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REFLECTIONS ON VOCATION

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Editorial: Reflections on Vocation

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The questions—What are humans? What is our value and dignity? What are we to live and die for?—are pressing questions today. Scripture gives us very clear answers to these questions, but our society, sadly, is quite confused. In the West, since the rise of the Enlightenment, we have witnessed a gradual departure and erosion of Christian theology and worldview. In its place, we have been captivated by various “isms” that have promised us “enlightenment” about ourselves but instead have resulted in darkness. For example, *Marxism*, *secular humanism*, *existentialism*, and *postmodernism* have all promised to deliver “liberating results,” but instead have led to a collective identity crisis.

The old adage has been proven true once again: “Ideas have consequences,” and really bad ideas have serious consequences indeed. In rejecting a Christian view of humans and substituting it for a mess of pottage, we have lost our bearings in the world. Why? Because we have cut ourselves off from our Creator and Lord, we have turned to understand ourselves by only looking at ourselves. What has resulted from such an

attempt is simply disaster. Instead of gladly acknowledging that we are creatures of the triune God, made for covenant relationship with him, and created to rule over the world for his glory as his image-bearers, we have turned from our blessed Creator and sought to substitute him for created things (Rom 1:18-32).

The fallout of not fearing God is that we have become fools, in the true biblical sense of the word (Prov 1:7). The attempt to understand who we are apart from seeing ourselves as God's creatures and rejoicing in it, has been catastrophic. Current views of humans, as diverse as they are, all tend to think of humans solely in terms of the impersonal—we are products of matter, motion, chance, or impersonal spirit, instead of the triune-personal God. Is it any wonder that our society cannot make sense of who we are? Is it a surprise that we have lost the meaning, purpose, dignity, and value of who we are? All around us families are in disarray, people are confused about their sexuality, suicide rates are skyrocketing, drug addiction is on the rise, and the value of human life from the womb to the tomb is under attack, from kindergarten to the highest levels of our government. Francis Schaeffer's ominous predictions about the effects of the loss of a Christian worldview on how we view, value, and treat one another have all come true. As Schaeffer predicted, unless we view ourselves in light of our Creator and Lord, and unless we find our redemption in Christ Jesus, ultimately we will fail to know who we are and the consequences will be severe—as we are now witnessing.

Today, then, what is needed is a robust theological anthropology that not only rightly views who we are in light of our triune Creator and Redeemer, but also lives out in the church the truth of our creation and redemption in Christ. In our present cultural context, it is not enough for the church simply to state the truth (which we must certainly do!), but we must also live out the truth as individuals, families, and churches. We must demonstrate before a watching world a Christian way of thinking and living, and we must do so in every aspect of our lives. It is not enough to talk about who we are and how we ought to live, we must actually *do* it in a way that adorns the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is Lord over everything, and part of the privilege we have as Christians is to live for him: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). In Christ, we are to "put on the new self, which is

being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Col 3:10).

A crucial area in which we can demonstrate a practical difference between a Christian and our society’s view of humans is in the areas of vocation and work. It should not surprise us that how we view our vocation and the dignity of work is directly tied to our theology, especially what we think of God and ourselves as his image-bearers. From a biblical view, work is tied to the purpose of our creation and it is intrinsic to who we are as creatures and image-bearers created to rule over the world as God’s vice-regents. No doubt, our work has been affected by sin (Gen 3; Rom 8:18-25), but in Christ, God the Son has assumed our human nature to reverse the effects of sin and death for us by his cross and resurrection, and to restore us to what God created us to be in the first place. As we await the consummation of Christ’s glorious new covenant work, believers are to be about the task of growing in grace, knowing and enjoying God and one another, and living out what God created us to be as his redeemed creatures and image-bearers.

At the beginning of 2018, we devoted an issue of *SBJT* to the subject of vocation and work. We did so because given our present context, it is imperative that the church recapture the truth of what it means to be created and redeemed humans before a world that has little basis for the dignity and value of humans, vocation, and work. In this issue of *SBJT*, we are concluding the year with a similar focus because it is our conviction that the church needs to think faithfully about such matters. An important part of our witness to the world is demonstrating what it means for the church to be the church, and correspondingly, what it means for us to be truly human.

The articles in this issue were papers first delivered at the Southeast Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society held on the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in March, 2017. Each article focuses on a different aspect of vocation, work, and thus what it means to be human in the world. Gregory Lamb focuses on the neglected theme of human flourishing in Philippians as he wrestles with what Paul means to live and die in Christ. Daniel Diffey and Nathanael Brooks focus on the theme of work, industry, diligence, and justice in the book of Proverbs. The wisdom literature is a biblically rich resource about how to think rightly about work in the context of God’s covenant relationship

with his people, and by application to believers today living under the new covenant. Richard McDonald takes us back to the work of Matthew Henry who wrote much about a biblical view of vocation and work and as such, we are able to stand on his shoulders and learn important lessons about these matters from Henry's teaching of Scripture. Jacob Prahlow and Chris Smith conclude our articles by focusing on wisdom from the past, rooted in Scripture, about male-female roles in the church and society, and the issue of celibacy. Often celibacy is ignored in contemporary discussion, but as Smith demonstrates, focusing on celibacy helps orient us to the eternal state, and thus help us think about the purpose or *telos* of our creation as image-bearers.

Once again, our purpose in focusing on a Christian view of being human, vocation, work, and other matters, is to call the church to live out what our triune God has created and redeemed us to be in Christ. As our society embarks on a path that is and will lead to destruction, the church is called to exhort people to turn from such a path by teaching them what it means to be human, and by demonstrating it for them in our daily lives. It is my prayer that this issue of *SBJT* will in some small way enable the church to be faithful to our glorious triune Creator and Redeemer, for his glory and for the good of the church.

Living is Christ and Dying is Gain: Paul's Reimagining of Human Flourishing in Philippians

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INTRODUCTION

Given modernity's explosion of diversity and specialization of knowledge, few ideas or concepts can be thought of as truly universal or unifying. However, the idea of living and dying well, also known as "human flourishing"¹ (expressed in antiquity as *εὐδαιμονία* in the Greek,² *Maat* in Egyptian,³ and *ars vivendi/ars moriendi* in Latin⁴), has been a thematic thread that has woven its way throughout the warp and weft of the tapestry of human history. Bedrock to human existence are questions such as: "What does it mean to live and die well?"; and "What of human suffering and death?" Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, perhaps more than any other New Testament (NT) writing, succinctly addresses these questions and more.

While the term *εὐδαιμονία* is not found in Scripture, Jonathan Pennington contends that three additional terms in the NT can also convey the sense

of “human flourishing”:⁵ εἰρήνη (often glossed as “peace”),⁶ μακάριος (“blessed”/“happy”),⁷ and τέλειος (“complete”/“perfect”).⁸ Philippians is important for discussions of human flourishing because it, in its four brief chapters,⁹ contains four references to two of these three terms: εἰρήνη (1:2; 4:7, 9) and τέλειος (3:15) as evidenced in the table below:

Table 1: Occurrences of Εἰρήνη, Μακάριος, and Τέλειος in the Pauline Epistles (PE)¹⁰

<u>εἰρήνη</u>	<u>μακάριος</u>	<u>τέλειος</u>
Rom – 10x (in 16 chapters)	Rom – 3x (in 16 chapters)	Rom – 1x (in 16 chapters)
1 Cor – 4x (in 15 chapters)	1 Cor – 1x (in 15 chapters)	1 Cor – 3x (in 15 chapters)
2 Cor – 2x (in 13 chapters)	--	--
Gal – 3x (in 6 chapters)	--	--
Eph – 8x (in 6 chapters)	--	Eph – 1x (in 6 chapters)
Phil – 3x (in 4 chapters)	--	Phil – 1x (in 4 chapters)
Col – 2x (in 4 chapters)	--	Col – 2x (in 4 chapters)
1 Thess – 3x (in 5 chapters)	--	--
2 Thess – 3x (in 3 chapters)	--	--
1 Tim – 1x (in 6 chapters)	1 Tim – 2x (in 6 chapters)	--
2 Tim – 2x (in 4 chapters)	--	--
Titus – 1x (in 2 chapters)	Titus – 1x (in 2 chapters)	--
Philemon – 1x (in 1 chapter)	--	--
43 total occurrences in PE (92 total occurrences in NT)	7 occurrences in PE (50 total occurrences in NT)	8 total occurrences in PE (19 total occurrences in NT)

Moreover, in Philippians 1:21, it appears that Paul may¹¹ invoke concepts that were likely well-known to Gentile readers: the Aristotelian concept of “living well” (τὸ εὖ ζῆν),¹² which many scholars take to be synonymous with εὐδαιμονία,¹³ and Plato’s notion of death as a “wonderful gain” (θαυμάσιον κέρδος) to this life.¹⁴ Thus, while Pennington’s essay is a helpful start, Paul may be “echoing”¹⁵ additional terminology in Philippians relevant to human flourishing.

Tragically, it appears that some evangelical discussions of human flourishing have neglected or misread Paul, or at least certain of his letters. There are three chief areas in which this appears to be the case. First, despite Philippians’ seeming importance in obtaining a more fully-orbed understanding of human flourishing, Philippians has received relatively short shrift in this discussion. For example, John Frame only briefly references Philippians 1:21 on a scant three pages within his massive volume on the doctrine of Christian living, and thus, fails to exegete and wed the seminal passage of Philippians 1:21–26 to a theology of Christian living and dying.¹⁶ This omission is further elucidated in the seeming omission of Philippians in more recent discussions on the doctrine of Christian living in works such as

Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica's *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life*,¹⁷ which offers chapters on Galatians and Ephesians, but omits Philippians.¹⁸ This essay seeks to address this problematic lacuna in scholarship.

Second, many contemporary scholars separate living and dying in their discussions of human flourishing, whereas Paul does not. Paul's synergistic conception of human flourishing is perhaps most readily seen in Philippians 1:21, which weds both aspects—living and dying—together in beautiful harmony.¹⁹ Such a superfluous separation is evinced in the aforementioned works by Frame (*The Doctrine of the Christian Life*), McKnight and Modica (*The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life*), as well as the monographs by Bradley Arnold (*Christ as the Telos of Life*),²⁰ and Alexander Kirk (*The Departure of an Apostle*),²¹ whose titles intentionally delimit the scope of their studies to either Paul's conception of living (Frame, McKnight and Modica, and Arnold) or dying (Kirk).

Such a separation of living and dying well stands in contradistinction to the imprisoned apostle described in Philippians whose post-Christophany, cruciform lifestyle was marked by pain, suffering, and seeing the process of dying—including the moment of physical death—as the very fulfillment/profit (κέρδος) of the Christ-centered life (2 Cor 11:23–28; Phil 1:21; 4:12).²² In Philippians 1:21, Paul elucidates that the diachronic processes of living and dying are inextricably linked and not separate, “either-or” processes. Rollin Ramsaran offers a helpful corrective when he baldly states, “Living is dying. This is to say that Paul's maxim [i.e., Phil 1:21] and exemplary argumentation forces one to consider the power of God as cruciform in shape.”²³ Michael Gorman echoes Ramsaran's view when Gorman defines the cruciform life, “[C]ruciformity is Paul's all-encompassing spirituality. It is the *modus operandi* of life in Christ.”²⁴ John Behr sees true humanity—true living—as coming through the process of dying. In his own words, “Christian life in this world is a continual practice of death, or rather, of life in death, taking up the Cross daily and laying down their life for others, considering themselves dead to this world, but alive in Christ Jesus.”²⁵

Such a superfluous bifurcation of living and dying also contradicts the evidence in ancient extra-canonical literature. For example, in *Apol.* 40C–41D, Plato also uses the Greek term κέρδος to convey that dying/death can be seen as a “gain” to this life when he writes,

For dying is either one of two things: either it is the state of senselessness, so that no one having died has any perception of anything, or (it is) as people are saying, a change and migration for the soul—hence, from this place to another place. And if (it is) but an exact state of senselessness, such as slumber whenever one is laying down to sleep and neither (having a) dream, nor seeing, then death would be a wonderful *gain* (emphasis added).

The concept of “dying as gain” also appears in Sophocles’s *Ant.* 461–64.²⁶ Many scholars note the seeming “echoes” between Philippians 1:21 and these ancient pagan works,²⁷ and such a separation of living and dying well often obscures these important connections.²⁸

Third and last, missing in every treatment of human flourishing and Paul is a thorough examination of the literary milieu surrounding Paul. The topic of living and dying well permeated the thoughts of the ancients, surely Paul was aware of it. It follows, therefore, that by comparing and contrasting Paul’s milieu we will get a better understating of the apostle’s concept. This literary lacuna is seen in the recent flood of publications that tend to read Paul against *either* Greco-Roman *or* Second Temple Jewish literature. This essay shall seek to bridge the gap in exploring Paul’s conception of human flourishing against the combined backdrop of Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Second Temple Jewish literature to better account for the complexity within the first-century Mediterranean world.²⁹ For example, within Second Temple Jewish literature, human flourishing was often equated with *Torah* observance.³⁰ In ancient Egypt, conceptions of human flourishing often centered around obtaining an equilibrium of justice and the “moral ideal” in the cosmos (*Maat*).³¹ In the Greco-Roman literature, human flourishing was often associated with pursuing the love of wisdom (*philosophia*), pleasure (*voluptas*), and living a life and dying a death that promoted personal fame (*fama*) and glory (*gloria*).³² Today, many equate the “good life” with personal happiness,³³ or a lifestyle of autonomous wealth and abundance—devoid of pain and suffering.³⁴

Thus, the questions arise: how does Paul present human flourishing throughout Philippians, and how does such a view comport with the pagan and Second Temple Jewish conceptions of human flourishing that Paul may have been familiar with? What are some of the ways contemporary scholars imagine human flourishing, and what are the implications for the church today in light of Paul’s teachings? The thesis of this study is that Philippians

is central to Paul's articulation of human flourishing as a cruciform life, and that while he was surely aware of the topic in the cultures around him, Paul stands in stark contrast to them.

The remainder of this essay consists of four sections. Section one is an investigation of Paul's conception of human flourishing within Philippians—looking at the verses (Phil 1:2; 3:15; 4:7, 9) that include the key lexemes identified in Pennington's study as well as other lexemes/phrases that Paul may have employed to convey the theme of human flourishing. Section two will succinctly trace the theme of human flourishing within select Greco-Roman, Egyptian, and Second Temple Jewish (including the Greek Old Testament [OT]) works that may have been familiar to Paul. Section three is a brief investigation of the conceptions of human flourishing within the contemporary world, including the works of Miroslav Volf and Justin Crisp,³⁵ Jürgen Moltmann,³⁶ and Charles Taylor.³⁷ Sections two and three will begin with a brief introduction, a succinct survey of each of the works, and then a brief synthesis—sketching the findings of each section in comparison/contrast with Paul—will be made. The fourth and final section shall conclude with four key implications for contemporary Western Christians based on the findings of this study.

PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Introduction

For Paul, living (τὸ ζῆν) can be summarized in one word—Christ (Phil 1:21). Yet Paul's conception of human flourishing in Philippians is not merely delimited to Philippians 1:21. An investigation of human flourishing throughout the rest of the epistle shall now ensue.

Investigation of Εἰρήνη and Τέλειος in the Greek Text of Philippians

Εἰρήνη

Εἰρήνη occurs three times in Philippians 1:2; 4:7, 9, and is used by Paul to denote the communal human flourishing (*shalom*) sourced in God the Father and Christ (1:2),³⁸ the “peace that God has and gives” (4:7),³⁹ and to describe the attributes of God himself (4:9). Paul likely intends the social concept of εἰρήνη rooted in the LXX (see e.g., Judg 6:23; Ps 29:11) as peace

and flourishing in a relational sense with both God (see e.g., Rom 5:1) and humanity (see e.g., 1 Cor 7:15).⁴⁰ Given the dissension within the Philippian church, such communal flourishing is disrupted, since some have neglected to honor God by honoring the law of the neighbor (Lev 19:18) in regarding others more important than themselves (Phil 2:3). Hence, true peace/flourishing is described by Paul in Philippians in three key ways: (1) true peace/flourishing is sourced in God the Father and Christ; (2) it is given by God; and (3) it consists in the relational nature of who God is. So what of the adjective τέλειος?

Τέλειος

Τέλειος only occurs once in Philippians (3:15). In its immediate context, Paul invokes τέλειος to show the necessity of the collective group of Philippians to whom Paul is writing to be united in their thinking. This is underscored by Paul's repetition of φρονέω as well as his use of the singular demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο ("have this [singular] mind in you [collective]"). The result of such a singular, Christ-centered mindset can only be achieved, according to Paul, by those Philippians whom he considers "perfect"/"mature." While Paul conveys the sense of eschatological "perfection" in Philippians 3:12 through the perfect passive verb τετελείωμαι, Paul intends the concept of "spiritual maturity" in Philippians 3:15.⁴¹ Thus, Philippians 3:15 explains that those who "attained" such a unified status of maturity in Christ can flourish as long as they continue to live joined together in imitation (συμμιμηταί) of Jesus's/Paul's cruciform life (2:5; 3:16–17).

*Other Lexemes/Phrases Conveying the Theme of Human Flourishing in Philippians*⁴²

In addition to εἰρήνη and τέλειος, it appears that Paul may be using other lexemes and phrases in Philippians to convey the idea of human flourishing. The example of Philippians 1:21 in which Paul seems to echo the Aristotelian and Platonic notions of the good life as τὸ εὖ ζῆν and dying/death as θανάσιον κέρδος has already been noted above.

In Paul's opening remarks in Philippians 1:2, it seems that human flourishing includes a life that is filled with the grace (χάρις) and peace (εἰρήνη) that are sourced in God the Father and Christ. In Philippians, the nominal term χάρις appears three times (1:2, 7; 4:23), and the verbal cognate χαρίζομαι

occurs twice (1:29; 2:9).⁴³ In Philippians 1:7, Paul explains that human flourishing involves the communal sharing (συγκοινωνούς) of χάρις through the bearing of one another's burdens (Gal 6:2; Phil 2:3) and willingness to suffer for the cause of Christ. Paul's reference to χάρις in the last verse of Philippians 4:23 serves as a fitting bookend in harking back to Philippians 1:2. Moreover, Paul is exhorting the Philippians to have flourishing lives and relationships with one another despite the presence or impending likelihood of suffering and persecution. Such a fearless, selfless attitude is possible because of the example of self-emptying love Christ himself displayed to them on the cross (2:5–11).⁴⁴ Paul's use of the verbal form χαρίζομαι in Philippians 1:29; 2:9 repeats this theme of suffering in terms of a "graciously granted" reward in light of the Philippians' (1:29) and Christ's (2:9) willingness to suffer for the purposes of God. The agency of such a reward is not sourced within the Philippians themselves, as the aorist passive ἐχαρίσθη illustrates. Rather, the agent of the gracious reward of suffering in Philippians 1:29 is God (divine passive) "for the sake of Christ."⁴⁵

In Philippians 1:15 and 2:13, Paul also seems to convey human flourishing in terms of aligning one's own desires to the good will/pleasure of God (εὐδοκία). For Paul, a flourishing life is one that exalts Christ (μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστός) whether through life or death (εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου; Phil 1:20; cf. Luke 1:46; Acts 10:46; 19:17). This is further confirmed in Paul's contrast of the articular infinitival phrases τὸ ζῆν Χριστός and τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί (1:21–22), in which Paul describes dying and being "with Christ" as "exceedingly better."⁴⁶ However, Paul is not saying that he wishes to die to escape the suffering and pain of living in bonds as a prisoner. Rather, Paul desires to be "with Christ," but also sees the need to remain steadfast so that he can help restore unity within the Philippian congregation (1:24). Philippians 2:13 clarifies that God is the enabling source of humanity's "willing" and "working" for his good pleasure (τῆς εὐδοκίας).

Paul's repeated references to χαρά/χαίρω also seem to connote the idea of human flourishing in Philippians. The concept of "joy"/"rejoicing" is a pervasive theme weaving its way throughout the tapestry of Philippians.⁴⁷ In the fourteen occurrences of χαρά/χαίρω in Philippians,⁴⁸ at least three common denominators seem to emerge: (1) that such joy is not individualistic, but flows out of living together in community (see κοινωνία and πολιτεύομαι in 1:5, 27; 2:1; 3:10); (2) that Paul's rejoicing was centered in Christ (1:18;

3:1; 4:4, 10); and lastly, (3) that Paul's rejoicing often involved suffering, even unto death (2:17–18). Thus, Paul depicts human flourishing in terms of joy/rejoicing as a community of believers in Christ who are willing to suffer (even to the point of martyrdom) for the gospel of Christ.

The final lexeme to be studied in this section is *κοινωνία* (cf. *συγκοινωνός* and *συγκοινωνέω*). *Κοινωνία* occurs three times in Philippians (1:5; 2:1; 3:10), and is found in all four letters of the Hauptbriefe—indicating its importance to Paul for the churches he planted. For Paul, human flourishing is living in communal partnerships centered in the gospel of Christ (1:5). Such partnerships extend horizontally (to others) as well as vertically (to God) as the Holy Spirit partners with believers who are “in Christ” to effect God's purposes on earth (2:5). Philippians 3:10 reveals the common thread of suffering, as human flourishing involves not only knowing Christ and “the power of his resurrection,” but also involves a participatory fellowship (*κοινωνία*) in Christ's sufferings. In other words, Paul presents human flourishing in Philippians in a thoroughly cruciform shape. The churches Paul planted were “colonies of ‘cruciformity,’” and Philippians beckons contemporary churches to become the same.⁴⁹

Synthesis

While Philippians 1:21 is perhaps Paul's most succinct and theologically-rich portrayal of human flourishing in all the PE, Paul also employs in Philippians two of the three terms highlighted in Pennington's study: *εἰρήνη* and *τέλειος*. Despite the variegated usage of *εἰρήνη* and *τέλειος* in Philippians and throughout the PE, there are at least two commonalities: the necessity of unity in communal flourishing as well as the fact that God alone is the source of all peace/perfection.

There are additional terms in Philippians that seemingly connote the idea of human flourishing such as: *εὐδοκία*; *χάρις/χαρίζομαι*; *χαρά/χαίρω*; and *κοινωνία*. Paul's usage of these terms repeats many of the same concepts embedded within Philippians 1:21: (1) the inseparable nature of human living, suffering, and dying; (2) that Christians should not fear death, but rather see it in terms as the gain or fulfillment to human life; (3) that all human flourishing is sourced in and centered on God the Father and Christ; and (4) that human flourishing is commensurate with cruciformity—living and dying well involves denying self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus (Mark

8:34). This essay will now turn to investigate other Greco-Roman writings that may illuminate Paul's understanding of human flourishing in Philippians.

CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN GRECO-ROMAN LITERATURE

Introduction

This second section will explore the theme of human flourishing across various ancient literary works. Two important Greco-Roman literary works will be surveyed including: a fourth-century BC Greek text from Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*) and a first-century BC Latin epistle from Cicero (*De finibus*⁵⁰). These writers and their respective works were highly popular and represent pervasive pagan views on human flourishing that Paul may have encountered while in Philippi.

*Conceptions of Human Flourishing within Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*⁵¹

Aristotle (384–322 BC), the famous philosopher and ethicist, was a pupil of Plato, instructed Alexander the Great, son of Philip II, and established the Lyceum in Athens, a school of philosophy later left to his successor Theophrastus.⁵² In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle is arguing that the highest goal for humanity is to be “happy” (εὐδαιμονίαν; *Eth. nic.* 1.4.2) and asks whether or not there is a common goal or object of happiness that is the same for all.

While Aristotle sees εὐδαιμονία as the highest good one can achieve in life, Aristotle declares that εὐδαιμονία is synonymous with two other terms/phrases (τὸ ... εὖ ζῆν, and τὸ εὖ πράττειν) when he writes,

[B]oth the multitude and persons of refinement speak of it [i.e., the “highest good”] as “Happiness,” [εὐδαιμονίαν] and conceive “living well” [τὸ δ' εὖ ζῆν] or “practicing well” [τὸ εὖ πράττειν] to be the same thing as “being happy” [τῷ εὐδαιμονεῖν]. But what constitutes happiness is a matter of dispute; and the popular account of it is not the same as that given by the philosophers. Ordinary people identify it with some obvious and visible good, such as pleasure or wealth or honor—some say one thing and some another, indeed very often the same man says different things at different times: when he falls sick he thinks health is happiness, when he is poor, wealth (*Eth. nic.* 1.4.2–3).

So while, Aristotle sees the concepts of εὐδαιμονίαν, τὸ ... εὖ ζῆν, and

τὸ εὖ πράττειν as synonymous, he claims that there is some subjectivity in considering what human flourishing means. Moreover, Aristotle claims that conceptions of human flourishing can change over time and circumstance depending on the experience of the individual: in sickness, flourishing means health; in poverty, flourishing means wealth; and in hunger, flourishing means an abundant feast.

Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within Cicero's De Finibus⁵³

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) was a soldier, jurist, politician, and orator, as well as a prolific epistolographer with many of his best known works happily preserved.⁵⁴ Cicero is important for NT studies primarily due to the fact that Cicero is widely considered to be the “most important letter writer of antiquity.”⁵⁵ Some scholars, such as P. L. Schmidt and Hans-Josef Klauck, argue that Cicero was “the ‘first to make letter writing a potential literary genre even if unwittingly and unwillingly.’”⁵⁶ In *De finibus*, Cicero sets forth a treatise on his theory of ethics, and critiques the three most important and pervasive ethical systems of Cicero’s day: Epicureanism, Stoicism, and the Academy.

In *Fin.* 4.16, Cicero presents human flourishing as a form of “self-preservation” when he writes,

Every natural creature aims at being its own “self-preserver,” so as to secure its safety and also its preservation true to its specific type. With this object, they declare, humanity has called in the aid of the arts also to assist nature; and primary among them is counted the art of living [*vivendi ars*], which helps humanity to guard the gifts that nature has bestowed and to obtain those that are lacking.

Cicero continues this anthropocentric understanding of human flourishing and concludes, “[S]o, the art of living [*vivendi ars*] is Prudence [*prudentia*]” (*Fin.* 5.16–17). In this sense, human flourishing is thoroughly naturalistic and anthropocentric as humanity, according to Cicero, holds its future and preservation in its own hands. Moreover, in Cicero’s schema, human flourishing is reduced to the mere attainment of *prudentia* (i.e., “practical wisdom”⁵⁷).

Synthesis

In this brief survey of Aristotle and Cicero, human flourishing has been presented in variegated ways. Human flourishing is subjective and based upon attainment of “happiness” in Aristotle’s purview. For Cicero, human flourishing is the anthropocentric desire of self-preservation and attainment of practical wisdom. Despite their own unique perspectives, there are at least two commonalities within these two writers’ conceptions of human flourishing: (1) that human flourishing is anthropocentric; and (2) that human flourishing deals with the attainment of wisdom or practical knowledge.

Aristotle’s flexible understanding of human flourishing stands in stark contrast to Paul’s bold and unshifting declaration “living/flourishing (is) Christ” (τὸ ζῆν) in Philippians 1:21. Moreover, Cicero’s understanding of human flourishing contrasts Paul who sees God as the creator, giver, and sustainer of all life (Acts 17:24–29). Rather than seeing the attainment of wisdom as the primary means of human flourishing, Paul decries any benefit to worldly philosophy and self-centric attainments in life in comparison to knowing Christ (1 Cor 2:2; Phil 3:8). This essay will now turn to an investigation of the ancient Egyptian literature.

CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN EGYPTIAN LITERATURE

Introduction

This section will investigate the concept of human flourishing (known in Egyptian as “Maat”) in two key Egyptian works. The first will be *The Book of the Dead* or *Coming Forth by Day* as it is also known (dating perhaps to the first dynasty 4266 BC).⁵⁸ The second body of Egyptian literature to be investigated is the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (*Greek Magical Papyri*; hereinafter abbreviated *PGM*), a body of papyri originating between the second century BC to fifth century AD from within Greco-Roman Egypt.⁵⁹

Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within the Egyptian The Book of the Dead

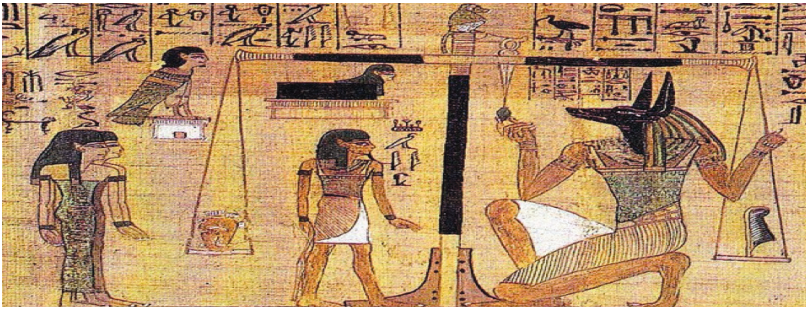
The Book of the Dead is the name given by Egyptologists to a collection of mortuary spells that depict the Egyptian concern for the preservation of their bodies for the afterlife. It is a type of “instruction manual” for the dead. Archaeology has shown that such instruction manuals were read by

“priests of the *ka*”⁶⁰ in order to give sacrifices and pay homage to the dead.⁶¹

One such text within *The Book of the Dead* (*The Book of the Dead of Nesikhonsu, a Priestess of Amen*) begins, “This holy god, the lord of all the gods, Amen-Ra, the lord of the throne of the two lands, the governor of Apt; the holy soul who came into being in the beginning; the great god who liveth by (or upon) Maat.”⁶² So, according to the Egyptian cult, Maat was the *modus operandi* of Ra and other deities within the Egyptian pantheon. Such deities “lived” by the ethical standard set forth in the concept of Maat. In a section of the *Book of Breathings*, the writer further elucidates the Maatian concept of human flourishing:

Hail, ye gods who are in the Tuat, hearken ye unto the voice of Osiris Kerasher ... and let him come before you, for there is neither any evil ... nor any sin ... with him, and no accuser can stand [before him]. He liveth upon Maat, he feedeth upon Maat, and he hath satisfied the heart of the gods by all that he hath done. He hath given food to the hungry, and water to the thirsty, and clothes to the naked. He hath made offerings to the gods, and to the Khus, and no report whatsoever hath been made against him before the gods.⁶³

In this text, Maat is a mode of sustenance—something to be lived and fed upon. Maat is brought about in selfless acts of generosity: giving food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked (cf. Matt 25:35–46; Gal 6:2; Phil 2:3). Maat also results in obeisance to the gods. In a final passage within *The Book of the Dead*, the writer exhorts the deceased to chant, “I live in right and truth [Maat] and I have my being therein.”⁶⁴ So not only is Maat the ethical standard of the gods, but is also the standard by which all souls trying to surmount the obstacles within the afterlife will be judged as the illustration below highlights.⁶⁵



Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within the Papyri Graecae Magicae⁶⁶

The extant PGM represent a much larger body of ancient magical spells that were suppressed or destroyed. Acts 19:19 documents such a destruction of pagan magical literature. Suetonius also notes the destruction of such books by Augustus (Aug. 1.1).⁶⁷ What is illustrated in the PGM is a process of syncretistic Hellenization that included, “[T]he egyptianizing of Greek religious tradition. The Greek magical papyri contain many instances of such egyptianizing transformations, which take very different forms in different texts or layers of tradition.”⁶⁸

In PGM IV.2170–77, human flourishing is depicted as the individualistic acquisition of power, invulnerability, esteem, and honor,

All will fear you; in battle you will be invulnerable; when you ask you will receive; you will enjoy favor; your life will change; and you will be loved by any woman or man you have contact with. You will have honor, happiness [μακάριος]; you will receive inheritances, have good fortune [εὐτυχίσεις], be unaffected by potions and poison; you will conquer spells and will conquer (your) enemies.

Despite the fact that this is technically not an anthropocentric conception of human flourishing, as the rewards are given from the gods, it is clearly self-centric and unlike the communal flourishing depicted in Maat. The PGM depict a hybrid, syncretistic understanding of flourishing in which the self-centric, Greco-Roman ideals of gloria, fama, and potestas (power) are blended together with the ancient Egyptian cult of Maat to form an “updated,” “Hellenized” religion.

Synthesis

In *The Book of the Dead*, human flourishing was clearly grounded in the ethical, theocentric concept of Maat. Maat was “a great gift of god,”⁶⁹

and was centered on the flourishing and generalized reciprocity by the wealthy necessary for the flourishing of a limited-goods society (*Book of the Breathings*). In contrast to this others-centric conception of human flourishing in Maat is the PGM's self-centric portrayal of human flourishing that aligns with much of what is seen above in the Greco-Roman literature.

While the stress of wisdom is not as prevalent in the PGM as it is in Cicero, the affinities of the PGM clearly betray the syncretistic influence of Hellenization. Such a Hellenistic conception of human flourishing stands in contradistinction to Paul who adopts a selfless understanding of human flourishing. Rather than existing for the attainment of power, titles, and fame, Paul defines living and dying well in terms of cruciformity.

