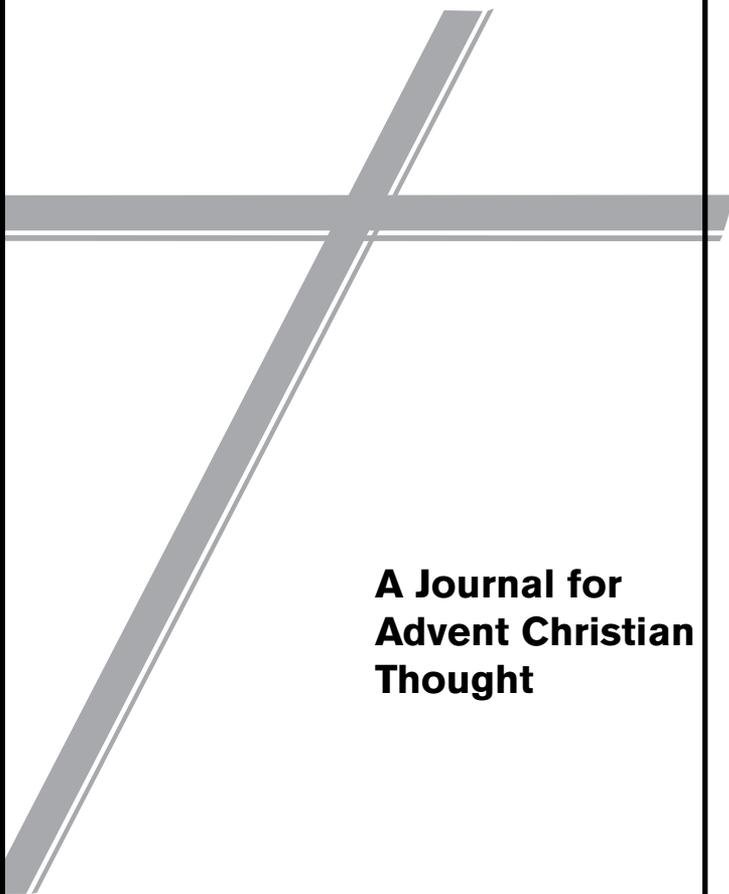


# HENCEFORTH ..♦♦



**A Journal for  
Advent Christian  
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**HENCEFORTH ...**

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## WHEN “BIBLICAL” IS WRONG

by Rev. Jefferson Vann

Advent Christians have always been strong advocates for the authority and inspiration of the Bible. We believe that “Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness”<sup>1</sup> so we strive to follow the Bible in everything we do. The Bible, for us, is God’s Word, and should not be nullified by human traditions,<sup>2</sup> nor neglected even for good things like ministry to others.<sup>3</sup> We view it as a disgraceful thing to use the Word of God to our own benefit, distorting it so that it says what we want it to say.<sup>4</sup> For those reasons, we Advent Christians have often sought to do things in a “biblical” way. We have sought after patterns of behavior and policy delineated in the Bible and have endeavored to follow those patterns. We have judged our ministries and our personal lives based not on the question “is it appropriate” or “is it justified.” No, our mantra has been “is it biblical.”

In one sense, there is absolutely nothing wrong with seeking to be biblical. We should all judge our actions on the basis of whether those actions are commanded in the Holy Scriptures. We should all reflect and “defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people.”<sup>5</sup>

But there is a sense in which modern evangelicals (Advent Christians not excluded) use the terms “biblical” and “unbiblical,” which has the potential to endanger our relationships with people and distort the gospel message. I refer to the tendency to brand some actions not described in the Bible as “unbiblical,” and

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16 NET.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:13.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 6:2.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:2.

<sup>5</sup> Jude 3 NLT.

others that are described in the Bible as “biblical.” But these tendencies are often accompanied by an even more dangerous one — the tendency to assume that some things merely described in the Bible are actually prescribed for all of us to follow today.

It is not too difficult to see how these tendencies can create modern-day Pharisees. People convinced that they are doing something biblically can become absolutely monstrous toward those whom they consider unbiblical. They can avoid fellowship with them, preach against them in their messages, and even criticize them in their theological journals.

So, how can we avoid the wrong kind of biblical, while seeking to stay biblical in the right sense? Here are some suggestions:

1. Be careful to distinguish between the form that an action takes, and the function it seeks to perform. Doing something that the Bible commands in an unusual or different way is not being unbiblical. It is just being creative.
2. Be careful to let the Holy Spirit do what the Bible says that he does. Often our self-imposed definitions of biblical ministry prohibit some people from doing certain things. The Bible consistently breaks those norms, because the Holy Spirit is free to gift anybody to do anything.
3. Package your prescriptions carefully. Even some of the actual commands of Scripture were intended for temporary strategic purposes. For example, the early apostles commanded Gentile Christians to avoid animals that had been strangled.<sup>6</sup> There is no reason that command should be taught today as if it is a tenant of the faith. It was a command expected to be obeyed at that time, and in that culture, but it was only for that time and context. Feel free to disagree, but I believe the New Testament commands against female leadership in the church serve as another example of the same thing.

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 15:20.

We do ourselves and the people who serve with us a disservice if we are more concerned about looking biblical than we are about obeying the Lord who gave us the Bible. He wants to move and operate among us, and often chooses to do it in ways that stretch our understanding of his will (as revealed in the Bible). May he grant us the wisdom to follow him closely, but not to idolize the structure and methods we use as if they are the message itself.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE CONSERVATIVE THREAT TO INERRANCY

by Pastor Corey McLaughlin

Any discussion of inerrancy must begin with a careful and thoughtful definition. **David Dockery** offers just such a faithful and succinct understanding:

*Inerrancy — the idea that when all the facts are known, the Bible (in its autographs, that is, the original documents), properly interpreted in light of the culture and the means of communication that had developed by the time of its composition, is completely true in all that it affirms to the degree of precision intended by the author’s purpose, in all matters relating to God and His creation.<sup>1</sup>*

While this description is solidly biblical, does it go far enough? Many would nod approvingly at these descriptions and yet still harbor the belief that the Holy Scriptures are nonetheless corruptible, inconsistent and contradictory in many places. These are not the liberal outsiders from whom we expect such charges of fallibility, but conservative Christian scholars whom our pastors and leaders in the local church rely on for accurate insights to pass onto their own people.

When Westminster Theological Seminary dismissed tenured Old Testament professor **Peter Enns** in 2008 for making claims in his book inconsistent with their doctrinal stance on inerrancy (most notably various contradictions<sup>2</sup>), it sent shock waves through the evangelical scholarly world. At the time Enns affirmed his belief in inerrancy, however, the most recent meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2013 (ETS) left little doubt where he stood as he outright denied inerrancy and attempted to defend his position.

**But why should a lone professor at a prestigious seminary give us pause?** Because, as many have noted, “*as goes the seminary, so goes the church.*” It’s the beginning of a new fight on inerrancy but unlike the one in the 19th century against liberal scholars claiming the Bible was myth (the very reason the term “inerrancy” came into play in the first place<sup>3</sup>). Now our own shipmates are in mutiny against the doctrine!<sup>4</sup>

One may understand why these Christian scholars continue to affirm inerrancy, otherwise it could bring a decisive death blow to an evangelical career. A case in point is **Michael Licona’s** book, “The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach,” which subsequently caused him to lose his professorship at Southern Evangelical Seminary.<sup>5</sup>

In an otherwise outstanding work defending the historical resurrection of Jesus in more than 700 pages, he bizarrely interprets Matthew 27:51–53 (the resurrection of numerous saints at the death of Christ) as myth classifying it as “poetry,” and calling it a “legend,” an “embellishment,” and even Matthew’s way of adding literary “special effects.”<sup>6</sup>

He finds support in the Greek and Roman literature citing Virgil (among others) who reports that following Caesar’s death 16 supernatural phenomena appeared including prolonged darkness, earthquakes, streams standing still, ivory idols weeping, bronze idols sweating, etc.<sup>7</sup> In short, Matthew’s account is not historical according to Licona, but neither did Matthew actually *intend* for it to be taken as such. This enables him to still claim inerrancy and yet deny the historicity of a key gospel event.<sup>8</sup>

Since this is the knife's edge many conservative scholars walk in the debate on inerrancy, we, too, must lock our carabiners in and explore their reasoning more thoroughly if we hope to defend a high view of Scripture.

There are *two* slippery slopes here that one may fall down; **genre** and the **author's intent**.

**1<sup>st</sup> Slippery Slope — Abuse of Genre:** Genre research is crucial to any hermeneutic that seeks to understand Scripture.<sup>9</sup> How many Christians have deflated their spiritual lives because they did not recognize the difference between a proverb and a promise? The former is only a general truth that allows for exceptions (e.g. the famous Proverbs 22:6 concerning parenting), the latter is an iron clad expectation based on the character of God (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9; Rom. 8:28). However, scholars are often too eager to build a case for outside sources instead of trusting in the sovereign wisdom of God who brought these 66 books together in the Canon and thus allow Scripture to truly interpret Scripture as a first principle. When we do this, it becomes clear that Matthew 27 cannot be seen as anything other than historical narrative.

Many conservative scholars believe that if they can prove the existence of a particular genre that exists outside the Bible (say apocalyptic imagery used in Greco-Roman biography) then the biblical author must certainly have used it as well in his story (or at least there is a good possibility).<sup>10</sup> Two unchecked assumptions often prevail: (a) that Matthew (or the biblical author) is, in fact, using the same genre, and (b) that he is using it in the same unhistorical way as his godless contemporaries (Enns uses similar reasoning in his work "The Evolution of Adam" to deny the historicity of Genesis 1–3).<sup>11</sup> **Any outside sources that challenge Scripture's own internal genre identity must robustly prove these assumptions beyond a reasonable doubt.** Otherwise, once the incident of the rising of the saints in Matthew 27 is admitted to be "apocalyptic imagery" we are forced to admit with Licona, "*It is often difficult to determine where history ends and legend begins.*"<sup>12</sup>

That is precisely the monumental problem his theory and others like it introduce. Namely, if Matthew is using the genre of the time, with the assumptions of the time, what is to stop him from doing the same thing to the resurrection of Jesus just a few verses later in the next chapter? In purportedly defending the resurrection of Christ Licona has made a bed of meat and left the door open for the wolves! Such is becoming characteristic of conservative scholarship.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Slippery Slope — Abuse of Authorial intent:** It is sometimes argued that if the author did not intend for his or her work to be taken historically/literally (even if it appears to be presented that way!) then his or her motives supersede any modern notion of inerrancy. This has solid merit, after all, few would argue that it was Jesus' intent to be scientifically accurate when he said that the mustard seed was the smallest of all seeds (Matt. 13:31); rather, it was the smallest of the seeds customarily used or seen in Palestine in the life of his audience. Since we talk about the "author's intended meaning" at great length in all biblical hermeneutics, this appears to be a fully legitimate claim. Upon further inspection however, we may discover that a scholar is really saying that an author's intended purpose for writing can be sincere and without fault, free of error, truly "inerrant" in the full sense of the word, even if *what* they write does actually contain errors, inconsistencies and contradictions.<sup>13</sup> Hence we are inclined to agree with Inigo Montoya in the "Princess Bride," "*I do not think it means what you think it means*" ("Inconceivable!").

The problem is that the "author's intended purpose" has to be clearly and precisely defined, or it allows for people to affirm inerrancy while pulling the rug out from under its feet.

Geisler observes that "intent" can mean four different things:

- (1) *Plan*, as in: "I intend to go tomorrow";
- (2) *Purpose*, as in: "My intention was to help you";
- (3) *Thought in one's mind*, as in: "I didn't intend to say that";

(4) *Expressed meaning*, as in: “The truth intended in John 3:16 is clear.”

He further argues that evangelicals who believe in verbal inspiration of Scripture should not use intention in the third sense when applied to understanding Scripture “*for the locus of meaning (and truth) is not in the author’s mind behind the text of Scripture. What the author meant is expressed in the text. The writings are inspired, not the thoughts of the author’s mind.*”<sup>14</sup> Nor does the evangelical scholar refer to some plan the author may or may not have had to express his meaning; rather all we know is what the author did actually express in the inspired text itself.

But what of the author’s purpose when not explicitly declared? Again, Geisler’s distinctions are helpful to navigate the rapids:

- (1) Meaning is *what* the author expressed.
- (2) Purpose is *why* the author expressed it.

Without the author in front of us to ask questions of, and without any explicit statement as to his purpose in writing, figuring out the *why* often leads to endless speculation and becomes a lot like searching for your echo in a cavernous gorge. But meaning can be understood without knowing anything about an author’s purpose. We are not sure *why* Scripture prohibits boiling a young goat in its mother’s milk (Exodus 23:19), says Geisler, but *what* the author wrote is plainly in front of us; leaving no question as to what the author actually meant (i.e. don’t boil a young goat in its mother’s milk!). Nor does one have to understand *why* in order to obey the command.

The biblical exegete may inquire as to the purpose of an author in hopes of understanding the *significance* of any given passage but *meaning* stands independent of purpose (significance too, it can be argued, is highly contextual).<sup>15</sup> This keeps biblical authority safe behind the walls of the biblical text, with the draw bridge up and the gates closed. Therefore the author’s intended meaning should be understood as the accessible and available meaning in the text.<sup>16</sup>

There is no need, then, to appeal to Jesus' intention (#2–3 above) when a simple appeal to the context is all that is needed; after all, was he giving a lecture on carpology? Context determines meaning. Consider this: Is it morally acceptable to punch someone in the face who has done nothing to you? That depends; are we talking about an altercation at work or a boxing fight on TV? Is it okay to steal? That depends; are we talking about robbing a bank or running to third base? Context is not the little drummer boy who pounds his drums but offers nothing of value to the war. Context is the army, the first line of defense, the sharp shooters, the cavalry and the cannons all rolled into one. **Our appeal should always be to context first with all other interpretive concerns following behind.**

An abuse of genre studies and authorial intent allows opponents to frame the debate in terms of interpretation rather than the core issue inerrancy.<sup>17</sup> This same strategy was used in the 1980s as well when respected scholar **Robert Gundry** published his Matthew commentary. There he argued that Matthew used a Jewish genre called “Midrash” in order to turn Luke’s account of shepherds in the field into magi from the East, and his descriptions of two doves shockingly became twisted in Matthew’s hands into a fabricated story about Herod’s slaughter of the innocents!<sup>18</sup> He, too, stuck by his affirmation of inerrancy.

