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A Reconsideration of Hebrews 6:4-6 in Light of Contextual Studies

John T. Stevenson

Few passages of the Bible have spawned more diverse opinion than the early verses of Hebrews 6. Bruce Compton describes this passage as “a notorious crux in New Testament interpretation” (1996:135). Mathewson says that it “remains one of the most puzzling and enigmatic for interpreter” (1999). A number of varied and conflicting interpretations have been suggested and the fact that no single one of these has gained an overall acceptance is in itself evidence that this is one of the more misunderstood passages of Scripture.

Most commentators would seem to agree with McKnight’s analysis that focuses the key interpretive issue upon “two central sets of questions: (1) Who are the subjects? Are they genuine believers? Or, are they false or pretentious believers? and (2) What is the sin these subjects are in danger of committing? Is it apostasy? Is it ‘the sin unto death?’ Or, is it a sin which, though leading to the heaviest discipline of the Lord, does not finally exclude a person from God’s presence?” (1992:27). An examination of these two questions is therefore in order. A survey of the popular interpretations of this passage reveal the following:

Saved persons who are subsequently lost	Lenski and Arminians in general teach that one can be saved and then lose that salvation. The problem is that this passage would say it is subsequently impossible for such a person to be saved again.	
Professed believers who have never really been saved	Phenomenological-False Believer View	These are not true believers and can therefore fall away from their proximity to the true faith.
	Phenomenological-True Believer View	These look on the outside to be true believers and are outwardly indistinguishable from false believers.
Saved persons who backslide	Charles Ryrie taught that this meant a believer could not start over again but must continue his spiritual walk from where he found himself.	

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Hypothetical situation	Spurgeon, Westcott, and Kent teach it is a warning of what could hypothetically take place if one were able to fall away. The warnings are real, but the sin against which is warned cannot actually be committed since true believers cannot fall away.
Covenant Community View	Individuals are not in view; this is a warning against the Hebrew covenant community.

These conflicting interpretations have a tendency toward polarization based upon the theological presuppositions of their adherents. Spurgeon makes this observation of those within his own theological camp:

“If you read Dr. Gill, Dr. Owen, and almost all the eminent Calvinistic writers, they all of them assert that these persons are not Christians. They say, that enough is said here to represent a man who is a Christian externally, but not enough to give the portrait of a true believer. Now, it strikes me they would not have said this if they had had some doctrine to uphold; for a child, reading this passage, would say, that the persons intended by it must be Christians. If the Holy Spirit intended to describe Christians, I do not see that he could have used more explicit terms than there are here. How can a man be said to be enlightened, and to taste of the heavenly gift, and to be made partaker of the Holy Ghost, without being a child of God? With all deference to these learned doctors, and I admire and love them all, I humbly conceive that they allowed their judgments to be a little warped when they said that; and I think I shall be able to show that none but true believers are here described” (1856).

Nor is this the only view against which such a charge can be laid. If those of the Calvinist and eternal security persuasion have sought to delegate the references in this passage to unbelievers so as to avoid the perceived theological implications that would be contrary to their theological views, many of those of the Arminian camp have also attempted to soften the weight of the judgment of this passage by either changing the import of that which was described as an impossibility to a mere difficulty or to have it apply, not to the permanent loss of eternal salvation, but to the re-administration of baptism. Even Tertullian, considered an extreme view by all parties, seems to have limited the import of this passage to the adulterer and fornicator (1986:97).

Of special value is Guthrie’s observation that “most discussion of the warnings in Hebrews have greatly neglected the ‘omniscience’ factor. The author admits his lack of knowledge concerning the spiritual state of all those in this community of hearers” (1998:231). If the author of the epistle admits an uncertainty as to the spiritual status of the recipients, indicating that he is hoping for the best but fearing the worst, then we ought to be equally cautious in setting forth any dogmatic conclusion as to the state of those same recipients as well as those who are described in the passage before us.

If it is true that we cannot say with any certainty what was the spiritual state of those

described in this epistle, we can at least be sure of their ethnicity, for there is ample evidence to show that the epistle has been appropriately titled to the Hebrews. The recipients of this epistle are Jewish descendants of the children of Israel. Though there has been speculation as to exactly where they were located, whether they were in Jerusalem or Palestine or whether they were from the diaspora in some other part of the world, it is universally acknowledged by all interpreters that the arguments of the epistle are especially relevant to the Jews. More specifically, these were Jews who had come to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah. They had heard the message of Jesus Christ, that He had died for sins and that He rose from the dead. They initially believed this message. In doing so, they had now become targets for persecution. The author speaks of how, after being enlightened, they had endured “a great conflict of sufferings, reproaches, and tribulations (Hebrews 10:32-33), extending even to the seizure of their property (Hebrews 10:34), though this persecution seems not yet to have accelerated to the point of bloodshed (Hebrews 12:4). In the midst of these difficult times, they were now being tempted to leave Christ and to go back to their sacrifices and their religious ceremonies.

McKnight correctly points out that when we look at all of the warning passage of Hebrews together, a picture of the sin against which the readers are being warned becomes clear. It is the sin of apostasy which is in view (1992:26). However, it is not the sort of apostasy that would have led those guilty of its infraction to abandon a faith in God or return to a former paganism. These are Jews and this means the sort of apostasy with which they were being tempted would result in a return to the Old Testament law as a means of approaching God. They were missing the point that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament sacrifices and ceremonies. These ceremonies and customs all serve as illustrations of His perfect person and work. As a result, they were attempting to return to the infancy of their faith. They were turning back to the Mosaic Law. They were like the baby who wants to again become a fetus.

The book of Hebrews contains five warnings to the Jewish Christian readers. They are warnings to beware of certain spiritual failures.

1. Beware of Neglecting Salvation (2:1-4).
2. Beware of Not Entering into Rest (3:7 - 4:13).
3. Beware of Not going on to Maturity (5:11 - 6:20).
4. Beware of Insulting the Spirit of Grace (10:26-31).
5. Beware of Indifference (12:18-29).

Though these warnings have sometimes been treated as though they were distinct and unrelated to one another, Bruce Compton builds a compelling case for seeing the relationship between these warnings:

Furthermore, the warnings themselves are interrelated since they appear to have the same audience in view, the same underlying problem as the occasion for the warnings, and the same consequences if the warnings are not heeded. Consequently, they should not be treated in isolation, but synthetically, in order to arrive at a proper interpretation of each (1996:135).

Each of these warnings are given because there is a danger of leaving Jesus. The solution to each of these warnings is to see that Jesus is better. We can see the flow of thought in the following chart:

Jesus is Better...		
1:4	He is better than the Angels	Warning #1: How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation (2:2-4).
3:1	He is better than Moses	Warning #2: Take care lest any should be falling away from the living God and not enter into His rest (3:12; 4:1; 4:11).
4:3	He provides a better Rest	
4:14	He is a better High Priest	Warning #3: Those who have fallen away find it impossible to renew again to repentance (6:4-6).
8:1	He ministers in a better Sanctuary	
8:6	He has obtained a better Covenant which has been enacted on better promises	
10:1	He has offered a better Sacrifice	Warning #4: If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins (10:26-31).
12:1	He has brought a better City	Warning #5: If those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. (12:25).

These are all different aspects of the same basic warning. It is a warning against not holding onto Christ. This is simply another way of describing the danger of apostasy, for apostasy, by definition, is to depart from Christ and from Christianity. Indeed, the Greek verb *aphistemi*, from which we derive our English word “apostasy” is used in Hebrews 3:12 when the readers are warned against an “unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.” Likewise, the related *apostreho* is used in Hebrews 12:25 where a warning is given to those “who turn away from Him.”

Though not appearing on the chart above, Hebrews 12:15 warns the readers to “see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.” Though these words have often been taken by casual readers to speak about emotional bitterness, but the context does not allow for such an interpretation. We should instead view these words through the lens of the history of Israel. They are reminiscent of the instance when Moses spoke to the Israelites of the danger of turning away from the Lord to serve the false idols of their neighbors.

Moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them);¹⁸ lest there shall be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there shall be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. (Deuteronomy 29:17-18).

The poisonous fruit and wormwood Moses described was the poison of idolatry. Now the danger has come full circle. It is no longer the danger of worshiping idols of wood or stone or silver or gold. Now the danger is of making an idol of the law while turning away from the One to whom the law pointed. They are being tempted to depart from Christianity and to return to their former Judaism. To summarize:

- ♦ They were Jews.
- ♦ They have a heritage that was rooted in religion.
- ♦ They have grown up going to synagogue every week.
- ♦ They have read the Old Testament Scriptures.
- ♦ They have offered sacrifices and offerings to the Lord.

Then they became Christians. They heard the message that Jesus had died for sins and had risen again from the dead. They believed that message and joined the local group of believers which followed the teachings of Jesus. But as persecutions began to arise they began to be tempted to renounce their new found faith. After all, they had been happy when they had been under the spiritual infancy of the Law, even though it is elsewhere likened to a bondage.

So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.⁴ But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,⁵ in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:3-5).

It is important to note that the language of immaturity used both by Paul in the above passage as well as here in Hebrews does not refer to a believer who has just come to Jesus as opposed to a believer who has been a Christian for an extended period of time. The reference to childhood speaks of those who were in their former state of Judaism and who approached God through the Old Testament rituals and promises as they awaited the

coming of a future Messiah. These rituals are the “weak and worthless elemental things” that can become a place of enslavement to the New Testament believer (Galatians 4:9).

This same language of spiritual infancy carries over to the epistle to the Hebrews as the writer likewise describes a time when the readers were under the “elementary principles of the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:11). But then the fulness of time had come and Jesus had come and these readers had heard the gospel and had believed. They had taken the solid food of the gospel to replace the previous milk of the promises and types and pictures contained in the Old Covenant. Now that they had come to faith, they had a tremendous advantage over Gentile converts to Christianity, for they already knew the Old Testament Scriptures. In the words of the author of Hebrews, they should have been teachers, but instead, they have come to a place of needing to be taught a true understanding of the central truth of those same Old Testament Scriptures to which they are now seeking to return. They want to return to the Law and the Prophets, but they seem to have forgotten that it is the Law and the Prophets that prophesy of Jesus. They are told, “You have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12). What are the elementary teachings about Christ? In the context of which this is given, it is the teachings of the Messiah (that is what the word “Christ” means) as seen in the Old Testament. Messiah was seen in an elementary way in the Old Testament, but He is seen in a complete way in the New Testament. This is what Hebrews is all about. The epistle begins with the premise that God spoke at many different times and in many different ways, but in these last days, He spoke by a Son.

These Jews had heard the message of the gospel. They had come to Christ. They had joined the ranks of the Christians. They had pledged themselves to Jesus Christ. But now they are turning away. They are turning back to their former Judaism. They are turning back to their previous religious system and telling themselves that such a departure will be acceptable because it is still the same God. But, in doing this, they are ignoring the oracles of God. They are ignoring the fact that their Old Testament Scriptures which they are trying to return to are the very ones which bear witness of Jesus Christ.

These Jews are likened to babies; they *have come to need milk and not solid food* (5:12). At a time when they should have been teachers, spreading the gospel to others, they needed to be fed the milk of the gospel. The reason they need milk is because milk is crucial at their stage of spiritual development. They need a true understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures and the Law and the priesthood and the tabernacle and the sacrificial system and the way it all points to Jesus. They need to be taught the ABC’s of the Old Testament. At a time when they ought to have been teaching in the Jerusalem Bible College, they needed to go back to spiritual kindergarten.

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, lest us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we shall do, if God permits. (Hebrews 6:1-3).

This passage has been greatly misunderstood. It has been taught that this is a call

for believers to grow and to mature and to become more knowledgeable in the Scriptures. But such an interpretation is completely at odds with the context. Up to this point, there has been a series of contrasts showing that Jesus is better...

than the angels.

than Moses.

than Joshua.

than the priesthood.

As we come to chapter 6, the contrast still remains. It is a contrast between the elementary teachings about the Christ versus going on to maturity. We tend to think that the “elementary teachings” are the basics of salvation while the “mature” things are some special teachings which transcend salvation. But that isn't so. You never get more mature than the cross. There is nothing deeper than salvation.

When the Hebrew readers are told to “go on to maturity” they are being told to hold to Jesus rather than all of the shadows and types of the Old Covenant which merely pointed to Jesus. The opposite of going “on to maturity” would be “laying again the foundation” of all of the things listed. These are all doctrines which were taught in the Old Testament. There is nothing wrong with these doctrines. They are all things which we believe. But they are only the foundation of what we believe. Unless we come to see Jesus as the One who is set upon that foundation, then the foundation is in itself of no benefit to us.

These were not merely baby believers who needed to grow. These were people who were being tempted to turn from the faith and to return to the law. These were Jewish converts who were returning to their Judaism. They were turning from Christ and now they were going back into the Temple and offering their sacrifices and trying to please God by keeping all of the Old Testament ordinances. Bing notes that “when the readers became Christians they had rejected the Jewish sacrifices and accepted the eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ. To go back and identify with Judaism is to publicly deny the benefits of Christ's sacrifice and even show implicit agreement that Christ deserved to die, thus the statement in 6:6: ‘since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame’” (2009).

These Jews are advised in Hebrews 6:1 to leave the elementary teaching about the Christ. This is not a call to abandon Jesus. Rather, it is a call to abandon the elementary teachings about Messiah and move on to the more advanced teachings of Messiah. These elementary teachings about the Messiah are the same as *the elementary principles of the oracles of God* described in Hebrews 5:12 (the same words are used in the Greek text). They are the types and shadows and the prophecies on the Old Testament. These all looked forward to Christ. They are the ABC's of the Messianic truths. MacArthur explains that “the elementary teaching about the Christ (Messiah) that the unbelieving Jews were to leave was the Old Testament teaching about Him” (1983:137).

These Jews who had initially come to Jesus and had then turned away were going back to the elementary teachings of Messiah. They were going back to the Temple sacrifices and the rituals which pictured the Messiah who was to come. They need to leave these things. They need to move on. They need to graduate to “Jesus 101.” They need to go on to maturity. What kind of maturity is this? Is it spiritual maturity? Is it some kind of spiritual level that a Christian attains to by doing all of the right things like

praying and witnessing and giving money and Bible study? No. It is simply a reference to the salvation which is found in Jesus Christ. This “maturity” is a description of the man who has come to Christ in faith. This will be seen when we come to chapter seven.

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? (Hebrews 7:11).

The word “perfection” in this verse comes from the Greek root word τελιος (*telios*). It is the same word which is translated “mature” in Hebrews 5:14 and “maturity” here in Hebrews 6:1. Elsewhere, it has been translated “complete, finished, fulfilled.” The point of the passage is that perfection never came through the Levitical priesthood. Therefore, if you want to reach that perfection, you need to leave that Levitical priesthood behind and hold to that which is perfect and complete, Jesus Christ. We could chart it like this:

Old Testament Symbols	Fulfillment in Jesus Christ
You have need that someone teach you again the elementary principles of the oracles of God (5:12).	By this time you ought to be teachers (5:12).
You have come to need milk (5:12).	You are not eating solid food (5:12).
Milk is for babies (5:13).	Solid food is for the mature (5:14).
Leave the elementary teachings about Christ (6:1).	Press on to maturity (6:1).
Approaching God on the basis of the Old Covenant.	Approaching God on the basis of the New Covenant.

The Jews are to leave their past heritage of infancy behind and to hold to that which is the fulfillment and the completion of all of the Old Testament types and shadows. They are to leave behind their Old Testament sacrifices and their Old Testament rituals and they are to hold to Jesus. It is in this light that the readers are not to be *laying again a foundation (6:1)*. Bruce speaks of this foundation:

“It was on a foundation already laid in the Old Testament... and one on which their way of life was already based, that these people had received the gospel. All these things were now given a fresh and fuller significance because of the coming of Christ into the world” (1990:143).

The foundation mentioned in Hebrews 6:1 speaks of the spiritual heritage enjoyed

by the readers. That heritage is the foundation for the gospel. But, now that the gospel has come, it is time to leave the foundation and hold to the gospel. These Jews were doing just the opposite. They were abandoning the truth of the gospel and returning to the Old Testament foundation on which the gospel was built. This foundation was made up of a number of teachings. There are six mentioned here.

- ♦ Repentance from dead works.
- ♦ Faith toward God.
- ♦ Instruction about washings.
- ♦ Laying on of hands.
- ♦ The resurrection of the dead.
- ♦ Eternal judgment.

Lenski recounts this list and then summarily concludes that “all these genitives refer to basic Christian and not to the old Jewish teachings” (1998:176). But if we critically examine his conclusion, we might not be so quick to agree with him. Indeed, if we listen to Lenski’s own discussion on these terms, he might be enough to convince us that it is indeed the old Jewish teachings which are in view. For example, he asks, “why does the writer not say ‘faith in Christ’ instead of ‘faith based on (ἐπι) God’? Because he refers to faith that is based on God who spoke concerning Christ in the Old Testament. The Jews did not need another god; they needed faith in the God whom they knew, genuine trust in him and in the revelation of his Word” (1998:177).

In commenting about the reference to “instructions about baptisms,” Kistemaker points out that “the use of the plural provides sufficient reason to assume that he calls attention to washings other than Christian baptism” (2002:154). The writer to the Hebrews will use this same term (*baptismos*, βαπτισμος) once again when we come to Hebrews 9:10 where he speaks of the Mosaic law and its ordinances relating to “food and drink and various *washings*.”

