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EDITORIAL

The Spirit, *Scholē*, and Spirit-filled Scholarship

Jeremy Wallace, D.Min.¹

Unlike many of my peers and colleagues who attend and minister within our Foursquare family, I was not raised in a Foursquare church. Rather, I was raised within a Baptist tradition and my grandfather was a Baptist minister who served well over 40 years in this capacity. Many of my childhood memories of church were filled with pipe organs, hymnals, and unbelievably hard, wooden pews. Despite spending my kindergarten and first grade years in a K-12 school based out of Portland Foursquare (Heritage Christian School) in the early 80s, my true journey into our Foursquare family came in the late 80s when I was in junior high school. As it would turn out, my former principal from Heritage Christian School was the new pastor at a Foursquare church in Canby, Oregon. We went to visit but ended up never leaving.

The Spirit

I recall the first time I entered a worship service at a Foursquare church, and I was blown away. I beheld young and old worshipping alike with hands lifted high and clearly heartfelt praise that seem to fill the room like a blanket. It was the first time I ever recall experiencing the Spirit of God amidst the praises of His people. Something was different about this mode of “doing church” and I was hooked from the “get-go.” I would later come to find out that the Foursquare denomination in general had gained a reputation for being “people of the Spirit.” This greatly intrigued me, since my upbringing seemed to focus primarily on the Persons and works of the Father and the Son in the Godhead. I would, of course, also come to find out the historical context of the Foursquare movement, the ministry of Aimee Semple McPherson, and the broader movement of Pentecostalism in the early twentieth century. Foursquare’s long and compelling story within the Pentecostal movement is one I came to cherish and sought to promote, as I do to this day. Years later, when I accepted the call of God on my life and launched into biblical studies at university, I gained a greater appreciation for the work of the Spirit. I heard professors speak of the crucial difference between what we call the “ontological Trinity” and the “economic Trinity.”² I learned of the Spirit’s role in creation, His role in bringing about and sustaining all life, His role in

¹ Jeremy Wallace (jeremy.wallace@tku.edu) is Executive Director of *Kerygma21* and pastor of *The Southside Community* (Tulsa, Oklahoma). He teaches theology and biblical studies for The King’s University & Seminary, Northwest University and Life Pacific University.

² Roughly speaking, such discussions attempt to differentiate who God is (and what God is like) in His essence apart from and prior to creation, versus God’s behavior and workings with (and after) the world He created. Hence, discussion of the “ontological Trinity” seeks to understand the nature of God’s “existence” *as God*. Conversely, the expression “economic Trinity” centers upon God’s postlapsarian redemptive activities and future relations with the created order.

the conviction of sins and the sanctification of the redeemed. As a budding scholar, I found myself particularly drawn to the work of the Holy Spirit as the illuminator of truth and the inspirer of Scripture. Indeed, what served to be somewhat of a reformatory epiphany for me personally was the simple (yet profound) truth that the very One who inspired the Word of God was the very One who would illuminate the truths of Scripture to my finite understanding. That is, the very Person of the Spirit who made Scripture itself God-breathed³ is the very Person who is at work elucidating and revealing the very truth from God's Word into which He breathed life. This discovery inspired me so deeply that I began a new relationship with the Holy Spirit — one in which I find immense satisfaction and gratefulness as I ever deepen in my knowledge of the Spirit as Ultimate Scholar.

Scholē

Contrary to the presumption of some, I greatly disliked my educational experience growing up, even into my years in undergraduate study. Struggling with mild dyslexia and debilitating test-taking anxiety, I grew to dislike much within the Western educational system. It really was not until half way through my undergraduate years that I began to enjoy “school.” In fact, it was a radical shift in my approach to education that changed everything. I barely made it into college, was only accepted through an academic probationary status, and I simply did not expect to succeed in my scholastic endeavors. But then I made a change and began to care less about “getting the grades” and simply began to appreciate what it was I was learning. I sought to discover *why* what I was learning was important on a grander scale. This brought not only a love of learning into my life, but it helped me to get better grades in the long run! You see, I learned there is a profound correlation between discipleship and education. Disciples are by nature learners. The very words for ‘disciple’ in Hebrew and Greek denote as much.⁴ Disciples were indeed “followers,” but fundamentally they were pupils, students, learners. In my quest to be a disciple, I found myself at home, as it were, through learning. The life of the mind became for me a life in the Spirit.

We think and speak of scholars today as individuals who are “learned” or at least as individuals who dedicate their lives, in some measure, to learning. We think of scholars as the “experts” in a given field of study and, in a sense, those who are the “professionals,” who have, in the eyes of some, “arrived.” Although this certainly is a way we use the term in our modern vernacular, one may be surprised to learn of the etymological roots and development of the word “scholar.” Our current English usage of “scholar” is derived from

³ The Greek word *theopneustos* is usually translated “inspired” or “God-breathed” and may be loosely rendered as “God-spirited.”

⁴ *Mathētēs* (Gk.) and *Talmīd* (Heb.) are variously translated “learner,” “pupil,” “student,” “disciple,” or “follower.”

the Old English word *scolere* (trans. “student”), which in turn came from the Medieval (and Late) Latin word *scholaris*, meaning “of a school.” In fact, our English word “school” is derived from the Latin word *schola*, with roughly the same meaning. Latin actually assimilated *schola* from the Greek language, however, and its etymology is much more interesting. The Greek noun *scholē* comes from the verb *scholazō* and early on each of these words had to do with “leisure” or “being at rest.”⁵ Over time, places of “leisure” became places of discussion, and these places of discussion eventually evolved into places for instruction and rigorous debate. My point is this: *scholarship is a dialogue*. Scholarship is not an empty means to an empty end. Rather, scholarship is a journey into knowledge, wisdom and understanding, and it must be done in dialogue. The work of Foursquare scholarship too is not a mere means to an end but should be a mutually beneficial relationship between scholars and leaders, between leaders and the led.

Spirit-Filled Scholarship

This brings us to the present issue of *Quadrum*, which attempts to give focus to the work of the Spirit in and through our Foursquare family today. In many ways, it addresses Spirit-filled scholarship. The Holy Spirit is indubitably working in our scholarship and through our scholarship to both advance the Kingdom and to bring to bear the witness of the Gospel into every facet of human existence. Although Foursquare’s reputation may be known as a pastor-centric, local church movement, it is important to acknowledge that Foursquare educators and scholars have their place in our movement as well. God has uniquely called, equipped, and anointed scholars within our family *for a purpose*. We believe this purpose is to equip and enfranchise our Foursquare family to exemplify and embody fidelity to Jesus and His Kingdom in general, and to promote and advance the Foursquare Gospel in particular.

For the present issue, I was pleased to partner with James Henderson, Steven Félix-Jäger, Ike Shepherdson, Ryan Lytton and Clayton Robinson. Dr. Henderson brings to us an article expounding upon the gift of the Holy Spirit addressed in Romans 5:12-21, most notably demonstrating that Jesus Christ did in fact die for the sins of all humanity and, hence, the notion of limited atonement is deemed untenable. Next, Dr. Félix-Jäger makes the case that the author of the book of Revelation, through his account of the Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8-11), used the days of creation (Gen. 1:1-2:3) typologically to “*un-create*”

⁵ Thayer’s first definition of *scholē* (G4981) suggests that “from Pindar down, [*scholē* meant] ‘freedom from labor,’ ‘leisure.’” A second definition is provided: “According to later Greek usage, [it meant] ‘a place where there is leisure for anything,’ ‘a school.’” See also BAGD, p. 797, where it is claimed that in the LXX and Philo *scholē* meant to “have time or leisure.” *Scholē* is a *hapax legomena* in the NT, occurring only in Acts 19:9. This is the occasion where the Apostle Paul “. . . took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus (τῆ σχολῆ Τυράννου // *tē scholē Tyrannou*). “Hall” is frequently translated “lecture hall” in Bible translations, but it would be misleading to think of it anachronistically as a locale strictly for instruction. It was, rather, a place of rigorous discussion, philosophizing, and a place for the free exchange of ideas.

the world. Dr. Shepherdson's article centers on how the doctrine of divine omnipresence provides a framework within which Christians can explain how the Holy Spirit functions in natural theology and apologetics. Prof. Lytton's article seeks to address the alarming tendencies within certain streams of Pentecostalism that are embracing gnostic epistemology, either tacitly or overtly. Finally, Clayton Robinson offers a lexical analysis of the usage of *apophthengesmai*, a Greek word used in the NT, to demonstrate that a believer's Spirit-infilling is an initiation and invitation to the Spirit's presence in one's preaching and teaching, and hence, potentially within one's scholarship.

We do hope you enjoy with great immensity this issue, and we want you to know we are grateful for your support and readership.

**Life for the Many:
Unlimited Atonement and the Gift of the Spirit in Romans 5:12-21**

James Henderson, Ph.D.¹

ABSTRACT:

Romans 5:12-21 has been used since the time of Augustine of Hippo to argue for a limited atonement, an atonement that is meant to save only a minority, pre-selected “elect.” This article will show that this conclusion is false. The passage actually supports an unlimited atonement that offers salvation to each and every human person. The article will first discuss the structure of Romans 5:12-21 and then its grammar. The article will then construct a theology of how the atonement can offer salvation to every human person despite Adam’s original transgression.

In the fourth century A.D., Augustine of Hippo set the tone for Western consideration of the scope of the atonement and the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation.² Augustine’s understanding emphasized the Father’s sovereignty and secret will to choose only some to be saved (by election or predestination), attributing salvation ultimately to the work of the Father (in electing). This diminished the scope of Christ’s work of the cross, and lost sight of the work of the Holy Spirit to bring the effects of the atonement to humanity. Election, and ultimately salvation, was the Father’s work, rather than the work of the entire Trinity.³

One of seminal texts for the discussion of election and the scope of the atonement is Romans 5:12-21.⁴ This text has had a “massive effect on the development of Western

¹ James Henderson (jhenderson@regent.edu) is Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies and Christian Ministry at Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia. A version of this paper was presented at the 41st Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, April 29 - March 03, at Regent University.

² On election, see Walter Van Saun, “Some Permanent Contributions of Augustine to Christian Thought,” *EvQ* 6, no. 3 (JI 1934): 265. Paul Rorem, “Augustine, the Medieval Theologians, and the Reformation,” in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G. R. Evans (Malden, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001), 365, 371. John Rist, “Augustine of Hippo,” in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G. R. Evans (Malden, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001), 3. J. Patout Burns, “The Atmosphere of Election: Augustinianism as Common Sense,” *J ECS* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 325.

³ Philip L. Quinn, “Disputing the Augustinian Legacy: John Locke and Jonathan Edwards on Romans 5:12-19, chapter 13 in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley; London: The University of California Press, 1999). David Weaver, “From Paul to Augustine: Romans 5:12 in Early Christian Exegesis,” *SVTQ* 27, no. 3 (1983): 202-03. See 203 n. 53. B. Harbert, “Romans 5,12: Old Latin and Vulgate in the Pelagian Controversy,” in Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *StPatr* 1987, vol. 22, *Cappadocian Fathers, Chrysostom and his Greek Contemporaries, Augustine, Donatism and Pelagianism* (Leuven: Peters Press, 1989), 261.

⁴ Peter J. Leithart, “Adam, Moses, and Jesus: A Reading of Romans 5:12-14,” *CTJ*, 43 (2008): 257. See also Jean-Noel Alletti, “Le Peché Originel Approche Paulinienne,” *ETR* 83, no. 1 (2008): 1. Mark Rapinchuk cites a number of examples of contemporary authors who take an Augustinian view of Romans 5:12-21, particularly in the sense of seeing original sin as making every human guilty (although his own view is that of covenantal nomism) in “Universal Sin and Salvation in Romans 5:12-21,” *JETS* 42, no. 3 (September 1999): 427.

theology” concerning the agency and scope of redemption since the time of Augustine.⁵ Western theologians have used this passage to affirm such opposite views as the “Law-gospel” contrast and a “forensic” view of justification in Reformed covenantal theology⁶ on the one hand, and the “covenantal nomism” of the New Perspective on Paul on the other.⁷

This article shall demonstrate that we can better interpret Romans 5:12-21 to show that the Father’s intent is to offer salvation to everyone rather than to restrict salvation to a pre-selected “elect.” We should not interpret the passage to say that the Father has a secret will to save only some. Further, this article will consider how we can understand the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the “gift of righteousness” to everyone, a topic almost wholly ignored in exegesis of Romans 5:12-21.⁸

To do this, I will discuss the structure, logic, and meaning of the text, examine the implications of its meaning for our perception of the work of Christ concerning all humans, and then propose a way of understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the possibility of life to every human person. It will briefly evaluate the Augustinian understanding of this passage, and then construct an alternate view that sees Romans 5:12-21 as a logical whole. In doing so, I will examine the important but generally misunderstood concepts of the “all” and the “many.” The paper will then show that the Augustinian emphasis on sin and death is inferior to an emphasis on the redeeming work of Christ and life this work brings. Finally, we will conclude that the passage supports the view of a general calling of all humans by the Holy Spirit who empowers an eschatological, ontological choice, leading to a particular election.

The Text of Romans 5:12-21

In discussing the meaning of Romans 5:12-21, we will first discuss what place Romans 5:12-21 occupies within the framework of the larger epistle, and then we will discuss the structure of the smaller passage. Both of these discussions affect how we will construe the meaning of Romans 5:12-21. The purpose in this section is to counter the Augustinian assumption that we should read 5:12-21 through the lens of Romans 9, as if Romans

⁵ For example, Meredith G. Kline, “Gospel until the Law: Rom 5:13-14 and the Old Covenant,” *JETS* 34, no. 4 (December 1991): 433-34; Gerhard O. Forde, “The Exodus from Virtue to Grace: Justification by Faith Today,” *Int* 34, no. 1 (January 1980): 32-44.

⁶ Two examples of a Covenantal nomism view of Romans 5 are James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38 A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988) and N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁷ It is interesting, to me, that a youth pastor sees this clearly where theologians do not. See Andy Goodliff, “Can the Christian Gospel Speak to the Experience of Young People Today?” *Journal of Youth and Theology* 3, no. 2 (November 2004): 46, n. 38.

⁸ Ben Witherington III, “The Trouble with Tulips: Romans and Reformed Theology,” *Christian Studies* 22 (2007-2008): 21.

chapters 7 and 8 were parentheses in Paul's main argument. This failure to read Romans sequentially, as a logical development of Paul's thought, leads to a misunderstanding of the meaning of Romans 5:12-21.⁹

The Place and Connection to the Larger Context of Romans

Commentators disagree on the place of Romans 5:12-21 in the logic of the epistle, some seeing it as a "bridge" between Romans 1:1-5:11 and the rest of the epistle, others seeing chapters 5-8 as a rhetorical unit marked off by clear rhetorical structures.¹⁰ Some of these different approaches appear to arise from theological assumptions made about Romans 5:12-21, rather than the structure of the passage itself. For example, orthodox Augustinian commentators focus on the role of Adam and the Law in spreading sin and death, and tend to see Romans 5:12-21 as an extension of the argument in Romans chapter 4. Here, they link Paul's discussion of the faith of Abraham to the absence of the Law (see Rom 5:14, 20) between Adam and Moses and conclude that the sacrifice of Christ, explained in Romans 3, is meant only for those predestined to salvation, the "elect."¹¹ This leads them to read 5:12-21 through the lens of Romans 9, as if chapters 7 and 8 were parentheses in Paul's main argument.

On the other hand, if Romans 5:12-21 emphasizes not so much the consequences of Adam's sin as that of the "one act of righteousness" performed by Christ, then the connection to Romans 3, where Paul makes it clear that the remedy for universal sin is the offering by the Father of Christ in sacrifice, is obvious. The language used in Romans 5:12-21 makes this connection more explicit,¹² and the conclusion of Romans 3:9-20 that sin is universal provides the foundation for the argument of 5:12-21.¹³ This would make Romans 4 an example of trusting in the sacrifice of Christ as the remedy for sin both for those who sin without the Law and for those who sin while under the Law. Romans 5:1-11 shows us

⁹ See Thielman, "The Story of Israel," 227-249 for a discussion of some of the different ways the place of Romans 5 is parsed. Examples of rhetorical analysis would be Patricia M. McDonald, SHCJ, "Romans 5.1-11 as a Rhetorical Bridge," *JSNT*, 40 (1990): 83, 91; Marty L. Reid, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Romans 1:1-5:21 with Attention given to the Rhetorical Function of 5:1-21," *PRSt*, 19, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 271.

¹⁰ Kline, "Gospel until Law," 437. Kline hangs his assumption solely on the fact that Paul makes a theological point about Abraham in chapter 4. Leithart, "Adam, Moses, and Jesus," 257, whose analysis is very different from Kline's, also stresses the role of Torah in Paul's thinking.

¹¹ D. B. Garlington, "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans: Part III: The Obedience of Christ and the Obedience of the Christian," *WTJ*, 55 (1993): 97 [Hereafter cited as "Obedience III/1"]

¹² Charles D. Myers, Jr., "Chiastic Inversion in the Argument of Romans 3-8," *NovT* 35, no. 1 (1993): 38-40.

¹³ D. B. Garlington, "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans. Part II: The Obedience of Faith and Judgment by Works," *WTJ* 53 (1991): 47-72 [hereafter cited as "Obedience II"] states that this emphasizes the comparison of Adam and Christ. However, an *equal* comparison of the two is probably not Paul's point in this passage. On linking Romans 5:12ff with verses 1-11 through the idea of the atonement, see C. Clifton Black II, "Pauline Perspectives on Death in Romans 5-8," *JBL*, 103, no. 3 (1984): 421.

the result of having faith in Christ, and 5:12-21 demonstrates that this result is the consequence of the sacrifice of Christ.¹⁴

In both sections of Romans 5, the major theme is the work of Christ and its effect on the human relationship to God. The structure of Romans 5:12-21 leads naturally from the considerations developed in Romans 5:1-11, and shows how the work of Christ brings peace with God. The passage then leads from the sacrifice of Christ as the remedy for the universal condition of humanity as sinners directly to the development, in Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8, of the participation of the believer in the life of Christ and in following daily the leading of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Romans 5:12-21, then, forms a distinct unit within the rhetorical whole of Romans which can be identified as stretching (at least) from chapter 3:21 through chapter 8:39.¹⁶

This means that Romans 5:12-21 is most likely the *summation of Paul's entire discussion* of how the righteousness of God comes to us through the sacrifice of Christ. Rather than an excursus or parenthesis in Paul's thought, 5:12-21 describes how the benefits of Christ's sacrifice come, potentially, to every one of us even though we are sinners. This makes it very important to understand Romans 5:12-21 properly.

The Structure of Romans 5:12-21

How we see the structure of verses 12 through 21 in Romans 5 influences our understanding of how the passage fits into the larger whole of Paul's argument. Many wish to interpret 5:12-21 under the rubrics of sin and death, and often argue that the passage is "broken," that Paul does not complete the thought begun in Romans 5:12. Other analysts insist that the passage is a rhetorical whole.

A number of commentators argue that the structure of Romans 5:12-21 is broken in the sense that Paul's thought stops abruptly at the end of 5:12 and does not resume until 5:18. For example, Garlington joins Romans 5:2 with 5:18 and 19 as a "statement of cause and effect."¹⁷ Kline denies that Romans 5:12-21 has the history of humankind in view and restricts the "parenthesis" of 5:12-17 to a discussion of the Mosaic Law and the covenant community, whereas Kreitzer sees the intervening verses as an "excursus."¹⁸

¹⁴ Thielman, "Story of Israel," 229.

¹⁵ Thomas Barrosse, C.S.C., "Death and Sin in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans," *CBQ* 15, no. 4 (October 1953): 438; Garlington, "Obedience III/1," 97, 98. Kreitzer, "Christ as Second Adam," 78. we do not have the space here to discuss the relationship of these chapters to chapters 1 and 2 or of chapters 1-8 to chapters 9 and following.

¹⁶ Garlington, "Obedience III/1," 100.

¹⁷ Kline, "Gospel until Law," 436-37. Kreitzer, "Christ as Second Adam," 79. See also Michael F. Bird, "Incorporated Righteousness: A Response to Recent Evangelical Discussion Concerning the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness in Justification," *JETS* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 267-68, and Alletti, "Le Peché Originel," 1.

¹⁸ Byrne notes this effect while arguing for the greater stress by Paul on Christ, rather than Adam. Byrne, "Christ's Pre-Existence," 324.

While a grammatical reason is generally offered for omitting Romans 5:13-17 from the main flow of the argument (that of a protasis which is not immediately followed by an apodosis), this reasoning is as much *theological* as grammatical.¹⁹ By declaring the passage broken, commentators emphasize the role of Adam in bringing sin and death to all humankind, stringing Romans 5:12 directly to the transgression and condemnation spoken of in Romans 5:18. The themes of disobedience, the Law, and condemnation then dominate the interpretation of 5:18-21, and thereby dominate the interpretation of 5:12-21 as a whole. That this is foreign to a proper reading of the passage can be seen in that a number of commentators who consider the grammar of Romans 5:12-21 as broken or tangled, nevertheless treat the entire passage as a logical whole, or at least a structure that hangs together internally. Garlington sees the vocabulary of Romans 5:13-17 as influencing the vocabulary of Romans 5:18-19. Byrne sees the verses that come between 5:12 and 5:18 as explanatory.²⁰

On the other hand, several recent studies argue that Romans 5:12-21 is not a broken passage, but demonstrates a logical and rhetorical wholeness.²¹ Rhetorical analyses views Romans 5:12-21 as a whole. Rather than a logical break, Paul answers two questions in Romans 5:15-17 (to both of which we must answer “yes”), which leads to the conclusion in Romans 5:18 that the result of one man's sin is judgment on all, and the result of one man's righteousness is righteousness for all.²²

Some structural analyses, which focus on chiasmic patterns, make a stronger case for the unity of Romans 5:12-21 (as well as its connection to Paul's discussion of the sacrifice of Christ in Romans 3). Leithart proposes that the structure of the passage is very tight and focuses on the parallel between the reign of death and the reign of life in Romans 5:17.²³ Myer concludes that the entire section of Romans 3:9 to 5:21 is a chiasm arranged around the discussion of 3:29-4:25.²⁴ We conclude that the desire to see the passage as “broken” stems primarily from the attempt to make Romans 5:12-21 fit into a prior

¹⁹ D. B. Garlington, “The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans: Part III: The Obedience of Christ and the Obedience of the Christian *Continued*.” *WTJ* 55 (1993): 287-88 [hereafter cited as “Obedience III/2”]. Byrne, “Christ's Pre-Existence,” spends considerable space developing the “schema” of verses 13-17 and considers verse 16 as crucial to Paul's argument. See pp 324-27, esp. p. 327.

