a book that all should handle with care.

Another concern to red-flag is his first chapter on Creation. It makes it hard for me to recommend this book with any appetite. The writer begins by stressing, correctly, the need to read Scripture with eyes open to both general and special revelation. With little explanation, or any biblical warrant, however, he then proceeds to capitulate to the tenets of macro-evolution. He rules out of court those who espouse literal days (which is a 'Copernican' mistake), yet it is hard to imagine, for wilderness Israelites, that Moses means anything else. Even if we could accept his case as valid, science, it seems for Longman, at this point, trumps the text. He is adamant, of course, that he upholds the truth of original sin, and maintains, in some sense, historical reality behind an Edenic metaphor. Yet, when all is said and done, what the author really advocates is a figurative re-interpretation of Paradise and Fall. This may, for the writer, be no threat to the Cross. I fear, however, for the shaky or skeptical reader, it will provide ammunition for an attack on the truth.

In conclusion, if you insist on buying this book, do not leave it lying about. Though there are two or three really excellent parts, it is not the sort of book to be put on a present list!

Andrew Kerr

Theoretical-Practical Theology. Volume 1 Prolegomena, Petrus Van Mastricht, translated by Todd M. Rester, edited by Joel R. Beeke, Reformation Heritage Books, 2018, hbk., 238 pages, $50.00.

As the number of translations grows, more of the great figures of Reformed theology in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are becoming known to English speakers. Until the production of this first volume of the translation of his *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, few non-specialists will have heard of Petrus Van Mastricht, but he is a theologian worth getting to know.

Van Mastricht (1630-1706) was born in Cologne to parents who were refugees from the Dutch Revolt. They hailed from Mastricht and Petrus' father changed his name to Van Mastricht when he arrived in Cologne. Petrus began studies at the University of Utrecht in 1637, studying under such eminent teachers as Hoornbeck and Voetius. In the bitter polemics raging within covenant theology at the time between the followers of Voetius and of Cocceius Van Mastricht expressed himself in eirenical terms which set him apart from the more strident voices that dominated debate. After several pastorates he served as Professor of Hebrew and Theology at the University of Duisburg (1670-77) and then at the University of Utrecht (1677-1700). In his final years, due to ill health, he taught in his own home. Van Mastricht was known as a vigorous opponent of the philosophy of Descartes, but his chief work was his *Theoretical-Practical Theology*. His significance as a theologian is strikingly expressed by the great Jonathan Edwards when he recommended, 'But take Mastricht for divinity in general, doctrine, practice and controversy, or as an universal system of divinity; and it is much better than Turretin or any other book in the world, excepting the Bible, in my opinion.' High praise indeed!

Theoretical-Practical Theology, which will be translated in a projected seven volumes, running to some 4000 pages, covers the whole spectrum of theology, ethics and 'piety'. As Todd Rester, the translator, puts it, 'The overriding concern of the work is a high regard for God, preaching, Scripture, doctrinal orthodoxy, and personal godliness' (xvii). Van Mastricht is 'a pastor writing to train pastors'. His aim throughout is to treat each element of theology according to a fourfold approach: exegetical, dogmatic, elenctic (answering opponents) and practical. The structure is characteristic of seventeenth century scholastic method, dividing the treatment of each subject into carefully ordered sections, sub-sections and sub-sub-sections. Although this may seem strange at first to readers unfamiliar with Scholasticism, and can make the exposition seem complex and even baffling, a little effort soon overcomes the stylistic obstacles and allows the reader to engage with a man warmly committed to setting forth divine truth and applying it to the heart. As Van Mastricht expresses it, 'Theology is the doctrine of living for God through Christ' (1.1.1.xxxvi). In biblical language it is the doctrine that is according to godliness (1 Timothy 6:3), the knowledge of the truth that is according to godliness (Titus 1:1).

Volume 1, entitled 'Prolegomena', consists of several elements. A concise yet comprehensive overview of Van Mastricht's life and work is provided by Adriaan Neele, including a consideration of the main aspects of his theology and a survey of the ways in which others

responded to (or sometimes ignored) his work. The lengthy and elaborate oration delivered at Van Mastricht's funeral is then translated. Next comes a translation of Van Mastricht's 'The Best Method of Preaching' which in later editions of *Theoretical-Practical Theology* was placed after the dogmatics, but is here restored to its original position at the beginning. It offers many interesting insights into Van Mastricht's view of how biblical truth should be preached and is characterised by solid common sense. The rest of the volume offers a translation first of the 'Methodical Arrangement of the Whole Work', which runs to sixteen pages and illustrates very well the complexities of scholastic methodology, followed by Part 1, Book 1 of *Theoretical-Practical Theology*. This part of TPT deals with the nature of theology, the place of Scripture in formulating theology and the manner in which the exposition of theology is to be ordered.

The translation by Todd Rester, a historian of early modern theology and philosophy, formerly in the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics at Queen's University, Belfast, and now an associate professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary, has produced a careful and readable translation with copious footnotes which, among other things, track down the source of every quotation and allusion employed by Van Mastricht. The most demanding readers will be well satisfied. We are in Rester's debt for his monumental labours which have begun to make available to the Church another fruitful source of theology which for most was previously unknown. This is truth not only to be studied, but also lived, just as Van Mastricht believed it should be.