Lenski himself points out that the laying on of hands “is the old symbolic act that dates far back into Judaism and is benedictional by praying for God’s blessings to descend upon the person indicated; it is at the same time symbolic of that very blessing” (1998:177). In the same way, the eschatological beliefs in a future resurrection and eternal judgment were rooted in the Old Testament. Daniel 12:2 provides the clearest example of the Old Testament teaching when it describes how “many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”

Bruce correctly observes that “when we consider the ‘rudiments’ one by one, it is remarkable how little in the list is distinctive of Christianity, for practically every item could have its place in a fairly orthodox Jewish community” (1990:139). These were not merely Christian teachings, though they were true of Christianity. They were Jewish teachings. MacArthur agrees that “there are not, as if often interpreted, elementary Christian truths that are to be abandoned in order to go on to maturity. They are Old testament concepts. To be sure, they pointed to the gospel, but they are not themselves part of the gospel” (1983:138).

Each of these six teachings was an Old Testament teaching. Each one of these teachings had a legitimate use. But each one is being used wrongly if it is used to detract attention away from Jesus Christ. There is an important lesson here. Anything which takes my attention away from Jesus Christ is wrong. It might be a good thing. But it is being wrongly used if it takes me away from the Lord. Even a thing from the Bible can be wrongly used if it takes me from the One who gave us the Bible. As we come to verse 4, we find ourselves embarking upon an extended sentence.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Guthrie is helpful in laying out the structure of the passage as follows (1998:217):

For (it is) impossible...		
The ones (descrip.)	once having been enlightened having tasted the heavenly gifts and having become partakers of the Holy Spirit and Having tasted the goodness of God's word and the powers of the coming age	
(sequence)	and (then) having fallen away	
...to renew to repentance again		
because they are	crucifying to themselves and exposing to ridicule	→the Son of God

Now we are faced with a serious warning. We are given an extended description of those to whom this warning is directed. This is spoken to those who...

- ♦ Have once been enlightened.
- ♦ Have tasted of the heavenly gift.
- ♦ Have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit.
- ♦ Have tasted the good word of God.

- ♦ Have tasted the powers of the age to come.

We have already noted how those in the Calvinist and “once saved, always saved” camp often attempt to take these descriptions as referring to one who is close to salvation without actually having been saved. For example, Newell tries to make a contrast between those who drink of the water of life versus those who only taste of the heavenly gift, between those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit with those who are only made partakers of the Holy Spirit, with those who tasted that the Lord is gracious with those who merely tasted the good utterance of God. However, it seems to this writer that such attempts are based upon what is perceived to be a theological necessity rather than out of exegetical concerns.

The writer to the Hebrews is not hindered by such concerns. He does not have the context of the Calvinist/Arminian debates in mind. He is instead concerned with the context of those who had originally worshiped the Lord through the Old Testament sacrificial system. Dave Mathewson puts it this way:

“...the descriptions in vv. 4-5 are not to be pinned down to precise referents as most commentators attempt to do, but all refer more generally to the experience of the people in hearing the Gospel and experiencing the blessings of the new covenant within the context of the new covenant community. What the readers have experienced as part of the new Exodus community is to be interpreted in terms of what the first Exodus generation experienced on their way to the promised land” (1999).

This new community had always believed in a future coming messiah. But then they heard the gospel. They heard about Christ and the salvation that He brings. They trusted in Him as their Messiah, receiving the heavenly gift. They witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit and became a partaker of that power. They heard the preaching of the Word of God. They saw miracles. Then hard times came. In the midst of those hard times, they are now being tempted to abandon their faith and to return to the way things used to be. They are being tempted to return to the Old Testament sacrifices and the waiting for a future messiah.

When we read that it is *impossible to renew them again to repentance*, most interpreters have taken this repentance to refer to a return to the salvation that is found in Jesus Christ as though once a person had committed such an apostasy it would be impossible for such a person to return to Jesus. But the same term was used in verse 1 to describe the Old Testament teaching of “repentance from dead works.” Given the context, we should understand the repentance here to be the same as that which was mentioned five verses earlier, the same repentance that was seen when Old Testament saints returned to God. Bruce points out that “the sectaries of Qumran... described themselves as ‘the repentant of Israel’; and they were by no means the only Jews to think and speak in such terms” (1990:140).

Here is the warning. Those who leave Jesus cannot go back to the Old Testament forms of worship because there is nothing left for them. They cannot go back to the Levitical Law and expect God to honor their worship because they have turned from the

One who fulfilled the Law. They cannot go back to the Temple and offer a sacrifice, since they have already rejected the Ultimate Sacrifice. Guthrie correctly concludes that “repentance in 6:4-6 is ‘impossible’ because there is nowhere else to go for repentance once one has rejected Christ” (1998:220).

They again crucify to themselves the Son of God (6:6). This is spoken to Jews who are turning away from Jesus. They are trying to leave the cross and go back to the temple sacrifice. They are trying to leave the reality and go back to the type. In doing so, they are turning their backs upon Jesus. Less than forty years earlier, another generation of Jews had turned from Jesus. They had manifested their hatred of Jesus by crucifying Him. Now, these Jewish people are in danger of doing the very same thing. Lenski properly concludes that “they are repeating the awful act of the Jewish Sanhedrin, who crucified Jesus because he said he was the Son of God (1998:186).

Summary: This is written to Jews who have heard the gospel and have accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah. They are told that if they now reject the Messiah and fall away from the gospel, it is impossible for them to repent and return to the Law and thereby renew their old pre-cross relationship with God, since to do so would be to crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

Bing correctly observes that “the sin in the warning of 6:4-8 seems to be the same sin in the warning of 10:26-39. The willful sin of 10:26 would be a deliberate abandonment of their confession of the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice for a return to insufficient Jewish sacrifices. The author wrote to the Hebrews that ‘Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many’ (9:28), that ‘by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified’ (10:14), and that once forgiven ‘there is no longer an offering for sin’ (10:18). The Law offered them nothing since it looked forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ (10:1-10)” (2009). Bruce agrees that “the context here shows plainly that the wilful sin which he has in mind is deliberate apostasy” (1990:148-9). Kistemaker makes an important distinction between this apostasy versus falling into sin:

“A distinction must be made at this point. The author speaks about falling away, not about falling into sin. For example, Judas fell away from Jesus and never returned to him; Peter fell into sin but soon afterward saw the resurrected Jesus. The two concepts (apostasy and backsliding) may never be confused. In 6:6, the author refers to apostasy; he has in mind the person who deliberately and completely abandons the Christian faith” (2002:160).

The two verses that follow (6:7-8) give a graphic illustration that springs from the truth that has just been presented.

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; s but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (Hebrews 6:7-8).

These two verses form an illustration. They serve to illustrate the truths that have just been taught. The rain represents all of those things which God has sent in verses 4-5 to convince men of the truth of the salvation that Jesus provides. This rain has been offered to all. But it has a different effect in some areas than it has in others. In some areas, it bears fruit and is blessed by God. In other places, it bears thorns and is destroyed by God. The following chart shows both the illustration and that truth which is demonstrated by the illustration:

Illustration	Truth that is Illustrated
Rain falls from heaven.	Truth has been given from heaven.
The rain lands on everything.	The gospel has been given to all men.
When the rain brings forth vegetation, it results in a blessing.	When the gospel is believed and brings salvation, it results in a blessing.
When rain brings forth thorns and thistles, it is worthless and ends up being burned.	When the gospel is not believed, the result is a curse.

The warning is clear. The readers are being asked concerning their own ground. Are they holding fast to Jesus? Or will they abandon Him to chase the wind?

But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:9-12).

The writer to the Hebrews expresses his own personal assurance that his readers do not fit his earlier description of those who have fallen away from Jesus to return to the Law. He is assured both by the character of God working on their behalf as well as by the evidence exhibited in their own lives of their love of the Lord and the way in which that love has been manifested in their ministry to the saints. This assurance does not make the warning any less dire. Indeed, that warning will be repeated twice more before the epistle comes to a close. We have already noted what is essentially the same warning when we come to Hebrews 10:26.

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of

judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26-27).

Once again, the context of the passage deals, not with merely the committing of sin in general, but with the specific sin of departing from Jesus to return to the formerly held Jewish religion. The issue in the immediate context is that it was becoming the habit of some to forsake the assembling together of the church (Hebrews 10:25). They were therefore exhorted to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering” (Hebrews 10:23). The warning is that a departure from Christ does not allow one to return to the Old Testament sacrifices as an alternate method of approaching or appeasing God, but that once Christ has come, then there no longer in those Old Testament rituals remains a sacrifice for sins, but instead, any attempt to abandon Christ and return to those rituals will find that they have cut themselves off from God. If they reject the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, there is no other sacrifice available. The once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ is all that there is. If a person rejects the sacrifice of Christ, “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin. This verse is not teaching as so many do that if one “willfully” sins after he is saved he will lose his salvation. In fact, the verse does the opposite. It is speaking to those who would turn away from the once and for all sacrifice of Christ. The Hebrews for whom this was written were in danger of trusting in the blood of bulls and goats to atone for their sins, and the writer was telling them that there was no more sacrifice other than that which the Messiah had accomplished.

At the same time, we cannot leave this warning without taking it and applying it to our own day. Most of us are not tempted to leave Christ in order to return to the Mosaic Law and to go and offer a sacrifice in the temple. But in this age of doubt and uncertainty, we are tempted to depart from Christ and to seek fulfillment in other ways and means. This passage is a warning that it is only in Christ that we shall find our way to God. That goes against the grain of 21st century Postmodern thinking. But it is in accord with the One who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

The final warning in the epistle to the Hebrews is given near the close of the epistle. When commentators have looked at the various warnings of Hebrews, they have at times seemed to ignore this one or placed it into a different category, as it has little to do with the earlier warnings. But I propose to show that it is indeed the same warning that has been repeated throughout the epistle.

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; ¹⁶ that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. (Hebrews 12:15-17).

Commentaries have regularly come to this passage and have depicted it as though it refers to some sort of emotional bitterness which a Christian ought to avoid. I agree that emotional bitterness is a bad thing and something to be avoided, but that is not what

this passage is describing. The writer to the Hebrews has been speaking of the doctrinal poison of leaving Jesus to return to the Old Covenant way of life. The big idea throughout this book has been that Jesus is better. He is better than Moses and He provided a better sacrifice than the Old Testament sacrifices and He has instituted a new and a better covenant than was found in the old covenant of the law.

As he now warns against the danger of coming “short of the grace of God,” he is speaking of the same danger. It is the danger of coming short of the grace of God by abandoning Jesus in favor of the law; of abandoning the cross in favor of the Old Testament sacrifices. This is described here in terms of a root of bitterness. It is a poisonous root that is in danger of sprouting up in the church. The image of such a poisonous root is borrowed from the Old Testament. Moses used this image when he spoke to the Israelites of the danger of turning away from the Lord to serve the false idols of their neighbors.

Moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them); 18 lest there shall be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there shall be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. (Deuteronomy 29:17-18).

Now the danger has come full circle. It is no longer the danger of worshiping idols of wood or stone or silver or gold. Now the danger is of making an idol of the law and turning away from the One to whom the law pointed. Partaking of this poisonous practice will be futile because it is impossible to find repentance and salvation in the Old Covenant once the New Covenant has come.

By leaving Jesus to return to the legal sacrifices of the Old Testament, the Hebrews to whom this epistle is directed were in danger of doing the same thing that Esau had once done. They are in danger of abandoning their birthright to gain a single meal. Their birthright is the Messiah. Jesus is that Jewish Messiah who is their proper birthright. He came to His own people, but those who were His own did not receive Him. They preferred the meal of their tradition and thus gave up the One who was their birthright.

Though most Christians today do not find themselves in exactly the same circumstances, that is, they are not normally facing the temptation to leave Jesus in order to return to the rituals of the Mosaic law, there is a more general application of the warnings of this epistle. It is found in the call to hold onto Jesus in the face of any and all temptations we might face to abandon Him.

There are many people who hear the gospel and are initially attracted by some aspect of it. Judas Iscariot was an example of this. He came for a time; he followed Jesus for a time, but then he fell away. When a person departs from the faith, they are showing their true colors. They are showing that they were never really children of God in the first place.

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it

might be shown that they all are not of us. (1 John 2:19).

There are people who hear the gospel and make a decision to accept it and who join the ranks of the Christians for a time, but who then turn from the faith and fall away. The reason that this takes place is because they were not really of the faith in the first place. They came, but they did not come to stay, and so, they departed. The good news is that we have a continuing hope of salvation. This is the note on which the writer of this epistle closes the section we have been studying: *We are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation (Hebrews 6:9)*. The writer feels certain that there is more to these Hebrew Christians than “thorns and thistles.” He knows that they are being tempted to depart from the faith, but he does not think that they have done so yet. He does not believe that they have fallen away. Why? Because he has witnessed the evidence of their salvation. The evidence of their inward faith is those outward actions that are produced by their faith.

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name (Hebrews 6:10). These Hebrews had come to Christ. Since they had come to Christ, their faith had produced corresponding works in their life. These works were not the cause of their salvation. Rather, these works were the evidence of their salvation. God does not forget that evidence. He has promised to keep those who are His. They will not be permitted to fall away because He will hold on to them.

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The Land, the People, and the Promise

Jodyann T. Reid

“The Promised Land always lies on the other side of a Wilderness.”¹ In a poem entitled *The Promised Land*, Samuel Menashe expressed a longing for a place it seems for him was just out reach; a place of beauty and peace, a celestial city, the hope of the soul. He writes,

At the edge of a world beyond my eyes,
Beautiful
I know Exile is always green with hope-
the river we cannot cross flows forever²

The effigy of a promised land has long haunted the writings and paintings of many a great man. Men such as John Bunyan and his picture of the celestial city; Augustine and his City of God, Martin Luther King and his dream of a place of social justice. Life itself is a journey to a city, a land that lies just out of the line of our vision, but its promise is seared on our hearts.

This paper will trace the theme of “the good land” as the attestation of the covenant blessings of God. Conversely exile from that “good land” will be examined as a penalty for covenant breaking. This exploration will compass the Pentateuch, highlighting the significant events which show the land motif; culminating in the picture of the Promised Land in the New Testament.

The importance of land in Biblical Theology extends beyond the existential need to achieve a sociological significance. Land symbolizes the transition from disordered existence to ordered structures.³ Paul Williamson says, that land is one of the central themes of the Biblical faith.⁴ It is a central tenet of the promise to the patriarchs, it is the destination for those rescued from Egyptian bondage, to which they eventually make their way. It is the territory conquered under Joshua, and was parceled out among the Israelite tribes. It is the center stage for the military campaigns in the days of the Judges, and the center of the empire carved out by David and solidified under Solomon. It is the focus of political intrigue during the divided monarchy, and expulsion from it is the tragic note that brings the story to a conclusion.⁵

More than territorial space, land is a place of memory and meaningful existence. It symbolizes the roots of oneself. Brueggemann observes, “Place is space that has

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¹ Havelock Ellis, Quotes, (British psychologist and author 1859-1939).

² Samuel Menashe, The Promised Land, from New & Selected Poems (New English Library, 2005), copyright © Samuel Menashe 2005, used by permission of the author

³ Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, An Old Testament Theology, (Zondervan: 2007), pp. 322.

⁴ Philip Johnston and Peter Walker, The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives, (Intervarsity Press, Ill 2000), Pg 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

historical meanings, where some things have happened that are now remembered and that provide continuity and identity across generations.”⁶ In Biblical Theology the ideal “land” is the place where God chooses to be uniquely present, to provide for and protect his people.⁷

The Promised land is the culmination of covenant blessings. The English word "covenant" is translated from the Hebrew word "*Beriyth*" meaning "a compact (made by passing between pieces of flesh)," suggesting a "cutting" of the covenant (Gen. 15:10, 17; Jer. 34:18).⁸ In the New Testament two Greek words are used; "*diatheke*" and "*suntheke*". "*Diatheke*" comprised of a covenant made by one party with plenary power, being established on the basis of that "party's love and affection toward another, without necessarily being dependent on the other party's acceptance of the covenant for it to be initially established, yet dependent on the second party's faithfulness to the covenant for its benefits to be able to be transferred from the giver to the second party."⁹ By contrast, "*suntheke*" means to place together; a two way arrangement or coming together in agreement.¹⁰

Covenant language is not unique to biblical tradition. There are examples of covenant language in the Suzerainty treaties of the Ancient Near East. The sequence of steps characteristic of these treaties has come to be known as the covenant formulary. For the purposes of exploring the role of covenants in the “land promises” not all the formularies will not be discussed. We will briefly look at the: Preamble, the Historical Prologue, and Blessings and cursing. We will look at the element of the treaties of the Ancient Near East to show that blessing and cursing are the expected consequences attached to covenants. In the first step, the Preamble or Titulary the suzerain identifies himself as the benevolent Lord. The second step, is the Historical Prologue or Antecedent History. It is a statement of the past relationship of the parties. Sometimes the suzerain stresses his benefactions towards the vassal. The covenant obligates the vassal to the suzerain. The essence of the covenant lies in the fact that the participants pledge to be faithful to one another. The relationship goes beyond mere political posturing. The vassals were expected to love and fear the suzerain. Faithfulness was an outworking of gratitude for the steadfast benevolence of the suzerain. The sixth and last element in the covenant formulary is called Curses and Blessings. This is the element which is most important to this discussion. Violations of the stipulations and betrayal will surely result in a cursed life. Compliance with the stipulations, loyalty and faithfulness to the suzerain resulted in a state of beatitude toward the vassal. The curses included such things as annihilation, epidemic, sterility, drought, famine, dethronement, and exile. It is clear that the

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), p.3

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ J. Strong, The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. (Nashville: Nelson, 1990), H-#1285-SEC [from #1262-H; like #1254].