²⁰ Leithart surveys both views, the passage as broken and as whole, in “Adam, Moses, and Jesus,” pages 263 n. 14, and 264 n. 15.

²¹ Stanley E. Porter, “The Argument of Romans 5: Can a Rhetorical Question Make a Difference?” *JBL* 110, no. 4 (1991) 673-74. Porter analyzes the passage as a Greek “diatribe.” Reid, “Rhetorical Analysis,” pages 262-63, comes to a very different conclusion. However, Reid simply assumes that the passage revolves around covenantal nomism. He does not argue for his position, and one may wonder if his assumption skews his rhetorical analysis.

²² Leithart, “Adam, Moses, and Jesus,” 262-264.

²³ Myer, Jr., “Chiastic Inversion,” 39-40.

²⁴ Porter, “Argument of Romans,” 673-75. Byrne, “Christ's Pre-Existence,” 323, 325. For an example of a reading which stresses the Adam/sin side of the comparison, see Kline, “Gospel until Law,” esp. 429.

orthodox Augustinian theological assumption—that Adam, sin, and death are Paul’s focus in this passage—in order to ground the idea that salvation is a sovereign work of the Father (by election) in a passage that otherwise would argue against an Augustinian theology of predestination.

Both the rhetorical and chiasmic analysis demonstrate that the heart of this passage are the two parallels of Adam/Christ and death/life. However, in both cases, the second set of ideas (Christ and life) are far more important than the first set (Adam and death). The parallels are "balanced" but not equal. The effects of the sacrificial death of Christ far outweigh the consequences of Adam's transgression. Absent a theological stress on sin and death or a covenantal theology which argues for an original guilt in Adam, Paul’s use of “much more” in Romans 5:15 and 17, and the fact that the gift which comes through Christ is said to “abound” in Romans 5:15, clearly point to the supremacy and logical priority of what Christ has accomplished over what Adam has done. That Paul calls Adam a “type of the one to come” (Rom 5:14) strengthens this conclusion, since the anti-type or fulfillment, Christ in this case, surpasses the type.²⁵

The Universal Effect of Adam and Unlimited Effect of Christ

Both sides of the parallel between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21 are alike in their effects. In whatever manner one conceives the effects of Adam’s sin, whether in terms of a universal guilt due to our “solidarity” in Adam or as a universal corruption in which all of us are entangled or dominated, the effects of this sin are universal in that they have affected every human. Every one of us born on the earth, save Christ himself, participates in the consequences of Adam’s sin.

In a parallel manner, the effects of the work of Christ in Romans 5:12-21 also affect everyone.²⁶ The parallel structure of “one transgression” (*énoš paraptôma*) and “one righteousness act” (*énoš dikaiômatos*) in verse 18 supports this argument.²⁷ However, although Adam’s sin has touched every person in causing somehow each of us to sin in actuality, the effects of Christ’s work touch each and every person in order to bring about a potential, the possibility of choosing to trust (have faith) and receive saving grace. For this reason, and to avoid entanglement with the theological idea of a universal

²⁵ Porter, “Argument of Romans,” 669-70, 674. Garlington, “Obedience III/2,” 282. Rapinchuk, “Universal Sin,” 430. Rapinchuk emphasizes the similarity of results; death for all of those affected by Adam, and life for all those who are affected by Christ. I disagree with his view that the latter group are those who keep covenantal obligations to some form of the Law, and thus the “all” of this passage is “all without ethnic distinction.” The reading recognizes the “unlimited” intent of God, but then assumes that Paul is teaching covenantal nomism.

²⁶ Rapinchuk, “Universal Sin,” 430.

²⁷ Roger E. Olson, “Resurrection, Cosmic Liberation, and Christian Earth Keeping,” *ExAud* 9 (1993): 128-29.

reconciliation, we will speak of the effects of Adam's sin as "universal," but we will use the term "unlimited" when speaking of the work of Christ.

We can understand the unlimited effect of Christ's sacrifice as an eschatological inclusion in the sense that the resurrected Christ is now the head of a new humanity whose fullness will be manifested only in the *eschaton*, or even as a cosmic event that has radically altered the direction of the universe.²⁸ Just as the effects of the Second Adam reach backwards (for example in the justification of Abraham and David in Romans 4), so the *eschaton* has reached "back" into the present experience of every person. However, Paul does assert, elsewhere, that not everyone will be reconciled to God in the end, and so we cannot posit a universal reconciliation of all people.²⁹ "Universalism" is not a viable option in Romans 5, but the effects of Christ's work must have some universal effect, or we disrupt the parallel between Adam and Christ. The context of Paul's parallelism argues for a view of an "unlimited" effect of the work of Christ.

The "All" and "the Many" in Romans 5: 12-21

In discussing the universal scope of the acts of Adam and Christ, another issue is the understanding, or, more generally, misunderstanding, of the Greek terms *pas/pantes* ("all") and *hoi polloi/polloi* ("many"). While commentators generally understand the "all" in Romans 5:12 to mean "every human person" (*pantes* which is parallel to the *polloi* of 5:15 and 19, and to the *pantes* of 5:19), there is disagreement about the corresponding "all" (*pantes*) in 5:18. The "all" in verse 18 is parallel to the "many" (*polloi*) of 5:15 and many commentators will interpret the "all" of 5:18 by the "many" in 5:15. Since they take "many" to mean "some out of the whole," they feel justified in arguing that the "all" of 5:18 means something other than everyone.

Commentators generally assign one of three meanings to the term "all." For some, "all" means both Jews and Gentiles without distinction.³⁰ Others, particularly orthodox Augustinian commentators, read "all" as representatives of all groups or kinds of people (from every tribe or people-group) rather than every individual. The third meaning, "all"

²⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:9, Philippians 3:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:3, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9; 2:10. For this reason, we prefer the term "unlimited" for the effects of the atonement that extend to every human. "Universal" too easily suggests "universalism," or the idea that all will be reconciled to God in the end (*apokatastasis*). I contend the scope of the atonement is unlimited in God's intent, as well as in potential, and thus the Father authentically extends the offer of the gospel to every person without the limitation of a prior, secret will of God. We do not support a Universalist reading. Kirk reaches this same conclusion by examining only our passage. J. R. Daniel Kirk, "Reconsidering *Dikaiōma* in Romans 5:16," *JBL* 126, no. 4 (2007): 788-90.

²⁹ Gerald Bray, "Adam and Christ (Romans 5:12-21)," *Evangel* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 8; Rapinchuk, "Universal Sin," 433; Garlington, "Obedience III/1," 100, 112.

³⁰ Rapinchuk analyses three possibilities in this manner. "Universal Sin," 434-35. All of his examples of *pantes* meaning "all without distinction" involve faith, which would seem to link more naturally to the qualification of faith in Romans 5:17 rather than to covenant obedience as Rapinchuk would have it. See also Garlington, "Obedience III/1," 112.

as every human person, is often dismissed out of hand as being "universalistic" (despite the clear qualification in Romans 5:17).

The context of the parallel between Adam and Christ would seem to demand some kind of effect that reaches to each human person. It is disingenuous to assert that Adam's sin affected every human but that the Father intended the atonement to rescue only some from each group. The question is rightly not *if* the atonement includes all, but *in what manner* the atonement is effective for all. The meaning of "all," however, is closely tied to the meaning of the Greek *polloi* and *hoi polloi* in this passage.³¹ Examining these terms will strengthen the argument for an "unlimited" effect of the atonement.

In his discussion of how God has dealt with the sin of the first Adam by means of the righteousness of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, Paul contrasts "the one" with "the many." While the Augustinian tradition reads these verses as though "the many" is in contrast to "all"—that only some of the "all" are meant³²—this is emphatically not the case. This misunderstanding seems to be based on the Classical Greek meaning of *polloi*, which Augustine (incorrectly) read back into the *Koine* Greek of the NT. However, modern scholarship now understands the *Koine* Greek of the NT far better than even the Church Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries.

Rather than the Classical Greek sense of "many" —a distinction between the majority of a group, and the few— Paul employs the term "many" (*hoi polloi*) in the Hebraic sense that is reflected in the LXX. This is a collective sense, called a "summarizing"³³ or "inclusive"³⁴ sense, and does not contrast some of a group with all of a group. Instead, it speaks of *every person in the group*, the group viewed as a collection of individuals.³⁵ For example, when it says in Mark 1: 32 that they brought *all* of the sick and the demon possessed, and Jesus healed *many*, it does not mean that Jesus healed some of those afflicted. Rather, it indicates that Jesus healed each and every one of the sick or afflicted individually. Perhaps a better translation of *polloi* might be "*each and every*."

Since Paul clearly uses *hoi polloi* as a synonym for *pas/pantes* in Romans 5, "all" means all; the effects of Jesus' sacrifice must somehow touch each and every human. The

³¹ For example, Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 394.

³² F. Graber, "All, Many," in Colin Brown, ed., *NIDNTT*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 1: 94-97.

³³ J. Jeremias, *Polloi*, in Gerhard Kittel, and Gerhard Friedrich, *TDNT*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mi., Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 6: 536, 540-545. Donald M. Lake, "He Died For All: The Universal Dimensions of the Atonement. Jacob Arminius' Contribution to a Theology of Grace," chap. 2 in *Grace Unlimited*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 33. Gallagher cites Karl Barth's understanding of *polloi* as individual egos for whom Christ as an ego acts out obedience, "Obedience II," 51. It is interesting that Rapinchuk's analysis of *pas/pantes* does not mention the parallel language of *hoi polloi/polloi*.

³⁴ *TDNT*, 6: 536, n. 3. See also BAGD, 688, 2, a., β, which refers to the article in *TDNT*.

³⁵ Garlington, "Obedience III/2," 282.

“unlimited” effect of Christ’s work somehow offsets the “universal” impact of Adam’s sin.³⁶ Such an understanding does not lead to a “universalist” conclusion. The parallel between Christ and Adam is not balanced, and the effects are not equal.³⁷ The death brought about through Adam’s transgression extends over every human without qualification, but the life that comes through Christ is enjoyed only by those who receive grace and the gift of righteousness (Ro 5:16-17). The Augustinian assumption, that God gives such grace and the gift only to those he has pre-selected for salvation, is not supported in the actual text. We must construct a theological understanding that takes the *Koine* meaning of the terms (*polloi* and *pas*) and the parallel between Adam and Christ into proper account.³⁸

Emphasizing Christ and Life rather than Adam and Death

As we move toward a proper theological reading of Romans 5:12-21, we must first examine the theological treatment of the passage by others. Grammatical, rhetorical, or structural analyses do not seem to lead everyone in the same direction. For example, Garlington uses rhetorical analysis to support a largely Augustinian reading of 5:12-21 while Reid uses his analysis to support the idea that Paul taught a covenantal nomism.³⁹ In these analyses, one’s theology seems to play an even larger role in the interpretation of 5:12-21 than one’s grasp of the grammar or structure, and so we must examine particularly the theological assumptions behind the reading.

The formulation of Augustine’s doctrine of original sin relies heavily on his reading of this passage, and this doctrine has been determinative for much of Western theology down to the present day. The “covenant theology” espoused by Reformed thinkers today owes its structure to Augustine’s view of the Adam-Christ language that Paul uses.⁴⁰ The Reformed idea of “Federal Headship” sees the actions of Adam or Christ as imputed to all those who are “in” Adam or Christ. Such imputation “credits” the act of one to the reality of the many (or perhaps even alters the essential nature of the many).⁴¹ This

³⁶ Kirk, “Reconsidering,” 788.

³⁷ Rapinchuk argues that the data shows that Paul is speaking of all “*without ethnic distinction*” (emphasis original), but it seems clear that he chooses to interpret the data this way because of a previous commitment to covenantal nomism rather than to avoid universalism. It seems odd to argue that *pas* means “all” and then default to Augustine’s view that “all” means some from every group. “Universal Sin,” 433.

³⁸ Garlington, “Obedience III/2,” 284-85; Reid, “Rhetorical Analysis,” 262-63. Although Reid presents his argument as though the results were as straightforward as an autopsy, he simply assumes that Paul is extorting Jews and Gentiles to fulfill their covenantal obligations.

³⁹ Leithart, “Adam, Moses, Jesus,” 257. Leithart provides examples from Augustine. For an Augustinian treatment, see Kline, “Gospel until Law.”

⁴⁰ Kline, “Gospel until Law,” 433. Federal Headship is the terminology of Reformed theology rather than that of Augustine. I suggest that the fifth century Augustine would recognize this as opposite his own view and so we will discuss it under the term “Augustinian.”

⁴¹ Kline, “Gospel until Law,” 437-38. Kline offers no reasoning for this statement except for the tautology that 5:12-21 reflects covenant theology. This may be because Melancthon’s analysis of the passage has fixed the Reformed categories concerning Romans 5. R. Muller points out that Melancthon identified the

understanding, which focuses on the interplay of four covenant relationships (of God to Adam, to Abraham, to Moses, and finally the new covenant in Christ) as “epochs” in salvation history, is seen as the “Pauline pattern” of soteriology and all of Romans is read by this light. Thus, the references to Adam and Moses in 5:12-21 are not temporal references, but are theological statements.⁴²

Romans 5:12-21 forms the basis for the Augustinian doctrine of original sin.⁴³ In the Augustinian view, the passage does not deal with individual human sins, but with human nature; humans are “sinners” in their essence and this is the reason why we sin and why every human is under judgment as part of a condemned whole. Every human is guilty of the original sin committed by Adam because they were in some manner part of Adam (“in” Adam) when he sinned. Discrete sins committed by individual persons cannot be in view.⁴⁴ Human sinning is not the outcome of a corrupted nature, but of the guilty status (or essence) of the entire race.⁴⁵ It would be more accurate to call the Augustinian doctrine one of “original guilt.”

The interpretation of the Greek phrase *eph hō* is relevant here.⁴⁶ While the meaning of this phrase has some latitude, Greek scholars consider it to mean a cause or a result.⁴⁷ Adam's transgression is the cause of sin and death, or sin and death are the results of Adam's act (the sequential idea that sin and death follow as the consequences of Adam's sin seems the same as construing sin and death as the result of the Fall). However, Augustine, under the influence of the Old Latin version which translated *eph ho* as "in whom" (*in qui*),⁴⁸ read this not as the consequences of Adam's transgression affecting every person, but as every person having participated in the sin "in Adam" and so being guilty themselves.⁴⁹ This makes the orthodox Augustinian view one of "original guilt" rather than

locus in 5:11-19 as Sin, with the rest of our pericope under the rubric of Law. Paul does not discuss grace, in Melancthon's schema, until Romans 8. Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 129.

⁴² Rapinchuk gives examples of this in “Universal Sin,” 427-28.

⁴³ Robert L. Thomas, “Hermeneutics of the New Perspective on Paul,” *MSL*, 16, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 307-308. See also Alistair Drummond, “Romans 5:12-21,” *Int* 57, no. 1 (January 2003): 68-69. Drummond sees the issue as one of “ruling powers” rather than “act and punishment.”

⁴⁴ Alletti, “Le Peché Originel,” 13.

⁴⁵ Gerald Bray, “Adam and Christ (Romans 5:12-21),” *Evangel* 18, no 1 (Spring 2000): 6. Garlington, “Obedience III/1,” 111. Leithart, “Adam, Moses, and Jesus,” 265.

⁴⁶ In Romans 5:12, Paul's statement concludes as follows: *eph hō pantes hēmarton* (ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον). In modern translations the phrase *eph hō* is frequently translated “because,” hence “because all sinned.”

⁴⁷ B. Harbert, “Romans 5,12: Old Latin and Vulgate in the Pelagian Controversy,” in Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *StPatr1987*, vol. 22, *Cappadocian Fathers, Chrysostom and his Greek Contemporaries, Augustine, Donatism and Pelagianism* (Leuven, Belgium: Peters Press, 1989), 261.

⁴⁸ Alletti, “Le Peché Originel,” 13. Garlington, “Obedience III/1,” 111. Klein, “Gospel until Law,” 437. Leithart, “Adam, Moses, and Jesus,” 265. Allan P. F. Sell, “Augustine versus Pelagius: a cautionary tale of perennial importance,” *CTJ* 12, no 2 (November 1977): 124.

⁴⁹ Lake “He Died for All,” 34.

"original sin."⁵⁰ Even when Augustine realized that neither the Greek text nor the newer Latin translation of Romans 5 supported his reading, he still maintained this idea of "original guilt" as a foundation stone of his theology.⁵¹ Augustinian commentators, if they acknowledge this problem at all, generally brush it aside and affirm a reading of "original guilt" as if this was a perfectly legitimate reading of *eph ho*.⁵² Again, our theology should be conformed to the text (or there are no legitimate boundaries for interpreting the text at all), and so we must consider *eph ho* to be a cause (Adam caused the spread of sin and death) or a result (sin and death spread as a result of Adam's sin). Our problem is corruption and death rather than guilt.⁵³

Another way that we might understand the result of Adam's sin that avoids some of the difficulties in Augustine's reading is to see the effect of Adam's disobedience as a corrupted nature, rather than as personal guilt for Adam's deed. This restricts "original sin" to the act of disobedience by Adam in the Garden and restricts "original guilt" to Adam alone.⁵⁴ The consequence of Adam's guilt is universal. Each and every one of us person has inherited a corrupted "humanness" if you will. A discussion of the extent and the exact nature of such corruption is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is clear that such corruption leads each and every person to commit sins. Indeed, Paul immediately qualifies his statement about Adam in Romans 5:12 with a statement of individual responsibility for sins.⁵⁵ In Romans 2:1-4, and 12-16, Paul seems to say that it does not matter if we violate a known commandment of God or just our own moral code. Each one "suppresses" the truth that we know and deliberately chooses to do what is not morally good (Rom 1:18-20). A corrupted nature leads to universal sinning, and this in turn means that every human is guilty before God.

In light of this, the relevant question would be "how can God save anyone?" Augustine's answer was that God could sovereignly save whomever he chooses. Since all are dead in sin, all deserve death and perdition. God's grace moves him to save some

⁵⁰ Harbert, "Romans 5, 12," 261.

⁵¹ Sell, "Augustine *versus* Pelagius," 127, argues that Augustine was not consistent in ascribing guilt to humanity. However, he assumes the original guilt of Augustinian theology on page 118 and tells us that we must maintain this view of human guilt "if the theological basis of Christianity is adequately to be set forth, and if Christian living is to flourish." In note 28, page 127, Sells avers that we may forgive the "occasional misreading" of the text due to the necessity of Augustinian theology. Bray, "Adam and Christ," page 6, tells us that we must accept the Augustinian tradition as the best interpretation of this verse because anything else is "Arminian and Pelagian theology" and is inadequate as theology. we assert that classical "Arminian" theology is not at all Pelagian. For a classical Arminian view see Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 200-220.

⁵² Garlington, "Obedience III/1," 102.

⁵³ Bray, "Adam and Christ," 6. Bray accepts this as the fruit of his exegesis but does not follow this in his theology.

⁵⁴ Black, "Perspectives," 421.

⁵⁵ Garlington, "Obedience III/1," 103.

despite their rock-solid commitment to sin, and his justice leaves aside the rest so that they fall into perdition of their own wills (or actively reprobates them). Here we see justice, and we see grace, each in its own proper sphere. What we do not see is the Pauline idea that grace and justice are reconciled in Christ (see Romans 3:26 and 2 Corinthians 5: 18-21). Since the “death” brought about by Adam is not merely physical death, but an abiding state of alienation from God and condemnation, to say that God saves some is to beg the question of how he can save any given their godless and guilty state.⁵⁶

We must reformulate our understanding of how God can save in the face of universal sinning. The orthodox Augustinian approach emphasizes Adam rather than Christ, and so truncates the work of the cross; it has no universal answer to sin beyond condemnation for all since the remedy —the sacrifice of Christ on the cross—has only a “local” scope, the salvation of certain individuals. On the contrary, the cross is God’s way of dealing with sin on the cosmic scale as well as in the individual locus. Romans 5:1-11 demonstrates the results of the cross, reconciliation and peace with God through faith. Romans 5:12-21 demonstrates the means by which that reconciliation is possible and shows that such reconciliation is available to all those who choose to trust in Christ’s work by faith. It also tells us, somewhat obliquely, how the Holy Spirit makes such a choice to trust possible for humans whose nature is to sin. In the following section, we will attempt to construct an alternative theology that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit as the agent of grace based on the sacrifice of Christ in Romans 5:12-21.⁵⁷

Christ and the Spirit in Romans 5:12-21

It is Christ and his work that brings the grace and life that is the central emphasis of Romans 5:12-21 rather than the sin of Adam and the death that resulted from it. To understand the import of Romans 5:12-21 we must focus on the work of Christ. What did Christ do, and how are the effects of Christ’s work communicated to humanity? The work of Christ is his sacrificial death and that he died for every person. It is the Holy Spirit who communicates to us the grace that this sacrifice enabled the Father to bestow.⁵⁸

The use of the Greek *dikaioma* and the connection of this term with the thought of Romans chapter 3 makes it clear that this passage emphasizes the effect of the sacrificial death of Christ. The “righteousness” referred to by the term *dikaioma* is not, first of all, that righteousness imputed by Christ to believers. While the concept of imputed

⁵⁶ We have used the term “Semi-Augustinian” to describe a theology that does not embrace an autonomous human will and is neither Reformed Orthodoxy nor Wesleyan. Roger E. Olson uses “Classical Arminian” to indicate a view that includes an autonomous will. See Roger E. Olson *Arminian Theology*.

⁵⁷ F. Stuart Clarke, *The Ground of Election: Jacob Arminius’ Doctrine of the Work and Person of Christ*, Studies in Christian History and Thought, ed. Alan P. F. Sell (Bletchley/Waynesboro, UK/GA: Paternoster Press, 2006), 45, 75.