**Craig Evans** defended Gundry in the 1980s and defends Licona now. Yet he himself is not untainted. In his commentary on Luke he posits that Jesus likely allowed for no legitimate grounds for divorce, but Matthew (or the tradition he received) “added” the exception clause. Inerrancy affirms that biblical authors may select, omit or summarize their material, but it is quite another thing for Matthew to actually “add” his own personal views into Jesus’ mouth!<sup>19</sup>

Outside this particular debate stands another otherwise outstanding New Testament scholar, **Craig Bloomberg**. In a book about how modern scholars distort the gospels, he attempts to defend the veracity of the Scriptures by conceding to Christian turned agnostic–liberal-critic **Bart Ehrman**, that his charge of a

contradiction in Mark 2:25–26 (who was high priest, Abiathar as stated in Mark or Ahimilech as stated in 1 Samuel 21:1–10?) is actually sustainable. He admits, “*We have a mistake, technically speaking, either made by Jesus himself, or by Mark (or perhaps by someone who passed on the story).*”<sup>20</sup> Now, is it more likely that the sinless Son of God did not know his Hebrew Scriptures and made a mistake, or that Jesus was simply referencing the one who became the more notable and well known High Priest in line with the custom of the day? After all he literally says, “*in the days of Abiathar*” indicating a wider perspective than just when he was in office.<sup>21</sup>

**Rumblings in the church?** When the dam of inerrancy springs a leak it is not long before it cracks under the pressure of the worldliness it is holding back. **Rob Bell’s** 2011 controversial book “*Love Wins*” challenged the notion of God’s judgment in hell and presented a hopeful belief that God would reconcile all to himself. Oprah loved it, but it set off a furious firestorm from evangelicals. Not surprisingly, he also rejects biblical inerrancy.<sup>22</sup>

More shocking was what popular and influential pastor **Andy Stanley** did NOT say in a now famous 2012 illustration.<sup>23</sup> He told a story about a couple with a young daughter who recently divorced because the wife discovered the husband was in a relationship with another man. The wife asked her former husband and gay partner to move; they did, to another North Point congregation where they began serving as part of the “host team” (greeters). Then Stanley learned that the former husband’s gay partner was still married. He kindly explained that the partner was committing adultery and as such could not serve on the host team any longer so long as he was still married. As the story wrapped up, and to illustrate the messiness of grace, he reported that the entire family (the woman, her daughter, her former husband, his gay partner and his daughter) all attended the Christmas service together with joy.<sup>24</sup> Stanley himself has refused to offer any help despite the outcry to clarify why he emphasized adultery but ignored the homosexual issue (curiously the same cannot be said this year as he eagerly offered a four-page inter-

view to “Christianity Today” about a passing comment concerning Obama<sup>25</sup>). It is hard to say, and certainly no one wants to be hasty, though, Stanley does appear to undermine the doctrine of inerrancy in other interviews, which may eventually undermine his convictions here.<sup>26</sup>

Another difficult to determine case is the ever popular “**Message**” paraphrase created by the retired PC-USA pastor **Eugene Peterson**. Is the removing of the term “homosexual” in two texts (1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 1 Timothy 1:10) and the softening of it in another (Romans 1:27) indicative that he shares his denomination’s view of both inerrancy (which they reject)<sup>27</sup> and homosexuality (which they allow for ordained ministers)<sup>28</sup>? No one knows precisely what Peterson believes. He has endorsed two unorthodox authors (Rob Bell,<sup>29</sup> William P. Young who wrote “The Shack”<sup>30</sup>) who believe in **universal reconciliation** and **deny the substitutionary atonement** of Christ (that he died in our place to appease God’s demand for justice); but how far this extends to Peterson is difficult to say. Perhaps these are off base, but many believe a new battle for the Bible is already hiding, ever so subtly, like an armed submarine below the surface. Perhaps more than ever we need believers willing to think through the issue, not just react. We need both reasoned responses and seasoned wisdom. Perhaps most practically for the person in the pew, we need Christians to get off the computer and bury their “Face” in the only “Book” that matters and then to live it out with light and love.<sup>31</sup>

*\*To see the expanded 16 page version, please visit [sheffieldchapel.org](http://sheffieldchapel.org), “Articles” on the main site, “The Conservative Threat to Inerrancy (Expanded).”*

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<sup>1</sup> *The Doctrine of the Bible*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1991: 80. Cf. Paul D. Feinberg who rightly adds that the Scriptures are true in all that they affirm “whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with social, physical, or life sciences” (p. 294, *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler).

<sup>2</sup> Enns claims in *Inspiration & Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* that there are contradictions in Ecclesiastes (*Inspiration and Incarnation* 77, 78), and inconsistencies in the moral law in the Old Testa-

ment (85), which is simply indicative of the inconsistency in the Law itself such as the conflict between Exodus and Deuteronomy (87). In a specialized article Enns argues that the apostle Paul was referring to a standard Jewish myth when he referenced the “rock” that followed Israel in the wilderness as Christ, but Paul himself believed this to be historical (though it was only a legend) in “*The ‘Moveable Well’ in 1 Cor. 10:4: An Extra-biblical Tradition in an Apostolic Text*,” BBR 6 (1996): 23–38. Westminster Seminary did affirm that they believe his “writings fall within the purview of Evangelical thought” (so [www.wts.edu/stayinformed/view.html?id=187](http://www.wts.edu/stayinformed/view.html?id=187)), however that cannot be claimed in light of the stance he has taken in 2013 in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*. For a complete and thorough rebuttal see *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* by G.K. Beale.

- <sup>3</sup> Though to be clear, the concept was present throughout church history from its earliest days, cf. John Hannah, *Inerrancy and the Church*, 1984.
- <sup>4</sup> For a great overview see *How Far Beyond Chicago? Assessing Recent Attempts to Reframe the Inerrancy Debate* by Jason S. Sexton online at [thegospelcoalition.org](http://thegospelcoalition.org) (Themelios: Volume 34, Issue 1: April 2009). He places the current debate begun by Enns in its third wave, issues a call for clarity of concept and terms, and observes attempts to reframe the debate. This is a helpful overview for someone trying to put the debate and its complexities into a wider context.
- <sup>5</sup> Similar to Enns, he nevertheless stood by his claim to inerrancy in contradistinction to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (the plum line for defining inerrancy), which clearly states that anything that denies the “historicity” of Scripture denies its full truthfulness and inerrancy (so Article 17, online at [www.churchcouncil.org/Reformation\\_net/COR\\_Docs/01\\_Inerrancy\\_Christian\\_Worldview.pdf](http://www.churchcouncil.org/Reformation_net/COR_Docs/01_Inerrancy_Christian_Worldview.pdf)). Evidently, others did not buy his reasoning either. When his views became known, it created a rift that dislodged Licona’s academic career, and he was asked to leave his position as professor at Southern Evangelical Seminary, resign as apologetics coordinator for the North American Mission Board (NAMB), and refused a contract renewal with Liberty University.
- <sup>6</sup> “For this reason we get a sense in the canonical gospels we are reading authentic reports of Jesus’ arrest and death, even if Luke may have cleaned up or omitted some of those embarrassing details, and John all of them, and even if some embellishments are present. Accordingly, the embarrassing elements in the Passion Narratives weigh in favor of the presence of historical kernels.” (p.306 last paragraph; emphasis added). “Special effects” (552), 548–553 for the other claims (search [books.google.com](http://books.google.com) “The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach” for free excerpts of these pages). “*On the other hand, in favor of the historicity of the phenomena re-*

ported by Matthew, the darkness reported in all three Synoptics is also apparently reported by the secular historian Thallus (ca. A.D. 52)” (551). Evidently, Matthew’s testimony cannot stand on its own but requires outside corroboration in order to add authenticity. What does Licona do with early church reports that understand this incident as a historical event such as the one recorded by Ignatius about prophets raised by Jesus? He counters, “But it is uncertain how this report was intended to be interpreted.” Licona might be uncertain but the early church was not.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 548–549.

<sup>8</sup> Article 17 of the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy states, “We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.” Cf. Al Mohler “The Devil is in the Details: Biblical Inerrancy and the Licona Controversy” online at [www.albertmohler.com/2011/09/14/the-devil-is-in-the-details-biblical-inerrancy-and-the-licona-controversy/](http://www.albertmohler.com/2011/09/14/the-devil-is-in-the-details-biblical-inerrancy-and-the-licona-controversy/)

<sup>9</sup> For a 14 page helpful quick notes guide to Fee & Stuart’s book, *How To Read The Bible For All It’s Worth*, [www.prepareinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/e-understandingthegenreofthebook.pdf](http://www.prepareinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/e-understandingthegenreofthebook.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> The definitive study on gospel genre as Greco-Roman biographies is *What Are The Gospels? A Comparison With Greco-Roman Biography* by Richard Burridge (380p) now in its second edition.

Chapter 2 is especially pertinent as he discusses the difficulty of genre. In the hands of liberal scholars this theory often leads to hunting for all the fabrications this genre allows for. In the hands of evangelical scholars they tend to emphasize the original audience’s expectation of historicity. This wide consensus is rarely challenged, but Loveday Alexander presents a compelling case for placing the Gospels in their Hebrew context and comparing them to the Old Testament (three of the four gospel writers were Jewish after all!). See, Loveday Alexander, “*What Is a Gospel?*” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels*, ed. Stephen Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 13–33. Search for the book at [books.google.com](http://books.google.com) to read it online. A.Y. Collins also critiques Burridge for failing to see the bios genre in the Hebrew Scriptures (Mark: A Commentary [Hermeneia: a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible]: 29–31). Cf. E.P. Sanders work “Studying the Synoptic Gospels” who points out the differences from Greco-Roman biography arguing for a more Jewish context as well.

<sup>11</sup> *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn’t Say About Human Origins*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. He uses the term “genre calibration” to

indicate that Genesis did not intend to accomplish anything more than surrounding cultural/narrative myths were aiming at. In chapter four he lays out the idea that because Genesis was written during the Exodus it is essentially an allegory whereby Israel's deliverance is presented with cosmic battle scenes, thus her present experience greatly shaped her creation story.

<sup>12</sup> *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 34. See his attempt to make his case nonetheless, "When The Saints Go Marching In (Matt. 27:52-53): Historicity, Apocalyptic Symbol, and Biblical Inerrancy." [www.risenjesus.com/wp-content/uploads/2011-eps-saints-paper.pdf](http://www.risenjesus.com/wp-content/uploads/2011-eps-saints-paper.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Linguist Moises Silva recognizes the danger here as well identifying such manipulation of the author's intent saying, "These and comparable formulations are indeed destructive of biblical authority and must be rejected" (70) in *Westminster Theological Journal* 50 (1988) 65-80, *Old Princeton, Westminster, And Inerrancy*, online at [www.files.wts.edu/uploads/images/files/WTJ/Silva%20-%20Old%20Princeton%20Inerrancy.pdf](http://www.files.wts.edu/uploads/images/files/WTJ/Silva%20-%20Old%20Princeton%20Inerrancy.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> P. 230, *The Relation of Purpose And Meaning In Interpreting Scripture* in *Grace Theological Journal* 5.2 (1984) 229-245. Online at [www.Biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/gtj/05-2\\_229.pdf](http://www.Biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/gtj/05-2_229.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> So Geisler who argues that the significance of the Exodus passage would change drastically if it were found in a cookbook as opposed to God's holy law. The implications of any given command is also understood less by an appeal to an invisible purpose and more "by the overall context of who said, to whom it was said, and under what circumstances" (p. 232). Cf. *The Relation of Purpose And Meaning In Interpreting Scripture* in *Grace Theological Journal* 5.2 (1984) 229-245. Online at [www.Biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/gtj/05-2\\_229.pdf](http://www.Biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/gtj/05-2_229.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Silva both commends Geisler and critiques him for going too far in distinguishing purpose and meaning (p. 70 n. 6). Yet, Silva defines *sensus literalis* by asking the basic question, "What did the author mean?" and keenly observes, "The only evidence we have to answer that question is the text itself. In other words, we dare not speak about the Bible's infallibility in such a way that it legitimizes random and arbitrary interpretations of the text" (p. 70). Silva is not saying anything substantively different than Geisler then. Thus, Geisler rightly quibbles that Silva is equivocating the word "intent" without defining it (*Does Purpose Determine Meaning? A Brief Response to Professor Silva* in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, 51:1 (1989); <http://www.galaxie.com/article/wtj51-1-09>

<sup>17</sup> A number of heavy hitting conservatives are backing him up claiming this is really just an interpretation issue that concerns *genre* not a theological issue concerning inerrancy so William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland, Gary Habermans, Craig Evans.

<sup>18</sup> *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Eerdmans,

1982), p. 34. See [christianitytoday.com](http://christianitytoday.com) “*Evangelical Scholars Remove Robert Gundry for His Views on Matthew.*”

<sup>19</sup> Craig Evans, *Luke Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* comment on Luke 16:18. Regardless of one’s views on divorce and remarriage this is an unacceptable approach to solving the problem between Jesus’ statement in Mark and Luke compared to Matthew.

<sup>20</sup> *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006): 31.

<sup>21</sup> For helpful answers to difficult questions see *Making Sense of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009): 175–176. Often Scripture presents various angels on a single event and we are left to put the pieces together. These may be apparent contradictions, or seeming inconsistencies, on the surface, but that is because we do not have a perfect knowledge of all events; we do, however have a perfect God and one we trust completely. When we are told that God incited David to number his troops in one book (2 Sam. 24:1) but that Satan incited David in another (1 Chron. 21:1), we can either (A) declare this an outright error and falsity, (B) harmonize the accounts with a theory, (C) let the mystery stand knowing that the answer will come eventually. In this case we can apply what we learn in the book of Job. Who brought trials to Job? On the one hand and quite directly, Satan did, on the other, and quite indirectly God had to allow this to happen in the first place. God was the ultimate cause of testing Job’s faith through the fire of suffering, but Satan was the immediate means God used. The same is true with David. God is the ultimate cause on the one hand, but on the other, Satan was the instrumental cause.

<sup>22</sup> He describes the Bible as a “human product” and chastens under the idea that “Scripture alone” is our guide saying, “It sounds nice, but it is not true” (*Velvet Elvis* 67). “*Emergent Mystique*” [christianitytoday.com](http://christianitytoday.com) interview. It makes sense that he describes inerrancy as “not a helpful category” on his blog since he sees the Bible as just a book “written by actual, finite, limited, flawed people.” What is the Bible? Part 21: In Air, In Sea at [robbell.com](http://robbell.com).

<sup>23</sup> “*When Gracie Met Truthy*” (April 15, 2012 #5): [www.northpoint.org/messages/christian/when-gracie-met-truthy/](http://www.northpoint.org/messages/christian/when-gracie-met-truthy/) Stanley is no liberal and even in this message he speaks of sin, people as sinners, and God’s grace as the answer. As a pastor of tens of thousands of souls however, he has a duty to be clear and not obscure. See Denny Burk’s site for reflective questions he hopes Andy will answer: [www.dennyburk.com/the-relevant-queries-for-andy-stanley/](http://www.dennyburk.com/the-relevant-queries-for-andy-stanley/)

<sup>24</sup> reported by Albert Mohler, “*Is the Mega Church the New Liberalism?*” online at [www.christianpost.com/news/is-the-megachurch-the-new-liberalism-74152/](http://www.christianpost.com/news/is-the-megachurch-the-new-liberalism-74152/) where he points out that Stanley affirms that Jesus does not condemn them, even if they cannot or do not leave their life of sin. Another glaring silence was the lack of any mention of repentance and faith in Christ.

- <sup>25</sup> Search christianitytoday.com, “Did Andy Stanley Really Mean Obama Is ‘Pastor in Chief’?”
- <sup>26</sup> See online: [www.dennyburk.com/andy-stanleys-poison-pill-for-the-doctrine-of-scripture/](http://www.dennyburk.com/andy-stanleys-poison-pill-for-the-doctrine-of-scripture/) for written excerpts since the video was taken down.
- <sup>27</sup> *What Presbyterians Do Not Believe* <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today/dont-believe/>
- <sup>28</sup> Romans 1:27 in the Message, “Sexually confused, they abused and defiled one another, women with women, men with men — *all lust, no love.*” As a PC-USA pastor for more than 30 years, is he unaware that the main argument launched from the pro-gay camp is that the Bible forbids *uncommitted* gay relationships but does not condemn *committed and loving* gay relationships? Is it a mere coincidence that the homosexuals in his interpretation of Romans 1:27 are said to specifically lack “love” three times in that one verse? Perhaps it is, but it has not missed the attention of the gay community who invoke his scholarly credentials as giving the true insight into these verses and thus supporting their arguments (so Pastor turned gay rights advocate Tim Evans, “On Being Gay” <http://www.courage.org.uk/articles/article.asp?id=219>).
- <sup>29</sup> Does Peterson really believe Bell’s book was written “*without compromising an inch of evangelical conviction*” as he says in his endorsement? After the flurry of debate began, Peterson also was sure to defend Bell, <http://www.readingtheology.com/eugene-peterson-and-love-wins> Peterson ends the interview by saying, “There’s very little Christ, very little Jesus, in these people who are fighting Rob Bell.” These people would include Pastor John Piper and John Macarthur among others. His DVD presentation *The God’s Aren’t Angry* subtly denies substitutionary atonement through insistence that God does not demand a blood sacrifice for sins.
- <sup>30</sup> William P. Young’s *The Shack* has found a substantial following with many reading it not as fiction but quite dangerously as revelatory insight into the nature and character of God. His universalism is present: Mack, the main character hears from God, “I don’t punish sins; sin is its own punishment” (p. 120). The Shack’s Jesus says, “*Those who love me come from every system that exists ... I have no desire to make them Christian, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters*” (Windblown Media, 2007: p.182). Young also appears in a recent documentary titled “Hell Bound?” in which he questions the doctrine of hell. Cf. *Burning Down ‘The Shack’: How the ‘Christian’ bestseller Is deceiving millions* by James De Young who exposes the doctrine of universal reconciliation, which he shows stands behind *The Shack*.