⁹ J.M.S Vickers, The Covenant of God, (Loganholme: Freedom Ministries Press, 1993), p2.

¹⁰ Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin, The Covenant. (Blackburn, Vic: Bible Temple-Conner/Malmin Publications, 1976). p.2

covenant contains within it an intrinsic mechanism based on the principle of retribution: reward for the faithful, punishment for the faithless.¹¹ The Book of Deuteronomy can be seen as one grand covenant treaty opening with the Historical Prologue of Chapter 1-3, the Stipulations of Chapter 4- 26, and the Blessings and Curses of 27-28. The latter part of chapter 28 describes the curse of exile,

Deuteronomy 28:49–58

The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you. Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you. The man who is refined and very delicate among you shall be hostile toward his brother and toward the wife he cherishes and toward the rest of his children who remain, so that he will not give *even* one of them any of the flesh of his children which he will eat, since he has nothing *else* left, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in all your towns. The refined and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and refinement, shall be hostile toward the husband she cherishes and toward her son and daughter, and toward her afterbirth which issues from between her legs and toward her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of anything *else*, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in your towns. If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God.

The motif of land as a part of the covenant blessing is seen from Genesis. The Lord planted a garden in Eden and placed the highlight of his creation there. God caused every tree that was pleasant to the eye, and good for food to grow there. The

¹¹ Jon D. Levenson, Sinai and Zion (HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), pg 26-27.

Lord placed man in a garden on a hill, as a sign of his covenant provision for his creation. The Edenic covenant, also known as the covenant of works or the covenant of grace, required Adam's participation. It consisted of a covenant between God and Adam, in which Adam was promised life on the condition of obedience.¹²

From Chaos to Cosmos

God brought cosmos from chaos, to provide suitable habitation for man. The word land connotes that which is benevolently ordered by God's sovereignty in the interests of human life and security (Ps. 24:1–10; cf. Prov. 2:21–22). The primeval narratives of Genesis (Chaps. 1–11) show God's work of bringing cosmos from the midst of Chaos: the creation of the cosmos (Gen. 1), the gift of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2), man's expulsion from Eden (Gen. 3), Cain's expulsion from the arable land (Gen. 4), the destruction and re-creation of the cosmos (Gen. 6–9), the distribution of the earth to the nations (Gen. 11), and the scattering of the nations after the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11). The Creator is the source of the gift of the natural order. Israel's special gifts, including its land, its procreant people, and spiritual distinction are a part of that natural order. From the creation account and the first eleven chapters of Genesis, one can infer the several relationships of the Creator to his creation; these relationships are made explicit elsewhere in the Old Testament. The creation account presents God transforming chaos into cosmos by his word.¹³ God as sovereignly stepped into the midst of darkness and abyss and transform it into "the good land" one that is able to produce and sustain life. In Genesis, God said of his creation, it is good. He declared, "let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good".

Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.¹⁴ The land is God created, and God gifted as a habitat for his children. God gave man dominion over the land but man's dominion was dependent on his relationship with God. He instructed man to work, reproduce, and flourish in the paradise that he was placed in.

There is a special relationship between the first man and the ground. This special relationship is reflected in the name of the first man אָדָם, (*'Ādām*) and אֲדָמָה (adamah) (earth). The word Adam literally means earth man.¹⁵ He was charged with

¹² Thomas Edward Mc Comiskey, The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987) p.214.

¹³ Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, An Old Testament Theology, (Zondervan: 2007), pg 219.

¹⁴ New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Gen. 1:9–12.

¹⁵ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, Wordbook of the Old Testament, (Moody Press, Chicago1980), p. 11.

the keeping of the garden, the naming of the animals.¹⁶ Every tree and animal was given to Adam for food. After the fall of man, his relationship with the earth was several affected.

From Paradise to Exile

This section will show the consequences of breaking the stipulations of the covenants. The keeping of the covenant offers covenant blessings, and the breaking, covenant cursing. For the purpose of this paper the curse that will be explored is exile from the “good land”. In chapter three of Genesis we see the transition from paradise to exile. The covenant blessing that Adam and Eve enjoyed was dependant on loving obedience to the covenant stipulations, given in Genesis 2:16–17, “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Adam and Eve failed to keep this commandment and as a result passed from the realm of blessing to that of cursing.

From the fall narrative of Genesis 3 and the Cain and Able narratives we see that continued residence in “the good land is dependent on continued obedience and communion with God. In addition to residence, prosperity in the land directly correlates to relationship with the creator. The consequence for disobedience while in the land is exile. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden the consequence for that breach was expulsion from Paradise. Genesis 3:23–24, “therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.”

When man continued in obedient communion with God that habitat was welcoming and flourishing, but at the fall man was shut out of this paradise, marked by the fruitfulness and order that the presence of God carries, and was turned out into a land marked by chaos and unfruitfulness. Genesis 3:17–19, Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

Blessing and cursing are important concepts in the book of Genesis. The Hebrew verb for blessing, *barak* and cursing, *arar*, occur 73 and 9 times respectively. Normally, in Genesis, blessing is associated with God’s favor and the cursing with His disfavor. Because of the sin of Adam the very ground was cursed. We see further evidence of the effects of man’s actions on the land in Deuteronomy 28:18, “Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.” (cf. Deut 28: 23-24; 33).

¹⁶ New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Gen 15

Man was intended to live in harmony with nature. He was made to take care of God's creation. After the fall we see a dramatic downward spiral. Man's disobedience escalated, invoking the wrath of God. We see the ultimate manifestation of the wrath of God during the Great Flood where the creator of Cosmos allowed chaotic waters to once again cover the earth. This narrative paints a bleak picture. We saw that God is his fervor to display his love for man, created for them a lush paradise, and in His hot displeasure decimates his creation. Chaos is the result of disobedience. God used the very nature that he had created to provide a haven for mankind to destroy all the inhabitants of the earth except for Noah and his family. When the flood was over God made a promise (Genesis 8:21), "The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done." The curse mentioned here is not the one pronounced in the garden of Eden. Rather, it refers to the floods. The earth would continue to be covered in thorns and thistles, man would continue to toil to produce the food necessary for survival and reproduction would continue to be painful. The Noachic covenant was established with Noah, his family, and all future generations after the Flood. Out of all of humanity Noah was the only one who "found favor in the sight of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). God's instruction for Noah to enter the ark (Gen. 6:18) did not initiate the covenant; rather, it was after the flood that God established this covenant (Gen. 9:9-11).¹⁷

After the great flood there was a covenant renewal. Noah becomes the new Adam. His father Lamech gave him the name, declaring, "Now he called his name Noah, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands *arising* from the ground which the LORD has cursed." ¹⁸ After the flood Noah is described as 'a man of the soil (ground).¹⁹ The blessing of fruitfulness given to Adam was again pronounced over Noah, Genesis 1:28, "God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁰

The re-creation narrative of Genesis eight has many of the same elements of the original creation. In both chapters the theological narrative moves from the display of divine work to the outcomes of divine rest. In Genesis 8:1 God brings about a wind that passes over the waters of the flood which, like the waters of the original chaos²¹, covered the earth.²² The emergence of dry land and the bringing forth of vegetation²³ find a mirror image in the olive which was brought to Noah as a token of the emergence of dry land.²⁴ The Sabbath rest of God at the conclusion of the original

¹⁷ O. Palmer Robertson., The Christ of the Covenants. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980. p.125;209

¹⁸ New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Gen 5: 29

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Gen 9:20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Gen 9:1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Gen 1:2.

²² *Ibid.*, Gen 7:18-19.

²³ *Ibid.*, Gen 1:12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Gen 8:11.

creation²⁵ finds correspondence in the sacrificial rest of God after the new creation was completed; “and that the Lord smelled the aroma of rest.”²⁶ The relationship between the man and the land is restated and renewed.

After the fall, the world and its creation had a new lease on life. However, the depravity of man reached new heights as demonstrated in the Babel encounter. The picture of Babel is the ultimate picture of exile. The people of the earth rebelled against God and in doing so were scattered through the world. It was a world filled with refugees. It is on the heel of this cacophonous event that the family of Terah comes on the stage.

From Paganism to Promised Land

The motif the “good land” as a covenant blessing is seen in the life of Abraham. God seeking to bless humanity, and redeem it from the curse, and its effects, told Abraham to go to a new land in Genesis 12:1–3,

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

The elements of the Covenant, stipulation are clearly seen here: (1) leave present country for a new country. The stipulation is a simple act of faith, Abraham has to act upon the word of God and leave all that he knows and loves. Faithful adherence opens the door to the promise: (1) I will give you a land, (2) you will be a great nation, (3) you will be a blessing. It is noteworthy that the covenant blessing was land. The land promise was also for Abraham’s descendants. In Genesis 12:7, the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” The land that God promised to Abraham was the “good land” it is described in Exodus 3:8 as one flowing with milk and honey.

The call of Abraham to the land of Canaan, with its attendant promise to give him that land, essentially informs and unifies the entire Pentateuch and in fact the entire Old Testament.²⁷ God calls, not forces, Abraham to venture by faith in his word and promise to go to a land he has never seen to mediate God’s blessings of life and prosperity to all people. As a reward for his faith, both in going to the Land (Gen. 12:4) and in living as a resident alien in it (Gen. 13:17), God covenants and swears to Abraham to give him and his descendants forever the land of the

²⁵ Ibid., Gen 2:2; 8:21.

²⁶ Warren Gage, The Gospel of Genesis. (Wipf and Stock Publishers Or 2001), Pg 11

²⁷ Von Rad, The Promised Land and the Lord’s Land in the Hexateuch: Problem of the Hexateuch, (Oliver & Boyd, 1966) p. 184.

Canaanites as a royal land grant (Gen. 12–15; 26:3–4; 28:13; 35:9–15; cf. Lev. 26:43–45; Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 14:1.²⁸

The covenant of promise, "involves a relationship between God on one hand and Abraham and his descendants on the other."²⁹ God not only made this covenant with Abraham but also with Isaac and Jacob, which not only included the promises of the previous covenants (Edenic, Adamic and Noahic) but expanded upon them. God assured Abraham of his covenant by his instructions to present certain animals in a particular form to God (Gen. 15:7-9). These instructions were exactly in the form of a covenant that might take place between two men. Abraham halved the animals placing the halves opposite each other, except the bird which he killed but did not divide (Gen. 15:10-11). As Abraham slept, the Lord came as a "blazing torch" (Gen. 15:17), passed in between the animals, and established a covenant that could never be annulled (Gal 3:15-17). This act symbolized not only that this covenant was a *diatheke* but, the participants pledged to the other total commitment, and that if that was to be broken "they were asking that their own bodies be torn in pieces just as the animals had been divided ceremonially."³⁰ The dividing of the animals coupled with the passing between the pieces became known as a bond in blood. The Old Testament seal which arose from the covenant was circumcision which symbolizing purification between "a holy God and an unholy people".³¹ However, in the New Testament this external expression of the seal was abolished by Christ's death leaving only an "internal and spiritual reality of the seal" being the circumcision of the heart.³²

The covenant that was "cut" with Abraham, like other covenants, included both blessings and curses. God promised various types of blessings both personally to Abraham (Gen. 12:2), to be blessed by others (Gen. 12:3). He promised that Abraham's seed would multiply (Gen. 17:4-8; 16; 26:4) and that Abraham was to be a part of the Messianic line. Out of all of the blessings that were promised to Abraham, one curse existed, where God promised "whoever curses you I will curse" (Gen. 12:3b)

Abraham and his children and grandchildren started out as a landless people. They are nomadic, sojourners on their way to settlement in the land of promise. Through many struggles in the land of promise, the fate of the descendants of Abraham changes from being homeless pagans to the covenant children of God living in the land of promise. The tenure of Israel in the land of promise continued for many generations. The land of promise proved to be the "good land" and as the Lord promised it was a land flowing with milk and honey. Notwithstanding the fierceness of the other nations inhabiting the land, the people of God prospered. This continued until a great famine caused the people of God to once more become exiles. They lived as servants in the land of Egypt until they were emancipated by the God appointed deliverer, Moses. After their deliverance from Egypt the people of God

²⁸ Moshe Weinfeld, The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites (University of California Press, 1993), p.222-64.

²⁹ Thomas E. McComiskey, The Covenant of Promise, (Inter-Varsity Press, 1987) p.63.

³⁰ O Palmer Robertson, Christ of the Covenant (P & R Publishing 1981) p.130.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.150)

³² *Ibid.*

once more set out on a journey to the “good land”. They found themselves a people without a country. They set out to Canaan based on the promises of God. During this time they were considered wanderers. They are without resources, constantly in lack of water and food, and under attack by the Amalekites. Walter Brueggemann painted a picture of the dismal landlessness of the wilderness years. Israel experienced the bitterness of landlessness, of being totally exposed and helpless, victimized by anything that happened to be threatening. In the wilderness, their raft of resources, faith is not easy.³³

From Wilderness to Promised Land

The book of Deuteronomy marks the transition of Israel from wilderness wanderers to landed people. The words of Moses at the beginning of Deuteronomy reach a people on the border of fulfilling the promise. But the condition was the ability of the people to heed the instructions. The Deuteronomic discourse is like the final instructions before the commencement of a game. All the rules are summarized and reiterated. The score at the end of the game will be a reflection of the gamer’s ability to follow instruction.

Israel’s claim to the Land depends on God’s prior action to elect Abraham’s seed for this gift (Josh. 1:6). “Of the 167 occurrences of the verb *natan* (‘give’) in Deuteronomy, 131 have the Lord as subject— The object of the verb is usually ‘land’ itself, but sometimes varies to ‘cities,’ ‘towns,’ etc. (e.g. 13:12; 17:2; 31:12).” The land grant is good land that flows with milk and honey (Num. 13:27; 14:8), a metaphor for its rich pastures that feed the flocks and for its fruitful orchards, vineyards, and date palm trees. This good inheritance includes houses that Israel did not build, wells they did not dig, and orchards they did not plant (Deut. 6:10; 8:7–9). In sum, the patriarchal covenants and their examples assured Israel that behind its existence and its tenure of the Land and its wealth lays the divine election.³⁴

The land promises are fulfilled several times but have never been consummated. God fulfills the promises through Joshua (e.g., Josh 21:43–45). But not completely, the Israelites did not fully expel the other nation in the land (Josh. 13:13, Jud. 1:27–2:4). God charged to Joshua picks up on Moses’ charge. In Deuteronomy 31:1–8 (cf. Deut. 11:1–32) and initiates the book’s plot. The repetitive addresses underscore that God will give Israel the land on the condition that Israel keeps faith with him.³⁵ The commands and the promises in Joshua 1:2–9 exhibit the covenant relationship. God elects Israel to enter and inherit the land (v. 6), and Israel claims his gift by faith (vv. 3–4), Genesis 15:5–21; 17:4–8; 18:18–19; 22:17–18; 26:2–4; 28:13–15; 35:11–12; 46:3; exodus 3:6–8; Deuteronomy 11–12 offers the nation rest, security, and abundance. Life in Numbers then presents “the goal and desire of the people of God. Moses at the end of Deuteronomy 28: 49 ff. predicts the disobedience of Israel

³³ Walter Brueggemann, *The Land* (Fortress Press, 1977), pg 6

³⁴ See Deut. 4:6, 14; 9:1; 11:31–32; 17:14; 18:9; 21:1; 26:1. See von Rad, *Problem of the Hexateuch*, 91

³⁵ Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, (Zondervan: 2007), p. 655

and their eventual exile. This is fulfilled in the Babylonian captivity during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The exile lasted 70 years but though the Israelites were returned to the land they still felt alienated from the promise of God. There was still a spiritual exile in the air. Though in the land, the people of God were still in spiritual exile. The redemption of Israel was prophesied by the Isaiah in Chapter 29: 17-18, “Is it not yet just a little while Before Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field, And the fertile field will be considered as a forest? On that day the deaf will hear words of a book, And out of *their* gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.”³⁶

The people returned to the land but not to their former glory. Powerful nations cast great shadows over the world, including Jerusalem. The world passed from the dominance of the Persians to that of the Greeks, and Romans. Israel was never that autonomous nation of days gone, now they were always subject to a higher power. The prophet Isaiah prophesied about the birth of the Christ, He declared that, “the people who walk in darkness will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them”³⁷. He goes on to say, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.”³⁸

The children of Israel longed for the Prince of peace which would repeal their exile. While the children of Israel groaned under Roman rule, the Christ, the Messiah for which they cried was born in Nazareth. The Children of Israel lived in the land given to their forefather but they longed for a better land, “the good land”. They longed for one who would restore Israel to the golden days. They longed for another Moses, another Joshua to return the milk and honey to the land. Jesus began his ministry and did many miracles, but over throwing the Roman government was not one of them. The people wanted a savior in the lines of Judas Maccabeus who delivered them from Seleucid rule. When Jesus did not lay out plans for a new revolt the people began to wonder. In Matthew 11:2–6 (NASB95)

- 2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent *word* by his disciples
- 3 and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?”
- 4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see:
- 5 *the* BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed and *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised up, and *the* POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.
- 6 “And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

³⁶ Patrick D. Miller, The Gift of God: The Deuteronomic Theology of the Land, Interpretation 23 (1969): 461–65.