⁵⁸ Richard H. Bell, “Sacrifice and Christology in Paul,” *JTSA* 53, no. 1 (April 2002): 18, 19.

righteousness is, in my view, extremely important as the foundation for our new relationship with the Father through Christ (expressed in Romans 6 and explicated in Romans 7 and 8), in Romans 5 *dikaioma* refers primarily to the fulfillment of the Law by Christ in his paschal sacrifice on the cross. We see the effects of this fulfillment extending in some manner to every human being. In this section, we will first discuss how the cross is a “cosmic Passover,” the Father’s remedy for universal sin. We will then examine how the effects of this “cosmic Passover” are unlimited in scope (although limited in actual application). Finally, we will explain how the effect of the paschal sacrifice of Christ brings to each one of us the gift of the Holy Spirit who works in us to bring us the possibility of salvation.

The Sacrifice that Cancels Sin

The cross is the Father’s answer to universal sin. The structure of Romans links 5:12-21 to Paul’s explication of the cross as an atoning sacrifice in Romans 3. The Father sent Christ as the “propitiation” or sacrificial offering in answer to the universal reality of sinning expressed from Romans 1:18 through 3:20. On the one hand, not one is righteous and no one seeks God. On the other, outside of the sphere of Law and sin, God has established the sacrifice of Christ as his answer; the son dies as a paschal sacrifice, a “mercy seat” for the entire world, so that the Father may save humanity.⁵⁹ Romans chapter 4 makes it clear that the individual appropriates this answer to sin and alienation through faith in God’s substitute sacrifice. This faith overcomes the hostility and alienation of sinners from God and makes peace with God possible if one believes or trusts in this sacrifice, as Paul argues in Romans 5:1-11. It remains for me to show how a sinner can thus appropriate grace.

The parallels drawn between Adam and Christ in Romans 5: 12-21 continue this explication of the cross as God’s unlimited answer to universal sin. The effects of Christ’s righteous act counter the effects of Adam’s sin. The parallel structures, the use of *pas* and *polloi*, and the equal but opposite effects of the one transgression (*énos paraptômatos*) over against the one righteous act (*énos dikaiômatos*) in Romans 5:18 all point to the idea that the cross is effective against original sin and against the corruption and guilt incurred on an individual level because of original sin.⁶⁰

A number of commentators, such as N. T. Wright, have interpreted the “righteousness” of Romans chapter 5 as faithfulness to covenant obligations rather than any “doing away” with sin. Although Wright sees God’s purpose in Romans 5:12-21 as dealing with Adam’s sin, and acknowledges a “forensic” dimension of acquittal from guilt,

⁵⁹ Bray states that Paul is addressing a “first principle” of human existence, getting back to the “root of things.” Bray would not support my assertion that this applies to all humans. Bray, “Adam and Christ,” 4.

⁶⁰ N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 130-131. It is curious that Wright personifies the Torah.

justification is primarily eschatological as the result of keeping one's obligations. The Torah seems central here. Even though Wright asserts that God (8:1-4) has given this life to us, this is the life that the Torah wanted to give but could not.⁶¹

However, the emphasis in Romans chapter 5 is not on Adam or on Torah, but on Christ. As noted above, the parallels between Adam and Christ are not balanced; they stress the dissimilarity between them. The weight lies with Christ, righteousness, and life rather than on Adam, sin, death, and Law.⁶² Christ's work is a far greater work, as Romans 5:15b and 16 assert.⁶³ Moreover, if we see Romans 5 as related to Romans 3 in a chiasmic structure, we cannot ignore the fact that Paul places all of the redemptive work of the cross "outside of" (*chōris*) the sphere of the Law, or Torah. Romans 5:12-21 begins with the assertion that Adam's sin has brought death to all and ends with righteousness and grace abounding through Christ. The sacrifice for sin made by the Father through the self-offering of Christ is certainly the central focus of Romans 5. Paul's Damascus Road experience convinced him that "Christ vicariously bore the curse of the law for our sins... (and) now salvation depends on appropriating the divine redemptions that had been wrought in Christ ... rather than the law."⁶⁴

The sacrifice of Christ is a cosmic Passover. Rather than emphasizing the role of the Law as covenant, the Law is what made it possible for the atoning sacrifice of Christ to bear the sins of Adam's race. Sin and Death, as corruption and its effect, and as a cosmic power, is dethroned and their reign over humanity is broken.⁶⁵ Thus, the aim of the atonement is specifically to fulfill the Law, defeating death, and bringing both justification (acquittal from guilt) and life to us. The justification that brings life is also a rescue from death.⁶⁶ Christ's sacrifice is a cosmic Passover, designed to deliver every human from death, and so the atonement has an aspect of unlimited application to every human person.

In the light of the connection to Romans 3, the "one righteous act" (*énos dikaiômatos*) of Christ refers to his sacrificial death.⁶⁷ If Paul is speaking in Romans 5:12-21 of an "exodus" from sin and death,⁶⁸ then the sacrifice of the cross is the Passover event

⁶¹ Byrne, "Christ's Pre-Existence," 323.

⁶² Porter, "The Argument of Romans," 673-74.

⁶³ Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 42.

⁶⁴ Leithart, "Adam, Moses, and Jesus." 271-272.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁶⁶ Richard B. Hays, "PISTIS and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake?" in *SBLSP* 1991, vol. 30, ed. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 720, 721, 723.

⁶⁷ Cornelius P. Venema, "N. T. Wright on Romans 5:12-21 and Justification: A Case Study in Exegesis, Theological Method, and the 'New Perspective on Paul,'" *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 16 (2005): 34-37. Wright and Venema say this to emphasize the corporate aspect of 5:12 ff; the "all" refers to peoples, in this case the people of God. we disagree with the corporate emphasis, but I am taken by the link to the Passover narrative.

⁶⁸ R. Bell. "Sacrifice," 18, 19.

for all of humanity. Christ is the “mercy seat,” the instrument of cleansing from sin, for all people, and not “propitiation” in the sense that he “turns away wrath.”⁶⁹ The emphasis is on salvation, not wrath. Christ takes the place of the sinner on the cross and so allows the Father to pursue salvation for all.⁷⁰ There is no *a priori* reason to restrict the effects of the cross to a limited group other than a previous theological commitment. Just as the one act of disobedience by Adam brought death to every person, so the one death of Christ has brought life to every person, at least potentially. Just as the Passover potentially covered every household in Egypt, and yet only by those who trusted in the blood of the sacrifice made this active for themselves, so the cross of Christ potentially extends to every human person but will save only those who choose to have faith.⁷¹

We must make a distinction between the sacrifice for sin and the application of that sacrifice, using the Passover our example. The offering is “made simply for all men, human beings as sinners (Hebrews 5:1). The application was made for believers.”⁷² A grace that is “sufficient” to bring all to salvation is given to all by a decree of Providence (if one must have God make “decrees”) to provide grace, but this grace can be rejected.⁷³

This justification brings about a connection to the divine life. The believer realizes this life now, but this life is also eschatological. The “justification of life” (*dikaiôsis zôês*) is “the life of the age to come actualized in the believer.”⁷⁴ This righteousness is both forensic and proleptic. God has declared the many righteous because Christ bore their sins, but they have also been restored to the primal relationship of humanity to God, renewed in a covenant relationship that in time will encompass the entire creation, as Paul says in Romans 8:20-21.⁷⁵ The righteousness given through the gift is the resurrection life of Christ (discussed by Paul in Romans chapter 6) who is the Second Adam.⁷⁶ This life is active now and will be active at the eschaton when the dead in Christ are raised (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

The Unlimited Effect of the Atoning Sacrifice

Commentators generally apply all of the benefits of the atonement to believers, those regenerated by God’s grace. When the cosmic breadth of the atonement is considered, they

⁶⁹ R. Bell, “Sacrifice,” 21-22.

⁷⁰ “The role of faith is crucial and is a double one: for it is through faith that one is identified with Christ; but, at the same time, it is through faith that the atoning death of Christ is perceived and understood.” R. Bell, “Sacrifice,” 22.

⁷¹ Clarke, “Election,” 35.

⁷² This is taken from Arminius, who appears to argue that all receive “sufficient” grace by a “decree of Providence” but all do not receive “efficacious” grace, which comes as a result of a decree of Predestination. See James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols and R. W. Bagnall, Paperback ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 3:336. Cited in Clarke, *Election*, 35.

⁷³ Garlington, “Obedience III/2,” 289.

⁷⁴ Garlington, “Obedience III/2,” 292.

⁷⁵ Bird, “Incorporated,” 269.

⁷⁶ Clarke, *Election*, 77.

relegate it to the *eschaton*, the end of this present world and the renewal of all things. However, we are too quick to assign these benefits only to believers now and all of creation only at the end. If the life given to believers through the “gift” (Rom 5:17) is both realized and proleptic, there must be other aspects of the atonement that apply to all humanity now as well as to all creation at the end. The parallel between the effects of Adam’s deed and the atoning sacrifice of Christ requires some universal or “unlimited” application of the benefits of the cross to humanity as a whole.

It is the grace of the cross that saves through our faith. It is not the Father’s sovereignty that saves through the working out of a secret will or decree. In working out the effects and scope of the sacrifice of Christ, we must be careful to avoid a truncated theology of the atonement. Augustinian theology wrongly defines “grace” in terms of sovereign election. Because the Augustinian emphasis is on sin and death, and the sovereign choice of God as the remedy, it mistakenly subsumes the atonement under the work of the Father in choosing the elect and sending Christ for them. In orthodox Augustinian theology, the cross is not God’s answer to all of Adam’s sin, but only the means whereby God accomplishes the election of a few. This theology tends to make grace into an abstract “thing,” a tool of God with “quasi-independent qualities” such as irresistibility.⁷⁷

On the other hand, Paul emphasizes the universal nature of human sin in Romans 1-4. How is it that he suddenly restricts the reconciliation of Romans 5:1-11 to the elect? He does not. Romans 5:1-11 addresses the issue of how God can overcome the alienation and hostility of every person, explained in Romans 1:18 through 3:20. It is through the effects of the atonement that God has poured out his love in order to overcome human alienation, a love so great that it is able to wipe out the effects of human sin.⁷⁸ The parallel structures and usage of “many” (*polloi*) and “all” (*pas*) in the second half of Romans chapter 5 make it clear that Paul sees the effects of the cross encompassing the entire human race in some manner. Just as the disobedience of Adam affected all humans, so God extends the effects of the atonement to the same group.⁷⁹ Thus, the potential benefits of the atonement cannot be restricted arbitrarily to a few. Since Paul has the original sin of Adam in view, the answer of the atonement must first address the issue of original death.⁸⁰

In Romans 5, it is the atonement and not the sovereignty of God that saves. We cannot appeal to God’s sovereignty in order to understand Romans 5 (or Romans chapters 1-4), since God’s sovereignty or mysterious secret decree is not discussed in the chapter.

⁷⁷ Byrne, “Christ’s Pre-Existence,” 327, 328-29.

⁷⁸ Rapinchuk, “Universal Sin,” 430.

⁷⁹ This is Garlington’s term, used to distinguish a view of corruption stemming from Adam rather than a view of “original guilt.” Garlington, “Obedience III/1,” 103.

⁸⁰ Clarke, *Election*, 99. This is true whether one sees the effect of Adam’s sin as original death/corruption or original guilt.

Orthodox Augustinians read Romans chapter 5 as though it followed chapters 9-11, where Paul does discuss sovereignty. To do this is to force the text into grotesque acrobatics. Nor do we need to discuss sovereignty when Paul has supplied us with a universal divine response to the universal human condition of sin and guilt here in Romans 5. Augustine's focus on Adam and sin, rather than the "much more abundant" gift given because of Christ, is misguided.

The voluntary, obedient death of Christ on the cross is the universal antidote to original sin, and the triumphant note sounded by the victory of life for "the many" should alert us to the priority as well as the superiority of Christ's work. The parallel structures of verses 12-21 in Romans 5 make it clear that Christ's one act of obedience, his paschal sacrifice, offsets all of the guilt and at least some of the effects of original sin. This allows the Father to deal uprightly when he offers reconciliation to all (or any) humans. Christ has absorbed the penalty through the cross. The *intent* of the Father in salvation, whether or not God's intention is to save all or only a few, is the prior question. If one assumes a limited satisfaction, that God intends to save only a few, the cross cannot have an unlimited effect. If one assumes that God would save all, if all would be saved, then the cross must be potentially unlimited.

The Gift is the Manifest Presence of the Holy Spirit

If the effect of the cross is not universal salvation, how can the atonement have an "unlimited" effect without saving everyone? The atonement works first to cancel the effect of "original sin" by absorbing the curse on behalf of all humanity.⁸¹ Paul uses the language of "curse" in Galatians 3:10-14. Jesus redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us (Gal 3: 13) in order that God could reconcile the Gentiles to himself by faith, and so be reconciled to God. While ultimately this applies only to those who trust ("have faith") in Christ (Gal 3:14, cf. Rom 5:17), the atonement addresses all of the curse for lawbreaking, and allows God to be "just" in his justification of sinners because Christ's sacrifice allows the Father to offer grace to sinners who are dead in their own transgressions. If we are not to abort our reflection by an appeal to the mysterious will of God, if we attempt instead to deal with faithful reflection on what is revealed (and all that has been revealed in Scripture, insofar as we are able), then we must ask on what just basis can God save any human since we willingly reject God and embrace corruption? The basis is the atoning work of Christ that has dealt with sin and the curse universally by canceling "original sin." This then allows God to save everyone who is willing to receive grace, making the atonement "unlimited" in its potential scope. But how can this happen when we are still "dead in our trespasses" and unresponsive to God? (Eph 2:1-3).

⁸¹ As, for example, Venema does. "N. T. Wright on Romans," pp 34-37.

If Paul is speaking in Romans 5:12-21 of an “exodus” from sin and death,⁸² then the sacrifice of the cross is the Passover event for all of humanity. As such, the potential effects of the cross are not limited in power or in scope; the effects of the cross are “unlimited.” This unlimited effect is two-fold. First, the work of Christ allows God to justify humans who have sinned without being unjust (the meaning of Romans 3:26, in my view). The Father is able to offer salvation to depraved humans because the atonement has countered the effects of Adam’s sin. Second, the work of Christ allows the Father to give a gift to every human (not merely to those pre-selected for regeneration).

This gift (Rom 5:17 cf. 5: 5) is the presence of the Holy Spirit who restores a measure of “life” to each person. As Augustine understood, we cannot will to be saved unless our will is aided by the work of the Holy Spirit who brings the love of God into our hearts.⁸³ This measure of “life” allows the possibility of faith by empowering an ability in each person to choose passively to allow God to save, or actively to reject grace. The gift of righteousness through the Spirit is the new principle in us that allows the Spirit to aid us toward faith that makes it possible for sinners to grasp salvation by faith.⁸⁴ In effect, on the basis of the cross, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Father is laying the covenant choice of life and death before every human and asking each to choose life (cf. Dt 30:19).⁸⁵ The choice of faith makes the application of the atonement “unlimited,” rather than universal.⁸⁶

Why are we speaking of the Holy Spirit as the “gift of righteousness” in Romans 5:17? The answer is that, since Romans 5:1-11 and 12-21 are two halves of a rhetorical whole, when we examine what verses 15-17 of Romans 5 say about the “gift” we must

⁸² Augustine Aurelius, “On Man’s Perfection in Righteousness” (*De perfectione iusticie hominis*) in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 1st Series, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Robert Ernest Willis, Peter Holmes, and Benjamin B. Warfield, 14 vols., Vol. 5, *Anti-Pelagian Writings* (1954; Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 19 (40), cf. 5 (11). Cited in Frank Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Trinitarian God* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 16.

⁸³ The idea of a “new principle” comes from Henri de Lubac, although he seems to mean what Aquinas understands by “sanctifying grace.” Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder), 83. Cited in Macchia, *Justified*, 33. In contrast, see Macchia’s discussion of Eberhard Jüngel’s position in *Justified*, 72.

⁸⁴ We draw this from Thielman, who uses it in a different way. Thielman, “Story of Israel,” 238.

⁸⁵ Bray makes this point without agreeing that the offer of faith is unlimited. Bray, “Adam and Christ,” 8.

⁸⁶ For example, Byrne “Christ’s Pre-Existence,” 325-26; Forde, “Exodus,” 36; Kline, “Gospel until Law,” 433; C. Gordon Olson notes this about Reformed thought in *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism: an inductive, mediate theology of salvation* (Cedar Knolls, NJ: Global Gospel Publishers, 1981-2002), 39. See also George C. Westberg, “The Two Adams (Exposition of Romans 5:12-21).” *BSac* 94, no. 373 (January-March 1937): 45. Kirk thinks of the *dikaiôma* as “reparation,” the paying back of a debt incurred by breaking the Law. He seems to link this to a moral lifestyle as acting out such repayment. However, the “faith of Abraham,” in the context of in Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:1-5 does not work, but simply trusts in the work done by the Lord who alone walked between the pieces of the offering. See Kirk, “Reconsidering,” 791-92; Garlington, “Obedience III/1,” 97.

refer to verses 1-11 in order to discover what this "gift" is. Most commentators are content to assume that the "gift" (*dorema*) of Romans 5:15-17 is justification, salvation, or regeneration without any examination of what "gift" might actually mean in the context of the entire chapter.⁸⁷ Luther is a notable exception in that he identifies the "gift" as the Holy Spirit,⁸⁸ although he then makes the Augustinian assumption that Paul is speaking only of regeneration.⁸⁹ Calvin also acknowledges a role of the Holy Spirit, who must strengthen the soul and sustain it for the Word to be effective.⁹⁰ Paul has already identified the nature of the "gift" in Romans 5:5.

When examining the structure of our passage, we must keep in mind that the two parts of Romans 5 are two halves of a whole. This is true whether one joins Romans 5 with the preceding chapters, sees Romans chapters 5-8 as a unit, or understands Romans 5 to be a bridge between two units. Romans 5:1-11 defines the result of being justified by faith in the sacrificial death of Christ. Romans 5:12-21 explains how this justification applies to all humanity and makes it clear that the one sacrifice of Christ is the answer to the universal human condition of sin that Paul has described in Romans 1:18 through 3:20.⁹¹ Since this is so, we will look first within the passage to define what Paul means by "gift."

This "free gift" (Rom 5:15, 16) is not precisely the same as God's grace. It comes to us because of grace (the grace of the Father and the grace of Christ, together) in Romans 5:15. This gift is not the same as justification in Romans 5:16, but results in justification. In this way, the "one act of righteousness" brings justification which results in life for all people (Rom 5:18), and righteousness to "the many" in Romans 5:19. This is in line with how Paul defines the "gift" in Romans 5:5, not as the love of God, but as that through which the love of God comes to us. The love of God comes to us through the Holy Spirit. This is parallel with verse 5, where the love of God is poured out on us through the Holy Spirit. The "gift of righteousness" is given to us by the presence of the Holy Spirit, himself, as a manifestation of God's "self-giving."⁹² The gift of the Holy Spirit empowers us to have faith and so determines election. Thus, we are not saved by our faith as the work of an

⁸⁷ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1519* in Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 27, *Lectures on Galatians 1535, Lectures on Galatians 1519* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 252. Cited in Macchia, *Justified*, 63.

⁸⁸ Steven K. Turnbull, "Grace and Gift in Luther and Paul," *WW* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 307-08.

⁸⁹ Muller. *Unaccommodated*, 167-68. I am using the term "soul" to refer to the "inner man" or interior reflective being of the human person. I am attempting to avoid the idea of the "self" as an autonomous entity standing alone and able to rationally discern truth from falsehood. The ideas of "soul" (*psuchê*), "heart" (*kardia*), and "mind" (*nous* or *dianoia*) can all refer in the NT to the interior self, "ego," or the person/personality as a whole. For a discussion of these terms, see T. Sorg, *Kardia*, in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 2:180-84; G. Harder, *Nous*, in *NIDNTT*, 3:122-30; and C. Brown, *Psuchê*, in *NIDNTT*, 3:676-89.

⁹⁰ Black, "Perspectives," 421.

⁹¹ Macchia, *Justified*, 137. Macchia is here using Karl Barth's term.

⁹² Macchia, *Justified*, 54, see also 53, 58.

autonomous power of will, but by grace as the work of the Holy Spirit to draw us to God and allow us to choose to trust him. We participate proleptically in the life of Christ to a degree as the Holy Spirit communicates that life through his work (what we will call “electing grace” elsewhere). The Holy Spirit is the “go-between God” who mediates life to the dead sinner.⁹³ To understand that the effects of the cross are unlimited demands that we acknowledge the role of the Holy Spirit as the Father’s agent in bringing us grace.⁹⁴

The Holy Spirit brings to us a restoration, in part, of the soul. The creative energies of the Holy Spirit bring to life aspects of the *imago Dei* that were broken or effaced in the fall. We do not assert that this enables a “free will” in the sense of a capacity to choose freely according to one’s intellect or perception of the good rather than according to one’s own depraved desires, what the heart loves. Rather, we assert that the work of the Holy Spirit restores our ability to assent passively to salvation, to agree to allow God to bring saving grace to us. This capacity to choose life is the result of “prevenient grace,” the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit. As such, this capacity is not in truth a capacity resident in us, but the manifestation of the energy of the Holy Spirit. It is grace and not a human work.

Nevertheless, it is a choice. Although created and sustained by the Holy Spirit (at some time, and for some period), the authorization to allow God to save must come from us as human persons. This is the qualification noted in Romans 5:17. Only those who “receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness (*dikaiôsin zôês*) will reign in life (NIV).” Only those who, by the grace of the creative life of the Holy Spirit manifested to them, allow grace to save them, or “receive” salvific grace, will have eternal life actualized in them.

Conclusion: The Universal Gift Leads to a Particular Election

In this article, we have examined the text of Romans 5:12-21 and particularly discussed its rhetorical structure and the meaning of several significant words. We found that Romans 5:1-21 is a distinct pericope that fits within the logical flow of Romans Chapters 1-8. Rhetorically, the second half of this passage, Romans 5:12-21 is Paul’s summary statement of *how* the grace of God comes to humanity through faith in Jesus Christ, specifically Christ’s work in atonement upon the cross.

We examined several crucial Greek words in the passage, particularly the words “all” (*pan*) and “many” (*polloi*). We found that, unlike the Classical and Common Greek of Augustine’s day, *polloi* carries the sense of all individuals in a group, considered individually (rather than “some” out of the “all”). Added to the causal sense of the Greek

⁹³ I have discussed the idea of the Holy Spirit’s presence as prevenient grace at some length in my “Electing Grace as the Empowering Presence of the Holy Spirit,” in *Renewal History and Theology: Essays in Honor of H. Vinson Synan*. S. David Moore and James M. Henderson, eds. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014.