There are a couple of similarities between Paul's conception of human flourishing and that of Maat. First, both Pauline and Maatian conceptions of human flourishing are theocentric (albeit, Paul's source for human flourishing is the God of the Bible, whereas the Maatian concept is focused on the Egyptian pantheon). Second, at times, the ethics of Maat seem to comport with some of the ethical teachings of Scripture (e.g., the care for the neighbor [Lev 19:18] and the poor/needy [Prov 14:21; Matt 25:35–46]). However, there are at least two key differences between the Pauline and Maatian conceptions of human flourishing. First, Paul adopts an others-centric stance, whereas Maat is performed to ultimately benefit one's own self. Second, Paul does not see human flourishing as a works-based method of salvation (see e.g., Eph 2:8–9), but *The Book of the Dead* clearly illustrates human flourishing (Maat) as being proportionate to the amount of good works performed in one's lifetime.

CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN SECOND TEMPLE JEWISH LITERATURE

Introduction

This section will consist in two parts. Part one will investigate select passages from the Greek OT (LXX) that employ the three terms conveying human flourishing (εἰρήνη, μακάριος, and τέλειος) as referenced in Pennington's study above. While an exhaustive analysis of these terms within the OT is beyond the scope of this study, this section will briefly investigate passages from each section of the *Tanakh* (i.e., the *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, and *Ketuvim*) that

contain clusters of these terms. Part two will investigate two key writings (Philo's *De Specialibus Legibus* also known as *On Special Laws* and Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*) from within the vast corpus of non-canonical Greco-Jewish writings. The primary reason for selecting these writings is their treatment of the concept of human flourishing as τὸ εὖ ζῆν and εὐδαιμονία.

Part 1: Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within Select Passages from the LXX⁷⁰

Select Passages from the Torah

In the *Torah* or written law, the term εἰρήνη is employed in Leviticus 26:6 and Numbers 6:26 to indicate that all human flourishing is theocentric in that it is sourced in YHWH. The *Torah* presents Israel as μακάριος in Deuteronomy 33:29 due to its salvation by YHWH. The term τέλειος occurs less frequently than εἰρήνη and μακάριος in the OT, but appears in Genesis 6:9 and Deuteronomy 18:13 in the context of Noah's (Gen 6:9) and the Israelites' (Deut 18:13) "blameless" status before God and others. This view of human flourishing echoes the Egyptian concept of Maat. Interestingly, the immediate context of Deuteronomy 18:13 discusses warnings against oracles (μαντεῖαν), magic (φαρμακός), spell conjuring (ἐπαεῖδων), and consulting the dead (τερατοσκόπος ἐπερωτῶν τοὺς νεκρούς), which are well-attested practices within the Egyptian literature (especially the PGM).⁷¹

Select Passages from the Nevi'im

The books of the *Nevi'im* (Prophets) present human flourishing as εἰρήνη in sundry passages. Judges presents εἰρήνη as the flourishing that exists horizontally between humanity (Judg 4:17), and vertically in God (Judg 6:24). This concept is repeated in 1–2 Kings (1 Kgs 2:13; 2 Kgs 4:26). Samuel explains the horizontal flourishing of εἰρήνη that exists between individuals and people groups (1 Sam 7:14). Isaiah presents εἰρήνη as the reward for obedience to God's commands (Isa 48:18; 57:2), and the instruction of *Torah* to the children of the next generation (Isa 54:13). Jeremiah reveals the communal nature of εἰρήνη as he exhorts the exiles to seek peace for the city of their captivity (Jer 36:7). The term μακάριος is not as common in the *Nevi'im* as it is in the *Ketuvim*, but is found in Isaiah 31:9 to show the character of God in Zion, and in Isaiah 56:2 to show the reward of human flourishing for *Torah*-keeping. Daniel 12:12 invokes μακάριος

as the reward for those persevering in God's promises. The term τέλειος is used in the *Nevi'im* to show the negative (1 Kgs 15:3) and positive (1 Kgs 15:14) effects for those who either choose to reject *Torah* or keep it. Τέλειος also occurs in the negative sense in Jeremiah 13:19 to describe the totality of the exile for Judah.

Select Passages from the Ketuvim

Similar to Judges and 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles depict εἰρήνη as the flourishing that exists horizontally between humanity (1 Chr 12:19), and vertically in God (2 Chr 34:28). The Psalmist describes the flourishing that comes through εἰρήνη as sourced in God (Ps 4:9; 28:11). Psalm 118:165 also presents human flourishing through εἰρήνη as a reward for those who love (i.e., keep) the *Torah*. Proverbs 3:17, 23 explains that the paths of Wisdom are εἰρήνη. Human flourishing as μακάριος is found throughout the Psalms and Proverbs to denote the reward of *Torah*-keeping and taking refuge in YHWH.⁷² There is also the communal aspect of flourishing through caring for the poor (Ps 40:2), as well as the rearing of sons (Ps 126:5), and vocation (Ps 127:2). Like 1 Kings 15:3, 14, the term τέλειος is used in the *Ketuvim* to show the negative (Ps 138:2) and positive (1 Chr 28:9) effects for those who either choose to reject *Torah* or keep it.

Part 2: Conceptions of Human Flourishing Within the Non-Canonical Greco-Jewish Writings

*Conceptions of Human Flourishing within Philo's De Specialibus Legibus*⁷³

In the Greco-Jewish writings of Philo (*Spec. Laws* 1.339), the Alexandrian Jewish historian (ca. 20 BC–50 AD),⁷⁴ one sees the Aristotelian/Platonic concept of τὸ εὖ ζῆν employed in the consideration of the physical senses (sight and hearing) which foster the attainment of philosophy (φιλοσόφων), and, thus, the “good life” (τὸ εὖ ζῆν). Interestingly, in *Spec. Laws* 1.337, Philo makes a technical distinction between the physical senses (smell and taste) necessary for living (τοῦ ζῆν) and those senses (sight and hearing) required for living well (τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν). Those senses (sight and hearing) which enable the attainment of philosophy are of higher value to Philo for human flourishing.

*Conceptions of Human Flourishing within Josephus's Jewish Antiquities*⁷⁵

The importance of Josephus, the Jewish historian (37 AD ca.-100 AD),⁷⁶

for biblical studies can hardly be overestimated. His numerous extant works help illuminate many concepts and figures within the NT, the Greco-Jewish, and Greco-Roman world. Josephus has also been shrouded in controversy as many doubt the trustworthiness of his writings.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Josephus stands as an important figure in understanding first-century Jewish conceptions of human flourishing. In *Ant.* I.223, Josephus casts human flourishing in terms of εὐδαιμονία in describing Abraham's happiness as being due to his zeal in following God and the prospect of leaving his son, Isaac, unharmed when he died. Moreover, Abraham's human flourishing was sourced in God (*Ant.* I:224; cf. *Ant.* I.155). Yet in *Ant.* XVI.36, Josephus adopts an anthropocentric understanding of εὐδαιμονία and attributes human flourishing to King Agrippa. Whether this is evidence of a discrepancy within Josephus's writings, or written out of political convenience is unknown.

Synthesis

Despite the variegated portrayal of human flourishing from within the Greek OT, human flourishing can be summarized by three main motifs. First, all human flourishing is ultimately sourced in God (see e.g., Lev 26:6). Second, human flourishing is often equated with *Torah*-keeping (see e.g., Isa 56:2). Third and last, human flourishing is both communal (others-centric) and generative in that the future generations (sons) are important for the continued flourishing of the religious community (see e.g., Ps 40:2; 125:4–5).

In part two, the extra-canonical works, human flourishing was portrayed by Philo in terms of τὸ εὖ ζῆν and the Hellenistic attainment of wisdom. Josephus sent mixed signals throughout *Jewish Antiquities*—taking a theocentric view of human flourishing as εὐδαιμονία in some sections, and an anthropocentric approach in others.

How does Paul compare? While Paul agrees with Greek OT passages above that human flourishing is sourced in God (theocentric) and communal in nature, Paul is reticent to equate *Torah*-keeping with human flourishing. It is important to note that Paul does not abrogate the *Torah* in his writings, and, in 2 Timothy 3:16,⁷⁸ Paul sees all the OT Scriptures (πᾶσα γραφή)—including the *Torah*—as “inspired by God” or “God-breathed” (θεόπνευστος). However, for Paul, human flourishing is not gained through

Torah-keeping, as sinful humanity cannot perfectly keep the law (Rom 3:19–23). Rather, for Paul, the *Torah* serves as a type of “pedagogue” (παιδαγωγός) to teach sinful humanity their need for Christ (Gal 3:24). Philo’s Hellenistic understanding of human flourishing as the attainment of wisdom and Josephus’s passages that posit an anthropocentric view of human flourishing (true flourishing comes from the worldly leaders) is antithetical to Paul’s Christocentric, cruciform view. Now that the survey of ancient works is complete, this essay will investigate contemporary views on human flourishing.

CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Introduction

This third section will briefly survey the recent works of some of the leading contemporary writers on human flourishing including: Miroslav Volf, Justin Crisp, Jürgen Moltmann, and Charles Taylor. While some focus on the value of joy (so Crisp), others on the need for religion (so Volf), and still others on the problem of a diminished, humanistic conception of living (so Moltmann), one fact remains clear—there is no shortage of opinions on the important topic of human flourishing. While a full-length review of each work is beyond the scope of this essay, this section will identify and engage the central tenet(s) of each work.

Joy and Human Flourishing (2015)

This anthology of writers, ranging from Volf and Crisp to Moltmann and N. T. Wright, argues as one of its central theses that, “[J]oy stands at the very core of Christian faith, life, and practice, and that the dearth of sustained scholarly reflection on joy has left theologians bereft of a key resource for articulating a compelling vision of the good life capable both of pushing against the tide of suffering and of resisting the shifting tides of a culture unmoored from transcendence.”⁷⁹ While Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians does highlight the centrality of joy in the Christian life (see above), such joy does not necessarily “push against the tide of suffering” as Volf and Crisp suggest. Rather, such suffering for the cause of Christ allows Paul to rejoice in exuberant fashion (Phil 3:10; 4:4–12).

The Living God and the Fullness of Life (2015)

Moltmann states that his goal in writing is to, “[P]resent a transcendence that does not suppress and alienate our present life but that liberates and gives life a transcendence from which we do not need to turn away, but that fills us with the joy of life.”⁸⁰ Moltmann’s thesis can be perhaps summarized as, “The modern world takes its bearings from humanistic and naturalistic concepts of life, and in so doing, what it experiences is a diminished life. Christian life takes its bearing from the ‘living God,’ and in doing so, it experiences the fullness of life.”⁸¹ Moltmann’s tightly-knit, and carefully-worded thesis finds many resonances with Paul in Philippians: a rejection of humanistic/naturalistic modes of living; the centrality of the resurrected Christ; and the fullness of joy that comes as a result of being in Christ.

A Secular Age (2007)

In *A Secular Age*, Taylor argues that there are three dimensions in which religion should be seen as going “beyond” (i.e., transcending). The most important of these three, argues Taylor, is “[T]he sense that there is some good higher than, beyond human flourishing.”⁸² For Taylor, such a good is the transformative Christian concept of, “[A]gape, the love God has for us, and which we can partake of through his power.”⁸³ Taylor rightly sees the problem of separating living from dying in human flourishing when he writes, “Modern humanism tends to develop a notion of human flourishing which has no place for death. Death is simply the negation, the ultimate negation, of flourishing; it must be combated, and held off till the very last moment.”⁸⁴

There is much to commend in Taylor’s conception of human flourishing: that basic, self-centric notions of human flourishing are insufficient; the importance of agape in all aspects of living and dying; and that living and dying are inextricably linked when it comes to human flourishing. However, Taylor perhaps overstates his case regarding the need to go beyond human flourishing. The Westminster Shorter Catechism declares that the chief end of man is not self-centric “human flourishing” as the pagans have claimed, but “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” Biblically, human flourishing is the story of God enacting his redemptive purposes on earth. When one sees human flourishing through the lens of the grand narrative of Scripture, there is no need to go “beyond” human flourishing. Rather, one should reimagine erroneous understandings of human flourishing to comport with the teachings of Scripture.

Synthesis

In this short survey of contemporary conceptions of human flourishing, it is perhaps Taylor and Moltmann who give the most illuminating window into Western culture. Volf and Crisp rightly focus on joy, but lamentably remove human flourishing from suffering and dying in a way that is alien to Paul's conception in Philippians. Each of these works have their merits (such as N. T. Wright's helpful discussion of Philippians in *Joy and Human Flourishing*⁸⁵), but none adequately capture Paul's portrayal of human flourishing within Philippians.

Concluding Remarks

Human flourishing is one of the few meta-themes that has pervasively transcended time and culture, and, as Taylor has rightly said, "Every person, and every society, lives with or by some conception(s) of what human flourishing is: what constitutes a fulfilled life? what makes life really worth living? What would we most admire people for?"⁸⁶

Given the findings above, a few implications for the contemporary church are in order. Further exploration is critically needed in these areas for Christians to be faithfully engaged in the *missio Dei*. First, human flourishing, as presented by Paul, is not subjective. Paul grounds his conception of human flourishing in the cruciform example of Christ. Every human life, as a bearer of God's image, matters to God (Gen 1:26–27), not just the elite or wise.

Second, human flourishing is not anthropocentric; it is theocentric. Despite humanity's attempts to become what Adam Smith has famously called "masters of mankind,"⁸⁷ Paul clearly squares human flourishing as God's good gift in Christ, and not something humanity creates.

Third, Paul couches his discussion of human flourishing in terms of cruciform living and dying.⁸⁸ Human flourishing does not always involve "happiness" or "good fortune." For Paul, cruciform living often involved suffering for the gospel. Contra many conceptions of human flourishing within ecclesial circles as "health and wealth,"⁸⁹ Paul presents a Christocentric conception of flourishing that rejoices in all circumstances—both positive and negative (Phil 4:4–12). Western Christians must think deeply and biblically through what it means to both live *and* die well in a culture that eschews any form of suffering and death.⁹⁰ Pastors should help

their congregations recover a robust theology of Christian suffering and dying from Scripture.

Fourth and last, Paul's understanding of human flourishing is steeped in communal living where the other is regarded more highly than self (Phil 1:24, 27; 2:3). Churches should strive to build every-member ministries that provide avenues of opportunities to all congregants (and other Christ-centered congregations) to become actively engaged in God's mission in their homes, communities, and around the globe. Christians should live with open hands and open hearts in portraying the radical, cruciform generosity exemplified by Christ and Paul.⁹¹

Humanity's conception of human flourishing is shaped both individually (through one's own unique life experiences) and corporately (through the various social and religious communities to which one subscribes). For the contemporary church to be a winsome witness to its surrounding cultures, Christians must, like Paul, deconstruct and confront views on human flourishing that contradict the teachings of Scripture.

¹ The theme of "human flourishing" has become a pervasively popular topic in theological/biblical studies over the past decade. This is due at least in part to the Yale University Center for Faith and Culture's God and Human Flourishing Program as well as in evangelical circles through the Institute for Faith, Work, and Economics (TIFWE).

² While the Greek term εὐδαιμονία has often been translated as "happiness," numerous scholars suggest "human flourishing" is a more accurate translation as it better captures the holistic, "true, full happiness" of the whole being. For the purposes of this essay, the phrases "human flourishing," "the good life," and "living/dying well" will be used interchangeably to connote a more holistic understanding of the concept of εὐδαιμονία. Contrastingly, "happiness" is often understood in popular culture as merely a temporary state of euphoria. See *ibid.*; Daniel N. Robinson, *Aristotle's Psychology* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 99–101; John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 103; and cf. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, "εὐδαιμονία," in *A Greek-English Lexicon* (ed. Henry Stuart Jones, 9th rev. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 708 (hereinafter abbreviated LSJ).

³ Maat was seen as both a feminine deity as well as a philosophical way of life. See R. A. Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt* (Cairo and New York, NY: The American University in Cairo Press, 2016), 133.

⁴ The phrases *ars vivendi/ars moriendi* can be translated, "the art of living/dying."

⁵ Jonathan T. Pennington, "A Biblical Theology of Human Flourishing," n.p. Institute for Faith, Work & Economics. <http://tifwe.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Pennington-A-Biblical-Theology-of-Human-Flourishing.pdf>.

⁶ W. Bauer et al, "ἐλπίς," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 287–88 (hereinafter abbreviated BDAG).

⁷ *Ibid.*, "μακάριος," 610–11.

⁸ Ibid., “τέλειος,” 995–96.

⁹ Statistically speaking, Romans and 1 Corinthians are the only epistles containing all of Pennington’s three terms. However, they are also the two largest of Paul’s letters—consisting of a total of thirty-one chapters. These three terms occur a total of fifty-eight times in the Pauline Epistles (hereinafter abbreviated PE) or 36.0 percent of the total occurrences in the NT. In terms of the *Hauptbriefe* in the PE, Romans accounts for 24.1 percent of these fifty-eight occurrences. Both letters taken together within the Corinthian correspondence only account for 17.2 percent. Galatians contains only three instances of the term εἰρήνη for a total of 5.2 percent. Among the remaining undisputed Pauline letters (Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon), only Philippians has two of Pennington’s three terms for human flourishing (εἰρήνη and τέλειος) and accounts for 6.9 percent in only four chapters.

¹⁰ Lexical data was derived from Andreas Köstenberger and Raymond Bouchoc, *The Book Study Concordance of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003).

¹¹ The qualifier “may” is key, as it is impossible to speak dogmatically regarding the influence these texts had in Paul’s conception of living and dying well. See Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament: What We Cannot Show, We Do Not Know* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1994), 16. Sarah Ruden argues for the validity of reading Paul within his cultural milieu, “As I began to read Paul in connection to Greco-Roman writing, I seemed to be actually reading him: understanding his devotion and his constraints, and not simply listening to 1 Corinthians 13 with boredom and irritation, and with smug agreement to exhortations of his ‘betrayal of Jesus’ message’... What Greco-Roman works can teach about Paul’s writings is incredibly rich and virtually unexplored so far—and often rather mortifying to a previous knee-jerk anti-Paulist like me.” See Sarah Ruden, *Paul Among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 2010), 4–5.

¹² Author’s translation. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of the primary sources (biblical and extra-biblical) are author’s own. In Phil 1:21, Paul also uses the articular infinitive τὸ ζῆν to convey the essence of living. Cf. Aristotle’s *Eth. nic.* 6.S.1140a25–28.

¹³ See e.g., John M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hackett, 1986), 111.

¹⁴ In his *Apol.* 40C–41D, Plato (like Paul) uses the Greek term κέρδος to explain that death can be seen as a “gain” to this life.

¹⁵ This nomenclature invokes Richard B. Hays’s study, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989). In this work, Hays argues (pp. 2, 5) that Paul did not see himself “as a writer of Scripture.” Rather, for Hays, Paul was “interpreting Scripture” with the pragmatic and missiological purpose of exhorting these “fledgling churches” to “live as good citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27). However, many disagree with Hays’s conclusions. First of all, whether Paul saw himself as writing Scripture or not, the writer of 2 Peter certainly did—equating Paul’s writings with τὰς λοιπὰς γραφάς (2 Pet 3:15–16). Second, Craig Evans takes issue with Hays’s “typological thinking.” See Craig A. Evans, “Listening for Echoes of Interpreted Scripture,” in *Paul and the Scripture* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 47–48. Third, NT scholar James Sanders states his fundamental differences with Hays’s methodology more bluntly when he writes, “There is indeed but one God at work throughout Scripture. As Hays rightly notes, Paul’s reading of Scripture is not typological as that term is normally understood; Paul does not fret about types and antitypes. Rather, Paul’s argument, like Isaiah’s and Luke’s, and indeed much else in the Bible, is from theological history.” See James A. Sanders, “Paul and Theology of History,” in *Paul and the Scripture* (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 53–54, emphasis added. Cf. Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew* (WUNT 2, Reihe 216; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 50–51. While some pushback is warranted against Hays’s methodology, it seems at least plausible that Paul was not only an interpreter of canonical Scripture (see e.g., Gal 4:21–31), but, as a church planting missionary, was also an interpreter of the surrounding first-century cultures as well (see e.g., Acts 17:22–31; 1 Cor 9:19–23). As a result, Paul would have likely been familiar with the influential traditions driving the worldviews of those whom he was trying to reach with the gospel of Christ as his putative quotations of Greco-Roman writers illustrates (see e.g., Paul’s seeming use of the Cretan philosopher Epimenides in Titus 1:12).

¹⁶ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 1065.

¹⁷ Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, eds., *The Apostle Paul and the Christian Life: Ethical and Missional Implications of the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).

¹⁸ Ibid., vii–viii. Given the lexical data in Table 1, this is all the more surprising as, statistically speaking,

Philippians is more “pregnant” than Galatians with the biblical terms often invoked in discussions of living and dying well.

¹⁹ The Greek text ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος can be translated “For me, living (is) Christ and dying (is) gain.”

²⁰ While Arnold does include the topics of shame, suffering, and the summum bonum (i.e., the “highest good”) in his index of subjects, the subjects of dying and death are conspicuously absent. Moreover, Arnold intentionally limits the scope of his study to viewing Paul through a Greco-Roman lens. See Bradley Arnold, *Christ as the Telos of Life: Moral Philosophy, Athletic Imagery, and the Aim of Philippians* (WUNT 2, Reihe 371; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1–2, 259.

²¹ Like Arnold, Kirk intentionally restricts his study to investigating Paul’s Greco-Roman background. See Alexander N. Kirk, *The Departure of an Apostle: Paul’s Death Anticipated and Remembered* (WUNT 2, Reihe 406; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), viii–xii, 1, 11.

²² Heinrich Schlier, “κέρδος, κερδαῖνω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 3:672–73 (hereinafter abbreviated TDNT).

²³ Rollin A. Ramsaran, “Living and Dying, Living Is Dying (Philippians 1:21): Paul’s Maxim and Exemplary Argumentation in Philippians,” in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference* (ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker, Emory Studies in Early Christianity; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 336.

²⁴ Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Paul* (Cascade Companions 4; Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008), 147.

²⁵ John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 143.

²⁶ Sophocles writes, “But if I will die [θανοῦμαι] before (my) time, I myself say this (is a) gain [κέρδος]. For whoever lives in as many troubles as me, how does the way of dying [καθ’αὐτῶν] not bring gain [κέρδος]?” In this sense, Sophocles explains that dying is seen as a “gain” because it cuts short the pain and suffering to be faced in life. This is antithetical to Paul, who does not see dying/death as escape from life, but as the very conduit through which eternal life with Christ is gained (Phil 1:23).

²⁷ The importance of Greco-Roman literature for reading Paul is illustrated by Craig Evans who notes thirteen quotations/allusions/parallels to the Greco-Roman literature in Philippians alone. See Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 391–92.

²⁸ While parallelomania has been a pervasive problem in biblical studies over the past century as Samuel Sandmel’s seminal essay portends, the NT writers appear to cite numerous passages within the extra-biblical literature (e.g., Acts 17:28; 26:14; 1 Cor 15:33; Titus 1:12), and there are legitimate “echoes” and parallels that help to inform our reading of Paul and the rest of the NT. See Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81.1 (1962): 1–13; and Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 154–92.

²⁹ The rationale for the investigation of these three specific corpora of literature is based upon both their influential reach in the ancient world, as well as their pertinence to the discussion of Pauline studies and human flourishing. This is attested in the works of a plethora of scholars including: Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1983); Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2001); Maulana Karenga, Maat, *The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2004); and the aforementioned works of E. P. Sanders and Rollin Ramsaran.

³⁰ See the discussion of dissimilarity between Aristotelian virtue ethics and Israelite conceptions of the “good life” in Brent A. Strawn, “Introduction to Part I: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament,” in *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us About the Good Life* (ed. Brent A. Strawn; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 29–30.

³¹ Karenga, Maat, 3.

³² The ambitious quest for *gloria* and *fama* was so great among the Caesars that Suetonius (*Jul.* 7.1–2) cites a legend regarding Julius Caesar’s beholding of Alexander the Great’s statue in the temple of Hercules while in Spain. Julius Caesar “having mourned” (*ingemuit*) over his own lack of noteworthy accomplishments, compared his life to Alexander, who, at the same approximate age, “had already conquered the world” (*orbem terrarum subegisset*).

³³ See e.g., Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2002), 13.

³⁴ Aristotle vehemently rejects such a materialistic view of human flourishing (*Politics*, 1257b40–1258a2).

- For a discussion of human flourishing as the absence of pain/suffering see Hesook Suzie Kim, *The Essence of Nursing Practice: Philosophy and Perspective* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2015), 73.
- ³⁵ Miroslav Volf and Justin Crisp, eds., *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2015). Cf. Miroslav Volf, *Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2015).
- ³⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015).
- ³⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- ³⁸ The preposition ἀπό indicates that such peace/flourishing is not inwardly innate in humanity, but is “from God our Father and (the) Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul appears to be echoing the Shema in Phil 1:2 and including Jesus Christ within its formula. Compare the Greek text of Deut 6:4 (LXX) κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἰς ἔσθιν with Phil 1:2 θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.
- ³⁹ Reumann rightly sees the genitive phrase in Phil 4:7 (τοῦ θεοῦ) as subjective, not objective. See John Reumann, *Philippians* (AB 33B; New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 499.
- ⁴⁰ See Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians* (EGGNT; ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 13–14, 240–41.
- ⁴¹ Hellerman, *Philippians*, 206.
- ⁴² While this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of terms which Paul may be using to discuss human flourishing in Philippians, it is hopefully a helpful addition to the scholarly discussion.
- ⁴³ Köstenberger and Bouchoc, *Concordance*, 1108.
- ⁴⁴ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: 2009), 332.
- ⁴⁵ The redundant repetition of τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ ... τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ in Phil 1:29 underscores this focus on the imitation of Christ’s suffering.
- ⁴⁶ Paul uses a triad of comparative terms (πολλῶ ... μᾶλλον κρείσσον) in Phil 1:23 that can be (nonsensically) woodenly translated in English as “much more better!”
- ⁴⁷ Carolyn Osiek sees the overarching theme of Philippians as “joy.” See Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000), 31.
- ⁴⁸ Χαρά and its cognates appear fourteen times in the text of Philippians: χαρά (4:1); χαρὰς (1:4; 2:29); χαρὰν (1:25; 2:2); χαίρω (1:18; 2:17); χαίρετε (2:18; 3:1; and twice in 4:4); χαρήσομαι (1:18); χαρήτε (2:28); and ἐχαρήν (4:10). Lexical data obtained from Köstenberger and Bouchoc, *Concordance*, 1108.
- ⁴⁹ Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission, The Gospel and Our Culture Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 3. Cf. idem, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 49–67.
- ⁵⁰ The full Latin name is *de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, which can be translated “On the Ends of Good and Evil!”
- ⁵¹ The Greek source text is Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. H. Rackham, Aristotle volume 19, LCL 73; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).
- ⁵² Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*, 289.
- ⁵³ The Latin source text is Cicero, *On Ends* (trans. H. Rackham, Cicero vol. 17, LCL 40; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914).
- ⁵⁴ Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*, 289.
- ⁵⁵ Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 157.
- ⁵⁶ P. L. Schmidt, “Cicero und die republikanische Kunstprosa,” in *Römische Literatur* (Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft Bd. 3, ed. M. Fuhrmann; Frankfurt: Frankfurt am Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1974), 152. Cited in Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 157.
- ⁵⁷ P. G. W. Glare et al, eds., “prudentia,” in *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1509–10.
- ⁵⁸ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead: The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner, 1898), xlvii. All translations for *The Book of the Dead* are from Budge.
- ⁵⁹ H. D. Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation: Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), xli.
- ⁶⁰ In ancient Egyptian culture, humans consisted of multiple physical and spiritual constituents: *ka* (vital energy); *ba* (soul); *khet* (body); *akh* (transformed spirit); *ren* (name); *ib* (heart/mind); and *shuit* (shadow). See Karenga, *Maat*, 158.
- ⁶¹ Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, 43–54.

⁶² Ibid., clxxxiii.

⁶³ Ibid., cci.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 76.

⁶⁵ Note the feather on the right scale that represents Maat—the standard of measure by which the Egyptians thought that the heart (ib) of the dead would be judged in the afterlife. This is why the hearts of the mummies were preserved, as it was thought to be part of the soul to be judged. This image derives from the papyri of *The Book of the Dead*, and features the various “assessors” judging the Maat of the deceased.

⁶⁶ The source Greek text for the translation of this section is Karl Preisendanz, ed. and trans., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–1931).

⁶⁷ Betz, *Papyri*, xli.

⁶⁸ Ibid., xlv.

⁶⁹ See *Sebaït of Amenemope* 20.21–21.8. Translation taken from Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (3 vols.; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973–80), 2:158.

⁷⁰ Please note that the versification listed in the Greek OT (LXX) may differ from that in English Bibles.

⁷¹ See e.g., *Coming Forth by Day LXXX*; PGM III.10–14; IV.2176, 3087; VII.155; PDM XVI.167.

⁷² See e.g., Ps 33:9; 40:2; 83:13; 93:12; 111:1; 144:15; 146:5; Prov 8:34; 28:14.

⁷³ The author’s original translations are derived from the Greek text of Philo, *On the Decalogue*, *On the Special Laws*, Books 1–3 (trans. F. H. Colson, LCL 320; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

⁷⁴ David M. Scholer, “Foreword,” in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (trans. C. D. Yonge, rev. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), xi.

⁷⁵ The author’s original translations are derived from the Greek text of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Volume 1: Books 1–3 (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, Josephus vol. 5, LCL 242; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930).

⁷⁶ See Paul L. Maier, “Introduction,” in *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (trans. William Whiston, rev ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 8–9.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁸ This author affirms Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.

⁷⁹ Justin Crisp, “Introduction: A Bright Sorrow,” in *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life* (ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin Crisp; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2015), viii.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, *The Living God*, x–xi.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1.

⁸² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 20.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 320.

⁸⁵ N. T. Wright, “Joy: Some New Testament Perspectives and Questions,” in *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life* (ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2015), 50–54.

⁸⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 16.

⁸⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of the Nations* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1843), 169.

⁸⁸ See e.g., 1 Cor 15:31; Gal 2:20; Phil 1:1, 21; 2:5–11, 17; 3:17; 4:9.

⁸⁹ For an overview of the “health and wealth” gospel (also known as the “prosperity gospel”) in America, see Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁹⁰ Such an aversion and fear of death is famously illustrated in Ernest Becker’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book about death, *The Denial of Death* (1974), in which he writes, “The fear of death is a universal that unites data from several disciplines of the human sciences, and makes wonderfully clear and intelligible human actions that we have buried under mountains of fact, and have obscured with endless . . . arguments about the ‘true’ human motives.” See Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1974), ix–x.

⁹¹ Sociologists Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson note a paradox of generosity: “giving we receive, grasping we lose.” See Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson, *The Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

The Diligence, Justice, and Generosity of the Wise: The Ethic of Work in the Book of Proverbs

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Introduction

A major theme in the book of Proverbs is the theme of work. This is largely presented through a contrast between the sluggard and the one who is diligent. It is surprising then, that not much has been written from a scholarly perspective on the theme of work within Proverbs.¹ It is not as if this topic has been neglected, but there does appear to be a general lack of focused thinking outside of commentaries and reference works. This is unfortunate because Proverbs has a more focused discussion on work than almost anywhere else in the Bible.² Proverbs portrays a picture of two different types of workers, the wise and the foolish.³ The wise worker is characterized by diligence in his work. Within Proverbs the wise pursue diligence and fools pursue laziness. As a general rule diligence leads to flourishing while laziness leads to poverty. This idea manifests itself in exhortations towards diligence and admonitions against laziness

throughout the book. Each of these exhortations and admonitions brings to light different aspects and attributes of those who are wise and diligent against those who are foolish and lazy. In regards to the subject of work, however, the book of Proverbs does not merely compare and contrast the diligent and the sluggard. The wise worker is just and righteous in the way that he earns his wages. And the wise worker is generous with what he has earned. This lies in stark contrast to the depiction of the foolish worker who is a sluggard and is characterized by laziness, oppression of the poor, and a squanderer of money. This contrast between the wise and the foolish worker provides the basis for the ethic of work within the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs portrays a proper understanding of work through a description of the wise worker, someone who is diligent, just, and generous.

Diligence of the Wise

Throughout Proverbs diligence is praised as the work ethic of the wise person. Diligence is highlighted in three main ways within Proverbs.⁴ First, diligence is highlighted indirectly through a portrayal of the sluggard/slothful fool. The majority of teaching on diligence within Proverbs comes through a description of the fool who is a sluggard or slothful. As Tremper Longman notes, “Proverbs is intolerant of lazy people; they are considered the epitome of folly.”⁵ One of the larger sections regarding the sluggard (עצל) is found in an exhortation in 6:6-11 where the sluggard is told to look at the ant and be wise.⁶ The ant prepares (כון) and gathers (אגר), but the sluggard sleeps (שנה), slumbers (נום), and folds (חבק) his hands (יד) to rest (שכב).⁷ The result of the life of the sluggard is then poverty (ראש). Following the introduction in the book (1:1-7), this passage is providing instruction to the sluggard to no longer follow his foolish way, but instead to be wise. Being wise on this occasion means to have a diligent work ethic, like the ant.