³⁷ Isaiah 9:2 (NASB95)

³⁸ Isaiah 9:6–7 (NASB95)

Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 29: 18 where it speaks of the restoration of Israel, because of the emergence of the Holy One of Israel. The appearance of Jesus signals the end of exile, and the breaking in of the Kingdom of God. What are the dimensions of this kingdom? The Jews were expecting the kingdom to be a geographic one with Jerusalem at its center. But the time had not yet come. The incarnation of the Christ announces the commencement of the breaking in of the Kingdom of God, but not its culmination.

The good land at first seemed to be limited to a locality, that is, Canaan. However with the coming of the Christ we see that the “good land” goes beyond national boundaries, to Spiritual dimensions. In the Gospel of Mark, he proclaims the reign of God. In Jesus, God accomplishes an eschatological deliverance of his people. Mark shows this in many ways. At Jesus’ baptism God rend the heavens and comes down as Isaiah urges him to do in Isaiah 64:1 (Mark 1: 10). At this point in time God recognizes Jesus as His son in words which reflect the spirit of Isaiah 42:1 (Mark 1:11). Jesus then goes for 40 days into the desert, the place where, according to Isaiah, God will appear to restore his people. Jesus came to preach the *euangelion* of the *basileia* of God (Mark 1:15). The kingdom of God is the “good land”.

From Temporal to Eternal

Abraham by faith lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.³⁹ The good land extends beyond a geographic locality. It spans nation, kindred and tongue.

The Old Testament does not mention "the kingdom of heaven." And the phrase "kingdom of God" is not nearly such a standard expression as it is in the New Testament. There are only a few passages containing the equivalent of *basileia* in the sense of the kingship or the royal dominion of God.⁴ Often, indeed, Yahweh is indicated personally as king, especially in the Psalms and the prophets."⁵ A twofold distinction should be made as it relates to the kingship of the Lord. Firstly, the Old Testament speaks of a general and a particular. The former concerns the universal power and dominion of God over the whole world and all the nations, and is founded in the creation of heaven and earth." The latter denotes the special relation between the Lord and Israel.' This was later called *theocracy* in a special sense, and coincides in many respects with God's covenant in the Old Testament. The idea of the coming kingship of God is especially found in the later books of the Old Testament, particularly in those of the prophets. Its origin is closely connected with Israel's national life. During the period in which Israel's national existence was more and more in decline and the world powers threatened to crush Israel, a strong tension arose between God's kingship revealed to Israel, that is, his power over the whole world and his particular relation to Israel.

³⁹ Hebrews 11:9–10 (NASB95)

Israel will be restored as a nation; the Lord will have his throne in Jerusalem; her enemies will be subjugated. The coming kingdom of God will be inaugurated by the great day of the Lord (Is. 2), the day of judgment for the apostate part of Israel, as well as for the nations in general, and at the same time, however, by the day of deliverance and salvation for the oppressed people of the Lord. The coming salvation is eternal (Hos. 4:3; 2: 17 Is. 2: 10ff.; 1-6; 11: 1-10ff.; Mic. 4: 1 ff.). The coming salvation is imperishable. A new heaven and a new earth will come into existence (Isaiah 10:19; 65:17; 66:22); death will be annihilated (Isaiah 25:7ff.); the dead will be raised (Isaiah 26:19). In opposition to the eternal woe of the wicked there will come the eternal bliss of the redeemed (Isaiah 66:24).⁴⁰

According to Dr. Waltke, “This biblical world takes place within the cosmogonic temporal and spatial horizon of a beginning in the old heavens and an ending in the new heavens and earth. There is likewise a telos to the creation, wherein God announces that the world will be filled with human images of the divine creator and that evil will be subdued, represented by the rule of man and woman over the beast (Gen 1:28).⁴¹ Saint John’s vision of the heavenly city is this crime through three metaphors of which depicts an ecumenical city constituted of Jews and gentiles. The New Jerusalem is a mountain city with 12 foundations and 12 gates. Herb garden is graced by the tree of life. At the climax of his prophecy, John tells us that he saw the New Jerusalem descending from heaven to rest upon a high mountain. He described it as a beautiful city having been buried in the glory of God. The city had 12 foundations, named for the 12 apostles to the nations (rev. 21:14). And the city had 12 gates, named for the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel (rev 21: 12)”⁴²

Concluding Statements

The Promised Land or the good land, was promised in the beginning and inaugurated at Jesus’ first coming and will be established as his second coming. The theme of land runs throughout all of Scripture, as a display of God’s loving provision for his covenant children. In times of disobedience the people of God are exiled from the land, and through repentance are ultimately restored. The final appearing of the promised land, that is the New Jerusalem is a land flowing with milk and honey prepared for the people of God. John the revelator says a vision of the “good land”, he writes.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds* of fruit, yielding its

⁴⁰ Herman Ridderbos, The Coming Kingdom (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company 1962) p. 6-7.

⁴¹ Warren Gage, The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology (Winona Lake ind.:Eisenbrauns, 1998) p. 27.

⁴² Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, An Old Testament Theology, (Zondervan: 2007), p. 665.

fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads. And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. (Revelation 22:1-5).

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Cain as a Type of the Beast

Scott Schuleit

But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

—Jude 1:10-13¹

It is, of course, well understood that Cain was a wicked man, the first murderer and persecutor of the children of God in Scripture (Gen. 4:8) and a kind of forerunner of the children of the devil. In his hatred towards God and those who follow God, Cain reveals through his actions and words, including that of murdering his brother Abel and lying about it, that he follows his father, the devil, who “*was a murderer from the beginning*” and is “*the father of lies*” (Jn. 8:44). To further underscore this well-established reality about Cain’s evil stature and, hopefully, unveil a new dimension to it, there is strong suggestion in Scripture that Cain is a type of the *beast*² in the book of Revelation. A theme of unregenerate human beings who reveal through their opposition to God and the people of God that they follow in the sinful, beast-like, spiritual line of Cain (and further back to the beast of the *serpent* in the Garden of Eden), is a motif that begins in Genesis and runs all the way through to Revelation. Through my initial forays at exploring this theme it has become evident that it is deep and wide and, as a result, this little paper will attempt to simply establish its legitimacy rather than trace its lineaments. By doing this, I hope to join a burgeoning conversation associated with exploring the many diverse and beautiful literary qualities (particularly that of *typology*³) found within the word of God. These

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²By the word “*beast*” here, I am referring to the ultimate antichrist, not to one of the many antichrists that have already come (1 Jn. 2:18), but the one to whom these others, starting with Cain, foreshadowed, a figure referenced in Scripture at many points, including Rev. 11:7; 13:1-8; 16:13; 17:3, 8; 20:4, 10.

³The study of *Typology* tends to be a neglected aspect in *Hermeneutics*, but lately the identification and understanding of types in Scripture has been experiencing a recovery. Typology involves singular occurrences and patterns of lexical, imagistic, narrative, musical, symbolic, and thematic shadows (and combinations thereof) in the Old Testament that correspond with and are sometimes developed, yet always find their fulfillment (*antitype*), within the substance of New Testament revelation. *Allegories* (Symbolic, narrative sequences that represent something else) differ in a few ways from types. One way involves the fact that

qualities are not merely ornamental, of some minor importance, but integral towards a deeper understanding of the text; they are crucial as a means towards the pursuit of a more precise, biblical, exegetical program.

The theme under discussion begins, possibly, as far back as Genesis 1:24-25 where a distinction is made between domesticated and wild beasts (similar separations occur elsewhere in Scripture such as between the sheep and the goats in Mt. 25:31-46), but at the very least, I think it is either inaugurated or carried forward in Gen. 3:1a:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

Satan often (if not always) disguises himself in attractive appearances to deceive (2 Cor. 11:14) and this narrative recounts the first time this technique is used against humans. In this case, a serpent, a “*beast of the field*” becomes the embodiment of Satan (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). In this counterfeit incarnation, the devil veils himself within a beast, which was probably a bedazzling creature in its pre-fall state, to deceive and destroy (Jn. 10:10). As God’s representative, mankind is made in His image and given the authority to take dominion over the beasts of the earth (Gen. 1:26-30), but in the fall (Gen. 3:1-7), the wild, undomesticated beast of a spiritual serpent embodied in the wild, undomesticated beast of a physical serpent, deceived them and, in a tragic reversal, took dominion over them, subduing them. Through the fall we entered into the death of an unregenerate state, becoming enslaved to sin, death, and the wild beast of a spiritual serpent, Satan. After the successful temptation of Adam and Eve by the serpent, we find ourselves in anticipation, desiring to see what was stolen taken back; it leaves us yearning for another incarnation, a true and righteous one. This was fulfilled, of course, when Christ veiled Himself in humanity (Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:6-8; Col. 1:19) to save the lost (Lk. 19:10) and destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8b). Now consider Gen. 3:15, which reveals enmity:

“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.”

In this verse God speaks to Satan directly, placing enmity between his “*offspring*,” that is, the unredeemed, the children of the devil (Mt. 3:7; 23:33; Jn.

they are often (if not always) unconcerned with history. One of the reasons why typology has been neglected involves our Western, *modern* mindset, our way of thinking in contrast to that of an Eastern, *classical* mindset. The Eastern mind is, to some degree, more intuitive, poetic and artistic, preferring imagery, metaphors, symbols, shadows, types, themes, repetition and variation woven within their worldview, while the Western mind is, to some degree, more logical, philosophical and scientific, preferring the literal, didactic, straightforward, black and white, systematic, informational kind of approach to things. It is interesting to note that Scripture accommodates both perspectives and, more specifically, both personality types. The two mindsets, if seen correctly, do not conflict with each other, but deepen, support, complement, and augment each other. As Westerners, we will miss some of the tremendous amount of richness in Scripture if we fail to consider the Eastern perspective.

8:44; 1 Jn. 3:8-10), and “*her offspring*,” that is, the redeemed, the adopted children of God (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:4-7). He then reveals Satan’s future defeat. The bruising of Satan’s “*head*,” which is a fatal wound, refers to Christ’s completed work on the cross; the bruising of Christ’s “*heel*,” which is not a fatal wound, refers to the agony of the crucifixion. It also faintly anticipates the resurrection. A wound to the heel will heal; in other words, the wound of Christ’s death would be healed through the resurrection. The resurrection of Christ, the “*last Adam*” (1 Cor. 15:45), is foreshadowed even earlier than this when God heals the side of the first Adam (Gen. 2:21), who is a type of Christ (Rom. 5:14). Christ won the battle with His death and resurrection, but the fullness of this victory is forthcoming (Dan. 7:13-14) when all His enemies (and the enemies of believers), including sin (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), death (1 Cor. 15:51-57), and the devil (Rom. 16:20; Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8) will be finally, fully, vanquished (Rev. 20:7-10). The scene in the following verses (Gen. 4:3-5a) helps to set the context even further:

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.

Abel’s offering given in faith and trust in God (Heb. 11:4) fulfilled the right requirements (which must have been given to them by God at some point) while Cain’s faithless offering gave far less than what was required. Abel obeyed the word of God, and Cain disobeyed the word of God (Gen. 4:7a). Abel is a type of Christ (Heb. 12:24) and his offering a distant shadow of the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of His elect (Heb. 10:1-14), and Cain’s offering reflective of man’s attempts to attain righteousness by works through which no one will be justified and made righteous before God (Rom. 3:21-28). Consider Gen. 4:5b:

So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

Instead of responding with repentance for his sin, Cain becomes extremely angry towards God. The falling of his “*face*” not only reflects the fatal bruising of the “*head*,” which will be suffered by the serpent and its offspring (Gen. 3:15), associating him with that ancient beast, but also links him to the beast in Revelation. Though it is somewhat subtle, there is a lexical correspondence between the combination of the words “*face fell*” (Gen. 4:5) and “*rose up*” (v.8) in Cain’s actions to Rev. 13:3, where one of the first beast’s “*heads*” falls, in a sense, through a “*mortal wound*”, and then rises, in a sense, through being “*healed*” in a kind of counterfeit resurrection. This correspondence not only offers some evidence surrounding Cain’s kinship with the first beast in Revelation, which is the pinnacle of his wicked legacy—the final culmination of his ungodly line—but also reveals something of the seriousness and consequences of sin. The ending, the tragic apex of Cain’s sin, can

be dimly seen in the seed of its beginning. Protology⁴ foreshadows Eschatology⁵. The beginning helps us to understand the ending and the ending the beginning. If this was the only evidence offered for this theme, the basis for it might not be quite strong enough, but there's more. Cain's relationship to the beast is also suggested in Gen. 4:6-7:

The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Mercifully, lovingly, God asks Cain a question giving him space to repent (as He did with Adam) and then follows it up with a rhetorical question (v. 7a), reminding him to simply be obedient and then warns him of the "*crouching*" beast of sin (which is, possibly, a reference to Satan as well) always waiting to leap and overtake a soul and need for vigilance and mastery over it (Eph. 4:27; 1 Pet. 5:8). The description of sin in this manner is meant to lead us to believe it is like an animal, a beast. Mankind has dominion over the beasts (Gen. 1:26), we rule over them, but through sin we become like the beasts, not ontologically of course, but metaphorically; we become bestial. Giving oneself over to sin makes a human being think and act like an animal (2 Pet. 2:12-16; Jude 1:10). God's grace takes us out of our animal-like behavior and puts us in a right frame of mind as it did, for example, with Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:33-37) and the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:1-19). Apart from divine intervention, we all begin in the line of the serpent, starting at conception (Ps. 51:5). This metaphor of the crouching beast in the verses at hand serves to strengthen the link between Cain and the serpent and the first beast in Revelation. Gen. 4:8 offers some further support for the theme under discussion:

Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

The reference to Cain speaking to Abel, an action which God saw fit to preserve in His word, is very revealing. Cain, who has now given himself over to the beast, probably "*spoke*" to his brother to not only lead him into the field, but lull him into a false sense of security, less vigilant towards his devious scheme. It is an action which alludes to Satan *speaking* through the beast of a serpent to Eve for wicked purposes, revealing the spiritual darkness, the evil spirit which lurks behind, tempts, and influences Cain; it is the same ancient evil which lies behind the "*image of the beast*" (which speaks) in Rev. 13:15. The fruit of our words reveal who we are and where we are going; the mouth reveals our heart, exposing what's inside of us (Mt. 12:33-37; Jas. 3:3-12). Also, the reference to Cain and Abel "*in the field*" connects us back to that crafty "*beast of the field*" in Gen. 3:1. Cain has become like that aggressive, crouching beast he was warned to resist (Gen. 4:6-7). This verse (v.8) reveals the first

⁴Protology is a branch in theology involving the study of beginnings or first things.

⁵Eschatology is a branch in theology involving the study of endings or last things.

murder (fratricide) and Cain as the first murderer as well as the first *apostate*⁶ in Scripture. Jude 1:10-11 refers to apostates as “*unreasoning animals*,” that is, like beasts, followed with a reference to Cain. Surely Cain is counted among those apostates “*who long ago were designated for this condemnation*,” (Jude 1:4) and among those Enoch prophesied about (Jude 1:14-16). Gen. 4:8 also reveals Abel as the first martyr, which foreshadows the death of Christ at the hands of wicked men (Heb. 12:24). Abel is the type of all forthcoming martyrs whose “*blood is crying*” out (Gen. 4:10) like those souls in Rev. 6:10 who cry out to the Lord to avenge their “*blood*.” Cain, on the other hand, is a type of persecutors (and apostates) to come (Mt. 23:29-36; Lk. 11:47-51). If Cain could have murdered God he would have. His descendants, not necessarily genealogical, following in his vicious, spiritual lineage will murder Jesus, that is, destroy His human body (Jn. 2:18-22). Unable to kill God, Cain rises up out of spiteful envy (1 Jn. 3:12) to kill one of His righteous servants who, of course, is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). This verse also reveals that the enmity (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:17), the war between the offspring of the woman (Rom. 9:8; Gal. 3:7), which includes Abel, and the offspring of the serpent (Mt. 23:33; Jn. 8:44), which includes Cain, emerges rather quickly. Now consider Gen. 4:9:

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”

Cain compounds his sins with a lie and sarcastic response towards God. It’s interesting to note that when Adam is approached and questioned by God, he answers truthfully and does not ask a question in return, but Cain responds differently, he lies to God and then asks *Him* a question, acting as if he is God. This does not mean it is wrong for us to ask God a question when done rightly, but in this case it was definitely not done appropriately. God is the One who questions us regarding our actions (Gen. 3:9-11; Job 38:1-3; 40:1-2), not the reverse. God’s questioning of Adam and Cain foreshadows the ultimate giving of an account for our lives before God on judgment day (Eccl. 12:14; Mt. 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6-16; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15; 22:12). Cain, in his profound arrogance, asks a belligerent, blasphemous, accusative question. Like the beast in Revelation, Cain is blasphemous (Rev. 13:5-6). Mockery, slander, sarcasm, and ridicule towards God (Mt. 27:27-31, 39-44; Lk. 23:35-37) and His people (1 Sam. 17:43; Acts 2:13; 17:32a) are common verbal sins committed by the offspring of the serpent. Gen. 4:10-12 states:

And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the

⁶*Apostates* refers to those who for a season participate in the physical church (and receive various blessings for doing so); they hear and comprehend the gospel, and may even appear to be true believers but, eventually, reject the gospel, falling away, committing apostasy (1 Cor. 10:1-12; Heb. 3:12-19; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 1 Jn. 2:18-23; Jude 1:4-16).

ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

Cain is found out and judgment follows. The archetypal judgment can be found in Gen. 3:14-19, which foreshadows the ultimate and final judgment in Rev. 20:10-15. God punishes Cain for his crime as He will the beast (Rev. 20:10). The judgment on Cain is the second judgment narrative in Scripture and reveals yet another subtle connection to the serpent. In comparing both narratives, the serpent and Cain are the only ones *directly* cursed, offering further proof of their kinship and the bestial character of Cain. Consider Gen. 4:13-14:

Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

Rather than exhibit godly sorrow, true remorse and repentance over his sin (like the offspring of the woman), Cain remains unrepentant, concerned only about his welfare after being cursed, which is worldly sorrow, leading to death (2 Cor. 7:10b; Mt. 27:3-5). Unless regenerated by the sole grace of God, this is the only kind of repentance the unsaved (the offspring of the serpent) can exhibit. Godly sorrow before the Lord brings life and peace, things associated with salvation (2 Cor. 7:10a), but worldly sorrow before the Lord yields death and anxiety, things associated with condemnation. It's also interesting to note that Cain's description of his punishment as a kind of restless state of wandering on the earth sounds similar to the description Satan gives of his state in Job 1:7 and 2:2, revealing affinity. Those who follow Satan, worshipping creation, become more, in a sense, like the beasts, the image of God in them becoming darker and darker (Rom. 1:18-32) while those who follow God, worshipping Him, become more, in a sense, like Him, the image of God they were made in becoming brighter and brighter (2 Cor. 3:18). Gen. 4:15 states:

Then the Lord said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

In this verse, God places some kind of mark of protection on non-elect Cain, giving him a space of time to live. This does not mean he was marked out for salvation, but simply placed under protection. God places a different kind of mark on His elect people, the name of the Lamb and the Father "*on their foreheads,*" identifying them as His own adopted children (Rev. 7:3; 14:1). It is also interesting to note that Abel (an adopted child of God) was not protected by God from being murdered by Cain (a child of the devil), yet Cain was given, through the common grace of God, a mark that protected him from being murdered. This certainly points not only to the gracious character of God towards His enemies, but His sovereignty over all creation (Dan. 4:34-35; Eph. 1:11). For various reasons, God ordains persecution against His saints. Persecution was not foreign to the Son of God and

neither will it be to those who truly follow Him (Mt. 10:24-25; Jn. 15:20a). The narrative continues in Gen. 4:16:

Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Cursed by God to be a “*fugitive and a wanderer*” (Gen. 4:12), Cain rebels against God’s judgment by immediately, wickedly, *settling* in Nod instead of accepting his punishment as a wanderer over the world, revealing his failure to trust God to protect him from being killed. Cain even builds a city, naming it arrogantly after his own son (Gen. 4:17), as a means to try and flee from the presence of God (Gen. 4:16). In general, this is one of the main reason why cities are built and how they are used today, as a means—like the fig-leaves Adam and Eve used to clothe the nakedness of their shame—to try and run away from God, to escape from His presence lest our sinfulness be exposed. This perverse form of escapism, this rebelliousness seems most manifest in the city dynamic where its denizens tend to use crowds, busyness, families, possessions, the arts, false religion, drugs, sexual immorality, violence, and technology etc., as a means to suppress the truth (Jn. 3:19-20; Rom. 1:18), to hide themselves from God and the judgment they know is forthcoming (Heb. 10:26-27). The restless, unregenerate offspring of the serpent seek to settle on this fallen earth and make, through cities, a kind of counterfeit garden paradise to try and preserve their lives and cater to sin, but the regenerate offspring of the woman are pilgrims with a purpose, unsettled on earth yet at peace with God, willing to forfeit their lives (Acts 20:24; Rev. 12:11) as they seek the region of heaven, journeying to the city of the righteous.⁷ Perhaps Nod, the place where Cain “*settled*,” which is, paradoxically, a land of *wandering*, which suggests being unsettled, also functions as a type of hell, a land without purpose, of striving, of restlessness, of endless wandering and futility (in contrast to Eden) for Cain does, after all, journey to this region after being judged and cursed, revealing something of the end for all of those who follow the serpent. The final end of the unrepentant is progressively revealed in Scripture (like the theme under discussion), from Genesis to Revelation, becoming clearer and clearer until we arrive at the pristine clarity in Rev. 20:10 and verse 15 where every fallen angel and unregenerate human being is cast into “*the lake of fire*.”

After Cain, who is the next *major* figure following in his insidious pedigree? There are certainly several candidates, including Lamech (Gen. 4:18-19, 23-24) and Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12), who stridently carry forward his unholy lineage—his wicked line of descent, but the next *main* character seems, though I’m not certain, to be Ishmael (Gen. 16:11-12). Before he is even born, the mother is told that he will be “*a*

⁷The proud, faithless citizens of the earth are preoccupied with the temporal (1 Jn. 2:15-17) and, thus, seek earthly treasures (Mt. 6:19), working to build—in defiance of God—an ultimate earthly kingdom, foreshadowed through the construction of man-centered cities (Gen. 4:17; 10:8-12; 11:3-4) while the humble, faith-filled citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) are concerned about the eternal (Col. 3:1-3) and, thus, seek heavenly treasures (Mt. 6:20), striving to build—to the glory of God—His kingdom, foreshadowed in God-centered communities, in anticipation of the perfect heavenly city to come (Heb. 11:8-10; 13:14).

wild donkey of a man,” (v.12) that is, like an undomesticated beast, linking him back to Cain, the archetypical beast-like man (and back to that ancient serpent), as well as anticipating the beast in the book of Revelation.

Hopefully, this short paper has proven sufficient to reveal something of the extent of Cain’s wickedness and influence as well as reasonably prove the thesis that Cain as unveiled in Holy Scripture not only follows in the line of the serpent and is a predecessor of those after him who do the same, but a type of the beast in the book of Revelation.

The book of Philemon as an Apologetic for the Church's Fight against Modern-day Slavery

Gustavo F. Cabral

In recent years, the church has awakened to the reality of a problem that it long had not been aware or had chosen to ignore: Today in the world, there are more slaves than there has ever been before. The reality of human trafficking and modern-day slavery can no longer be ignored by the church, and as a response, there has been a growth of anti-trafficking movements connected to Christian organizations. Books have been written, documentaries have been made, conferences have been held, and non-governmental organizations have been formed connected to this issue and many Christians are willing to be a part of a conscious and noble effort to end modern-day slavery.

While it does seem that taking the plight of modern-day slaves is a given for Christians, or for any other human being for that matter, one must remember that not more than two centuries ago, slavery was a legal institution in most of the world, and Christians were directly involved in its sustainment. In fact, there was even use of the Bible to support the position that slavery was a morally acceptable institution. What has changed since then? How can the church take on the fight against human trafficking and modern-day slavery using the Bible as its main source of motivation for this fight? How can it fight accusations of hypocrisy from the world about its participation in this fight when there are passages in the Bible dealing with slavery and not condemning it?

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the issue of slavery in the Bible by providing a hermeneutically sound interpretation of Paul's letter to Philemon, in order to attempt to provide the church with a correct understanding of how God views the issue. While there are other passages in the Bible dealing with slavery which cannot be ignored, Philemon is the key book on this subject. In Philemon, Paul reveals the essence of Christian thought in the issue of slavery, becoming an essential part of Scripture to be observed when looking at this subject. The purpose of this study is not necessarily to provide strategies on for the church's fight, but rather to provide biblical basis for it, as well as ammunition to answer its critics with proper apologetics. As the book of Philemon will show, slavery and Christianity cannot exist in the same context, and although the Bible does not explicitly condemn the institution for reasons to be examined, its message is categorically against slavery.

Social and Historical Background on Slavery

The consensus among scholars is that Philemon was written by the apostle Paul around 60 A.D. from his first imprisonment, in the city of Rome, at or about the same time he sent his letter to the Colossians, and perhaps even the one to the Ephesians.¹

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The letter, which is only comprised of one chapter of twenty-five verses in the modern division of the Bible, is addressed mainly to Philemon, though other people are mentioned in its introduction. The content is mostly a plea from Paul to Philemon, an old friend of his, on behalf of Philemon's runaway slave named Onesimus, who had found Paul and become a Christian since he had fled his master. Paul's plea is for Philemon to receive Onesimus back, but as it will be further explained, in a different way than a master would receive a runaway slave.

However, before delving into the study of the book of Philemon itself, it becomes crucial to understand two aspects of the background of the book associated with the issue of slavery. First, is the significance and prevalence of slavery at the Roman Empire's society and how crucial it was to its economy and other social institutions; as well as the familiarity of Paul, the author of the letter, with the Jewish law and its regulations on slavery. These two aspects will provide critical insight into the reasons the letter of Philemon was written the way it was.

To say that slavery was an essential part of the Roman Empire's economy and society is most definitely an understatement. The Empire in many ways depended on this institution that was ingrained in that society to survive and had laws to make sure it would be perpetuated as well as to protect from any threat against it. It is estimated that there were over sixty-million slaves in the Roman Empire,² with the number of slaves far outnumbering the number of slave owners.³ As Rodney Stark reports, "The enclosures at the major Roman markets in Capusa and Delos were capable of handling 20,000 slaves a day and often ran at full capacity."⁴ One of the reasons for the sheer numbers of slaves was that "the Romans had conquered most of the known world and had reduced whole populations to bondage."⁵ Then, slavery grew with the growth of the Empire "until it changed the economic basis of society, doing away with free labor, and transferring all industries to the hands of slaves."⁶

As Barclay puts it, "Slavery was an integral part of the ancient world; the whole of society was built on it."⁷ Some historians believe that every single household in Rome had slaves, and one's social standing could be measured by the number of slaves he or she had in his or her company in public. In fact, the Roman Empire rested on the backs of slaves to such an extent, that even some slaves who worked in production had their own domestic slaves.⁸ This concept would be foreign to those familiar with the concept of slavery in the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries in colonial America, where slaves pretty much belonged to the same social class and

¹ John W. Robbins: *Slavery & Christianity* (Unicoi: The Trinity Foundation, 2007), 8.

² William Barclay: *The letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 270.

³ John Phillips: *Exploring Colossians and Philemon - An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 253.

⁴ Rodney Stark: *For the Glory of God - How monotheism led to reformations, science, witch-hunts, and the end of slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 296.

⁵ Phillips, 232.

⁶ Marvin R. Vincent: *The Epistle to the Philippians and to Philemon, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 162.

⁷ Barclay, 271.

⁸ Stark, 297-298.

were mostly used for forced labor. As Brown puts it, "As for slaves, New Testament translations render the Greek *doulos* both as "servant" and "slave," but those so described should not be imagined in 19th century patterns of either British household servants or African slaves in America."⁹ For in Rome, some slaves were "exceedingly valuable", and could work as artists, scholars, skilled craftsmen,¹⁰ as well as administrators, physicians, teachers, scholars, and poets, being able to work in businesses, farms, and households.¹¹

Their place in society was also different than what is usually associated with slavery in the modern world, as they had legal rights, even though were not legally recognized as persons.¹² They had some form of protection even, since under Roman law it was a crime to abuse or kill slaves.¹³ And by the end of the New Testament era, the treatment of slaves was even improving since masters began to realize that a more content slave worked better and produced more. Some scholars go to the extent of saying that in some ways, a slave was better-off than freemen, for they were assured of protection, and their basic necessities, such as food, clothing, and shelter, while some poor freemen had to live on the streets.¹⁴ Therefore, it is important to understand two concepts about slavery when examining Philemon, or any New Testament writing for that matter: One is that slavery was "endemic" in the Roman world, and the evidence is there to show that the social and economic conventions were there to support the institution.¹⁵ The second is that the slavery at that time, while still wrong, and worthy of condemnation by today's standards, had a different dynamic than what the minds of the modern man is able to grasp - since it was accepted as a *normal* part of life.

The apostle Paul, however, was part of that whole context, aware of how that institution was prominent in the world in which he lived. As a Roman citizen, he was certainly educated on the laws concerning slavery. However, more importantly, as a Jew, having been trained in the Torah ever since childhood, he was definitely familiar with the "benevolent form of slavery permitted under the Hebrew law and with the safeguards built into the system to protect the slave from abuse."¹⁶ This is another aspect that cannot be ignored when studying the letter to Philemon, for Paul's extensive knowledge of the Law played a significant role in his writings.

And what the Law said exactly about slavery and that Paul knew is worthy of exploration, in order to fully understand Paul's mindset when composing the letter to Philemon. Moses, the person chosen by God to receive the Law from him and record it for the nation of Israel, "did not come down from the mountain with a

⁹ Raymond E. Brown: *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 67.

¹⁰ Philips, 232.

¹¹ Brown, 67.

¹² John MacArthur: *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Colossians & Philemon* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 205.

¹³ Brown, 67

¹⁴ MacArthur, 205.

¹⁵ Ralph P. Martin: *Interpretation - Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 128.

¹⁶ Philips, 233

commandment forbidding slavery," as Stark puts it, but he did receive a revelation from God of a "very elaborate moral code" that made slavery among the Jew significantly more humane than any other contemporary society.¹⁷

One key passage in the Old Testament that deals with slavery is in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, where God authorizes Jews to buy and keep people from "the nations around you"¹⁸ as slaves forever. This is a controversial passage because, even by the admission of abolitionists, it "precludes the possibility" of God being himself, tolerating the existence of slavery.¹⁹ The key word here, however, is "tolerating," that is, it does not mean that God necessarily approved of it. Also, since this specific part of the passage deals exclusively with foreigners, non-Israelites, some argue that God was simply exercising His rights and His judgments upon the people for their sins and He ordained that it be through His own people, since they were in the Old Testament "a political and ethnic reality with God as their King."²⁰

However, not only were the Jews prohibited from enslaving other Jews, as prescribed in the same chapter twenty-five of Leviticus and on Deuteronomy chapter twenty-four, there were still "severe limits [on the] treatment" of slaves.²¹ For example, the punishment for any Jewish master who killed a slave was death; children of slaves could not be parted from their parents, nor a wife from her husband; freedom was to be awarded any slave as compensation for suffering acts of violence, and the Talmud went even further, advising that a slave should be treated like family, equally to the others and should be allowed to rest on the Sabbath.²² This is significant to show how different the culture of slavery at that time is from what was experienced in the American continent a few centuries ago and what is experienced around the world today. God may have tolerated slavery, but his heart was to limit it with His Law. In fact, this is proven by the fact that of all the world's religions, "only in Christianity did the idea develop that slavery was sinful and must be abolished."²³ This should come as no surprise, since the God of the Jews is the same God of Christianity.

Introduction to the Book of Philemon

With this understanding of the culture of slavery within the Roman Empire at the time Paul wrote the letter to Philemon, and of his religious background on the subject, guided by the Torah, it is possible to move on with an analysis of the text of Philemon itself. As previously mentioned, this letter is a plea from the apostle Paul to an old friend of his, Philemon, on behalf of a runaway slave, Onesimus, who

¹⁷ Stark, 327-328.

¹⁸ Leviticus 25:44, NIV.

¹⁹ David Brion Davis: *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 112.

²⁰ John Piper, "Why did God permit slavery?" *Desiring God*, May 16, 2008, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/ask-pastor-john/why-did-god-permit-slavery> (accessed March 4, 2013).

²¹ Stark, 328.

²² Ibid, 328.

²³ Ibid, 291.

belonged to Philemon, but at the time of the writing of the letter was with Paul, or at least in contact with him.

In reading the text of Philemon, though, one might wonder why a plea would be necessary. The fact is that the Roman Empire had strict and severe laws concerning runaway slaves. About a century earlier, there had been a revolt of the slaves in Italy led by a man named Spartacus²⁴ and the Romans wanted to avoid another one at all costs, since the danger of revolt was always eminent with the great number of slaves in the society.²⁵ Slaves who had run away and were caught received a harsh treatment from the government, and no mercy was granted to them.²⁶ As John Philips puts it in his commentary on the book of Philemon, "The law was harsh. Mutilation or scourging would be the least of the terrors that would loom in Onesimus's mind: crucifixion or even some more horrible death was very likely."²⁷ Slave owners had the power of the law on their side and the approval of other slave owners to do anything he or she wanted with the runaway slave, especially since the other slave owners had a "vested interest" in seeing fugitive slaves severely and immediately punished since these owners were so outnumbered by the slaves.²⁸

The apostle Paul was well aware of these circumstances and in a way wanted Onesimus "back in the good graces of his master before his crime was found out"²⁹ but he knew that even sending Onesimus back was a "considerable risk" due to slavery being such a significant part of the life in the ancient world.³⁰ However, it is important to point out that Paul was not sending Onesimus back, for another regulation of the Torah on slavery was that runaway slaves could not be sent back. The book of Deuteronomy, in chapter twenty-three, verse fifteen, clear states this prohibition³¹: "If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand them over to their master."³² This is why Paul did not give up Onesimus to the Roman authorities, for in his thinking "God's Law supersedes Roman law."³³ This is strong evidence that Paul was a man who followed God's teachings, and understood God's heart on the issue of slavery, adhering to the many restrictions that the Torah imposed on this institution.

Still, Paul preached no "cheap gospel" and he understood it was Onesimus' "clear duty" to return to Philemon and "throw himself on his mercy" just like Paul himself had done years before when he refused to bribe Felix for his release, as recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Acts.³⁴ When someone becomes a Christian, he or she still has obligations to the law of the land, and if restitution is required, then

²⁴ Brown, 503.

²⁵ Barclay, 270.

²⁶ Robert T Boyd: *Paul The Apostle - An Illustrated Handbook on His Life & Travels* (Iowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, 1995), 321.

²⁷ Philips, 236.

²⁸ Philips, 253.