David McKay

BOOK NOTICES

The Battle for the Biblical Family, George C. Scipione, 2nd. edition, Crown and Covenant Publications, 2018, pbk., 284 pages, $16.00.

George Scipione, who has 44 years of pastoral experience in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, has for the last decade directed the Biblical Counseling Institute of the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Pittsburgh. This book is a 2002 revision of a work published in 1993. Although, as Scipione recognizes, some of the references are a little dated, the issues addressed have not changed, nor have the biblical principles that are relevant to them. Taken together the five sections offer a comprehensive biblical theology of the family. The key term is 'biblical' – Scipione includes much anecdotal material by way of illustration, but he never allows the Word of God to be moved from its central, authoritative position. He considers in turn 'The Family: Why Bother?', 'The Family: Does God Care?', 'Is the West Best?', 'Where's the Battle?' and 'What's the Strategy? The theme of covenant also runs through the book and the final chapter, in asking 'Can issues such as gender roles, social science, counselling and the civil magistrate. The notes run to around 60 pages. This is a great resource for understanding the Bible's view of the family. It is not necessary to agree with all that Scipione says – his view of God's goal of building 'a Christian world order', apparently on this side of the return of Christ, may occasion debate – but he offers significant help in addressing many of the most pressing problems faced by Christians in an increasingly hostile environment.

God's Design for Women in an Age of Gender Confusion, Sharon James, EP Books, 2019, pbk., 318 pages, £9.99

This is a revised version of Sharon James' 2002 book, first revised in 2007, which is now updated for the #MeToo generation. Once again James has succeeded in providing a balanced biblical understanding of God's design for women, one which is very different from that current in contemporary Western societies. She begins by considering the positive impact Christianity has had on women throughout history (often airbrushed out by feminists), and then considers the four 'waves' of feminism which have shaped our society from the late 19th century up to the present day, together with seven ways in which feminism has failed both men and women. The 'meat' of the book is a consideration of the Bible's teaching about equality and complementarity ('equal dignity/complementary difference'), an examination of issues such as singleness, marriage, motherhood and work, a comparison of different views of the ministry of women in the church and an outline of the many positive avenues of Christian service open to women. The final part of the book asks, 'How Should We Then Live?' and answers with thoughts on the love that never dies, the beauty that never fades and the life that never ends. This is a fine conservative treatment, submissive to the teaching of Scripture, of subjects which are matters of heated debate inside and outside the church. It is a book that will continue to be of great help to Christians as they seek to chart a God-honouring course through these troubled waters. Essential reading for men as well as women.

Maturity. Growing Up and Going On in the Christian Life, Sinclair B. Ferguson, The Banner of Truth trust, 2019, pbk., 231 pages, £7.50.

Anything written by Sinclair Ferguson is well worth reading. This book is no exception. It is a comprehensive revision of *Add to Your Faith*, published in 1980, a book which helped many readers over the years. *Maturity*, by God's grace, will do the same. It offers a wide-ranging examination of the Christian life in 12 chapters, divided into sections entitled Growing Up, Standing Firm, Facing Difficulties, Pressing On and Maturity. Rather than gathering a plethora of individual biblical texts on each topic, Ferguson focuses attention on a limited number of longer passages, allowing for greater depth of exposition. His writing is always clear and accessible, a delight to read. The treatment is soundly biblical, shot through with practical pastoral wisdom, directly and helpfully applied. Although the most obvious readership may be those younger in the faith, this is material to encourage and strengthen any believer. It is always dangerous to think that we have outgrown the basics of the gospel. We never do, and this book will help readers to keep preaching the gospel to themselves and encouraging others to do the same.

The Last Things, David A. Höhne, IVP, 2019, pbk., 322 pages, £15.99.

There are many books written on 'the last things' – the culmination of God's redemptive purpose – and some are sound and helpful. Is there anything new to be said, or can the familiar truths be expounded in a new way? David Höhne, who lectures in theology and philosophy at Moore Theological College, Sydney, offers in this contribution to IVP's 'Contours of Christian Theology' series a distinctive approach. His 'biblical approach' entails using the Lord's Prayer as a framework for expounding eschatology. Among the advantages he sees in this is that it maintains a focus on the person and work of Christ, serving as an antidote to a common neglect of the 'once for all' aspects of Christ's atoning work. On this base Höhne develops a 'theological interpretation' of Scripture, which, he says, 'will mean using each of the Prayer's petitions to clarify a specific divine promise to be explored throughout the canon of Scripture' (p.xvii). Höhne's treatment of eschatology is also thoroughly Trinitarian in nature, and essential element not always given its proper place in studies of the doctrine. With the centrality of Scripture safeguarded, Höhne is able to develop his thinking in critical dialogue with other theologians, the main interlocutors chosen being Barth and Moltmann. This is not, however, a coldly academic study: Höhne is also concerned to work out the implications of eschatology in the life and service of Christians. The result is a fresh and refreshing study of a subject which in some cases attracts an unhealthy degree of interest and in others a weary avoidance, yet a subject which, as Höhne shows, is full of the work of the Triune God in providing a glorious hope for his people.