The description of the sluggard elsewhere in Proverbs is not flattering. Proverbs presents the ideal of diligence by highlighting the folly of the sluggard by means of a harsh description that focuses on the ethic and morality (or lack thereof) of the sluggard. On the purpose of the description of the sluggard Leland Ryken writes, “Such a denunciation of idleness implies a positive and liberating attitude toward work.”⁸

It is through this negative portrayal of the sluggard that the reader is encouraged to be a diligent worker. There are several individual proverbs addressing the sluggard. Having a sluggard within one's employ is like drinking vinegar or getting smoke in their eyes (10:26). The sluggard's way is like a hedge of thorns (15:19).⁹ The sluggard desires and craves, but it comes to nothing except the grave (21:25-26). The sluggard is often associated with sleep (19:15),¹⁰ a lack of work (20:4), making ridiculous excuses to be lazy (22:13; 26:13), and poverty (23:19-21).¹¹ This description of the sluggard shows that he is characterized by laziness. Almost all of these traits are found in the lengthy reflections on the sluggard in 24:30-34 and 26:13-16.¹²

Proverbs 24:30-34 shows that the sluggard is a fool who lacks sense.¹³ The sluggard's fields are not worked or protected and are overgrown. The author attributes this to the sleep, slumber, and the folding of hands, which leads to poverty. In Proverbs 26:13-16 the sluggard is so lazy that he cannot get out of bed (26:14) and cannot even lift his food to his mouth (26:15, also found in 19:24).¹⁴ These descriptions are hyperbole that serve the point of showing the gravity of the foolishness of the sluggard. When describing the sluggard Ben Witherington writes that, "the sluggard takes the path of least resistance; rather, he takes the path of least exertion. His life is one of avoidance—avoidance of things that require real effort or could prove to be challenging. He seems to respond only to real pressure or pain from a taskmaster or overseer."¹⁵ The sluggard is truly the epitome of the fool in that he considers himself wiser in his own eyes than seven sensible answers (26:16).¹⁶ The strong critique of the lazy person heightens the contrast between the sluggard and the diligent elsewhere within the book.

Second, diligence is extolled through a comparison between those who are lazy (most commonly referred to using sluggard) and those who are diligent. The description of the ant in 6:6-11 is similar to the contrast that is made for the wise (חכם) son (10:1) between the one who has a slack hand (כף), which causes poverty (ראש), and the one who has a diligent hand (יד), which makes rich (10:4). The wise (שכל) son gathers (אגר), but the son who brings shame sleeps (רדם).¹⁷ The diligent rule, while the slothful (רמה) are forced labor (12:24). The slothful are so lazy that they cannot even cook their food, but the diligent are associated with wealth

(12:27). The sluggard craves, but the diligent are satisfied (13:4).¹⁸ The diligent plan and it leads to excess, but hastiness leads to poverty (21:5).¹⁹ This contrast between the hard worker, who has plenty and the lazy worker, who is impoverished is exemplified in 28:19 which states that “the one who works his land will be filled with bread, but the one who follows empty pursuits will be filled with poverty.”²⁰ The irony of being “filled” with poverty is striking. The life of a sluggard leads to nothing but emptiness. This is contrasted with the life of the diligent, who flourishes in all that he does.²¹

Third, diligence is embodied in the virtuous wife of Proverbs 31 who is described in very hard working terms and is said to not eat the food of idleness (31:27). On the theme of diligence, the description of the virtuous woman here fits well with the call of lady wisdom in the early chapters of Proverbs. On the connection between Lady Wisdom and the virtuous woman Jim Hamilton writes, “Lady Wisdom makes herself known in the markets at the beginning of the book (1:20-33), and the noble wife is active in the markets at the end (31:14-15).”²² The wise and diligent wife works skillfully (31:14), provides for those in her house through long work hours (31:15, 18), and even cares for those outside of her house who are in need because she is generous (31:20). The characteristics that are exemplified within the virtuous wife are exemplified in the wise worker in the categories of justice and generosity.

Justice and Generosity of the Wise

While there are many other characteristics besides diligence that describe the wise and ethical worker, two that are striking are the justice and generosity that the wise worker embodies. These two concepts are not always very easily separated and at times Proverbs discusses the two in tandem. First, the wise worker is just in the way that he works, particularly in the way that he earns his wealth. Proverbs 13:11 says that wealth hastily gained will dwindle.²³ Bruce Waltke notes that the way wealth is supposed to be accumulated in this proverb “symbolizes a slow, small, steady accumulation of wealth by the handful, not by a ‘windfall.’”²⁴ The word for hasty (לבה) in Proverbs 13:11 is the same word used to Proverbs 21:6 that says deceitfully earned money is only temporary, fleeting. Proverbs 11:18 says that wicked deeds bring false wages, but righteous

deeds bring reliable payment. This too shows the importance of earning money justly. This sentiment is also expressed in Proverbs 20:10 and 20:23 where unequal weights and false scales are called an abomination. Norman Whybray discusses the importance of earning wealth justly in these proverbs by writing, “If wealth is accompanied by injustice, hatred, strife, or (somewhat more vaguely) ‘trouble’ (*m’hûmâ*), —and, it seems to be implied, this is often the case—then it is better to remain ‘poor.’”²⁵ Oppression of the poor for gain is also criticized. Proverbs 22:16 says that those who oppress the poor will themselves become impoverished. Even the ruler is supposed to operate with justice by hating unjust gain (28:16). While Proverbs 21:3 is not a proverb related to work, it does express a far reaching aim that the wise operate with justice. This proverb states that, “Doing righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice.” The wise person acts with the traits of righteousness and justice in all of life. Not only is it important to earn money in a proper manner, but being just and righteous is better than wealth.

Second, the wise worker is more concerned with uprightness than with monetary gain. There are multiple proverbs that indicate the importance of righteousness over wealth. Proverbs 19:1 says, “Better is the poor man who walks in his integrity than the one who is crooked and is a fool.” This proverb is echoed and given a slightly different nuance in 28:6 where it reads, “Better is a poor man who walks in integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his doings.” Both of these proverbs express the importance of integrity over wealth. Integrity is more valuable than wealth.

Third, the wise worker is also described as both just and generous. Proverbs 14:31 places the concepts of oppressing the poor and being generous to the needy with antithetical parallelism by stating, “The one who oppresses a poor man insults his maker, but he who honors him is generous to the needy.” Oppression to the poor is insulting to God, but giving generously to the needy is honoring to God.

Fourth, the wise are characterized by generosity. Proverbs 21:26 continues a discussion of the sluggard from v.25 that says that he only craves and craves, but the righteous (parallel with the diligent) gives and does not spare. Daniel Estes notes that “Generous people give when they can. In contrast to the sluggard, who craves for more, ‘the righteous give without sparing.’”²⁶ Norman Whybray discusses the theme of the wise

worker and generosity by noting, “in 11:25; 13:4; 28:25 it is promised that the generous, the hardworking and the pious respectively will be *enriched*.”²⁷ One of the reasons that generosity is logical is because wealth and riches are only temporary and it does not last forever (27:23-27). The fool is not generous, but squanders his money on prostitutes (29:3). But the wise person is generous towards the poor (22:9). Proverbs says that being generous to the poor is lending to Yahweh (19:17) and that those who give to the poor will not want (28:27). Those who are righteous know the rights of the poor (29:7) and the king is expected to operate with faithful judgment towards the poor (29:14). Each of these descriptions shows that the wise are just and generous in all of their dealings, especially towards the poor.

Conclusion

The book of Proverbs presents an ethic of work through the description of the wise worker as one who is diligent, generous, and just. The wise worker is diligent, like the virtuous wife, and is not a sluggard or slothful in their work. Working with diligence leads to life and flourishing, whereas the life of a sluggard leads to death. The wise worker is also characterized by justice in the way that he gains his wealth in that in his work he cares for others. Finally, the wise worker is generous with what he has worked for and gives to the needy without sparing because wealth is only temporarily here. Proverbs shows that the wise worker fears Yahweh and loves his neighbor.

²⁷ There are almost no scholarly articles on this theme. Scanning the internet one can find several popular level blog posts. Within books that are written on work some treat the book of Proverbs in a surprising brief fashion. For example Gene Veith only cites three proverbs in his book *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002). Most other works will mention specific proverbs in passing (and sometimes quote Proverbs frequently), but do not contain any sustained discussion on work in Proverbs (see Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011]; Leland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work & Leisure* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995]). Some commentaries that have sections on themes in Proverbs will briefly discuss topics related to work like diligence or the sluggard (see *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 1-15*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004]: 114-115; Tremper Longman, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006]: 561-562). These brief summaries will usually only be a couple of pages in length. Similarly introductory works on wisdom literature will often have brief one to

two page discussions of topics like diligence and laziness (see Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005], 235-236; Donald K. Berry, *An Introduction to Wisdom and Poetry of the Old Testament* [Nashville, TN: B&H, 1995]: 133-135). The most thorough (and focused) examination of work in the book of Proverbs is the *Theology of Work Bible Commentary, Volume 3: Joshua-Song of Songs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005): 155-198. This volume is also made available in totality online by the Theology of Work Project at <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/proverbs/>. It should be noted that there are several academic works on poverty and riches in the book of Proverbs, which does relate to the theme of work.

² In sheer content Proverbs likely has the most, but the issues that Paul is addressing in 1-2 Thessalonians may be more focused.

³ When engaging in a thematic study within Proverb Longman note that three steps (with several implied sub-steps) should be followed: 1) The entire book of Proverbs should be read and the reader should determine all the texts that deal with the theme at hand, use judgment on what to include, and make a list of those verses; 2) All of the verses should be typed/written out and these should be systematized into the broad categories that they represent; 3) These texts and categories should be analyzed and read within the entire Bible's teaching on the subject first by seeing how they fit into the book of Proverbs, second, by how they fit into the Old Testament, and third, by how they fit into the New Testament (see Tremper Longman, *How to Read Proverbs* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002]: 118-120). This basic procedure will be followed here.

⁴ Certainly the diligent are discussed in more than three ways. Estes, for instance, notes that Proverbs 22:29, and its use of מָהֵר, "indicates that diligence entails quickness, promptness, and readiness as it moves quickly to accept a challenge ... The diligent person, then, is a self-starter who perseveres to complete the challenges that come," (in Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*, 235). *The Theology of Work Commentary on Proverbs* identifies several categories for the wise worker. Under the category of the wise worker being diligent it notes that the wise worker is diligent in hard work, planning long term, contributing to profitability, and smiling at the future (168-173).

⁵ Longman, *Proverbs*, 561. Similarly, Waltke notes, "Laziness in Proverbs is more than a character flaw; it is a moral issue," (in Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 1-15*, 115).

⁶ The term for sluggard (עָצֵל) is used only in Proverbs, and is used thirteen times (6:6, 9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13, 14, 26). For a discussion of this and related terms see Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 115.

⁷ Note the use of synonyms to convey similar ideas, but with slightly different language.

⁸ Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 247.

⁹ In Proverbs 15:19 the sluggard is compared with the upright and just before a discussion of the sluggard in 21:25-26 there is a description of the scoffer and arrogant/prideful (21:24).

¹⁰ Proverbs 20:13 offers further exhortation to not love sleep, which leads to poverty, but to have open eyes, which leads to bread (the opposite of hunger). So here the themes of sleep and hunger are connected.

¹¹ Waltke makes a helpful comment that the sluggard "is never equated with the 'poor' ... who are so by virtue of circumstances beyond their control, such as by tyranny (13:23), but the sluggard is poor by virtue of his moral degeneracy. He is not worthy to be called 'poor,'" (Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 115).

¹² For a discussion of Proverbs 24:30-34 see Kojo Okyere, "The Rhetoric of Work in Proverbs 24:30-34," *Theoforum* 44 (2013): 157-171.

¹³ Interesting the Hebrew for "sense" here is actually "heart" (לֵב).

¹⁴ Note the connection here to hunger (implicit not explicit) and proverbs that say things like Yahweh not allowing the righteous to go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked (10:3). Note also the similarity in craving language (13:4; 21:25-26).

¹⁵ Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor*, 59.

¹⁶ Here the sluggard is clearly seen at the simple fool who hates advice, which is a framing element within the book (1:7). It is assumed in this that the sluggard has no fear of Yahweh.

¹⁷ Note that 10:1 and 10:5 both refer to the wise son with slightly different language. This section forms an inclusion collection (see Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* [NAC, vol. 14; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993]: 47, 117).

¹⁸ The word translated here as satisfied is more literally "fattened" (שָׂבַע).

¹⁹ As mentioned above with the description of the sluggard in 23:19-21. This idea is also found in other descriptions of the lazy/sluggard mentioned to this point (6:11; 10:4; 23:21). This is also found in texts like 14:23 where talk (as opposed to action) leads to poverty.

²⁰ This is also found in Proverbs 12:11.

²¹ The idea of flourishing in Proverbs should also be linked to the central idea of living in the fear of the Lord.

²² James M. Hamilton, *Work and Labor in the Lord* (Short Studies in Biblical Theology; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017): 54.

²³ See also 12:11; 20:21; 28:22.

²⁴ Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, 561.

²⁵ R. Norman Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990): 34.

²⁶ Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*, 241.

²⁷ Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, 33

The Sluggard and Covenant Faithfulness: Understanding the Nature of True Virtue and the Call to Industry in Proverbs

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The purpose of this paper is to postulate that within the book of Proverbs the call to the sluggard to work is not merely a call to industry, but to covenant faithfulness. I will demonstrate this through three points. First, I will demonstrate that the book of Proverbs is to be read through the lens of the Torah. Though different in genre, wisdom literature serves as an illustration of life lived according to the commandments of Yahweh. Such a reading of the Proverbs as a whole shatters the contemporary emphasis upon categorizing individual proverbs into sacred and secular categories by understanding the so-called “secular” proverbs as necessary explications of the Torah. Second, I will show that New Testament (NT) evidence corroborates this understanding by insisting that work is considered ethically virtuous only when it proceeds forth from faith. This

NT emphasis continues the theme that the Scriptures are interested not just in excellence in execution but upon a restored covenantal relationship with the Lord. Third, I will argue that a desire to glorify God is a requisite presupposition for human industry and work to be considered genuinely morally laudable. The Framinan discussion of “civic righteousness” helpfully gives grounds to understand the work of unbelievers as socially beneficial but morally bankrupt in an ultimate sense. Throughout this paper “industry” and “work” are used interchangeably to denote human labor and effort, whether vocational or otherwise. Similarly, “virtue,” “ethical,” and their variants are used synonymously to designate work and industry that is considered morally acceptable by God.

The Relationship between Proverbs and the Torah

The relationship between wisdom literature and the other elements of the Old Testament (OT) is substantially debated. James Hamilton asserts that “Proverbs serves as an exposition of the Ten Commandments. Solomon is teaching the Torah to his son and, by extension, to his people.”¹ John J. Collins posits the exact opposite understanding:

Later Jewish tradition would identify the way of Wisdom with obedience to the Torah. There is nothing to indicate, however, that this identification was implied in Proverbs. There is overlap between the commandments of wisdom and those of the Torah, but there is nothing here to correspond to the ritual Torah or the more distinctively Israelite commandments.²

The distinction between exposition and overlap is hermeneutically significant. If the Proverbs are written without reference to the Torah, then the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his people is not fundamentally necessary for obedience to the Proverbs. If, however, Proverbs functions as an extended explication of Torah, then genuine obedience toward each individual proverb requires a reconciled covenantal relationship *a priori*. The mere performance of the ethical commands would not constitute obedience, for the motive behind performing the action is an implicit requirement of the command itself by virtue of canonical connections.

There is a tendency within certain corners of scholarship to subdivide individual proverbs into “secular” and “religious” categories. Michael V. Fox provides an example of these two variants. Proverbs 13:14a stands as a “secular” proverb with its instruction being “The teaching of a wise man is a fount of life.” Conversely, Proverbs 14:27a falls in the “religious” category by virtue of a slightly different formulation: “The fear of Yahweh is a fount of life.”³ Fundamental to Fox’s assertion is the assumption that “the fear of Yahweh” is not essential for one to be a “wise man” within the Proverbs’ internal assessment.⁴

The strongest argument for reading the Proverbs as being distinct from the Torah comes from the Proverbs’ lack of interaction with the major biblical-theological arc. Graeme Goldsworthy writes, “For many biblical theologians the wisdom literature has presented certain difficulties because its authors display little interest in the main biblical themes of covenant and salvation-history.”⁵ Indeed, the book of Proverbs displays only the most cursory references to the entire form of worship set forth in the Torah or in the national history of the people of Israel. Likewise, there is no mention of Israel’s national identity or history. The only internal references that particularly set forth the book of Proverbs as being connected to the national life of Israel are the Solomonic subscription and the 88 references to Yahweh placed at intervals throughout the text.⁶

Some scholars see these 88 references as an attempt to transform otherwise universally applicable material to being exclusive to the worship of Yahweh.⁷ Such assertions are typically derived from the belief that the material contained therein is extensively drawn from Egyptian and Assyrian sources and is not Solomonic in origin. The similarity of pagan literature in genre and form to the biblical text does not necessarily demonstrate dependence or appropriation, however. Derek Kidner helpfully discusses how the existence of extra-biblical proverbs merely situates the book of Proverbs as writing done in a culturally-appropriate, contextually-relevant genre.⁸ The uniqueness of biblical content does not depend upon a uniqueness of genre and form, but upon the orientation of the material with eyes towards a covenantal relationship to Yahweh.

When the internal testimony of the book of Proverbs is taken at face value and not reinterpreted as the handiwork of a much-later editor, the connection between Proverbs and the Torah is certainly visible.⁹

The attribution of the book to “Solomon, son of David, king of Israel” (Prov 1:1) locates the material within the kingly courts of the nation of Israel. If Solomonic authorship is taken seriously, the Proverbs must be understood within the context of Solomon’s plea for wisdom in 1 Kings 3:5-9. Twelve times during this exchange Solomon specifically references Yahweh’s relationship to people: four times towards David, three times towards himself, and five times towards the nation as a whole. These references are covenantal in nature, as Solomon invokes the promise from Yahweh to David for a descendent upon the throne, the selection of Israel for a special relationship with Yahweh, and Solomon’s subservience to Yahweh as ultimate ruler of the Israelite people.

The use of the tetragrammaton likewise strengthens the understanding of Proverbs as a covenantal book. Solomon pervasively uses the name of Israel’s covenant God, revealed to Moses at the burning bush and further elucidated on Mount Sinai. R. B. Y. Scott helpfully identifies that even though the majority of the individual proverbs “make no direct appeal to the authority of a revealed religion ... their occasional exhortations to piety toward Yahweh presuppose an accepted belief.”¹⁰ The use of the tetragrammaton imports Yahweh’s prior self-disclosure through the Torah into the text of the Proverbs. Goldsworthy helpfully summarizes, “The idea that the wise men of Israel had no understanding of the covenant simply does not stack up with the evidence.”¹¹

Fourteen times the phrase “the fear of Yahweh” is used throughout the text, sharpening the gaze of Proverbs from mere general reference to Yahweh’s character to a particular relational posture before Yahweh. Waltke states, “To fear [Yahweh] means essentially to submit to his revealed will, whether through Moses or Solomon. Each in his own way seeks to establish the rule of Israel’s covenant-keeping God. Moreover, the theology of proverbs compliments the unified theology of Moses and the prophets.”^{12,13}

Of great importance to this study is not merely the covenantal cohesion between Proverbs and the remaining OT corpus, but rather the understanding that the Proverbs contain within them the understanding that all ethical action requires *a priori* a covenantal relationship with Yahweh. Put another way, Proverbs does not leave room for human action to be genuinely moral when it is performed outside of a covenant

relationship with Yahweh.

To this point, Proverbs 1:7 is widely recognized as being the textual gatekeeper for the remainder of the book. Solomon holds that to possess ultimate wisdom, one must stand in submission to his revealed will, namely through the Torah and other Scriptures. The Proverbs are written to make the foolish wise (1:1-6), however, the mere reading and application of the principles found in individual proverbs does not automatically confer wisdom upon the reader. Rather, the fear of Yahweh is seen as being necessarily prerequisite for the book to accomplish its stated purpose. Waltke again is helpful, “What the alphabet is to reading, notes to reading music, and numerals to mathematics, the fear of the LORD is to attaining the revealed knowledge of this book.”¹⁴

Consequently, when the Proverbs calls a sluggard to abandon sloth and be industrious, it does so with the assumption that genuinely virtuous industry can only exist within the framework of a restored covenantal relationship with Yahweh. The sluggard is wise in his own eyes (26:16). Being wise in one’s own eyes renders a person more hopeless than a fool (26:12), and the fool is one who mocks the covenant rituals of the people of Israel (14:9). In short, the sluggard has breached the covenant and it is not mere industry that is required of him, but repentance and restoral.¹⁵

Virtue and Industry in the NT

The NT continues the theme of covenant faithfulness being an *a priori* condition for work to be considered genuinely virtuous. Such continuity is not surprising given the moral consistency between the two halves of the Scriptures. This section will analyze the teaching of the NT that elucidates faith in Christ as requisite for human industry being considered virtuous.

Interestingly enough, much of the NT’s teaching on the connection of faith and virtue sits within the context of ritualistic food laws. It is beyond the scope of this paper to speculate as to the reason for this consistent context; however, it is instructive to note that such a context provides an excellent setting for exploring virtue in connection with human activity.

1 Corinthians 10:23-33 is a discourse on the proper NT understanding of meat sacrificed to idols. Paul insists throughout the section that an individual’s personal desire should not be the controlling impulse of

his heart.¹⁶ Verse 31 serves as Paul's capstone teaching on the issue – "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." "Whatever you do" extends the broader principle of action mindful towards God's glory beyond the immediate context of eating and drinking. Ciampa and Rosner helpfully comment, "[Believers'] overriding concern should not be with the exercise of their own rights and freedom or desires but with the potential implications for God's honor and glory."¹⁷ Hodge likewise sees a broader principle expressed, "God cannot be glorified by our conduct unless it be our object to act for his glory ... It is by thus having the desire to promote the glory of God as the governing motive of our lives, that order and harmony are introduced into all our actions."¹⁸ Paul's charge to the Corinthian believers regarding food and drink customs therefore serves as an explication of the required aim of all of life for the believer. The sum purpose of our existence is to bring honor and glory to God.

Romans 14:23 further details the connection between faith and virtue within the Christian ethic. Writing to the Roman church on the topic of food laws in the broader section of 14:13-23, Paul declares that "[W]hatever does not proceed from faith is sin." As in 1 Corinthians 10:31 this statement serves as a universal principle that Paul then applies to the particular situation at hand. Put another way, Paul declares that because whatever is not from faith is sin (universal), therefore eating in a way that compromises conscience is sin (particular). Hendrickson acknowledges, "[W]hatever thought, word, action, etc. does not spring from the inner conviction that it is in harmony with a person's faith in God ... is sin."¹⁹

These two passages clearly delineate the boundaries of Christian virtue. If action is performed from some fountainhead other than faith, the sum total of that action is sin. Bridges helpfully articulates, "Men of the world have themselves for the end of their actions. Philosophers tell us to make the good of others the end; and thus destroy the sentiment of religion, by margining it into philanthropy or benevolence. The Bible tells us to make the glory of God the end."²⁰

The Scriptures are replete with examples of otherwise laudable action that is tainted by being performed for the wrong end. Ananias and Saphira gave generously to the work of the church, but their gifts were for a self-serving purpose (Acts 5:1-11). Simon the magician believed Philip's

preaching and became his disciple, yet his desire to purchase the power to bestow the Holy Spirit was met with a stern call to repent (Acts 8:9-24). Paul mentions proclaimers of the gospel who preach with wrong motives during his imprisonment, calling their ministry insincere (Phil 1:15-17).

In sum, NT evidence clearly demonstrates that all things must be done from a heart of faith towards the demonstration of God's majesty in order to be genuinely virtuous. The unbeliever's actions fail on both counts. He is incapable of the faith required for his actions to be considered not sinful. And secondly, he does not perform his actions to the glory of the God but rather stands in unsubmitive opposition to him. Consequently, a restored covenantal relationship stands prerequisite for work and industry to be considered virtuous.²¹ The declaration in Romans 8:8 serves as both an overarching summary of mankind's ultimate state before God, but also of the individual actions that comprise his life: "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Civic Righteousness and Genuine Virtue

Having demonstrated that the book of Proverbs is to be read as an explication of the Torah and that the NT further advances the idea that covenant faithfulness is required for work and industry to be considered obedience to God's revealed order, we shall now turn to the last assertion of this paper. It is the purpose of this section to demonstrate that a desire to glorify God is a requisite aim for human industry and work to be considered genuinely morally laudable. Such an assertion does not negate acknowledging that work done by those at enmity with God is valuable and has been used by God to mitigate human suffering and advance the comfort of human life. However, the work of unbelievers ultimately is of no absolute moral value due to its improper aim.

John Frame addresses the matter of virtue in his magisterial *Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Citing Romans 8:8 he notes a seeming contradiction,

Apart from grace, none of us can do anything good in the sight of God. Yet all around us we see non-Christians who seem to be doing good works: they love their families, work hard at their jobs, contribute to the needs of the poor, and show kindness to their neighbors. It seems that these people are virtuous apart from Christ.²²

This question of the “virtuous pagan” has been a consistent point of contention for those who would seek to deny the doctrine of total human depravity. A uniquely Christian ethic can be gestured to in matters of spirituality and religious duties, but the topic of work and industry presents a more difficult challenge to the idea that the Christian worldview necessarily creates a different product than competing ideologies. Keller notes, “[M]uch work that Christians do is not done, at least not in its visible form, any differently from the way non-Christians do it.”²³

Harry Emerson Fosdick recounts an exchange with a set of parents within his congregation who were concerned for their son’s infatuation with literature to the exclusion of all things Christian. Fosdick calmed their fears by assuring them that if their child served to have so great an influence on humanity as Longfellow, they would have raised an exceptional boy who stood as the best kind of individual regardless of his spiritual inclinations.²⁴ This kind of thinking is unsurprising from a leading liberal intellectual such as Fosdick who expressly denied the doctrine of original sin.

Frame helpfully categorizes the work of unbelievers that contributes to the “betterment of society” as “civic righteousness.” The Westminster Confession details this category more fully:

Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others; yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God.²⁵

In order for any activity or action to be considered genuinely virtuous, three elements must always be present: (1) a heart purified by faith, (2) obedience to God’s word, and (3) the right end, namely the glory of God.²⁶

These three elements can be clearly seen in the above exegesis of NT passages regarding faith as prerequisite for pleasing God. Likewise, the theological presuppositions of the book of Proverbs make clear its implicit understanding that its aim for the sluggard is right action motivated by right motive. Returning to Fosdick’s young man, writing

poetry to the scope of *Evangeline* or *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* serves the good of mankind and constitutes civic righteousness.²⁷ However, Fosdick's insistence that acts still could be virtuous without reference to a covenantal relationship with Christ illustrates a failure to understand the Siniatic presuppositions of the book of Proverbs and the expanded teaching on ethics in the NT.

Building upon the work of Van Til,²⁸ Frame again helpfully connects the importance of covenant and virtue:

Right motive corresponds to the lordship attribute of covenant presence, for it is God's Spirit dwelling in us who places faith and love in our hearts. Right standard corresponds to God's lordship attribute of authority. And right goal corresponds to the lordship attribute of control, or it is God's creation and providence that determine what acts will and will not lead to God's glory. God determines the consequence of our actions, and he determines which actions lead to our *summum bonum*.²⁹

Every ethical action will have as its cornerstone presupposition that Christ is Lord over the universe, has been granted all authority (Matt 18:28), and therefore every has every right to be considered the motivation and the object for which every act is performed (1 Cor 10:31).

Jonathan Edwards further details the necessity of love of God for any act to be considered virtuous in his *A Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue*. According to Edwards, "All true virtue must radically and essentially . . . and summarily consist in [supreme love to God]."³⁰ Indeed, "love to God is most essential to true virtue; and no benevolence whatsoever to other beings can be of the nature of true virtue without it."³¹ Fundamental to understanding biblical teaching on work and industry is its insistence that the end of work and industry is of critical importance to the ethical value of the work being conducted. Keller expounds, "As an extension of God's creative work, the Christian's labor has its orientation toward God himself, and we must ask how it can be done... for his glory."^{32,33}

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to demonstrate that within the Proverbs the call to the sluggard is not a call to mere industry but to covenant faithfulness. This task has been undertaken in three ways. First, it has been demonstrated that the book of Proverbs expects to be read within the context of the Mosaic Law. As such the injunction to work contains an implicit understanding that work is an expression of loving God and loving neighbor as required by the law. Second, it has been demonstrated that the NT further details the divide between mere industry and virtuous work. Whatever is not from faith is sin (Rom 14:23) and all human activity is to have as its aim the glory and honor of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 10:31). Lastly, it has been demonstrated that civic righteousness does not constitute genuine virtue by failing to pass the tripartite test of motive, goal, and standard. Genuinely virtuous work requires conducting that work with the goal of bringing honor to God. Taken in unison, these three arguments serve to demonstrate that the call to the sluggard is a call for him to be restored before Yahweh and work out the covenantal charge to love God and love neighbor.

¹ James M. Hamilton, Jr. *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 292.

² John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 255.

³ Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (Anchor Yale Bible; Vol 18b; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 482.

⁴ It must be noted that scholars such as Scott and Fox are not arguing that there is no religious backdrop to the "secular" proverbs. Previous authors such as McKane drew a hard line between the two, viewing the origin of the secular proverbs as being the administrative court rather than the religious community. Whybray comments on such an understanding in *The Composition of Proverbs 10-29*, "[A] distinction between 'secular' and 'religious' was unknown in the ancient world" (109). Scott and Fox retain the language of "secular" and "religious" as a way of distinguishing between universally sourced and exclusively Israelite proverbs.

⁵ Graeme Goldsworthy, "Proverbs" in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (eds. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, et al.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 208.

⁶ Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 80.

⁷ See John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* as a representative summary of this commonly held position.

⁸ Derek Kidner, *Proverbs* (TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1964), 13-21.

⁹ This is not to deny that the Proverbs were edited. Rather, I insist that the editor did not transform the content of Proverbs *ex post facto* from being primarily secular to primarily religious through the rewriting of Yahweh's name into the text.

¹⁰ R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs – Ecclesiastes* (Anchor Bible; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), XVI.

¹¹ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 70.

¹² Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 1-15* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 64-65.

¹³ Goldsworthy also helpfully connects the fear of Yahweh with covenantal submission: "Such fear is a reverential submission to the revealed truth of god, which focuses on the covenant and redemption. Godly

wisdom in Israel is based on life's experiences, which ideally are steered by the redemptive revelation of God." (Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 129)

¹⁴ Walke, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 1-15*, 181.

¹⁵ James Crenshaw follows this line of thinking when he observes the moral binary set forth by the sages: "The wise were righteous and fools wicked. This surprising conclusion arose from the operative assumption that anyone who strengthened the order upholding the universe belonged to God's forces, while those who undermined this harmony were enemies of the Creator." Crenshaw's viewpoint regarding the integrity of the book of Proverbs is suspect, but the conclusions he draws regarding the moral landscape of the book are insightful (James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010], 73).

¹⁶ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner. *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 495-496.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 496.

¹⁸ Charles Hodge, *1 & 2 Corinthians*. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 202.

¹⁹ William Hendrickson. *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 468.

²⁰ Hodge, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 202.

²¹ Once again, the assertion is not that work performed outside the bounds of faith is of no benefit to humanity. Rather, the assertion is that such work does not constitute genuine virtue. An analysis of this concept will be provided in the third section of this paper.

²² John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2008), 27.

²³ Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor* (New York: Dutton, 2012), 185.

²⁴ I encountered this vignette while listening to original Fosdick sermon cassette tapes while conducting research for another project. I do not have notes as to which cassette tape contained this account, though if someone is entirely desperate to fact-check this, they may listen through the catalogue of Fosdick's sermons in The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary library.

²⁵ *Westminster Confession of Faith* 16.7

²⁶ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 28.

²⁷ The matter of Longfellow's connection to Christianity is of some debate. Regardless of Longfellow's personal beliefs, Fosdick's point was that it did not matter the existence of belief or unbelief in the biblical God so long as one was pursuing civic righteousness.

²⁸ Frame comments in the footnote stating Van Til's tripartite identification as foundational for his understanding of lordship and obedience. See Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 28.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

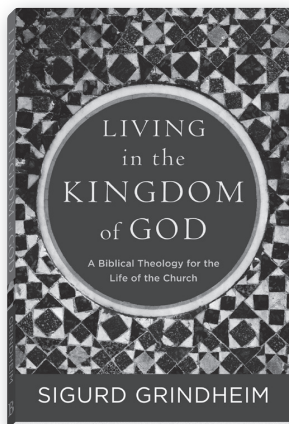
³⁰ Jonathan Edwards, A Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 124.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

³² Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 184.

³³ Leland Ryken further explores Puritan teaching on the connection between God's glory and industry in his work *Redeeming the Time* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker, 1995), 106-108.