The online episode of Wretched includes both audio clip and commentary on William P. Young’s interview with Kendall Adams in which he denies penal substitution: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIBy0Bkk1ks](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIBy0Bkk1ks). For a full defense of the historic understanding of salvation see *Pierced for our Transgres-*

sions: *Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* by Jeffrey, Overy and Sach. They prove beyond a doubt that the doctrine has “an impeccable pedigree in the history of the Christian church” (31) and contrary to recent claims the evidence that the early church believed and taught this doctrine is “quite overwhelming” (163).

<sup>31</sup> Recommended books for further study: (1) *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative And Theological Introduction* by **Jonathan Pennington** (2012), offers a clear, lucid introduction for laymen and pastor alike into the world of gospel studies, which can sometimes feel like clanging cymbals and crashing pans in our head. (2) *Christ & The Bible* by John Wenham (2009, Third Edition) is unique in that he begins with Jesus’ view of the Scriptures and works outward from there. This has the advantage of building a case for inerrancy based on the inductive approach to Scripture rather than a *priori* logic, as well as avoiding circular reasoning in the process. (3) *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* by Geisler & Roach (2011) gives the history of the recent inerrancy controversy and itemizes the specific people who are challenging it with substantial quotes along with a strong defense of the doctrine.

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## **BIBLIOLOGY: HOW FIRM IS OUR FOUNDATION?** **by Rev. Jefferson Vann**

### *The Standard*

As the first century was coming to an end, the Christian message was beginning to be challenged by various cults and false teachers. Responding to this reality, the apostle John wrote, “We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”<sup>1</sup> He implied that there is a test to determine whether someone is walking in truth or not: are they listening to (and heeding) the message of the apostles.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 4:6.

This was the attitude of the prophets of Old Testament times as well. Samuel, for example, said to Saul, “Tell the servant to pass on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God.”<sup>2</sup> When Moses spoke to Pharaoh, he did not speak on his own authority, but prefaced his words with “thus says the Lord.”<sup>3</sup> Other prophets followed the same pattern (Joshua 24:2; Judges 6:8; 2 Samuel 12:7; 1 Kings 11:31; 17:14; 2 Kings 19:20). They had the audacity to assume that their messages were God’s Word, and carried God’s authority — and they were right.

The writings of the prophets carried the same authority. This is evidenced by the recurrence of the phrase “the word of the LORD came” (Isaiah 38:4; Jeremiah 1:2, 4, 11; Ezekiel 1:3; 3:16; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1; 3:1). It was clear that it was not the prophets themselves — through their own ingenuity or wisdom — who came up with these words. The words were a supernatural gift from God himself. It was truly revelation. It was not “inspiration” in the modern sense of the word — which implies some kind of boosting of an artistic genius that already exists. Instead, God was revealing himself and his thoughts and words to those who wrote the original manuscripts of the Bible.

God continues to reveal himself personally to those who seek him, but he no longer needs to communicate to us the same way that he has in the Bible. Those 66 books remain the standard by which we can judge whether we are listening to God’s voice or someone else’s. The Bible is the standard in two senses of the word. It serves as a basis of comparison for all the words and ideas that bombard us. It also serves as the rallying flag (or standard) where all those truly seeking and speaking God’s truth will congregate.

Willingness to accept the teachings of the Bible is evidence that one has had a real experience with God. It is a choice that everyone who encounters the Bible must make, and it has consequences. Since God’s Word is his standard, those who reject it,

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 9:27.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 4:22; 5:1; 10:3; 11:4.

or belittle it, or only choose to heed it partly, will find themselves caught up in a spirit of error. They might be partly aware of the realities of which the Bible speaks, but will fail to understand their implications. For example, many unbelievers know about, and even celebrate Christmas and Easter. But the deeper implications of the events celebrated (like the incarnation and the resurrection) find no place in their world-view. Those deeply deceived might even understand some of these theological ideas, but will not feel the necessity of applying them to their own lives by a true conversion. By refusing to put their faith in Christ (as revealed in the Bible), they have aligned themselves with Satan by default.

### **The Manuscripts**

The Bible did not come to humanity as one complete document. The messages of Moses, the Prophets and the other Old Testament sages were revered by Jews in their separate forms for centuries. But the tendency was to combine them into groups even then. The earliest grouping was the five books of Moses, which the Jews call the Torah, or Law. By the time of Christ, all Jews accepted the Torah as God's inspired word, while some Jews (like the Sadducees) did not view any other books in that category. For most Jews, however, it was hard to resist the appeal of the Writings (which contain some historical books and some poetic works) and the Prophets. The Hebrew Bible was already complete by that time, and consisted of all the documents that we now call the 39 books of the Old Testament. While there were many other books known by Jews at that time (in several languages) only these books were regarded as canonical, that is, inspired Scripture.

The Gospels had the same appeal for Christians as the Torah did for Jews, since they recorded the events associated with Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and were conveyed by either apostles themselves (like Matthew and John) or people who were closely associated with them (like Mark and Luke). Thus the Gospels became the standard for measuring God's will as re-

vealed by Jesus for new covenant believers just as the Torah had been the standard as revealed by Moses for old covenant believers.

The writings of the apostles continued in letters to the churches founded in the first century. These letters were called epistles, and reflected the new reality of the Christian church, and concentrated on defining and protecting it. The writings of John (including Revelation) completed this group of documents. Like the Old Testament books, these books began as individual manuscripts, and were later copiously copied and compiled into groups. Recognition of the inspired nature of these books was practically immediate, but it was not until a heresy developed that questioned the canonicity of the Old Testament (Marcionism), that the Church felt the need to officially set the Canon.

## **The Versions**

As the Church sought to convey the message of the whole Bible to the predominately Greek speaking world of the first century, they were helped by the Greek New Testament, and a version of the Old Testament that had been translated from its original Hebrew and Aramaic, into Greek. This Greek Old Testament, called the Septuagint, was the first in a long line of what we call versions of the Bible. The versions seek to bridge the cultural, linguistic and temporal distance between the original manuscripts and modern audiences.

No one version of the Bible will ever be perfect, because 1) the needs of modern audiences are always changing, 2) our understanding of the texts of the original manuscripts is constantly being tweaked, and 3) our understanding of the culture of biblical audiences and writers is being updated through historical, archaeological and philological research. It is OK to have a preference for a particular version (as long as one does not get too dogmatic about it), but it is better to use several versions, comparing the renderings on certain texts — for the sake of clarity, and to avoid the biases of individual scholarly teams.

## Is Diversity a Liability?

The existence of multiple versions and manuscripts may lead some to question whether God's authority can be asserted. But the same kind of diversity exists in creation itself. While the skies declare the glory of God, they don't always do it in the same way. They are sometimes cloudy skies, sometimes clear. They are sometimes rainy, sometimes dry. They are sometimes stormy, sometimes calm. The diversity in creation testifies to the brilliant creativity of our Creator, and leaves us not knowing what he's going to come up with next.

Since God expects us to come to him by faith, he seems to have eliminated the certainty factor from the Bible in order to encourage people to put their faith in him, rather than to trust in their own understanding of his revelation. On the other hand, one might argue that the multiplicity of manuscripts and versions can help humans gain even more clarity, in the same way that several witnesses to a crime insure that the whole truth about it comes out at the trial.

### Today's Problem

Bultema asserts that "in the ancient church (canonicity) happened to be the greatest problem. While they all believed in the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures, they were not settled as to the question of which books should be included into or excluded from the sacred volume."<sup>4</sup> The modern church seems to have settled the issue of canonicity, but now struggles more and more with the fundamental question of authority, and the extent to which they can trust the Bible as God's exclusive voice. Advent Christians have historically asserted absolute confidence in the Bible. The next few chapters will show that the confidence is not misplaced.

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<sup>4</sup> Harry Bultema, *Miracle of Inspiration*. (Grand Rapids: Grace Publications, 1990), 9.

## *The Tool*

The absolute confidence Advent Christians have historically held concerning the Bible has always been two-fold: a confidence in what the Bible is (the Word of God), and also in what the Bible does. Advent Christians realize that the Bible was never intended merely to inform them of God's existence and standards, but it was designed to do more. It was designed as a tool to transform them into the people God wanted them to be. Many Advent Christians came out of other movements which stressed the role of the Holy Spirit in personal sanctification.

Human nature is not what it should be. The entrance of sin into the mix has corrupted our DNA and our minds and hearts as well. The human race in general — and every person in particular — is off kilter. We may not be as bad as we could be, but nobody is as good as we were supposed to be. We need help.

God has a wonderful plan for your life, but you do not qualify for it, and neither do I. Something is wrong inside — and that something has disqualified us all for the destiny God has in store. Christ's death on the cross applied by faith removed the penalty of sin, which restores our relationship with God, but it did not immediately transform us into the kind of people who are fit for eternity. God has provided his Word to begin that process.

We need to apply the words and message of the Bible to our lives. This allows God's Word to transform us into who we were intended to be. The apostle Paul explained the mechanics of this process when encouraging Timothy to stay true to the faith and not follow the deceptions of apostates.<sup>5</sup> He explained that the apostates who would come would soon be shown to be fools (vs. 9), but that Timothy would be vindicated because ...

“ ... from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 3.

by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:15–17).

Paul called the difference that protected Timothy from apostasy *wisdom*. The source of that wisdom was *the sacred writings*, a term that Paul used to refer to the Hebrew Scriptures. Now that the New Testament has been written, the term *all Scripture* includes those writings as well.

Notice the elements of the process that Paul describes. Each element is crucial for transformation, and in each element the Holy Spirit actively uses the Word of God to affect change.

### **Element #1: The light of “wisdom that leads to salvation.”**

This is the foundational element. No one can be sanctified if they have not come to the cross and accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. One of the reasons for this prerequisite is that this event (conversion) is when the Holy Spirit comes inside the believer. He comes to us when we are saved, and he comes in order to sanctify. Skeptics often wonder why Christians make so much of the Bible when it does not appear to have much effect. But the transformation that Christians enjoy only comes after they have professed faith in Christ, not before.

The Bible does contain a great deal of wisdom, which anyone can profit from. For this reason, a great many unbelievers who have obeyed Scripture because it has been incorporated into the human laws of their state have profited from that obedience — gaining peace and perhaps even a measure of prosperity they otherwise would not have enjoyed. Much of the Old Testament Wisdom Literature (e.g. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job) offer that kind of wisdom.

But Paul says the Bible also offers a different kind of wisdom. It is “*the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*” It is the ability to see beyond the mundane problems of the day and to recognize an ultimate problem: sin, and its resulting estrangement from God. The wisdom of which Paul

speaks addresses that ultimate, eternal issue. It is an answer to a problem that is more important than those the secular world can address.

One of my wife's relatives is a very talented artist. He painted a scene in which a young family is sitting at the table in their home and are obviously in distress. The child has tipped over his glass of milk, and both parents are in tears. Yet, also in the painting is a window, and through the window observers of the painting can see what that young family does not. A giant funnel cloud from a tornado has formed, and is heading straight for the home. The family is so preoccupied with the spilled milk that they are oblivious to the real danger which is imminent.

That painting is a parable that describes the plight of so many people in this world. It is so easy to get carried away in search of answers to problems that appear to be important, but that pale in comparison to the issue of one's eternal destiny. The only way to explain such ignorance is to admit that deception has occurred. The world has been deceived into believing that there is no eternal destiny. Therefore its population runs screaming from one spilled milk crisis to another.

Paul explains that Timothy is different because he has allowed the sacred Scriptures to give him a different kind of wisdom — rather than a worldly wisdom he has been given a next-worldly wisdom.

The apologist Cornelius Van Til compared the Scriptures to “the sun in the light of which all things are seen and without the light of which nothing is seen for what it is.”<sup>6</sup> It sheds light on that ultimate reality, enabling believers to understand why Jesus had to die on the cross as a sacrifice for the world's sin. But that light is not just a spotlight, focusing myopically on the crucifixion itself. The light is like a sun, which illuminates the whole world. So, for the believer, accepting Christ is the essential starting point of a new life, now ordered by the new realities revealed in God's Word.

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<sup>6</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture*. (Ripon, CA: den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1967), 40.

## Element #2: “Teaching:” The Light that Reveals True Doctrine.

After the Holy Spirit changes the heart through conversion, he gets to work immediately on informing the mind through teaching. He does not have to invent a new teaching for each new convert. Instead, he utilizes “whatever was written in former days,”<sup>7</sup> (i.e. The Bible) because the old truths revealed there remain true, and they are just as powerful as they always have been.

The difference between texts of Scripture (which always carry God’s authority because they are God’s Word) and human doctrines (which are our human attempts at answering our own questions)<sup>8</sup> must be maintained. However, it is those texts of Scripture that lead us to those doctrines, and that is God’s intention. He wants us to understand the world we live in, and the way we are supposed to live in it. He wants us to be aware of where our problems will probably come from, and what resources are available for us to deal with those problems.

Within the body of Christ (the Church), The Holy Spirit provides certain ministries that exist to help the believer grow in maturity.<sup>9</sup> One of the roles of these equipping ministries is to help the believer to tell the difference between a teaching that has been cleverly devised to distract him, and a teaching that was intended by God to mature him. Each of these equipping ministries

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<sup>7</sup> “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction (διδασκαλία), that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

<sup>8</sup> cf. Chapter 1, pp. 8–9.

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 4:11–14 “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”

had a teaching component.<sup>10</sup> Each of them drew heavily upon the Word of God as the basis for their authority and ministry.

Legitimate Bible teaching ministries encourage people to follow Christ — not themselves. They submit to the ministries of other Christians rather than dominate through the pulpit or lectern. They can also tell the difference between essential truths (where Christians tend to be unified) and distinctive doctrines (where Christians tend to manifest diversity). Their emphasis is on the essentials, while not neglecting the issues that form the distinctives.

### **Element #3: “Reproof:” The Light that Exposes False Doctrine.**

The same light that reveals true doctrine also exposes false doctrine. This appears to be the idea behind the word *reproof*.<sup>11</sup> Part of the maturing process is submitting to the Word of God, and allowing it to expose areas in ones understanding that have been tainted by deception or ignorance. Conversion to Christ involves a changing of one’s mind, but does not guarantee that false understandings and perceptions will be immediately eliminated.

The true disciple loves God with all her mind (Mark 12:30), and seeks to have her life transformed by the renewing of her mind (Romans 12:2). She will “not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). She will “not despise prophecies, but (will) test everything; (and) hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:20–21). She will allow the light of the Word of God to reprove her for false doctrines she has held in the past.

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<sup>10</sup> Margaret Y. MacDonald, Daniel J. Harrington, *Colossians and Ephesians*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 272.

<sup>11</sup> Although ἐλεγμός is used in the Bible for rebuking sinful behavior (Ps. 39:11; Isa. 37:3), in this context it appears to address false doctrine, since it is coupled with the word διδασκαλία, and the Bible’s effects upon the believer’s behavior are adequately described later in the verse. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Faithful*. (David C. Cook, 1981), 150 – 151 explains that the Scriptures “are profitable for doctrine (what is right), for reproof (what is not right), for correction (how to get right), and for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right).

