

Long Term Care

Ordained Servant

November
2021



Ordained Servant Online

A Journal for Church Officers

E-ISSN 1931-7115

CURRENT ISSUE: LONG TERM CARE

November 2021

From the Editor

I recently heard an excellent sermon on Psalm 49 in which the pastor emphasized that death is the earthly end of us all. As believers this is not news, but we, like the culture around us, also tend to minimize and even cover up our mortality, thus failing to plan properly for this most inevitable reality. Gregory DeJong's article, "Who Cares for Us When We Can No Longer Care for Ourselves?" is a significant help in planning for one very important part of everyone's future. This article should be distributed to every officer and every church member.

The two resources provided by Danny Olinger in *The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation: Chapter 5 – "Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1–27:1"* (1986); and Meredith G. Kline, *A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John*, Part 3 provide an excellent place for preachers to begin preparing to preach this rich and important final book of the Bible. Fear of preaching on Revelation is unwarranted. It was given to encourage and direct the church militant through this present evil age. I have added the first two parts of Kline's *A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John* this month in order to clarify the footnotes.

Bryan Estelle's review article, "Covenant Theology Today," looks at an important new book, *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, an anthology of professors from Reformed Theological Seminary.

Darryl Hart's review of *Dual Citizens: Politics and American Evangelicals*, an anthology of various writers from various periods on various aspects of politics and Christianity from *Christianity Today*, is a fascinating historical journey.

Charles Wingard reviews *Small Preaching: 25 Little Things You Can Do Now to Become a Better Preacher*. The author, Jonathan T. Pennington, a seasoned preacher, brings unique insight and suggestions to the important business of pastoral preaching.

Finally, do not miss the third poem in a row by Phillis Wheatley, the first published black poet in America: "on Imagination." Her appreciation for this God-given gift is profound.

The cover photos, which are often different on various devices and the PDF, are almost always my own. The present photos come from a little campsite in Washington, New Hampshire, the first town to be named after our first president and has the highest town center in the state. The brook water and fall leaves make a lovely composition. What does this picture have to do with long term care?

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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http://opc.org/OS/pdf/Subject_Index_Vol_1-29.pdf

- “Clarity on the Covenants.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 15 (2006): 22–27.
- “Covenant and Salvation.” (Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.) 18 (2009): 145–49.

Ordained Servant exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God-glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high-quality editorials, articles, and book reviews, we will endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

ServantLiving

Who Cares for Us When We Can No Longer Care for Ourselves?

by Gregory S. DeJong

One of the most challenging areas of personal financial planning is how to provide the care which is often needed late in life. The topic is an uncomfortable one for most people, and thus few take the time to research alternatives, get sound advice, discuss options with their loved ones, and formulate a realistic plan before events overtake them.

We all hope to live to a ripe old age in nearly perfect health and then die peacefully in our sleep one night. But a survey of the elderly members of your extended family tree, both living and deceased, will probably reveal that such an outcome is rare. With life expectancies typically stretching into one's eighties and nineties, most Americans will live out their final years with significant physical impairments, mental limitations, or both. While most married couples hope to stay in their own home and care for each other until their earthly days are ended, failing to plan for alternative scenarios can create substantial hardships for the couple and their family.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the issues, challenges, and options involved in planning for late-in-life care needs, or what we will call "long-term care." We will explore:

- Who can provide such care?
- Where might I receive such care?
- What are the cost considerations of various types of care?
- Is such care provided by government or community-based programs?
- Is insurance available which covers long-term care expenses?

As you will quickly discover, this topic is complex, both in the sense that there are many different options to weigh and in the recognition that such planning involves unknowables and must be conducted in a spirit of "if the Lord wills." As the Puritans put it, "Man proposes, God disposes."

Who Might Provide Additional Care for Me?

For a married couple, the most common answer is "my spouse." Wedding vows typically include "in sickness or in health . . . 'til death do us part," so looking to your spouse is a reasonable place to start. There may, however, be many circumstances where your spouse, despite a fervent desire to help, simply cannot provide the support needed. He or she may end up with physical limitations of their own. A 140 lb. wife may be

incapable of helping her 200 lb. husband dress, bathe, or recover from a fall. A healthy husband may find that the constant demands of a wife suffering from dementia overwhelm him, thus impairing his health due to stress or lack of sleep.