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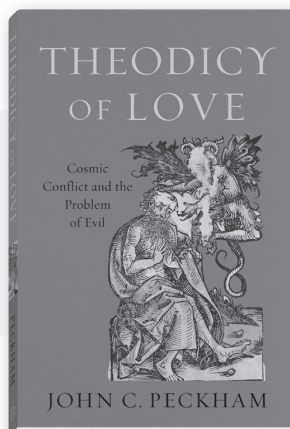
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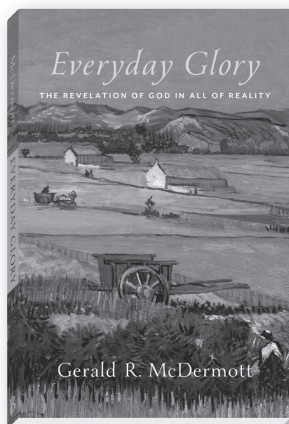
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“They were not Brought up in Idleness”: Matthew Henry, the Old Testament, and Work

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The doctrine of vocation is an essential part of a Christian’s understanding of how to live before God. Gene Veith—who has written extensively on the doctrine of vocation—observes that there is a great need to recover this “liberating, life-enhancing doctrine” in the present day.¹ The doctrine of vocation “has become all but forgotten” in the church and in the seminaries.² To answer this need, Veith develops a doctrine of vocation, basing his work on Luther. However, Veith acknowledges that other theologians have also contributed to an understanding of vocation, “from the Puritans to Os Guinness’s recent book *The Call*.”³

As Veith points his readers to Luther and the Reformers, this article outlines the teachings of Matthew Henry—a prominent preacher and Bible commentator of the late 1600s and early 1700s—on work as found in his Old Testament (OT) commentaries. Henry was greatly influenced by the Reformers and the Puritans through the training he received early in life from his father Philip Henry.⁴ Nearly three hundred years after first appearing, Matthew Henry’s commentaries are still in print today and still influence his readers. With his keen insight and profound wisdom, Henry has much to offer in developing a biblical understanding of work.

While Henry does not formulate a systematic doctrine of work, his

teachings on the matter are easily ascertained from his comments on passages of the OT. His observations are found in narratives in which work or some form of labor is a prominent feature—for example, Jacob working for Laban in Genesis 29 and 30; the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Nehemiah 3—and in the writings of Solomon in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Furthermore, while Luther and Veith contend that “vocation” encompasses all aspects of a person’s life—work, marriage, citizenship, church, etc.—the focus of this article is solely on Henry’s teaching regarding a person’s employment.⁵

This article argues that Henry teaches that God calls all people to work and to improve upon their employment in order that their labor may benefit themselves and others. Henry’s comments on work, gathered from various portions of his OT commentaries, can be organized under six themes, which will be elaborated on in this article:

1. God calls all people to work.
2. Honest work is not to be despised.
3. God provides everything needed for work.
4. Study is necessary to improve work.
5. Work benefits all people.
6. Work is difficult.

As each theme is expanded on, Henry’s contribution to a biblical understanding of work will be clear.

1. GOD CALLS ALL PEOPLE TO WORK

Henry understood that the OT clearly teaches that all people are called by God to work. No matter one’s station in life—rich or poor, follower of Christ or not—every person must have something to do while on this earth. According to Henry, God providentially places all people in their particular place of employment, whether a person remains in one job or changes employment. In whatever situation, Henry exhorts his readers to be faithful in that situation God places them.

ALL PEOPLE MUST WORK

According to Henry, the OT indicates that all people must find some form

of employment. Reflecting on Genesis 2:8-15, Henry remarks that even the first man was called to work. God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to keep it; "He put him there, not like Leviathan into the waters, to play therein, but to dress the garden and to keep it."⁶ "Paradise itself was not a place of exemption from work," notes Henry.⁷ He goes on to add,

We were none of us sent into the world to be idle. He that made us these souls and bodies has given us something to work with; and he that gave us this earth for our habitation has made us something to work on . . . ; he that gave us being has given us business, to serve him and our generation, and to work out our salvation: if we do not mind our business, we are unworthy of our being and maintenance.⁸

In Solomon's command in Proverbs 27:23—"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds"—Henry observes that that command implies that "we ought to have some business to do in this world and not to live in idleness."⁹

Henry gleans from the narratives of the OT that all people—rich or poor, gifted or non-gifted, believer or non-believer—are called to work. No one is exempt. Commenting on Genesis 2:8-15, Henry notes that if anything such as a good family lineage, or a large domain, or sinlessness, or "a genius for pure contemplation," could "have given a man a writ of ease" then Adam would have been exempt from work, for before he sinned he had it all.¹⁰ However, God placed Adam in the garden to tend it; Adam was called to work. Henry notes that even Cain and Abel, who "were heirs apparent to the world, their birth noble and their possessions large, yet they were not brought up in idleness."¹¹ Henry comments on Noah planting a vineyard after exiting the ark, "Though Noah was a great man and a good man, an old man and a rich man, a man greatly favoured by heaven and honoured on earth, yet he would not live an idle life."¹²

In his comments on Deuteronomy 28:8—"The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto"—Henry continues to emphasize that all people are called to work. The context of Deuteronomy 28:8 is the blessings promised to Israel in her obedience to God. Henry argues that the clause "in all that thou settest thine hand unto" implies that even when the Israelites were rich they were not to be idle, "but must find some good employment or

other to set their hand to, and God would own their industry.”¹³ Even ministry does not exempt a person from work. Henry calls attention to the sons of the prophets in 2 Kings 6:1-7, who entreated Elisha that they might work to improve their house. Henry writes, “As the sons of the prophets must not be so taken up with contemplation as to render themselves unfit for action, so much less must they so indulge themselves in their ease as to be averse to labour ... Let no man think an honest employment either a burden or disparagement.”¹⁴

God's Providence in Work

Henry contends that God ordains the job or the station in life for each person. He indicates this when he comments on Adam's work in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:8-15: “There is a true pleasure in the business which God calls us to, and employs us in.”¹⁵ Henry maintains that God's providence is over the call of the minister and the public servant, as he demonstrates in his comments on the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon (1 Kgs 10:1-13): “Those whom God has called to any public employment, particularly in the magistracy and ministry.”¹⁶ Yet, Henry also extends God's providence to all honorable work. In his remarks on Joseph's slavery in Potiphar's house (Gen 39:1-6) Henry writes, “Providence is to be acknowledged in the disposal even of poor servants and in their settlements.”¹⁷ Reflecting on Joseph acquiring the land of Goshen for his family to settle and tend sheep (Gen 46:28-34), Henry notes that Joseph could have obtained for his brothers any employment in Egypt; yet, they remained shepherds. Henry exhorts his readers, “Whatever employment or condition God, in his providence, has allotted for us, let us accommodate ourselves in it, and satisfy ourselves with it.”¹⁸ In his observation on Ecclesiastes 5:18-20, Henry encourages his readers to delight “in the calling wherein God has put us.”¹⁹ God, contends Henry, is sovereign over all peoples' employment.

As is evident in the quotes above, Henry encourages his readers to be content in the place God has put them; however, he does maintain that God may place a person into a new occupation. At times, God may call a person to suspend one's current employment to temporarily serve in a new line of work, only to return to his former employment at a later period. Note Henry's comments on Noah in Genesis 9:18-23.

Henry observes that after leaving the ark, Noah "returned to his old employment, from which he had been diverted" by the building of the ark and the resettling of his family.²⁰ In light of Noah's situation Henry writes, "Though God by his providence may take us off from our callings for a time, yet when the occasion is over we ought with humility and industry to apply ourselves to them again, and, in the calling wherein we are called, faithfully to *abide with God*."²¹ At other times, God may call a person to a particular work, but temporarily place him in a different occupation to prepare him for his calling. For instance, Henry observes in Exodus 3:1-6 that Moses was "confined to obscurity" as a shepherd before God directed him to lead Israel out of Egypt. Henry writes, "Let those that think themselves buried alive be content to shine like lamps in their sepulchres, and wait till God's time come for setting them on a candlestick."²² No matter the situation, Henry exhorts his readers to recognize God's providence and to faithfully work.

While Henry acknowledges God's providence in a person's employment, he also contends that a person has the responsibility to seek and choose his profession. In Genesis 4:1-2, Henry notes that Abel chose to be a shepherd, an "employment which most befriended contemplation and devotion."²³ Henry goes on to add that there are things to consider when choosing a vocation: "That calling or condition of life is best for us, and to be chosen by us, which is best for our souls, that which least exposes us to sin and gives us most opportunity of serving and enjoying God."²⁴ Henry also highlights the responsibility of man in his exposition of Deuteronomy 28:1-14. In this passage Moses promises Israel that God will bless their obedience. Henry focuses on verse 8—"the Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto." Henry remarks that Deuteronomy 28:8 indicates that Israel must not be idle, even though they were rich and blessed, and "must find some good employment or other to set their hand to, and God would own their industry."²⁵ Israel still had a responsibility to seek work.

Not only is man to seek work, but Henry insists that man also has a responsibility to raise his children to work. Commenting on Cain's and Abel's professions in Genesis 4:1-2, Henry remarks that parents have a duty to "bring up their children to business."²⁶ Henry then goes on to quote a certain Mr. Dod, "'Give them a Bible and a calling (said good

Mr. Dod), and God be with them.’”²⁷ In his exposition of Genesis 37:1-4, Henry comments on Joseph who, although was favored by his father Jacob, still worked as a shepherd. Jacob, argues Henry, did not raise his son to be idle. Henry writes,

Though he [Joseph] was his father’s darling, yet he was not brought up in idleness or delicacy. Those do not truly love their children that do not inure them to business, and labour, and mortification. The fondling of children is with good reason commonly called the spoiling of them. Those that are trained up to do nothing are likely to be good for nothing.²⁸

Although God is provident over a person’s work, Henry places a great responsibility upon parents to raise their children to work.

According to Henry, therefore, God calls all people to work, no matter one’s station in life. Henry encourages his readers to be content in their work as God has providentially placed them in the very labor they have chosen to set their hand to. However, God may temporarily suspend a person’s work in order to accomplish another task, or He may temporarily keep a person from his calling in order to prepare him. Furthermore, because God ordains work and providentially calls people to their work, all honorable work is of God and must not be despised.

2. Honest Work is Not to be Despised

Throughout his comments on the narratives of the OT, Henry impresses upon his readers the attitude towards work many faithful Israelites exhibited. Taking these examples into account, Henry emphasizes that no manner of honest labor—shepherd, tradesman, husbandman, craftsman, etc.—should be despised by any person. Henry exempts no one; Henry addresses noblemen, ministers, kings, men and women alike. No person is above any kind of honest labor.

The Individual and Work

In his commentary on Genesis 29:9-14, Henry focuses on the phrase “she kept her father’s sheep” in verse 9, noting that Rachel likely had servants under her and yet she worked to care for her father’s sheep. Henry writes, “Honest useful labour is that which nobody needs be

ashamed of.”²⁹ Although Rachel was likely in an elevated position, she did not despise her work. Even young David, after slaying Goliath, does not shy away from declaring that he is a shepherd when King Saul inquires of his work (1 Sam 17:31-39). “He is not ashamed to own that he kept his father’s sheep, which his brother had just now upbraided him with,” observes Henry. Henry goes on to note, “So far is he from concealing it that from his employment as a shepherd he fetches the experience that now animated him.”³⁰ Far from being a source of shame for David, his experience as a shepherd served him well in his fight against Goliath. According to Henry, no one is to be ashamed of his or her work, even when standing before a king.

Henry even exhorts his readers to not despise the honest labor of others. Concerning God’s appointment of Bezaleel to lead the work on the Tabernacle (Exod 31:1-11), Henry maintains that the family of Bezaleel was greatly honored even though he was employed “as a mechanic, or handicraft tradesman, for the service of the tabernacle.”³¹ Bezaleel’s work on the tabernacle offered no less honor to his family and himself than the work of the Levites. Furthermore, Henry highlights Joseph’s attitude towards his brothers, who were shepherds, when Joseph gains from Pharaoh the land of Goshen (Gen 46:28-34). Even though the Egyptians despised shepherds, Joseph “would have them to continue shepherds, and not to be ashamed to own that as their occupation before Pharaoh.”³² Henry continues, “An honest calling is no disparagement, nor ought we to account it so either in ourselves or in our relations, but rather reckon it a shame to be idle, or to have nothing to do.”³³ Family members are not to be ashamed of or despise the honest labors of fellow family members. Honor comes to a person and to a family when a person faithfully performs his duty in work, not in the type of work.

Kings, Ministers, and Nobles and Work

Henry also addresses those in a position of leadership or authority—nobles, ministers, kings—exhorting them to value all honest work. When Elijah calls Elisha, Henry emphasizes that Elijah found Elisha “not in the schools of the prophets, but *in the field*, not reading, nor praying, nor sacrificing, but *ploughing*.”³⁴ Henry surmises that Elisha was a wealthy man, basing his conjecture on the feast mentioned in verse 21. Henry

writes of Elisha, “Though a great man (as appears by his feast, v. 21), master of the ground, and oxen, and servants, yet he did not think it any disparagement to him to follow his business himself, and not only to inspect his servants, but himself to lay his hand to the plough. Idleness is no man’s honour, nor is husbandry any man’s disgrace.”³⁵ In 2 Chronicles 26:1-15, Henry calls attention to King Uzziah and his love of husbandry (v. 10). Henry stresses that Uzziah did not hold himself above inspecting “his affairs in the country, which was no disparagement to him, but an advantage, as it encouraged industry among his subjects.”³⁶ Henry goes on to add, “It is an honour to the husbandman’s calling that one of the most illustrious princes of the house of David followed it and loved it.”³⁷

Furthermore, Henry exhorts ministers to follow the example of Eliashib the high priest in Nehemiah 3:1, who, along with his fellow priests, rebuilt the sheep gate. Henry writes,

Ministers should be foremost in every good work; for their office obliges them to teach and quicken by their example, as well as by their doctrine. If there be labour in it, who so fit as they to work? . . . The dignity of the high priest was very great, and obliged him to signalize himself in this service.³⁸

Henry finds another positive example of ministers and work in 2 Kings 6:1-7. In this passage the sons of the prophets entreat Elisha, requesting permission to improve their housing. Henry writes,

They were industrious men, and willing to take pains. They desired not to live, like idle drones (idle *monks*, I might have said), upon the labours of others, but only desired leave of their president to work for themselves. As the sons of the prophets must not be so taken up with contemplation as to render themselves unfit for action, so much less must they so indulge themselves in their ease as to be averse to labour . . . Let no man think an honest employment either a burden or a disparagement.³⁹

Against these positive examples of ministers and kings at work Henry sets the negative example of the noblemen of the Tekoites in Nehemiah 3:5. This verse reads, “And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.” Henry writes,

Here is a just reproach fastened upon the nobles of Tekoa, that they *put not their necks to the work of their Lord* (v. 5), that is, they would not come under the yoke of an obligation to this service; as if the dignity and liberty of their peerage were their discharge from serving God and doing good, which are indeed the highest honour and the truest freedom. Let not nobles think any thing below them by which they may advance the interests of their country; for what else is their nobility good for but that it puts them in a higher and larger sphere of usefulness than that which inferior persons move?⁴⁰

Henry clearly holds those in a privileged or leadership position to a high standard. Their position does not exclude them from work, and neither should those in higher positions spurn any kind of work. Rather, leaders or those in privileged positions should set the example by doing all kinds of honest labor; furthermore, their work benefits those under their care.

Henry and Husbandry

Henry's insistence on the dignity of all honest labor is made most clear in his numerous statements on husbandry.⁴¹ Henry often praises the husbandman and his occupation, urging his readers to not despise this calling. Henry holds husbandry in higher favor compared to other occupations and stresses its importance. Henry's insistence on the honor of husbandry is likely due to the fact that he thought that husbandry was despised in his day. Notice his comments on Genesis 4:1-2. In this passage Henry observes that Cain's and Abel's work was that of husbandmen. Husbandry, contends Henry, is "a needful calling, for *the king himself is served of the field*, ... It is now looked upon as a mean calling."⁴² Henry cites Jeremiah 53:16, "*the poor of the land serve for vine-dressers and husbandmen*," attributing the sentiment to Henry's peers.⁴³ Although Henry's contemporaries may have despised husbandry, Henry's comments give the impression that it is the preferred occupation.

Henry demonstrates the honor of husbandry through the lives of several illustrious men of the OT. In Genesis 2:8-15 Henry notes that husbandry was the ideal occupation for the sinless Adam. "It was a calling fit for a state of innocency," Henry remarks, "making provision for life, not for lust, and giving man an opportunity of admiring the Creator and acknowledging his providence: while his hands were about his trees, his heart might be with his God."⁴⁴ Henry also holds up Noah as an example,

observing that Noah—after he left the ark—tended the vine and did not “think the husbandman’s calling below him.”⁴⁵ Even King Uzziah loved and did not despise husbandry (2 Chr 26:1-15). Henry writes of Uzziah,

It is an honour to the husbandman’s calling that one of the most illustrious princes of the house of David followed it and loved it. He was not one of those that delight in war, nor did he addict himself to sport and pleasure, but delighted in the innocent and quiet employments of the husbandman.⁴⁶

Lastly, Henry commends Elisha, for though he was a great man, he did not shun husbandry (1 Kgs 19:19-21). Henry reflects on Elisha the husbandman, “Idleness is no man’s honour, nor is husbandry any man’s disgrace.”⁴⁷ That these great men of the OT saw fit to be husbandmen supports Henry’s statements that honest work of all kinds should not be despised.

Furthermore, Henry asserts that husbandry is a necessity; people spurn husbandry to their own detriment. Reflecting on Proverbs 14:4—“Where no oxen *are*, the crib *is* clean: but much increase *is* by the strength of the ox”—Henry writes, “The neglect of husbandry is the way to poverty.”⁴⁸ Henry goes on to explain, “*Where no oxen are*, to till the ground and tread out the corn, *the crib is empty, is clean*; there is no straw for the cattle, and consequently no bread for the service of man.”⁴⁹ Henry, focusing on the clean crib, chastises those who are unwilling to engage in the dirty work of husbandry:

The crib indeed is clean from dung, which pleases the neat and nice, that cannot endure husbandry because there is so much dirty work in it, and therefore will sell their oxen to keep the crib clean; but then not only the labour, but even the dung of the ox is wanted. This shows the folly of those who addict themselves to the pleasures of the country, but do not mind the business of it, who (as we say) keep more horses than kine, more dogs than swine; their families must needs suffer by it.⁵⁰

According to Henry’s exposition on Proverbs 24:30-34, the earth would be a wilderness without husbandry. In this passage Solomon observes “the field of the slothful” and offers words on idleness. Henry comments on verse 31—which describes the field overgrown with thorns and the stone wall broken down:

See what a blessing to the world the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this earth, even Canaan itself, would be without it. The king himself is served of the field, but he would be ill served if God did not teach the husbandman discretion and diligence to clear the ground, plant it, sow it, and fence it.⁵¹

Such a needed occupation should not be despised.

In two instances Henry contends that husbandry is actually a more attractive occupation compared to others. First, commenting on Abel's choice to be a shepherd in Genesis 4:1-2, Henry notes that "Abel chose that employment which most befriended contemplation and devotion, for to these a pastoral life has been looked upon as being peculiarly favourable. Moses and David kept sheep, and in their solitudes conversed with God."⁵² Second, reflecting on Genesis 49:13-21, Henry maintains that husbandry is the most restful occupation. The context of Genesis 49:13-21 is Jacob's prophecy concerning Issachar. Verse 14 states that Issachar is a donkey "couching down between two burdens." According to Henry, the two burdens are cultivating the land and tribute.⁵³ Verse 15 states that Issachar saw that "rest *was* good, and the land that *it was* pleasant." Henry writes, "The labour of the husbandman is really rest, in comparison with that of soldiers and seamen, whose hurries and perils are such that those who tarry at home in the most constant service have no reason to envy them."⁵⁴

While many people spurn husbandry, Henry argues that the OT honors husbandry. Husbandry is not a source of shame, but of honor to the individual and to his family. Furthermore, people spurn husbandry to their own detriment, missing out on the necessities and benefits provided by and through this occupation. Henry's comments regarding husbandry supports his main point that all honorable work should not be despised.⁵⁵ Compare his comment in 1 Kings 10:14-29 regarding the tradesman, "This puts an honour upon the trading part of a nation, and sets a tradesman not so much below a gentleman as some place him, . . . In all labour there is profit."⁵⁶ All people are called to work, and God providentially places people in their occupations; therefore, no one should spurn honest labor.

3. God Provides Everything Needed for Work

The blessing of God on seemingly menial tasks is further evidenced

by God's provision of all that is necessary to carry out that task. Henry encourages his readers that God will equip them whether their job is a secular job or service in the ministry of God.

Henry maintains that the time Joseph spent serving in Potiphar's house was used by God to prepare him for the time he served under Pharaoh. Henry writes, "He was sold to an officer of Pharaoh, with whom he might get acquainted with public persons and public business, and so be fitted for the preferment for which he was designed."⁵⁷ Furthermore, Henry observes, "What God intends men for he will be sure, some way or other, to qualify them for."⁵⁸ Likewise with Moses, Henry remarks that Moses' time as a shepherd was a time that God prepared him to lead Israel (Exod 3:1-6).⁵⁹ Two things Henry notes that Moses learned during his time of shepherding were "meekness and contentment to a high degree, for which he is more celebrated in sacred writ for all his other learning."⁶⁰

Henry asserts that God provides all wisdom and skill for use in secular work. In Exodus 31:1-11 God tells Moses that He has filled Bezaleel "with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" for his work on the tabernacle (v. 3). God also filled Aholiab and "all that are wise hearted" with wisdom (v. 6). With reference to these verses, Henry remarks,

Skill in common arts and employments is the gift of God; from him are derived both the faculty and the improvement of the faculty. It is he that puts even this *wisdom into the inward parts*, ... He teaches the husbandman discretion ..., and the tradesman too; and he must have the praise of it.⁶¹

Bezaleel and Aholiab are reintroduced again in Exodus 35:30-35, and Moses declares to Israel that God had filled them with His Spirit. Henry writes, "Those whom God called by name to this service he *filled with the Spirit of God*, to qualify them for it, ... Skill in secular employments is God's gift, and comes from above."⁶² Henry then cites James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

Moreover, as illustrated with Moses in Exodus 3:1-6 above, God also equips those called to ministry. In Jeremiah 1:4-10, when God calls Jeremiah, Henry notes two things. First, Henry comments on verse 5, in

which God comforts Jeremiah stating that He had called Jeremiah while he was in the womb. Henry observes that "what God has designed men for he will call them to."⁶³ Second, Henry notes that the prophets and ministers "are by special counsel designed for their work, and what they are designed for they are fitted for."⁶⁴ God does not leave His servants to do His work without equipping them.

The minister, the shepherd, the farmer, the mechanic can rest assured that God has and will equip them with those things necessary to complete their work. God providentially places people in their employment and he also provides the means for that work.

4. Study is Necessary to Improve Work

Henry contends that while God calls people to work and provides for all that is necessary for work, a person still has a responsibility to improve his understanding and skill in his profession. Henry notes in Genesis 3:17-19 that the need for improvement is especially necessary due to the curse placed on the ground after the fall. Henry reflects, "That uneasiness and weariness with labour are our just punishment, which we must patiently submit to, and not complain of, since they are less than our iniquity deserves."⁶⁵ Although we do labor under the curse of sin, Henry exhorts his readers, "Let not us, by inordinate care and labour, make our punishment heavier than God has made it; but rather study to lighten our burden, and wipe off our sweat, by eyeing Providence in all and expecting rest shortly."⁶⁶ Henry's comment raises the question: What does he refer to when he commends his readers to study to lighten the burdens of work? Does Henry mean to study God's word in order to have a biblical perspective? Or, does Henry also include the exhortation to study one's profession in order to improve his labor? It would seem that both options are viable, as Henry makes several remarks about studying and growing in understanding in work.⁶⁷

Henry clearly exhorts his readers to study their respective professions. Proverbs 27:23 reads, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds." Henry reflects on this verse:

A command given us to be diligent in our callings. It is directed to husbandmen and shepherds, and those that deal in cattle, but it is to be extended to all other lawful

callings; whatever our business is, within doors or without, we must apply our minds to it. . . . We ought rightly and fully to understand our business, and know what we have to do, and not meddle with that which we do not understand.⁶⁸

Henry offers Jacob as an example. In Genesis 30:37-43, Moses chronicles Jacob taking rods from various trees in order to breed strong, spotted cattle. Due to his actions, Jacob grew in wealth. Henry reflects on Jacobs actions, “It becomes a man to be master of his trade, whatever it is, and to be not only industrious, but ingenious in it, and to be versed in all its lawful arts and mysteries.”⁶⁹ Henry also notes the ingenuity of Joseph’s brothers in Genesis 47:1-12. In verse 6 Pharaoh commands Joseph with regard to his brothers that if he “knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers” over his cattle. Concerning the “men of activity” Henry writes, “He [Pharaoh] offered them [Joseph’s brothers] preferment as shepherds over his cattle, provided they were men of activity; for it is the man who is diligent in his business that shall stand before kings. And, whatever our profession or employment is, we should aim to be excellent in it, and to prove ourselves ingenious and industrious.”⁷⁰

Henry also highlights worthy examples among non-Israelites. In Genesis 36:20-30 Moses lists the sons of Seir the Horite, among whom was Anah. Henry notes that this Anah was mentioned in v. 24 where it is told that he found mules in the desert and fed them. Anah is later called a duke in v. 29. Henry praises Anah, saying, “This Anah was not only industrious in his business, but ingenious too, and successful.”⁷¹ Henry also offers the Queen of Sheba as an example when she visits Solomon in 1 Kings 10:1-13. Henry writes,

She came to *hear his wisdom*, and thereby to improve her own (Matt. xii. 42), that she might be the better able to govern her own kingdom by his maxims of policy. Those whom God has called to any public employment, particularly in the magistracy and ministry, should, by all means possible, be still improving themselves in that knowledge which will more and more qualify them for it, and enable them to discharge their trust well.⁷²

Notice that Henry’s comments covers all workers in a wide range of positions. Henry exhibits no favoritism; just as all people are called to work, and to honor all lawful work, they are all to improve upon their work.

5. Work Benefits all People

Henry maintains that people should not only work to benefit themselves or their family only; an individual's work is a benefit to his neighbors. Moreover, Henry widens the scope of the merits of work to include the labor of nations. Work should be a blessing and a boon to all.

In his comments on Genesis 4:1-2, Henry comments on Cain's and Abel's choices of work: Cain a farmer, Abel a shepherd. Henry notes, "Their employments were different, that they might trade and exchange with one another, as there was occasion. The members of the body politic have need one of another."⁷³ Henry also points his readers to Jacob, who worked for his uncle and was faithful with his uncle's property (Gen 29:15-30). Henry writes, "Wherever we are, it is good to be employing ourselves in some useful business, which will turn to a good account to ourselves or others."⁷⁴ Jacob's labor was a benefit to Laban, which Laban readily recognized. In Exodus 36:1 Moses recounts Bezaleel, Aholiab, "and every wise hearted man" beginning the work on the tabernacle. Henry comments on these talented men, "Note, [t]he talents we are entrusted with must not be laid up, but laid out; not hid in a napkin, but traded with. What have we all our gifts for, but to do good with them?"⁷⁵

Consider also Henry's comments on Proverbs 10:16a, which reads, "The labour of the righteous *tendeth* to life." Henry observes that the righteous man "would enable himself to do good to others; he labours *that he may have to give* (Eph. iv. 28); all his business turns to some good account or other."⁷⁶ Against the positive example in Proverbs 10:16a, Henry comments on a negative example in Ecclesiastes 4:7-12. In this passage Solomon observes the vanity of the man who labors only for himself. Henry writes of "this covetous muckworm," "He has not consideration enough to show himself the folly of this. He never puts the question to himself, '*For whom do I labour* thus? Do I labour, as I should, for the glory of God, and that I may have to give to those that need?'"⁷⁷ The fool does not recognize that his labor is to benefit others in addition to himself.

In 1 Kings 9:15-28 Henry observes the benefit of one nation's work upon another. Verses 25 and 26 recount Solomon building a navy and Hiram sending his shipmen to Solomon. Henry conjectures that Solomon had worked with Hiram before, "or put a venture into his ships," and made

a profit off of the partnership.⁷⁸ With this money, Henry argues, Solomon built his navy. Henry then reflects on this passage, “The success of others in any employment should quicken our industry; for *in all labour there is profit*.”⁷⁹ Henry also praises Solomon’s trade with Egypt in 1 Kings 10:14-29: “This puts an honour upon the trading part of a nation, ... In all labour there is profit.”⁸⁰

Work is certainly meant to benefit the individual and his or her family. Henry expands the merit of labor to include the labor of nations. All are mutually benefitted by the labor of others. “In all labour there is profit.”⁸¹

6. The Difficulty of Work

While Henry recognizes the merits of work and God’s providence and provision in work, he does recognize the difficulty of labor. Henry teaches that after the fall of man work was cursed. As people labor in a cursed world, Henry encourages his readers to work with an eye to God, and to be faithful and content in one’s occupation.

Work is Difficult

The difficulty of work is clearly expressed in the book of Ecclesiastes. In Ecclesiastes 1:14 Solomon writes, “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Henry comments, “The works themselves which we see done are *vanity and vexation* to those that are employed in them. There is so much care in the contrivance of our worldly business, so much toil in the prosecution of it, and so much trouble in the disappointments we meet with in it, that we may well say, It is *vexation of spirit*.”⁸² In Ecclesiastes 1:3, Solomon asks, “What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?” Henry observes, “The business of the world is described. It is labour; the word signifies both care and toil. It is work that wearies men. There is constant fatigue in worldly business.”⁸³

Solomon’s language is particularly strong in Ecclesiastes 2:18: “Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.” Henry aptly explains what Solomon means by hating labor. He writes,

This expresses not a gracious hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion (Luke xiv. 26), nor a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned us and the work of it, but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them and a sense of disappointment in them.⁸⁴

Solomon simply expresses the frustration felt by all who labor under the curse. Furthermore, Henry's comments on Solomon's sayings evidences that, although he has a high view of work, work is difficult.

Work is Cursed by the Fall

Although work is hard, in Genesis 2:8-15 Henry indicates that work was never itself a curse; work was part of God's original design. "Paradise itself was not a place of exemption from work," writes Henry.⁸⁵ Adam's call to tend the Garden of Eden, according to Henry, "was a calling fit for a state of innocency" for it provided his needs and allowed for communion with God.⁸⁶ Henry goes on to observe that "Adam's work was so far from being an allay that it was an addition to the pleasures of paradise; he could not have been happy if he had been idle."⁸⁷ In Genesis 3:17-19 Henry writes, "His [Adam's] business, before he sinned, was a constant pleasure to him. [T]he garden was then dressed without any uneasy labour, and kept without any uneasy care."⁸⁸ Work was never a curse, but work was cursed.

After the fall Adam's work became difficult. Henry continues his comments on Genesis 3:17-19: "But now his labour shall be a weariness and shall waste his body; his care shall be a torment and shall afflict his mind. The curse upon the ground which made it barren, and produced thorns and thistles, made his employment about it much more difficult and toilsome."⁸⁹ Henry brings out the effect of the curse on work in his comments on Leviticus 25:1-7. In this passage God commands the sabbatical year; the land was to lie fallow in the seventh year. This command, argues Henry, reminds Israel "of the easy life man lived in paradise, ... Labour and toil came in with sin."⁹⁰ The difficulty mankind faces in work is due to the curse placed by God on the ground; however, God still calls all people to work.

Work With an Eye to God

In light of the difficulty of work in a fallen world, Henry offers much

in the way of exhortation to his readers to help ease the burden. Henry exhorts his readers to perform their work to the glory of God, and to keep in mind the believer's heavenly rest. Moreover, Henry reminds his readers that their work is to benefit others in addition to themselves.

In Genesis 2:8-15, Henry stresses that even Adam, who at that time had not sinned, was called to work. "Secular employments," writes Henry, "will very well consist with a state of innocency and a life of communion with God."⁹¹ He goes on to note if believers perform their work "with an eye to God, they are as truly serving him in it as when they are upon their knees."⁹² Henry reiterates this point in his comments on Ecclesiastes 2:26: "For *God* giveth to a man that *is* good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy." Henry explains that this verse intimates that the believer is to faithfully use the profits from his or her work. How a person uses their profits is more important than how to increase profit. "This," writes Henry, "is intimated in v. 26, where *those* only are said to have the comfort of this life who are good in *God's* sight, and again, good before God, ... We must set God always before us, and give diligence in every thing to approve ourselves to him."⁹³ In Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 Henry admonishes the "covetous muckworm" who only works for himself: "Do I labour, as I should, for the glory of God?"⁹⁴ As man receives his work from God, he should work unto God.

Henry also offers other counsel to aid the believer in bearing the difficulties of work. First, Henry reflects on Joseph's success in Potiphar's house (Gen 39:1-6), noting that "it is God's presence with us that makes all we do prosperous."⁹⁵ Henry continues, "Those that would prosper must therefore make God their friend; and those that do prosper must therefore give God the praise."⁹⁶ Second, Henry exhorts his readers to keep in mind the believer's heavenly rest. Expounding on Jacob's prophecy for Issachar (Gen 49:13-21), Henry writes, "Let us, with an eye of faith, see the heavenly rest to be good, and that land of promise to be pleasant; and this will make our present services easy, and encourage us to bow our shoulder to them."⁹⁷ Third, Henry exhorts his readers to work in heavenly things. While earthly work is important and needed, we must also work for that which is higher. Commenting on Ecclesiastes 5:9-17, Henry writes,

“If we labour in religion, the grace and comfort we get by that labour we may carry away in our hearts, and shall be the better for it to eternity; that is meat that endures. But if we labour only for the world, to fill our hands with that, we cannot take that away with us; we are born with our hands griping, but die with them extended, letting go what we held fast. So that, upon the whole matter, he may well ask, *What profit has he that has laboured for the wind?* Note, Those that labour for the world labour for the wind, for that which has more sound than substance, which is uncertain, and always shifting its point, unsatisfying, and often hurtful, which we cannot hold fast, and which, if we take up with it as our portion, will not more feed us than the wind, Hos. xii. 1. Men will see that they have *laboured for the wind* when at death they find the profit of their labour is all gone, gone like the wind, they know not whither.⁹⁸

According to Henry, work will be difficult, but an eye to God will ease the burden.