#### **Element #4: “Correction:” The Light that Exposes Improper Behavior.**

God teaches us how to live by giving us commands in the Bible. He has also provided the Bible as a kind of mirror, by which we can evaluate our behavior to see if it measures up to God’s intention. This is what James implies:

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless” (James 1:23–26).

The mirror simile is a reminder that believers need to change their deeds as well as their doctrines. The Bible provides a means for both.

An Old Testament story illustrates this *mirror* role of the Bible: the story of King Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34:1–21. While refurbishing the temple, one of the king’s officials found a copy of the “Book of the Law of the House of the LORD,” and brought it to Josiah. When Josiah realized that the priests and people had been disobeying God’s law, he tore his clothes as a sign of remorse. He realized that Israel had incurred God’s wrath for being disobedient. Josiah showed discernment in stark contrast to most of the Israelites of his day. A children’s book author has compared C. S. Lewis’ Prince Caspian to king Josiah because he “was considered a boy-king who rejected the wickedness of his ancestors and worked to restore his nation.”<sup>12</sup> He realized that ignorance of the Word of God had led to sin, and God was bound by his own nature to punish that sin.

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<sup>12</sup> Katie Kubesh, *Narnia Chronicles: A Study of Prince Caspian*. (In *The Hands of A Child*, n. d.), 13.

## **Element #5: “Training in Righteousness:” The Light that Produces Proper Behavior.**

The psalmist alluded to this role of God’s Word in the longest psalm, 119:

“Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules” (Psalm 119:104–106). The Bible serves as a training manual, giving believers understanding that keeps them on the right path. The believer determines to keep God’s righteous rules. Just carrying around a copy of the Bible will do nothing.

In this New Testament passage (2 Tim. 3) Paul identifies the Bible as a means by which Christ trains believers in righteousness. In a previous letter he had encouraged Timothy to “train (himself) for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1 Tim. 4:7–8). He defined godliness in his letter to Titus, as “to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age” (Titus 2:12).

The Bible trains believers in righteousness in a number of ways: 1) by condemning improper behavior, 2) by defining and promoting proper behavior, 3) by illustrating each with biographical examples in both testaments, 4) by encouraging us to draw on the power available through the Holy Spirit for godly living,

5) by steering believers to congregate and have fellowship, which fosters spiritual growth toward Christ-likeness.

There is a sixth, more subtle effect on the believer as well. As she spends quality time every day in God’s Word, thinking God’s thoughts, reliving God’s reactions, she cannot help but pick up more of God’s character. The exposure itself changes her, somewhat like a missionary is changed by living in another culture. The proverb GIGO (garbage in, garbage out) works the other way as well. Sustained exposure to the words and principles of the Bible is bound to affect the words that the believer says, and her thoughts and actions.

The Bible, then, is a tool that the Holy Spirit can use to change us. Like any tool, its usefulness increases the more it is used, because the user becomes more adept at its operation. This generation has a multitude of Bibles and Bible versions available. Only time will tell if they have been utilized properly.

### *The Light*

The psalmist calls God's Word "a lamp to (his) feet and a light to (his) path" (Psalm 119:105), affirming that what God says helps him walk as God desires. Today's culture tends to treat the Bible as a dark and confusing path, rather than a light. But God's Word is intended to be understood in the contexts and times in which it was originally given, and with a minimum of effort, and we can understand and apply it to our modern contexts as well.

Traditionally, this doctrine is known as the clarity or perspicuity of Scripture. It affirms that "Scripture can be and is read with profit, with appreciation and with transformative results."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> James Callahan, *The Clarity of Scripture*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 9. See also Gregg Allison, *The Protestant Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture*. (Deerfield, IL: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995), 516–517. Allison provides and defends the following definition: "Perspicuity is a property of Scripture as a whole and of each portion of Scripture whereby it is comprehensible to all believers who possess the normal acquired ability to understand oral communication and/or written discourse, regardless of their gender, age, education, language or cultural background. However, the level of people's comprehension of perspicuous Scripture is appropriate to and usually varies proportionately with various factors, including, but not limited to, spiritual maturity. In addition, the doctrine of perspicuity is always affirmed in the context of a believing community, a context which assumes the assistance of others in attaining a more precise understanding of Scripture, and perspicuity requires a dependence on the Holy Spirit for Scripture to be grasped, and calls for a responsive obedience to what is understood. Moreover, perspicuity includes the comprehensibility of the way of salvation to unbelievers who are aided by the Holy Spirit, and it does not exclude some type of cognition of Scripture in general by unbelievers."

Some might argue that since the Bible is God's Word, one requires divine help to read it. But the evangelical doctrine of clarity assumes that the divine help is built into the inspired text itself.

In fact, one reason that people often have problems understanding Scripture is that in addition to being God's Word, it is also written with human words.<sup>14</sup> Hermeneutics, the science of biblical interpretation, exists to help human beings understand the meaning intended by the original human authors of Scripture. God did not bypass the minds of those human authors. His Word is written in their words. The more we understand them, the more we will understand him.

When biblical texts are treated in accordance with the rules of literature established for the genres they reflect, their meaning is obvious. Willful ignorance of the teachings of God's Word cannot be excused by claiming that the Bible is too confusing.

## **The Genealogies**

Many stumble over the lists they find in the Bible, and fail to see how such lists — e.g. the genealogies — can be theologically appropriate, or devotionally uplifting. But the existence of these numerous lists is the very thing that made these texts come alive to the original recipients, since they realized that what God did affected the lives of people like them, and — in many cases — their own families.

## **The Archaisms**

Some object that the Scriptures are outdated, and thus obsolete. Every writing is a product of its own time, and the Scriptures are no exception. But the really good writings are so good that they are worth the time and effort it takes to overcome the time

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<sup>14</sup> Moises Silva, "Who Needs Hermeneutics Anyway." in Walter C. Kaiser and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 16.

barrier. Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies, for example, are still performed today, and many versions of his works are available. People still study his writings, and some do it exclusively. Often a Shakespeare book will be published with professional annotations. The reason is that without those explanatory notes, many of the sayings, although written in English, would be incomprehensible. Time has so changed how things are communicated in English that such extra study is necessary if we are to understand what Shakespeare meant. But no one blames Shakespeare for that. It is not that he wrote without clarity. Time has made his clear words unclear. It only takes a little effort and study to appreciate the genius of Shakespeare. The same is true of God's Word.

In fact, it takes less time and effort to understand the Bible than it does Shakespeare for several reasons:

1) Scholars continue to research the background of Bible texts, revealing insights that help the average Christian understand what the original authors of Scripture intended to say. This is actually one of the purposes for commentaries and Bible textbooks.

2) New translations of the Bible help to clarify texts, words and phrases that were difficult to understand in the past. This is why Christians should not get hung up defending just one translation of the Scriptures, as if God has only endorsed one. That is just not true. The King James Bible may have been the best translation available to explain God's Word to English speakers in 1611, but a lot has changed in the last 400 years. Biblical scholarship has changed, and not all of it has been modernist. The English language has changed drastically. In fact, if you ever see one of those King James Bibles written exactly as they were written in 1611, you will notice how hard it is to read it.

I recommend that every serious student of the Word of God possess two English language Bibles: one should be more word-for-word literal, and the other should seek dynamic equivalence. Just in the short time that I have been preaching and teaching the Bible, the actual versions that I recommend have changed several times. Currently, I recommend the ESV (English Standard

Version) for its literal rendering of the original words, and the NLT (New Living Translation) as an example of dynamic equivalence.<sup>15</sup>

3) Theologians continue to posit theories and doctrines that are aimed at showing the meaning of the Bible as a whole, or the particular emphasis of a biblical author. As more work is done in this area, the average Christian is more able to explain what Scripture means. As long as we continue to draw a distinction between those doctrinal systems and the Bible itself, this process can only magnify the clarity of Scripture.

4) Unlike Shakespeare, the Bible is best understood when its message is applied. “Application focuses the truth of God’s Word to specific, life-related situations. It helps people understand what to do or to use what they have learned.”<sup>16</sup> Those who commit themselves to living the Bible find its message less complex. As believers find themselves walking in the footsteps of the biblical characters, they understand why God blessed them when he blessed them, and why he withheld blessing or brought judgment when they rebelled or sinned.

5) The truly born-again Christian has the help of a resident Bible expert: The Holy Spirit, who inspired the Bible, and thus can explain its message best. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Word, and brings about understanding and conviction (1 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 John 2:27). He encourages listeners not to harden their hearts when they hear God’s voice (Hebrews 3:7–8). He also appears to particularly accompany the preaching of the Word, so that it has special power (1 Peter 1:12).

## The Genres

One of the characteristics of Scripture that leads many to label it as confusing is that it is a collection of many different types of

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<sup>15</sup> Serious Bible students can now have access to dozens of versions, and the more, the better. Bible software programs have made this possible for many, as well as Bible study websites on the Internet.

<sup>16</sup> D. Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1993), 15.

writing, not just one. A genre is a type of writing. Poetry is one genre, and history is another. One would never approach a book of poetry expecting to get the kind of information she can get from a history book. But the untrained reader often approaches an obscure text of Scripture expecting to be “blessed” the same way she was blessed when reading John 3. It doesn’t work that way.

## The Tanach

The Hebrew compilers of Scripture recognized this fact, and grouped together books of similar genres. This simple grouping consisted of the Torah, the Neviim, and the Chtuvim. The whole Hebrew Bible is thus often called the Tanach, from the first letters of those three genres.

### *The Tanach*

Torah	Neviim	Chtuvim
“Law”	“Prophets”	“Writings”
Instruction from Moses about who the Israelites are, and what God has planned for them.	A look at the Israelites from God’s viewpoint.	A look at the Israelites from their own viewpoint.
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve Minor Prophets.	Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles.

## The Torah

Both the Neviim and the Chtuvim were (in a sense) commentaries on the Torah, since the Torah served as the basis for the Israelite identity, as it carved out the pattern for the nation in

relationship with its Lord. The Torah established the parameters of the Mosaic covenant. The Mosaic ceremonial regulations were important because they accentuated this covenant relationship and tied together the Israelites as a separate people, intended to be uniquely God's.

## **The Neviim**

The Neviim held the Israelites accountable for living up to the demands of that covenant. That was why the prophets often condemned their own people. God was speaking through them, calling them to task for their failure to be who he wanted them to be, encouraging them to live up to who they were. Reading the prophets requires keeping that in mind, and continually tracing the prophetic pronouncements back to the original covenant stipulations they reflect. While prophetic texts contain many predictive elements, they are best read not as merely history written beforehand, but as historical reflections on God's plan as revealed in the Torah. This explains why the Hebrews considered some historical books (e.g. Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings) as prophets.

## **Chtuvim**

The writings category is somewhat surprising as well. It contains poetry and wisdom literature, but also some historical books. The biggest surprise is that the Hebrews categorized the book of Daniel as a writing instead of a prophet. The best way to see this category is as sort-of the opposite of the prophets. While the prophets showcase God's people from God's viewpoint, the writings view life from the perspective of God's people themselves. Perhaps Daniel is included in this category as an example of how godly wisdom works its way out in the life of a leader in exile. Of course, there are prophecies in Daniel, just as there are examples of poetry and wisdom in the Torah and Neviim.

## The New Testament

The Gospels	Revelation	Acts & The Epistles
Instruction from Jesus about who Christians are, and what God has planned for them.	A look at Christians from God's viewpoint.	A look at Christians from their own viewpoint.
Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Revelation	Acts, The Pauline Epistles, The General Epistles

The New Testament contained books that followed a very similar pattern. The new covenant was explained by Jesus to his disciples. Revelation is a means of encouragement from God as Christians seek to live their lives in obedience to that covenant while encountering opposition from the Dragon (Satan), the Beast (political powers), and the False Prophet (religious deception). Acts and the Epistles swing back in the other direction as the new Church seeks to define and defend itself as the new covenant people of God.

## New Translations and Versions

When it became necessary to translate the original Hebrew and Aramaic texts of the Hebrew Bible, and add the new inspired writings of the New Testament, new versions came about that did not follow the Jewish tripartite categories. Eventually a new standard classification system developed that divided the OT into law, history, poetry and prophecy, and the NT into Gospels, history (Acts), epistles, and prophecy (Revelation). No classification system is inspired, and this new one had its flaws, but it was an honest attempt at classifying texts according to their genre. The problem was that each biblical book may contain examples of several genres.

## Genre Classification Today

The approach today is to treat smaller segments of text within the biblical books, and seek to understand their meaning based

on the type of writing they reflect. Thus any text might be classified as apocalypse, epistle, genealogy, gospel, law, narrative, poetry, prophecy, proverb, psalm or wisdom and with each classification comes a different set of rules for interpreting the text.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Problem with Lights**

Like every other electrical device, a flashlight has to be turned on to work. The Bible is a light to illumine dark paths, but it will do no one any good if it stays on the shelf. Just claiming that you have a flashlight is not going to be very helpful. You have to pull it out and turn it on. Millions have found encouragement and solace in the Bible, but each has had to put his or her trust in it. Those of us who have had the privilege to study the Bible for many years can testify that it never fails to light the path for those who dare to use it.

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<sup>17</sup> See <https://netfiles.uiuc.edu/k-lee7/www/iccf/docs/blitzenres.htm>

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## **A SECOND ADAM CHRISTOLOGY IN HEBREWS 2** **by Pastor Timothy Bertolet**

The purpose of this paper will be to argue that the epistle to the Hebrews contains an implicit Second Adam Christology that serves to advance its argumentation concerning the work of Christ to bring humanity to eschatological glory. This paper will seek to build on the foundation of those who have, to varying degrees, highlighted an incipient Second Adam Christology in Hebrews while proposing several ways that this helps us understand the flow of argumentation in Hebrews 2. This paper will be divided into three parts of argumentation. Our first task in

this paper will be to define a Second Adam Christology, which we will follow, with a second section containing an introductory examination of the use of Psalm 8 in the context of Hebrews 1 and 2. Finally, we will suggest that this Second Adam Christology illuminates Hebrews' conception of Christ as ἀρχηγός, in the manner in which Hebrews understands Christ's representation for the σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ, and thus undergirds the significance of the humanity and superiority of Christ in the epistle.

### 1. A Working Definition.

Second Adam Christology is usually a designation used to refer to Paul's discussion in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 where he draws direct correlations and contrasts between the role of Adam and the role of Christ in their respective acts of disobedience and obedience or their roles as head of humanity and the new humanity. In our discussion of the text of Hebrews 2, we will use this same designation to show how Hebrews conceptualizes Christ in light of Psalm 8 and Christ's relationship to the people of God. In using this designation we are making no statements about the relationship between Paul and Hebrews, but assume that both are drawing from the background of the role of Adam in Second Temple Judaism. In order to briefly establish a working definition, we shall turn to two New Testament scholars whose work in Christology has strongly influenced the direction of the field of Christological reflection for this generation of New Testament scholarship.

In 1977, C.F.D. Moule, in his work "The Origin of Christology," brought one of the early challenges to the notion that a "high" Christology of later Christian writers must have evolved from an original low Christology.<sup>1</sup> His work sketched how Christ was conceived by the early church not only as an individual, but personal experience was attached to Christ so that early Chris-

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<sup>1</sup> C.F.D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), 6.

tians considered the corporate implications of Christ. He seeks to go beyond Oscar Cullmann's Christology via titles to look at the corporate experience of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Of particular interest early in his work is his discussion on the relationship between the title Son of Man, its background in Daniel 7, and the corporate dimension of this exalted figure.