A second common assumption is “the kids will help us out.” Certainly, many adult children do contribute significantly to the care of their parents. Whether this is a desirable arrangement which was entered into willingly by all parties may be another matter. Adult children have their own responsibilities, increasingly with their own children and grandchildren, who also may have significant needs. Adult children in their fifties and sixties are often expected to provide significant leadership in their local church or may have career obligations which cannot be easily shed. Intra-family dynamics can also create challenges. If one child lives nearby and the rest are scattered around the country, how is it practically possible for all of the children to share equitably in caring for a parent?

Friends, including members of your local church family and your church’s deacons, may also be a source for some assistance, but within reasonable limits. If you will, at some point, need daily physical assistance, specialized care, or regular monitoring (such as with a cognitive impairment), most local congregations would be taxed or overwhelmed covering these needs.

Another group which may be of some help would be community-based resources. For example, there may be a senior citizens transportation service which could provide rides to the doctor or grocery store. There may also be “senior centers” with daily activities to help fill some of your time, provide social engagement, and give relief to your other caregivers. Such centers may also be an excellent source of information for other programs and benefits in your area.

Beyond these sources, those who can assist you fall into various categories of professional caregivers. This might be someone who comes into your home to cook or clean, or a home health aide. Professional caregivers would also encompass the staff of an assisted living facility, memory care facility, or nursing home. Or it could be professional medical personnel such as nurses, doctors, or therapists. The common theme in this group is that they will be compensated for the services they provide you, whether by you or by another.

Where Might I Receive Care?

The desirable answer for most of us would be “in my home.” Fortunately, there are a wide variety of care services which can be provided in the home. In fact, insurance companies which provide long-term care insurance are generally eager to see you receive care in your home if possible. Remaining in familiar surroundings can provide important psychological and sociological benefits.

If care in your home is not feasible, or the ability to maintain your home properly is beyond you, it may be that one of your children has a residence which could provide separate living quarters for you. This decision should not be made lightly nor unilaterally, as it can have significant ramifications for the host family.

If your home or a child’s home is not viable, a residential care facility of some sort will provide your remaining options. As most seniors know, there are a variety of facilities or “care communities” available, starting with independent living arrangements,

continuing with assisted living, memory care, and if needed, full skilled nursing care facilities. So-called “continuing care communities” (CCC) have become popular, in that they allow their residents to stay within a residential community and transition to more advanced levels of care if needed. This can be a significant benefit if both spouses are alive but need differing levels of care. Some CCC’s may also guarantee you lifetime care even if your own financial resources end up being exhausted.

How Will the Expense of My Care be Covered?

The first line of defense will of course be your own savings, investments, retirement accounts, and whatever sources of income you receive, such as Social Security, pension benefits, or perhaps rents or royalties.

Since a home may be one’s largest asset, the value it represents may also help pay for needed care. A reverse mortgage can, in the right circumstances, be an effective way to extract the value from your home over time in order to pay for needed in-home care. Among other important considerations, a reverse mortgage can only continue as long as you reside in your home. Despite your firm intention of remaining in your home the rest of your earthly days, this plan could collapse if your final year on this earth requires full nursing care, with potentially dire financial consequences. Reverse mortgages should only be considered with the assistance of knowledgeable professional advisors. The value of your home could also be tapped to finance some of your care needs by selling your home and using the sales proceeds to cover the entrance fee, or a portion of it, for a CCC.

Will federal government programs such as Medicare, or will a Medicare supplement insurance policy, cover long-term care expenses? Generally not. Many people are under the impression that Medicare will pay for nursing home care, but on closer examination this is true only for a limited period of no more than one hundred days. For such care to be covered, it must follow a period of hospitalization (of not less than three days), and the nursing care must be for medical needs directly related to the cause of hospitalization. Certainly, this is a valuable, albeit limited, benefit if you qualify, but it does not fit the progression of health impairment experienced by most with long-term care needs.

Medicaid is another possible source of funding. Medicaid is a program administered by the states with funding from the federal government, which is designed to pay health care costs, including nursing home and certain personal care services. However, Medicaid is a “safety net” program which is available only to individuals with very low incomes and minimal assets. Since Medicaid provisions vary by state, it is best to consult the particular details of one’s own state of residence as well as the federal government’s website (www.medicaid.gov).

Due to the limitations of what Medicaid will reimburse, some nursing care facilities may not accept Medicaid patients, and facilities which have a large percentage of Medicaid patients will generally provide a lower level of amenities and may be less appealing than facilities populated primarily by private-pay or insured residents. In order to qualify for Medicaid, a couple will first need to spend down most of their own assets. This is true even if only one spouse needs care and the healthy spouse is capable of continuing to live independently. At the death of the second spouse, the state may recoup some of its Medicaid outlays for care through a lien on your personal residence. In short,

Medicaid should be viewed as the payer of last resort when your savings have been largely depleted.