Faithfulness and Contentment in Work

Henry urges his readers to be faithful and content in their employment while they work with an eye to God. Whether one is placed in a humble occupation or one is in charge of another's affairs, faithfulness and contentment is expected of all. Moreover, Henry contends that the OT implies that workers are to be wise in the amount of labor they perform that they might rejoice in their labor.

Henry reminds his readers in Genesis 3:17-19 that difficulties in work “are our just punishment” as fallen sinners, “which we must patiently submit to, and not complain of, since they are less than our iniquity deserves.”⁹⁹ Commenting on the same passage Henry exhorts his readers to study to ease the burden of the curse; however, his charge to submit to “our just punishment” seems to indicate that not all difficulties will be alleviated. For example, Henry comments on Proverbs 6:6-11,

We must take pains, and labour in our business, yea, though we labour under inconveniences. Even *in summer*, when the weather is hot, the ant is busy in *gathering food* and laying it up, and does not indulge her ease, nor take her pleasure, as the grasshopper, that sings and sports in the summer and then perishes in the winter.¹⁰⁰

One will face difficulty simply by the weather conditions, notes Henry.

Henry also observes Jacob's endurance in hardships while he tended Laban's flocks in Genesis 31:36-42: "He stuck to his business, all weathers; and bore both heat and cold with invincible patience."¹⁰¹ Henry then applies the lesson of Jacob to business men and ministers: "Men of business, that intend to make something of it, must resolve to endure hardness. Jacob is here an example to ministers; they also are shepherds, of whom it is required that they be true to their trust and willing to take pains."¹⁰² Despite difficulties and hardships, Henry urges his readers to be faithful in their work.

Henry's view of God's providence in calling people to work has been discussed above. While Henry does contend that God can call a person from one occupation to another, the thrust of his remarks seem to indicate that God primarily calls a person to one occupation. In the following quotes, Henry urges his readers to be content in their calling and not to be given over to longing after other opportunities. Reflecting on Genesis 9:18-23 and Noah's return to the vineyard after the flood, Henry writes, "In the calling we are called, faithfully ... *abide with God*."¹⁰³ In Genesis 46:28-34 Joseph attains the land of Goshen for his brothers to live and shepherd. Henry observes, "It is generally best for people to abide in the callings that they have been bred to, and used to, ... Whatever employment or condition God, in his providence, has allotted for us, let us accommodate ourselves to it, and satisfy ourselves with it, and *not mind high things*."¹⁰⁴ Henry ends the comment from Genesis 46:28-34 with a quote from Romans 12:16, which reads, "*Be of the same mind toward one another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*" Henry seems to intimate that one should not think too highly of himself, thinking himself above or overqualified for his current employment.¹⁰⁵ Henry points to Moses as an example in Exodus 3:1-6. Moses labored as a shepherd as God prepared him to lead Israel. Henry writes, "In the calling to which we are called we should abide, and not be given to change."¹⁰⁶

Henry clearly indicates that faithfulness and contentment should be exhibited no matter one's work situation. In Genesis 31:36-42 Henry highlights Jacob's faithfulness and contentment even though the flocks he tended were not his own. "Servants should take no less care of what they are entrusted with for their masters than if they were entitled to it as

their own," Henry writes.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Jacob "was very honest, and took none of that for his own eating which was not allowed him. He contented himself with mean fare, and coveted not to feast upon the rams of the flock."¹⁰⁸ Henry also offers young David as an example, who declared to King Saul that he was a shepherd (1 Sam 17:31-39). Henry observes, "Whatever our profession or calling is, be it ever so mean, we should labour to excel in it, and do the business of it in the best manner."¹⁰⁹ Notice Henry's comment on Proverbs 27:18: "Though the calling be laborious and despicable, yet those who keep to it will find there is something to be got by it."¹¹⁰ Faithfulness and contentment should be exhibited no matter the work situation.

Henry also instructs his readers that a part of being faithful and content is being mindful of not overworking. In Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 Henry writes, "We must neither over-toil ourselves, so as, in pursuit of more, to rob ourselves of the comfort of what we have, nor must we over-hoard for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoyment of what we have to lay it up for those that shall come after us, but serve ourselves out of it first."¹¹¹ Notice also his comments in Ecclesiastes 5:18-20:

We must not do the business of our calling as a drudgery, and make ourselves slaves to it, but we must *rejoice in our labour*, not grasp at more business than we can go through without perplexity and disquiet, but take a pleasure in the calling wherein God has put us, and go on in the business of it with cheerfulness.¹¹²

Work will be difficult, but Henry exhorts his readers that no matter the occupation to keep their eyes to God, to be faithful and content, and to not overwork. With this biblical perspective it "will make our present services easy, and encourage us to bow our shoulder to them."¹¹³

CONCLUSION

Although he does not set out his teaching systematically, Matthew Henry presents a well-developed doctrine of work in his OT commentaries. Henry teaches that all people are called by God to work and that all people are to improve upon their work so that they may be a benefit to themselves and to others. Furthermore, Henry teaches that since God providentially places people in their work, no honest labor is to be

despised. He encourages his readers to ease the burden of the curse on work by laboring with an eye to God.

Believers today would do well to consider what Henry has to offer towards a biblical understanding of work. Henry's insistence on the dignity of all honorable labor helps correct a tendency among those in ministry or the workforce to favor certain jobs while despising others. While American laborers enjoy a freedom of mobility in employment, Henry's comments on contentment and God's providence in work certainly places a check on the temptation to search for that elusive "better opportunity." Veith is correct to observe the church's need to recover the doctrine of work. Rediscovering Matthew Henry and his teaching of work is a step towards recovery.

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1. Gene Edward Veith Jr., *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 16.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid., 23.
 4. Allan Harman, *Matthew Henry: His Life and Influence* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2012), 150.
 5. In his first plenary address at the Southeast Regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Veith noted that Calvin's and the Puritans' teachings on vocation primarily focused on economic labor. Gene Veith, "Human Work and God's Work in Vocation" (lecture presented at the annual Southeast Regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, March 17, 2017). While Henry was greatly influenced by the Reformers and the Puritans, the author of this article did not seek to verify Veith's claim with regard to Henry.
 6. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 Vols (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing, 1985), 1:16.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Ibid., 1:16-17.
 9. Ibid., 3:951. All quotations from Scripture are from the KJV. Henry bases his commentaries on the KJV and often weaves quotations from the KJV into his sentences.
 10. Ibid., 1:16.
 11. Ibid., 1:36.
 12. Ibid., 1:72.
 13. Ibid., 1:838.
 14. Ibid., 2:739.
 15. Ibid., 1:17.
 16. Ibid., 2:628.
 17. Ibid., 1:221.
 18. Ibid., 1:250.
 19. Ibid., 3:1011.
 20. Ibid., 1:72.
 21. Ibid., 1:73. Italics are original and are a quote from 1 Cor 7:24.
 22. Ibid., 1:280.
 23. Ibid., 1:37.
 24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 1:838.
26. Ibid., 1:36.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 1:212.
29. Ibid., 1:175.
30. Ibid., 2:375.
31. Ibid., 1:404.
32. Ibid., 1:250.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 2:685. Italics are original. The second italicized phrase is a quote from 1 King 20:19.
35. Ibid., 2:685.
36. Ibid., 2:987.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 2:1076.
39. Ibid., 2:739.
40. Ibid., 2:1076-77.
41. *The New Oxford American Dictionary* defines 'husbandry' as "the care, cultivation, and breeding of crops and animals." *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, s.v. "Husbandry." In his comments on Gen 4:1-2, Henry notes that both the employment of Abel (shepherd) and of Cain (farmer) "belonged to the husbandman's calling" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:36).
42. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:36. The italics are original and are a quote from Eccl 5:9.
43. Ibid., 1:36. The italics are original.
44. Ibid., 1:17.
45. Ibid., 1:72-73.
46. Ibid., 2:987.
47. Ibid., 2:685.
48. Ibid., 3:867.
49. Ibid., 3:867. Italics are original and are quotes from Prov 14:4.
50. Ibid. Italics are original and are quotes from Prov 14:4.
51. Ibid., 3:934. Italics original and are a quote from Eccl 5:9.
52. Ibid., 1:37.
53. Ibid., 1:262.
54. Ibid.
55. See his comments on Prov 27:23-27 (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 3:951).
56. Ibid., 2:630.
57. Ibid., 1:220.
58. Ibid., 1:220-21.
59. Ibid., 1:280.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 1:404. Italics are original and a quote of Job 38:36.
62. Ibid., 1:433-34.
63. Ibid., 4:400.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 1:32.
66. Ibid.
67. Henry's quotes about working with a biblical perspective will be discussed below.
68. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 3:951.
69. Ibid., 1:183.
70. Ibid., 1:251.
71. Ibid., 1:211.
72. Ibid., 2:628.
73. Ibid., 1:36.
74. Ibid., 1:176.
75. Ibid., 1:434.
76. Ibid., 3:846.
77. Ibid., 3:1003. Italics are original and are a quote of Eccl 4:8

78. Ibid., 2:627.

79 Ibid. Italic are original; the italicized words are a quote from Prov 14:23.

80. Ibid., 2:630.

81. Ibid.

82 Ibid., 3:986. Italics are original and are a quote from Eccl 1:14.

83 Ibid., 3:982. Italics are original and are a quote from Eccl 1:3.

84 Ibid., 3:992.

85 Ibid., 1:16.

86 Ibid., 1:17.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., 1:32.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., 1:545-46.

91 Ibid., 1:17.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid., 3:994. Italics are original. The first italicized phrase may be a paraphrase of Deut 12:28. The second italicized phrase is a quote from Eccl 1:26.

94 Ibid., 3:1003.

95 Ibid., 1:221.

96 Ibid., 1:221.

97 Ibid., 1:262.

98 Ibid., 3:1011. Italics are original and, unless otherwise noted, is a quotation from Eccl 5:16.

99 Ibid., 1:32.

100 Ibid., 3:822. Italics are original. The first italicized phrase is likely a paraphrase of Prov 10:5. The second italicized phrase is a paraphrase of Prov 6:8.

101 Ibid., 1:189.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid., 1:73. Italics are original and are a quote from 1 Cor 7:24.

104 Ibid., 1:250. The italics are original and are a quote from Romans 12:16.

105 Consider Henry's comments on Rom 12:16. He writes, "*Mind not high things*. We must not be ambitious of honour and preferment [advancement; recognition], nor look upon worldly pomp and dignity with any inordinate value or desire, but rather with a holy contempt ... *Condescend to men of low estate*—... *First*, It may be meant of *mean things*, to which we must condescend. If our condition in the world be poor and low, our enjoyments coarse and scanty, our employments despicable and contemptible, yet we must bring our minds to it, and acquiesce in it ... Be reconciled to the place which God in his providence hath put us in, whatever it be" (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6:463. Italics original and are generally a quote from Rom 12:16.).

106 *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:280.

107 Ibid., 1:189.

108 Ibid., 1:189.

109 Ibid., 2:375.

110 Ibid., 3:949.

111 Ibid., 3:994.

112 Ibid., 3:1011. Italics are original and is a paraphrase of Eccl 5:19.

113 Ibid., 1:262.

Rules and Roles for Women: Vocation and Order in the Apostolic Fathers

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In the formative years between the time of the Apostles of Jesus and the Apologists of Christianity stand several texts which reflect the labor of early Church leaders as they attempted to outline acceptable ethics and what it meant to be the Christian Church. Long neglected, in recent decades scholars have turned to these writings—collectively called the Apostolic Fathers—with increased vigor and the recognition that these sources offer valuable insights into the post-New Testament era.¹ Many of the recent studies on the Apostolic Fathers address questions of church order and the construction of authority in these writings.² One realm which has received comparatively little attention, however, is the conceptions of women in the Apostolic Fathers. Studies of women in early Christianity have seen a tremendous growth since Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's publication of *In Memory of Her* in 1983.³ However, studies of women in the New Testament (NT), ordained women in early Christianity, and women in second through fifth century sources have received far more attention than conceptions of women in the Apostolic Fathers.⁴ The only substantial treatment of this topic comes in Christine Trevett's *Christian Women and the Time of the Apostolic Fathers*.⁵

Several factors contribute to this relative neglect. First, other areas of study

are intrinsically more interesting for those studying women or early Christianity, such as what the NT says about women. Second, the relative lack of source materials for this period necessarily limits studies of women in the Apostolic Fathers. As Trevett writes, “The process of writing this study of Christian women and the time of the Apostolic Fathers has involved collating and commenting on fragments of evidence from disparate sources.”⁶ Third, other areas of study contain more interesting materials for those seeking to understand the conceptions and roles of women in early Christianity. The greater attention paid to women in the “New Testament Apocrypha” may be easily explained, if only for the glaringly obvious reason that women play greater and more noteworthy roles in the various early Christian *Acta* than they do in the largely epistolary literature of the Apostolic Fathers.⁷ Unsurprisingly, the study of women in the Apostolic Fathers lags behind other areas of research.

This study begins to address this scholarly lacuna by examining several pericopes within the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers wherein these writings address women or employ female narrative characters. Although necessarily limited in scope (due to the length of this study) and implications (due to the disparate nature of the writings being examined) this project argues that for the Apostolic Fathers women possessed properly ordered roles which could include familial and visionary functions. The pericopes examined to support this thesis include instances where women are utilized as *paraenetic* examples for all Christians, models for the Church, possessing certain familial roles, serving local Church communities, and fulfilling visionary functions.

In order to properly understand conceptions of women in the Apostolic Fathers, one must consider not only the writings themselves but also the general context of the first and second centuries, including Greco-Roman and earlier Christian evidence.⁸ Of course, this attempt at contextualization becomes immediately problematized by the fact that, there was no “typical woman” or single female perspective in the ancient world, for a cacophony of social, political, economic, and religious factors defies the painting of a unified picture or situation of women.⁹ Speaking generally, however, some shards of evidence may be pieced together.

One starting point involves the *tutela impuberum*: a classical Roman law which placed orphaned under-aged children under a guardianship, a protection sometimes extended to unmarried daughters of majority.¹⁰ During the first century, this practice became increasingly rare, however, especially when

Claudius abolished the practice for women beyond puberty.¹¹ In its place arose the practice of *tutor*-ship, which was intended to protect the property rights of minors.¹² Of course, by no means may it be assumed that this practice was accepted everywhere, nor that it could be applied to poor families with little or no property. Nonetheless, Roman guardianships and tutors do suggest a general view of females that placed them under the care and authority of a male. Building on this, Kerstin Aspegren argues that even the terminology of “male” and “female” became embedded with assumptions of authority and ethics, with “woman” symbolizing imperfection and evil.¹³ How far beyond figurative literary portraits these ideas extended remains a matter for discussion elsewhere.

Early Christian conceptions of women are much debated. For some scholars, the Jesus Movement was a radically egalitarian golden age which was usurped and corrupted by the later establishment of church hierarchy.¹⁴ For others, the message of Christianity for women developed alongside the development of hierarchy and practice.¹⁵ For example, textual evidence suggests that some women held a form of church office (Rom 16:1, 7),¹⁶ rightly prophesied (Acts 21:8-9),¹⁷ read (possibly in a liturgical setting),¹⁸ and partook in the daily life of the Church, even suffering persecution.¹⁹ This complexity of factors and influences disallows the portrayal of a monolithic “situation of women” in the Greco-Roman and Christian worlds. What may be said, however, is that women occupied a place of tension in the ancient world, with prescriptive and lived realities rarely standing in unison. Women in Christianity held particularly “tense” positions, as ongoing development of church order, practice, and scriptural interpretation often stood at odds with the lived experiences and practices of Christian women. This complex situation forms the context for the writings of the Apostolic Fathers to which we now turn.

WOMEN IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Introductions to the Apostolic Fathers

Before engaging pericopes from the Apostolic Fathers regarding women, let me first briefly introduce the writings from which this evidence comes. Given the length and scope of this paper, these introductions are necessarily brief (and insufficient for a comprehensive examination of the Apostolic Fathers), standing as starting points for contextualizing and engaging these writings.

By far the longest and most important epistolary contribution to the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers is the *First Letter of Clement to the Corinthian Church*, commonly known as *First Clement*. Extant in two Greek manuscripts and several translations, *First Clement* was likely written by Clement of Rome during his time as bishop of Rome between 94 and 98 AD.²⁰ The letter primarily addresses a division in the Corinthian church in which presbyters had been forcibly deposed from their ecclesial offices and replaced, with Clement admonishing the church to reinstate the presbyters for the sake of unity, concord, and order.²¹

Although long identified with *First Clement*, the homily bearing the title *Second Clement* was almost certainly not composed by the same author.²² While a number of theories have been posited as to where *Second Clement* was composed, arguments concerning Rome and Corinth are most convincing due to the letter's quick association with *First Clement*.²³ The dating of *Second Clement* remains uncertain, although most scholars place it somewhere in the mid-second century.²⁴ *Second Clement* addresses a situation where ethical behavior has been threatened (10.5) although the specific cause of this ethical laxity remains uncertain.

While many Apostolic Fathers remain shrouded by history, Ignatius of Antioch has long been viewed as a vibrant and important character of the early Church. Written on the road to his martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius's seven authentic *Epistles* were written to churches in Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, Smyrna, and to Smyrnaean bishop Polycarp.²⁵ The precise dating of Ignatius's writing remains a mystery, although many scholars suggest his composition and death to have occurred between 108 and 117 AD.²⁶ The specific purposes of these letters vary somewhat due to the fact that they are written to different churches. Spanning each of his letters, however, are Ignatius's calls Christians to eschew Gnostic logic and Jewish exegesis, and to combat heresy and disorder through church order and obedience to the bishop.²⁷

Although portrayed in tradition as a prolific writer, the only authentic writing of Polycarp of Smyrna to have survived the viscidities of time is his *Epistle to the Philippians*.²⁸ Written from Smyrna, this letter's combination of *paraenesis*, advice, and admonishment was penned in response to a query (or set of queries) from the Philippian church.²⁹ Likely written shortly after the death of Ignatius, Polycarp's letter remains extant in a

number of manuscripts.³⁰ In all, Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* remains an immanently practical and pastoral letter, intent on providing answers to the Philippians' questions and showing the Smyrnaean bishop to be deeply involved in the central issues and challenges of his day.

Perhaps the most peculiar writing in the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers, the *Shepherd of Hermas* was highly popular among early Christians.³¹ Composed of five visions, twelve mandates, and ten similitudes, the author of this treatise remains unknown apart from their visionary character and likely location in Rome.³² Extant in numerous copies—a testament to its popularity—the dating of *Hermas* remains uncertain, with Osiek's judgment the most sound: "The best assignment of date is an expanded duration of time beginning perhaps from the very last years of the first century, but stretching through most of the first half of the second century."³³ Many commentators have viewed *Hermas* as something of an apocalyptic writing, with *Hermas's* visionary character, attendant responses to crisis, and strategic reshaping of the church supporting this view.³⁴ Perhaps most interesting is *Hermas's* use of female characters as revelatory agents, women who speak with, guide, encourage, and admonish Hermas.³⁵

These literary historical introductions to *First Clement*, *Second Clement*, the *Epistles* of Ignatius, Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas* in hand, this study now turns to consideration of references in these works to women and the conceptions therein.³⁶

Paraenetic Women in First Clement

Women's voices are not directly heard in *First Clement*, although several women do appear as characters in Clement's exhortations to the Corinthian church. While Trevett argues that Clement singled out the "uppity women" of Corinth, this seems unlikely for a couple of reasons.³⁷ First, Clement was highly familiar with Paul's writings, especially those to Rome and Corinth.³⁸ Yet nowhere does he invoke the authority of Paul concerning ordered and submissive women in the church, instead generally discussing the order of all.³⁹ Second, Clement felt free to utilize biblical women as models for concord and order among the entire community, not just among women. These *paraenetic* women include Lot's Wife, Rahab, Judith, and Esther.

*1 Clement 11.2*⁴⁰

“Lot’s wife was made a sign of this: for when she left with him but then changed her mind and fell out of harmony, she was turned into a pillar of salt until this day—so that everyone may know that those who are of two minds and who doubt the power of God enter into judgment and become a visible sign for all generations.”

Lot’s Wife is cited as a negative example of one who lives “double-mindedly,” someone who did not live in harmony with herself, her husband, or Yahweh. As a result, she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26) as a reminder to all of the perils of double mindedness. Trevett views this as a specific warning to those “uppity women” of Corinth, though it seems better understood as a warning to all who live out of harmony with themselves, their families, and God Almighty.⁴¹ Additionally, Lot’s Wife seems to be contrasted with Rahab (whose story follows immediately) as one who was not hospitable. This indicates that, for Clement, a lack of harmony and single mindedness will eventually result in a lack of hospitality, thus signaling to the exterior world the internal discord at work in the Corinthian church.

*1 Clement 12.1-8*⁴²

“Because of her faith and hospitality Rahab (φιλοξενίαν Παῖβ) the prostitute was saved from danger. . . . 3. And so, the hospitable Rahab brought them inside and hid them in the upper room under a pile of thatching straw. . . . 7. And they proceeded to give her a sign, that she should hang a piece of scarlet from her house—making it clear that it is through the blood of the Lord that redemption will come to all who believe and hope in God. 8. You see, loved ones, not only was faith found in the woman, but prophecy as well.”

Clement next regales his readers with the story of Rahab from Joshua 2. The φιλόξενος Παῖβ is named not only for her faith, but also for her hospitality, which following on the heels of Lot’s Wife’s inhospitable actions. This forms a stark contrast to Rahab’s own hospitable concord, not only with the spies, but also within herself and toward Yahweh. Clement’s source for Rahab’s faith—possibly James 2:25 or Hebrews 11:31—is not a direct concern here.⁴³ What is important here is how Rahab’s “sign” not only points to her faith, but also to her prophetic spirit. That is, Rahab’s

faith and hospitality not only commend in her own time, but stand as examples worthy of emulation throughout time due to her faithful witness.

*1 Clement 55.3-6*⁴⁴

“3. Many women were empowered by the gracious gift of God to perform numerous “manly” deeds (ἀνδρεῖα). 4. The blessed (ἡ μακαρία) Judith, when her city lay under siege, asked the elders for permission to go out to the foreigners’ camp. 5. And so she handed herself over to danger, going out because she loved her homeland and the people under siege. And the Lord handed Holofernes over to the hand of a female. 6. No less did Esther, a woman perfect in faith (τελεία κατὰ πίστιν), put herself in danger to rescue the twelve tribes of Israel who were about to perish. For through her fasting and humility she petitioned the all-seeing Master, the God of eternity, who saw the humbleness of her soul and rescued the people for whom she put herself in danger.”

Judith and Esther appear at the end of lengthy section of cultural and biblical models for right action before God.⁴⁵ These women’s ἀνδρεῖα, their “manly” deeds, are what Clement highlights.⁴⁶ Judith receives the title ἡ μακαρία, an appellation applied to the saints, because of the love of her homeland and people. Similarly, Esther, a woman τελεία κατὰ πίστιν, is held up as an example right action, which she completes with humility of soul and at the expense of her own danger. For both of these women, “manly” deeds and right action stand at the heart of their *paranetic* example, actions spurred on by love (of people and land) and faith in God.

In the end, Clement utilized biblical examples of women as exemplars for the Corinthians. In the instances of Lot’s Wife and Rahab, Clement exhorted the Corinthians toward interior and exterior harmony and the good fruits thereof, rather than the double-mindedness and discord which was plaguing that church. In the examples of Judith and Esther, Clement encourages the Corinthian community toward right action which is motivated by love and faith in God. For Clement, these women demonstrated proper disposition and order, making them worthy examples not only for Corinthian women, but for Corinthian men as well.

Christ and the Church in Second Clement

The section of *Second Clement* which most clearly references women has been called “undoubtedly the most complex part of the whole of the text

of 2 *Clement*.⁴⁸ Not only is the text itself not entirely certain at points, but the author's argument proves rather hard to follow.

2 *Clement* 14.2⁴⁹

"But I cannot imagine that you do not realize that the living church is the body of Christ. For the Scripture says, "God made the human male and female." The male is Christ, the female the church. And, as you know, the [books] and the apostles indicate that the church has not come into being just now, but has existed from the beginning. For it existed spiritually, as did our Jesus; but he became manifest here in the final days so that he might save us."

In this passage the author of *Second Clement* argues (perhaps against Gnostics⁵⁰) that the flesh and spirit do not stand in total opposition to one another, for "this flesh is able to receive such a great and incorruptible life when the Holy Spirit clings to it" (2 *Clem.* 14.5).⁵¹ The natures of Christ and the Church both possess a dual nature of flesh and spirit, which for this author reinforces the importance of "fleshly" ethical behavior among Christians.⁵² Male and female are brought into the discussion as an image of the "body of Christ," Christ's relationship with the Church. After citing Genesis 1:17, *Second Clement* seems to take Paul's language in Ephesians 5:23-32 and interpret it quite broadly.⁵³ For not only is Christ preexistent, but his bride (the Church) is as well.⁵⁴ Not only are Christ (male) and the Church (female) fleshly but they are entirely spiritual as well. Therefore, women, just like men, reside within the jointly flesh-and-spirit Church as Christ's preexistent bride. Of course, to get to that specific conception of women *Second Clement's* readers would have needed to look past the rest of this confusing passage. While the conception of women at work here ultimately seems positive, it resides behind too many mixed images and too much muddled elaboration for much meaning to have seeped through. Ultimately, however, this passage's affirmation of fleshly bodies and the female Church positively reinforces the idea that women constitute an important part of the Church body.

Familial Expectations in Ignatius and Polycarp

While the Apostolic Fathers by-and-large eschew the household codes which are so prevalent in Pauline and post-Pauline literature, Ignatius's

Epistle to Polycarp and *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians* each contain a section reminiscent of Greco-Roman household duties.

Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp 4.1⁵⁵

"Do not allow the widows (χήραι) to be neglected. After the Lord, it is you who must be mindful of them. Let nothing be done apart from your consent, and do nothing apart from God. You are already acting in this way. Be imperturbable."

Having completed his admonitions to Polycarp regarding more urgent matters, Ignatius touches on several areas of church life. First he mentions care of the χήραι, for which Ignatius had considerable precedent (Acts 6:1; 9:39, 41; Jas 1:27; 1 Tim 5:9-16), although this passage has sometimes been viewed as Ignatius's corruption of the egalitarian nature of the Jesus Movement and the beginnings of the gradual patriarchalism of the church.⁵⁶ Esther Yue has sufficiently problematized this conception of Ignatius and suggested that these remarks should be read in a context of admonishment against heresy, not the development of patriarchy.⁵⁷ Ignatius's concern for the widows here seems to be two-fold. Initially, as Grant notes, the bishop seems to be fulfilling some semi-legal role.⁵⁸ This may be a reference to the Roman practice of *tutor*-ship or (more likely) the invocation of apostolic command. Additionally, Ignatius's reminder to "let nothing be done apart from your consent, and do nothing apart from God. You are already acting in this way" ... seems to indicate that in some locales there may have been some groups behaving contrary to their bishops.⁵⁹ Who, where, and whence this might be remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that Ignatius deems the widows (as with all other Christians) to owe obedience to the bishop as Christ's representative on earth.

Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp 4.3⁶⁰

"Do not be arrogant towards male and female slaves, but neither let them become haughty; rather, let them serve even more as slaves for the glory of God, that they may receive a greater freedom from God. And they should not long to be set free through the common fund, lest they be found slaves of passion (δοῦλοι ἐπιθυμίας)."

The second issue that Ignatius discusses involves slavery, where he avoids encouraging manumission, instead calling slaves to "serve even

more as slaves for the glory of God.” Ignatius values freedom in God, rather than social and physical freedom, and suggests that Polycarp admonish the slaves—presumably both male and female—accordingly. The connection between slaves yearning for freedom and the potential for them to become δοῦλοι ἐπιθυμίας is not immediately clear. At stake could be the desire of money (since such persons would likely only receive their freedom from the common fund of the church, as Ignatius notes) or desire itself. Given Ignatius’s general approach to desire and celibacy, it seems more likely that love of money was the greater issue at stake here, although this position should be held tentatively.

*Ignatius’s Epistle to Polycarp 5.1*⁶¹

“Instruct my sisters to love the Lord and to be satisfied (ἀρκεῖσθαι) with their husbands in flesh and spirit. So too enjoin my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loves the church.”

Next Ignatius instructs Polycarp on how to encourage wives and husbands in their marriages. The guiding principle for the sisters seems to be satisfaction (ἀρκεῖσθαι) both in terms of flesh and spirit.⁶² Husbands are given the command from Ephesians 5:25, 29, to love their wives as the Lord loves the Church. While Schoedel suggests that these commands are given primarily as a means of communal definition and boundary marking, it seems just as likely that Ignatius’s thought—so formed by Pauline precedents—found it natural to speak about the relationship between husbands and wives after having discussed other social issues.⁶³ As is his custom, Ignatius concludes his remarks by admonishing Polycarp to make marriage the concern of the bishop, thereby ensuring that proper interaction and order persist in Smyrna.

*Ignatius’s Epistle to Polycarp 5.2*⁶⁴

“If anyone is able to honor the flesh of the Lord by maintaining a state of purity, let him do so without boasting. If he boasts, he has been destroyed, and if it becomes known to anyone beyond the bishop, he is ruined. But it is right for men and women who marry to make their union with the consent of the bishop, that their marriage may be for the Lord and not for passion. Let all things be done for the honor of God.”

Finally, Ignatius mentions those who “honor the flesh of the Lord by maintaining a state of purity.” These seem to be celibates—likely distinct from widows—who viewed Christ’s celibacy as paradigmatic for their lives.⁶⁵ Ignatius does not seem directly opposed to these ascetics, although he clearly demarcates acceptable speech concerning their celibacy, namely, that anything other than informing the bishop of this practice makes it worthless. It would seem Ignatius’s anti-docetic tendencies—especially his view that the union of flesh and spirit mark the true Church (*IgnEph.* 8.2)—stand in contrast to later Christian celebrations of asceticism, virginity, and monasticism.⁶⁶ In the end Ignatius advocates two guards against improper (a)sexual relationships: the authority and blessing of the bishop and the honor of God.

It is noteworthy that Ignatius’s commands concerning households come in his letter to a fellow bishop. In coordination with the messages of his other letters, this suggests that his conception of a “top-down” church hierarchy was pervasive: the bishop had the right, indeed the duty, to oversee all social activities of the Christian community, whether those involved were widows, married, or celibate. Marriage, in particular, finds an emphasis here that—despite the brevity of his remarks—suggests Ignatius viewed it as an important characteristic of the Smyrnaean community. Indeed, central to the purposes of this entire “household code” is the formation of a Christian communal ethic built around mutuality among persons under the authority of the bishop.

If Ignatius’s remarks on household order are brief, then Polycarp’s are nearly non-existent, both in terms of length and the treatment given to them by existing scholarship.

Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians 5.3⁶⁷

“So too let the young men be blameless in all things, concerned above all else for their purity, keeping themselves in check with respect to all evil. For it is good to be cut off from the passions of the world, since every passion wages war against the spirit (πνεύματος), and neither the sexually immoral, nor the effeminate, nor male prostitutes will inherit the kingdom of God; nor will those who engage in aberrant behavior. Therefore we must abstain from all these things, and be subject to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ. And the virgins must walk in a blameless and pure conscience (συνειδήσει).”

Polycarp appears to have been far more concerned with the purity of young men than he was with the purity of young women, the latter appearing only as an afterthought in this citation.⁶⁸ The 1904 Oxford Committee concluded that Paul's language in 1 Corinthians stands behind this passage, which seems likely, although this does not account for the emphasis on male purity.⁶⁹ Paul Hartog suggests that the passage's intended audience was young men;⁷⁰ whether this was because of a particular problem among the men in Philippi, the assumption of the importance of virginal purity, or something else cannot be said with any degree of certainty. Polycarp goes somewhat further than Ignatius in his address, as he admonishes the young men to cut off all worldly passions. For Polycarp, not only outward action, but inward thought—*πνεύματος* and *συνειδήσει*—are the battleground of the passions. The solution to immorality and impure passions is both abstinence and the subjection of the self to the presbyters and deacons. While Ignatius's ever-present bishop has been replaced by lower church orders, the implications are basically the same: for Polycarp, purity of body and spirit among men and women alike should be done in fellowship with church hierarchy and order.

In the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp an emphasis on church order and hierarchy informs the presentation of household codes and reflections on purity. Whether the members of a Christian community are widows, slaves, married, celibate, young men, or (female) virgins, all of their actions should be orderly and honorably undertaken under the auspices of God and His regents on earth. For Ignatius, the bishop should be involved in the care, support, and affirmation of proper interpersonal interactions. For Polycarp, it is the presbyters and deacons who are to guard the purity of male and female body and spirit. For both, purity only exists through coordination, among individuals, spouses, and the authority of God invested in the Church.