Moule writes concerning the Danielic Son of Man:

It is often pointed out that the Danielic vision constitutes a meditation on the supremacy of Adam over the rest of nature in the Genesis creation stories. Perhaps it is even more apposite to recall that Ps. 8 expresses surprise and admiration that God has exalted frail man to this position of supremacy. All in all, then, the human figure of Dan. 7 is highly appropriate to the ministry of Jesus. On this showing, it is not a *title* for Jesus, but a symbol of vocation to be utterly loyal, even to death, in the confidence of ultimate vindication in the heavenly court. Jesus is alluding to “*the* (well known, Danielic) Son of Man” in this vein. As Dr. Morna Hooker has shown, this makes good sense of the Marcan sayings about the Son of Man's authority: it is the authority (whether in heaven or on earth) of true Israel, and so, of authentic Man, obedient through thick and thin, to God's design.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Moule, 8. Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (trans. S.C. Guthrie and C.A.M Hall; London: SCM Press, 1959)

<sup>3</sup> Moule, 14. Emphasis original. Seyoon Kim reaches a similar conclusion: “With ‘the Son of Man’” then Jesus intended to reveal himself to be the divine figure who was the inclusive representative (or the head) of the eschatological people of God, i.e. the Son of God who was the head of the sons of God ... he intended to reveal his mission in terms of gathering or, as it were, creating, God's eschatological people who, represented or embodied in him as their head, would be elevated (or made) God's sons” (*The Son of Man as the Son of God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985] 36).

Later in his work, building on this discussion, Moule remarks that contained in Hebrews 2 “*in nuce* is an Adam-Christology.”<sup>4</sup> He marks this by the conception of vindication in glory and corporate representation of God’s people. Jesus, after his temptation and agony, has now “by his flesh ... made the transition from earth to heaven.”<sup>5</sup> While Jesus is ahead of the believer in heaven, he has gone ahead to enable the believer to make such a transition to exaltation.<sup>6</sup> Jesus “is identified as the one who alone fulfilled the glorious destiny designed, according to Psalm 8, for mankind as a whole.”<sup>7</sup> His crowning is the crowning to which mankind was destined. His fulfillment guarantees a corporate fulfillment upon believers. As Moule puts it later summarizing other NT data, “he [Jesus] is the origin and active initiator of all that the believer may hope — derivately [sic] and by dependence upon him — to become.”<sup>8</sup>

James D.G. Dunn’s “Christology in the Making” has also been influential in the study of the Christological reflections of the early church. He, too, suggests that Hebrews 2 contains something akin to an “Adam-Christology.” He characterizes this concept as “[t]he divine program for man which broke down with Adam has been run through again in Jesus — this time successfully.”<sup>9</sup> Similar to Moule, Dunn highlights the concepts of solidarity with humanity, recapitulation of Adam’s task, and progenitor of a new humanity.<sup>10</sup> Dunn concludes, “The way in which Jesus becomes last Adam is by following the path taken by the first Adam.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Moule, 101.

<sup>5</sup> Moule, 101.

<sup>6</sup> Moule, 101.

<sup>7</sup> Moule, 101

<sup>8</sup> Moule, 103.

<sup>9</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* Second Edition (London: SCM Press, 1989) 110.

<sup>10</sup> Dunn, 110–111.

<sup>11</sup> Dunn, 113

Thus for both Moule and Dunn what constitutes a Second Adam Christology is representation and recapitulation with fulfillment. Adam represented humanity and in a Second Adam Christology, Christ represents a new humanity. There is also a recapitulation. The Second Adam repeats but completes or fulfills the activity of the first Adam therefore setting things right. He is rewarded dominion and regal sovereignty over creation in an Adamic-like capacity.<sup>12</sup>

Second Temple Judaism considered the fulfillment of the eschaton to be patterned after Adam and the Garden of Eden.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the restoration of the saints and their vindication entailed an endowment or crowning with the glory of Adam.<sup>14</sup> For Hebrews, the activity of Christ as an act of obedience leads to a crowning of his humanity with glory and honor. It is the movement from humiliation to exaltation. This is much like the movement of Second Temple Judaism where the righteous are lowly and suffering in this age but exalted in the age to come at the judgment.

Second Adam theology takes its cue from Second Temple Judaism beliefs in the age to come that provided part of the seed bed for early Christian theology regarding the inaugurated

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<sup>12</sup> More recently, Kenneth Schneck has used narrative substructure analysis to reach the same conclusion on Hebrews 2. He shows that Hebrews' argument is dependent on the notion that God's original intent was to crown humanity with glory and honor and this original destiny has been fulfilled in Christ. *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007) 51–59.

<sup>13</sup> See discussion below in its relationship to understanding Hebrews 2. On Second Adam Christology and Second Temple Judaism see N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 20–23. N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 262–8. David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 81–118, 133–142. Seyyoon Kim briefly discusses the evidence in *The Origins of Paul's Gospel* (Mohr Siebeck, 1981; Reprinted: Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2007) 186–193.

<sup>14</sup> See discussion below.

eschaton and work of the Messiah. This seed bed flourishes in various ways in early Christianity including Paul's articulation, early gospel writer's reflections on Jesus' Son of Man tradition, and early Christian inaugurated eschatology. It is our proposal that this "Adam Christology" explains Hebrews' reflection on the work of Christ and his exaltation in Hebrews 2:5–18. In short, we propose that Hebrews has a "Second Adam Christology" that explains in part how Hebrews conceptualizes not only the work of Christ as obedient to death followed by exaltation but also aspects of the representative nature of Christ's humanity and his corporate connectivity to believers.

## 2. Psalm 8 in the Argument of Hebrews 1 and 2.

The argument of Hebrews 2:5–18 flows directly out of the argument of the exaltation and identity of the Son in Hebrews 1. The writer begins with a concern over the dominion and rulership of the eschatological age. Angels are not those who have dominion and authority over the age to come: Οὐ γὰρ ἀγγέλοις ὑπέταξεν τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν, περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν.

The thought in this passage is rooted in the Second Temple distinction between the present age and the age to come.<sup>15</sup> This pattern can be found in modified form in the New Testament as it is well recognized that early Christians believed that the work of Christ had inaugurated the eschatological age.<sup>16</sup> This in-breaking of the eschaton drives the argument of Hebrews in significant ways.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Some of the Second Temple references that divide history into two ages include 4 Ezra 7:50, 113, 8:1; 2 Baruch 15:7.

<sup>16</sup> Some of the representative secondary literature would include George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1993) 54–67; Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Translated by Floyd Filson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964); Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

<sup>17</sup> See C.K. Barrett's classic essay "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews" *The Background of the New Testament* (Edited by W.D. Davies; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964) 363–93.

Right from the introduction of the book, the author is concerned with the activity that God has done in ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων as he has ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ. This climax of *historia salutis* has come in God's action of the Son being appointed heir of all things (ὄν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων). In appointing this reign to the Son, he has ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς. Hebrews sees the dawning of age to come in that actions of God that are both revelatory (apocalyptic) and eschatological. The Son is appointed ruler. The appointed heir (the firstborn: τὸν πρωτότοκον) comes εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην (1:6) so that he can usher in the τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν directly through his activity of behalf of the people of God. He does this not only by means of offering atonement but by offering up active human/Adamic obedience.

Speculation on the rulership of angels over human realms and nations is quite common in Second Temple Judaism. Hebrews, however, argues that the Son is different in several ways. First, none of the angels have ever been designated Son (1:5). This statement may have seemed contradictory at first glance since angels were sometimes referred to as sons of God, e.g. בְּנֵי הַאֱלֹהִים in Job 1:6 & 2:1, which the LXX translates οἰάγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ. Yet, Hebrew's point is that no angel ever was exalted to God's right hand although they might minister within the divine glory.<sup>18</sup> Second, Hebrews quotes LXX Deut. 32:43 with reference to the Son so that the angels worship the Son just as they would God. Finally, the Son inherits the rulership of creation via exaltation and declaration of Sonship. This signals the climax and inauguration of the last days. Even the Son was the means by which God created the ages (1:3 δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας), He rules over all via God's appointment (1:3 ὄν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων; see also Psalm 110 in Heb. 1:13).

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<sup>18</sup> See for example the angelic presence in Isaiah 6:2–3. On the role of angels as divine agents of God see Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988) 71–92.

The author of Hebrews does not merely lay out that Christ is divine in chapter one only to turn and pursue a different tact in chapter two that the son is human.<sup>19</sup> While these two statements in themselves summarize key points, the author of Hebrews is driven by the eschatology of his argument. Chapters 1 and 2 serve a unified argument. This Son who inherits does indeed inherit because he shares in the divine glory and divine identity of YHWH.<sup>20</sup> No angel, though present in the glory of heaven and often described as having a sort of glory, has ever been called out as Son and installed to reign over all creation. Nor will any angel receive such position over creation in the age to come despite what role they might hold in the present age over nations and kingdoms. But even more in this appointing to reign over the new age, the Son has also been crowned with eschatological glory exceeding the glory of angels. He fulfills the destiny for which humanity was created — glory and rulership of creation under God. The Son has not only been installed as heir of creation, his crowning with glory is the dawning of ‘τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν’. The Son, unlike angels, is the hinge point of history but also the ἀρχηγός of the transition of humanity into glory.

Having laid out the context up to Hebrews 2:6, we turn to the quotation of Psalm 8:5–7 from the LXX in Hebrews 2:6–8. The MT and the LXX are as follows:

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<sup>19</sup> David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 52 n.9, 58. *Contra* Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2010) 92.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1998). He has used the term divine identity to describe how God is characterized in Second Temple Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures and then applies the term to Jesus Christ to explain how the early church described Jesus as divine, namely in sharing attributes reserved for YHWH alone in the Hebrew Scriptures. See especially pp. 25–42 and p33 briefly on Hebrews 1.

5 מִהֲאֵנוּשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבִן־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ:  
 6 וְתַחֲסֶרְהוּ מִטַּט מַאֲלֵהִים וְכְבוֹד וְהִדְר תִּעֲטָרְהוּ:  
 7 תִּמְשִׁילֶהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו כֹּל שֶׁתַּת תַּחַת דְּרָגָלָיו:

- <sup>5</sup> τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι μιμνήσκη αὐτοῦ, ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, ὅτι ἐπισκέπτῃ αὐτόν;  
<sup>6</sup> ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ ἁγγέλους, δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν,  
<sup>7</sup> καὶ κατέστησας αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου, πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ,

The key difference between the two texts is the Hebrew “מַאֲלֵהִים” and the LXX “παρ ἁγγέλους.” While it is possible that the original Hebrew refers to the divine council or heavenly beings, the best translation would be to translate it as a “little lower than God.” This would be consistent with the Psalm’s reflection on Genesis 1:26–28 where humanity is established as vice-regents under the authority of YHWH/God.

While the writer of Hebrews uses the LXX more regularly in his quotation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the LXX serves the argument of Hebrews in two ways. First, the LXX serves Hebrews’ purpose more clearly because Hebrews is concerned to show the superiority of the Son over the angels. While Jewish angelology placed angels over man and as governor of the nations, Hebrews needs to make clear that in the eschaton man will rule over angels and so Christ as Son and king of the age to come now rules over the angels. Second, the argument capitalizes on the temporal aspect of the phrase “βραχύ τι παρ ἁγγέλους.” In the Greek βραχύ has a decidedly temporal point while the Hebrew טַטַּמָּ has no temporality.<sup>21</sup> The author highlights this in 2:9a “τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ ἁγγέλους ἠλαττωμένον βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν.” The Son’s hu-

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<sup>21</sup> BAGD, 147.

miliation in suffering death is part of the phase of his existence with creation as one lower than the angels.<sup>22</sup>

The use of Psalm 8 expounds the humiliation of the Son followed by his exaltation over all things. Hebrews, like other early Christians, connected Psalm 2, 8 and 110 to Jesus' exaltation. For example, Paul quotes Psalm 8:6 in 1 Corinthians 15:27. In this passage, Paul is concerned with the raising up of the Son over all creation. Christ is a new Adam. He is the firstfruits of a resurrected new humanity. He reigns until all is under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25, alluding to Ps. 110:1). Similarly, the writer of Ephesians<sup>23</sup> alludes to Psalm 8 in Eph. 1:22 with "καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ." Ephesians is equally concerned with Christ's exaltation, the two ages and its powers in submission to him and the unique representation that offered over the church, the new people of God. As Martin Hengel suggests in his study of the use of Psalm 110, "one could even say that they [Ps. 110:1 and 8:7] were 'woven together.'"<sup>24</sup>

For several reasons, we propose that in Hebrews' use of the Psalm 8 the concept of a Second Adam is at work in the mind of the writer. First, the background of Psalm 8 references the role of humanity in creation and reflects the theology of Genesis 1:26–28. The psalm reflects the concept of vice-regency common to the ANE where humanity is installed under the high King but in exaltation over all the creation. The vice-sovereign or viceroy exercises dominion on God's behalf over everything that God has

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<sup>22</sup> This phase of Christ's existence is true of his humanity even though Hebrews 1:2–4 shows the superiority of Christ as sharing in the divine glory and being an agent of creation, a role reserved for YHWH alone in the Old Testament, especially in Isaiah 40–55.

<sup>23</sup> We simply acknowledge that New Testament scholarship debates Pauline authorship of the book.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Hengel, *Studies In Early Christology* (New York: T&T Clark, 1995) 165. He suggests other allusions to Psalm 8 in 1 Peter 3:22; Polycarp and Phil. 3:21. More recently Aquila H.I. Lee has also argued for a "Christological Fusion" of Psalm 110:1 and 8:6 in *From Messiah to Preexistent Son* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2005) 216–23

made. While Psalm 8:7a [Eng. 6] does not use the same word for dominion as in Genesis 1:26–28, it uses the hiphil form of מָשַׁל which means not only to give someone dominion but to make them a ruler or lord.<sup>25</sup> In Psalm 8:7b [Eng. 6], the notion of God putting all under man’s feet is the idea that God has set, ordered or determined that this man should have dominion. It entails imagery of a vice-regency receiving his installment to royalty and sovereign by the authority of the high sovereign.<sup>26</sup>

On Genesis 1:26–28, it is readily acknowledged by most Bible scholars today that the concept of man’s creation in the image of God establishes his functional sonship, which entails regal imagery as a vice-regent under God but over God’s created world. Yet, it is important to emphasize that the role humanity is established to is one of kingship, albeit a delegated kingship under the authority of the highest King. In this, the early chapters of Genesis fit strongly within an Ancient Near East setting.<sup>27</sup>

The first two key words in Genesis 1:26–28 are image (צֶלֶם) and likeness (דְּמִתּוֹ). The two terms should be seen as near synonyms, not as describing two different aspects of humanity.<sup>28</sup> The

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<sup>25</sup> CHALOT, 219. See also Daniel 11:39 “He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.”

<sup>26</sup> It would be interesting to explore the implication for the notion of a covenant and suzerain-vassal treaties, but this is beyond our immediate scope. It may be possible to suggest that covenant is not far from the author’s thought in Psalm 8 given the ordering and setting of a viceroy in place.

<sup>27</sup> J. Richard Middleton *The Liberating Image: the Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2005) 93–145.

<sup>28</sup> It is beyond our scope to review the long history of interpretation. Suffice it to say, in earlier centuries it was frequent to assign different aspects to humanity based the different words. The use of image and likeness in Gen. 5:1, 3; and 9:6 lead most scholars to assume they are near synonyms. See for example Eugene Merrill “Covenant and Kingdom: Genesis 1–3 as Foundation for Biblical Theology” *Criswell Theological Review* 1.2 (1987) 299 and Antony Hoekema *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986) 13.

word צלם is often used to denote a statue or an idol (1 Samuel 6:5; Numbers 33:52; 2 Kings 11:18). Idols would stand as proxies for the divine being they represented. In the Ancient Near East, kings were considered to be “sons” of the gods so that they were considered visible manifestations of the rule of the god.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, it is recognized that earthly kings themselves would erect images of their regal power in lands they had conquered. Gerhard von Rad connects this to the implications for Adam as God’s image:

Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so man is placed upon earth in God’s image as God’s sovereign emblem. He is really only God’s representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God’s claim to dominion over the earth.<sup>30</sup>

Taking a line of argument other than our reflection, Doug Green reaches the conclusion that Psalm 8 is first about the royal identity of David.<sup>31</sup> Green discusses the use of Psalm 8 to refer to all humanity, the so-called “democratic” interpretation.<sup>32</sup> His

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<sup>29</sup> Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Waco, TX: Word, 1997) 30. Phyllis Bird “Male and Female He Created Them”: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation” *HTR* 74:2 (1981) 137–44. Again, J. Richard Middleton *The Liberating Image*, 93–145.