Can I Purchase Insurance to Cover Long-Term Care Expenses?

Insurance has been available for at least thirty years to help individuals transfer some of the financial risk of a long-term care need to an insurer in exchange for paying premiums on an insurance policy. For individuals without a spouse, such policies can help pay for the care that they might have otherwise received from their husband or wife. For married couples, long-term care insurance can prevent the care needs of one spouse from draining the couple's savings and leaving the surviving spouse impoverished. Originally, these policies were referred to as "nursing home insurance," but policies quickly evolved to cover expenses incurred for in-home care as well as various types of in-facility care. Such insurance today takes the form of either a stand-alone long-term care insurance (LTCI) policy or a hybrid policy where a long-term care rider is added to either a life insurance policy or an annuity policy.

Whether coverage is provided through a stand-alone policy or a hybrid, several key principles will most likely apply:

- Your health needs to be good enough to qualify for coverage.
- Premiums are higher for older applicants than for younger; many insurance advisors suggest that age 50–65 is the "sweet spot" for obtaining this type of insurance.
- For stand-alone policies, premiums are *not* guaranteed to remain level as the years go by, and existing policyholders have endured unexpected (and often substantial) rate increases over the past 15–20 years.
- Benefits will be paid as a reimbursement for long-term care expenses incurred, capped either by a maximum amount payable per month and a maximum number of months or by an overall dollar limit.
- Benefits become available after a waiting period, commonly known as an "elimination period," which may be as short as thirty days but typically would be ninety or one hundred eighty days. The concept is that you should be able to cover expenses from your own savings for a time, after which the insurance benefits kick in. Selecting a longer elimination period will yield a lower premium.
- You qualify for benefits by filing a claim with the insurance company; your claim would ordinarily be approved if you are unable to perform two or more "Activities of Daily Living" *or* your doctor attests to your having a severe cognitive impairment (such as Alzheimers or dementia) requiring substantial supervision. Activities of Daily Living are generally defined as eating, bathing, dressing, transferring/mobility, toileting, and continence.
- The insurance company will often provide a "care coordinator" who will, in conjunction with you, your medical professionals, and your family, develop a "plan of care" which is appropriate to your needs. While a care coordinator is there in large part to keep the insurer from paying for unnecessary services, you will also find them to be a valuable resource in helping you find the right kind of help.

Stand-alone policies are not inexpensive, depending of course on the level of benefits selected. For example, a couple aged sixty purchasing a policy which, after a ninety-day waiting period, would provide a \$7,000/mo. benefit¹ for up to 48 months² would likely pay premiums of more than \$600/month. People of average financial means may find that paying the ongoing premiums of a stand-alone policy simply is not affordable. Hybrid policies attempt to address affordability concerns by pairing some coverage for long-term care needs with either life insurance or an annuity. Hybrid Life/LTC policies will be based on permanent cash value life insurance, not low-cost term insurance. If the policy has had, or will have, sufficient premiums paid into it, then the insurer can be confident that they will pay out the insurance policy face amount eventually. Normally this would be at the death of the person insured, but with the LTC component, should you incur qualifying long-term care expenses, the insurer can in essence pay a portion of the eventual death benefit to you early. While it becomes very difficult to assess whether LTC insurance is “a better deal” through a stand-alone policy or a hybrid, the hybrid approach has understandable appeal. The hybrid policy owner knows that they or their heirs will receive a financial return one way or another.

Hybrid Annuity/LTC policies are fundamentally different in that you are not offloading financial risk to the insurance company. Instead, you are using your own cash to purchase an annuity from the insurer, and in addition to the normal means by which you might later withdraw your funds from that annuity, you can also withdraw funds to pay for long-term care expenses. The benefit is that such LTC withdrawals will be tax free, where any other withdrawals may be taxable. A simple example will illustrate: when James was age fifty he received a \$100,000 inheritance and decided to invest this money in a deferred interest annuity. As the years went by, the annuity earned interest and the value grew. James is now age eighty, and the annuity has grown to \$225,000. If he begins withdrawing money, he will have to declare all of the earnings (\$125,000) as taxable income and pay taxes at his then-current income tax rate. The original \$100,000 comes back as his principal and is tax free, but the taxes on the \$125,000 of earnings could be as much as \$30–40,000. In contrast, should James have qualifying long-term care expenses, those withdrawals would be tax free, potentially allowing annuity proceeds which otherwise would have gone to the IRS to instead pay for his LTC needs. As you might surmise, the Annuity/LTC hybrid will provide the greatest benefit to someone who has had money invested and growing in an annuity for many years.