⁹⁴ Clarke, “Election,” 22.

phrase *eph ho*, we concluded that all humanity suffers corruption and each one sins in actuality. However, in parallel reasoning, Paul asserts that the possibility of life through receiving the gift of righteousness is given to each and every human person. The atonement is unlimited in scope or potential. Overall, in examining the passage, we concluded that Paul emphasizes the work of Christ and the universal scope of the potential of the gift of righteousness. We contrasted this to the Augustinian emphasis on the transgression of Adam and the death that encompasses all humanity.

We turned from examining the text of Romans to constructing a theology of Christ and his atonement and the Holy Spirit from this passage. Here, we asserted the idea that the atonement is a kind of Cosmic Passover that does for every human what the original Passover did for the Israelites; it offers the potential of saving life to overcome sin and death if any individual will believe. In light of this, we expounded how the atonement can be unlimited in scope yet lead to the particular salvation of all who believe rather than a universal reconciliation of every human to the Father in the end.

Last, we considered the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing the effects of an unlimited atonement to particular human beings. In this, we equated the presence of the Holy Spirit as the “gift of righteousness” which one may receive, or may not, according to each one’s choice to have faith or continue to resist the Holy Spirit. Although created and sustained by the Holy Spirit (at some time, and for some period), the authorization to allow God to save must come from us as human persons. This is the qualification noted in Romans 5:17. Only those who “receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness (*dikaiôsin zôês*) will reign in life (NIV).” Only those who, by the grace of the creative life of the Holy Spirit manifested to them, allow grace to save them, or “receive” salvific grace, will have eternal life actualized in them. Theologically, we equated this with the concept of “prevenient grace.” Such an empowerment of human choice makes faith no less a gift.

In conclusion, the intent of the Father is not to get glory for himself by saving some, but to manifest his love in offering salvation through faith in Christ to each and every human person. The scope of the cross is unlimited, unrestricted by any divine decree or secret will. The Father offers salvation and enables those who choose to have faith by the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the “gift of righteousness” that we may receive by faith.

In the End God Un-created the World: Order & Chaos in the Book of Revelation

Steven Félix-Jäger, Ph.D.¹

ABSTRACT:

The themes of chaos and creation in Gen. 1-2:3 are not only alluded to in Revelation, but also purposefully and systematically broken down by John through the Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8-11). While Genesis moves from chaos to orderly creation as a critique of Babylonian mythology, the author argues there is intertextual evidence that indicates John is moving from order back to chaos, from creation to “*un-creation*,” through a series of events that unfurl the events of Gen. 1:2-3. This paper argues that there is intertextual evidence suggesting John used the days of creation typologically to *un-creation* the world.

Introduction

The biblical narrative displays God’s creative, sacrificial, and redeeming love, particularly as it concerns humans – the prized object of God’s affection. As the story unfolds, Genesis and Revelation can be viewed as bookends, with paralleled creation and destruction narratives.² For instance, the earth is created in Genesis (1-2:3), passes away, and is re-created in Revelation (21:2). The sun, moon, and stars govern the day and night in Genesis (1:16), whereas there is no need for any celestial body in the New Jerusalem (21:23). The curse of sin and death enters the world in Genesis (3:17), and the curse is broken and death is defeated in Revelation (22:3).³ In this regard we can see Genesis as the *alpha* and Revelation as the *omega* of the Bible’s grand narrative both in its canonical positioning and in its content. Yet as the biblical narrative runs full circle from creation to new creation, a “de-creation” or undoing of the first creation heralds the New Jerusalem. The building blocks must be ripped apart before they can be reconstructed.⁴

The notion of a de-creation is fully present in Revelation as the apocalypse climaxes with a new creation (21:1).⁵ Surprisingly, however, John’s reference to the creation account of Genesis has been scarcely acknowledged by biblical scholars. With the frequent usage of the number seven in Revelation, and the fact that John’s apocalypse is bringing the

¹ Steven Félix-Jäger (sfelixjager@lifepacific.edu) is Professor and Chair of Worship Arts and Media at Life Pacific University in San Dimas, California.

² Mal Couch, Ed. *A Bible Handbook to Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 16; Michael Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 156; Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1983), 14; Michael Pahl, *The Beginning and the End: Rereading Genesis’s Stories and Revelation’s Visions* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

³ Ethelbert Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation Or, The Apocalypse*, Repr. 1935 (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 58-59; Jacques Ellul, *L’Apocalypse: Architecture en Mouvement* (Geneve: Labor Et Fides, 2008), 63.

⁴ Although I am looking at an overarching biblical theme found in Genesis and expanded on in Revelation, it should be noted that the Bible was not written as a whole, but as an inspired received whole. It is a collection of individual texts, so my argument here is merely that John used the Creation narrative in Genesis as a direct source.

⁵ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 486.

biblical narrative to a close, one can see that the allusions to the beginning of the story (Gen. 1-2:3) are intentional and should factor into one's understanding of the narrative's structure. Yet such perceptions seldom emerge in exegetical studies or commentaries. As a corrective, I would like to focus on the "series of sevens" in Revelation (especially the trumpets), and suggest that they are not merely allusions to the days of creation, but rather the creation narrative is used typologically to deliberately and systematically *un*-create the world. This paper begins by discussing the themes of chaos and order in Genesis and Revelation, and then compares and contrasts the creation account of Gen. 1:2-3 with the trumpets of Rev. 8-11. I argue that there is intertextual evidence suggesting John used the days of creation typologically to *un*-create the world.

From Chaos to Order in Genesis

The rich symbols of Revelation can only be grasped when the reader takes heed of the many verbal allusions to the Old Testament.⁶ As Richard Bauckham notes, these allusions are essential to the way meaning is conveyed throughout the book of Revelation.⁷ In other words, we cannot know the full value of Revelation without knowing how John uses and dialogues with Old Testament passages. While we should not doubt the uniqueness of John's visionary experience, it is clear that he thoroughly grasped the potency of these Old Testament images,⁸ weaving "...hundreds of scriptural allusions into a new, coherent prophetic vision."⁹ Grasping the Old Testament allusions becomes a difficult task because they "...frequently presuppose their Old Testament context and a range of connexions [*sic*] between Old Testament texts which are not made explicit but lie beneath the surface of the text of Revelation."¹⁰ In other words, John not only alludes to Old Testament texts, but also references the very context from which those texts arise. For instance, when John alludes to the creation account of Gen 1-2:3, he is also making reference to Genesis' dialogue with, and criticism of, the ancient Babylonian creation myths.¹¹ Genesis was not written in a vacuum, but makes reference to the socio-historical context from whence it was written. Revelation, therefore, picks up not only the structure of the creation account of Genesis, but extends and finalizes Genesis' critique against the Babylonians.

⁶ Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretations of Revelation 8:7-12* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1988), 12-13.

⁷ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 18.

⁸ Paulien, 17.

⁹ Michael Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness - Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 23.

¹⁰ Bauckham, 18.

¹¹ J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 50.

Hermann Gunkel, in his classic work *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton*, posits that parts of Genesis and Revelation share Babylonian roots. This is particularly evident in the creation narrative of Genesis, even though Gunkel believes the final form of Genesis came about later in history.¹² Gen. 1-2:3 parallels the Babylonian creation myth *Enûma Elish*¹³ where the storm god Marduk kills the primordial goddess of the sea Ti'amat, and then forms heaven and earth from Ti'amat's broken body. During their battle Ti'amat took the form of a colossal sea dragon. From this – Ti'amat's characterization – giant sea creatures and the depths of the seas came to symbolize the chaos of primordial creation. When Gen. 1-2:3, therefore, talks about order coming out of chaos, it is referencing, even critiquing, these older Babylonian myths. As Gunkel writes, "Generally, Judaism dealt with Chaos, which was revered as a god in certain religions known to the Jews, by making clear the powerlessness of *all* pagan gods (Ps 40:5)."¹⁴ While both creation accounts see order eventually coming from chaos, the biblical account sees God creating out of love, not war.¹⁵

Gunkel sees the reappearance of Babylonian influence in Rev. 12 when the ultimate chaos monster, the great red dragon, seeks to devour the son of the woman clothed in the sun.¹⁶ He sees this passage as the remains of an earlier tradition that is fading away. John does not consciously respond to the Babylonian myth, but the "...Babylonian tradition has fructified the Israelite tradition at many different points."¹⁷ What is likely happening is that John is pulling from a "stockpile of apocalyptic symbols,"¹⁸ to not only write in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, but also to affirm his own writing as a climax to this tradition.¹⁹ John thus creates his own prophetic revelation from many Old Testament images,²⁰ which were in dialogue with older Babylonian traditions.²¹ The Babylonian influence is not only evident in Rev. 12, however. I would like to argue that the seven trumpets of Revelation (8:2-11:8) reference the creation account of Genesis typologically, recontextualizing the chaos-order theme recovered from the Old Testament and its sources. What follows, then, is a parallel study of the creation and destruction accounts.

¹² Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, Trans. by K. William Whitney Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 12.

¹³ Gunkel, 77.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁵ Middleton, 50.

¹⁶ Gunkel, 240.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁸ Paulien, 110.

¹⁹ While John clearly saw his vision as scriptural (Rev. 22:19), we can only speculate whether he saw Revelation as closing the Canon or not.

²⁰ Bauckham, 5.

²¹ In other words, John is referencing the Genesis account, which itself is in dialogue with other traditions, notably as it seeks to correct popular Babylonian myth.

Why Are the Trumpets Sounding?

Judgment unfolds through a series of sevens: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.²² The correlation of cosmic completeness through the numbers four and seven are significant as both the seals and trumpets shift after the fourth judgment, and come to fruition with the seventh.²³ Furthermore, the first four trumpets affect the elements of light, air, vegetation, celestial bodies, and creatures.²⁴ So in this way at least the first four trumpets, which also parallel the first four bowls, constitute an undoing of the days of creation. Jacques Ellul likens the trumpet blasts of Revelation with those of Jericho, which destroyed the city to ensure the people's entrance into the land of promise.²⁵ Likewise in Revelation it is a series of trumpet blasts that destroys the world to ensure a new land of promise.

Revelation is moving from order back to chaos, from creation to a de- or “un-creation,” through a series of events that unfurl the events of Gen. 1-2:3. This is most clearly evident with two key parallel passages: on the fourth day (Gen 1:14-19) God fills the cosmos with the sun, moon, and stars to govern day and night, while at the fourth trumpet blast (Rev. 8:12) these celestial bodies are struck causing a third of the light from the sun, moon, and stars to go dark. Similarly, on the sixth day God creates humanity (Gen. 1:26-31), whereas the sixth trumpet blast (Rev. 8:13-21) causes a war that would wipe out a third of humanity. However, these images of un-creation seem to extend throughout the whole series of days and trumpets (and seals and bowls to a lesser extent), which suggests that John is using the creation account typologically.

The creation narrative of Gen. 1-2:3 is expressed through a rhythmic pattern that systematically builds upon and corresponds the days with each other. While everything is created “in the beginning,” the first three days consist of God *separating* elements of creation and putting them in order. On the first day God separates light from darkness (v. 3-5), on the second day God separates “the waters from the waters (v. 6-8),” or in other words, the sky from the waters on the horizon, and on the third day God separates the land from the seas (v. 9-13), which allows for vegetation. The fourth day is transitory in at least two ways. It is different from the first three days because it does not consist of, or use the language of, separation. It is also unlike the fifth and sixth days as no living creatures are created. But it does seem to begin a new phase of *filling* what was separated in the first three days.²⁶ On the fourth day God called forth lights (sun, moon, and stars) to govern the

²² Beale, 64. The seven thunders are also mentioned in Rev 10:1-7 but not detailed like the other sets of sevens.

²³ Ibid., 64.

²⁴ Ibid., 486.

²⁵ Jacques Ellul, *L'Apocalypse: Architecture en Mouvement* (Geneve: Labor Et Fides, 2008), 89.

²⁶ The point of the creation account being a *hexameron* with corresponding days has been expounded many times, dating all the way back to the 4th century with Basil of Caesarea.

night and day (v. 14-19). These celestial bodies can be seen as filling the cosmos that were separated on the first day. On the fifth day God fills the skies and waters with creatures of the air and sea (v. 20-23), which corresponds with the second day where God separated the sky from the waters on the horizon. On the sixth day God fills the earth with land-dwelling creatures (v. 24-31), with humans as God's crown jewel of creation. The sixth day corresponds with the third day as God fills the lands that were separated from the seas. The seventh day is God's day of rest, and with it comes the precedent of a Sabbath and the symbolism that the number seven represents a perfect fullness or completion, indicating ". . . the fullness of the divine being to which that title points."²⁷

Through this schematic *hexameron*, the creation narrative of Gen. 1-2:3 forms a typological approach for understanding formation out of chaos. While the days do not follow a literal chronology,²⁸ they do correspond literarily in a system. God organizes and stocks creation by separating and filling the infrastructure of chaos that cannot breed life. The series of sevens in Revelation effectively mixes and breaks up the orderly foundation of the world, propelling it back towards chaos so God can re-create the world again from a primordial state. The series of sevens play out God's judgment through a slow buildup. As Jon Paulien writes, "There appears to be a dramatic crescendo of judgment in the seals, trumpets, and bowls, with the imagery supporting the impression of the partial character of both the seals and the trumpets in contrast with the bowls that consummate the wrath of God."²⁹ The seals cause and allow for war that will usher in God's judgment. The seals are preparatory as terror and excitement for impending judgment fill heaven and earth as the kings of the earth proclaim, ". . . for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand (6:17)?"

The trumpets begin God's judgment with preliminary warnings; they preview the full wrath of God through the bowls.³⁰ Indeed the trumpets emulate the bowls, but the key difference between the two is the scope of destruction.³¹ The trumpets only destroy one-third of creation, whereas the bowls finish the job. Michael Gorman sees the trumpets' partial destruction as giving people a chance for repentance. Through the trumpets, therefore, "mercy tempers the destruction,"³² giving humanity yet another chance to repent before God's judgment is complete.

²⁷ Bauckham, 26-27.

²⁸ For instance, the sun, moon, and stars are created on the fourth day while light is present on the first, and vegetation is growing on the third. The latter is not possible without the former.

²⁹ Paulien, 341.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 339.

³¹ Michael Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness – Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 142.

³² Gorman, 150.

I would like to focus on the trumpets because they bear the closest parallels to Gen 1-2:3, paving the way “. . . for the proleptic announcement of a new heaven and a new earth in (Rev.) 11:15-18.”³³ While the seals are preparatory, the trumpets let the world know that God’s judgment is at hand. Just as divine speech-acts³⁴ caused the creation of the world in Genesis, it is another sonic proclamation that marks its destruction. Paulien sees five major ways that trumpets are used symbolically in the Old Testament and in early Jewish symbolism: they are used for covenant prayer, warning, coronations, theophany, and judgment.³⁵ The main functions of the trumpets in Revelation, while *theophanous*, are warning and judgment.³⁶ So of the series of sevens, it is the proclamatory nature of the trumpets that best demonstrates the un-creation of the world back into chaos. The trumpets make it known that judgment is here through a systematic undoing of creation.

The Days of Creation and the Trumpets Compared

The trumpets unleash a series of plagues that culminate in one-third of humanity being killed before the seventh trumpet, which releases the seven bowls of wrath to complete God’s judgment. Most scholars see the strong thematic parallel of the trumpets with God’s judgment of the Egyptians in Exodus.³⁷ For instance, in Exodus thunder and hail strike (Ex. 9:22-26) as in the first trumpet, water becomes blood (Ex. 7:20-25) as in the second trumpet, darkness covers the land (Ex. 10:21-23) as in the fourth trumpet.³⁸ Another definite allusion, as previously mentioned, is the seven trumpet blasts at Jericho (Josh. 6:1-27).³⁹ There are also allusions that are less direct – what Paulien calls “echoes” – where John may not necessarily be pointing to a historical episode or Old Testament passage, but is nevertheless working through the image’s general concept.⁴⁰ Some of these echoes include “. . . the army of locusts depicted in the prophecy of Joel, the Sinai theophany, the

³³ Paulien, 230.

³⁴ For the context of this paper I am defining “divine speech-act” as an illocutionary act where God’s meaning derives from action that occurs as a result of pronouncement rather than any revelation of knowledge. While extrapolation from this line of thought exceeds the scope of this paper, more can be read in Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections of the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997); Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2009); and Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2002).

³⁵ Paulien, 220-221.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 224.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

³⁸ Elmer Rusten, *A Critical Evaluation of Dispensational Interpretations*, Part 2 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1977), 534-535.

³⁹ Beale, 469.

⁴⁰ Paulien, 306.

contemporary fear of invasion by Parthian cavalry, the earthquakes to which the cities of Asia Minor were rather frequently subject, and very possibly the eruption of Vesuvius which had recently terrified the Mediterranean world.”⁴¹ Finally, some commentators have seen the trumpets as a “systematic and progressive undoing of creation,”⁴² but they tend to say that the specific order of the un-creation does not follow the creation account.⁴³ I contend, however, that the order is followed perfectly as John tightly uses Gen 1-2:3 as a typology for the trumpets. This is better evidenced when one looks at the days of creation and the trumpets side by side.

Days of Creation (Gen 1:1-2:3)	The Seven Trumpets (Rev 8:1-9:21, 11:15-19)
<i>1st Day</i> – Separates light/dark	<i>1st Trumpet</i> – Hail/fire mixed with blood thrown upon earth/scorched 1/3 of earth
<i>2nd Day</i> – Separates sky/waters on horizon	<i>2nd Trumpet</i> – Mountain burning thrown into sea/sea becomes blood 1/3 sea creatures die
<i>3rd Day</i> – Separates dry land/seas and produces vegetation	<i>3rd Trumpet</i> – Star fell from heaven /contaminated 1/3 of fresh water
<i>4th Day</i> – Fills cosmos with sun, moon, and stars	<i>4th Trumpet</i> – Sun, moon, and stars struck 1/3 of light darkened
<i>5th Day</i> – Fills sky/sea with birds/sea creatures	<i>5th Trumpet</i> (1st Woe)– Locusts from the Abyss attacking humans
<i>6th Day</i> – Fills land with animals/humans	<i>6th Trumpet</i> (2nd Woe) – 1/3 of humans killed in war
<i>7th Day</i> – God rests	<i>7th Trumpet</i> (3rd Woe) – Interruption before judgment/proclamation of final judgment/seven bowls poured out

While the first three days are spent separating the chaos into orderly divisions, the first three trumpets re-mix and taint what was separated. For instance, with the first trumpet hail and fire (opposites like light and darkness) are *mixed* with blood and fall upon the earth. The Greek word for “mixed” is *memigmēna* (μεμιγμένα), the past perfect form of the verb *mignumi* (μίγνυμι), which means, “to mix or mingle.” This is the same word used to describe the wine mixed with gall that was offered to Jesus at Golgotha (Matt. 27:34). As this preceded the death of Christ, perhaps the mixing in Rev 8 is the bitter drink that the

⁴¹ Bauckham, 20.

⁴² Paulien, 229-230.

⁴³ Ibid.

world was offered before its death. But in the context of Revelation the word also stands as an antonym to the Hebrew word *badal* (בָּדַל) found in Gen 1, which means to be divided or separated. Hail and fire from the cosmos fell back to the earth and scorched it, consequently mixing up the separation of the first day.

The second trumpet sees a mountain, which stretches to the sky, burning with fire and thrown back into the sea. This is a visible sign of something that reaches the atmosphere being toppled back to the horizon. At the third trumpet a star fell from heaven contaminating the potable water, effectively undoing the separation of land and sea that produced vegetation on the third day.

On the second three days God fills what has been separated in the prior days (celestial bodies, sky and sea animals, land animals and humans), whereas on the second three trumpets agents of chaos (darkness, beasts, war) are released to essentially turn the lights out on creation. The fourth trumpet darkens one-third of the sun, moon, and stars, which parallels the fourth day when these celestial bodies were created. John Christopher Thomas points out that with the fourth trumpet “all four spheres of God’s creation (earth, sea, fresh water, and heavens) have been affected.”⁴⁴ While this indicates a shift in the text, it does not dismiss the typology set with the creation account. Beale rightly points out: “The first four trumpets signal judgments affecting the sources of human life, while the final three signal judgments directly striking humans themselves.”⁴⁵ Likewise the first four bowls affect the elements of creation (earth, sea, fresh water, cosmos), and the last three bowls affect creatures and their dwellings (throne of the beast, Euphrates River, whole earth).⁴⁶ This intertextual evidence leads me to conclude that John had Gen. 1-2:3 in mind when writing about the seven trumpets because in Genesis God is creating through separation and ordering the sources of human life throughout the first four days of creation, and then fills the world with biological life on the fifth and sixth day before resting on the seventh. As one would assume, the fifth and sixth trumpets inflict judgment on people before shifting again with the seventh trumpet.

The fifth trumpet does not parallel the creation account as directly as the other trumpets, but there are still similarities. Demon-like locusts from the abyss are unleashed and given the mandate to torment humans who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads for five months without killing them. Their avoidance of the sealed people of God parallels the Exodus account of the marked Israelites who were saved from the plague of the firstborn (Ex. 12:13). But we should note that the locust’s description, which alludes

⁴⁴ John Christopher Thomas, *The Apocalypse: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2012), 291.

⁴⁵ Beale, 464.

⁴⁶ The seals similarly follow the typology of 4-3 as the first four seals unleash the four horsemen, whose charge was to bring destruction to the world, and the last three seals indicate anticipation for the impending judgment.

to the description of the locusts in Joel 1, portrays a mixing of sorts as the imagery recounts a militaristic amalgamation of several creatures.⁴⁷ They are locusts that look like horses prepared for war, with faces of men, lion's teeth, and tails like scorpions.⁴⁸ The task of these locusts is not to kill the wicked, but to make them wish they were dead. As Craig Koester writes, "The result of their fiendish work is that the inhabitants of the earth no longer seek to embrace life and to escape the pain of death, but seek to embrace death and to escape the pain of life."⁴⁹ The locusts mark the first of three woes, and the woes get increasingly worse with the final two trumpet blasts.

As the sixth trumpet sounds, the four angels bound by the great river Euphrates are loosed and blow their four destructive winds together. These angels have power over a massive demonic army of two hundred million.⁵⁰ The riders of the armies are also hideous amalgamations, as 9:17b states: "the riders wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur; the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths." They were charged to kill one-third of humanity, which antithetically parallels the sixth day when humans were created.