²⁹ Boyd, 321.

³⁰ Barclay, 270.

³¹ Stark, 328.

³² Deuteronomy 23:15, NIV.

³³ Robbins, 35.

³⁴ Philips, 236.

it must be made, so Onesimus "must" return to his master Philemon.³⁵ Therefore, the letter to Philemon needs to be read not as a letter sending Onesimus back, but rather as a letter of recommendation sent *with* Onesimus returning voluntarily to the city of Colosse to rejoin his master.³⁶

Analysis of the Text of Philemon

In reading the twenty-five verses that comprise the letter to Philemon, one aspect that quickly stands out, perhaps even to the most unmindful reader, is Paul's cleverness in making his appeal for Onesimus, and arguably for all slaves. Pretty much every word was chosen with a definite purpose in order to convey to the main reader, Philemon, and to other future readers who would get a hold of the letter, his heart on the issue of slavery.

The first evidence of this cleverness of his is the way he begins the letter, by calling himself a "prisoner of Christ Jesus,"³⁷ a term which is then repeated with relation to himself in verse nine, and which opens the door to the theme of being a prisoner of Christ, or "in chains" for him.³⁸ This is the only time in all of his epistles that Paul begins his usual introduction by using these words. Since he knows he will be making a request, he wants to gain the sympathy of the reader by reminding him that he is currently in prison for the sake of the gospel.³⁹

Another example of Paul's cleverness in the writing of this letter is found on verse two, when after addressing Philemon, the author also addresses "Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home."⁴⁰ William Barclay in his commentary argues that since Paul knows that Onesimus is taking a risk in going back, he is "mobilizing" the Church in his favor, as he puts it, "The decision about Onesimus is not to be left to Philemon; it is to be the decision of the whole Christian community."⁴¹ Once again, this is another instance where Paul shows the intentions on his heart in making sure that Onesimus is protected, by trying to remove the decision of the runaway slave's fate from solely the hand of his master.

On verses four through seven, though, Paul goes back to addressing his "brother" Philemon in what becomes a sequence of praises for Philemon's love for God's people. Commentators agree that this section is there, again, as part of Paul's skills in writing an effective letter that will get his objectives accomplished. He is trying to win the heart of Philemon over to granting his request before he even mentions what it is. Marcus J. Borg compares to what modern readers would call "laying it on thick" and "what Latin rhetoric calls *captatio benevolentiae* ('capturing

³⁵ Boyd, 324.

³⁶ Isaac Allen: *Is Slavery Sanctioned by the Bible? A Premium Tract* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1860), 23.

³⁷ Philemon 1, NIV.

³⁸ Philemon 10 and Philemon 13, NIV.

³⁹ Philips, 238.

⁴⁰ Philemon 2, NIV.

⁴¹ Barclay, 274.

your benevolence')," just like someone praising another's person generosity before asking for a loan.⁴² While the fact that Paul would only have second intentions behind his praise is probably unlikely for it certainly would be beneath him, one must recognize that it probably helped his cause.

Another evidence of Paul's rhetoric strategy can be found in verses eight through fourteen, and this section is also when Paul mentions Onesimus' name for the first time, "more than a third of the way through his letter."⁴³ He certainly wanted to make sure he had captured Philemon's heart before getting to the point, but this is not even the most significant aspect of this section of verses. First, Paul makes the point that even though he has the apostolic authority to command Philemon to do his Christian duty,⁴⁴ he does not want Philemon to do anything out of duty, but rather he "[prefers] to appeal to [him] on the basis of love."⁴⁵ Second, Paul mentions that he did not want to overstep any boundaries and "do anything without [Philemon's] consent."⁴⁶ As commentator John Philips writes, "Paul will not command; he will appeal. But he will not hesitate to use every argument he can..."⁴⁷ The apostle wants to make this clear that the ultimate decision on the fate of Onesimus rests with Philemon, even though it is pretty obvious how Paul wanted him to act - out of love.

A final example of Paul's persuasiveness comes towards the end of the letter, in verses seventeen through nineteen, when Paul claims an old debt Philemon had with him, his "very self"⁴⁸ since Paul was probably responsible for preaching the gospel to him, in order to eliminate any excuse he would have not to receive Onesimus back. The apostle says that whatever Onesimus owed Philemon could be charged to his account, and that Philemon should receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul himself.⁴⁹ These and Paul writing that he is "confident of [Philemon's] obedience"⁵⁰ are the final arguments he makes, showing that he stands behind what he says and will do anything to make sure that nothing bad happens to Onesimus.

Yet, before he makes these final arguments, Paul uses an expression that can be considered the thesis of this whole epistle and which deserves a special analysis. As mentioned before, "Paul resolutely refused to put this matter of slavery on any ground but that of Christian love"⁵¹ and this exactly his goal when he says in verse sixteen that Philemon should see Onesimus "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother."⁵²

Paul was very clear in his request, he wanted Onesimus to be freed. A slave owner could, as "an unusual act of appreciation for some singular and extraordinary

⁴² Marcus J. Borg, and John Dominic Crossan: *The First Paul* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), 36.

⁴³ Philips, 252.

⁴⁴ Robbins, 27.

⁴⁵ Philemon 9, NIV.

⁴⁶ Philemon 14, NIV.

⁴⁷ Philips, 250-251.

⁴⁸ Philemon 19, NIV.

⁴⁹ Philemon 17-18, NIV.

⁵⁰ Philemon 20, NIV.

⁵¹ Philips, 254.

⁵² Philemon 16, NIV.

service” even free a slave, but to free a runaway slave, like Paul was requesting was “revolutionary.”⁵³ However, Paul did not stop there. Not only did he want Onesimus to be freed, he wanted Philemon to go an extra step, and see the relationship that he had with Onesimus in light of the gospel and see him as a brother in Christ, rather than just a slave. This illustrates Paul’s way of thinking in that once someone received Christ, his or her values need to be changed⁵⁴ and the way he or she sees his or her relationships cannot stay the same. Hence, Philemon must consider the master-slave relationship he had with Onesimus. In fact, when Paul says the expression “no longer as a slave,” some argue that these words make it clear that Paul already sees Onesimus as a free man, and now, it is just a matter of Philemon agreeing, consenting, and taking the legal steps necessary for the Roman law to recognize Onesimus as a free man.⁵⁵

This single statement in verse sixteen is very significant, for in it Paul reinforces a new concept he also introduces in his letter to the Galatians. On verse twenty-eight of the third chapter in that letter, he says that there’s “neither slave nor free” and that “you are all one in Christ Jesus.”⁵⁶ To a Christian, all are the same, there are no class distinctions. The verse in Philemon is mostly significant, then, because it is in direct opposition to the institution of slavery, even though it might not say so with all the words. As Brown puts it, this statement “rang the death knell to slavery in the Christian community”⁵⁷ and that “Paul could ask for no more. If Philemon did what Paul requested, then there was an end to slavery.”⁵⁸

In fact, this logical argument that Paul makes that masters could not see their slaves as just slaves, but rather need to see them as brothers in Christ, is supported by his writings in other epistles, which in conjunction, introduce the concept that Christianity came to introduce a new type of relationship between men, where there are no differences between them.⁵⁹ As Barclay aptly explains it, “If the master treats the slave as Christ would have treated him, and if the slave serves the master as he would serve Christ, then it does not matter if you call the one master and the other slave; their relationship does not depend on any human classification, for they are both in Christ.”⁶⁰

Paul looked at all the relationships from the perspective of the gospel. The death of Christ on the cross changed every human relationship – it did not matter whether one was a slave or a master, all were one in Christ.⁶¹ Essentially, Paul is recognizing slavery as a part of society that could be beneficial if all parties involved treated each other as they should, even though it is important to make clear that he was not advocating slavery.⁶²

⁵³ Philips, 232.

⁵⁴ Brown, 505.

⁵⁵ Robbins, 40.

⁵⁶ Galatians 3:28, NIV.

⁵⁷ Brown, 258.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 259.

⁵⁹ Barclay, 272.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 272.

⁶¹ Philips, 233.

⁶² MacArthur, 174.

Paul exemplifies this concept in his letter to the Colossians, which was written at the same time he wrote the letter to Philemon, as previously mentioned. In chapter three, verse twenty-two, he says: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord."⁶³ And in the following verses he continues to reinforce the point that a slave should work for the Lord and not for his or her master, and that God would reward him or her. However, one must read the following verses in the epistle to understand Paul's rationale. In verse one of chapter four, he says: "Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven." Paul envisioned that slavery could be accepted if both slaves and masters were all subject to the higher authority of God. In no way, could this be interpreted as Paul endorsing, accepting, or even tolerating any type of slavery relationship where the master is not obedient to God, and treats the slave abusively, as it is the case with modern slavery. Philips even goes further in his interpretation of this Colossians passage, stating that the slave must obey the master only in things that "do not contradict the express commands of the heavenly Master."⁶⁴

At a first glance, though, one can perhaps understand the "no longer as a slave" statement in Philemon as contradictory to the teachings in the epistles, such as the example presented in Colossians, that give instructions on how a Christian should act when involved in the institution of slavery. Two points need to be reinforced, though: One is that, again, the New Testament does not endorse or advocate slavery, but rather only "accepts slavery as a social reality and seeks to instruct those in that system to behave in a godly manner."⁶⁵ Second, it shows the epistle of Philemon as clarifying the "rules of the household" dealing with slavery mentioned in the other epistles by explaining the "Christian conscience against a background of the institution."⁶⁶ The book of Philemon essentially goes beyond just dealing with the institution, it actually sows seeds as to how it could be abolished. The question, then, is raised as to why Paul, or in fact, any writer in the Bible, did not flat out condemn the institution and call for its end, since he clearly saw it as against the nature of human relationships within the context of the gospel. There are several factors involved in this decision that will be evaluated in as follows.

Why did Paul not make a Direct Call for the End of Slavery?

A first reason that can be pondered involves knowing that setting a slave free often did not change his or her situation greatly, only his or her legal status.⁶⁷ As mentioned before, in some cases for a slave to be set free and sent out of a household,

⁶³ Colossians 3:22, NIV.

⁶⁴ Philips, 196.

⁶⁵ MacArthur, 174.

⁶⁶ Martin, 138.

⁶⁷ S.M. Baugh: "Philemon," In *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary - Volume 3*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, 512-519 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 517.

it could be "potentially greatly disadvantageous" in a "family oriented" Greco-Roman world.⁶⁸ While this was certainly not true in all cases, and certainly some slaves would be freed from abuses they suffered from their owners, the institution was legal and had certain protections. It is fitting to remember that in no way was it like what our minds in the twenty-first century understand as slavery, it could actually have been a mutually beneficial relationship, say to Onesimus and Philemon, and so Paul, along with the other writers of the Bible, had more crucial subjects to deal with directly.

One of these crucial subjects, which is appointed as another reason why Paul was not more explicit in condemning slavery, was the fact that Jesus was coming back soon, the world was ending, and the gospel needed to be preached. Paul has been described as having an "apocalyptic mind-set" and in such, "there is little time for changing this world's social structures."⁶⁹ And Jesus himself had a strong apocalyptic tone in his message, and in this said context, "long-range social planning" is not really encouraged - whatever prevents the preaching of the gospel must be neutralized.⁷⁰ So Paul thought the world was ending soon, and Raymond E. Brown eloquently provides some insight into Paul's train of thought when writing his epistles, especially Philemon, as follows:

Yet to overturn the massive Roman societal institution of slavery is not a feasible accomplishment in the very limited time before Christ comes. Obviously on the world level slaves will seek to gain freedom, but if one is a slave at the time of being called and physical freedom is unobtainable, that situation is not of essential importance (506).

Thus, time was of the essence, and the first-century Christian thought was that Jesus was coming back in their generation, so there were more pressing matters with which to deal. While with us, more than two thousand years later still need to have an apocalyptic frame of mind, for Jesus' return could happen at any time, we cannot misinterpret Paul's omission as a justification in current days for a "slavery often harsher than existed in New Testament times."⁷¹

However, the concept of the coming end of the world was not the only deterrent to the New Testament authors writing on slavery. A third reason was the fact that the aforementioned laws in the Roman Empire provided a solid protection to the institution, and it could only be overthrown by means of violence and force, something in which Paul was not interested. As Martin explains it: "In the exigencies of the social structures of the Roman Empire of Paul's day, slavery could be overthrown only by violent means; and the apostle will be no party to class hatred or violent methods."⁷² The context was such that Paul could never have imagined how it would be possible for society to function without slavery, and if Christianity had aided or even given any encouragement to a revolt by the slaves, the result would have been certainly tragic - any slave who would have claimed freedom would have

⁶⁸ Ibid, 517.

⁶⁹ Brown, 480.

⁷⁰ Brown, 506.

⁷¹ Ibid, 68.

⁷² Martin, 138.

been punished, and worse, Christianity would "have been branded as revolutionary and subversory."⁷³

This was not the intention of the apostles, or the early church, for it had never been the intention of Jesus. He did not want to get involved in politics or the government - his message was bigger than that. MacArthur also comments on the significance of the New Testament not directly attacking slavery by saying that the "gospel would have been swallowed by the message of social reform."⁷⁴ In Philemon, for example, Paul's larger message that in Christ, we are all brothers, including Onesimus and Philemon, would have been overshadowed by a revolutionary call to freedom for all slaves.

Paul never aimed to be a revolutionary, for he never advocated a social philosophy based on "countenance and revolution."⁷⁵ Paul also never aimed to be a politician, he was "too wise to make a frontal attack on slavery" for he had "no intention of involving the church with the state."⁷⁶ This is yet another reason why Paul did not openly call for the end of slavery in his writings; his answer was not politics, but love, rather. Not any kind of love though, but "brotherly love in Christ, which would make impossible for one man to abuse the rights of another man."⁷⁷ This was the key for him, especially in Philemon. Philemon was a Christian, and he knew that could ask him for a different treatment of his slaves, taking Onesimus as an example, for the love of Christ was in him. All relationships become different, or are supposed to become different when the love of Christ gets involved through at least one of the parties.

Commentator John Phillips also raises the point that there was "inspired genius" in the decision not to "settle social issues on the low ground of human rights, but on the high ground of Calvary's love."⁷⁸ Paul's inspired mindset in Philemon was to deal with the themes of grace and to call for a higher level relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. He wanted to raise the whole issue to "the realm of the spiritual," accepting that slavery was the law of the land and that if revival is brought to a society, its "lesser" issues will be resolved sooner or later.⁷⁹ Slavery today is no lesser issue, for it is manifested in a more cruel way, as previously explained, but the church should still practice the principles learned in the New Testament writings when developing a strategy for its fight. Slavery should be denounced, and abuses to other human beings fought against, but the most important message should be the love within the message of the gospel.

For it was in this love that Paul believed so much to end the institution of slavery in his time. The book of Philemon illustrates the principle that slavery would "be destroyed not by social upheaval, but by changed hearts."⁸⁰ Marvin Vincent, in his commentary on the book of Philemon wrote an important truth in how Paul was

⁷³ Barclay, 271.

⁷⁴ MacArthur, 206.

⁷⁵ Martin, 138.

⁷⁶ Philips, 233.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 233.

⁷⁸ Philips, 254.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 255.

⁸⁰ MacArthur, 206.

inspired to end the institution of slavery: "The principles of the gospel not only curtailed [slavery's] abuses, but destroyed the thing itself; for it could not exist without its abuses. To destroy its abuses was to destroy it."⁸¹ Violence, social revolt would only bring more violence and revolt, and no solve the problem. The principles found in the book of Philemon, however, could only "[bring] us into an atmosphere in which the institution could only wilt and die."⁸²

Some scholars welcome the letter of Philemon as a "stronger Pauline position on slavery," which eventually would lead Christians to reject it as a whole.⁸³ If one carefully reads between the lines of the epistle, he or she can see that Paul stopped just short of denouncing slavery completely, but he could or would not, for the reasons discussed. It has been said that "the word *emancipation* seems to tremble on his lips, but he never utters it."⁸⁴ He realized that focusing on the gospel was the most effective way to deal away with the institution. And to understand this as a support of slavery, as many have done, is a gross and deliberate error in interpretation.

CONCLUSION

Isaac Allen said that "the whole tendency of the Bible and true Christianity, direct and indirect, is to the liberty and advancement, never the slavery and degradation, of man." This statement could not be more true and better summarize the essence of the Bible on the subject of slavery. Although it does not condemn it with all the words, not to detract from its central message in the contexts it was written, the thread that runs through it on the subject of slavery leads to the conclusion that the institution is not compatible with Christianity.

It all begins with the prohibition of the Torah for the Hebrews to enslave their own brothers, and the regulations it had on the treatment of foreign slaves, which were only slaves as a result of a form of God's judgment for rejecting Him and Israel. Then, in the Gospels, Jesus is seen the ultimate abolitionist, the only one who is able to free humanity from its worst kind of slavery, the slavery to sin. Finally, in the epistles, especially the ones Paul wrote, we see Paul dealing with the institution on a spiritual level, culminating with his passionate plea for a slave in the epistle of Philemon.

In that letter, we see the lengths the apostle went through and risks he took in order to free not only the life of one slave, but eventually of all, by carefully, eloquently, and wisely presenting his arguments. They were effective enough to get the job done and eventually promote the end of slavery in the context of Christian love, but not direct enough in order to degrade the message of Christianity to a message of social reform. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he optimized the use of his words in order to maximize their effect.

The fact that societies in later times mistakenly used the Bible as a justification for slavery does not make true the concept that the Bible supports the institution.