A final consideration regarding LTC insurance, whether stand-alone or hybrid, is that these financial products are generally provided by an insurance agent or broker who will be compensated through a commission arrangement. Typically, their pay will be some

¹ The national average for a single bedroom assisted living facility was \$4,800/mo. in 2020, and the national average for a semi-private room in a nursing home was \$8,177/mo. Source: Mutual of Omaha, “The Cost of Long Term Care Services, 2021 Update.”

² For this example, a “shared benefit” approach is assumed. The husband’s policy provides for 24 months of benefits, as does the wife’s policy. If one spouse exhausts all of their benefits, they can use as much as 12 months of their spouse’s policy benefits. This policy also adjusts future benefits upward by 3% yearly to partially offset inflation. Many other policy configurations are possible. This example is meant to illustrate a fairly modest level of coverage. The annual premium is \$7,993. Pricing current as of September 2021, for an Illinois resident.

percentage of the premiums that you pay. While there is nothing inherently wrong with such an arrangement, it does create the possibility of a conflict of interest between you and the agent. Deal with someone whom you know to be trustworthy, and who is part of an organization that is likely to be able to continue servicing your policy for years into the future.

Concluding Thoughts

As was promised, planning for late-in-life long-term care needs and expenses is complex. It is rare that anyone arrives at a plan which can be executed with 100% certainty as to the outcome. But as Christians, we are called to be wise stewards, not to guarantee results. In that light, make a plan carefully and prayerfully. Involve your children as well as trusted professional advisors. But make a plan and communicate it to those whose lives may be impacted. Then leave it to your sovereign Lord to provide for you as only he can. If his eye is on the sparrow, then we know he watches over you.

Resources

Brian L. De Jong, *Honoring the Elderly: A Christian's Duty to Aging Parents* (Sheboygan, WI: Brian L. De Jong, 2017).

Carol Levine, *Planning for Long-Term Care for Dummies* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

Joy Loverde, *Who Will Take Care of Me When I'm Old?* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2017).

Medicare, www.Medicare.gov

Medicaid, www.Medicare.gov

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Servant Truth

The Writings of Meredith G. Kline on the Book of Revelation: Chapter 5 – “Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1–27:1” (1986)

by Danny E. Olinger

In 1986 for a tribute to Old Testament scholar Gleason Archer, Kline contributed the essay “Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1–27:1.”¹ The essay focused on Isaiah’s so-called “little apocalypse” with the stated goal to open Isaiah’s pastoral theology of death, resurrection, and judgment and the impact it had on certain eschatological texts in the New Testament, primarily those in the Book of Revelation.

Victory Over Death

In the essay, Kline argued that the prophet Isaiah celebrates Yahweh’s victory over death in three main sections in Isaiah 24:1–27:1—the introduction (Isa. 24:1–3), centerpiece (Isa. 25:6–8), and conclusion (Isa. 26:19–27:1). Each graphically depicts the great reversal that will overtake the realm of death, but it is Isaiah 25:6–8 and its picture of the eschatological banquet that is Kline’s starting point.

Kline maintained that to appreciate the imagery of Isaiah 25:6–8 it is necessary to recall the reputation of the grave as the great devourer in the prophecy of Isaiah. Sheol makes wide its throat and swallows down its victims insatiably (Isa. 5:14).

When the promised banquet of everlasting victory for all peoples takes place “on this mountain” (Isa. 25:6–7) and “in that day” (Isa. 25:9),² the Lord will devour the devourer. God will swallow up the covering, death, that is cast over all the people (Isa. 25:7–8). This good news of the coming banquet and what God will do for his people in defeating death leads to confession, “It will be said in that day, ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation’” (Isa. 25:9).³

¹ Originally published in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Ronald R. Youngblood (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 229–249. Citations will be taken from the appearance of the article in Meredith G. Kline’s *Essential Writings of Meredith G. Kline* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2017), 217–237.

² The translation “in that day” in Isaiah 25:9 is Kline’s own. Jonathan G. Kline helpfully explains regarding Bible translations that in many cases his grandfather “used either the KJV or produced his own translations, but he also sometimes quoted the following translations (occasionally, though not usually, marking them): AV, ASV, RSV, NIV.” See, Jonathan G. Kline, “Acknowledgments,” in *Essential Writings*, xi.