Then, before the seventh trumpet blasts, there is an interlude where John discusses the nature of the little scroll that must be consumed and the two witnesses (10:1-11:14). Gorman suggests that this interlude, and the interlude after the sixth seal, exist to "...reassure the faithful that God will execute judgment, that they will be preserved through tribulation even if they are killed; and that they will be rewarded for their faithfulness."⁵¹ In fact, this sort of hope demarcates the principal purpose of Revelation. Bauckham suggests that this underlying message, which is the whole point of Revelation, is revealed during this interlude when the contents of the little scroll are laid bare.⁵² But these interludes also speak to the typology of the creation account. On the seventh day God rested, and in both the seals and the trumpets there is a "resting" – a reaffirmation of the saints before the next judgment. Since the bowls are God's final judgment, the seventh bowl here does not have a moment of rest, but a proclamation that "it is done" (Rev. 16:17), which harkens us back to the cross when Jesus said, "it is finished" (Jn. 19:30), and Gen 2:1 which states, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude." In reference to the creation account, rest and completion are affiliated with the seventh of all three of Revelation's series of sevens.

⁴⁷ Paulien, 329.

⁴⁸ The agents of chaos in Revelation frequently seem to be mixtures of beasts that reference older accounts of symbolism in the Old Testament.

⁴⁹ Craig Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 100.

⁵⁰ This is especially noteworthy since the population of the entire Roman empire at the time is estimated at most between 50-60 million and some contend that the world population in the 1st Century was around 100 million. Thus, a 200 million strong army would have been overwhelmingly large at that time.

⁵¹ Gorman, 144.

⁵² Bauckham, 82.

The function of the seventh trumpet is to announce the coming of God's final judgment with the bowls. As mentioned earlier, the seals and the trumpets are preparatory, partial judgments, whereas the bowls are the complete judgment of God (Rev. 15:1). Paulien points out that the seventh trumpet indicates a context of *parousia* because Rev. 11:17 refers to God as the "One who is and who was" (*ho on kai ho en*), effectively dropping the "is to come" (*ho erchomenos*) of earlier passages.⁵³ This indicates that all of the foreshadowing and preparations are complete and the judgment is finally at hand with the bowls of wrath. The judgment of the trumpets ends, as v. 18 indicates, with the destruction of those who destroyed the earth. The verse states, "The nations raged, but your wrath has come, and the time for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints and all who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth." And if the trumpets depict the un-creation of the earth, it is fitting for evil humanity, who caused the destruction of the earth, to be destroyed.⁵⁴ After God's judgment is completed through the bowls, the stage is set for all things to be made new. The series of sevens has ended and God's judgment is complete. The stage is now set for the New Jerusalem (21:1) to descend from heaven as Christ, seated on his throne, proclaims, "See, I am making all things new (21:5b)."

Conclusion

What better way to end a story than to set it up for a sequel? By un-creating the world, the story of creation and its judgment from the Fall is complete. But as Christ rose from the dead on the third day, so does God's good creation arise from its death. This paper explored the themes of chaos and order, noticing that Rev 8-11 follows the creation narrative of Gen 1:2-3 typologically to expound an un-creation of the world. We found that God brought the order of the world back into chaos, to allow for a re-creation of a new heaven and new earth. Redemption affects every created thing, so in Revelation we can be secure in the hope that God will make all things new.

⁵³ Paulien, 333.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 333-334.

The Spirit of Truth and the Unmoved Mover: The Presence of the Holy Spirit in Natural Theology

Andrew I. Shepardson, Ph.D.¹

ABSTRACT:

This paper will argue that the doctrine of divine omnipresence provides a frame-work within which Christians can explain how the Holy Spirit functions in natural theology and apologetics. Specifically, God's omnipresence applies to the loci of propositional inferences: minds. This means that God is acutely present in arguments that speak of God's existence and nature. This article will engage and critique James K. A. Smith's Pentecostal philosophy of religion and Amos Yong's Spirit-Word-Community hermeneutic and then explain how divine omnipresence entails that God is present in the arguments of natural theology.

Introduction

Rudimentary debates over natural theology tend to juxtapose the role of reason against the role of the Holy Spirit in someone's coming to faith. In an attempt to clarify the terms of the debate, advocates of natural theology often argue that while the Holy Spirit serves the primary role in bringing someone to faith, reasoned arguments (such as those of natural theology) may serve a supporting role. However, analysis of the Holy Spirit's relation to the arguments of natural theology has received limited attention. This paper will argue that the doctrine of divine omnipresence provides a framework within which Christians can explain how the Holy Spirit functions in natural theology and apologetics. Specifically, God's omnipresence applies to the loci of propositional inferences: minds. This means that God is acutely present in arguments that speak of God's existence and nature. After providing some definitions, this paper will engage James K. A. Smith's Pentecostal philosophy of religion and Amos Yong's Spirit-Word-Community hermeneutic by attempting to retain the centrality of the Holy Spirit for the practices of natural theology and by critiquing Smith's, and to a lesser degree Yong's, postmodern philosophical commitments. Despite these commitments, these authors convincingly argue that pneumatology ought to inform philosophical theology. Finally, I will explain how divine omnipresence entails that God is present in the arguments of natural theology. If the theological investigation herein is successful, then it will be clear that the Holy Spirit is present when people consider natural theology arguments.

General Revelation, Natural Theology, and Apologetics

The Bible itself, along with the persons and works of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, is part of a class of God's self-revelation known as special revelation. However, God has also

¹ Andrew "Ike" Shepardson (shepardson.andrew@gmail.com) is co-pastor of Hope Denver Church (Denver, Colorado) and teaches philosophy and religious studies at Life Pacific University (Virginia) and Denver Seminary.

revealed God's self in the natural world, and this is known as general revelation.² All people have access to knowledge of God's existence, some of God's attributes, and the moral law provided through this type of God's revelation in the natural world.³ When people rationally reflect upon general revelation, they are doing natural theology.⁴ While natural theology may corroborate special revelation, its source material is the data of general revelation, and it is more explicitly philosophical than special revelation. Natural theology employs deductive and inductive argumentation and inferences to the best explanation. In particular, natural theology develops arguments for God's existence including, but not limited to, ontological arguments, design arguments, and cosmological arguments. Apologetics is the Christian ministry of defending the Christian religion as true, rational, and relevant to every aspect of human life. Apologetics uses natural theology (in addition to other kinds of evidences) to confirm for those who already confess Christian faith that the Christian worldview is true, and it supports the preaching and teaching of the Christian gospel to those who are outside of the household of Christian faith.

Reason and Argumentation

Reason can refer to any number of activities, attitudes, and objects. It can serve as a tag for the kinds of critical thinking engendered by some academic disciplines. Reason may refer to an attitude of inquiry or the quality of an explanation. However, for the purposes herein, reason refers to those features of Western logic, including some syllogistic argument forms and laws of thought (i.e. the laws of noncontradiction, identity, and the excluded middle) that aid in evaluation of truth claims. It is impossible to meaningfully deny the laws of thought, for one must assume them in order to deny them. For example, the law (or principle) of noncontradiction "exhibits the fact that no thinker can question the principle

² John Stott argues that general revelation has four key characteristics. (1) It is made known to everyone. (2) It is disclosed in the natural world. (3) It is continually communicated through the natural world. (4) "It is 'creational,' revealing God's glory through creation, as opposed to 'salvific,' revealing God's grace in Christ." See idem., *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 73; quoted in Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 173.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 121. Emphasis in the original. See esp. Rom. 1:20; 2:14-15. The issue of "access" is one key point of controversy on the issue of natural theology that cannot be considered here. Rather, I assume that natural theology is possible and preferable. For a classic exposition of the objection against natural theology, see Alvin Plantinga, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (1980): 49-62. For an overview of the problem, see Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*, Ashgate Philosophy of Religion Series (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

⁴ In this article, I do not take up attempting to provide an account of the basis of rationality. For more on how rationality relates to revelation, see Andrew I. Shepardson, *Who's Afraid of the Unmoved Mover?: Postmodernism and Natural Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 74-84, 128-136.

which lies at the basis of all thinking and is presupposed.”⁵ An argument is a set of propositions in which rational sequence and relations of dependency among the propositions govern the structure. In a valid argument, the proposition that is claimed to be the case follows from the other supporting propositions.⁶ An argument is a set of abstract objects, that is, propositions. Since the set of propositions exists as a mereological⁷ whole, it follows that the argument as a whole is an abstract object which may be expressed in any number of natural languages.⁸ I presume here that abstract objects, such as individual arguments, exist as real things; I presuppose the existence of *abstracta*. This is important for the argument below: namely, that the arguments of natural theology and apologetics are abstract objects among which God is acutely present.

Omnipresence

Classically, the doctrine of omnipresence refers to God’s actual presence throughout the entirety of the world. The discussion below will suffice for a brief overview of the doctrine. Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas all held that God is “in every place and at all times” without requiring physical localization or confinement to any single place.⁹ This view, seemingly committed to God’s noncorporeality, assumes that God’s literal presence extends throughout all of the corporeal world. Recently, many have taken to qualifying or disputing this account of omnipresence in various ways. Hud Hudson argues that anything that occupies a physical region cannot fail to have a body.¹⁰ Therefore, Hud Hudson suggests it is most helpful for the Christian to be willing to entertain the notion that God is material, albeit perhaps in a way that is fundamentally different from the materiality of

⁵ Frederick Copleston, S. J., *A History of Philosophy: Volume I: Greece and Rome* (New York: Image Books, 1993), 283.

⁶ See Irving M. Copi and Carl Cohen, *Introduction to Logic*, 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), 6. There is, of course, dispute around the propositional view of language. Here I assume that meaning is encoded in propositions, so to enter into this debate is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷ In philosophy and mathematical logic, mereology is the study of parts and wholes.

⁸ Of course, the debate about God and abstract objects is far from settled as can be seen in the debate between William Lane Craig, Peter Van Inwagen, and J. Thomas Bridges. See William Lane Craig, “God and Abstract Objects,” in *Philosophia Christi* 17.2 (2015): 269-276; J. Thomas Bridges, “A Moderate-Realist Perspective on God and Abstract Objects,” in *Philosophia Christi* 17.2 (2015): 277-283; and Peter Van Inwagen, “Did God Create Shapes?,” in *Philosophia Christi* 17.2 (2015): 285-290.

⁹ Anselm, “Monologion: Chapter 20,” in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis, MN: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2000), 32. See also Saint Augustine (of Hippo), *Letters: Epistulae 100-155*, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Roland J. Teske, S.J. (New York: New City Press, 1990), 247, “This God... enclosed by no place;” and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Hanover House, 1955-57), III, 68, 3, accessed November 8, 2018, <https://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraGentiles.htm>; “If there be an incorporeal being possessed of infinite power, it must be everywhere. But we showed... that God is of infinite power. Therefore, He is everywhere.”

¹⁰ Hud Hudson, “Omnipresence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, eds. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rae (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 210.

any other thing.¹¹ Eleonore Stump claims that God is omnipresent with respect to time, space, and to persons. God is present at all times in that God experiences time as a kind of eternal present, and God has immediate cognitive and causal contact with all things at all places in addition to being available to share attention with any person at a place.¹² Ross Inman attempts to reapply the insights of Medieval thinkers like Anselm and Aquinas to argue that God and the soul, though immaterial entities, are “spatially located or present . . . to the material domain.”¹³ God’s omnipresence is fundamental in that God is fully present in relation to the entirety of the physical world in God’s own right and not as a derivative relation of God’s causal and epistemic contact with the physical world alone. Though these views differ greatly, the idea that God is omnipresent either in God’s power, will, relationality, and/or God’s literal presence is affirmed by many Christian philosophers and theologians today, and which view should be adopted is both beyond the scope of this study and immaterial to the position taken herein.

None of the above positions attempts to identify specifically which member of the Trinity is omnipresent. Indeed, the principle of divine simplicity would affirm that God’s omnipresence is not a matter of the acute presence of any particular member of the Trinity being everywhere (in either a causal, epistemic, relational, physical, or otherwise literal way).¹⁴ Yet a key interest in this study is to how the Holy Spirit is present in natural theology. As a member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is, of course, present everywhere. To properly explain God’s omnipresence, especially among the items of philosophical discourse, one must further investigate options for how God relates to the conceptual world, the world of philosophical ideas, and it is to this topic that we now turn.

Options for Pneumatological Philosophy

James K. A. Smith and Amos Yong both provide fascinating attempts to apply insights of pneumatology to Christian philosophy. James K. A. Smith’s Pentecostal philosophy of religion and Amos Yong’s Spirit-Word-Community hermeneutic attempt to retain the centrality of the Holy Spirit for philosophical inquiry. However, Smith, and to a lesser degree Yong, have deeply problematic postmodern philosophical commitments that

¹¹ This interpretation is shared by Ross Inman, “Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial,” in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion Volume 8*, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 178.

¹² See Eleonore Stump, “Omnipresence, Indwelling, and the Second-Personal,” in *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5.4 (Winter 2013): 29-53. This is a modification of her earlier position regarding God’s spatial omnipresence as that of immediate cognitive and causal contact expressed in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, “Eternity, Awareness, and Action,” in *Faith and Philosophy* 9 (1992): 463-482.

¹³ Inman, “Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial,” 168.

¹⁴ For a brief overview of divine simplicity, including its implications for natural theology, see Brian Leftow, “Is God an Abstract Object?” in *Nous* 24 (1990): 581-598.

require critique.¹⁵ Despite these commitments, these authors convincingly argue that pneumatology ought to inform philosophical theology.

James K. A. Smith's *Thinking in Tongues* functions as a kind of manifesto, in the vein of Alvin Plantinga's "Advice to Christian Philosophers,"¹⁶ that Pentecostal¹⁷ philosophers ought to bring contributions in keeping with their unique ways of life to the larger philosophical discourse. Smith's philosophy of religion, at its best, is animated by a key aspect of the Pentecostal worldview; namely, that Pentecostals exhibit radical openness to God.¹⁸ Metaphysical naturalism is inimical to Christian faith, but Pentecostalism knows that nature is thoroughly "inhabited by the Spirit."¹⁹ God is active and detectible in the natural world in such a way that it is more appropriate to speak of the natural world as being "enchanted;" that is, the world is Spirit-filled. The physical world and the spiritual world are inexorably mingled. Smith's theological ontology suggests that God does not have to come through the back door to be detectable in the natural world. This is an important corrective to the methodological naturalism of which many Christians are guilty, and which would rule out natural theology *prima facie*.

On its own, this perspective seems to endorse a deep interest in general revelation and natural theology. However, this is sadly not the case. For many philosophical and theological reasons throughout his project, Smith rejects natural theology. The most important of these is Smith's commitment to postmodernism.²⁰ Smith commends Jean-François Lyotard's principle that postmodernism is "incredulity toward metanarratives."²¹ In his interpretation of Lyotard, a metanarrative is any *grand récit* (or grand story) that claims legitimacy by a reference to universal reason. Classical apologetics is one type of metanarrative because it attempts to legitimize Christianity by reference to universal reason. The appeal to universal reason means that "classical apologetics is quite distinctly

¹⁵ For a critique of James K. A. Smith's rejection of natural theology, see Andrew I. Shepardson, *Who's Afraid of the Unmoved Mover?: Postmodernism and Natural Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019).

¹⁶ Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," in *Faith and Philosophy* 1.3 (July 1984): 253-271.

¹⁷ He does not capitalize the noun or verb form of *pentecostal* so as to suggest that his proposals for Christian philosophy can also be followed by those who are not inside the traditional mainstream Pentecostal denominations like the Assemblies of God, the Foursquare Church, etc. See James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), xvii, nt. 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Smith also endorses the Reformed argument against natural theology. For him, while general revelation is a legitimate category of inquiry, yet "sin has marred the perceptive capacities of humanity such that these aspects of creation are not and cannot be recognized." See Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 164.

²¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Theory and History of Literature Volume 10, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xxiv.

modern in its understanding of knowledge and truth,” constituting it as a metanarrative toward which those who recognize their postmodern situation are rightly incredulous.²² This rejection is regrettable, particularly because basic principles of logic and reason are required to even comprehend it. For example, Smith claims that Christians should entertain Lyotard on this score because he is not referring to meganarratives such as the Christian biblical story, but only to metanarratives that are legitimized by reference to universal reason. Yet this clarification of Lyotard depends on the universality of the law of noncontradiction. Lyotard does not have in mind meganarratives (M1) like the Bible, Smith claims; rather, he has in mind metanarratives (M2) such as the philosophical defense of Christianity. And $M1 \neq M2$ (via the law of noncontradiction). Lyotard’s principle, and Smith’s endorsement thereof, collapses on itself because it requires the very universal reason that it seeks to doubt.²³

Amos Yong’s *Spirit, Word, Community* is not an exercise in pneumatological philosophy, per se, yet it does attempt to present a theological hermeneutic “from a pneumatological starting point.”²⁴ The implications, though, are heavily philosophical, and they potentially impact natural theology since natural theology, with its source data of God’s self-revelation in nature, could potentially fall into Yong’s subject of “theological hermeneutics—the activity of reading or interpreting things related to the divine.”²⁵ For Yong, the Holy Spirit must play a key role in the interpretive dialectic (indeed, a trialectic since all members of the Trinity serve a role) presented in other proposals for theological hermeneutics.²⁶ The Spirit “is the condition for human mentality, wisdom, understanding, intelligence, and cognition.”²⁷ This means that when humans exercise rationality, they are doing so at least functionally, if not ontologically, through the Holy Spirit’s primary agency. The Spirit is a mediator of rationality to humanity.²⁸ Yong uses Leo Perdue’s argument that if the association between the Spirit and rationality indeed ought to be construed thusly, then the Spirit as divine wisdom “both observes and posits coherence and order, whether in reference to elements of nature or in the persuasive arguments of moral

²² James K. A. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 65.

²³ I make a similar argument in *Who’s Afraid of the Unmoved Mover?: Postmodernism and Natural Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, forthcoming).

²⁴ Amos Yong, *Spirit, Word, Community: Theological Hermeneutics in a Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14. In my reading of Yong, it seems like interpreting general revelation is not particularly in view, though I think it follows from his work that he must maintain some place for natural theology based on general revelation.

²⁶ Yong discusses Kaufman’s faith and imagination, Tillich’s situation and revelation, Rahner’s nature and grace, and Pannenberg’s historical-eschatological and anthropological-theological methods.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁸ It is important to note that Yong’s arguments are biblical, not philosophical, on this score. He is attempting to show that the biblical picture of Holy Spirit entails this relationship between the Spirit and rationality.

discourse.”²⁹ This contribution to theological hermeneutics holds some promise for natural theology, particularly if one agrees that natural theology is indeed interpreting something related to the divine, namely, God’s self-revelation in nature. In this case, it is the Spirit herself³⁰ who animates or empowers the rational and argumentative approach used by advocates of natural theology. “All theologizing is charismatic in the sense that it is enabled by and through the Spirit.”³¹ This seems to comport well with the idea that the Spirit is at least causally and epistemically present in the doing of natural theology because the Spirit is the mediator of rationality.

Yong’s proposal for theological hermeneutics is more complex than what this brief presentation can convey, yet Yong’s proposal seems challenged by at least one philosophical commitment that can rightly be construed as postmodern, as well. Now, Yong explicitly attempts to show that the postmodern “crisis of meaning” and “crisis of truth” has its antidote in the Spirit, but he assumes the success of the post-structuralist critique of metaphysics when he argues, “we need to be wary about metaphysical reflection that claims to proceed from any abstract or neutral foundation since such alleged foundations have been all but deconstructed.”³² This could be devastating for natural theology since it makes metaphysical claims (i.e. God exists) by appealing to foundations which are not explicitly confessional and could be construed as neutral in that sense. That said, Yong does seem to want to save a place for a non-totalitarian account of universal reason and for at least a fallibilistic foundationalism, and upon further application of these principles and understood according to his Spirit-Word-Community trialectic, one may find a hospitable schema for thinking about natural theology, especially with respect to the Holy Spirit’s presence in giving the arguments of natural theology. Yong’s and Smith’s contributions, at the very least, encourage the basic interest of looking at human inquiry into God’s revelation alongside or empowered by pneumatology and accompanied, more generally, by a theology of God’s omnipresence.

The Question of God’s Actual Presence Among Arguments

Natural theology seeks to discover knowledge about God apart from special revelation and particularly in nature. The means by which this is achieved is through arguments such as cosmological, ontological, moral, and design arguments.³³ These arguments may have similarities with one another in that they all suggest or demonstrate the existence of God, and they may have similarities with other arguments in that they follow common forms of

²⁹ Leo Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1994), 332; quoted in Yong, *Spirit, Word, Community*, 37.

³⁰ Yong prefers this pronoun for the Holy Spirit.

³¹ Yong, *Spirit, Word, Community*, 229.

³² *Ibid.*, 84.

³³ For an introduction to these kinds of arguments, see Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*.

sylogistic reasoning. For example, C. S. Lewis' moral argument for the existence of God in *Mere Christianity* follows the form of a deductive conditional proof.³⁴ As previously suggested, since arguments are sets of propositions and propositions are abstract objects, then arguments themselves are abstract objects. An important question in this paper is, therefore, God's relation to abstract objects. Even if God is not an abstract object, then God's noncorporeality places God in the same class (call it: Noncorporeal Things) as arguments.³⁵ But in this section, I will heuristically follow Brian Leftow's suggestion that it is theologically permissible to consider God to be an abstract object. If that is the case, whether God's omnipresence should be understood epistemically, causally, relationally, and/or literally:

1. God's omnipresence applies to the loci of propositional inferences: minds.
2. God is acutely present in those arguments which speak of God's existence and nature.

(2) is supported by the Christian conviction that God is the source of all truth, both in that God knows all true propositions and that all knowledge is mediated through the Son who is the "true light who gives light to everyone" (John 1:9, NIV). (1) is supported by propositionalism, the thesis that thoughts exist in minds and are not reducible to matter.³⁶ After heuristically applying Leftow's suggestion, I shall offer a more modest account of God's presence in the arguments of natural theology by employing an epistemic account of omnipresence.

To begin, Brian Leftow argues in "Is God an Abstract Object?" that the identity thesis (that God is identical to God's essential attributes) does not, in fact, entail that God is an abstract object.³⁷ However, thinking about God as an abstract object, or at least as a being with abstract-entity features may be philosophically helpful.