Greetings in Ignatius and Polycarp

Although characteristically brief, epistolary greetings provide further insights into the contexts and conceptions of Ignatius and Polycarp regarding Christian women.⁷¹

*Ignatius's Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 13.1-2*⁷²

"I greet the households of my brothers, along with their wives and children, and the virgins who are called widows (τὰς παρθένους τὰς λεγομένας χήρας). I wish you farewell in the power of the Father. Philo, who is with me, greets you. 2. I greet the household of Tavia, whom I pray will be firm in faith and in a love that pertains to both flesh and spirit. I greet Alce, a name dear to me, and the incomparable Daphnus and Eutecnus, and all by name. Farewell in the gracious gift of God."

Ignatius's greetings are aimed primarily at two social groups within the community: the householders, along with their wives and children, and "the virgins who are called widows" (τὰς παρθένους τὰς λεγομένας χήρας). Grant suggests that this later group consisted of numerous actual widows along with some older women who had never actually been married, enrolled among the widows because of a shortage of widows to whom the church gave care.⁷³ More convincing is the possibility that virgins formed a distinct (and relatively large) subgroup in Smyrna by this early date and were entrusted with special responsibilities, much like groups of widows had been elsewhere.⁷⁴ In this view, Ignatius had likely received some special care from these virgins during his time in Smyrna, and this greeting was his way of offering special thanks to these virgins for their service. The names which follow are likely particular people whom Ignatius singled out for their particular faith and service in the Smyrnaean community. Tavia, which is otherwise unattested in the ancient world, may be a feminine form of the Latin Tavius.⁷⁵ Alce may be the same person mentioned in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17.2, which would make her a person of some standing. Whoever these women were, Ignatius honored them in his letter and in his prayers. *Ignatius's Epistle to Polycarp* 8.2-3⁷⁶

"I greet all by name, and the wife of Epitropus, along with the entire household of her and her children. I greet Attalus, my beloved. I greet the one who is about to be deemed worthy to go to Syria. God's grace will be with him constantly, and with Polycarp who sends him. 3. I bid you constant farewell in our God Jesus Christ. May you remain in him, in the unity and care that comes from God. I greet Alce, a name dear to me. Farewell in the Lord."

Ignatius's letter to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, may provide information which coordinates with the greetings from his letter to the general Smyrnaean congregation. Certainly Alce is mentioned again, reinforcing the possibility of her social standing, Ignatius's friendship with her, or both. Grant suggests that the wife of Epitropus serves as the head of her household and may be separated from her husband.⁷⁷ Given Ignatius's apparent closeness with the Smyrnaean community and propensity to use proper names, this designation is indeed curious. It could be that this woman is the aforementioned Tavia, which would accord with *Smyrnaeans*, although still leave unanswered the question of why Ignatius does not refer to her by name here. Regardless, this letter confirms what was seen in *Smyrnaeans*, that women held a place of importance and honor in the church of Smyrna. *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians* 14.1⁷⁸

"I am writing these things to you through Crescens, whom I commended to you recently [Or: when I was with you] and now commend again. For he has conducted himself blamelessly among us; and I believe that he will do the same among you. And his sister will be commended to you when she comes to you. Farewell in the Lord Jesus Christ in grace, with all who are yours. Amen."

Little can be said about this passage with certainty, other than the fact that Crescens, who bears this letter to Philippi and his unnamed sister, are commended to the church there.⁷⁹ It could be that Crescens and his sister were from Philippi and were returning home, that they were joint-messengers from Smyrna, that she will bring a second message to Philippi, or something else entirely. Given that she is unnamed and of secondary importance in this greeting, it may be that her purposes in travelling to Philippi were not directly concerned with the contents of this letter.

The letters of Ignatius and Polycarp were written employing fairly standard Greco-Roman epistolary conventions. Even more so, however, they were influenced by Pauline-modes of letter writing and communication, employing even Pauline sounding formulae and ways of talking about particular persons. In terms of what may be said about these letters' insights into the role and conception of women among the Apostolic Fathers, it may safely be said that certain women held positions of some standing (in at least Smyrna), including a group of "virgins called widows", households

apparently run by women, and individual women, perhaps of some social standing. Polycarp offers less information than that, simply confirming the fact that women travelled in the ancient world (Acts 18) and could serve as messengers (Rom. 16:1-2).

Some Visionary Women in Hermas

Perhaps no other piece of early Christian literature gives women such prominent and significant roles as does the *Shepherd of Hermas*.⁸⁰ Of course, the visionary character of *Hermas* allows commentators to conclude little about the meanings of the visions and even less about the lives of real Roman women. Nonetheless, an investigation of some women in *Hermas* reveals the revelatory authority that females could have for some early Christians. *Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 1.1.1-5*⁸¹

“The one who raised me sold me to a certain woman named Rhoda, in Rome. After many years, I regained her acquaintance and began to love her as a sister. 2. When some time had passed, I saw her bathing in the Tiber river; and I gave her my hand to help her out of the river. When I observed her beauty I began reasoning in my heart, “I would be fortunate to have a wife of such beauty and character.” This is all I had in mind, nothing else.... 4. While I was praying the sky opened up and I saw the woman I had desired, addressing me from heaven: “Hermas, greetings!” I looked at her and said, “Lady, what are you doing here?” 5. She replied to me, “I have been taken up to accuse you of your sins before the Lord.””

Hermas opens with the author’s recollection of Rhoda, a former owner and enchantress. Carolyn Osiek suggests that Hermas’s loving her “as a sister” indicates affection rather than eroticism (likely as a fellow Christian), although the bathing scene suggests erotic imagery.⁸² Sometime later, the earthly Rhoda was transformed into a heavenly messenger who appeared to Hermas in order to accuse him of sinfulness. While Hermas focused on his external actions, Rhoda emphasized the desires of the heart, encouraging Hermas’s contemplation and recognition of personal and communal sin.⁸³ Rhoda thus appeared to Hermas bringing a message of conviction, but most importantly, she also set the stage for his subsequent experiences with visionary women, forming the “bridge” between a woman revelator whom Hermas knew and the later revealers with whom he had no prior personal experience.

*Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 1.2.2-4.1*⁸⁴

“1.2 While I was mulling these things over in my heart and trying to reach a decision, I saw across from me a large white chair, made of wool, white as snow. And an elderly woman (γυνή πρεσβύτις) came, dressed in radiant clothes and holding a book in her hands. She sat down, alone, and addressed me, “Greetings, Hermas.” And I said, still upset and weeping, “Greetings Lady.” . . . 3.3 When she finished these words, she said to me, “Do you want to hear me read?” I replied to her, “Yes, Lady, I do.” She said to me, “Be a hearer and hear the glories of God.” I heard great and amazing matters that I could not remember. For all the words were terrifying, more than a person can bear. . . . 4.1 Then, when she finished reading and rose up from the chair, four young men came and took the chair and went away to the east.”

Hermas’s next vision introduced him to the character who served as his central guide until the end of *Vision* 4, an “elderly woman” (γυνή πρεσβύτις) bearing a book—the coming revelation. The true revelatory message for Hermas began when she reads this scroll.⁸⁵ The parallels with other apocalyptic revelatory material are difficult to miss here, especially 4 *Ezra* and the *Apocalypse* of John. This elderly woman—dressed in radiant clothes, on a white woolen throne, and clearly acting on behalf of the divine—brings her message on a scroll and reads its judgments.⁸⁶ Later, *Hermas* records that this woman appeared a year later, reading another “little book” (βιβλαρίδιον).⁸⁷ This γυνή πρεσβύτις becomes the regular revealer of Hermas’s visions before he learns her identity.

*Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 2.4.1-3*⁸⁸

“While I was sleeping, brothers, I received a revelation from a very beautiful young man, who said to me: “The elderly woman from whom you received the little book—who do you think she is?” “The Sibyl,” I replied. “You are wrong,” he said; “it is not she.” “Who then is it?” I asked. “The church,” he said. I said to him, “Why then is she elderly?” “Because,” he said, “she was created first, before anything else. That is why she is elderly, and for her sake the world was created.” 2. And afterward I saw a vision in my house. The elderly woman came and asked if I had already given the book to the presbyters. I said that I had not. “You have done well,” she said. “For I have some words to add. Then, when I complete all the words, they will be made known through you to all those who are chosen. 3. And so, you will write two little books, sending one

to Clement and the other to Grapte. Clement will send his to the foreign cities, for that is his commission. But Grapte will admonish the widows and orphans. And you will read yours in this city, with the presbyters who lead the church.”

Finally a young man (likely an angelic messenger) reveals to Hermas who the elderly woman was: the church, who appears elderly because she was created before the earth.⁸⁹ *Hermas* thus reveals that the Lady Church—simultaneously ancient and rejuvenated—bears God’s messages to the world. The process for this revelation seems to be God’s inspiration of the Church, whose prophets and visionaries record messages which are then given to qualified men (Clement) and women (Grapte) for dispersal among the cities and churches of the world. Grapte stands as an otherwise unknown figure, who is tasked with delivering Hermas’s message to orphans and widows, suggesting that she held a teaching role of some sort.⁹⁰ If she does indeed hold an office (perhaps that of deaconess) this reference stands as one of the earliest to a woman holding a church office.⁹¹ It would seem that the “manly” role of instruction was not only reserved for men, but that *Hermas* felt it appropriate to task a real woman with teaching at least certain portions of the Christian community.

The conception of women revealed in these portions of the *Shepherd of Hermas* suggests a careful negotiation of complex social and theological factors. Hermas’s experience with Rhoda and her correction of his sin prepared him for later visionary experiences, only the first portion of which have been touched upon here. Hermas’s interactions with the elderly woman clearly cast her as revealer of God’s divine messages, and her identification as the Church only further reinforces the authority of her revelations. For Hermas, visionary women were fully capable of speaking truth on behalf of God. Not only this, but his identification of the Church as an elderly woman suggests that, in some sense, all Christians were to hear and obey the corrections, admonition, and instruction of a “woman.” As for Grapte, Hermas indicates that she could, and was actually expected to, teach the widows and orphans, thereby fulfilling a teaching office of the church. While it seems doubtful that this office would have been extended to the instruction of males, *Hermas* nonetheless reveals a relatively high conception of women and female figures as, at least in the proper contexts, those who may speak for God and instruct others.

Conclusions

Through consideration of several pericopes from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, this study has argued that these authors conceived of women as having properly ordered roles in the Christian Church, roles which could include familial and visionary functions. In *First Clement*, biblical women were employed as examples for the congregation at Corinth. *Second Clement* reinforced the Pauline idea that the relationship between Christ and the Church was akin to that of husband and wife, both of whom contain fleshly and spiritual components. The epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp reveal an emphasis on church order and ecclesiastical hierarchy which affects how all Christians—both women and men—should live their lives. These epistles also demonstrate that women held positions of some standing in certain Christian communities, including groups of “virgins called widows,” house-holding women, traveling (diaconal?) women, and individually outstanding women. In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, women serve as revelers of God’s truths, images of the Church herself, and teachers of women and children.

As noted above, the cumulative conclusions to be drawn from this study are necessarily limited by the disparate origins and purposes of these writings. Yet the overarching theme of ordered roles does seem to account for the particularities of how these writings conceive of women. Such roles could vary depending on *who* the woman in question might be: young virgins, celibates, married women, widows, householders, messengers, owners, fellow sisters, deaconesses, and visionary women all functioned somewhat differently and diversely fit into the social and theological *ordo* envisioned by these early Christian leaders. Women could also serve *paraenetic* purposes: in the same way that the great male figures of the past could be viewed as worthy of emulation, so also biblical women could serve as encouragements and examples for Christian women and men. Perhaps most striking, the personification of the Church as woman in 2 *Clement* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* suggests that, at least in some sense, all Christians were to submit to the correction and instruction of a “woman.” At the heart of all of these ways of talking about women are concerns with order in the church.

Further, other theological battles early Christians were waging shaped their views of male and female. In likely opposition to docetic and Gnostic interlocutors, *Second Clement* and Ignatius reveal a relatively high view of

flesh as a necessary component of the human body and the created order. The body was not without its dangers, of course, but for the Apostolic Fathers it does not yet exist primarily as the basis for ascetic struggle. This could be because they were concerned with more pressing issues, because the Christian communities assumed a common moral or bounded character, or simply because these sources only reflect a select subset of the writings originally from this period. It is noteworthy, however, that the Apostolic Fathers (and their neutral/high views of the body) appear between two sub-collections of writings (the Pastorals/late New Testament literature and the *Acta*/apocryphal gospel/gnostic literature) which are more explicitly concerned with bodies, gender roles, and the place of women in the church.

Before concluding, a word ought to be said about potential future projects in the stream of what has been done here. Expanded study of women in the *Shepherd of Hermas* would appear to be a fruitful avenue forward, as would a comparison of women in the Apostolic Fathers and late New Testament literature. Another project could involve conceptions and portrayals of women in other second century literature, such as the *Ad Autolycum* of Theophilus of Antioch, the writings of Justin Martyr, and the *Odes of Solomon*. These projects may not be the most exciting or groundbreaking studies; however, they do appear to be worthy pursuits for those seeking to “fill in” the historical and theological gaps regarding women in early Christianity.

Christine Trevett concludes that the writings of the Apostolic Fathers bear “witness to struggle *for* sites of power and *against* Roman *imperium* and the gods of the cities ... the writers’ concerns were with order, control, survival in a context of Christian caring and mutuality, opposition to error, and with a view to seeing God’s people triumphant.”⁹² For these early Christian writers, women were expected to follow the proper way of performing and living faith in the Risen Jesus, ways which still varied depending on their station and position in the Christian community.

¹ The designation “Apostolic Fathers” originated with Jean-Baptiste Cotelier in 1672 and William Wake in 1693. Though an artificial marker, the name finds extensive use throughout existing literature, making it pragmatically unreasonable to separate this study from its use. In this study the term “Apostolic Fathers” indicates the collection of nine writings generally categorized under this designation in modern scholarship, including *First Clement*, *Second Clement*, the *Epistles of Ignatius*, the *Didache*, *Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Epistle to Diognetus*, and *Fragments of Papias*. See Jean-Baptiste Cotelier, SS.

- Patrum qui temporibus apostolicis fl oruerunt: Barnabae, Clementis, Hermae, Ignatii, Polycarpi* (Paris, 1672). William Wake, *The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers, S. Barnabas, S. Clement, S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp, The Shepherd of Hermas, and the Martyrdoms of St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp* (London, 1693). H. J. de Jonge, "On the Origin of the Term 'Apostolic Fathers,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978): 503-505. Helmut Koester, "The Apostolic Fathers and the Struggle for Christian Identity," *The Expository Times* 117, 4 (2006): 133.
- ² Jefford, 59-66. Helmut Koester, "The Apostolic Fathers and the Struggle for Christian Identity" in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 7.
- ³ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).
- ⁴ Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1998). C. L. Meyers, T. Craven, and R. S. Kraemer. *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000). Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, eds., *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). This comprehensive resource of all textual evidence in the Greek and Roman worlds regarding women's ordained roles in the early church reveals only two possible references during this era of the Apostolic Fathers, one of which comes from Pliny. See 1-2, 26-27. Cx. Pliny, *Epistolae* 96. Patricia Cox Miller, *Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).
- ⁵ Christine Trevett, *Christian Women and the Time of the Apostolic Fathers (AD c.80-160): Corinth, Rome, and Asia Minor* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ⁷ A helpful selection of introductory essays on this topic is *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha* (eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins; Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006).
- ⁸ Carolyn Osiek and Jennifer Pouya, "Construction of Gender Roles in the Roman Imperial World," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (eds. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris; London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 44-56. Trevett, 3.
- ⁹ Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 18. Trevett, 12.
- ¹⁰ Esther Yue, "Mirror Reading and Guardians of Women in the Early Roman Empire," *JTS* 59, 2 (2008): 681. On the general social and public place of women in the Greco-Roman world, see Susan Treggiari, "Jobs for Women," *American Journal of Ancient History* 1, 1 (1976): 76-104. Ramsey MacMullen, "Women in Public in the Roman Empire," *History* 29, 1 (1980): 208-18.
- ¹¹ Yue, 682-3.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 683. On women claiming exemption from this practice later in the Imperial period, see Yue, 685-91.
- ¹³ Kerstin Aspegren, *The Male Woman: A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1990), 11-4.
- ¹⁴ Koester, 11. Gal. 3:28.
- ¹⁵ Matthijs den Dulk, "I Permit No Woman to Teach Except for Thecla: The Curious Case of the Pastoral Epistles and the Acts of Paul Reconsidered," *Novum Testamentum* 54 (2012): 176-203. See also Kristi Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 11.
- ¹⁶ *Acts of Thecla*. Eisen, 47-55.
- ¹⁷ *Didache* 11-13. *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Mandate* 11. Eisen, 70. Eisen notes that Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen do not raise any fundamental objections to women prophesying, only how particular movements were abusing prophecy or teaching false doctrine. See also Eusebius H.E. 5.16-17.
- ¹⁸ *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Vision* 1.2.2; 1.3.3; 2.1.3. Trevett, 19.
- ¹⁹ Trevett, 11.
- ²⁰ 1 Clement remains extant through *Codex Alexandrinus* (missing 57.7-63.4) and *Codex Hierosolymitanus*, two Coptic manuscripts, a complete 11th century Latin manuscript (with possible 2nd/3rd c. exemplar), and 12th c. Syriac manuscript, where *First* and *Second Clement* appear after Acts and the Catholic Epistles but before the Epistles of Paul. Andrew F. Gregory, "1 Clement: An Introduction," *Expository Times* 117, 6 (2006): 223-224. Origen argues that the letter's author was the man mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:3 (*Commentary on John* 6.36). Eusebius identifies him as companion of Paul and third bishop of Rome (H.E. 3.4.8-9; 3.15.1; 3.34.1). According to Tertullian, Clement succeeded Peter directly as Bishop of Rome (*Prescription* 32). Whatever one makes of these arguments, the contents of the letter make clear that Clement resided in Rome, could fluently compose letters in Greek, held a position of authority within the Roman

- church, and was likely a Hellenistic Jew prior to his conversation. Gregory, "Introduction", 225. David I. Rankin, *From Clement to Origen: The Social and Historical Context of the Church Fathers* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate, 2006), 26. For arguments against Clement's authorship, see Gregory, "Introduction", 223. The chief factor in favor of this view is the lack of a named author. Michael Stover, *The Dating of 1 Clement* (Wake Forest, NC: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), ix-x. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 142. Odd Magne Bakke, *Concord and Peace: A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Sedition and Unity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 11. Commonly mounted evidence for this range includes the letter's language about the deaths of Peter and Paul, which suggests a not-forgotten-but-not-yesterday-event, and the interpretation of *1 Clement* 1:1 as referencing the persecution of the church under Domitian. Of additional interest may be John A. T. Robinson's argument for an early date of composition. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 329-330.
- ²¹ Rankin, 33. See also Harry O. Maier, "The Charismatic Authority of Ignatius of Antioch: A Sociological Analysis," *Studies in Religion: Sciences Religieuses* 18, 2 (1989): 117-22.
- ²² Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Volume I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 157-8. Christopher Tuckett, *2 Clement: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-6, 14. Paul Parvis, "2 Clement and the Meaning of the Christian Homily," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 34. 2 Clement follows *1 Clement* in all extant manuscripts, including *Codex Alexandrinus*, *Codex Hierosolymitanus*, and the Syriac MSS 1700. On 2 Clement as *paranetic*—but not homiletic—sermon, see Tuckett, 25-6. Concerning the identity of the author, Tuckett concludes that, "the author was not a Jew before becoming a Christian. But that is about as far as the text allows us to go. For the rest, the author must remain anonymous, a reflection perhaps of his somewhat self-effacing modesty." Tuckett, 17.
- ²³ Provenance suggestions have included Rome, Corinth, Syria, and Egypt. The athletic analogy in chapter 7 has often been taken as an allusion to the Isthmian Games near Corinth, further reinforcing arguments for a Corinthian-Roman origin. Tuckett, 58-62. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers I*, 158. Parvis, 37.
- ²⁴ The edges of its composition are the reception of *1 Clement* and Harnack's suggestion of Soter (c. 166-174 AD) as author. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers I*, 159-60. Tuckett, 62-4. Parvis, 36-7.
- ²⁵ Milton Perry Brown, *The Authentic Writings of Ignatius: A Study of Linguistic Criteria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963), xi. Christine Trevett, "A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia" (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 10-5. William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (ed. Helmut Koester, Hermenia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 5. Contemporary considerations of Ignatius typically view his letters in their totality, the notable exception being Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2004), 11. See also H.E. 3.36. On Ignatius' spurious letters, see Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers: With English Translations: Volume I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912). Of interest to readers of this paper may be the reference to women of Holy Orders in *Letter to the Inhabitants of Antioch* 12:2-3. See *Patres Apostolici: Volume II*, ed. Franz Diekamp and F. X. von Funk (Tubingen: Henrici Lauppe, 1913), 222.
- ²⁶ Rankin, 82. Robinson, 4, 182.
- ²⁷ Norris, 32-4. Importantly, Thomas A. Robinson notes that "the evidence from Ignatius's letters suggests that he does not think in terms of several neatly distinguishable groups of opponents. There is one church and there is one opposition. The opposition is not defined as much by precise aspects of their distinctive beliefs as by their independence of, or separation from, the bishop." Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 126.
- ²⁸ Michael Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna, Epistle to the Philippians," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 109-10. See Holmes' discussion of Irenaeus' possible reliance on his mentor, either through oral teaching and/or the catalog of heresies.
- ²⁹ PolyPhil. 3.1; 13.1. Holmes, 111. Paul A. Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23, 45. The differences between chapters 9 and 13 concerning Ignatius have led to several theories regarding this letter's literary unity, which in the end does seem to be a single, unified letter interrupted by news of Ignatius' death. See Hartog's discussion, 27-40. Holmes, 120-3. See also P. N. Harrison, *Polycarp's Two Epistles to the Philippians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), esp. 140, 151-2.
- ³⁰ On the dating of the letter, see Holmes, 123-4. Hartog rightly notes that "internal evidence might

seem to push the date of Pol. *Phil.* into the 120s or beyond." Hartog, 43-4. This leads him to posit a range of dates anywhere between 110 and 140. There are numerous extant manuscripts of *PolyPhil.*, including *Vaticanus* gr. 859; *Neapolitanus* Bibl. Naz. Borbonicus II.A.17; *Florentinus* Laurentianus plut. 7.21; *Vaticanus* Reginensis gr. Pii II.11; *Romanus* Bibl. Casanatensis G.V.14; *Vaticanus* Ottobonianus gr. 348; *Parisinus* Bibl. Nat. gr. 937; and *Andros Hagias* 64. Unfortunately, none of these Greek manuscripts are earlier than the 11th century or are complete. There are also numerous Latin translations, as well as some Syriac and Armenian fragments. See Hartog, 26-7. Ferdinand R. Prostmeier, "Zur Handschriftlichen Überlieferung des Polykarp- und des Barnabasbriefes. Zwei nicht beachtete Deszendenten des Cod. Vat. Gr. 859", *Vigilae Christianae* 48, 1 (1994), 48-64, esp. 61n22.

³¹ Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, *Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 1. Joseph Verheyden, "The Shepherd of Hermas," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 63.

³² Osiek, *Hermas*, 18. Cx. *Vis.* 1.1-2; 4.1.2; *Sim.* 2. In response to theories of *Hermas* as autobiography, Snyder correctly writes that, "it is impossible to distinguish history from fiction in the apocalyptic or visionary form." Graydon F. Snyder, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary: Volume 6: The Shepherd of Hermas* (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 29.

³³ Osiek, *Hermas*, 20. *Hermas* remains only partially extant in *Codex Athous* (15th c.), *Codex Sinaiticus* (4th c.), Michigan Papyrus 129 (c. 250 AD), Bodmer Papyrus 39 (late 4th/early 5th c.) and 21 later Greek fragments. Two complete Latin manuscripts exist, as well as Ethiopic, Akhmic and Sahidic Coptic, Middle Persian, and Georgian fragments. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers: Volume II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 169-72. Osiek, *Hermas*, 1-3. On the dating of *Hermas*, three factors are particularly relevant: the mention of *Hermas* in Rom. 16.14, the reference to Clement in *Vis.* 2.4.3, and the *Muratorian Fragment's* assignment of authorship to the brother of Pius, in the fourth decade of the second century. For more discussion of these issues, see Osiek, *Hermas*, 18 and Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers II*, 165-9.

³⁴ Osiek, *Hermas*, 10-2. Compare *Hermas* with the SBL's definition of Apocalypse: 'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an other-worldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world." John J. Collins, "Apocalypse: An Overview," in *Encyclopedia of Religion, Volume One* (Online: Gale Virtual Reference Library, 2005), 409.

³⁵ *Vis.* 2.2.6, 4.3; 3.8.11; 4.3.6. Cx. 4 *Ezra* 9.38-10.57. Osiek notes that, "This female guide has no true precedent in Western literature." Osiek, *Hermas*, 16.

³⁶ These pericopes are selective and this study does not intend to consider the entirety of how the Apostolic Fathers conceived of and portrayed women. Other notable interactions which are not examined here include 2 *Clement* 2.1-7 (Interpretation of "Rejoice Oh Barren Woman"); *IgnEph* 19.1, *IgnTral* 9.1, and *IgnSmyr* 1.1 on the Blessed Virgin Mary; *Hermas*, M 9.10-16; *Hermas* V 3.1-2; and *Hermas* V 4.1-3.

³⁷ Trevett, 45-7, 69-70, 81-6. "Clement never directly addressed the 'sisters' but only made clear the Roman church's wish to see Corinthian women compliant and quiet, with men rightfully supreme. In Corinth, I suggest, that unassailable truth had been assailed. Women who did not deign to be 'little' were not, in Rome's view, good wives. I suggest that, as the Romans saw matters, shameless female partisanship had contributed to the all-too-public scandal in Corinth." Trevett, 45.

³⁸ 1 *Clement* 1.3-2.8. Andreas Lindemann, "Paul's Influence on 'Clement' and Ignatius," in *Trajectories Through the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers*, ed. C. M. Tuckett and Andrew F. Gregory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9-16. Jacob J. Prahlow, *Discerning Witnesses: First and Second Century Textual Studies in Christian Authority* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University, 2014), 53-6.

³⁹ It is always somewhat dangerous to argue from silence. But here the silence is especially palpable, given Clement's strong knowledge of 1 Corinthians, his upholding the authority of Paul throughout this letter, and the purpose of his letter. If there were women causing trouble in Corinth, Clement had ready access to the materials necessary to "put them in their place." Yet nowhere does he utilize this arsenal. Cx. 1 *Clem.* 37. See also Lindemann, 11-12, 14-15.

⁴⁰ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 54-5.

⁴¹ Trevett, 55.

⁴² Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 54-7.

⁴³ Given Clement's knowledge of Hebrews, it would not be surprising to see him building from the "Hall of Faith." Donald A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 181-94. See also Clement's christological interpretation of the cord, which is taken up by Justin, *Dialogue* 111.4.

- ⁴⁴ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 132-3.
- ⁴⁵ Robert M. Grant and Holt H. Graham, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary: Volume 2: First and Second Clement* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 87-8. Into a woman's hand" comes from Judith 13:15 or 16:6 (LXX) and Esther's petition of God cannot be from the Hebrew, as YHWH does not appear there.
- ⁴⁶ While ἀνδρεία and its cognates are most often applied to men, the term was applied to women. Prov 11:16 LXX.
- ⁴⁷ Judith is later called a saint by Tertullian in *On Marrying*. 17.1. Cx. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2.35.4.
- ⁴⁸ Tuckett, 259. Rudolf Knopf, *Die Lehre der zwölf Apostel, Die zwei Clemensbriefe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1920), 175. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 2.248.
- ⁴⁹ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 186-9.
- ⁵⁰ Tuckett, 247.
- ⁵¹ Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers I*, 188-9.
- ⁵² 2 Clem. 14.3 ἡ ἐκκλησία δὲ πνευματικὴ οὐσα ἐφανερώθη ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ Χριστοῦ, δηλοῦσα ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐάν τις ἡμῶν τηρήσῃ αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ καὶ μὴ φείρῃ, ἀπολήψεται αὐτὴν ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ· ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ αὐτῆς ἀντίτυπος ἐστὶν τοῦ πνεύματος.
- ⁵³ Parvis, 39. On this, Grant and Graham note, "It is not difficult to suppose that most of this is exegesis of Ephesians 5:23-32, where Christ's Church is referred to as his body (5:23) or his flesh (5:29), and the story of Adam and Eve is referred to Christ and his Church (5:31-32)." Grant and Graham, 126.
- ⁵⁴ On the idea of the pre-existent church, see Eph 1.4; Ps 71.5, 17 LXX; *Hermas*, *Vis.* 2.4.1.
- ⁵⁵ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 314-5.
- ⁵⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, 313-5. Trevett, 220-1. Schüssler Fiorenza reconstructs this group as widows living together in a household who were accustomed to holding Eucharist. Ignatius's commands thus encroach on the freedoms of these women, starting a gradual decent into patriarchy.
- ⁵⁷ Yue, 693-5. "No matter what interpretation we take, and if the consent of the bishop still had to do with the widows, then Ignatius was probably urging Polycarp to be a conscientious guardian or administrator such that the poor widows would not be defrauded by his neglect of them. On the other hand, the fact that Ignatius went on to urge Polycarp not to do anything without God's consent would ensure that the guardianship was carried out honourably and ethically." Yue, 695.
- ⁵⁸ Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary: Volume 4: Ignatius of Antioch* (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 132.
- ⁵⁹ *IgnPoly* 4.1 μὴ δὲν ἄνευ γνώμης σου γινέσθω, μὴ δὲ σὺ ἄνευ θεοῦ τι πράσσεις, ὅπερ οὐδὲ πράσσεις. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 269. The widows being under the authority of the bishop is alluded to or repeated elsewhere, including *IgnSmyr.* 6:2; *PolyPhil.* 4:3; *Hermas*, *Sim.* 9, 27, 2; and Justin, *First Apology* 1.67.6. Ignatius's mention of widows here and in his *IgnSmyr.* could serve as an indication that an issue existed in Smyrna's not too distant past.
- ⁶⁰ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 314-5.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 314-5.
- ⁶² Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 272. A similar perspective exists in Josephus, *Jewish War*. 2.116; Epiphanius, *Anchoratus* 104.8; and *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.32.4.
- ⁶³ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 272. Grant, *Volume 4*, 133-4. Lightfoot, 348.
- ⁶⁴ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 314-7.
- ⁶⁵ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 273. Cx 1 Cor. 6:12-20; Tertullian, *On Marrying* 5.6; Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 3. Ideas that physical union adulterates relationships with God or that virgins are wedded to Christ may be at play here.
- ⁶⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 272. Grant, *Volume 4*, 134.
- ⁶⁷ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 340-1.
- ⁶⁸ Hartog, 122. Cx. 1 Clem. 1.3. 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2. Gal. 5:17. 1 Pet. 2:11.
- ⁶⁹ Oxford Society, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 85.
- ⁷⁰ Hartog, 121.
- ⁷¹ Lindemann, 16-24.
- ⁷² Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 308-9.
- ⁷³ Grant, *Volume 4*, 125.
- ⁷⁴ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 252.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 252-3.

⁷⁶ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 320-1.

⁷⁷ Grant, *Volume 4*, 137.

⁷⁸ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers I*, 350-3.

⁷⁹ Hartog, 160.

⁸⁰ Trevett, 111-6.

⁸¹ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers II*, 174-9.

⁸² Osiek, *Hermas*, 42-3. Cx. 2 Sam. 11:2; Daniel 13:5-33 LXX. Consider also Juvenal, *Satire VI*, 419-25. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.32-3. Osiek further notes that the “general assumption that Hermas’ desire for Rhoda is only sexual may not be complete: such a liaison would mean status elevation for a freed-man. In view of the fact that the desire for wealth and status is to be the central focus for sin (see 1.8 below), it must also be implied here.” Osiek, *Hermas*, 42.

⁸³ Osiek, *Hermas*, 44.

⁸⁴ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers II*, 178-85.

⁸⁵ Osiek, *Hermas*, 49.

⁸⁶ 4 Ezra 9:38-10:57; Rev. 1:13-5; 5:1-5. Snyder, 31. Verheyden also notes that this woman inhabits portions of the biblical Wisdom tradition. Verheyden, 67.

⁸⁷ *Hermas*, Vis. 2.1.3. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers II*, 184-7.

⁸⁸ Ehrman *Apostolic Fathers II*, 190-3.

⁸⁹ Osiek, *Hermas*, 58. Snyder, 38-9.

⁹⁰ Trevett, 155-7. Trevett suggests that Grapte, like Clement, was a true person of first or second century Rome.

⁹¹ Madigan and Osiek, 26. Batovici, 305-7. Synder, 40.

⁹² Trevett, 271.