³ Typologically, Isaiah’s banquet has its antecedent in the communion meal that took place on the mountain of God in Exodus 24:9–11. According to Kline, the concluding verse of Isaiah 24 makes the connection unmistakable with its mention that the Lord of hosts reigns in Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders. He also adds that “Yahweh’s swallowing of the earth-cover of death and

Kline noted that the Apostle Paul, quoting Isaiah 25:8 in 1 Corinthians 15:54, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” identifies Isaiah’s banquet with the believer’s ultimate putting on of the glory of incorruption and immortality.

For Kline, however, this is not the only New Testament reference for Isaiah 25:8. He argued that Revelation 20:14 portrays this death of death as a casting of death and Hades into the lake of fire. The first death undergoes a second death, or as Kline said employing the language of Revelation 20, “what is the second resurrection for those written in the book of life is the second death for those who are not.”⁴

The connection between Isaiah 25:8 and Revelation 20:14 is strengthened by the fact that Revelation 20:12–13 reflects Isaiah 24:1–3. In Revelation 20:12, “the great and the small” refers to the totality of the dead who are delivered up by death and Hades from the sea to stand before the judgment throne of God (cp. also Rev. 19:18). Isaiah renders death as a bottle or skin whose liquid contents are to be poured out. At the general resurrection, portrayed in Isaiah 24:1–3, all that death has swallowed down will be spit up, spelling the end of death’s historical role.

Vindication of the Martyrs

Aligned against the saints and associated with death in Isaiah’s Apocalypse are Satan and his human accomplices. The final resurrection triumph over death includes judgment upon Leviathan (Isa. 27:1) and the vindication of the martyrs. Leviathan is a serpentine symbol in the Bible that pictures the demonic dimension of a particular situation. Likewise, John used the dragon-figure to represent Satan in Revelation 12:9 (“And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world”) and Revelation 20:2 (“And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan”).⁵

Kline emphasized that both death and devil share the same attributes and activities. He wrote, “Like death, the devil is depicted as the swallower, if not through the Beliel designation then at least in Rev. 12:4, where the dragon is seen ready to devour the messianic child, and in 1 Pet. 5:8, where the Adversary is compared to a lion on the

the grave is a banquet of resurrection life forever, a devouring-death of death. Anticipating this eschatological banquet is the sacramental supper of the Lord, in which a feasting on Christ’s death celebrates his victory of life” (219).

⁴ Kline, “Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs,” 221.

⁵ Kline also saw a connection between Satan’s attack in Revelation 20:2 and Job 7 (quotations below from ASV). In Job 7:12, Job asks complainingly, “Am I the sea, or a sea monster?” With the surveillance kept over him, Job says it is as if he was a mythological monster like Leviathan (Job 3:8) who threatened the stability of the universe. This leads to Job’s exclamation in 7:17, “What is man?” and his lament in 7:20, “If I have sinned, what do I unto thee?” Kline commented, “Actually, of course, God’s transcendence magnifies the seriousness of sin: it is the foundation of the meaningfulness of human experience and of all that is. Moreover, this struggle of Job was particularly significant because it had been made the test case for this very truth of the transcendent authority and control of God over history. In Job’s temptation the stability of the universe was under attack—as the ‘sons of God’ could have told Job—by the real ‘dragon’ (cf. Rev. 20:2) of whom the mystical sea monster was a paganized version. The angels saw the world trembling with every tremor of Job’s spirit. For it the redemptive power of God could not preserve Job in the fear of God, not only Job but the world was lost to satanic chaos.” See, Meredith G. Kline, “Job,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. C. F. Pfeiffer (Chicago: Moody, 1962), 468.

prowl, seeking to devour believers.”⁶ Revelation 12:7–9 adds to this picture when it declares that an army of evil beings is associated with the devil in his cause. The judgment of God will come against Satan and this evil host “after many days” (Isa. 24:22) and God’s glory will be revealed (Isa. 24:23).

Kline believed that something of the nature of the judgment on Leviathan in Isaiah 27:1 could be discerned from Revelation 20:10. Here, the devil’s doom is being consigned eternally to the lake of fire, a realm of forever continuing torment. Satan no longer functions as the power of death in the creation proper, which also means that he no longer is in the role of the accuser of the brethren day and night before God. Kline explained,

It is through his tempting to sin and then prosecuting for sin (the ultimate duplicity) that he has come to yield the power of death. Therefore God’s resurrection-conquest of Satan as possessor of the power of death is at the same time a triumph over him as the accuser of the brethren.⁷

Deliverance, then, from death through resurrection in Christ is a reversal of condemnation. The verdict of justification secured by the merits of Christ is the answer to the prayer of the blood of the martyrs at the resurrection that Isaiah prophesies in 26:21. In Revelation 6:9–11, the martyrs awaiting the final avenging of their blood in the intermediate state receive already a foretaste of that pronouncement by being acknowledged as righteous through the bestowal of white robes in Revelation 19:8.