³⁴ See J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 42-43. Key to this interpretation is Lewis' statement: "Suppose someone asked me, when I see a man in blue uniform going down the street leaving little paper packets at each house . . . The only packet I'm allowed to open is Man. When I do, especially when I open that particular man called Myself, I find that I do not exist on my own, that I am under a law," in *Mere Christianity*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1952), 24-25. He is claiming to have both his internal perspective in mind along with an objective view toward all humanity's internal experience of the law. Alister McGrath disagrees with this interpretation, claiming that Lewis presents an inference to the best explanation, a kind of abductive argument. See McGrath, *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 133-137.

³⁵ Of course, this does not entail that God is like unto other Noncorporeal Things in any other way except their noncorporeality.

³⁶ A defense of propositionalism is beyond the scope of this article. For an introduction to propositions, see Matthew McGrath and Devin Frank, "Propositions," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Published Jan 25, 2018, Accessed July 3, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/propositions/>.

³⁷ Leftow, "Is God an Abstract Object?," 593.

Many theists claim that God exists necessarily and is present in space without precluding the presence in the same place of material things; some also assert that God is timeless and immutable. Many philosophers would say that only abstract entities (and not all of *them*) have these features.³⁸

Leftow claims that this was originally the insight of philosophers like Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. So even if the identity thesis did entail that God is an abstract object, an entailment which Leftow denies, thinking about God as an abstract object is a helpful way of understanding God's omnipresence, timelessness, and immutability and a helpful way for considering how God has features which no other being has. Moreover, claiming that God is an abstract object does not entail that God is the same thing as a property, a human mind, or a proposition. On Leftow's consideration of abstract objects, God may retain his personhood and uniqueness because God has unique attributes which are abstract. "If attributes exist, they are abstract."³⁹ The question of whether or not God *is* an abstract object cannot be settled here. At the least, though, if God has attributes which are indeed abstract, then God's attributes such as power, wisdom, and rationality could be said to be in some kind of relation to other abstract objects like propositions and arguments. This would especially be the case if God's omnipresence ought to be understood on causal and epistemic grounds alone.

Second, further supporting the notion of God's metaphysical similarity to abstract objects is God's similarity to one class of abstract objects: numbers. In their essay defending the doctrine of divine simplicity, Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann argue that God has aspects of God's nature which are similar to the nature of numbers.

(1) It is impossible that God have any spatial and temporal parts that could be distinguished from one another as here rather than there or as now rather than then, and so God cannot be a physical entity. Next, the standard distinction between an entity's essential and accidental intrinsic properties cannot apply to God: (2) It is impossible that God have any intrinsic accidental properties.⁴⁰

God shares with numbers both that God does not have spatial and temporal parts, and that God does not have intrinsic accidental properties. This suggests that it is possible to examine other ways in which God is similar to numbers such as God's presence in minds. Since numbers can be present in minds, then perhaps God can be present in minds. This seems to line up well with the idea of God's omnipresence being primarily epistemic,

³⁸ Ibid., 593-594.

³⁹ Ibid., 597, nt. 26.

⁴⁰ Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Absolute Simplicity," in *Faith and Philosophy* 2.4 (October 1985): 354.

causal, and relational. But it also seems to line up with the idea that God is literally present in minds. If numbers can be conceptualized by a given mind (i.e. I'm thinking about the number three.), then God can be conceptualized by the human mind, as well.⁴¹ This means that God could potentially be literally present in someone's mind when hearing an argument of natural theology. If someone is indeed thinking about the true God when they consider an argument, then God may actually be present in that person's mind in the same way that "threeness" is present when thinking about the number three.⁴²

Before going any further, it is important to answer a potential objection here. I have argued that God's literal presence in one's mind may be possible when one considers an argument from natural theology which demonstrates or infers God's existence. What does this mean for bad arguments? For example, consider the dilemma posed by Socrates in *Euthyphro*: "Is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?"⁴³ This argument implies that either God arbitrarily decides that some things are moral and that some things are immoral, or morality is logically prior to God in some such way that God merely recognizes what the good is and commands humans to obey. Either way, this would be a problem for classic theism. Either God is whimsical about ethics, in which case one should wonder why God ought to be obeyed, or God merely recognizes the good, which challenges the essential link between God's will and Divine Command Morality (DCM), further making one wonder if God is really the ultimate authority in the universe. James G. Hanink and Gary R. Mar provide a helpful formalization:

- (P1) Either an act is right because God wills it, or God wills an act because it is right.
- (P2) If an act is right because God wills it, then morality is arbitrary.
- (P3) If God wills an act because it is right, then DCM is false.
- (P4) Therefore, either morality is arbitrary, or DCM is false.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Some may be concerned that this falls into the ontotheological error. See Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001); and idem., "Onto-theology, Metanarrative, Perspectivism, and the Gospel," in *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*, ed. Myron B. Penner (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 141-143. For why this ontotheological objection should not apply to philosophizing about God, see my *Who's Afraid of the Unmoved Mover*, ch. 4.

⁴² One way in which God's comparison to numbers is not shared with God's comparison to arguments is that arguments do, it seems, have intrinsic accidental properties, but this does not seem to impact the reasoning above.

⁴³ Plato, "Euthyphro," in *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, 2nd ed., trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002), 12.

⁴⁴ James G. Hanink and Gary R. Mar, "What Euthyphro Couldn't Have Said," in *Faith and Philosophy* 4.3 (July 1987): 242-243.

This argument about God is problematic for theists in that it is a potential defeater for one's knowledge that God (as the ultimate moral authority) exists.⁴⁵ This example presents a potential challenge for the argument that God is present in the minds of those who are considering an argument about God's existence, namely, that God may be present in the mind of one who is considering an argument that challenges God's existence or any argument the conclusion of which is that God does not exist. Not only is this odd, but it would seem to challenge the particularly Christian notion that God is the locus of truth (see John 14:6).

Perhaps a distinction about God will help to clarify the issue. God's existence is a primary condition for anything in the universe to exist, including the existence of particularly evil people and their actions (such as genocides). This seems to be implied by Paul's description of the Son when he says that "all things have been created through him and for him...in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17-18, NIV). God's existence is a necessary condition for the existence of anything and the occurrence of any event in the universe. God is not responsible for making an evil person evil, nor is God the primary agent behind evil actions like genocides.⁴⁶ Indeed, it is the human agent who is responsible for his/her evil actions.⁴⁷ One might fairly say, however, that while the human responsible for an evil act is the primary cause of the evil act, God is the secondary cause of the act in that God's existence is necessary for the creation of all things (including the moral agent) and God holds together the universe in such a way that an evil act is possible.⁴⁸ In a similar way, God is the basic presence in human minds necessary for any rational reflection while not being acutely present when one is considering bad arguments. That is, God is still the object of inquiry in any argument about God's existence, and God is present in the mind of the inquirer as a basic condition of the inquirer's ability to think, but God is only acutely present only in those moments in which true arguments are being considered.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ It is possible that Bertrand Russell held this as a reason to believe that God does not exist. See *idem.*, *Wisdom of the West: A Historical Survey of Western Philosophy in Its Social and Political Setting*, ed. Paul Foulkes (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), 71. Hanink and Mar provide a helpful distinction that shows that this dilemma does not apply to the Christian God. Hanink and Mar reject the first premise by suggesting that Socrates does not understand the nature of God in that "God is Perfect Righteousness." See *idem.*, "What Euthyphro Couldn't Have Said," 246.

⁴⁶ Some may object here about the so-called genocides commanded by God in the Book of Joshua. For a devastating critique of the idea that God commanded genocides, see Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011).

⁴⁷ See James 1:13-15.

⁴⁸ The problem of theodicy is related to this, but far beyond the scope of this paper. For a helpful survey of theodicies and their relation Christian faith specifically, see Daniel Howard-Snyder, "God, Evil, and Suffering," in *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed. Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), ch. 4.

⁴⁹ More ought to be said about this objection and this distinction, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to go further.

A Minimalistic Argument

The above considerations support God's literal presence alongside arguments in minds. But these considerations aside, we may proceed minimalistically to consider the key thesis of this paper, namely, that God is present in the giving and receiving of the arguments of natural theology.

1. God is omnipresent at least in the sense that God has epistemic contact with all of the world.
2. God is omnipresent with the world of abstract ideas (i.e. arguments and propositions).
3. Natural theology is when logical argumentation is applied to propositions about general revelation.
4. Natural theology arguments have their loci in minds.
5. God is omnipresent in the loci of the arguments of natural theology: minds.

(1) is supported by a large number of Christian philosophers of religion even though it is perhaps permissible to claim that God is omnipresent causally, relationally, and literally, as well. (2) follows from (1) and is supported by the fact that God and abstract objects share many of the same properties. Even though it might not be accurate to claim that God is an abstract object, the fact that God appears to have some properties that are similar to abstract entities means that God at least (!) has epistemic contact with this world. This would be even more obvious were we to consider God's omniscience.⁵⁰ (3) is more of a stipulative definition, yet it seems to fit the standard account of the relationship between general revelation, natural theology, and apologetics. (4) is supported by (3) and propositionalism, in general, and the specific account of propositions and arguments provided above. (5) follows from (2) and (4).

A Final Objection

One additional objection to this paper could be that I have not properly distinguished between the abstract and the noncorporeal. Christian theology confesses that God is Spirit (John 4:24), which entails that God is noncorporeal. God's noncorporeality places God in the class of noncorporeal objects (or Noncorporeal Things) which contains spirits, angels, numbers, ideas, and propositional inferences (arguments). It would be a category mistake to ask about the length, weight, or color of a *modus tollens* propositional inference. So it is with God. Though there are important metaphysical distinctions between God and propositional inferences (i.e. God is mind-independent; propositional inferences are mental.), the fact that both God and propositional inferences are noncorporeal is significant. That said, it is possible that referring to God as a member of that class of noncorporeal

⁵⁰ An idea not taken up here.

things called abstract objects may impugn God's personhood. Alvin Plantinga seems to suggest that if God is an abstract object, then God lacks personhood.⁵¹ If God is not to be considered an abstract object, my suggestion that one could still place God in the same class as other noncorporeal objects, as opposed to keeping God in God's own unique class, may impugn God's uniqueness. This does not seem to be the case, though, for my soul is still unique from my wife's soul even though our souls both belong to the class of Noncorporeal Things generally and to the class of human souls more specifically.⁵² Moreover, this objection seems to affect the argument developed in the above section on "the question of God's actual presence among arguments." However, it does not affect the more minimalistic argument because that argument does not depend on God's identity as an abstract object; rather it depends only on God's epistemic omnipresence.

Conclusion

This minimalistic argument, if successful, shows that when Christians present arguments for natural theology, they can be confident that God is present, not just in adjacent kerygmatic proclamations, but in the actual arguments themselves. This should instill confidence in apologists that their work is not just a prelude to evangelism, but an act of Spirit-empowered proclamation of the one whom Francis Schaeffer called "the God who is there." In both kerygmatic and apologetic argumentation, God is indeed there.

⁵¹ Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* Aquinas Lecture 44 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1980), 47.

⁵² Of course, there are other distinctions, as well, and they may be significant ones. However, this does not obviate the fact that we both belong to the class of human souls.

Pentegnosticals: Gnostic Influences Among Modern Pentecostals

Ryan Lytton, M.A.¹

ABSTRACT:

Gnostic epistemology, broadly speaking, divorces one from both scripture and community by focusing the concept of truth on the individual. Pentecostal epistemology holds much in common with this approach, and is thus in danger of the same result. This article explores Gnosticism and the result of its epistemology. Then a parallel is drawn by examining the influence of the so-called “prosperity gospel” and postmodern philosophy on modern Pentecostal epistemology.

Introduction

“Christians have long talked about converting souls; it’s time they talk more about converting the faculty of reason and reorienting the whole ‘how we can know’ question.”² This epistemological³ issue is true not only of Christians in general, but Pentecostals in particular, and it is generally even worse at the popular level. This is not the first time the church has found herself struggling with epistemology. In the Patristic period,⁴ the Gnostics put the locus of truth in the individual, divorcing them from community and scripture. Nicholas Perrin has said, “Gnosticism is an existential commitment to freedom and self-realization.”⁵ Irenaeus of Lyon, the earliest and perhaps strongest opponent of Gnosticism, tells us that Gnostics flee to tradition when confronted with Scripture and flee to Scripture when confronted with tradition. The end result is that “these men do now consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition.”⁶ Some modern Pentecostal approaches to epistemology, while not directly influenced by Gnosticism, often run the risk of the same issue. This focus on *self* is as popular today as it is heavily problematic. Modern Pentecostal approaches to epistemology, specifically at the lay level,⁷ often suffer from the same

¹ Ryan Lytton (rltton@ignite.lifepacific.edu) is the Director of Academic Services at Life Pacific University – Virginia in Christiansburg, Virginia.

² Nicholas Perrin, *Lost in Transmission? What We Can Know About the Words of Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), xi.

³ Epistemology is the field of philosophy which “tries to make sense out of knowledge, rationality and justified or unjustified beliefs.” James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 71. For a thorough explanation of epistemology, see *ibid*, 71-172. “Experience as an authoritative appeal, then, is connected to the realm of theological epistemology...” Peter D. Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience: An Ecumenical Encounter, Princeton Theological Monograph Series*, vol. 187 (Eugene, OR.: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 3. Neumann’s work cannot be recommended strongly enough.

⁴ The Patristic period followed the Apostolic period and preceded the Medieval period.

⁵ Nicholas Perrin, “Ancient Gnosticism and Its Re-Emergence in Contemporary Culture” (lecture, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC, January 23, 2014).

⁶ *Against Heresies*, 3.2.2.

⁷ There are exceptions to varying degrees among scholarly Pentecostals. See for instance Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for The Kingdom*, (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010). He focuses Pentecostal experience on the community and not the individual. See also, Kenneth A. Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community*. Vol. 28. (New York: T & T

problems as Gnosticism. This is a result of the influence of the so-called “prosperity gospel” and postmodern philosophy. Similar problems, although originating in different ways, can benefit from similar solutions. Since Irenaeus was at the forefront of confronting Gnosticism as it arose, his writings could help to construct a framework through which Pentecostal epistemology can be adjusted. Consequently, this article will show a parallel between the epistemology of Gnosticism and of some contemporary lay-level Pentecostals, and then offer a corrective to Pentecostal epistemology based on Scripture and the writings of Irenaeus.⁸

Gnosticism

First, we need to define Gnosticism.⁹ This is widely acknowledged as a difficult (if not impossible) task. For instance, it was once believed that Gnosticism was present during the time of the New Testament.¹⁰ More recently, however, it seems clear that anything that we would now call Gnosticism could not have existed until the early second century.¹¹ Even then, its emergence was so diverse that it is difficult to speak of Gnosticism as a single

Clark International, 2004), though his emphasis on postmodern epistemology is troubling, which will be covered later. See also papers presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies in 2007 towards the theme “The Role of Experience in Christian Life and Thought: Pentecostal Insights,” particularly Christopher A. Stephenson, “Epistemology and Pentecostal Systematic Theology: Myer Pearlman, E. S. Williams, and French L. Arrington” which culminated in the first chapter of Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types Of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁸ This is not to say that Pentecostals have derived their views from Gnostics, just that there is a similar problem with a similar solution. Pentecostals are distinct from Gnostics in many ways. For instance, one significant difference is their views on reality (usually called *metaphysics*). Gnostics generally understand the world in a tiered system. Pentecostals generally do not.

⁹ Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* is the most important early work, covering multiple gnostic teachers in great detail while paying special attention to Valentinus. For the origin of Gnosticism, see Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 116-120. For helpful introductions to Gnosticism, see David E. Wilhite, *The Gospel According to Heretics: Discovering Orthodoxy through Early Christological Conflicts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 61-85, Justin S. Holcomb, *Know the Heretics*, The Know Series (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 33-43, and Justo L. González and Catherine Gunsalus González, *Heretics for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 29-44. Holcomb’s work is particularly helpful as it clearly delineates between Gnosticism and Docetism (see *ibid* 55-61). Gnostics are Docetic, but not every Docetist is a Gnostic. This is a distinction many have missed (see for instance, David W. Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs: A Reference Guide to More Than 700 Topics Discussed by the Early Church Fathers* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 220, 305-309.

¹⁰ For instance, Albert Poncelet, “St. Irenaeus.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 8. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.” exemplifies this view. See *Against Heresies* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), 23-65. In more recent literature, David W. Bercot lists several NT verses as texts related to Gnosticism in *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, 305. Holcomb also seems to see Gnosticism present in the opponents of some NT writings, *Know the Heretics*, 39.

¹¹ We have a latter limit in Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies*, which is certainly aimed at Valentinian Gnosticism. It was written around 180 CE.

entity. This has led some to suggest that we abandon the use of the term entirely.¹² David Wilhite correctly notes that “many of the so-called gnostic sources even exhibit more orthodox versions of . . . different tenets, [so] it must be admitted that gnostic tendencies fit within the bounds of Christianity. The question about whether a specific teaching has crossed the bounds of acceptable orthodoxy must be assessed on an individual basis.”¹³ Due to this difficulty, this article takes the perspective laid out by Everett Ferguson:

The use of Gnosticism as a general category is problematic, for not even Irenaeus and his successors constructed a single typology for the various groups now covered by this term . . . [However, it] seems so firmly established that whatever problems in generalization it provokes it is not likely to be replaced, and we continue to use it in this introduction with the understanding that readers must exercise caution.¹⁴

Thus, it should be said that while what is presented here is representative of much of Gnosticism, it should not be taken to represent the whole. Some groups were radically antinomian. Some were radically legalistic.¹⁵

In spite of this, there are commonalities. Alister McGrath lists two fundamental elements: cosmology and soteriology.¹⁶ According to Justo González, all of these various sects held three things in common: (1) cosmology, (2) soteriology, and (3) adaptability.¹⁷ Of these three, soteriology is the most helpful for our current pursuit. This is because “Gnostic salvation was from ignorance and not from sin. Knowledge was not just the means to salvation, it was the salvation.”¹⁸ Thus, Gnostic soteriology was epistemic. Since it is

¹² Most notably Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially 43-44, Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), and David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

¹³ Wilhite, *The Gospel According to Heretics*, 70-71.

¹⁴ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2003), 301. See also Alister McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth*, (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010), 118-119.

¹⁵ For more on this duality, see (8) in Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed., 311.

¹⁶ Alister McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending The Truth*, (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010), 119. According to him, they believe that the cosmos is the product of an evil creator and that salvation is a progressive upward ascent of knowledge culminating in freedom from the physical world.

¹⁷ González and González, *Heretics for Armchair*, 33-36. González does not use these specific words. They are my summary of his three points. A full treatment of each is beyond the scope of this paper. It is worth noting that Wilhite provides eight tenets of Gnosticism (Wilhite, *The Gospel According to Heretics*, 63) which are helpful, but essentially extrapolations of the two McGrath and González have in common. For a brief introduction to Gnosticism with an excellent bibliography, see Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed., 300-313.

¹⁸ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed., 310. Cf. *The Secret Book of James* 8,27. “This is how you can acquire heaven’s kingdom for yourselves. Unless you acquire it through knowledge

their epistemology that concerns us, their soteriology constitutes a significant portion of our analysis.

Non-Communal

“Gnostics were ‘people who knew,’ and their knowledge at once constituted them as a superior class of beings.”¹⁹ This knowledge that is critical to Gnosticism is fundamentally self-discovered. Gnostic writings are replete with examples of encouragements towards such types of knowledge. For instance, the first verse of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas reads: “Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death.”²⁰ While this may seem innocuous, it is not. The author, not unlike other Gnostic authors, goes on to employ strange sayings and paradox ostensibly to veil their truth from all but the most perceptive. The gospel of Gnosticism does not come to the poor, it comes to the intelligent for in Gnosticism, it is the intelligent who can see the world for what it is: utter ruin. Thus, salvation is only for those who are clever enough and determined enough to push forward for the prize of knowledge. For instance, *The Gospel of Truth* describes ignorance as a nightmare, and one who is saved as the person who wakes themselves up and casts off the illusion of their dream.²¹ This type of self-actualization is at the heart of Gnosticism. According to Alister McGrath, “What we know of Gnostic beliefs suggests that they chime in with contemporary ideals of self-discovery, self-awareness, self-actualization, and self-salvation, not to mention a dislike of any kind of authority, especially ecclesiastical.”²²

But this knowledge is not gained through careful study or discipleship. In fact, prevailing religious authority is likely a barrier to knowledge. The Gospel of Thomas 39 tells us, “The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge (*gnosis*) and hidden them. They themselves have not entered, nor have they allowed those who wish to.”²³ Instead of receiving teaching from the religious elite, this knowledge is personally discovered and ascertained for the purpose of personal ascent from the physical world to the spiritual world.²⁴ A quick read of any of these works quickly demonstrates the level to which they exclude the uninitiated. Many are nearly impossible to understand, and almost all of them lack any narrative context to assist the reader. They tend to be collections of

[*gnosis*], you will not be able to find it,” in Marvin W. Meyer and Wolf-Peter Funk, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, international ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 27.

¹⁹ John Arendzen, “Gnosticism.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 6. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909, found in *Against Heresies* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), 23.

²⁰ Bart Ehrman, ed., trans., *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make it into the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 20.

²¹ 28,32-30,23. Meyer and Funk, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 42.

²² McGrath, *Heresy*, 117. Elaine Pagels even devotes an entire chapter to “Gnosis: Self-Knowledge as Knowledge of God” in her *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989, 1979), 119-141.

²³ Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 23.

²⁴ An excellent example of this is the *Gospel of Mary*, Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 35-37.

cryptic sayings, leaving the reader to determine the meaning of the mystery on their own.²⁵ Contra Irenaeus and historic Christianity, knowledge [*gnosis*] is *private*, not *public*.²⁶

Following directly from this self-centered idea, on Gnosticism we find a deep abiding disrespect for authority. Pagels exclaims, “Gnosis offers nothing less than a theological justification for refusing to obey the bishops and priests!”²⁷ This must be true if Gnosticism is true. If salvation is primarily a function of knowledge and not of relationship and we all have the same access to the same knowledge, then what use is community? “[This] illustrates what many Christians saw as one of the dangers of heresy: it encourages insubordination to clerical authority.”²⁸ This very diversity of Gnosticism, which is well documented in Book 1 of Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies*, demonstrates the radical personal nature of their epistemology. “Each Gnostic teacher supplied his own constructions and variations, with the result that *Gnosticism* is now a general term that covers a variety of individual constructions. There is no single, uniform Gnostic system.”²⁹ As he put it, “[T]his wisdom each of them alleges to be the fiction of his own inventing...so that, according to their idea, the truth properly resides at one time in Valentinus, at another in Marcion, at another in Cerinthus, then afterwards in Basilides.”³⁰ Why submit to anyone or anything if the truth is in you? According to the Gospel of Truth, “[Y]ou are the understanding that is drawn forth . . . Do not become a (dwelling)”³¹ If you disagree with the ecclesial authorities, then leave. That is precisely what leading Gnostic teacher Valentinus did. He “had expected to become a bishop, because he was an able man both in genius and eloquence. Being indignant, however, that another obtained the dignity by reason of a claim which confessorship had given him, he broke with the church of the true faith.”³²

Gnostic epistemology is thus strongly non-communal. They had communities, to be sure, but they were only communities of agreement. Disagreement meant schism, because each individual was the arbiter of truth in the world. There was no ability in the community to hold them accountable. “This solitude derives from the gnostics [*sic*.]