⁸¹ Vincent, 167.

⁸² Baugh, 517

⁸³ Brown, 506.

⁸⁴ Barclay, 271.

Without the illumination of the Holy Spirit and the use of proper hermeneutics, analyzing the context in which passages were written, or seeing Scripture in light of Scripture, one can use certain biblical passages as a pretext for pretty much any perverse ideas they might have.

The challenges for today's church in defending the accusations of hypocrisy, for trying to end modern-day slavery while the Bible does not explicitly condemn it, are to educate on the historical backgrounds of slavery pertaining to the writings of the Bible and to concentrate on the fact the message of the Bible needs to be understood as a whole. However, the focus in the fight against modern-day slavery, as well as in any other endeavor the church may be involved in, should be the message of the gospel, for it is the only message that can defeat evil, thus healing and truly changing the world.

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The Movement of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

John V. Mezzacappa

Jesus tells Nicodemus that the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes (John 3:8). You can, however, see the effects the wind has made on which it has blown. The same holds true for identifying and seeing the movement of the Holy Spirit in which I shall present in the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Testaments, the regeneration and indwelling of Old Testament saints, the movement of the Holy Spirit between the Testaments, and a comparison of the movement within the Testaments. Clearly it is God who directs the work of the Spirit in the lives of those God has chosen for His will and purpose, this is the movement that I shall present.

History of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

I would like to introduce a brief history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit looking into the early church and the progressive revelation found in the Scriptures in which the Person and work of the Holy Spirit today and time past since creation has been revealed. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit may be traced to the second century in Church history; prior to this time not much thought was given to the doctrine considering the writers of the Old Testament did not see the Holy Spirit as a Person let alone a member of the Holy Trinity¹. A brief chronological survey of the Church's doctrine of the Holy Spirit shall be presented starting with the Church father Origen. Origen Adamantius, a second century Biblical scholar and philosopher (A.D. 185-254), spoke of the Bible as, "written by the Holy Spirit."² It was not until the later part of the second century that Clement of Rome coordinated the three members of the Trinity in an oath, "*as God lives, and the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and the Holy Spirit lives.*" (Erickson 1985, p849) Church history shows us that a full doctrinal understanding of the Holy Spirit with relationship to the Father and the Son was not accomplished until the fifth century. It was from this point on that others have contributed to the doctrine. During the medieval period controversy ensued as to whom the Holy Spirit proceeded from; unresolved this led to the split between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches in A.D. 1054, known as the Great Schism. Still in controversy today, the filioque clause, which *filioque* means "and son" in Latin was added to the Nicene Creed, indicating that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. The reformation did not produce any major

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¹ "Some writers have doubted that the Old Testament contains any sure references to the Holy Spirit and that certainly people of the time had little, if any, conception of this Third Person of the Trinity." (Wood 1976, preface)

² Origen *Against Celsus* 5. 60; cf. Basil *Homily on Psalm 1*.

changes in the orthodox doctrine of the Holy Spirit with the exception of elaborations and expansions on previous thoughts. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the churches interest in the Holy Spirit underwent a long period of decline this due to a variety of movements in which they each regarded the Spirit and His work as either superfluous or incredible. “*Calvin was very careful to stress the union of the Word and the Spirit. Some expected the Holy Spirit to function independently of Scripture. They were anticipating new revelations from the Spirit. But Calvin reminded his readers of Jesus’ words in John 14:26-the Spirit would not instill some new truth into the disciples, but would illuminate and impress Jesus’ words upon them.*”³ (Erickson 1985, p853).

Movement of the Holy Spirit

The movement of the Holy Spirit is continuous from creation to present day being evidenced in the Scriptures, and in the history of Israel Biblical and extra Biblical documents. “The Old Testament word principally used to designate the Spirit of God is *ruach*. The New Testament word is *pneuma*. *Ruach* refers to the atmosphere, the wind, which is an invisible, irresistible power, sometimes benign and beneficial, sometimes raging and destructive (Gen. 8:1; Exod. 10:13, 19; 14:21 Num. 11:31; etc.)” (Jewett 1976, p183). Jesus tells Nicodemus that the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:8). Solomon proclaims in Ecclesiastes, “*As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything*” (Eccl. 11:5). How than can one determine to see the movement of the Spirit as it is reckoned to the wind? We find this solution as we look at the outcome, reaction, or the cause and effect of the Holy Spirit. It is just as watching the movement of the trees or blades of grass as the wind blows, or the direction in which a sail boat sailing. In each case one cannot see the wind but the effect of the wind. With these illustrations in mind; in order to see, recognize, the movement of the Holy Spirit we must identify the causes and the outcomes of those He affected. The movement of the Holy Spirit is always the result of God’s work.

The movement of the Holy Spirit as seen in the Old Testament relates to His movements; in creation, coming upon certain Old Testament saints (writers, prophets, judges, and kings), and his movements in regeneration and indwelling of the Old Testament saints in order to prove that it was the gift of the Holy Spirit that came and went not the Person of the Holy Spirit. In his book “*The Majesty of God in the Old Testament*” Walter Kaiser tell us, “*The person of the Holy Spirit does more during the Old Testament period, therefore, than merely working in creation, equipping persons for special acts or spheres of service, giving others wisdom and skill in craftsmanship of as channels of prophetic inspiration. The Holy Spirit also works in generation and indwelling every Old Testament believer who has ever entered into the new birth-yes,*

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 1, chapter 7, section 5.

even prior to the events of Calvary. Men and women were justified by faith as a gift of God, and not by works, lest anyone (Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, or any other Old Testament saint) should boast (Eph. 2:5b, 9). This faith did not just pop out of nowhere, but it came as a result of the inner working of the Holy Spirit, because the Old Testament saints, like us, were regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.” (Jr. 2007, p93) For some, the concept of regeneration of Old Testament saints can be controversial, yet, it is significant in identifying the movement of the Holy Spirit as seen not only in the changed lives of these Old Testament saints but in their empowerment by the Spirit for specific tasks ordained by God.

Movement in Creation

We find in the creation account a reference to the presence and activity of the Spirit of God (Erickson 1985, p866) “*The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God⁴ was hovering⁵ over the face of the waters*” (Gen. 1:2). As a result of the Holy Spirit’s movement we see creation and renewal of the earth and its inhabitants⁶. In *Understanding Christian Theology* Robert Gromacki says, “*The Spirit is connected to the earth, both in creation and renewal. Preserving animating, and refreshing the creation are all aspects of the ministry of the Spirit.*” (Gromacki 2003, p430) The Chronicler writes, “*The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him...*” (2 Chron. 16:9) The meaning of hovering is to remain, and up to today the Spirit of God remains hovering. Some writers have referred to the hovering of the Holy Spirit as “brooding” using the illustration of bird caring for her eggs, hovering and brooding over them all the while in constant care of them. Since creation the Holy Spirit has watched over us, brooding and hovering in constant care of us.

Movement in Writers, Prophets, Judges, and Kings

During Old Testament times God ordained certain individuals to be writers, prophets, builders, judges, and kings. Their power and wisdom to carry out their tasks, evidenced in their actions, was by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, as seen today in the distribution of the gifts to the believers for the good of others. During Old Testament times the movement of the Holy Spirit was that of empowerment and

⁴ The Old Testament includes about one hundred references to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether the mention of the word “Spirit” refers to the person of the Holy Spirit or to God’s own spiritual essence. The emphasis in the Old Testament is on the oneness of God in contrast to polytheism. However the New Testament declares that the Holy Spirit was active in the ancient history of Israel (Acts 7:51; 2 Pet. 1:21). (Gromacki 2003, p430)

⁵ To remain suspended over a place or object; Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary*. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

⁶ “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mtt. 5:45)

inspiration by the will of God for the glory of God. Four major areas of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit may be seen in the effect He caused upon the writers of the Scriptures, the prophets, the judges, and the Kings.

Looking at the writers of Scriptures Timothy tells us, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (NKJV), “*All scripture is God-breathed* (theopneustos, “inspired”)⁷ (NIV), (2 Tim. 3:16). We see from this portion of text that it was God who inspired the writers through the movement of the Holy Spirit so that there was no error or boasting on man’s part. Regarding the inspiration of Scripture, “*John Calvin’s unique contribution to the discussion of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit lay in the area of the authority of the Scriptures. Calvin insisted that the testimony of the Holy Spirit is superior to reason. It is an inward work which captures the minds of those who hear or read Scripture, producing conviction or certainty that is the Word of God with which they are dealing.*” (Erickson 1985, p853) The Holy Scriptures are clearly a byproduct of the movement of the Holy Spirit in the empowering of these writers for a specific task preordained by God.

Reflecting back to the time of Moses when he needed help in governing God’s people; part of the Spirit was taken from him and given to the 70 elders in order that they may wisely lead Israel and settle disputes amongst them (Num. 11:25). Through progressive revelation we know that the Holy Spirit is a person identified by His will, intellect, and emotions as that of a person; this being the case the hermeneutical approach to this portion of Scripture should be viewed allegorically. With this view in mind it is logical to suggest that what the 70 elders received from the Holy Spirit was empowerment to lead and guide God’s people. In his article “*Living by the Power of the Holy Spirit*” Dr. Toussaint writes, “*Some people think that the filling of the Spirit means that you receive more of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is a person, not a divine liquid poured into a bottle.*” (Dr Stanley Toussaint 2004, p3) We may conclude, logically, that it was the gift of administration which was poured into the elders to empower them for the tasks preordained by God, for His glory and by His might (Zech. 4:6).

The Holy Spirit also came upon the prophets of the Old Testament that they may speak the Word of God to His people. Most of these prophecies have been fulfilled and those which have not shall be brought about by the Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter tells us, “*knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:20-21). The prophet Ezekiel also testified to the fact that it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that he was able to speak and write the Word of God; “*And when he spoke to me, the Spirit entered me and set me upon my feet; and I heard him speaking to me*” (Ezek. 2:2). It was the regenerated Old Testament saint God would use as His prophet proclaiming and speaking God’s words and intentions to His people.

In the time of judges, when there was no king, man did what was right in his own mind (Judges 17:6). Having the full counsel of God today we may surmise that

⁷ Zuck, Walvord and. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983.

the judges most certainly needed the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to wisely judge and lead God's people at time when many were turning from the will of God. As we see in Scripture there were judges who did not lead godly upright lives, however, they were empowered by the Holy Spirit for a specific task which was accomplished by the movement of the Spirit and not the will of man. *"The Old Testament depicts the Holy Spirit as producing the moral and spiritual qualities of holiness and goodness in the person upon whom he comes or in who he dwells. We should note, however, that while in some cases this internal working of the Holy Spirit seems to be permanent, in other cases, such as in the Book of Judges, his presence seems to be intermittent and related to a particular activity of ministry which is to be carried out."* (Erickson 1985, p869) Progressive revelation of the Holy Spirit, at the time of judges, reveals His ministry of the imputation of gifts of leadership and administration.

The Holy Spirit also empowered Israel's kings that they may lead God's people by His might and by His will. Some writers believe that during Old Testament times the Holy Spirit came upon individuals and then left them. Looking to the Scriptures we see two references that may support this point; the first is 1 Samuel 16:14, *"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul..."* And the second is when King David prayed in Psalm 51:11, *"...And do not take your Spirit from me."* Both these men were anointed to be kings; as many godly men before them, they also would have moments of victory and times of defeat both physically and spiritually. Their success would be a direct result of the empowering by the Holy Spirit for their specific tasks preordained by God for the good of His people, for His will, and for His glory. Progressive revelation reveals to us the total depravity of man apart from God, the apostle Paul tells us, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rm. 3:23). When King David prayed for the Spirit not to be taken from him he knew what had happened to Saul, he also knew that the empowerment of the Spirit can only be upon one king at a time, no other person in his day would have prayed that prayer just the way in today's time no believer would pray it as well. Both Saul and David sinned, logic and progressive revelation would reveal to us that it was not the Person of the Holy Spirit that left Saul and entered David, but it was the empowering movement of the Spirit that left Saul and came upon David. *"After Samuel anointed David to be the next king, "the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul" (16:14). Saul no longer had the enablement of the Holy Spirit to rule as king. When Samuel anointed David with oil, "the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16:13). Although David was the divinely authenticated king, he would not publicly rule until Saul was dead. The Holy Spirit enabled David to rule as king for forty years."* (Erickson 1985, p434,435)

In relation to the Spirit being only temporary during Old Testament times I would ask if God's grace can ever be temporary, weather during Old Testament times or now. As stated earlier the Spirit of God is hovering, continuously from creation to present; as the eyes of the LORD look to and fro for those whose heart is loyal to him 2 Chronicles 16:9), not temporarily but continuously. *"As the living energy of a personal God, the Spirit broods, rules, guides, quickens, and moves. "Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" asked the psalmist (Ps.139:7), implying that where God's Spirit is, there He is personally present."* (Jewett 1976, p189) It is not God

who abandons but man who turns from God and does what is right in his own eyes. How could our loving Creator God, our Abba Father, leave us? He could not for God is immutable (unchanging), (1 Samuel 12:22; Isa. 41:17; Jn. 14:18; Heb. 13:5).

The Movement of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration and Indwelling of Old Testament Saints

This section will discuss the movement of the Holy Spirit as it relates to regeneration and indwelling in order to prove that Old Testament saints were regenerated and indwelled just as believers are today. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary defines *regeneration* as, “A *Special act of God in which the recipient is passive. God alone awakens the person spiritually through the power of His Holy Spirit. Both the OT and NT also speak of the renewing of the individual. In a technical sense the act of regeneration takes place at the moment of conversion as the individual is spiritually awakened*”.⁸ The movement of the Holy Spirit is seen in the change of heart of the person affected by the Holy Spirit. Knowing the sinful nature of mankind since the Fall, we know that man, in his flesh, is unable to change and his heart is deceitfully wicked (Jer. 17:9). “*By the very nature of total depravity, no one has the desire or capability to come to God.*” (McCabe 2004, p247) It is not just mankind today but mankind from Adam, obviously this includes Old Testament Saints. It was the movement of the Holy Spirit that regenerated certain men of the Old Testament that they may be of service to God for His specific purpose. In his book “*The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*” Leon Wood tells us, “*Regeneration, the impartation of new life made available by the work of Christ, was experienced by Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, and the many others of the Old Testament period.*” (Wood 1976, p68) Ezekiel told Israel that they would receive a new heart (Ezek. 36:27), the Salter proclaimed, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew as steadfast spirit within me*” (Ps. 51:10). How else could a saint of old be used in the service of God? Was it possible for the men of the Old Testament to be righteous on their own merits? The prophet Isaiah answers this, “*But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*”(6:44) Apart from God man cannot serve God and without spiritual renewal we are useless to God and His will; this holds true for the saints of the Old Testament and believers today. “*The evidenced that spiritual renewal, or regeneration, was true of such Old Testament people lies mainly in two directions. One is that these people lived in a way possible only for those who had experienced regeneration, and the other is the avenue of logical deduction that argues back from New Testament truth.*” (Wood 1976, p65) To suppose that God and

⁸ Drumm, S. (2003). Regeneration. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen & T. C. Butler, Ed.) (1371–1372). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

the Holy Spirit functioned differently in Old Testament times as compared to New Testament and today is to presuppose that God was different. Yet, Scripture tells us that God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, “*For I am the LORD, I do not change*” (Mal. 3:6), “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Heb. 11:12). “*Since regeneration in New Testament time is effected by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), it is logical to believe that He was the person of the Trinity that did the same at the earlier time.*”⁹ The movement of the Holy Spirit is clearly seen in the regeneration of Old Testament saints being evidenced by their changed lives and service to God and His people through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Having discussed regeneration it would prove notable to consider the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament saints viewing it as another ministry, gift, of the Holy Spirit. It is also worthy to note that the word indwelling is never found in Scripture; therefore its usage is primarily theological. “*Indwelling is a theological term that encapsulates biblical truth about the Spirit’s influence whereby he causes the believers to experience the blessings and operations of divine grace.*” (McCabe 2004, p217) It is logical to conclude that if the Holy Spirit regenerates a person He certainly will enable him to sustain his salvation. In his article “Were Old Testament Believers Indwelt by the Spirit” Robert McCabe says, “In 1988 Gary Fredricks argued that any believer’s growth in holiness, irrespective of whether he lived before or after the cross, was impossible apart from the indwelling ministry of the Spirit. Fredricks summarizes his position on indwelling: “*If holiness is a requirement for all believers, whether before or after the cross, and Romans and Galatians inform us that this can only be accomplished by the power of the indwelling Spirit, ...these OT saints were enabled to live their lives through the power of the Spirit.*”¹⁰ (McCabe 2004, p215)

The Holy Spirit between the Testaments

Mentioned earlier, God is unchanging (immutable) with this in mind one cannot but to wonder His working during the 400 silent years known as the intertestamental period. Through historical evidence we may see that the Holy Spirit was actively moving throughout the intertestamental period as well. During this time the Jews saw turbulence in politics, persecution, and finally falling under Roman control. It was during this time that the Septuagint was penned, the religious parties of Judaism was formed, a remnant of God’s chosen people were preserved, and most notable of all, it was a time of preparation for God to walk among His creation, a time of preparation for Jesus the Christ; Jesus the Messiah; the God-man to come redeem all who would turn their hearts to Him.

⁹ Kuyper (*Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 119) speaks in this regard: “Believing Israelites were saved. Hence they must have received saving grace. And since saving grace is out of the question without an inward working of the Holy Spirit, it follows that He was the Worker of faith in Abraham as well as in ourselves.”