Subjection of the World-City

In Revelation 12:17–13:7, the faithful are assaulted by the dragon through the earthly means of the dragon-like beast. Therefore, in Revelation 20:10, the beast shares the dragon’s doom in the lake of fire. Kline believed this place of destruction prepared for the devil and his angels was “the fitting fate of the seed of the serpent, for throughout history they have exhibited their father’s spirit of self-assertion in blasphemous defiance of God and murderous hatred of his people.”⁸ Since the days of Cain onward, the city of man in opposition to the city of God contains an antichrist propensity. This propensity erupted violently in Genesis 6:1–4 at the end of prediluvian history and will erupt again in the same manner in the final appearance of the man of sin.

The two-tiered structure of satanic enterprise in Isaiah 24:21–22 is seen in the Lord’s vengeance upon both the earthly kings below and the demonic host above. Consequently, what Isaiah depicts as a single judgment episode here in verses 21–22, John depicts twice in the Book of Revelation due to a thematic arrangement of its visions. In Revelation 19 the judgment is related from the perspective of the beast and the kings of earth; In Revelation 20 the judgment is related from the perspective of the career of Satan.

The hostility of the world-power against the saints in Isaiah’s prophecy is also seen in the prayers of the saints. Against the overwhelming might of their oppressors, the saints in Isaiah 26:8–9 cry to God and second the call of the blood of the martyrs for divine

⁶ Kline, “Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs,” 226.

⁷ Ibid., 228.

⁸ Ibid., 230.

justice. They also confess their helplessness in Isaiah 26:17–18. As if in childbirth, they can produce only wind. Victory over the hostile-to-God inhabitants of the earth they cannot achieve.

Still, the cries of the saints are answered, and they are delivered, not by their own might, but by the might of the Lord. Isaiah 26:12 declares that what God’s people cannot achieve for themselves God will accomplish for them. God will descend from his heavenly temple to exact vengeance, the appeal to the martyrs’ blood answered and the witness of God’s slain released from the grave (Isa. 26:21). On this day, the day of resurrection, all those who have sided with the demonic hosts and have warred against the saints will fall.

Invitation to the Martyrs

The enemies of God in warfare with the saints in Isaiah 24–26, then, will experience divine vengeance on the day of resurrection. Death is the “last enemy” to be abolished by the coming Messiah, but even before its abolishment, the martyr people of God are not terrified by death. For believers, death is no longer terrifying because in the resurrection it is no longer a confining covering. This explains the invitation of Isaiah 26:20 that the people hide themselves in the inner rooms, an image of Sheol, until the wrath has passed by.

Revelation 2:10, 6:9–11, 14:13, and 20:4–6 share this perspective. In his closing sentences to the essay, Kline elaborated:

In all these passages the godly are viewed as under persecution. The beast power, or even the devil himself, appears in the nearby contexts. But the saints are faithful unto death, and their martyr blood cries out for avenging. Also, the intermediate state of death is perceived as a royal sabbatical resting until the historical strife is over. This interval of waiting will be short. And finally, the continuity of John, the New Testament seer, with Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet, is exhibited in their common portrayal of death as having been fundamentally changed for the redeemed of the Lord. In Rev. 20:4–6 this transformation is expressed by identifying the Christian’s death as “the first resurrection.”⁹

In a footnote, Kline added that Revelation 12:11 is why the intermediate state can be understood in terms of Sabbath rest. There the martyrs are proclaimed victors, overcomers because of their faithfulness unto death. Thus, they are secured from the second death and assured of the second resurrection (Rev. 2:11).

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⁹ Ibid., 237.