²⁵ For translations of these writings, I recommend Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, or for a more thorough treatment with accompanying bibliography, Meyer and Funk, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

²⁶ For more on this point, see, Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit—In Biblical Teaching, Through the Centuries, And Today*; (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 173-176.

²⁷ Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 38, emphasis hers.

²⁸ Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 39.

²⁹ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed., 309.

³⁰ *Against Heresies*, 3.2.1.

³¹ Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 50.

³² Tertullian. *The Complete Works of Tertullian*. Edited by Alexander Roberts, Sir James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe. N.p.: N.I., 1885. Amazon Kindle edition; emphasis added, Location 8226-8228. Granted, Pagels doubts the validity of this story, but she offers no support for her doubt beyond the claim that “few historians” believe Tertullian. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 39.

insistence on the primacy of immediate experience. No one else can tell another which way to go, what to do, how to act.”³³ But what of scripture? Are the Gnostics accountable to it? Is it a standard by which they can be judged? Unfortunately, no.

Non-Scriptural

Ptolemy was one of the most famous Gnostic teachers of the second century, and his instruction to a Christian named Flora helps us to see the Gnostic view of scripture. Just as God did not create the world, he did not author scripture.³⁴ This allows a clever Gnostic to elude accountability to scripture. If a practice or teaching contradicts something in scripture, then that part is certainly not inspired.

Another strategy used to avoid the accountability of Scripture was allegorical interpretation.³⁵ Gnostics frequently appealed to allegory. For instance, they believed in thirty divine *aeons*³⁶ because the Gospel of Luke records Jesus starting his ministry at age thirty. They also appeal to the Parable of the Vineyard,³⁷ where workers are hired at the first, third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour, the sum of these being thirty.³⁸ Ehrman points out that orthodox believers also engaged in allegory. However, a careful study of their exegesis shows that they engaged in allegory within the boundary of the rule of faith.³⁹ In contrast, Gnostic exegesis refuses to submit to the text. Just as they accept community only insofar as it agrees with them, so also is the text made to conform to their odd beliefs or it is cast aside. Thus, Gnosticism is the perfect religion for the individual. “For present day people who want to keep their Jesus but who also want to remain on the world’s inside track, the seduction of Gnosticism can be overwhelming.”⁴⁰ Incapable of confrontation by group or by text, the gnostic is free to live whatever life they see fit, because they are the

³³ Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 145.

³⁴ Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 201-206. An exploration of gnostic cosmology is well outside the scope of this paper. For popular versions of the Gnostic creation myth, see the *Secret Book of John* available in *ibid.*, 297-306; *On the Origin of the World*, available in *ibid.*, 307-315; and *The First Thought in Three Forms* available in *ibid.*, 316-323. For a helpful explanation of Gnostic cosmology, see Wilhite, *The Gospel According to Heretics*, 70-76.

³⁵ For a brief, detailed analysis of Gnostic interpretation of scripture, see Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 195-197.

³⁶ “A Latin word that, like the Greek *aiōn*, from which it derives, can be translated as ‘age’ or ‘realm.’ The aeons in Gnostic thinking, however, are divine beings emanated from God.” Wilhite, *The Gospel According to Heretics*, 63.

³⁷ Matthew 20:1-16.

³⁸ Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 196-197. Ehrman lists other examples as well. Cf. *Against Heresies*, 2.20-2.26.

³⁹ A detailed treatment of the rule of faith is beyond the scope of this paper. For our purposes, it refers to the teaching of the apostles, passed down from generation to generation within Christianity. For a basic intro with an excellent bibliography, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010), 54-57.

⁴⁰ Perrin, *Lost in Transmission?* 161.

sole determiner of what is right. As Irenaeus says, they “also maintain that they have attained to a height above all power, and that therefore they are free in every respect to act as they please, having no one to fear in anything. For they affirm, that because of the ‘Redemption’ it has come to pass that they can neither be apprehended, nor even seen by the judge.”⁴¹

The solution to Gnosticism is accountable ecclesiology and bibliology. The Gnostics are radically individualistic, so Irenaeus suggests that they submit themselves to the community of faith and the text of Scripture. Gnosticism must tear at the Scriptures to force their doctrines to fit.⁴² They must ignore context. They must ignore entire passages. The solution to this problem is to confront it with the contexts of Scripture and community. Herein lays the antidote: Scripture that is interpreted (1) carefully and (2) in community. Gnosticism twists the intended meaning of Scripture to its own intended desires. The solution is to rejoin with the community of faith and embrace Scripture and the historical teachings of the church. This will cause Gnosticism and all its bitter fruit to wither. And this is the path Irenaeus himself used.

For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. For the Churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world. But as the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shineth everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth.⁴³

Modern Pentecostalism

Fortunately, Pentecostals are not Gnostics. However, some modern Pentecostal epistemologies bear a striking resemblance to Gnostic epistemology. One of the easiest ways to see this today is the common appeal to experience in the development of theology. According to Peter Neumann, “The appeal to experience has become more or less ubiquitous in contemporary Christian theology in general.”⁴⁴ Pentecostalism has not been immune to that influence. As Gordon Fee puts it, “The Pentecostal tends to exegete his or her experience.”⁴⁵ Or as the old saying goes, Pentecostalism is “better felt than telt, better

⁴¹ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), 114; AH 1.13.6.

⁴² Irenaeus uses the metaphor of breaking and rearranging the pieces of a mosaic. Cf. *Against Heresies*, 1.8.1.

⁴³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), 103; AH 1.10.2.

⁴⁴ Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience*, 2.

⁴⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991), 86.

walked than talked.”⁴⁶ Neumann continues, “Pentecostal spirituality should be best understood as experiential, as opposed to doctrinal.”⁴⁷ The difficulty with giving experience such ground is that it can easily give too much ground to the individual. Through his study of Pentecostal worship, Daniel E. Albrecht notes that while Pentecostal spirituality is fundamentally communal,⁴⁸ “There is truth in the characterization that Pentecostals are individualists. The essential mystical quality of their experience lends itself to a certain focus on the personal/individual dimensions of spirituality.”⁴⁹ The difficulty with giving experience such a prominent role is that it can easily give too much ground to the individual. This is precisely what we see both in Gnosticism as well as in many branches of Pentecostalism. There are two influences on Pentecostalism that are bringing this about: (1) the so-called “prosperity gospel,” and (2) postmodern philosophy. Before we get to a solution, we must further examine the problem.

“Prosperity Gospel”

While a distinction needs to be drawn between Pentecostalism and the “prosperity gospel,”⁵⁰ it is hard to deny the influence of the former on the latter, and the former is undeniably Gnostic in many ways. Gordon Fee, speaking of Kenneth Copeland and his associates, writes, “Healing ultimately resides in God, they will affirm. Yet in actual practice, it is the result of man’s faith. Indeed, *they see God as under obligation to us in this matter*. Healing, therefore, instead of being a gracious expression of God’s unlimited grace, is something He has to do—at our bidding.”⁵¹ For the “prosperity gospel,” and for much of Pentecostalism, healing is considered by many to be “a right.” Speaking of early prosperity theologians F.F. Bosworth and E.W. Kenyon, Kate Bowler says, “They never cried out: ‘Lord, heal me if it be thy will!’—the qualification marred God’s self-imposed promise with doubt . . . A spiritual law that few recognize is that our confession rules us.”⁵² Even though early prosperity theologians like E.W. Kenyon were not technically Pentecostal, they nevertheless influenced the movement and not for the better.⁵³ It is hard to argue that Kenyon himself was not at least semi-Gnostic. In contrast with the Gnostics,

⁴⁶ Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience*, 101.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁸ Daniel E. Albrecht. "Pentecostal Spirituality: Ecumenical Potential and Challenge." *Cyberjournal For Pentecostal-Charismatic Research*. Accessed July 1, 2019. <http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj2/albrecht.html>

⁴⁹ Daniel E. Albrecht. *Rites in The Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality*. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 243.

⁵⁰ The best on this is likely this recent work: Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of The American Prosperity Gospel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Also see D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995).

⁵¹ Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth*, 34; emphasis added. Fee’s work on this is without equal.

⁵² Bowler, *Blessed*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22. The last line is a quote from Bosworth, who says he is quoting Kenyon, but that may not be the case. See *ibid.*, 267n47.

⁵³ For more on Kenyon and his influence on Pentecostalism, see Bowler, *Blessed*, 15-25.

he acknowledged God as Creator. But in keeping with Gnosticism, he saw the physical world as a “shallow material reflection of this preeminent and preexisting spiritual universe...[and] though clothed in...flesh and bones, humans too were *primarily* spirit.”⁵⁴

Postmodern Philosophy

The influences of postmodern philosophy on Pentecostalism are legion. Perhaps the most recognizable area of influence is in the interpretation of texts, commonly called hermeneutics. Neumann notes that in recent decades Pentecostals began to question the focus on authorial intent present in Evangelical hermeneutics. In its place, they proposed “a greater openness to experiential, subjectivistic readings of Scripture, often relying on aspects of postmodern epistemology.”⁵⁵ There are several problems with this, the majority of which are beyond the scope of this work.⁵⁶ For our purposes, it should be noted how easily a subjectivist reading of a text allows one to avoid both accountability to a text and to a community. Some Pentecostal scholars recognize this: “Pentecostalism, because of its pragmatic and experiential focus, may be easily attracted to the ahistorical vision inherent in postmodern thought. This, however, is a weakness, not a strength.”⁵⁷

Summary

Early Pentecostalism mostly avoided these traps. Regarding prosperity, Kenyon’s influence was not widespread in early Pentecostalism,⁵⁸ and ministers like Parham, Wigglesworth, and Sister Aimee rarely if ever “projected ambitions through a theological lens.”⁵⁹ Additionally, they were incompatible with postmodernity.⁶⁰ They rejected modernity, but as Archer has pointed out, they are better classified as paramodern.⁶¹ They affirmed the objectivity of Scripture in contrast with the liberalism of their day and with postmodernism of our day. They also affirmed importance of personal experience in contrast with fundamentalists of their day.⁶² It should be noted that Archer goes on to

⁵⁴ Bowler, *Blessed*, 17. For a thorough rebuttal of this kind of sharp qualitative dualism, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*.

⁵⁵ Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience*, 127. Neumann’s survey of Pentecostal experience and scripture is very helpful. *Ibid.*, 124-133.

⁵⁶ For a thorough treatment of philosophical problems with postmodernism, see Andrew I. Shepardson, *Who’s Afraid Of The Unmoved Mover?: Postmodernism And Natural Theology*, (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2019).

⁵⁷ Menzies, William W., and Robert P. Menzies. *Spirit and Power: Foundations Of Pentecostal Experience: A Call To Evangelical Dialogue*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 65. For others, see Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience*, 149-152.

⁵⁸ Cf. Bowler, who calls his influence on Pentecostals a “strong minority.” *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁹ Bowler, 30.

⁶⁰ This is somewhat anachronistic. Obviously, postmodernism did not exist during early Pentecostalism. The point here is that early Pentecostals would not have aligned with it if it did.

⁶¹ Archer, 33, 40.

⁶² Neumann, 128-129.

suggest that Pentecostals adopt postmodern approaches. However, a better option is to recover what has been lost from pre-critical exegesis. Early church fathers were not haphazardly creating whatever meaning they saw fit within each text they read.⁶³ “*Literal* interpretations of the text were to be primary, and . . . figurative interpretations were to be used only to support views established on literal grounds.”⁶⁴ Objectivity can be retained. Instead of rejecting the focus on authorial intent, pre-critical exegetes emphasized the intent of both human and divine authors. This is easily missed, unfortunately, because Pentecostals have often viewed tradition in an unfavorable light.⁶⁵ Indeed, “Tradition . . . has generally not *consciously* factored into Pentecostal experience of the Spirit, and deep suspicion of tradition continues among many Pentecostals.”⁶⁶ This is to the detriment of Pentecostalism at large, particularly at the lay level. A number of recent Pentecostal scholars have begun to encourage Pentecostals to “mine the resources of Roman Catholic and Orthodox theology, arguably already evident within Pentecostal spirituality via Wesley.”⁶⁷

Proposed Solution

There is much for Pentecostals to mine, but not only within other traditions. Pentecostals need to reclaim much of their own heritage. “There is no doubt that experience was a crucial dimension of the early Pentecostal movement, but it was experience guided by a theological truth that really mattered. Experience alone was considered dangerous. Every Pentecostal leader worth his or her salt knew that. Experiences needed to be examined and evaluated.”⁶⁸ Returning to these roots which carefully evaluate experience is one more way to help certain Pentecostal streams to avoid slipping further into a Gnostic epistemology. Combined with our other observations, there are two areas for Pentecostals to address: (1) robust ecclesiology, and (2) renewed epistemology.⁶⁹

⁶³ While there may be examples of church fathers being perhaps a little too creative in their exegesis, the overall trend does not exhibit this kind of liberty. For an excellent demonstration of this in the exegesis of Irenaeus, see John J. O’Keefe and Russell R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁶⁴ Bart Ehrman, 197.

⁶⁵ Again, Neumann’s work is helpful. See *Pentecostal Experience*, 133-145.

⁶⁶ Neumann, 139, emphasis his.

⁶⁷ Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience*, 142. See the work of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Dale Coulter, Robert L. Moore, and Winfield H. Bevins. For a specific example of commonality, see Edmund J. Rybarczyk, “What are you, O Man? Theo-Anthropological Similarities in Classical Pentecostalism & Eastern Orthodoxy,” in Oden, Thomas C., Kenneth Tanner, and Christopher A. Hall, eds., *Ancient & Postmodern Christianity: Paleo-Orthodoxy in the 21st Century: Essays in Honor of Thomas C. Oden*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 83-105.

⁶⁸ Douglas G. Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 16.

⁶⁹ Others have expressed similar concerns. For instance, J. Lee Grady lists “Let’s return to the Bible,” and “No More Lone Rangers,” in his call for Charismatic reformation. See “It’s (Past) Time for a Charismatic

Robust Ecclesiology

It may seem odd to suggest that ecclesiology is an epistemological issue, but as William P. Alston says, there is disagreement “on what conciliar, episcopal, papal, or other pronouncements to take as authoritative, and also on what kind of authority these individuals or bodies have for us today, as well as on how much latitude one has in interpreting or reinterpreting what they say.”⁷⁰ But for Pentecostals, ecclesiology should be both strong and ecumenical.⁷¹ Consider the following from early Pentecostalism,

If this movement stands for anything, it stands for unity of mind. It was raised up to answer the prayer of Jesus: ‘That they might be one, as the Father art in me and I in thee.’ What is the matter with the world today? Here is a little selfish sect and there a denomination by itself. They do not love one another as God would have them. Let us honor every bit of God there is in one another. Let us honor the Holy Ghost to teach men to get them out of their error.⁷²

The teaching of the Body of Christ throughout history has rejected this selfish gospel of Gnosticism. The witness of church history and Scripture must be used to its fullest extent when confronting these teachings. When asked how to address Gnosticism, Perrin said, “I despair with changing society. I prefer changing the church. Education is really the key. If people think Gnostic thoughts, they will live Gnostic lives. The way to fix that is to confront it with truth. Our ecclesiology typically fails when emphasizing the fact that we actually need each other. We can’t completely know God without each other.”⁷³ The Apostle Paul once wrote, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to *comprehend with all the saints* what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses

Reformation.” *Charisma News*, 27 Oct. 2011, www.charismanews.com/opinion/32228-its-past-time-for-a-charismatic-reformation. For a more thorough analysis, see, Thomas A. Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright. *The Love of Power, Or, The Power of Love: A Careful Assessment of The Problems Within the Charismatic and Word-Of-Faith Movements*. (Minneapolis, Minn: Bethany House, 1994). This work also does much to expose the overly dualistic tendencies in Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Renewal movements. While outside the bounds of this essay, this is another notable similarity with Gnosticism that is troubling.

⁷⁰ William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 193. Alston’s reflections on St. Theresa’s autobiography (201-205) are well worth reading and reflecting on how the ecclesiology of tradition can help us reflect on the epistemology of religious experience.

⁷¹ For more on ecumenism and Pentecostalism, see Cecil Robeck, “Taking Stock of Pentecostalism: The Personal Reflections of a Retiring Editor,” *Pneuma* 15.1 (1993) 35-60; and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostals as ‘Anonymous Ecumenists’?” in *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission*; edited by Amos Yong, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 39-51.

⁷² Anna Hall, “Honor the Holy Ghost,” *The Apostolic Faith*, 1.2 (October 1906); as quoted in Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience*, 137.

⁷³ Perrin, “Ancient Gnosticism and Its Re-Emergence in Contemporary Culture.”

knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19 NASB). Our knowledge of God must be *in community*. Our comprehension of His Love relies on other saints. Gnostic epistemology divorces the believer from community and tells him that he can do it *on his own*, that *he* is enough, that *he* does not need a teacher. He does not need rebuke. He does not need a body of believers. He only needs his inward reflection to discover the secret knowledge that lies within. Pentecostals today run the risk of a similar approach. If one is not careful, he may mistakenly believe that the meaning of Scripture rests with the individual, not with the community. If the individual perceives that the community is in error, he simply leaves. He starts a new community based on his perception of the truth. Eventually someone disagrees with him, and he proceeds to start a new community. Each person in the Body of Christ needs each other. We are relational beings and we need relational solutions. Gnosticism ignores this relational capacity. It tells the individual to leave everyone behind because no one else is needed. But we do need each other, and desperately so.

Renewed Epistemology

Experience should play some role in the development of theology, however. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral (reason, experience, tradition, and scripture) certainly leaves room for such development. This is not new to Pentecostalism, especially given its Wesleyan-Holiness roots.⁷⁴ Contextual justification is not lacking, just understanding and implementation.

Wesley’s belief that experience was insufficient (and dangerous) without the resources of Scripture, tradition, and reason, serves to demonstrate that the Spirit’s work is only inadequately discerned or understood without these other three components informing the process . . . [A] mature Pentecostal theology needs to demonstrate an ability to both recognize and integrate the experience of the Spirit through these traditional, interrelated media of Scripture, tradition, and reason.⁷⁵

Thus, theology is based on the canonical experiences first (Scripture), then historical experiences (tradition), then personal experiences (experience). Reason is then used to evaluate all three. Scripture, however, should hold form the foundation. In observing Pentecostal theologians Myer Pearlman, E. S. Williams, and French L. Arrington, Christopher Stephenson notes that each begin their work with theological epistemology grounded in Scripture. “There is nothing peculiar about these pentecostals’ [sic] claim that scripture is a source of knowledge of God, but what is significant is that this claim stands

⁷⁴ It should be noted that many rightly suggest that Pentecostalism, while growing out of Wesleyan-Holiness roots, needs to remain distinct. For instance, see Dale M. Coulter, “What Meaneth This? Pentecostals and Theological Inquiry.” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10.1 (2001) 38-64.

⁷⁵ Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience*, 12-13.

first and takes the form of a justification of all that follows.”⁷⁶ They do not deny other sources for theology. Instead, they subject all other sources to the authority of scripture. This is a crucial epistemic move for Pentecostals. Experience is great and helpful in theological reflection, but must remain in check to Scripture, as well as reason and tradition.

Conclusion

How, then, are we to employ experience in a non-Gnostic way? William Alston provides the following analogy. Jim Jones’ experience is rejected on the grounds that it does not “tie into anything else in the tradition.”⁷⁷ However, the experience of someone in a prayer service who feels the love and mercy of God is accepted because it is not “discordant with anything in the Christian experience.”⁷⁸ Jones had a community, but it was divorced from tradition. Proudfoot offers an excellent summary of Alston’s overall point:

The socially established doxastic practice of forming beliefs on the basis of sense perception cannot be justified without epistemic circularity. No justification for the practice can be offered that does not assume the reliability of beliefs formed in this way. Another socially established doxastic practice, that of forming beliefs about God on the basis of putative perception of God, is similarly impossible to justify in an epistemically noncircular way. We think it rational to form beliefs on the basis of sense perception, and therefore, in the absence of other disqualifies, we should consider it rational for people to form beliefs on the basis of a religious doxastic practice. To claim it is irrational would be to employ a double standard.⁷⁹

To be clear, a robust ecclesiology works in tandem with a renewed epistemology to keep the Pentecostal believer in check. Knowledge of God is no longer solely a personal exploration. It is submitted not only to community but also to the text of Scripture.

It may be tempting for some to discard the notion that God can speak to us personally. After all, “One must ruefully admit that evangelical Christianity by and large does not expect much from God.”⁸⁰ If we remove that possibility, then Gnosticism has no ground to stand on. But to do so would also remove a vital part of our relationship with the God. Our “experience should be thought of not so much as a source, but as a means by

⁷⁶ Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology*, 21. These theologians are examples of what Stephenson calls the “Bible doctrines theological method.” He goes on to evaluate this method. Such an evaluation is beyond the scope of this work, but it is worth noting that the commitment to scripture mentioned here is listed as a strength.

⁷⁷ Alston, 190.

⁷⁸ Alston, 190. It is important to note that this “doesn’t show that the experience is veridical, but it leaves undisturbed the justification the experience provides for what is reported.” *Ibid.*, 190.

⁷⁹ Wayne L. Proudfoot, “Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 588–91.