Celibacy as Discipleship or Vocation? A Protestant Reading of Gregory of Nyssa and Thomas Aquinas

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For a variety of reasons, American Protestants are being forced to reconsider historic teachings and practices of celibacy.¹ This article is but a small part of the larger project of clarifying the place of celibacy and singleness in Protestant systematic and pastoral theology.² Specifically, this article attempts to determine to what extent celibacy should be understood as a matter of discipleship and to what extent it is a matter of vocation. The term “discipleship” is used here to mean the common standard against which all Christians are judged while the term “vocation” is used here to mean a specific calling only given to some disciples. Placing celibacy in these categories will, hopefully, bring clarity to Protestant discussions of the issue and avoid some of the confusion caused by similar discussions surrounding wealth and poverty in recent years.³ In an attempt to think through these distinctions, this article will first outline the proposals of two theologians who had a high valuation of celibacy—Gregory of Nyssa and Thomas Aquinas. The article will then conclude

with a distinctly Protestant proposal which draws on helpful insights from both Nyssen and Thomas while also critiquing their formulations.

GREGORY OF NYSSA

Of the early theologians who wrote on the issue of virginity perhaps none have attracted more attention in recent years than Gregory of Nyssa.⁴ Nyssen's praise of virginity began where his literary career began, with his treatise *De virginitate*.⁵ In the treatise, Nyssen praises virginity as the state of life that best enables one to already begin realizing humanity's *telos*—"to participate more deeply in the being of God" through divine contemplation.⁶ Since "the real Virginity, the real zeal for chastity, ends in no other goal than this, viz. the power thereby of seeing God," Nyssen indiscriminately calls for everyone to pursue the life of virginity, seemingly making virginity the path of true discipleship.⁷ Nyssen's argument in *De virginitate* is reinforced by the traditional interpretation of humanity's protology—itsself informed by humanity's *telos*—as described in Nyssen's *De hominis opificio*.⁸ According to Nyssen, humanity's paradisaical future is a return to its paradisaical past, both states that were defined by virginity. Therefore, the true life of discipleship here and now will also be lived in virginity.

One of the central features of Nyssen's argument in *De virginitate* is his ambiguous usage of the term "virginity." In some passages, Nyssen uses virginity just as a modern speaker understands the word—the state of never having had sexual intercourse. In other passages, Nyssen uses virginity in a much broader sense. He states, "The perfection of this liberty [i.e., virginity] does not consist only in that one point of abstaining from marriage. Let no one suppose that the prize of Virginity is so insignificant and so easily won as that; as if one little observance of the flesh could settle so vital a matter."¹⁰ Virginity in the narrow sense merely involves bodily control and keeps one from the distractions of a spouse and children. Virginity in the broad sense, however, "is not a single achievement, ending in the subjugation of the body, but ... it reaches to and pervades everything that is, or is considered, a right condition of the soul."¹¹ The right condition of the soul is a "disengagedness of heart" which turns the mind's eye up toward God in contemplation.¹² The embrace of bodily virginity, then, is not an end but the beginning of the

pursuit of the disengaged, contemplative life.¹³ Indeed, “if the whole life does not harmonize with this perfect note [i.e., virginity],” it is nothing but the “‘jewel of gold in the swine’s snout’ or ‘the pearl that is trodden under the swine’s feet.’”¹⁴ Therefore, it becomes clear that in *De virginitate*, virginity often refers explicitly to sexual renunciation, but it almost always carries the broader meaning of the “life according to excellence”—the participatory, contemplative life.¹⁵

Nyssen ushers forth a variety of arguments for creating such a strong connection between physical virginity and the participatory, contemplative life. The analogy between physical virginity and the nature of God is the first piece of evidence Nyssen offers. He argues that physical virginity reflects the purity of each member of the Trinity: the Father begets the Son without passion, the Son is begotten apart from passion, and the Holy Spirit has an “inherent and incorruptible purity.”¹⁶ Similarly, from the facts of Jesus’ virginal conception, virgin birth, and virgin life, Nyssen concludes that “purity is the only complete indication of the presence of God and of His coming.”¹⁷ Thus, physical virginity reflects the ineffable purity of God, both in his imminent triune relations and in his economic incarnation. Nyssen then devotes a substantial amount of the treatise to the argument that physical virginity enables the mind to push through and beyond physical realities to contemplate that “Intellectual Beauty . . . in which all other beauties get their existence and name.”¹⁸ Nyssen uses the metaphor of a stream being divided and losing its force to explain the effect marriage has on the abilities of the mind.¹⁹ Though he admits that some are able to create briefly a “small outlet” devoted to the sexual passion and then to reconstitute the “main stream,” Nyssen warns that, “there will be danger of the whole stream quitting its direct bed and pouring itself sideways.”²⁰

The contrast between the active life of marriage and childbearing and the contemplative life is brought into starkest relief by the real-life examples Nyssen uses to illustrate each. Perhaps the most memorable argument of *De virginitate* is the detailed diatribe Nyssen mounts against marriage. For three long chapters, he narrates the distractions and difficulties of the active life. He is able to see the dark cloud of heartache, anxiety, and loss inside every silver lining of marriage and family life. Bookending the treatise, in both the introduction and the extended

conclusion, Nyssen directs the reader toward living examples—most likely his brother Basil’s monastic communities—of physical virginity that leads to the life according to excellence. Nyssen’s arguments for a close connection between physical virginity and the life according to excellence are so powerful that Nyssen anticipates the objection that he denigrates marriage in direct opposition to Scripture.²³ While he does not want to be charged with denigrating marriage *per se*, Nyssen’s argument in *De virginitate* seems to portray the active life as almost unavoidably distracting from the disengaged contemplation that constitutes the true call of discipleship and marriage, in particular, as inviting passions into the soul which is meant to participate in God’s own ineffable purity.

The arguments for virginity in *De virginitate* are reinforced by placing them in the broader understanding of human protology and teleology found in *De hominis opificio*. The traditional interpretation of *De hominis opificio* has read there an argument for a two-stage creation of humanity. That which is made “in the image of God” is described in the first two phrases of Genesis 1:27, “God created man [*adam*] in his own image, in the image of God he created them.” Nyssen points out that *adam* is not used as a proper name here, as it will be later in the Genesis narrative, but is the generic word for humanity. He joins that insight with the observation that the subsequent pronoun in Genesis 1:27—“in the image of God he created him”—is singular in order to argue that God is here creating all of humanity as a collective individual.²⁴ The first step of creation is the creation of “the universal ‘man’” or the “whole human item.”²⁵

After the first two phrases of Genesis 1:27, Nyssen believes, “There is an end of the creation of that which was made ‘in the image.’”²⁶ To Nyssen, the phrase “male and female he created them” obviously represents a new step in the creation of humanity because “every one [sic] knows that this is a departure from the Prototype: for ‘in Christ Jesus,’ as the apostle says, ‘there is neither male nor female.’ Yet the phrase [in Gen 1:27] declares that man is thus divided.”²⁷ The division of humanity into two distinct sexes is, according to Nyssen, “alien from our conception of God.”²⁸ Therefore, the creation of sexed humans is outside the realm of the divine image and represents a distinct step—logically, not temporally—in the creation of humanity.²⁹

The second step of creation was necessary in light of God’s

foreknowledge of the Fall. The movement from non-being to being put humanity in motion such that humanity is mutable, with the potential to ascend toward God or decline away from him in sin.³⁰ God foreknew that humanity would forsake ascension for declension in sin. In doing so, humanity forfeited their angelic life—and the asexual reproduction proper to it—and were given over to death.³¹ Therefore, if humanity is to fulfill the “whole human item” envisioned by God, sexual reproduction is necessary.³² Sexual reproduction, marriage, and possibly even the sexed body itself, then, are sad effects of the Fall, not part of God’s original intention for humanity.³³

Nyssen reinforces his position by pointing out that the resurrected state will also be free from marriage and procreation (Luke 20:35–36).³⁴ He is explicit that his understanding of humanity’s eschatological destiny has shaped his understanding of humanity’s protological beginnings. Since there will be no marriage nor giving in marriage in the resurrected state and the resurrected state is a return to Paradise, there must have been a sense in which humanity was created apart from marriage and procreation. With a future devoid of marriage ahead and an origin devoid of marriage behind, it is not surprising that Nyssen encouraged all disciples to avoid marriage in this life.

In conclusion, Nyssen appears to leave open the possibility that married people could attain to the disengaged, contemplative life—most likely through marital continence in post-reproductive years—but those would be rare and exceptional cases. Counterintuitive to most contemporary Protestant readers, Nyssen argues that marriage is a dangerous enterprise to be avoided because it potentially opens the floodgates of passion and almost unavoidably distracts from the disengaged contemplation of God that defines humanity’s end. Therefore, one is left with the impression that in order to truly pursue God, one must do so via physical virginity. Using contemporary categories and terminology then, we may say that Nyssen admits that the vocation of marriage is good while presenting celibacy as the true path of discipleship.

THOMAS AQUINAS

For a different perspective, we turn next to Thomas Aquinas. As is the case

with many other topics, Thomas is most helpful not for his innovation but for the precision with which he articulates his positions. Thomas provides a clear, systematized presentation of the tradition that had developed in the Western Church in the centuries after Nyssen. Theologians had continued to consider marriage and virginity in light of humanity's *telos*. However, while many early theologians, such as Nyssen, taught and practiced virginity "literally and absolutely" as the "advised means to fulfill this common [Christian] vocation," Thomas inherited a developing distinction between the commands of Christ that apply to all Christians and the evangelical counsels which are heeded only by some.³⁵ This section will outline Thomas's view of marriage and virginity in contrast with Nyssen's and with the discipleship, vocation distinction in mind.³⁶

To begin, Thomas defines virginity, following Augustine, as, "the continence whereby integrity of flesh is vowed and consecrated to the service of the Creator of body and soul."³⁷ Having thus defined virginity, Thomas provides a number of arguments for why one should pursue the life of virginity. Perhaps his primary argument for virginity is that it is the state of life which best allows one to approach the final happiness of the saints here and now.³⁸ The Beatific Vision, as Thomas's view of the future happiness of the saints is often called, cannot be realized in this life. However, "a certain participation in happiness can be had in this life."³⁹ That certain participation is most easily attained in the contemplative life which "begins here so that it may be perfected in our heavenly home."⁴⁰

In support of his view that the contemplative life is a participation in the beatitude that is to come, Thomas cites the well-known pericope of Jesus with Mary and Martha from Luke 10. As Mary sat gazing upon Jesus, so too does the contemplative life allow one to gaze upon God. In contrast, as Martha was busy serving the visitors in the pericope, so too does the active life force one into action directed toward other people. Following Nyssen's friend Gregory of Nazianzus, Thomas interprets Jesus' statement that, "Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her," to mean that by simply sitting and gazing upon Jesus, Mary was taking part in the life of contemplation that would last for eternity future.⁴¹ Therefore, choosing the contemplative life in virginity is a way of participating in the life to come here and now. In this respect, Thomas sounds a lot like Nyssen when he says, "Virginity is directed to

the good of the soul in respect to the contemplative life, which consists in thinking ‘on the things of God.’”⁴²

Therefore, Thomas concludes that, objectively speaking—i.e., when considering marriage and virginity as institutions, not married people and virgins as individuals—virginity is better than marriage. However, Thomas entertains a number of objections to this conclusion. One objection Thomas is compelled to consider is whether marriage should rank above virginity because the Philosopher—Thomas’s nickname for Aristotle—ranked common goods above private goods.⁴³ Thomas acknowledges that marriage is a “human good” and a “good of the body, namely the bodily increase of the human race.”⁴⁴ Going even a step further, Thomas considers whether the increase of the human race is a “precept of the natural law” based in Genesis 1:28.⁴⁵ To answer, Thomas draws a distinction between two types of duties. The command to eat in Genesis 2:16, for example, falls on each and every individual, for without food the individual would die. In contrast, the command to reproduce in Genesis 1:28 falls on the population, not each and every individual, since a population can continue without every single individual reproducing. In Thomas’s words, “The human family is sufficiently provided for if some undertake the responsibility of bodily generation, while others are free in order to devote themselves to the study of divine things, for the health and beauty of our race.”⁴⁶ The production of children in marriage, then, is a human and bodily good, but stands in contrast to the “Divine good” and “good of the soul” which is virginity.⁴⁷ Therefore, considering marriage and virginity objectively, as states of life, Thomas concludes, “Without doubt therefore virginity is preferable to conjugal continence.”⁴⁸

Moving from the objective consideration of marriage and virginity as states of life to the subjective consideration of married people and virgins as individuals, Thomas admits that “a married person may be better than a virgin.”⁴⁹ The first reason he gives is that a married person may be “more prepared in mind to observe virginity, if it should be expedient, than the one who is actually a virgin.”⁵⁰ Thomas, following Augustine, presents Abraham as an example of one who was unable to remain a virgin, yet proved his virtue to an extent that Thomas and Augustine both assume that he would have been an even better virgin than they were.⁵¹ The

second reason Thomas gives for why a married person may be better than a virgin is that “perhaps the person who is not a virgin has some more excellent virtue.”⁵² There are a host of virtues and married people may excel in any of them. Furthermore, a married person may offer themselves to God in chastity of the heart while a virgin may abstain from sex but not offer their hearts and minds to God, thereby failing even in the virtue of chastity.⁵³ Therefore, while virginity may be objectively better than marriage as an institution, there are individuals for whom marriage may prove to be better.

By now, it is clear that Thomas is not merely expanding on Nyssen’s position. Thomas shares a similar view of humanity’s *telos* and even agrees concerning the value of virginity in aiding the Christian toward that *telos* already in this life. However, the divergence between the two theologians in regards to the goodness and value of marriage is obvious. Thomas argues that marriage is woven into the order of creation as a “precept of natural law” instead of, as Nyssen argued, being an unfortunate but necessary response to the Fall. And Thomas admits that for some, marriage will prove to be the context in which they are able to live a virtuous life. Therefore, for Thomas, marriage and virginity are both states of life within which one can live out the commandments of Christ in Christian discipleship.

Thomas identifies the commandments that define Christian discipleship as the two commandments given by Jesus in Matthew 22:34–40, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”⁵⁴ Since Jesus specifically listed these two imperatives as the commandments on which the law and prophets depend, Thomas concludes that charity, which is the essence of both commandments, is the perfection in which the Christian life consists.⁵⁵ Therefore, primarily and essentially, Christians must observe charity. The rest of the commandments given in scripture “are directed to the removal of things contrary to charity.”⁵⁶ Since marriage is not contrary to charity, it is not against the commandments and, therefore, permissible. In other words, the requirements of Christian discipleship can be met within the state of marriage.

However, “secondarily and instrumentally . . . perfection consists in the observance of the counsels”—i.e., poverty, continence, and obedience.⁵⁷

The counsels are different than the commandments because while the commandments remove things contrary to charity, the counsels remove “things that hinder the act of charity, and yet are not contrary to charity, such as marriage, the occupation of worldly business, and so forth.”⁵⁸ Marriage, then, does not break the commandments, but neither does it fulfill the commandments in the best way.⁵⁹ Thomas argued for four levels of perfection in charity. The most perfect charity is only possible for God himself, because in God alone is love perfect and perfectly directed at the perfect object, God.⁶⁰ Next, there is a perfection of love only possible for those saints already in Paradise. Their affections are always directed toward God, though they remain finite.⁶¹ In this life, there are two levels of perfection possible. Within marriage, one could reach the “lowest degree of Divine love,” which is, “loving nothing more than God, or contrary to God, or equally with God.”⁶² However, there is “another perfection of charity . . . in this life” that a Christian can attain by refraining “even from lawful things, in order more freely to give himself to the service of God.”⁶³ Therefore, while one may meet the minimum requirements of Christian discipleship within marriage, virginity—along with the other two counsels—aids the Christian in attaining a more perfect life of charity.

With this understanding of commands and counsels, marriage is not disparaged to the extent it was in Nyssen’s writing, but virginity is still held to be objectively better. The religious life, in which one would vow to observe all the counsels, is a “greater good.” In fact, Thomas goes so far as to say that anyone who doubts that entrance into the religious life is better “disparage[s] Christ Who gave this counsel.”⁶⁴ Therefore, Thomas does not believe anyone should hesitate in joining a religious order and vowing themselves to celibacy, poverty, and obedience. If one is inclined to join a religious order as a child, they should join.⁶⁵ There is no need to bother with many counselors or deliberate for any length of time. If one is inclined to join a religious order, they should join.⁶⁶ And if anyone can convince someone else to join a religious order, they have “merit[ed] a great reward.”⁶⁷ There is no consideration given to the subjective fitness of the individual for the vocation of virginity.

Because virginity is objectively better than marriage, Thomas does not hesitate to impress upon everyone the beauty of the religious life. The objective value of virginity makes the subjective experience of a

“calling”—to use a familiar contemporary term—almost unnecessary. The only subjective consideration for Thomas is that virginity must be entered into voluntarily—one cannot be forced into virginity by violence, by bribery, or by lies.⁶⁸ There is no consideration given to the candidate’s fitness for virginity because God will provide the grace necessary to keep the individual chaste. Thomas cites Augustine’s vision of personified Continence calling out to him as proof that God will grant continence to anyone who desires it.⁶⁹ The perfection of charity within virginity is an act of God, not of the virgin. Therefore, whether one is “called” to virginity is only contingent on whether one will trust oneself to the Lord in virginity.

In conclusion, Thomas largely agreed with Nyssen’s view of humanity’s *telos* and the valuation of virginity as the best way to experience beatitude here and now. However, instead of the divine contemplation possible within virginity setting the standard for Christian discipleship and the distraction of marriage being some degree of falling short, Thomas presents charity as the standard for Christian discipleship. In addition, Thomas directly refuted Nyssen’s view of humanity’s protological beginnings, calling it “unreasonable.”⁷⁰ Because of his different views of the demands of discipleship and of creation, Thomas presents a more positive evaluation of marriage than Nyssen. For Thomas, loving nothing instead of or greater than God is the standard of discipleship, and that level of perfection can be reached in marriage. Virginity, though, allows the Christian to offer oneself more fully to God and, therefore, reach a higher level of perfection in this life than is possible in marriage. Therefore, marriage and virginity are both paths of discipleship while virginity is a vocation that goes beyond the commands of Christ.

Protestant Appraisal

In conclusion, a few words of appraisal from the perspective of contemporary Protestant evangelical theology are in order. First, the emphasis in both Nyssen and Thomas on humanity’s *telos* and eschatological destiny stands in contrast to much Protestant theology, which rarely devotes much space to reflections on how the future, eternal state influences the understanding of how Christians ought to live now.⁷¹ Commenting on the sexual ethics of Martin Luther and John Calvin, Christopher Roberts notes, “There appears to be little consideration of

any eschatological dimension to sexual difference in the Reformers.”⁷² The lack of consideration given to the eschatological dimension of human sexuality removed from early Protestant theology what was perhaps the primary theological argument for celibacy in Nyssen and Thomas. Grounding sexual ethics almost exclusively in the creation account did more than merely remove support for celibacy; it led the Reformers, especially Luther, to actively oppose the practice.⁷³ The almost exclusive use of the creation account in the Reformers’ reflections on sexuality continues in contemporary evangelical Protestant theology. For instance, Stanley Grenz, in the introduction of *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*, plainly states,

At the foundation of the medieval practices of monasticism and celibacy, the Reformers perceived a specific understanding of the Christian life, namely, that true Christian piety entailed the attempt to live up to the standards of the next life. In the place of this emphasis they taught the principle of obedience to one’s true calling within the orders of creation.⁷⁴

In keeping with this method, Grenz grounds his understanding of sexuality primarily in the creation account. Even in his largely favorable discussion of singleness and celibacy, there is no mention of the eschatological destiny of humanity.⁷⁵ Jesus’ interaction with the Sadducees in Matthew 22, which was so central to Nyssen’s anthropology, receives scant mention in Grenz’s work, and in each instance, the discussion concerns the role of sexuality in our post-resurrection existence, not how post-resurrection realities influence our present lives.⁷⁶ Just as the eschatological vision of believers from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation before God’s throne (Rev 7:9–10) informs our ecclesiology here and now, so should the eschatological vision of humanity have some influence on our anthropology here and now.

Admitting that Nyssen and Thomas helpfully challenge evangelicals to reclaim an eschatological dimension to their sexual ethics does not mean evangelicals should simply adopt either Nyssen’s view—celibacy as the true path of discipleship—or Thomas’s view—celibacy as a vocation of supererogation. Despite Nyssen’s protests to the contrary, by identifying marriage as a consequence of the Fall and by insisting that throwing off

marriage is the first step to reversing the effects of the Fall, Nyssen does not appear to hold marriage in honor (Heb 13:4) and complicates how it could function as a *mysterion* or *sacramentum* for the relationship of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32). Therefore, Nyssen's argument for celibacy as true Christian discipleship fails because it cannot sufficiently incorporate the biblical praise of marriage.

On the other hand, Thomas holds marriage in honor, listing it as a *sacramentum*, but erred in arguing that those who entered into marriage were choosing a lower level of perfection. There are two errors that lead to this conclusion. The first is the claim that the commands of Christian discipleship are negative, only concerned with removing obstacles to the love of God. In fact, "[The] Christian life is not defined by the minimum of the negative commandments, but by a calling to the maximum proposed in the two precepts of charity."⁷⁷ If Christian discipleship simply is a calling to maximum charity, then the counsels cannot be add-ons for the most extreme disciples, but somehow "belong irrevocably to the common Christian vocation."⁷⁸ Since Scripture assumes there will be married disciples and since maximum charity is required of all disciples, celibacy and marriage must both be understood as vocations with the potential for the perfection of charity. In this light, Jesus's challenge to the rich young ruler of Matthew 19 was not a challenge to reach another level of perfection in charity—as many read "if you would be perfect"—but a call to Christian discipleship within a particular vocation—as evidenced by the common call to discipleship with which Jesus concludes, "come follow me" (Matt 19:21).⁷⁹

Putting aside the question of the two states *qua* states, Thomas's second error is in giving too little attention to one's subjective fitness for celibacy. Though Thomas argues that celibacy would be better for any who entrusted themselves to God, the Apostle Paul plainly states that marriage will be better for some (1 Cor 7:9).⁸⁰ Since marriage will be better for some, discerning which vocation the Lord is calling a disciple to must include consideration of that disciple's fitness for each. Following Luther, many Protestants have virtually rejected celibacy because they assume nearly everyone is "burning with passion"—the marker of those for whom marriage will be better (1 Cor 7:9).⁸¹ What exactly Paul means by the phrase is a subject for another time and paper, but it seems unlikely

that Paul would expect a nearly universal lack of self-control in the area of sexual desire, given that self-control is listed as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22–24). Therefore, in conclusion, somewhere between Thomas's nearly complete rejection of a subjective aspect to the call of celibacy and Protestantism's nearly complete rejection of the call to celibacy based on the subjective aspect is a biblical position that speaks of celibacy as consistent with Christian discipleship for any Christian and the God-given vocation of some.

¹ The growth in the number of "singles" in the United States and the debates surrounding issues of same-sex attraction and marriage are two noteworthy reasons. On the growth of singleness in American adults see, D'Vera Cohn, Jeffrey S. Passel, Wendy Wang, and Gretchen Livingston, "Barely Half of U.S. Adults Are Married – A Record Low," *Pew Research* (2011). Cited 22 August 2017. Online: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low/>. On the increase of same-sex attraction and sexual activity, see Rachel Feltman, "Study: Same-sex experiences are on the rise, and Americans are increasingly chill about it," in *The Washington Post*, electronic ed. (1 June 2006). Cited 22 August 2017. Online: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2016/06/01/study-same-sex-experiences-are-on-the-rise-and-americans-are-increasingly-chill-about-it/>.

² For the purposes of this article, "celibacy" will be defined as the intentional choice to remain unmarried and, therefore, sexually inactive for religious purposes. This definition is a slight variation of O. G. Oliver's definition of celibacy as "the state of being unmarried for purposes of religious devotion and ethical purity" (O. G. Oliver, Jr., "Celibacy," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 217–8). This definition avoids the discussion of celibacy within marriage as it is outside the immediate purview of the article. "Singleness" will refer to the state of being unmarried, regardless of intention, desire, or longevity.

³ See the point, counterpoint of David Platt's *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook & Multnomah, 2010), and Michael Horton's *Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

⁴ "No one who works in systematic theology, let alone in patristic studies, can have failed to notice the recent up surge of interest in the work and thought of Gregory of Nyssa." Sarah Coakley, "Introduction—Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*," in *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 1. "Virginity" is used here instead of "celibacy" to reflect Nyssen's language. Celibacy, as defined in note two, is virginity but, as will be discussed, virginity is not necessarily limited to celibacy.

⁵ William Moore, Preface to *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises*, etc., NPNF2 5 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1893; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), viii, xiii.

⁶ Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa: An Analogical Approach*, *Oxford Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate*, trans. William Moore, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises*, etc., NPNF2 5 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1893; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 357.

The interpretation of *De virginitate* presented here is a traditional reading of the treatise in that, in the words of Christopher Roberts, "such summaries represent the traditional and, until recently, virtually unanimous view of the sexed body in Gregory" (Christopher C. Roberts, *Creation and Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage* [New York: T&T Clark, 2007], 25). In addition to a number of contemporary scholars—e.g., Hans Urs von Balthasar (*Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Mark Sebanc [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995]) and Hans Boersma (*Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa*)—the traditional interpretation has been held by Maximus the Confessor (Andrew Louth, *Maximus the*

Confessor, The Early Church Fathers [London: Routledge, 1996], 72–73.) and Thomas Aquinas (*ST* 1-98.2 s.c.).

Mark Hart has offered an alternative interpretation that treats *De virginitate* as a work of irony. Hart argues that despite initial appearances the deeper logic of the treatise places virtuous marriage above virginity as the highest calling of Christian discipleship. Hart's interpretation is born from an attempt to reconcile some tensions within the treatise and within its traditional interpretation. While it succeeds in releasing those tensions, it does so by straining the interpretation of the work as a whole and, therefore, is unconvincing. See Mark D. Hart, "Marriage, Celibacy, and the Life of Virtue: An Interpretation of Gregory of Nyssa's *De Virginitate*," PhD diss., Boston University, 1987; "Gregory of Nyssa's Ironic Praise of the Celibate Life," *HeyJ* 33 (1992), 1–19; "Reconciliation of Body and Soul: Gregory of Nyssa's Deeper Theology of Marriage," *TS* 51 (1990), 450–67.

⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis officio*, trans. William Moore, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, etc.*, NPNF² 5 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1893; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 387–427.

⁹ Inspired by Hart's alternative interpretation of *De virginitate*, John Behr has argued for an alternative interpretation of *De hominis officio*. Parallel to Hart, Behr argues that Nyssen presents humanity's protology not as without sex or sexuality, but instead without the disordered passions associated with sexuality in a post-Fall world. Therefore, the true path of Christian discipleship is not virginity, but dispassionate marriage. As with Hart's proposal, Behr offers some helpful insights but is ultimately unconvincing. See John Behr, "The Rational Animal: A Rereading of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis officio*," *J ECS* 7 (1999), 219–47.

¹⁰ Nyssa, *De virginitate*, 364, capitalization original to Moore's translation.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 360.

¹² William Moore, preface to *De virginitate*, by Gregory of Nyssa, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, etc.*, NPNF² 5 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1893; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 342.

¹³ "Therefore, to limit the notion of virginity to bodily chastity would be to lose the grand perspective, which sees virginity as identical to divine purity and incorruptibility and therefore as encompassing all human virtues." Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa*, 120, italics original.

¹⁴ Prov 11:22 and Matt 7:6, quoted in Nyssa, *De virginitate*, 363.

¹⁵ Nyssa, *De virginitate*, 343.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 344.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 355.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 352–3.

²⁰ Nyssa, *De virginitate*, 352.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 345–51.

²² Moore, note in *De virginitate*, by Gregory of Nyssa, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, etc.*, NPNF² 5 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1893; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 343n2.

²³ "Let no one think however that herein we depreciate marriage as an institution. We are well aware that it is not a stranger to God's blessing," Nyssa, *De virginitate*, 352.

²⁴ Nyssa, *De hominis officio*, 406.

²⁵ Hans Boersma, *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa*, 104; Johannes Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, SVG 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 156.

²⁶ Nyssa, *De hominis officio*, 405.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 405.

²⁸ Nyssa, *De hominis officio*, 405.

²⁹ For fuller treatments of the dual nature of creation in *De hominis officio*, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 49–55; Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa: Ancient and [Post]Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 166–81; and Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa*, 145–74.

³⁰ Nyssa, *De hominis officio*, 405.

³¹ "Yet while, as has been said, there is no marriage among them, the armies of the angels are in countless myriads; for so Daniel declared in his visions: so, in the same way, if there had not come upon us as the result of sin a change for the worse, and removal from equality with the angels, neither should we have needed marriage that we might multiply; but whatever the mode of increase in the angelic nature is (unspeakable and inconceivable by human conjectures, except that it assuredly exists), it would have operated also in the case of men, who were 'made a little lower than the angels,' to increase mankind to the measure determined by its Maker." *Ibid.*, 407.

³² *Ibid.*, 407.

³³ Sarah Coakley, following Verna Harrison, describe Nyssen's portrayal of resurrection life as a "'bodily'—albeit de-genitalized—life." If Nyssen envisioned the resurrected state as a bodily but de-genitalized existence, then per-

haps he also entertained the possibility of a bodily but de-genitalized existence for humanity in this world that was abandoned due to God's foreknowledge of the Fall. Sarah Coakley, "The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation, and God," in *Powers and Submissions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 166; and Verna Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology," *JTS* 41:2 (1990), 468–9.

³⁴ Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, 407.

³⁵ Richard Butler, *Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Publishing, 1961), 39.

"Now the goods of this world which come into use in human life, consist in three things: viz. in external wealth pertaining to the 'concupiscence of the eyes'; carnal pleasures pertaining to the 'concupiscence of the flesh'; and honors, which pertain to the 'pride of life,' according to 1 John 2:16: and it is in renouncing these altogether, as far as possible, that the evangelical counsels consist. Moreover, every form of the religious life that professes the state of perfection is based on these three: since riches are renounced by poverty; carnal pleasures by perpetual chastity; and the pride of life by the bondage of obedience." Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-1.108.4 co.

³⁶ As stated in the introduction, "vocation" is used here to mean a particular calling only given to some disciples.

The term is used in Catholic theological writings in a number of ways: in reference to the Christian life in general, to speak of marriage and virginity as states of life, or simply as shorthand for those committed to a religious life as a monk, nun, or in an ecclesial office. Edward Farrell, *The Theology of Religious Vocation* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1951), 39–50.

³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.152.1 s.c. Quoted from Augustine, *De virginitate* 8. PL 40, 401. Though Thomas's definition of virginity is the same as the contemporary definition of celibacy, this section will continue to use virginity to reflect Thomas's language.

³⁸ "Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence." Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1-2.3.8 res.

³⁹ "A certain participation of happiness can be had in this life: but perfect and true happiness cannot be had in this life." *Ibid.*, 1-2.5.3 res.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-2.180.8 s.c.

⁴¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Hom. xiv in Ezech.*, quoted in Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, 2-2.180.8 s.c. Most English translations render τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα as "the good portion," but Thomas's Latin text reads optimam partem, which is translated "the best part."

⁴² Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.152.4 co.

⁴³ Aristotle, *Ethic.* i, 2, quoted in Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.152.4 arg. 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-2.152.4 co.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-2.152.2 arg 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-2.152.2 ad. 1.

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.152.4 co.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-2.152.4 ad. 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Augustine argues that Abraham and the Patriarchs after him married, had children, and grew the nation of Israel in service to Christ because God promised to come in the flesh as a physical descendant of Abraham. Thus, Celibacy was not fitting in the salvation-historical time in which they lived. Augustine, *De bono conjug.* xxi, quoted in Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, 2-2.152.4 ad 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 2.152.4 ad 2.

⁵³ Though Thomas allows for the possibility that a married person may exceed a virgin in chastity, virginity allows for a greater experience of chastity for those who can attain it. "A thing may excel all others in two ways. First, in some particular genus: and thus virginity is most excellent, namely in the genus of chastity, since it surpasses the chastity both of widowhood and of marriage." Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2.152.5 res.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-2.184.3 s.c.

⁵⁵ "A thing is said to be perfect in so far as it attains its proper end, which is the ultimate perfection thereof. Now it is charity that unites us to God, Who is the last end of the human mind, since 'he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him' (1 John 4:16). Therefore the perfection of the Christian life consists radically in charity." Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.184.1 co.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-2.184.3 co.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-2.184.3 ad. 2.

⁶⁰ "One [level of perfection of charity] is absolute, and answers to a totality not only on the part of the lover, but also

on the part of the object loved, so that God be loved as much as He is lovable. Such perfection as this is not possible to any creature, but is competent to God alone, in Whom good is wholly and essentially." Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.184.2 co.

⁶¹ "Another perfection answers to an absolute totality on the part of the lover, so that the affective faculty always actually tends to God as much as it possibly can; and such perfection as this is not possible so long as we are on the way, but we shall have it in heaven." Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.184.2 co.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2-2.184.3 ad 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2-2.184.3 ad 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-2.189.10 co.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-2.189.5.

⁶⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.189.10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-2.189.9 co.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ "Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him; fear not, He will not withdraw Himself that thou shouldst fall. Cast thyself fearlessly upon Him; He will receive and will heal thee." Augustine, *Confessions* VIII, 11, quoted in Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 2-2.189.10 ad 3.