Servant Truth

A Study in the Structure of the Revelation of John, Parts 1–3

by Meredith G. Kline¹

Part 1

Thesis Statement

One of the structural principles of the Apocalypse is to set before us different series of pictures relating not so much to successive events as to the same events under different aspects, each series complete in itself and inviting us to think less of its temporal relations to those which precede and follow it, than of the new and different light in which it presents an idea common to itself and them.²

This statement represents fairly the synchronous structure of Revelation to be defended in this paper (provided that “the same events” is understood in a very broad sense, as indeed William Milligan does, and not as specific events recorded in history books). The danger is particularly strong in the case of the recapitulationist that the natural desire to find symmetry in the structure will betray him into sacrificing the thought, at least as to proper emphasis, for the sake of establishing a certain formally symmetrical arrangement of the visions. For instance, William Hendriksen, in dealing with the latter chapters, is consistent with his main principle that there are seven parallel sections and “each of them spans the entire dispensation from the first to the second coming of Christ.”³ In finding indications of the beginning of the Christian dispensation here he is correct; however, the overwhelmingly predominant thought of final judgment pervading the entirety of this section is not sufficiently evident in Hendriksen’s exposition. This is symptomatic of his general fault in not applying adequately his principle that “there is progress in eschatological emphasis.”⁴ Whatever may be its dangers of being abused, however, this structural principle of synchronism or parallelism or recapitulation is valid and necessary to a proper interpretation of Revelation. This thesis is here developed by dealing with certain introductory questions, by the exegesis of the climaxes of the main divisions and the consideration of related problems, and by a more direct refutation of the successive-judgment view.

Objections to Recapitulation Refuted

¹ This text is the ThM thesis of Meredith G. Kline for Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, 1946.

² William Milligan, *Lectures on the Apocalypse* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 100.

³ William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1944), 25.

⁴ Hendriksen, 47.

To clear the way for the study of the text and to ground the Revelation of John in biblical apocalyptic, we evaluate three objections of a general hermeneutical character elaborated by David Brown⁵ from Marcus Dods's *Introduction to the New Testament* against the understanding of Revelation as a presentation largely of ideas rather than events, which historically, and not naturally exegetically, has gone hand in hand with recapitulation.

1. It is "out of keeping with the general purpose of apocalyptic literature," which is to treat of the "the Kingdom of God oppressed by hostile worldly powers; in both books (i.e., Daniel and Revelation) successive periods in the history of this struggle are definitely though symbolically predicted."⁶

The idea of the world's hostility is true enough, as is that of the final triumph of God's kingdom, which he later adds; but that "successive periods in history" need be involved as of the essence of true apocalyptic is erroneous. Undeniably there are four successive historical empires before the founding of God's kingdom in Daniel, but far from Revelation being required to share this trait, it would be in direct contradiction to Daniel if it did so. For in Daniel, the coming of God's kingdom in Christ—the stone smiting the image—does away with world powers. We do not—cannot—interpret this literally, but we do insist that the Old Testament prophet's spiritual outlook on the state of affairs introduced by the establishment of the messianic kingdom be shared by his New Testament successor. Daniel considered all kingdoms as in principle, or as to the decisive issue, destroyed by Christ's coming and unworthy of being specifically designated as world empires once the one and only true world Empire of Messiah had been founded. In accord with this is Daniel 7 where the latter issue of the fourth beast, during whose sway Christ's kingdom is established, is represented by ten horns—ten, the symbolic number of completeness—designating the opposition to Messiah's people that would develop after the decline of Rome, everywhere throughout the earth, and down through all the centuries to the Judgment—but in no wise describing successive, specific, historical periods. The only exception to this is the detailed emphasis on Antiochus Epiphanes's anti-type, the little horn which appears among the ten. To this eschatological outlook Revelation is true, for it deals only with the general principles of the world's opposition to the now established kingdom of God, with the one exception of the final stage of the beast's activity. For a fuller discussion, see below: *The Eschatological Perspective of Revelation*.

2. It "fails to present a sufficient motive for its composition."⁷

First, it is close to presumption to judge what constitutes a proper motive for God's including any specific form of revelation in his Word. Second, such a consideration is highly subjective, and this is aggravated by Brown's unjustly limiting the "ideas" to God's sovereignty, providence, goodness, and final triumph in the vaguest of senses.⁸ Third, many of those holding the view Brown disparages find in Revelation thus understood the fairest gem in Scripture, uniting in a fitting consummation of the divine Word the most precious themes of the Bible, illuminating the prophetic element of the Old Testament, elaborating and unifying the eschatological outlines inherent in the teaching of Jesus, Paul, and the rest

⁵ David Brown, *The Structure of the Apocalypse* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1891), 31ff. The source of Brown's three objections is a quote from Marcus Dods, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1888), 243–44.

⁶ Brown, 31–32.

⁷ Brown, 31.