God's Two Words. Law and Gospel in the Lutheran and Reformed Traditions, edited by Jonathan A. Linebaugh, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018, pbk., 253 pages, $35.00.

One of the weaknesses in theological debate is a failure, or a reluctance, to listen to what opponents are actually saying. The result can be caricature and the demolition of straw men, which is often easier than engaging in meaningful discussion with those who hold different views. The advantage of a book like this one is that exponents of differing positions are able to state their view as they themselves would want them to be stated, not as relayed by a

potentially hostile interlocutor. If Calvin's successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, was even partly correct when he said that confusion of the Law and the Gospel is the primary source of the problems in the history of the church, then this is an important book. Different opinions on the relationship between Law and Gospel have characterised Lutherans and Reformed from early days. Are the two in opposition or harmony? How does the Law relate to Christians, if it relates at all? These and many more questions have occupied theologians for centuries. *God's Two Words* brings together the work of eleven theologians who in the course of a colloquium held in Birmingham, Alabama, in 2016, debate the Lutheran and Reformed understandings of Law and Gospel. Part 1 offers a paper from each tradition on 'The Law Is Not the Gospel'. The same pattern is followed in part 2, 'The Gospel Is Not the Law, and in Part 3, 'Law and Gospel in Theology and Ministry'. Part 4 offers interaction between the traditions in four papers, two providing 'A Lutheran Response to the Reformed Tradition' and 'A Reformed Response to the Lutheran Tradition', and two entitled 'Continuing the Conversation: A Lutheran Reflection' and 'Continuing the Conversation: A Reformed Reflection'. As well as indicating differences between the traditions, the papers also on occasion serve to show variations within each. This is a stimulating collection of papers on a vital theological debate which will stretch readers and deepen their grasp of the important issues at stake, whatever the conclusions they reach. Misunderstandings are removed and a significant degree of clarity achieved. It is a volume well worth pondering by anyone interested in engaging with Lutheran and Reformed understandings of the gospel.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Major Reformed Confessions and Catechisms of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Yuzo Adhinarta, Langham Monographs, 2012, pbk., 235 pages, £21.99.

Whilst the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has received significant attention with the rise of the Pentecostal movement in the twentieth century, many are unaware that this doctrine was also treated in depth in the Reformation period, especially in what has come to be known as Reformed Scholasticism. This comprehensive survey by Yuzo Adhinarta, who teaches at Reformed Evangelical Seminary Indonesia, is the fruit of research carried out at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids. Adhinarta draws on a comprehensive range of sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed confessions and catechisms from all branches of the Reformed family to make his case. Following on from the Introduction, which maps out the terrain he will cover and the sources he will use, two chapters cover 'Doctrinal Themes Commonly Associated with the Holy Spirit in the Reformed Confessions and Catechisms', which deal with Scripture, the Trinity, Christ, salvation, the Church and the sacraments. The remainder of the book focuses on the Holy Spirit in relation to creation and providence (Chapter 4), to the Church's unity and the diversity of spiritual gifts and the Church's evangelistic mission (Chapters 5 and 6), and to the doctrine of good works, in particular social responsibility (Chapter 7). A Conclusion summarizes Adhinarta's findings and a comprehensive bibliography is provided. This is a work of major significance, filling a gap in our understanding of Reformed theology and opening up valuable insights into the work of the Holy Spirit who is crucial for all Christian living and service.

Prosperity Theology and the Gospel. Good News or Bad News for the Poor?, edited by J. Daniel Salinas, Hendrickson Publishers, 2017, pbk., 219 pages, £20.99.

This volume is an addition to the Lausanne Library, published by Hendrickson on behalf of the Lausanne Movement. The book arises out of a 2014 consultation in Brazil which brought together forty pastors and theologians from around the world to consider the issues raised by 'prosperity theology'. This theology is defined thus: 'the teaching that believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the 'sowing of seeds' through financial or material gifts' (p.5). It is a teaching that has been very influential in many parts of the world, especially in the Two Thirds world. The fifteen chapters are divided into four Parts: 'God's Word: Prosperity Theology and the Poor in the Bible', 'God's World: Historical, Sociological and Ethical Approaches', God's World: Case Studies' and finally 'The Way Forward'. The contributors come from diverse parts of the world and offer a searching examination of this professedly 'Christian' teaching. Chapter 15 provides a summary statement of the conclusions of the consultation and highlights many of the questions still to be addressed. Given the influence exercised by proponents of 'prosperity theology', especially in economically poorer parts of the world, this volume offers considerable help in subjecting 'prosperity theology' to biblical critique and formulating a better alternative. It is not necessary to agree with all that the contributors state – they do not all agree among themselves at some points – for readers to profit from engagement with *Prosperity Theology and the Gospel*.

David McKay