<sup>30</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis*, (E.T.; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961) 60. In discussing the use of Psalm 8:6 with Psalm 110 in 1 Corinthians 15, Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins note that the first chapter of Genesis’ use of image and likeness “draws upon royal ideology” (*King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 110). For a discussion on the relationship between image and rule see Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 50–60.

<sup>31</sup> Douglas Green “Psalm 8: What is Israel’s King that You Remember Him?” <http://files.wts.edu/uploads/pdf/articles/psalm8-green.pdf> accessed 3/24/14.

<sup>32</sup> Green, 1–2

argument, similar to the argument by N.T. Wright, is that in the unfolding redemptive history of the Old Testament, Israel becomes a new Adam and Israelite royal ideology portrays King David as a Second Adam.<sup>33</sup> In this vein, J. Richard Middleton goes so far as to state that Psalm 8 has a clearer royal ideology than Genesis 1.<sup>34</sup> But Green argues further that there is a link between Adam and Davidic ideology since originally Adam had a royal identity:

There is a stream of theological reflection in the Old Testament ... that speaks of Israel and her kings using what may be called second-Adam imagery: the godlike (or near-divine) human, the son of Man crowned with divine splendor, who rules over the animal kingdom, and by extension the animalized humanity of the Gentile kingdoms. Psalm 8 floats in this stream. Read in context of the Psalter, and read in the context of Israel's story, Psalm 8 is less interested in the dignity and worth of humanity in general, and more concerned with the dignity and worth, the glory and honor, of the true humanity, Israel, and the true human, David (and his descendants).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Green, 3. N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 20–23. N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 262–8. For a discussion of royal ideology in Israel's king as God's son see also Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 1–47. Commenting on Psalm 2 and 110 they remark “As God's surrogate, he [the Davidic King] is sovereign of the whole world by right” (22). However they do not link this to Psalm 8. See also Moule, *The Origin of Christology*, 152 and Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 24–28.

<sup>34</sup> Middleton, 57.

<sup>35</sup> Middleton. 7

It is no surprise, then, that Psalm 8 becomes in Hebrews 2 an identification of Christ and his crowning with glory and honor in his exaltation. In fact, for Hebrews it is a false dilemma to ask whether Psalm 8 is intended to be understood as anthropological or Messianic within the unfolding argument of chapter two.<sup>36</sup> The psalm is a reflection of the vice-regency of humanity in its ANE setting but also read now amongst the early Christians as Davidic and Messianic. Jesus in his humanity and Messianic function takes on that regal capacity as the true human. To use more Pauline language, when Jesus becomes the installed king over all creation at his resurrection and exaltation he is designated Second Adam or Last Adam precisely because the original Adam had a royal function.<sup>37</sup>

Second, there is good reason to believe the reference to crowning and glory evokes Adamic imagery even without the clear citation of Psalm 8 and our interpretation. In Second Temple Judaism there is a motif that the righteous sufferer is destined to inherit the glory of Adam. C. Marvin Pate has shown that the connection between Paul's conception of suffering and glory in the righteous saints has its "impetus" in Jewish apocalypticism that "these intertwined motifs are rooted in the belief, so prevalent in the Judaism of this period, that Adam's lost glory will be restored through righteous suffering."<sup>38</sup> He concludes "Judaism [of the first century] taught that suffering was a prerequisite for inheriting Adam's glory."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 151–52.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Cor. 15 especially vv.20–27 and 45.

<sup>38</sup> C. Marvin Pate, *The Glory of Adam and the Afflictions of the Righteous: Pauline Suffering in Context* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993) 67.

<sup>39</sup> Pate, 67.

Pate cites three texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls in defense of his thesis: 1 QS 4:22,23; CD 3:20 and 1 QHa 4:15.<sup>40</sup> These texts describe the future people of God inheriting the glory of Adam (כבוד אדם) as a reward over and against the wicked being punished. The glory of Adam restored is a reward for those who inherit the age to come.<sup>41</sup>

In 1 QS 3:18 mankind was created to rule the world. Later in 1 QS 4, the righteous are those who inherit an everlasting covenant (4:22 'לברית עולמים'<sup>42</sup>) with God. God has sorted the righteous from the unrighteous. In this life they offer service "as a legacy to the sons of man so they might know good [and evil]," clearly an echo of Genesis 2. But in the final state, they inherit the 'כבוד אדם' glory of Adam (4:23). This includes various gifts such as "fruitful offspring with all everlasting blessings, eternal enjoyment with endless life, and a crown of glory with majestic raiment in eternal light" (4:7–8, emphasis ours). It is a new/renewed humanity with Adamic blessing and glories.

Similarly CD 3:20 describes man as inheriting the glory of Adam. In the context, various people from the sons of Noah on are described as going astray from God. God has established a covenant with Israel for the faithful who are steadfast in God's precepts. Given that sons of Jacob and Israelites are described as going astray, it is quite possible that these faithful are seen as the true Israel. They do the will of God "which man must do in order to live by them" (3:15–16). They will receive a safe home in Israel.

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<sup>40</sup> Pate (*The Glory of Adam*, 67) and N.T. Wright (*New Testament and the People of God*, 265 n.86) follow the older designation 1 QH 17:15, we have chosen to follow the structure of the scrolls proposed by Emile Peuch, "Quelques aspect de la restauration du Rouleau des Hymns (1 QH)," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 39 (1988): 38-55. This designation is found in Florentinie Garcia Martinez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition* Vol. 1 & 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997). All English quotations and references will be from this study edition.

<sup>41</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 265.

<sup>42</sup> Interestingly in Hebrews 13:20 there is also the phrase "διαθήκης αἰωνίου"

It is the steadfast who acquire eternal life and “all the glory of Adam is for them” (3:20).

Finally from the DSS, *1 QH<sup>a</sup> 4:15* promises that the faithful to God have “raised an [eternal] name ... giving them as a legacy all the glory of Adam [and] abundant days (כבוד אדם ו רוב ימים).” It is the eschatological end after atonement has been made and the dead are judged. The faithful inherit the glory of Adam, which was lost in the fall.

In Jewish apocalyptic literature there is association with the glory of the age to come and the glory of Adam.<sup>43</sup> Those who are obedient to God receive a glory. For example, in the day of judgment at the end of the age “glory and honor shall be given back to the holy ones” (1 Enoch 50:1).<sup>44</sup>

We find this in more detail in 2 Baruch. After suffering (51:2) they shall be exalted and glorified (51:5). This entails having the splendor of angels (51:5), but “the excellence of their righteousness will then be greater than that of the angels.” This is a restoration to glory but an exaltation over creation. 2 Baruch, like Hebrews, believes that man was made as a guardian of God’s creation (14:18). After suffering and tribulation in this fallen world the righteous will receive “a crown with great glory” (15:8).<sup>45</sup> In fact, Adam was offered Paradise before his sin but now this glory awaits the righteous (2 Bar. 4). Baruch is, of course, privileged to see it like Abraham and Moses. Thus, this glory that awaits man is an Adamic glory of the age to come.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> C. Marvin Pate, *The Glory of Adam*, 72–74.

<sup>44</sup> All citations from *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments* ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

<sup>45</sup> Moffitt, rightly in our estimation, sees a possible allusion to Psalm 8 here (*Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection*, 112).

<sup>46</sup>N.T. Wright states “The later writings of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch witness the same theological position: Israel will be given the rights of Adam’s true heir” (*Climax of the Covenant*, 24). He cites 4 Ez. 3:4–36; 6:53–59; 9:17ff.; and 2 Bar. 14:17–19.

If our reading of Hebrews 2 and the use of Psalm 8 is correct, we can bypass a precise answer to whether or not the use of “son of man” in the passage refers to Jesus’ title. On the one hand it is quite possible that the early community was aware of the title and that this is in the background of what Hebrews is articulating.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, “Son of Man” was not a title the church used actively for Jesus after his resurrection and accession. Regardless of the interpretation that one takes on this issue, the point of human representation and fulfillment of Adamic vocation stands.<sup>48</sup> Hebrews uses Psalm 8 to show that Christ is the fulfillment of true humanity. Remember Moule has remarked that Daniel 7 contains “a symbol of vocation to be utterly loyal, even to death in the confidence of ultimate vindication in the heavenly court.”<sup>49</sup> More clearly, this is precisely the motif that Hebrews sees fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus even without a possible contested reference to Daniel 7 with the phrase “son of man.”<sup>50</sup> The declaration of Psalm 2:7 and 110:1 is a vindication in the heavenly court as the Son having been faithful on earth in suffering is exalted up over creation. In this light, Psalm 8 read within the context of Hebrews’ theological concern for the exaltation is both anthropological and Christological be-

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<sup>47</sup> O’Brien remarks that the title would have struck the hearers with a “force beyond the original setting [of the Psalm]” (*Hebrews*, 95).

<sup>48</sup> This is not to say that this is not an interesting scholarly question or that we should ignore investigation. Rather regardless of one’s position on the issue, Hebrews 2 unifies the anthropological and Christological reading of Psalm 8. Ellingworth notes that some commentators see a possible allusion to Adam (*Epistle to the Hebrews*, 150). And although Ellingworth does not take the logic step of identifying an Adamic Christology in these verses he does rightly see a cohesiveness to the anthropological and Christological readings in Hebrews 2 (152–53).

<sup>49</sup> See above. Moule, *Origin*, 14.

<sup>50</sup> It is our opinion that Daniel 7 is not in view in Hebrews 2 but that the same motif is at work.

cause Christ is a second Adam fulfilling Adamic vocation and receiving Adamic glory in exaltation.<sup>51</sup>

### 3. The Activity of Christ as Second Adam in Hebrews 2:10–18.

In order to advance our defense of the conception of a Second Adam Christology undergirding Hebrews 2, we note the way that the work of Christ functions as a corporate representation in Hebrews 2:10–18. As we stated in our section of definition above, an Adam Christology will entail representation of the people of God just like Adam represented humanity in his act. For example, in Romans 5:12–21 Adam’s act of disobedience was contrasted with Christ’s act of obedience. But each act represents the people for which it stands. Similarly in 1 Cor. 15, Adam stands as representative life that he has given to his descendants. This was the “first age” or the present sinful age, the perishable. But Christ stands as a Last Adam who puts on an imperishable spiritual resurrection body and thus becomes a “πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν” — one who gives the Holy Spirit of the eschaton.

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<sup>51</sup> David Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection* reaches this conclusion 135–43, esp. 142–43. Likewise F.F. Bruce sees a second/last Adam theology at work in the use of Psalm 8 (*The Epistle to the Hebrews Revised* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990] 72–73). Harold Attridge mentions the possibility but concludes “in general Hebrews does not utilize the elements of such an Adamic christology” (*Hebrews* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989] 75). He believes that the Abrahamic lineage is more important, yet if N.T. Wright’s understanding of Adamic christology is to be preferred, and we believe it is, the mention of ‘seed of Abraham’ is precisely part of what an Adamic christology would entail. First Israel and finally the Messiah has Adamic vocation. The seed of Abraham is the new Adam. William Lane states that “in Jesus we see exhibited humanity’s true vocation” although he never mentions Adam or Adam Christology (*Hebrews 1–8* [Dallas, TX: Word, 1991] 48). Kenneth Schneek likewise sees both a unity of the anthropological and Christological readings (*Cosmology and Eschatology*, 56).

The role of Jesus in Hebrews 2 is to bring about Adamic glory of the age to come through his own suffering (2:9).<sup>52</sup> But it is this vocation that brings others to glory as well. When Christ fulfills the human/Adamic vocation and conquers death, he opens the path for others to come to glory with him and through his representative work.

Christ himself is perfected into the glorification of the eschatological state (διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι). Hebrews has already pointed to the eternal glory that the Son had (1:2–3), yet the word ἑπρεπεν denotes a rightness, fitting or suitableness<sup>53</sup> that this is the path that the Son should walk according to the Father. The reference to the Father creating may also highlight that it was the Father who established the order of man over his creation. Thus, if the fall is going to be undone, it must happen through a second Adam.

The purpose of God is to “πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα.” The context is talking about the work of the Father.<sup>54</sup> He is the one who has created all things. The Son is the author of *his* (God’s) salvation. So if the Father is going to bring sons to glory, there must be “τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν.” There must be a pioneer and originator who can accomplish what the people of God need. If the people of God need perfection and glorification, then the ἀρχηγός must experience it first.

While ἀρχηγός can mean leader, ruler or prince,<sup>55</sup> here in Hebrews it certainly connotes someone who begins something

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<sup>52</sup> See C. Marvin Pate, *The Glory of Adam*, 66-75, where he shows that righteous suffering was believed to be rewarded in Second Temple Judaism with Adamic glory.

<sup>53</sup> BAGD, 699.

<sup>54</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 82. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 159.

<sup>55</sup> BAGD, 112. Cf. Acts 5:31

as originator or founder.<sup>56</sup> Paul Ellingworth and William Lane in their respective commentaries suggest a more Hellenistic background of the champion or pioneer who blazes a path for followers.<sup>57</sup> This interpretation has a degree of validation in the context: (1) with the notion of the Son being necessary to bring other sons to glory, (2) the description of Jesus as a forerunner ‘πρόδρομος’ in 6:20, and (3) exhortation Hebrews 12:1 gives that we are to run with endurance because Jesus “τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν” has already suffered and received exalted glory. None of this negates our proposal of a Second Adam Christology but enhances it. Christ’s act of obedient suffering accomplishes the redemption of the people of God and achieves their eschatological glory. The community of believers is exhorted to faithful suffering in order to receive their eschatological glory precisely because Jesus’ Second-Adam-obedience has opened and cleared the way. In fact, if there was not a new man inaugurating a new covenant, the obedience of God’s people would be impossible. Hebrews 8:7–9 tells us that the Exodus covenant of the Law was not faultless because the people were unable to keep it. Christ must enter as a mediator, but to do so he offers obedience and pioneers the path into glorification/perfection.

The corporate relationship between Christ and the sons of glory is so close that Hebrews 2:11 tells us that he calls them brothers. Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22 [MT: 22:23; LXX: 21:23]:

MT:                   :דָּלִלְלֵאֵל קהֵל דִּיִּתְּבִי חֲאֵל דְּמִשׁ פִּרְרָאֵא

Ps. 21:23 διηγῆσομαι τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε

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<sup>56</sup> BAGD, 112. Used only here and in 12:2. The TDNT notes that Philo considered Adam and Noah to be ἀρχηγέτης while also confirming the Hellenistic background of the concept of “hero” (Gerhard Delling “ἀρχηγός” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich; Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans; Logos Electronic Library] volume 1, p.487).

<sup>57</sup>Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 56–57 and Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 161.

Heb. 2:12 ἀπαγγεῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε,

Aside from the minor textual difference (LXX: διηγῆσομαι; Heb. 2:12: ἀπαγγεῶ), which corresponds better with the MT, the wording is the same. Hebrews sees Christ as representative of “brothers” in the great congregation singing and leading in this singing. What is noteworthy is that Psalm 22 is well known in the gospels’ tradition to be used to refer to Christ. It points to one who suffers violently only to be raised up in triumph. The sufferer is raised up before the Lord after his deep humiliation. Narratively, this is the same movement that Hebrews 2 has in mind, so it is unlikely that the quotation of the Psalm is a mere coincidence on the narrow reading of just one verse.<sup>58</sup> As C.H. Dodd writes in his classic study “The conclusion is that Jesus is Messiah, or Son of Man, in the sense that He has passed from death to glory and universal sovereignty as representative Head of a redeemed mankind.”<sup>59</sup>

Finally for our discussion, in Hebrews 2:13, Jesus becomes the representative truster of God with the use of Isaiah 8:17–18. The role of humanity has always been to live in obedience under God and his command.<sup>60</sup> As the prophet stood as the remnant and trusted God along with those who are left, so Jesus trusts God along with the family that belongs to him.<sup>61</sup> Thus, having trusted God through suffering in offering himself in obedience, he is fit to lead the people of God in their trust of God. Lane concludes that there is here both representation and solidarity in what we have labeled under the rubric of ‘Adam Christology’:

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<sup>58</sup> Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1961) 84. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 167.