¹⁰ Fredricks, “*Holy Spirit in the Lives of Old Testament Believers,*” p.87

The Movement of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The history of the Intertestamental Period can be divided into six observable time periods detailed in the following table:

Era	Effects of the Movement of the Spirit Upon Israel
<p>The Persian Era (397-336 B.C.)</p>	<p>They returned to Jerusalem with a new reverence for the Scriptures. They had a firm grasp of the theological concept of monotheism. The rise of the synagogue as the local center of worship can be traced back to this period.</p>
<p>The Greek Era (336-323 B.C.)</p>	<p>Under Alexander the Great the world began to speak and study the Greek language. Hellenism became so popular that it persisted and was encouraged even into New Testament times by the Romans. Struggle developed between the Jews and Hellenism's influence upon their culture and religion was long and bitter.</p>
<p>The Egyptian Era (323-198 B.C.)</p>	<p>With the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., the Greek empire became divided into four segments under as many generals: Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Cassander, and Selenus. These were Daniel's "four kingdoms" which took the place of the "large horn" (Dan. 8:21,22). Hellenism's emphasis on beauty, shape, and movement encouraged Jews to neglect Jewish religious rites which were aesthetically unappealing. Two religious parties emerged: the Hellenizing party, which was pro-Syrian, and the orthodox Jews, in particular the Hasidim or "Pious Ones" (predecessors of the Pharisees).</p>
<p>The Syrian Era (198-165 B.C.)</p>	<p>In 168 B.C., Antiochus set about destroying every distinctive characteristic of the Jewish faith. He forbade all sacrifices, outlawed the rite of circumcision, and canceled observance of the Sabbath and feast days. The Scriptures were mutilated or destroyed. Jews were forced to eat pork and to sacrifice to idols. His final act of sacrilege, and the one that spelled his ultimate ruin, was to desecrate the Most Holy Place by building an altar and offering a sacrifice to the god Zeus. Many Jews died in the ensuing persecutions.</p>

<p>The Maccabean Era (165-63 B.C.)</p>	<p>When a Syrian official tried to enforce heathen sacrifice in Modein (northwest of Jerusalem), Mattathias, an elderly priest, revolted, killed a renegade Jew who did offer sacrifice, slew the Syrian official, and fled to the mountains with his family. Thousands of faithful Jews joined him, and history records one of the noblest demonstrations of holy jealousy for the honor of God.</p> <p>After the death of Mattathias three of his sons carried on the revolt in succession: Judas surnamed Maccabaeus (166-160 B.C.), Jonathan (160-142 B.C.), and Simon (143-134 B.C.). These men had such success that by December 25, 165 B.C., they had retaken Jerusalem, cleansed the temple, and restored worship. This event is commemorated even today as the Feast of Hanukkah (Dedication).</p> <p>Under the leadership of Simon, the Jews received their independence in 142 B.C., they experienced almost 70 years of independence under the reign of the Hasmonaean dynasty.</p> <p>The orthodox Jews became known as the Pharisees; those who supported the Hasmonaean were called Sadducees.</p>
<p>The Roman Era (63-4 B.C.)</p>	<p><u>The rise of religious parties:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The Pharisees</i>, “Separatists” strict adherence to Scripture and applying the written law to everyday life. ➤ <i>The Sadducees</i>, “Righteous” related to the high priest; the priests seemed to have tended toward the more social, political, and earthly aspects of their position. ➤ <i>The Herodians</i>, a political party whose major aim was to further the cause of Herod’s government (Mtt. 22:16). ➤ <i>The Zealots</i>, another political party in direct opposition to the Herodians who would not conform to Roman rule; they believed the Jews must be ready to fight for independence. ➤ <i>The Essenes</i> are not mentioned in the New Testament but have received considerable attention since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were religious and not political;

	they felt they must withdraw from ordinary human society and practice monastic kind of life and mystical kind of Judaism.
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As seen in the table, God allowed His people to experience persecution and His judgments, all the while keeping a remnant of His chosen people so that His covenant promises would not be broken. Throughout this period of 400 years we see the movement of the Holy Spirit in His guidance, conviction, encouragement, judgment, protection, and the preparation for the arrival of the Messiah. *“The stage was set. Man’s futile attempts to deal with the shifting tide of political power and religious belief had produced very little. Israel was in a kind of spiritual bondage that was seen worse than her political bondage. The rise of the various parties and movements discussed above was evidence of a sincere search for some final solution to her problem. All seemed to have failed. The stage of history was dark. The situation was indeed desperate. Amid this setting God broke four-hundred years of silence with the announcement of the coming of Christ, the faithful Servant of the Lord, and the Intertestamental Period came to an end.”* (MacDonald 1992, Supplement; Intertestamental Period)

Comparison of the Movement of the Holy Spirit in the Testaments

The comparison of the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Testaments may prove that the Holy Spirit’s movements in mankind have been similar throughout the ages in Biblical and historical records of mankind.

With regards to the inspiration of God’s Word; the Holy Spirit inspired all the writers of Scripture including the writers of the New Testament. *“Throughout the history of the Church, the written Word of God and the Spirit of God have been closely associated. The authority of the Jewish Scriptures in the apostolic church is expressly grounded in the inspiration of the Spirit.”* (Jewett 1976, p194)

As shown within the Scriptures God has been changing the hearts of man since the Fall, and still does so to this very day and will continue to do so until Jesus Christ returns for His church and judgment of unbelievers. *“The Holy Spirit was the same operator on the heart both in the Old and New Testaments. The Holy Spirit was involved in each person’s new birth prior to the cross of Christ, according to Ezekiel 36:24-28.”* (Jr. 2007, p95)

Scripture also reveals to us that in order for believers to maintain their salvation they need the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to convict, guide, and comfort the believer. *“There is no indication that believers of Old Testament time lost their state of spiritual renewal any more than believers of today, which means they enjoyed a condition of eternal security just as believers of the present age.”* (Wood 1976, p71)

Throughout Scripture we see that many a person was empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform a certain preordained task of God, it was the Spirit that imparted this gift of empowerment both in the Old and New Testaments. *“There are more cases of*

Spirit-empowerment of believers in the New Testament than in the Old. So, like regeneration, indwelling, sealing, and filling, Spirit-empowerment was experienced in the times of both Testaments." (Wood 1976, p73)

Old Testament writers have revealed a future work of the Holy Spirit in the preceding ages which has been revealed in the New Testament; "*There is within the Old Testament witness to the Spirit of anticipation of a coming time when the ministry of the Spirit is to be more complete*"¹¹. *Part of this is related to the coming Messiah, upon whom the Spirit is to rest in an unusual degree and fashion (Is. 11:1-5; 42:1-4; 61:1-3).*" (Erickson 1985, p869).

Conclusion

"The most abundant biblical testimony regarding the role of the Holy Spirit concerns his spiritual working upon or within humans." (Erickson 1985, p858) The result of God's work in mankind is clearly seen in the work and movement of the Holy Spirit as evidenced in the changed lives of past and present saints who were regenerated, indwelled, and empowered by God, for God and by His will. It is the power and movement of the Holy Spirit that God sustains creation, preserves His saints, and carries out His tasks. The movement of the Holy Spirit is seen in the effect God has on mankind eternally.

I often pray that God will reveal to me all that blocks the Holy Spirit from influencing my life so that I may repent, remember, and return to a right way of living which may only be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit evidenced in my life, by my good works, as seen by the movement of the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ George Smeaton *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), pp. 33-35

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ABSTRACTS OF RECENT SFBC&TS THESES & DISSERTATIONS

The Wife of Uriah the Hittite

James Jeffrey Walls

Master's Thesis

2013

This work involves an examination of Matthew 1:6 in an attempt to discern why it is worded as it is and, likely more crucial, to discover what can be gained from the wording and its specific placement in the Scriptures. More specifically, David and Solomon are mentioned by name, as well as Uriah, who is not actually in the lineage by blood, and the way in which Bathsheba is “named.” Why is the foreigner, a man of blood, named in this verse while the physical mother, Bathsheba, is left unnamed? What could be reasons for referring to Bathsheba as “the wife of Uriah” when, in fact, she is the wife of both David and Uriah?

To answer these points, each of the four persons specifically mentioned in the verse are considered, as well as the others listed in this brief, yet rich, genealogy, examining what others have said towards the commonalities and context as regards possible application to the primary four. This study looks at the gentiles in the lineage of Christ, seeing God's use of the weak and broken to humble the proud and mighty, and takes note of God's hand in the details. This study will go on to note the historical significance of the Hittites, the possible implications of the words of Bathsheba actually noted in Scripture as opposed to words that are not provided, how others have perceived the scene of David's great failure, and how much of the detail gained can have application to the Christian's views on personal salvation, being a good witness, obedient, and recognizing with greater clarity God's invisible hand working throughout our history.

Expressing the Love of Jesus to the Poor Through Social Services: A Transferrable Model for South Florida Churches

Donald F. Clarke, Jr.
Master's Thesis
2012

It is a fallacy to believe that today's 21st century church should not be involved in assisting the poor in society. It is antithetical to Christian theology to ascribe that our main goal is to evangelize the lost without ever ministering to their basic physiological and emotional needs. The focus should be to work simultaneously in winning people to Christ through sharing the Gospel of Jesus, that is, through securing their spiritual eternity with God and meeting their physical needs as well. Jesus Christ, our greatest example in the canonical Gospels, not only ministered in teaching the good news to the multitudes in Matthew 14: 13-1, Mark 6:34-41, and Luke 9:10-17, but also showed compassion by meeting their basic necessities by healing their diseases and meeting their physical hunger.

The church has a role to play when it comes to the destitute in society. We are called as the body of Jesus Christ to be His hands and feet in the community, not just in sharing the Gospel but also in catering to the physical needs of mankind. Jesus illustrates a parable in Matthew 25:46 and says, "Whatever you do for the least of these, you do it for me" (NIV). This seems to indicate that God is on the side of the oppressed and dejected and is against those who dismiss and ignore those who are in need of help.

The writer discusses how the poor in society matter. Topics that the writer addresses include (a) identifying the poor in the 21st century, (b) initiatives for the church to unite with the government in assisting the poor, and (c) biblical examples of those who have aided the poor. In the end, a model will be developed that other churches can follow to help the impoverished in their communities and to express the love of Christ through the conduit of social services.

The Disproportionate Incarceration of African American Males in America: Secular and Biblical Views

Ronnie S. Glover
Master's Thesis
2012

The purpose of this research paper is to expose the unjust system of consistent, disproportionate incarceration of African American males in jails and prisons in America, reveal the unfortunate legal, financial, and social facts that perpetuate this practice, highlight the negative effect that it has on the African American family, and suggest alternatives to incarceration.

Although the purpose statement may be controversial and those with opposing opinions might seek to challenge it, the data from the writer's research supports the statement and, at the same time, discredits opposing opinions. This study, through statistical data and research gathered via academic, public, and practical sources, will provide the reader with information that may surprise and astound them, as it did this writer. Additionally, biblical texts and theological thought are included in an effort to challenge individual and contemporary Christian analysis of the subject.

Most readers cannot fathom the different strategies practiced on every level of the justice system that contribute to the propagation of systematic, disproportionate incarceration of black men. Some factors that are examined in this work are racial profiling, commodification in prisons, prison profiteering, and intentional statistical distortion of racial and ethnic realities of prison growth. The negative effects that incarceration has on children and the communities of incarcerated black men are also examined.

Exploring Christian & Secular Counseling Approaches to Treat the Traumatic Effects of Sexual Abuse among Women Survivors with an Emphasis on Self-Image

Estrelita Elogada
Doctoral Dissertation
2012

It is important to understand how sexual abuse affects the overall well-being of women, particularly in the area of self-image. Secular counseling approaches continue to saturate literature to address the effects of sexual abuse among women, however since spirituality is becoming a major focus it is equally important to explore this issue from a Christian counseling perspective. This research will outline both secular and Christian counseling approaches that treat sexual abuse among women survivors. The purpose is to compare and contrast the effectiveness of these different approaches and explore which approach particularly emphasizes treatment on the self-image. Examining these different approaches can provide a myriad of information and options towards an effective recovery process. However, there are other factors to consider. First is to understand the prevalence and gender differences. Then define what sexual abuse is, explore the abusive experience, and interpret its traumatizing effects. Research has proven that the traumatizing experience impacts the spirit, soul, and body will be explored more in depth. In essence, this research will serve as a guide to help professionals and women survivors of sexual abuse understand the traumatizing effects of sexual abuse and become more cognizant of both secular and Christian counseling approaches who emphasize treatment on the self-image.

Understanding the Disorder and Societal Impact for Women with Postpartum Anxiety Issues

Ann Rowe

Doctoral Dissertation

2012

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine identified symptoms of postpartum anxiety disorder, explore the societal impact of postpartum anxiety, and demonstrate efficient solutions to manage postpartum anxiety disorders.

Mood disorders and anxiety disorders are recognized as significant mental health problems. Emotional distress and physiological effects associated with mood disturbances or persistent anxiety cause clinically significant impairment in social, academic, occupational, or other areas of functioning. Although comorbidity occurs, each disorder has distinctive attributes. Investigators have frequently chronicled prevalence rates, presenting symptoms, and diagnostic criteria affiliated with postpartum depression. Analysis of issues related to postpartum anxiety however is sparse. Because postpartum anxiety disorder has limited presentation in professional domains, moderate endeavors have been made by experts to define remarkable characteristics of postpartum anxiety disorder. Proficient skill is required to identify specific symptoms affiliated with anxiety disorder and to distinguish presenting features commonly recognized as depression. Effective treatment strategies must be formulated and implemented to combat fundamental dilemmas confronting women accompanied by the disorder. A strong maternal attribute is to protect an unborn child. The protective maternal instinct progresses throughout the pregnancy and persists during the child's development. In recent times, some mothers have endangered the life of their child or in rare case have committed infanticide. According to Spinelli (2004), the perilous nature of postpartum psychosis has been repeatedly noted through the centuries. Modern society is in pursuit of an intensified awareness surrounding issues related to postpartum psychopathology, including comprehension of postpartum anxiety disorder. Antenatal medical experts commonly recognize postpartum depression as a consideration. Effective implementation of classification mechanisms, treatment proposals, and regulatory standards has lead improved clinical management for women. "Effective strategies for identification, intervention, and prevention of infanticide are absent from the continuum of antenatal and postnatal care and services to date for women with anxiety dilemmas," according to Spinelli (2004).

Research participants were recruited from current patients receiving medical care services at a healthcare facility located in Utah. The medical assistants were trained to identify and recruit participants who met a specific inclusionary criterion. Before joining the project, trained staff members were instructed to give the letter of recruitment to any woman who presented to the healthcare facility for a postpartum visit, or to any woman who presented to the clinic on behalf of an infant child, under age one. Eleven participants were recruited for the project; however a total of eight women were included in the analysis. Materials: Each participant was required to complete a number of study documents, including the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) measure, a Demographic Information Questionnaire, and a Medication Checklist. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) measure was utilized because of its concise length and ease of completion. Additionally, the STAI was designed to determine anxiety levels at two distinctive junctures. The STAI is a well-validated self-report scale that evaluates feelings of apprehension, tension, nervousness, and worry at the time of administration (state anxiety) and measures dispositional anxiety (trait anxiety). Both scales contain 20 items, with a range of four possible responses, scored on a 4-point Likert scale. In total, each participant was involved in the project for one day. The time required to complete all research documents was approximately 20 to 30 minutes. All documents were completed in the office on the same day. Study Design/Type: A survey design study was implemented in this research project. After a research packet was distributed to the participant and all completed research documents were returned to the researcher, each participant was assigned to one of two groups. The experimental group consisted of those participants who have previously used psychotropic medication or were actively using medication therapy at the time each was recruited to join the project. Participants who reported no prior use or active use of psychotropic medication were assigned to the control group.

This research project was designed to allow the researcher to assess the amount of change as a result of the use of psychotropic medication therapy. A total of eight women were included in the analysis. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) was used to measuring anxiety levels during the postpartum period. The range of scores on the STAI is 20-80, the higher the score indicating greater anxiety (Spielberger et al., 1970). The Null Hypothesis for this experiment proposed that there would be no significant difference between the STAI scores for participants in the experimental group when compared with the STAI scores for participants in the control ($H_0: m_1 - m_2 = 0$). The alternate hypothesis for the project projected that there would be a significant difference between the STAI scores for these two groups ($H_1: m_1 - m_2 \neq 0$). The findings

generated in the analysis indicated that there was no significant difference between the STAI scores for participants in the experimental group when compared with the STAI scores for those individuals assigned to the control group.

The most critical time for an infant is the first several months. During this time, the process of attachment begins. Attachment is the reciprocal, enduring, emotional, and physical affiliation between a child and a caregiver. The child receives what he or she needs to live and grow through this relationship. The caregiver meets a child's need to provide sustenance and guidance. Infants and young children develop a preferred or primary attachment, commonly the child's parent. Parents provide comfort, reassurance, protection, guidance, and ongoing care as the child grows. Parental obligations contribute to the principal mission of attachment and provide the building blocks for a child's prospective development. Early childhood experiences shape personal and interpersonal social concepts. Failure to recognize psychiatric symptoms, warning signs for women at risk, and errors related to the diagnosis or treatment for identified women have led to tragic events including infanticide. A comprehensive evaluation of each patient is required to eliminate inadequate recognition of observable postpartum psychopathology. Implementation, adjustment, and maintenance of critical support services are required to reduce the impact of postpartum psychopathology.