⁷⁰ "Some of the earlier doctors, considering the nature of concupiscence as regards generation in our present state, concluded that in the state of innocence generation would not have been effected in the same way. Thus Gregory of Nyssa says (*De hominis opificio* xvii) that in paradise the human race would have been multiplied by some other means, as the angels were multiplied without coition by the operation of the Divine Power. He adds that God made man male and female before sin, because He foreknew the mode of generation which would take place after sin, which he foresaw. But this is unreasonable." Thomas Aquinas, *ST* 1-98.2 co. Italics mine.

⁷¹ For a broader discussion of the effects of a lack of teleological considerations in ethical thinking, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

⁷² Christopher Chenault Roberts, *Creation & Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 134.

⁷³ "What Luther conveyed to his students throughout ten years of lecturing on the book of Genesis is that this monastic and ascetic concept of holiness was insufficient and ill-conceived, the product of human rather than divine righteousness." John A. Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis: And the Formation of Evangelical Identity*, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies 80 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008), 134–5.

⁷⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*, 2nd edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 181–222.

⁷⁶ Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 19, 26, and 250.

⁷⁷ John M. Lozano, *Discipleship: Towards an Understanding of Religious Life*, trans. Beatrice Wilczynski, Religious Life Series vol. 2 (Chicago: Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, 1983), 71.

⁷⁸ Lozano, *Discipleship*, 71.

⁷⁹ "The call of Jesus, 'Follow me,' which is always directed toward individuals, initiates discipleship." Georg Strecker, "Discipleship: New Testament," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 1, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch, Jan Milič Lochman, John Mbiti, Jaroslav Pelikan, and Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 851.

⁸⁰ Similarly, even if Jesus's encouragement to become a eunuch for the kingdom is offered to all, his conclusion in Matt 19:12, "Let the one who is able to receive this receive it," obviously excludes some, namely those who are not able to receive it.

⁸¹ Though Luther admitted that some could be celibate and remain faithful to the Lord, he thought, "Such virgins will be rare, almost miraculously so, due to the relentless nature of postlapsarian desire." Roberts, *Creation & Covenant*, 117.

Book Reviews

Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church. By Benjamin L. Gladd and Matthew S. Harmon with introductory chapter by G. K. Beale. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016, xix + 199 pp., \$20.00 paper.

In academic biblical studies it is not uncommon to encounter *inaugurated eschatology*, the New Testament (NT) understanding that God's new creational kingdom has, on the one hand, erupted into the present evil age through Jesus Christ, but, on the other hand, acknowledge that the kingdom awaits full realization at the consummation with the second coming of Christ. Such discussions of inaugurated eschatology are very common in NT theologies and systematic theologies focused on the last things. Nevertheless, as Benjamin Gladd and Matthew Harmon rightly find, this perspective has not significantly impacted the ministry of the church. They "attempt to explain how the already-not yet framework informs our understanding of the life and ministry of the church" (xii). Their aim is to show that inaugurated eschatology shapes the nature of the church, the Christian life, pastoral leadership, and the function of the church in worship, prayer, and missions.

The book is straightforward in its organization and structure. Part one of the book builds the theological foundation. Since Gladd and Harmon studied under and are heavily influenced by G. K. Beale, the first chapter is written by him. Beale ably traverses the biblical storyline and convincingly demonstrates how the "latter day" hopes and prophecies based in the Old Testament (OT) have been set in motion in the present through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the formation of the church. The climax of the latter days is still future as believers live between the times, anticipating the resurrection of the body and the new heavens and earth. Next, in chapter two Harmon describes the nature of the church as the eschatological people of God. While trying to walk a line between dispensational and covenant theology, Harmon presents the church as the new covenant community (Jer 31), the restored latter-day Israel and eschatological remnant which has been

redeemed through Christ and empowered by the long-hoped for Holy Spirit. Harmon maintains that the church is not a parenthesis, as in some forms of dispensational thought, but the church does not “replace” Israel either as God has not rejected the Jewish people (32-34). In chapter 3, Gladd describes “how believers live in accordance with the ‘latter days,’ particularly, how they are to behave as kingdom citizens, spiritually resurrected beings, and Spirit-led believers” (37). The kingdom and kingdom ethics have broken into the present world and as kingdom citizens, God’s people are marked by love and service to the poor. Next, Gladd focuses on resurrection and explains how the latter-day concept of resurrection is another already-not yet reality. Believers in Christ are already spiritually resurrected and raised with Christ but in another sense, physical resurrection and the complete destruction of indwelling sin awaits the consummation (45-51). Lastly, the latter-day work of the Holy Spirit as it relates to creation, temple, God’s law, and the kingdom are surveyed as are the implications for believers who are recipients of the initial fulfillment of the Spirit’s work.

Part two focuses exclusively on pastors and leaders as they minister to God’s people within the framework of inaugurated eschatology, particularly with regard to preaching (chapter 4) and guiding and guarding the flock (chapter 5 and 6). First, taking his cues from Acts and preaching of Paul, Harmon lays out how the already-not yet dynamic should shape preaching. He finds that preaching should emphasize what God has already done in Christ, call people to live in a manner consistent with the gospel, and instill a hope for the consummation of all things (74-76). Now that the latter days have dawned, Gladd takes up the topic of how pastors and leaders are to combat false teaching and respond to persecution in chapter 5. The topics of the man of lawlessness, antichrist figure(s), and the problem of false teachings are presented since the church lives in an age where the end-time tribulation has commenced. Rounding out part two is chapter 6. Gladd focuses on leadership as the overlap of the ages impacts how one is to lead by example, disciple others, and cultivate a vision for ministry. Leaders embody the cross in showing others how they suffer in the latter days and they are to nurture faith in others, discipling them as new creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). The message and conduct of pastors and leaders must be informed by the fact

that they are held to a stricter scrutiny (1 Cor 4:1-5; Jas 3:1) with the sober reality of God's end-time judgment (105-109).

The third and final part of the book, written entirely by Harmon, concentrates on the eschatological service of God's end-time temple—the church—with respect to worship, prayer, and missions. Regarding worship, Harmon concentrates on the already-not yet nature of worship, how our worship is patterned after heavenly worship, and how present-day worship is participation in heavenly worship (Rev 4-5; Heb 12:18-29). Worship celebrates the covenantal relationship believers have with God and worship responds to who God is, his mighty works in the past, especially the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the songs, prayers, and preaching should also point believers to the not yet—the redemption to be realized in the new heavens and earth (119-24). In chapter 8, Harmon demonstrates how the eschatological dynamic now present through Christ impacts prayer. Examining Jesus' and Paul's teaching on prayer (Matt 6:9-13; Eph 1:15-23; 1 Cor 1:4-9; Phil 1:3-11), prayer focuses on what God has already done and looks forward to the fullness of what God has promised. Lastly, a succinct biblical theology of missions is presented in chapter 9. Starting from the OT (the commission of Adam), Harmon explains how God's mission is fulfilled in Christ, carried out by his Spirit-indwelt followers, and consummated when God's presence fills the entire created order and in a renewed humanity in glory (Rev 21-22). Gladd rounds out the book with a chapter by chapter overview.

In terms of evaluation, the strengths and positive contributions of the book far outweigh its minor weaknesses. Beale's first chapter is excellent and deserves a careful reading in its own right. Beale helpfully lays out the eschatology of the OT and summarizes the ten ideas that compose the content of the "latter days" (7). The notions of kingdom, the restoration of Israel, return from exile, anticipation of a new covenant, the bestowal of Spirit, and so on are clearly invoked in the NT, as is the language of the "latter days." The end days have come to initial fulfillment through Christ and the church as Beale convincingly demonstrates.

Next, I really appreciated how Harmon and Gladd did not shy away from difficult biblical texts as they relate to eschatology and ministry of the church. The authors affirm that the restoration of Israel has begun as the church is the eschatological people of God (e.g. 16-31, 64-66, 104,

163-67) and they offer biblical support for this position. Closely tied to restoration is the new exodus and the prophetic hopes of a new temple, both of which are fulfilled through Christ with the entailment that the church is the people of the new exodus and the eschatological temple. While difficult biblical-theological areas, maintaining these truths are important for understanding the church and the ministry of the church now that the end days have dawned in Christ.

Also, in drawing key areas for ministry with a view to the already and not yet, other difficult or challenging areas were brought to the fore. For example, for a book focused on the life of the church one would not expect a discussion of the man of lawlessness (1 Thess 2:1-7; see pages 80-89), but this passage is brought into focus (along with the helpful links to Dan 11:29-36; 12:10) by Gladd. While this area is a source of debate, the main point should not be: pastoral leadership must guard and comfort the flock in the midst of tribulation and persecution and they must combat the onslaught of false teaching that derives from the end-time oppressor who is already here even though his full manifestation is not yet. For yet another example, 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 (and 1 Cor 3:10-15), a passage often overlooked for pastoral stewardship receives attention as does an insightful OT allusion to Daniel 2:22-23 in 1 Corinthians 4:5 (105-109). Stewardship over the mystery, the message of the cross, is imperative, for “Paul knows that the Lord will one day hold him accountable, at the very end of history, for preaching a gospel that is free from deceit and error” (109).

These specific points aside, another strength of this work is that Gladd and Harmon draw out implications and practical suggestions at the end of each chapter. While there are many theological points and attention on inaugurated eschatology, Gladd and Harmon never lose sight of pressing these teachings for the ministry of the church and the Christian life. Gladd and Harmon are keen to explore what it means to live in the presence of the kingdom even as we await the full manifestation of the kingdom.

Despite these excellent points, there were areas that could have used much more refinement and analysis. With regard to the nature of the new covenant community, while the authors rightly emphasize the church as the end-time people of God who receive the promised blessings and inheritance through their identification with Christ, more development

of the new covenant was needed (20-23). While it is certainly true that Jeremiah 31 “is about a democratization of the priestly and prophetic roles within the end-time community of faith” (22), much more treatment of the fact that the new covenant people will *all* know the Lord and will have the law written on their hearts was needed along with the ecclesiological implications. Coupling the fact that *all* will know the Lord *and* possess the Holy Spirit with the truth that these ones will also experience the complete and final forgiveness of sin (Jer 31:34), does not this passage point to a faithful, regenerate end-time covenant community? Is there not a significant discontinuity between Israel and the church, namely, that the church is *not* a mixed community of believers and unbelievers as Israel was? One of the difficulties at this point is that the authors are not in agreement (21n5). In addition, I think Gladd’s discussion of the fulfillment of the law (40-41) could use much more development. The law is internalized in the hearts of believers, but Matthew 5:17 seems to be indicating more than this as the law as a whole, not just external aspects and ceremonial regulations, has come to fulfillment in Jesus.

While there are some areas that could have been developed more, *Making All Things New* is a very helpful work that deserves wide-readership, especially among pastors and other church leaders. Gladd and Harmon have convincingly shown that the already-not yet framework within Scripture should impact and reorient how we conceive of the church, how pastors minister to the flock, and how followers of Jesus worship, pray, and serve God in missionary endeavors.

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Augustine's Theology of Angels. By Elizabeth Klein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 212 pp, \$74.19. Hard cover.

There is a well-known saying about Augustine: anyone who claims to have read all his works is liar. That statement certainly describes anyone who thinks they have read everything written *about* Augustine’s life, philosophy, and theology. A myriad of books and articles populate the field of Augustinian studies because the Bishop of Hippo reigns as the

most pivotal figure in church history, indeed in western civilization. As such, his works have engendered a copious range of scholarly and pastoral attention for the past 1600 years.

Despite the prolonged analysis of Augustine's works, scholars continue to yield fruitful studies of his theology and writings. In 2018, Elizabeth Klein, who earned her PhD from the University of Notre Dame and currently serves as a professor of theology at the Augustine Institute in Denver, provided a gem for Augustinian studies when she unearthed a crucial yet underdeveloped theme that permeates Augustine's works: his theology of angels. Klein's *Augustine's Theology of Angels*, published by Cambridge University Press, sheds light on Augustine's angelology—specifically, how his angelology intersects with the economy of salvation and redemptive history. Klein, moreover, boldly suggests that unless students of Augustine understand his angelology, they cannot fully grasp his larger theological system.

Klein organizes her book into four chapters with an introduction and conclusion. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of Augustine's angelology and explores the roles of angels in (1) creation, (2) community, (3) salvation history, and (4) spiritual warfare. Here methodology represents a careful approach that concerns itself with Augustine and his historical context. She guards against proof texting and aims to maintain the integrity of Augustine's literary works. Klein admits in her introduction that though Augustine never devoted a single work to angelology, angels and demons saturate many of his most important theological works—indeed, Augustine presents through his writings a consistent and steady system of angels and demons in soteriology as well as an angelic paradigm for sacramental worship for the church.

Klein, furthermore, argues that historical-theologians must remember the *historical* element when delving into the annals of theological antiquity. Chronological chauvinism breeds poor historiography. Klein believes that “although the mediation of angels seems to have little hold in the imagination of modern scholars, this was not the case for an ancient religious adherent” (2). Thus, the questions of modernity must not supersede the questions and worldview of historical figures. Some historians enter the past with burdensome presuppositions and critical motivations—an attitude that will veil the past as it happened

and obscure important theological insights. A right historiography, as Klein has done her book, approaches the past with a desire to listen, learn, and ask the questions that the subject would have asked. This historiographical principle flows throughout Klein's book and subsequently presents the reader not only with a definitive assessment of Augustine's angelology but the significant role of angels in Augustine's mind and overall theological framework.

Chapter 1 distills the role of angels in creation—an important issue for Augustine because he engaged in polemics against Manicheans who believed a cosmic conflict engulfed the creation between two coeternal forces of light and darkness. Augustine, in his various works on Genesis and in his *Confessions*, refutes a Manichean worldview and instead posits the subordination of the angelic host as creatures of the almighty God. Augustine, therefore, develops an angelology in the turbulent sea of theodicy as he wrestles with the origin of evil and the fall of the angels.

First, Augustine dispenses with theories of preexistent events before Genesis 1:1. Before time, there was only God. God created *ex nihilo* and this includes the angels. Klein observes that Augustine curtails any Manichean notion of two, coeternal forces in conflict—rather, God, as the supreme and eternal good, created all things out of nothing and made everything in the cosmos good. The existence of evil, therefore, flows not from God and hence is not an eternal force in opposition to God's will.

Klein draws out Augustine's juxtaposition of the angelic fall with the fall of humanity to further enforce the created nature of angels. Indeed, the fall of the angels, in Augustine's belief, arose from the same restlessness that Satan would use to tempt Adam and Eve—the angels failed to cling to God as their source of life and joy. As Klein interacts with Augustine's *City of God* and *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, she discovers that Augustine believed God created the angelic host on the first day of creation that they might behold the creative power of God in the rest of creation and render to him worship and praise. Klein writes, "On day one the angels receive knowledge of God first, then of themselves in the evening. The next morning, they return to the Word aglow with praise for their own creation and glimpse again what will be created on day two, the firmament" (28). Augustine, therefore, posited an angelic doxology that unfolded with the subsequent days of creation. Klein believes Augustine's interpretive framework suggests three

profound elements of his overall theological system: (1) that God intended creation pedagogically, (2) that angels must and can only be creatures of the creator God, and (3) that time has a “sacramental quality” (29). By pedagogically, Augustine heralded the *goodness* of creation—as God creates, his creatures marvel at his creative work and render praise unto his glory. As creatures, the angels who lapsed represent the perversion of the liberty to love God completely while the faithful angels embody the future state of humanity wherein mankind will revel in the perfected freedom to possess God and his glory in fullness. By sacramental, Augustine believed the angelic participation in creation points to the importance of signs or sacraments in the worship of God.

In chapter two, Klein discusses Augustine’s formulation of the angelic community and their relationship to the church of Jesus Christ. The angelic community flourishes in bonds of felicity and communal praise—hallmarks of the type of community that should mark the church and God’s people. Augustine’s angelology is often typological of the human experience: the good angels represent the fullness of joy that Christians long to share while the evil angels typify the consequences of sin; the former embody the character that the church should strive to emulate while the latter corresponds to warning. The demons seek happiness and praise in their own being while the angels exude self-giving love that marks the community of God. Klein observes that “the good angels have attached themselves to God and seek to draw others into that relationship rather than to attract praise to themselves; that is the demonic impulse” (62). Augustine’s angelology, therefore, gravitates around worship. The angels are creatures of worship. They exist to praise God and to draw others into the celestial community of praise.

Klein believes Augustine’s angelology points to two diametrically opposed forms of worship communities. The two communities share many of the same worship practice—the showing of reverence and honor—yet the object of each community’s worship is distinct. Crucial for Klein’s argument is *The City of God* wherein Augustine divided the cosmos into two different cities: the city of man and the city of God. The city of man, ruled by the demons, suffers under the weight of self-love and deceit while the city of God casts the radiant light of divine love—a love that is not self-seeking but sacrificial. Humility, as defined fully by the

incarnation, marks the city of God.

Thus, as Klein observes, Augustine posits two communities that exist in the present life. She writes, “The two cities are cities composed of neighbors, defined by their love (or lack thereof) for the neighbor” (73). The good angels, in display of God’s providence, come alongside the will of God and draw God’s people into the heavenly community that is marked by worship of God. Community with the angels, therefore, has an “eschatological orientation”—present community with the good angels remains veiled until the fullness of time when Christ lifts the veil and the host of humanity joins together with the hosts of heaven for a perennial communion. Significantly, Klein draws out important implications of the communal angelology present in Augustine’s works: primarily, the familial bonds the unite humanity with the angels expresses that angels are not authoritative, unknowable creatures. The good angels have a distinct role the in the economy of salvation—they summon God’s people to join them in the praise of God. Moreover, Klein deduces immense pastoral concerns present in Augustine’s angelology: the belief in the active presence of angels abounded in Augustine’s day; he needed to protect his flock from the myriad of distortions that permeated the ancient world. Klein helpfully draws out the implications of Augustine’s theology of angels. Secular society (and even modern evangelicalism) gives little thought to the importance of angels. Subsequently, modern scholarship has overlooked its importance throughout the history of the church. Klein, however, adopts a sound historiography that elevates the concerns, thoughts, and theological quandaries Augustine faced to the fore of her book. She highlights the importance of, to the modern reader, an obscure doctrine—a doctrine, however, that had enormous implications for Augustine’s overall theology and pastoral ministry.

Chapter three surveys the role of angels in salvation history. Augustine believed the angels played a prominent role in the dispensing of the old covenant. He did not, according to Klein, interpret the appearance of the Son to Old Testament saints in passages like Genesis 18. This marks a departure from much of patristic hermeneutic. Augustine objected to a preincarnate Christ because it interrupted the narrative of Scripture which “culminates in the incarnation” (111). Augustine, therefore, believed the theophanies of the Old Testament were carried out by the

angels who served God as harbingers of his message and will to the people of Israel.

Klein persuasively argues that Augustine's understanding of angels in the Old Testament mirrors the prophets. Augustine, therefore, believed angels have a personal character—though Isaiah proclaimed God's revelation, he was no less the man Isaiah. In the same way, angels retain a personal character as they fulfilled a prophetic assignment in God's covenantal economy with Israel.

Klein moves on to consider Augustine's view of the incarnation—specifically, how angels functioned in the seismic shift of redemptive history when God came and dwelt among men. Augustine believed that all throughout the Old Testament every angelic event foreshadowed and prepared the way for the incarnation. Klein's analysis helpfully demonstrates the centrality of the incarnation in Augustine's theology as well as the crucial role of angels in the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes. Indeed, for Augustine, the role of angels in redemptive history was to announce the coming of the Messiah (122).

Klein turns to Augustine's Christmas sermons and homilies, which contain numerous references to the angelic vocation at Christ's incarnation. Indeed, the angelic ministry centers on the incarnation—from the Old Testament to the New Testament, Augustine's angelology abounds with incarnational imagery as angels, by God's will, participate in the entire scope of redemptive history. Klein, furthermore, notes that the angels continue to bear witness to and announce the meaning of the incarnation at Christ's ascension (see Acts 1:11).

Klein concludes with a foray into the reason Augustine believed that angels played such a prominent role in salvation history. Klein argues,

God uses angels, according to Augustine, both for the benefit of the angels themselves and for our benefit as creatures. This understanding reveals a more general respect for creation on his part ... He also suggests that the angels have a special aesthetic quality and that they provide an authoritative witness to God's work, both of which make their participation in the economy of salvation valuable. (139)

This keen insight from Klein unearths the significance of Augustine's angelology with his entire theology of salvation. Though God does not need

the angels to fulfill his will, he graciously enlists the angels to support the unfolding of his mysterious will—this God does so that his angels might enjoy the pleasure of their divine prerogative.

Finally, chapter four takes up a central pastoral issue for Augustine's theology of angels: spiritual warfare. This chapter redounds with sound historiography and theological awareness on the part of Klein. She uses as her primary source Augustine's sermons—especially his exposition of the Psalms. By drawing from Augustine's sermons, Klein offers fresh insight into another underdeveloped theme of Augustine's life, namely, his pastoral ministry. The world knows of Augustine the philosopher or Augustine the theologian. Few, however, have reflected on Augustine the pastor—the occupation that he held for the majority of his life. He served one congregation for the totality of his ministry. By drawing from his sermons, Klein casts a new light on this enigmatic figure and provides a compelling distillation of Augustine's theology of spiritual warfare.

By focusing on Augustine's exposition of the Psalms, Klein uncovers a hermeneutical principle Augustine deployed: he believed that “any psalm which speaks of combat, war, violence or victory is understood to pertain to the struggle of the church, of Christ or of the individual against the devil” (149). Moreover, Augustine interpreted precatory psalms as battle cries, not against earthly foes, but against Satan and his demonic cohort. Augustine's interpretation of Psalm 34 reveals that he subordinates the fleshly foe of the Psalm to the cosmic forces of evil that wage war against Christians.

Augustine's conceptualization of spiritual warfare imbued his pastoral ministry with a constant summons to the spiritual disciplines: prayer, obedience, and the liturgical practices of the church. Saints meet their enemy in the mundane events of life—the commonplace occurrences that can give rise to vice, anger, and pride. The devil lies behind the temptations Christians face always attempting to lure them away from their pursuit of holiness. Indeed, as Klein has consistently argued, Augustine's angelology centered on worship—either worship of self away from God or true worship directed towards God.

Perhaps Klein's most insightful comment comes in the conclusion of the chapter. She writes, “Spiritual warfare . . . serves as a hermeneutical key for Augustine in his Psalm commentaries; if Christ . . . is the speaker of each one of the Psalms, then the devil must always be the enemy to whom

the speaker is referring” (184). Spiritual warfare, therefore, served as the paradigmatic lens of Augustine’s exposition of the Psalter. Thus, Augustine’s ministry was shaped by his angelology and the warfare imagery depicted in the psalms. As Augustine read, interpreted, and preached the psalms, he summoned his people to a cosmic conflict—a war waged not for the physical cities of the earth but a war between the city of the devil and the city of God.

Klein’s book is a most welcome addition to Augustinian studies. Her book provides a swath of theological insight into the mind and ministry of Augustine. Klein successfully guides her reader through the massive corpus of Augustine’s literature and demonstrates the significant place of angels in the bishop’s theology. Their role in creation, community, salvation, and in war proves her original assertion in the introduction: students of Augustine cannot fully grasp his theology if they are sundered from his angelology. Scholars of history, theology, and patristics will welcome this insightful, well written, and substantive study on this neglected aspect of Augustine’s theology.

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Peculiar Orthodoxy: Reflections on Theology and the Arts. By Jeremy S.

Begbie. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, 214 pp., \$32.00.

Jeremy Begbie currently serves as the Thomas A. Langford Distinguished Professor of Theology at Duke Divinity School. He has done a significant amount of work in studying the interaction of music and theology, publishing several books and articles as well as serving as editor for many others. In addition, Begbie is also an accomplished musician, something that no doubt impacts his understanding of the subject matter presented here. He is undoubtedly one of the current leading voices in the “theology and the arts” discussions, and thus, well worth reading.

This book is a collection of essays, all previously published, but collected with some minor editing where necessary in this volume so that, among other things, a wider audience might gain access to them. The essays address individual topics, and as a result coherence throughout

the book is provided by Begbie's approach rather than by any particular topic. Due to the somewhat self-contained nature of each chapter, the book serves wonderfully as an introduction to several different aspects of theological interactions with the arts (or perhaps more accurately, artistic interactions with theology) without burdening a neophyte reader in the subject with extended argumentation. Each chapter can be digested on its own, or if the entire book is taken in, the reader can benefit from the interplay between the essays in order to get a wider-lens view of Begbie's thought. A selection of the chapters will be reviewed here.

The first two chapters deal with the subject of beauty from differing perspectives. As the notion of beauty has been reentering artistic discussions (184), these two chapters are helpful. The first investigates the production of beauty within the music of J. S. Bach. Thankfully, Begbie doesn't settle for simple hagiography of Bach's work, but instead works through some evaluations of particular musical features that it displays. Begbie's analysis interacts seriously with the music, but it does so without being overly technical, and thus even a non-musician may easily benefit. The focus is on the way that Bach crafted his music, not by rigid mathematical progressions, but by finding a pattern that could be built upon with variations and responses such that none of the notes seem inevitable, and yet all of them seem proper (16). In this way, Begbie sees Bach's work as, in many ways, reflecting the creative nature of God worked out through the Trinity; diversity and unity without limitation is a trajectory that Begbie sees in Bach's music, and it is evident in full in the work of the Father, Spirit, and Son.

In the second chapter, Begbie moves away from the intricate complexities of Bach and interacts with the matter of sentimentality. Rather than simply dismissing this as a sort of un-artistic tear-jerking, Begbie proposes a model for understanding what the deficiencies in sentimentality actually are and a way in which they can be recovered to productive artistic use. He imagines the three days of Easter as a paradigm for understanding art. All three days must be acknowledged by our perspectives and by our art if we are to remain properly balanced. "Christian sentimentalism arises from a premature grasp for Easter morning." (41) If we don't let the reality of "Friday" (the crucifixion, the harsh side of reality) impact our art but instead look only forward to the

happier day of Easter, we will end up with sentimental art that can't truly communicate to people whose daily experience is more like the despair of "Friday" or the troubled waiting of "Saturday."

Begbie's third chapter helpfully focuses on the role that emotion plays in worship. While emotion is so easily dismissed or at least viewed skeptically within some Christians circles, and in others is seemingly elevated to normative status, Begbie lays out what he believes is a proper role for emotion in worship. He finds the concept of "concentration," the process of developing specific emotions with a specific target, very helpful, particularly the concentration of emotion on the person of Jesus. What the church needs in worship is not less emotion, but more, and better, emotion. Too often, he notes, worship involves music that is too emotionally simple, "supporting only the broadest and most basic emotions." (76)

In chapter five, Begbie does an excellent job of evaluating the early modern music of Edward Elgar, particularly his rendition of John Henry Newman's poem, *The Dream of Gerontius*. Begbie demonstrates the connection between the music, specifically the chord and note progressions, and the thematic or story-line material that is being presented (100-101), but he goes one (very helpful) step further and comments on the consistency between Elgar's life and his music and his subject matter (105). Noting how Elgar's music accurately portrays the fear of judgment and the desire for purgatory that is present in Roman Catholic thought including Newman's poem, Begbie is not afraid to assert that the tentative hope that Elgar's music expresses (and that Elgar himself felt) is biblically deficient (109). In Begbie, it is certainly refreshing to read an artist/theologian who, while being impeccably respectful, is still willing to make a meaningful practical distinction between Roman Catholicism and Protestant faith.

Throughout the entire book Begbie's writing is clear and engaging, but the aspect of his writing that is most appreciated is the way in which the historic orthodoxy of the Christian faith, and especially the content of the Scriptures, provides boundaries for the appreciation and analysis of artistic creations. One of the most common themes throughout the book is the repeated reference to God as triune (5) and to the way that art engages trinitarian themes (17). In fact, according to Begbie, the

Trinity provides the grounding for beauty itself: given that the Triune God is characterized by “the dynamism of outgoing love, then primordial beauty is the beauty of this ecstatic love for the other.” (4) This unabashed centering on a unique feature of the Christian God may not be the most popular move in the art world, but it is certainly part of the path to having good “theology and the arts.”

In addition to the centrality of the Triune nature of God, Begbie also maintains a distinct emphasis on the role that Scripture plays in defining not only our theology but also our understanding for the roles that the arts can and should play. In chapter four, Begbie interacts with some of the published comments of David Brown, a significant “arts theologian.” Where Brown proposes an art that is free to reinterpret both Scripture and church tradition as it finds need (82), Begbie responds by acknowledging Brown’s concerns but then demonstrates that not only should Scripture be normative for our understanding and production of art (88), an art so constrained (and here he draws on Bach as a paradigm) would actually be better and more productive than art lacking such constraint (89).

In all, Begbie demonstrates not only great skill in guiding others through the world of interactions between theology and the arts, he also demonstrates a willingness to be, first of all, an orthodox Christian in the world of art. He doesn’t try to blend away the distinctiveness of being a Christian, but rather, he promotes theological orthodoxy based in Scripture as the ultimate means of developing meaningful and rich art. Many may benefit from this book, and if artists embody Begbie’s approach to the arts, the world will benefit.

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Persecution and Participation in Galatians. By John Anthony Dunne. WUNT 2.454. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. 248 pp., \$96.10, paperback.

Persecution is a repeated theme in the book of Galatians (e.g., 1:13, 23; 4:29; 5:11; 6:12), and yet the theme has been neglected or downplayed by most scholars. In his published dissertation, John Anthony Dunne attempts a comprehensive account of the theme of persecution in Galatians. Dunne

seeks to demonstrate that “in Galatians, Paul is informed by the Christ-event and the full implications of participation with Christ in such a way that he sees suffering for the sake of the cross not as incidental, but as one of the alternative marks to circumcision, which demarcates the true people of God, and sets them apart for future blessing” (4). After reviewing the history of research in chapter 1, in chapter 2 Dunne examines Galatians 3:4, 4:6–7, and 4:28–5:1 and concludes that suffering marks Christian identity (sonship) and destiny (inheritance). In chapter 3, on the basis of Galatians 6:11–17, Dunne argues that suffering serves as a means of “participation in the cross” and thus indicates “who will therefore be vindicated at the final judgment” (88). Since Paul bears the marks of a slave of Christ (Gal 1:10; 6:17), he expects the Galatians to become slaves as well (Gal 6:2). In chapter 4, Dunne claims that Paul’s emphasis on suffering and slavery in Galatians echoes Isaiah. In this claim, he builds on the earlier work of Matthew S. Harmon (*She Must and Shall Go Free: Paul’s Isaianic Gospel in Galatians*, De Gruyter, 2010). Dunne’s argument can be summarized in three steps: (1) Paul echoes Isaiah 53 when he describes Jesus’ death (Gal 1:4; 2:20; cf. Isa 53:5–6, 10, 12). (2) Paul presents himself as the Isaianic servant from Isaiah 49 (Gal 1:10, 15–16, 24; 2:2; cf. Isa 49:1–6). He is thus the servant of the Servant, displaying the Servant’s suffering and indwelt by his Spirit. (3) Finally, Paul calls on the Galatians to imitate him as suffering servants (Gal 4:12–5:1; Isa 49–54). The true people of God, therefore, are those who imitate Paul as he participates in the sufferings of Christ.

Dunne’s research represents the most comprehensive attempt to understand the topic of persecution in Galatians to date, and the quality of his research only serves to buttress the value of his work. Dunne, rightly, argues that the persecution theme serves a theological purpose in Galatians and is thus not merely an incidental circumstance of the letter. One of those theological purposes is to mark the identity of God’s true people, the true heirs of God, in contrast with the Old Covenant mark of circumcision. Students of Galatians would do well to wrestle with Dunne’s work as a way to fully appreciate the contribution that the persecution theme makes to Paul’s argument.

Nonetheless, I would point to two chief criticisms of Dunne’s work. First, Dunne shows little concern for understanding the historical background to the persecution referenced in Galatians. He acknowledges

this in his conclusion by identifying historical reconstruction as an area for further research. This issue, however, cannot be isolated from exegesis. Two recent trends in Pauline studies in particular—Paul within Judaism and Paul and Empire—demonstrate how significant historical reconstruction is to understand the theology of the text. These trends offer unique readings of Galatians based on particular understandings of the historical evidence. For example, without historical reconstruction the interpreter cannot easily identify instances when Paul might be using the theme to accomplish polemical purposes rather than addressing the historical setting of his readers. If Paul is using διώκω in Galatians 4:29 polemically to refer to false teaching rather than physical or social hostility, then this would tell us something significant about Paul's understanding of the concept of persecution as well as his conception of false teaching. Dunne attempts to evade the issue, and thus he must interpret references to persecution at face value.

Second, Dunne's emphasis on Isaianic echoes in chapter 4 is the weakest aspect of his argument. Dunne appeals to broad echoes of Isaiah 49–54 throughout the book of Galatians as the basis of Paul's theology of persecution. If one can only understand the echoes to Isaiah, then one can fully understand Paul's theology of persecution in Galatians. The emphasis, therefore, is placed on what is underneath the text of Galatians as the key to understanding the letter. While some (but not all) of Dunne's identified echoes exist, it may be better to seek a simpler and clearer explanation of Paul's theology of persecution from a surface reading of Galatians itself. Nevertheless, despite these two weaknesses, Dunne's work remains a significant contribution to scholarship on Galatians, and those who would preach or teach Galatians would do well to grapple with Dunne's arguments. No preacher should exposit Galatians without exhorting his congregation to bear the mark of suffering.

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