<sup>59</sup> C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Fontana Books, 1965) 20.

<sup>60</sup> Adam receiving the command in the garden; Israel receiving commands in the Law.

<sup>61</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 60.

Jesus is now the representative head of a new humanity which is being led to glory through suffering ... Although the concept of the people of God as τὰ παῖδια, “the children,” of the exalted Son is not found elsewhere in the NT, the image of family suggests an intimacy of relationship and a tenderness that broadens the concept of solidarity.<sup>62</sup>

Hebrews 2 goes on to spell out what exactly the incarnation of the Son entails. He became like his brothers in all ways. This is so he could represent them. Thus, he does not help angels but “σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ.” At first glance this reference may seem curious, but it is precisely as representative man, a last Adam, that the Son helps his brothers, the people of God. Thus the “house” is constituted under the representative man who stands for them and acts upon their behalf (cf. 3:1–6). Per Second Temple Judaism, only the seed of Abraham is destined for the glory of Adam. As N.T. Wright puts it “Abraham’s children are God’s true humanity, and their homeland is the new Eden.”<sup>63</sup>

The completion of the Adamic vocation for Christ through obedient suffering makes Jesus to be the perfect exalted king and high priest as the Father has exalted him, per Psalm 110. Thus, having been the forerunner into the eschatological glory, he can also serve as priestly representative. In his office, Jesus is superior to the angels, but he is also a superior representative of the people having walked through weakness to the eschatological glory.<sup>64</sup> In short, he succeeded where Adam failed. While Hebrews 1 makes clear Christ is superior as a ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης

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<sup>62</sup> Lane, 60.

<sup>63</sup> Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 23.

<sup>64</sup> We suggest then when Jesus is described as being faithful over the house, in contradistinction to Moses who was faithful in the house, not only is Christ’s glory greater than Moses’ glory, but this superiority is both by virtue of radiating divine glory and being crowned with human glory as an ἀρχηγός.

and the χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, it is in Hebrews 2 that we see his fitness for the vocation of ruling over creation as the representative man. Thus, in the last days God has spoken ἐν υἱῷ, it was necessary for this Son to take on Adamic sonship to enact the transition of the ages. In both aspects of Sonship [divine and Adamic], Christ is superior to angels and to other human beings, including Moses and the patriarchs.

#### 4. Conclusion.

The purpose of this paper has been to argue that Hebrews 2 contains a sort of Adam Christology. This is not to say that Hebrews is Pauline, but rather to describe the features of representation and restoration through recapitulation and fulfillment. Thus, a Second Adam Christology will have a figure who represents the people of God but is individually the apex of humanity. But this figure also acts in solidarity with the people of God on their behalf. We have pursued our argument along two lines. First, we examined the use of Psalm 8 in the context of Hebrews 2. We situated against the background of Adamic and royal ideology in the Old Testament. We also sought to show that the very concept of eschatological glory in Second Temple texts is read against the background of the fulfillment of the glory of Adam.

Seeking to establish that Hebrews 2:6–8 is sufficient warrant to describe an Adam Christology, we proceeded to examine Hebrews 2:10–18 highlighting the aspects of the argument that are consistent with Adamic Christologies. Taken alone they may not prove an Adamic Christology, but with the advancement of the use of Psalm 8 in Hebrews it becomes clear that these features are indeed an aspect of an Adamic Christology.

The writer of Hebrews sees the climax of salvation history coming in what God has done in and through the work of Jesus Christ. This work is Messianic and anthropological. The true human moves from humility to exaltation. He is crowned with glory and honor through representative suffering. His activity ushers in the eschaton where he is crowned over all creation in

fulfillment of the royal ideology of Ps. 2, 8 and 110. As Messianic King, he is the true new Adam who offered perfect obedience to bring in the perfection of glorification upon the people of God.

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**ANYTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS:  
HOW (SOME) TRADITIONALISTS DOWNPLAY  
THE DEATH OF CHRIST**  
**by Dr. Glenn Peoples**

*“What can take away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!”*  
—Robert Lowry

How does a traditional view of hell as eternal torment undermine the value of the death of Jesus?

One of the biblical reasons to accept conditional immortality is that Jesus stood in for sinners, taking upon himself their fate, dying the death that would otherwise have come to them. Although there is other good evidence in Scripture that without Christ we will finally die forever, the death of Christ dramatically portrays that fate as the Son of God took our place, giving up his life at Golgotha. Perhaps realizing the force of the argument, some traditionalists have sought to avoid conditionalism, incredibly, by denying the atoning power of Christ’s death.

***The historical centrality of the death of Christ***

From its very beginning, the Christian faith has always maintained that Christ died for sin. There have been several common ways of understanding how the death of Jesus on the cross could deal with sin, but the fact that Jesus’ death is a necessary part of the way that God dealt with sin — the view that it just wouldn’t work

if you take Jesus' death out of the picture — has always been critical to any Christian theology of the atonement. Central to the way that most Christians have viewed the atonement is the concept of substitution. Just how Jesus is viewed as a substitute is explained in different ways. The most widely held view among Protestants, historically, is that of penal substitution: Jesus bore the punishment for sin in his death on the cross, standing in for those who are saved through Christ, who will no longer finally face that punishment.

Penal substitution was by no means a Protestant innovation. It was the development of a standard view within Catholicism, spelled out in detail by St. Anselm and often referred to as a “satisfaction” model of the atonement. Satisfaction here refers to the satisfaction of an outstanding debt, a debt that Christ paid on behalf of sinners. Here, too, Jesus is seen to stand in and act on behalf of the condemned or the indebted.

Even in the major alternative to a satisfaction model of the atonement, namely the Christus Victor model (also called the “Ransom” theory), substitution looms large. Here Christ is seen as standing in, not before God, but in the face of the powers of darkness, who claim him instead of human beings. Their plan backfires, since Christ is raised from the dead, conquering them once and for all. It is easy to see the influence of this model on C. S. Lewis as Aslan in “The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe” stands in the place of the traitor Edmund, dying in his stead, only to rise again and conquer the witch who killed him.

What all orthodox views of the atonement share when it comes to the notion of substitution is that Jesus, the righteous one, is subjected to death in place of others. Had Jesus not died, sin would not be atoned, nobody would have truly stood in our place and we would be in dire trouble<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am not assuming the “moral influence” view of the atonement under the heading of “all orthodox views.” The moral influence view is where the death of Christ is such an expression of self-giving love that it moves us and kindles an answering love. While not false, I take it that orthodox theologies of the cross must regard a moral influence model as seriously inadequate by itself.

The first creed to explicitly state that the crucifixion of Christ was for our sake, the Nicene Creed, covers the passion of Christ entirely as follows: “For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.” Of course those who put this creed together knew that Jesus had suffered (you cannot suffer death without suffering something), but what they considered central to what he did for our sake was his death. That is what he suffered. While it is true that many Christian thinkers and statements of faith over the years refer back simply to the fact that Christ suffered, to take this to mean that they were only concerned with the pain that was endured and not the objective fact of Christ’s death would be to terribly take people out of context. The passion or the suffering of Christ when referred to by theologians in history is a series of events that crucially includes his death. To refer simply to the “suffering” of Jesus or to say that he “suffered” without further comment of course does not tell us what he suffered. When we find people who refer to the suffering of Christ, we also find, if we are fair to them and read more of what they had to say, that they are talking about Christ suffering death. Take John Calvin for example. He argued that Jesus obeyed God in our place because we could not, and took the penalty for sin in our place so that we would not. Here’s how he put it:

*I take it for granted, that if Christ satisfied for our sins, if he paid the penalty due by us, if he appeased God by his obedience; in fine, if he suffered the just for the unjust, salvation was obtained for us by his righteousness; which is just equivalent to meriting. [Emphasis added]<sup>2</sup>*

Somebody who says that Jesus took the consequences of sin upon himself by suffering the wrath of God as he was tormented on the cross prior to death might seize upon the phrase “he suf-

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<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 2, chapter 17.

ferred the just for the unjust” as evidence that Calvin shared their view. This, however, is careless. What did Jesus “suffer”? Calvin does not say. Not here, at least. Calvin does, however, make it quite clear what he thought in the very next sentence:

*Now, Paul’s testimony is, that we were reconciled, and received reconciliation through his death, (Romans 5:11). But there is no room for reconciliation unless where offense has preceded. The meaning, therefore, is that God, to whom we were hateful through sin, was appeased by the death of his Son, and made propitious to us.*

This is what Christ “suffered” in order to make atonement: death. Did he suffer anything prior to death? No doubt, but in the penal substitutionary view, it was the death of Christ that made atonement for sin.

Athanasius is another example of the many, many voices to which we could turn:

*He took to himself a body which could die, in order that, since this participated in the Word who is above all, it might suffice for death on behalf of all, and because of the Word who was dwelling in it, it might remain incorruptible, and so corruption might cease from all men by the grace of the resurrection.<sup>3</sup>*

It is hard not to see here the basis of a penal substitutionary model of the atonement, whereby the Word took on a human nature and endured death “on behalf of all,” subsequently conquering death and corruption for all (it is evident that Athanasius held to a universal atonement, but elsewhere he makes it clear that the gift is received only by those who receive him). The point

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<sup>3</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, chapter 9.

to note is that in Athanasius' theology, it was the death of Christ that was provided on behalf of all.

Martin Luther too, like any Christian with a part in orthodox understandings of the atonement, frequently expressed the fact that Jesus' death was for sin, famously declaring, "He [Christ] died for me. He made His righteousness mine and made my sin His own; and if He made my sin His own, then I do not have it, and I am free."<sup>4</sup>

In more recent times John Stott (representative of the penal substitutionary model) put it like this:

*He has redeemed his people. He has propitiated his wrath. He has demonstrated his justice. Indeed these three achievements belong together. Through the sin-bearing, substitutionary death of his Son, God has propitiated his own wrath in such a way to redeem and justify us, and at the same time demonstrate his justice.*<sup>5</sup>

Whether or not Paul had penal substitution in mind, the over-arching picture of the death of the old sinful nature and the entry of a new life in Christ is grounded in the pericope of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus precisely because it was his death that dealt with our sin, the sin that we turn from when we identify with him in baptism. The specific meaning of baptism is that we identify, not just with Christ in general, but with him in his death, signifying that we are dying to sin, and being raised to a new life in righteousness. This is exactly Paul's argument early in Romans 6:

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1961), 54.

<sup>5</sup> Commenting on Romans 3:21–4:25, reproduced at <[http://langham.org/bible\\_studies/25-july-2013/](http://langham.org/bible_studies/25-july-2013/)>, accessed 6 October 2013.

*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*<sup>6</sup>

Any attempt to divorce the atoning work of Christ for sin from his death is contrary to Scripture and to what Christians have taught from the beginning. Until now, I would expect that any evangelical reader would be saying “Of course! This is what we all believe, but what’s your point? How are traditionalists undermining this? Why would they?” Generally, traditionalists do not undermine any of this. But they should — if they are consistent. Of course, if conditionalism is true, then the final consequence of sin is death. But if the traditional view of hell is true, then death does not even enter the picture, ultimately. Instead, the lost will eternally endure the misery of hell. In traditionalism — especially if one thinks of the atonement in terms of substitution — the death of Christ simply does not do the job.

### ***Downplaying the death of Christ***

Some traditionalists realize this, and in avoiding the conclusion of the argument, they — again — only some of them, not all and presumably a minority — have made the only claim they could to rescue their understanding of hell: They oppose virtually the entire history of the Christian faith on one of the most solemn truths that we hold. They deny that the death of Jesus is what atones for sin.

This view is generally proposed by small, independent ministries or individuals, which likely speaks to the isolated manner in which their theology is constructed. As part of a larger ministry or subjected to the editorial oversight of others, it is much less

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 6:3–4 NASB.

likely that this claim would be made. A representative of Let us Reason ministries writes as follows:

*As our substitute he was separated, suffering the wrath of God for us, he cried out to the Father “my God, my God why have you forsaken me?” His eternal fellowship was broken as he experienced the punishment for sin. He now understood its affect [sic] on the human condition, body and soul. While no one knows what exactly transpired in this separation which lasted an agonizing 3 hours, we do know fellowship was fully restored before he died.<sup>7</sup>*

The claim is fairly clear: Jesus suffered the wrath of God on the cross: separation from God, which is the “punishment for sin.” Then a point came when this wrath was exhausted, the punishment had been paid, and fellowship with God was restored, after which point Jesus died, his work having been finished. A similar claim is made over at “A Voice Crying in the Wilderness”:

*Right before Jesus died, he said ‘It is finished.’ He must have suffered all of God’s wrath before he died. ... For three hours, from the sixth to the ninth hour, God turned the lights out on the earth because he didn’t want anyone looking in when he poured out all of his wrath on his son — when he bruised the son for our iniquities. It was during these three hours that God the son had become sin for us and he could not call God, Father, as before. The son was forsaken by the Father. It was during these three hours that Jesus suf-*

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<sup>7</sup> “Who died on the cross?” Let us Reason Ministries, <<http://www.letusreason.org/Onenes18.htm>>, retrieved on 6 October 2013. The terrible irony is that this is an article written as a criticism of a heretical movement.

*ferred in our place. Jesus did not have to go to Hell to suffer the torments of those flames.*<sup>8</sup>

The point of this claim is to reject the view that Jesus atoned for sin by suffering in hell after death (see below). The problem, however, is that it simply assumes that the punishment for sin is suffering the wrath of God in the form of torment, and so the solution, whatever it is, is assumed to be that Jesus suffers that torment somewhere, either on the cross or in hell — and since it wasn't in hell it was on the cross.

One more example (just to show that this is not a misrepresentation), Ken Matto wrote a short and somewhat hot-tempered article against annihilationism, in which he denied that physical death is the punishment for sin. But what about the death of Jesus for sin? Here's what Dr. Matto had to say: "Did the Lord Jesus say 'It is finished' before He died or after He died? Uh oh, He said it before He died, which means the atonement was complete before He physically died, and the atonement was on a higher level than mere physical death."<sup>9</sup> The atonement was complete before Jesus died. After all, Jesus had already suffered the spiritual wrath of God, and that is the punishment, not death.

The fact is that this view, expressed, admittedly, by a minority, is simply a rejection of what the Christian faith has always taught: Jesus' death on the cross atoned for sin. Now of course, "it is finished" had to have been uttered before Jesus died. He obviously could not have uttered it after he was dead. But as theologians have always recognized, this was his declaration based on the inevitable: He was about to die. In fact John is the only one to record this saying, and he portrays Jesus saying these words

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<sup>8</sup> "Did Jesus Suffer in Hell?" at A Voice Cryin in the Wilderness, <<http://www.voicecrying.com/?p=350>>, retrieved on 6 October 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Ken Matto, "Annihilation: For what saith the Scripture?" <<http://www.scionofzion.com/annihilation.htm>>, retrieved on 6 October 2013.

virtually as he dies: “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” Rhetorically, John links the saying directly to the death of Christ. The theological point made here is that Jesus’ atoning work is finished because Jesus died.

A major obstacle — in fact a decisive objection — to the claim that Jesus completed his atoning work before he actually died is just this: If the atonement was completed before Jesus died, then why did Jesus die at all? It will do no good to say that he died just because he was injured. If Jesus’ physical state was to dictate what could and could not happen, then the resurrection would never have happened. If the atonement was completed, the work was all done, nothing more was required and any “satisfaction” that was required had been achieved, why did God the Father allow his son to die? What did it achieve? Victory over the fate of sinners? No, because according to the traditional view of hell, death is not the fate of sinners. The eternal experience of the wrath of God is.