⁸⁰ Fee, 26.

which the ‘Source’ (God) becomes known.”⁸¹ If the Lord wants to speak to us, we ought to listen. Perhaps His voice does not come often, or clearly. But if it comes at all, we ought to listen. “It is the very rare Christian, indeed, who comes to faith through mere words on a page . . . Instead, Christianity must also be *experienced* from flesh to flesh through the Holy Spirit . . . ***Without an experience of the Holy Spirit, you will never own Christianity for yourself.***”⁸² This should not cause us to run headlong into a purely experiential theology. Returning to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, one’s experience must be balanced, but it must remain present. Exploring the Pentecostal usage of experience as a ground for crafting theology “should cause Pentecostals considerable pause in their popular, and sometimes naïve, appeals to experience of the Spirit as justification for belief and practice. The history of Pentecostalism is tainted with charges (and evidence) of triumphalism, elitism, and schism (often within its own ranks).”⁸³ Gnosticism teaches that the arbiter of truth in the universe is the individual. While Pentecostals may not make such a bold claim, their reliance upon experience can lead down the same path. The remedy for this, as evidenced in the writings of Irenaeus, is careful biblical interpretation in the context of the community of faith. Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason provide what is needed for the Body of Christ to triumph over Gnosticism while carefully navigating the waters of direct personal revelation from God.

⁸¹ Neumann, 6.

⁸² Perrin, 169-170; emphasis added.

⁸³ Neumann, 15.

The Spirit's Initiation as an Invitation to Prophetic Preaching, Teaching and Scholarship: The Implications of *Apophthengomai* in Acts 2:4, 2:14 and 26:25

Clayton D. Robinson, D.Min., Ph.D.¹

ABSTRACT:

This article focuses on the implications of the Greek word *apophthengomai* to demonstrate that a believer's Spirit-infilling is an initiation and invitation to the Spirit's presence in one's preaching, teaching and scholarship. After *apophthengomai* is examined in the contexts of Acts 2:4, 2:14, and 26:25, the contention is made that Luke deliberately used *apophthengomai* to connect the inspiration which empowered the tongues of Acts 2:4 with the prophetic message of Peter's articulation of the fulfillment of Joel's prophesy in Acts 2:14. Although Paul's "proclamation" of wise and sensible words in Acts 26:25 is consistent with the proclamation of the Gospel, it is in direct contrast to the "madness" associated with Hellenistic proclamations of inspired persons. Since the Peter/Paul parallels connect Paul's usage to the inspiration of the Spirit in Acts 2:4, it is apparent that, for Luke, speaking in tongues, prophetic messages, and the Gospel sensibly proclaimed all come from the same Spirit. The author's conclusion is that the church should not only contend for the release of tongues, but also for the ongoing flow of Spirit-inspiration in all works of proclamation, evangelization, prophetic preaching and scholarship.

Introduction

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In this passage, Luke establishes the purpose and outline for his work; namely, that believers will receive the power to become effective witnesses to reach the very ends of the world, which Luke then demonstrates by narrating the growth of the church from Jerusalem to the very ends of the known world. The power to drive the evangelistic growth of the church was provided through the divine outpouring of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by amazing prophetic gifts, including tongues, prophecy and "signs and wonders."

Pentecostals historically have separated the initiatory "tongues" of the Spirit's reception from ongoing spiritual gifts, and most definitely from preaching, teaching and scholarship. Luke, however, provides a link between the initiatory tongues released at the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 4) and Peter's subsequent prophetic message, and again later, with Paul's defense of the Gospel to Festus. I propose that Luke makes this linkage through the usage of a rare Greek verb, "*apophthengomai*."

In Acts 2:4, Luke narrates the coming of the Spirit: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (ESV). The word translated "utterance" is *apophthengomai*, and occurs only three times in the NT (Acts 2:4; 2:24; 26:25). Since the crux of this article is dependent upon correctly

¹ Clayton D. Robinson (clrobinson@lifepacific.edu) is an adjunct professor at Life Pacific University and the pastor of The Connection Foursquare Church in Lake Forest, California.

understanding this Greek word, a survey of *apophthengomai* in primary Greek literature will first be reviewed to ascertain its primary meaning and nuances. Following this, the three occurrences in the NT will be examined in detail. It will be argued that in fact all three occurrences of *apophthengomai* were deliberately utilized by Luke to establish that the very same Spirit that inspired tongues also inspired prophetic and evangelistic proclamations. It shall be concluded that the Spirit-filled person should not simply contend for a once-for-all experience of speaking in tongues, but for a continual in-filling of the empowering Spirit, which will burst forth in inspired speech, whether in a known or unknown language.

Apophthengomai

A careful analysis of “*apophthengomai*” in Hellenistic and Jewish literature demonstrates that the verb is used primarily as a loud and verbal “pronouncement,” often, if not usually, within a prophetic/inspired context. On several occasions *apophthengomai* is used to reference *short pithy proclamations*. Thus, Philo notes that on one occasion, short “pronouncements” had to be made concerning the law because time did not allow for deeper discussion.² Diogenes Laertius reports several short, pithy pronouncements such as by Solon, “Nothing too much,”³ and by Chilon, “Give a pledge and suffer for it.”⁴ Such pronouncements were intended as verbal proclamations that were instructive.⁵

It is possible the word was used metaphorically on one occasion by Lucian. It is traditionally translated as “a sound *ringing out* like a pot being struck.”⁶ Yet the Greek combines plural “pots” with the singular verb, “*apophthengomai*.” Thus it can be translated literally, “Just like worthless pots, when struck (tested), he proclaims, ‘worthless!’”⁷ In other words, while traditionally *apophthengomai* has been translated here to refer to the ringing of the pot (a metaphorical usage), it is more likely the word refers to the loud proclamation of the tester (buyer?) who proclaims the pots worthless because of their dull sound. Regardless of how one translates the passage, *apophthengomai* here seems to refer to a loud proclamation, whether a “thud” of the pot or the declaration that the pots are worthless.

The vast usage of *apophthengomai* is found within a prophetic context, in both

² Philo, *Moses* 2.33–4

³ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* LCL 184 1.63.

⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* LCL 184 1.78.

⁵ The cognate, ἀποφθεγματικός, -ή, -όν, refers to a short saying, an apothegm. Thus, Plutarch *Lives: Brutus* 3, 985 LCL 98:130–131. Plutarch notes that Brutus was trained in narrative in Latin, but in Greek “he affected the brevity of the apothegm.”

⁶ Lucian, *The Parasite, Parasitic an Art*, LCL 130: 246–247. A. M. Harmon translates the passage, “Like a good-for-nothing pot when you try its ring, sounds cracked.”

⁷ καθάπερ αἱ πονηραὶ χύτραι διακρουόμεναι, σαθρὸν ἀποφθέγγεται. A variant reading provided by LCL: σαθρὸν (Seager) ἀποφθέγγεται Fritzsche: μὴ σαπρὸν ἀποφθέγγονται (ἀποφθέγγηται) MSS.) (σαθρὸν (Seager) ἀποφθέγγεται Fritzsche: μὴ σαπρὸν ἀποφθέγγονται (ἀποφθέγγηται) MSS.

Hellenistic and Jewish/LXX literature. Later Christian usage is also prevalent, but often rehearses the scriptural passages in Acts, and thus, with a few exceptions, later Christian usage is not reviewed here.

The prophetic context of *apophthengomai* is broad, well attested, and generally in the context of prophetically “inspired” proclamations. For example, Publius Aelius references the *proclamation* of the god Ariess and Plutarch notes that the Oracles at Delphi used to make their *pronouncements* in prose (longwinded speeches) rather than short pithy *pronouncements*.⁹ It appears, then, that the *length* of the pronouncement is separate from its *presentational style*. What is consistent is that the pronouncement is clear and possibly loudly proclaimed. Thus, Eusebius notes, “Asaph prophesied, *proclaiming* just as inspired.”¹⁰

Often descriptive adjectives are used such as “raving,” “inspired,” and “mad” to describe the person while he/she is delivering a pronouncement. Thus, Vettius Valens notes men who were “like deranged madmen falling down when they finished *proclaiming*.”¹¹ Publius Aelius also observed, “the commander Poplios became raving and *proclaimed* deliriously many ecstatic things.”¹²

Prophetic proclamation can be accompanied by (or through) music, “David set apart the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, those *proclaiming/prophesying* by lyres, harps, and cymbals (1 Chron. 25:1 LXX).¹³ On the five occurrences of *apophthengomai* in the Old Testament, four refer to the prophetic activity of false prophets (Micah 5:11; Zech. 10:2; Ezek. 13:9, 19).¹⁴ Eusebius repeatedly uses the phrase, “They speak, *proclaiming* by their mouths and with a sword in their hands, which implies that actions and words may go hand-in-hand, but “proclamation” is key.¹⁵

Summary

To review and recap, several things appear clear. First, *apophthengomai* is consistently about a vocal, if not loud, proclamation, with only one instance where an inanimate object might have been the reference. In no instance was *apophthengomai* found to refer to written or other forms of communication, with some sort of proclamation always being noted.

⁸ Phlegon Paradox. *De mirabilibus* 3.12.1

⁹ Plutarch *Moralia*. LCL 306 320–321.23; cf. Publius Aelius Phlegon Paradox. *De mirabilibus* 3.9.2

¹⁰ Eusebius Scr. Eccl. Et Theol. *Commentaria in Psalmos* 23.589.19; Cf. 23.845.23.

¹¹ Vettius Valens, *Astrol. Anthologiarum libri ix* 74.24; 113.1; cf. 112.15.

¹² Publius Aelius, Phlegon Paradox. *De mirabilibus* 3.8.2

¹³ Eusebius Scr. Eccl. Et Theol. *Commentaria in Psalmos* 23.589.17.

¹⁴ It is not clear why the LXX usage primarily refers to the activity of false prophets, with the sole exception as a reference to the sons of Asaph in 1 Chron. 15:1.

¹⁵ Eusebius Scr. Eccl. Et Theol. *Commentaria in Psalmos* 23.541.39, 46; 23.549.30; 23.617.44.

Second, most occurrences demonstrate a prophetic context, often with the speaker referred to be in some sort of ecstatic state while “pronouncing.”

Analysis of Acts 2

Acts 2:1–4 provides the story of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost which resulted in the disciples being filled with the Spirit, accompanied by tongues “as the Spirit gave them *utterance*” (KJV, NASB, RSV, ESV), “. . . *enabled* them” (NIV), “. . . gave them *ability*” (NRSV, ISV). Unfortunately, all these translations fail to fully convey the sense of *apophthengomai*, which is a *dynamic proclamation within a prophetic context*. Thus, *Young’s Literal Translation* somewhat captures the sense of *apophthengomai*: “and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, according as the Spirit was giving them *to declare*.”

Luke’s usage of *apophthengomai* in Acts 2:4 makes perfect sense and is best understood as “a prophetic proclamation.”¹⁶ Thus, Acts 2:3-4 is best translated, “...they were speaking in other languages¹⁷ as the Spirit was continuously giving them what they were (prophetically) proclaiming.”¹⁸ The reciprocal relationship between the Spirit and the believer is demonstrated by the usage of the Greek word “to give” (*edidou*, ἐδίδου) which, as an imperfect active indicative (or past progressive) conveys an ongoing action in past time, or as Palma notes, “the continuation of the speaking in tongues depended upon the continuing impulse of inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹ Interestingly, the simple past tense (aorist), “gave” is not used, implying that the Spirit did not bestow a gift of tongues once for-all-time, but was suppling “tongues” in an ongoing action of inspiration. This is not to say that the ability to speak in tongues did not continue past the experience, but rather the ability to speak in tongues was a spiritual dance between the Spirit and the believer, with the Spirit taking the lead by providing the ability for an ongoing prophetic proclamation, as it were, word-by-word.

¹⁶ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*. AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 239. Fitzmyer takes *apophthengomai* as simply “to speak out, declare boldly and loudly” without reference to a prophetic/inspired context. Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles*. 6th ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1884, 1983), 51. Meyer correctly suggests that *apophthengomai* refers to loud utterances “in the elevated state of spiritual gifts.”

¹⁷ BDAG, γλῶσσα, ης, ἡ notes that in the plural *glōssa* should be understood as “a body of words and systems that makes up a distinctive language, *language, tongue*.” “Tongues” here should be understood as “foreign languages” rather than ecstatic speech (“an utterance outside the normal patterns of intelligible speech”—BDAG), in that Luke makes reference in the following verses that the “tongues” were understandable by foreign bystanders (Acts 2:8–11). See the extended discussion in Meyer, *Acts*, 45–51; Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts* (London: Paternoster, 1996), 216–9; John R. W. Stott *The Message of Acts* BST (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990), 65–8. Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*. SP 5 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) 42; Fitzmyer, 239; David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* Pillar New Testament Commentary (2009), 134–5.

¹⁸ Cf. Johnson, *Apostles*, 42.

¹⁹ Anthony D. Palma, *Enrichment Journal* (n.d.) “Spirit-inspired Utterance.”

Tongues were not simply a Spirit-inspired “glossolalia” to signal the Spirit’s in-filling, but the ongoing release of a prophetic proclamation of “the mighty works of God” (Acts 2:11).²⁰ Thus, “prophetic” speech pours forth through the believers in a clearly ecstatic context consistent with the usage of *apophthengomai* found in secular literature, demonstrated by the reaction of the crowd of onlookers who accuse the believers of being drunk. As is made clear by Peter, however, this is no drunken revelry, but evidence of the outpouring of the divine Spirit upon the followers of Jesus, who in turn are observed prophetically proclaiming “the wondrous works of God” in foreign languages.²¹

Luke’s usage of *apophthengomai* here is perfectly in line with usage elsewhere. What is surprising is the immediate usage of *apophthengomai* within the same context a few verses later when Peter addresses the crowd that had gathered. Unfortunately, most translations gloss over the second usage of *apophthengomai*, “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and *addressed* them” (Acts 2:14 ESV), where “addressed them” translates “*apophthengomai*.” To translate *apophthengomai* here as “addressed” (ESV, RSV, NIV) or “said” (KJV) is weak, with the NASB being close with “declared,” and *The Message* even closer with “bold urgency.” Unfortunately, it seems that all the translations fail to take into account the previous usage by Luke of *apophthengomai* within the same context.²²

In Acts 2:14, Peter responds to the accusations of drunkenness by addressing the crowd with a prophetic message explaining that what was happening was nothing less than the fulfillment of Joel’s prophesy that the Spirit would be poured out upon all believers.²³ Both usages of *apophthengomai* are consistent with the lexical understanding of a bold proclamation within a prophetic context. What is noteworthy, however, is that otherwise *apophthengomai* is not to be found in the NT (save one more occurrence in Acts 26:25 to be discussed shortly). Thus, two usages of such a rare word within the same passage should not be dismissed lightly, and most likely was a deliberate rhetorical tool utilized by Luke

²⁰ So F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 51–2, who notes that “the descent of the Spirit on the disciples was attended by prophetic speech, but prophetic speech of a peculiar kind—utterance in ‘other tongues.’” Cf. Craig S. Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power*. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 192–4, 206n41.

²¹ Victor Bartling, “Notes on ‘Spirit-Baptism’ and ‘Prophetic Utterance’” *CTM* 39 No. 10 (1968): 708–14, challenges the idea that Acts 2 is exemplary, setting an example for the church moving forward, noting that no glossolalia is mentioned in Acts 4:31, the next time the believers are “filled with the Spirit.” Yet, the very reference to speaking the Word with “boldness” in fact suggests the same idea of *apophthengomai* in that the charismatic gift of the Spirit results in bold (prophetic?) proclamation afterwards.

²² It should be noted here that the usage of *apophthengomai* is part of Luke’s narrative account, thus clearly part of Luke’s intentional narrative story.

²³ Most translations correctly note Peter’s words as, “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16), although the ESV’s rendering “This is what was uttered...” could mislead an English reader to connect the “utterance” of tongues found in Acts 2:4 with Joel’s prophesy, rather than as Luke did, by linking the proclamation of tongues to Peter’s message.

to connect the tongues of Pentecost with the prophetic explanation by Peter of what this all means.²⁴ As Palma notes, “Peter’s address was more than a sermon. It was a Spirit-inspired utterance that was comparable to prophetic messages often delivered by God’s servants in Old Testament times as they were moved on by the Holy Spirit.”²⁵

Thus, the rarity of “*apophthengomai*,” as well as the deliberate usage by Luke within the same context, implies that Luke wished his readers to conclude that the outpouring of the Spirit in tongues and the following message by Peter were of the same type, namely, prophetic proclamation. Thus, Acts 2:14 might better be translated, “And standing with the eleven, Peter raised his voice and boldly prophesied (or proclaimed) to them . . .”

Not only does this signify that Peter's sermon was prophetic, but that the initiatory tongues were as well. If one accepts the proposal, the implications are immense. It would suggest that the *initiatory tongues are not solely a “sign” of the Spirit's presence, but are the bursting forth of a prophetic gift through the Spirit's presence.*²⁶ It is true that tongues can be observed as an evidence of the Spirit's presence, yet the very same Spirit which bursts forth prophetically in unknown languages can and should be released in all Spirit-filled activity, including preaching, teaching, public proclamation, evangelism, and even prophetically-inspired scholarship.²⁷

Analysis of Acts 26:25

The third occurrence of *apophthengomai* in the New Testament occurs in Acts 26:25, where Paul is standing before Festus and King Agrippa providing a defense of the Gospel. Festus suddenly interrupts loudly, “Paul, you are mad, your great learning is making you

²⁴ Peterson, *Acts*, 139. Peterson notes, “Peter’s extensive and carefully argued speech has a prophetic character and is as much a Spirit-inspired utterance as the speaking in other languages.” Although in the discussion on Acts 2:4, Peterson suggests that *apophthengomai* in Acts 2:14 should be rendered simply as “to speak one’s opinion plainly” or “to speak with emphasis (p 135). Cf. R. J. Knowling, *The Acts of the Apostles* EGT 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 78. Knowling notes that *apophthengomai* here demonstrates that “Peter’s words were inspired no less than the speaking with tongues.” So Bruce, *Acts*, 60; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* Vol 1. ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark:1994), 134–5; David J. Williams, *Acts* NIBC 5 (Peabody: Hedrickson, 1985, 1990), 49.

²⁵ Palma, *Utterance*.

²⁶ Not to be confused with the “gift of prophesy” found elsewhere in the New Testament.

²⁷ While not clearly a “proclamation,” any activity that is inspired by the Spirit can and should be recognized as being prophetic, as judged by the Spirit-filled community. Thus Scripture, which is a type of Spirit inspired scholarship (exemplified by Luke’s historical writings) can be understood as “inspired.” So too should scholars today seek to be “inspired” by the Spirit in their research and writings. One should distinguish “inspired” scholarship, however, from the often speculative or overly reasoned work based all too often in human reasoning rather than in a sense of the Spirit’s revelation and inspiration. In no case, however, should scholarship today be placed in the same level as established biblical Scripture. Charles W. Carter and Ralph Earle, *The Acts of the Apostles* ZCS (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959) 34. Carter and Earle contend that to stand up, lift up one’s voice, and speak forth with inspiration “are three things that should always characterize the preacher in the pulpit.”

mad.” The Greek word translated “mad” here is *mainomai*, which was often associated with the behavior of “inspired proclaimers” as mentioned above.²⁸ It may be that Festus is accepting Paul’s place as a proclaimer of divine things, something best left to the “prophets” found at the temples. Instead, Paul responded that indeed he is prophetically proclaiming, but his prophecies are not the utterances of the demonically crazed, but are the bold and courageous pronouncements of true and sensible words rather than the foolish ramblings of a madman. As Palma also observes, the usage of *apophthengomai* thus implies that the apologetic proclamation of the Gospel by Paul is indeed actually a “prophetic proclamation in direct contrast to the *proclamations* of temple ‘madmen.’”²⁹

In addition, it is possible Luke includes the usage here of *apophthengomai* as part of his Peter and Paul parallels³⁰—apparently demonstrating that whatever Peter did as the apostle to the Jews was also done by Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. In the process, the usage of *apophthengomai* to connect Pentecostal tongues, as well as Peter’s and Paul’s proclamations, suggests Luke considered tongues, prophetic preaching, and prophetically inspired proclamation of the Gospel as equally Spirit-inspired prophetic speech.

Implications for Spirit-Empowered Preaching, Teaching and Scholarship

The same should be true today, such that preaching, teaching, even scholarly endeavors (through prayerful research and writing), can and should be Spirit-empowered, carrying the same sense of prophetic proclamation. While God’s empowerment comes at the baptism in the Holy Spirit, it is up to each individual to stay continually full of God’s Spirit through prayer and spiritual practices (Eph. 5:18).³¹ Peter’s prophetic “sermon” and Paul’s “reasoned evangelistic promulgation” were of the same prophetic essence as the prophetic “tongues” of Acts 2. Such “scholarly (prophetic) inspiration” is exemplified by both OT/NT historical works, which claim to be “well researched,”³² yet still are considered as prophetically inspired. This is not to say our pastoral study and scholarly work should be considered in the same genre as inspired Scripture. Rather, if pastors and scholars will approach their work with less speculation, criticism, and choice of trendy topics, in preference to prayerfully seeking the Spirit’s empowering presence and inspiration,

²⁸ E.g. Vettius Valens, *Astrol. Anthologiarum libri ix* 74.24; 113.1; cf. 112.15; Publius Aelius, *Phlegon Paradox. De mirabilibus* 3.8.2

²⁹ Palma, *Utterance*. Knowling, *Acts*, 511. On the other hand, Barrett, *Acts* 2, 1168. Barrett responds that where *apophthengomai* often suggests “inspired, even ecstatic, speech, this may be true in those verses but is hardly true here.” Cf. Williams, *Acts*, 422.

³⁰ For a history of the supposed Peter-Paul parallels see, David P. Moessner, “‘The Christ Must Suffer:’ New Light on the Jesus-Peter, Stephen, Paul Parallels in Luke-Acts.” *NT* 28.3 (1986): 220–56.

³¹ Thus, the Apostles and NT church were continually in prayer and fasting (Acts 4:37; 6:4; 12:5; 13:2–3; 14:23).

³² E.g. Luke 1:1–4.

sermons and scholarly writings might be more impactful and better received by the church at large, and in the process, make greater kingdom impact.³³

In conclusion, when seeking the Holy Spirit's in-filling, Pentecostals should contend for more than merely getting initiates to speak in tongues, but should contend for the full outpouring of the Spirit in power resulting in an ongoing empowering presence of the Spirit for their prophetic witness to Christ.³⁴

³³ Palma, *Utterance*. Palma notes, "In effect, the New Testament is saying that the same Spirit who emboldened the Old Testament prophets is now available to Christians inasmuch as all Christians may now be empowered by the Holy Spirit in the manner indicated on the Day of Pentecost and by Paul. All Christians may experience Spirit-inspired utterances."

³⁴ As true for us today as when Christ spoke the words, "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12:11–12).