The reality is that if someone is prepared to overturn one of the central truths of the Christian faith, it is unlikely that they will be troubled by having us simply point out that they are making the death of Christ unnecessary for the atonement. They already know this. But to those who believe that the punishment for sin is eternal torment but have not taken this extraordinary step, perhaps these examples will give you pause. Do you really want to make the death of Christ superfluous?

### ***Jesus goes to Hell***

On the other extreme, there are those who reason — again, consistently — that since the punishment for sin is torment in hell, and since Jesus’ death is not torment in hell, Jesus must have undergone this suffering after he died (again, remember, whatever the penalty for sin is, it’s not Jesus’ death). This is a view that has become associated with the “Word of Faith” movement within Pentecostalism. One of the more notorious teachers in

the movement, Kenneth Copeland, put it like this: “He [Jesus] allowed the devil to drag Him into the depths of hell ... He allowed Himself to come under Satan’s control...every demon in hell came down on Him to annihilate Him ... They tortured Him beyond anything anybody had ever conceived. For three days He suffered everything there is to suffer.”<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Alex Buchanan, a “widely accepted as a prophet and teacher” (says the blurb on the back of his book) articulated this view in his popular level 1995 book, “Heaven and Hell.” “There are two occasions on which Jesus went to Hell. The first was when He went there as part of the punishment for sin on Calvary. After all He must have paid the full penalty for sin, otherwise Calvary would be incomplete.”<sup>11</sup>

When these teachings were made public, conservative Evangelicals were in an uproar. These people are robbing the death of Christ of its significance! They are taking the focus away from the atoning death of Jesus and inventing stories about Jesus going to hell to suffer for sin. This is the sort of charge that was leveled against the view that since the penalty for sin is not death, Jesus had to go to hell to endure the wrath that was due to sinners. I agree with these complaints, but I’d like to see that same uproar directed at those who do the very same thing to the death of Jesus and yet who are still among the ranks of the very same conservative Evangelicals who exposed the Word of Faith movement. If you deny that Jesus’ death atoned for sin, then your mistake is just as important, whether you relocate the atoning work to some period of suffering prior to Jesus’ death or after his death. Either way, you’re saying that the death of Christ did not atone for sin.

Here is where conditional immortality brings us back to the heart of the gospel: Jesus died to save sinners. It is ironic that a view that some people regard as “heresy” should be so effective

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<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Copeland, “The Price of it All,” *The Believers Voice of Victory* (magazine), Sept 1991, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Alex Buchanan, *Heaven and Hell* (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 1995), 176.

in elevating the death (and let's not forget, the resurrection) of Jesus to the place that it deserves in Christian theology.

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## DID PAUL HAVE AN OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE?

by Dr. Glenn Peoples

*Did Paul talk about leaving his body and going to the third heaven?*

Although I'm familiar with the view that the apostle Paul is relating an "out-of-body experience" at the outset of 2 Corinthians 12, I'm pretty sure that he is not. That's partly because I don't think that Scripture teaches that we are immaterial souls that can escape our bodies. But my doubt is also based on the fact that the evidence for this claim about out-of-body experiences in this passage is just not persuasive. Here I'll explain why I say this.

In context, Paul is explaining that he will not boast or take glory in himself and his own achievements. He is not worthy of such boasting, according to him. In passing, he gives an example of someone whose encounter with God is worthy of boasting about. He says:

Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether *it was* in the body or out of the body I do not know — God knows. And I know *that* this man — whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows

— was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself ...

Virtually all of the New Testament commentaries say that Paul was talking here about his own experiences 14 years earlier on the road to Damascus, and that he was using the third person because he was embarrassed and did not want to sound as though he were boasting. If this majority opinion is correct, then the question of an “out-of-body-experience” doesn’t arise. He never had one, and that is that. After all, nobody believes that Paul’s (Saul’s) body died on the road to Damascus and that his soul went to heaven. However, I know that some individuals don’t accept this thesis, and some use this passage as a proof text for dualism out of more of a doctrinal interest and don’t actually realize that this is the majority opinion of scholarly commentators. I am therefore not going to assume that the majority are correct (and for all I know, they could be wrong).

I have intentionally chosen to quote from the New International Version because this is the version used by the majority of contemporary evangelicals, and also because of the significant translation questions raised by the translators’ selection of phrases. I have highlighted some words in particular that are not present or implied in the underlying Greek text, and which also significantly impact the meaning of the passage. If you don’t yet see how they do, read on. I’ll explain the impact of the NIV’s addition of these words in my second argument below.

The inference that some people draw from this text (or at least, from this particular translation of it) is that Paul knows someone who was taken to heaven, but he’s not sure if that person was taken to heaven bodily, or if that person’s soul left the lifeless body behind and went to heaven without it, only to return, bringing the body back to life later so that the man could tell other people about his strange experience.

## ***Major reply 1: This was a vision***

The first reply that I would make to this view raises none of the translation issues that I will delve into shortly. The first reply is just this: Why does Paul refer to the event as a “vision”? Obviously if the man went some place and was able to see it because he was *actually there*, then this wasn’t a vision, it was merely an observation. But Paul shows some uncertainty about what actually took place (again, if we rely on the NIV translation). He has two possibilities in mind: Either the man physically went there, or the man went there without bodily going there (“without the body”). The word *ektos* can mean “without,” and doesn’t have to mean “outside of.” It can mean something like *sans* as we use that word today. In the former scenario, it definitely wouldn’t have been a vision, it would have been more like a visit. But Paul is talking about something that could well have been a vision (according to him). That leaves the second scenario as a possibility. It seems perfectly reasonable to me to talk this way about having a vision of another place and seeing things as though you’re actually there as “going” there, even though you did not bodily go there.

The fact that Paul is prepared to countenance the possibility that this might have been a vision (although he’s not sure) suggests that his reference to the man going somewhere, but not actually *bodily* going there, might well have been a vision rather than an out-of-body trip as many suppose. If this approach is correct, then Paul is telling us that he knew a man 14 years ago who was taken to paradise, but he’s not really sure if the man was physically taken there, or if it was in fact one of the “visions” that Paul referred to in verse one.

I’ve made the following comments about “paradise” before, but they are relevant here. What I am saying is further bolstered by the way that the biblical writers used the Greek word *paradeisos* (paradise). This term is used in Genesis 2:8 and elsewhere in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) to refer to the garden of Eden. It is used in this connection to refer to the eschatological restoration that God will bring about (Isaiah 51:3). It is

used again in Revelation 2:7 in connection with the Tree of Life, something said (in chapters 21 and 22) to be present on the “new earth.” So there is no suggestion in Scripture that the term should mean “heaven” or some sort of spiritual intermediate state. On the contrary, it suggests a very physical state of existence and is connected with a restored physical world. Because of the presence of this word, then, the natural way to understand what this man saw is a vision of the future. Since it is a future state of affairs, it is more likely that this was a vision, unless the man was miraculously taken to the future and then brought back. From the man’s perspective, however, the likely fact is that he would have been unable to tell the difference between the two.

If all we need is a plausible and sufficient explanation of this passage that does not involve an out-of-body experience, we can stop there, because we have found one. Paul is referring to a vision, and that is that. But there’s more to see in this text, and there’s also a second solution as well, which I’ll get to shortly.

### *The “third heaven”?*

What then, of the phrase “the third heaven”? What does this refer to? It’s a good question because that phrase doesn’t appear anywhere else in the whole Bible. However, there’s an interesting reference to multiple heavens in 2 Peter 3:5ff

[T]he heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. ... Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens

will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.<sup>1</sup>

Look at what is said here about the heavens and the earth: The “heavens and the earth” once perished. There now exists the “heavens and earth” that will one day pass away as well, and there will be a new heavens and earth.

For those who are counting, how many is that? Which one is the eternal state? By my count, it’s the third. The third heaven is the third sky — the sky in the new creation (I’m going to assume that the reader realizes that “the heavens and the earth” just means “the sky above and the earth below” as a reference to the physical creation, as in Genesis chapter 1). Yes, it’s a strange way to put it, but don’t blame me, I didn’t write it. Speaking of the heavens and the earth just seems to refer to a “world order.” When all things are made new, we can speak of a new heavens and earth. The man then was caught up in a vision into the sky in the new creation (which is also how the term *paradise* is used), enabling him to get a view of it all. But while Peter uses this language of the heavens and the earth being replaced with version 3.0, Paul never does. But then again, Paul never spoke of these events with as much clarity either. Still, it is a speculative solution.

### ***Does another solution exist?***

The “third heaven” is also mentioned in the pseudepigraphal work (that means it was written in the name of an author who could not have actually written it) called the “Apocalypse of Moses.” There it is described as a physical place, equated with paradise, where the angel Michael buried the body of Adam as he awaits the resurrection. The difficulty with using this document

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<sup>1</sup> NASB.

as a source of Christian belief is that it is believed to have been written in the first century AD and very likely got this turn of phrase from 2 Corinthians itself.

There are a number of online pieces written by Christians explaining that the “third heaven” represents a spiritual place out there where God and the angels dwell. The first heaven is the sky or atmosphere, the second heaven is outer space, and the third heaven is what we mean when we talk about a person dying and “going to heaven.” But these are all retrospective arguments, trying to come up with a way that three different types of heaven could be distinguished in order to justify the use of this phrase in 2 Corinthians. The fact is, the Hebrew Scriptures to which proponents of this claim appeal nowhere show any awareness of the idea of a “third heaven.” There was a Jewish view that there are not three but seven levels of heaven, like an onion with multiple layers, but the earliest record we have of this *comes from the Talmud*, after Paul’s time. True, it’s still possible that the idea was present but unrecorded in Paul’s circles, but how would we know? What’s more, if there are seven layers of heaven, why would Paul refer to only the third?

So while my suggestion as to what the “third heaven” refers to is highly speculative, it’s at least possible, and it’s also not clear what alternative there might be. Whatever it refers to, as a visionary event no out-of-body travel needs to be dragged into the already strange picture.

### ***Major reply 2: The NIV translates the passage poorly***

Many years ago, before I had undertaken any formal theological or biblical training, I purchased a copy of the New Testament translated from Aramaic sources by George Lamsa. If you’re not familiar with this work, it’s an interesting enough story. There’s a view that the New Testament was originally written in Aramaic, and this translation purports to be from those original Aramaic sources. There’s a bit of fantasy in all of this. As is widely accepted, the earliest New Testament documents that we know of were

in Greek, not Aramaic. The Aramaic Peshitta is still a very useful source, but that's another subject altogether. Anyway, I bought this copy of the New Testament out of interest, and read it. On the whole, there's nothing terribly different or striking about it compared to what's available in other translations. I was fascinated, however, when I got to 2 Corinthians 12. This is what I started to read:

BOASTING is proper, but there is no advantage in it, and I prefer to relate the visions and revelations of our Lord. I knew a man in Christ more than fourteen years ago, but *whether I knew him in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows*; this very one was caught up to the third heaven. And I still know this man, but whether in the body or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows; How that he was caught up to paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a person, I will boast; but of myself, I will not boast, except in my weaknesses.

I have highlighted the part that really leapt out at me. "What? That's not what it says!" I said to myself. I knew what this verse was supposed to say, or so I thought. I consulted my NIV, which confirmed my previous belief about what it said. It's supposed to say that Paul knew a man fourteen years ago, and this man was caught up to heaven, and Paul doesn't know if that event was in the body or out of the body. This is why I highlighted some words in my quotation of this passage from the NIV, because those words stress that this is what the translators meant to convey.

Then I did something that can be life changing. I checked. I did not expect what I found. I first checked the King James Version, just because I knew that it took a very literal approach to translation, and literal wording was the crucial factor here. And lo and behold, the very first version I checked sided against the NIV, as follows:

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

You should immediately spot the difference. Just as with the Lamsa translation, the KJV likewise never even suggests that the man's experience might have been out of the body. No, the phrase "without the body" is used to describe the way in which Paul knew this man. I had to check more versions — those versions with a literal approach to translations. So I checked the American Standard version: "I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven ..." Another one! I tried Young's Literal Version: "I have known a man in Christ, fourteen years ago — whether in the body I have not known, whether out of the body I have not known, God hath known — such an one being caught away unto the third heaven ..." I checked my interlinear Greek English New Testament. Sure enough, these literal translations were giving what is essentially a word-for-word translation of this passage. The NIV was wrong.

What exactly does the text mean? I think Lamsa was right. Now, Lamsa added in a couple of words to make a strange sentence seem clearer. The text says "whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know ..." whereas Lamsa says "but whether I knew him in the body or out of the body, I do not know." Given the structure of what is said here, however, this makes sense, and I think it fairly represents the idea being expressed. But what

does it mean? It's not crystal clear. What does it mean to know someone "in the body" or "without the body"? One possibility is that Paul knows of the person, but isn't sure if it is someone that he has met "in the flesh," so to speak, or if it's a friend of a friend. I would not dogmatize about what the phrase means, because it's not clear. Drawing an uncertain conclusion in such circumstances is quite acceptable.

What is *not* acceptable, however, is to make phrases clear by changing their subject, which is effectively what the NIV has done. The subject is Paul's knowledge of this man, not the experience of the man seeing paradise. Unfortunately, even my current regular translation, the ESV, falls prey to the same temptation. It reads, "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know ... " The order of phrases is changed and the word "who" is added, shifting the meaning, just as with the NIV. What we have now is phrasing that is clear English, but which has given up its original meaning altogether.

### *Summary*

I'll draw this to a close here. To recap:

- First, most believe that Paul was speaking of himself and his Damascus road experience, in which case this was not an out-of-body experience.
- Second, Paul tells people that this is possibly a vision. That should be sufficient to end the matter.
- Third, the reference to "paradise" lends weight to the above, since that word is used in the Scripture to refer to a state of final restoration, a state that has not yet happened.
- Fourth, the "third heaven." What is that? I'm not sure, but it might offer support for the thesis that this was a vision of the future.
- Fifth, and taking the discussion in a whole new direction, those versions that imply that this man was caught up to

heaven but possibly out of his body have badly mistranslated this passage. The underlying Greek text refers to no such thing, nor do the most literal English translations.

Whatever we have here, there is no good evidence that Paul is talking about an out-of-body experience. In fact, the wider biblical picture of human beings presents us in a unified way, creatures of the earth, breathing the breath of life. We can no more escape our bodies than we can escape ourselves. We're not looking forward to going to heaven (whether the third heaven or another one!). We will return to the earth when God takes our life back, and we will fall asleep in the hope of the resurrection of the dead.

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## **THEOLOGY PROPER: JUST WHO IS GOD ANYWAY? (Looking Ahead to issue XL/2)**

**by Rev. Jefferson Vann**

- The Fall 2014 issue will feature articles about the nature of God. We are looking for articles defending God's nature as infinite, and also works that highlight his exclusive immortality.
- In the past, Advent Christians have debated the trinity. Articles on that issue (and/or its current significance) are welcomed as well.
- Perhaps someone would like to explain how the Bible presents God as manifesting both grace and justice?
- Perhaps someone would like to explain how God can be both eminent and transcendent at the same time?
- Exegetical essays on passages like these (usually considered as normative for theology proper) would be welcomed:

- o Genesis 17:1
- o Exodus 3:14–15
- o Exodus 34:6–7
- o Numbers 23:19
- o Psalm 139:7–12
- o Isaiah 5:16
- o Matthew 3:16–17
- o John 1:1–14
- o 1 Timothy 6:15–16
- o Hebrews 6:13–20
- o 1 John 3:20.
- We continue to welcome contributions that reflect what Advent Christians are currently thinking about, regardless of the topic.
- What are you reading? Reviews of current books are always welcome.