⁸ Brown, 28.

of the New Testament, and providing an inspiration by its solemn majesty that is not afforded so impressively anywhere else. Fourth, it is a poor substitute for such to offer, as Brown does, a system of historical events—often of the most obscure, trivial, and irrelevant nature—which but vaguely illustrate major Bible themes and would provide scarcely any practical comfort to the afflicted church.

3. It “fails to present a sufficiently definite guide through its intricacies,” wavering as it does between predictive and more general contents.⁹

Quite on the contrary, grounding the symbolism in other scriptural symbolism is the only legitimate guide. If some portions are more specific predictions than others, no problem is presented, for the more specific portions are always at the beginning and the close of the gospel age where the really epoch-making, eschatological inbreaking of God’s redemptive acts in the world’s history transpires. The long intermediate period is similar enough throughout to describe by the general principles or ideas unfolding therein. Again, Brown’s system of historical events is no improvement, to say the least, for the events move in a narrow rut altogether out of keeping with the universalism of the New Testament and are so hopelessly without demonstrable scriptural relation to the symbols of Revelation that there are as many sets of events as there are proponents of this system of interpretation.

Outline of Revelation

If we are to speak of the beginnings and endings of various series or cycles of visions within the Apocalypse, it is necessary to have the outline of the book in mind. The divisions which commend themselves to me are these:

Introduction 1:1–8
The Church Imperfect in the World 1:9–3:22
The Seven Seals 4:1–8:1
The Seven Trumpets 8:2–11:19
The Deeper Conflict 12:1–14:20
The Seven Bowls 15:1–16:21
The Final Judgments 17:1–21:8
The Church Perfect in Glory 21:9–22:5
Conclusion 22:6–21

The only division of which the bounds are at variance with the usual ones adopted by recapitulationists¹⁰ is that of ‘The Final Judgments’ (17:1–21:8). Some demonstration seems required:

1. Within these bounds all the main characters previously introduced are dealt with in respect to their final destinies: Babylon and the Beasts in 17:1–19:21; Satan in 20:1–10; unbelievers in 20:11–15; and overcomers in 21:1–8. This unity of theme is much disregarded but appears to me decisive and is confirmed by the following considerations:

2. This section begins with one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls coming to John and saying, “Come hither,” promising to show the judgment on the harlot-Babylon with whom are associated the kings of the earth and earth-dwellers who sinned with her. So, the

⁹ Brown, 31.

¹⁰ Cf. Hendriksen, 42–43.

next section, if divided as here suggested, begins (21:9) with the angel of the seven bowls series coming to John with the invitation, “Come hither,” promising now to show him the bride, the wife of the Lamb. The objection cannot be pressed that the material in 17:1–21:8 exceeds the statement in 17:1–2 of what is to be shown the Seer. For although nothing is said in 17:1–2 of the Beast, the harlot appears at once (17:3) in relation to the Scarlet-colored Beast, and this is undeniably within the proper bounds of this division. The various characters are so closely related that in the discussion of this theme of final judgments they all of necessity appear in relation to Babylon and become legitimate subjects to develop in this section.

3. “Their (i.e., sinners’) part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death,” (21:8), supplies a fitting climax to the theme of judgment, especially since judgment on evil ones predominates in this section. Its appropriateness as the closing verse of this division appears also in that this is the last statement in the Revelation dealing in a positive fashion with the destruction of the wicked. It is true that 21:27a mentions sinners as not entering into the Holy City, but the obvious intention of this is to describe the perfection of the city (compare 21:26 and 21:27b) in a negative way, not the destiny of sinners.

4. If the division is made at 20:1, as by the majority of recapitulationists, the resultant division would be the only major one in Revelation not marked by obvious formal boundaries, if not in the first verse, at least in those immediately following (compare 8:3ff). The amillennialist is wont to do this thinking, perhaps, to strengthen the case for his interpretation of 20:1–10 thereby, whereas the premillennialist is more likely to point to the series of “And I saw” phrases (19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11; 21:1) and insist that to make a major division at 20:1 is to fly in the face of the obvious formal indications which become impressive by their very accumulation. The latter is correct—on this point. It does not avail to claim that the introduction of a new character, Satan, in 20:1–10, constitutes a new major theme. Just because a red horse gallops forth at the opening of the second seal, nobody will claim the second seal is a new theme since the preceding and following seals introduce different horses! The seals unify all. So, Satan is introduced to develop the same theme of Final Judgment which both precedes and follows 20:1–10 and unifies all.

As a matter of fact, however, I think this strengthens the amillennial view of 20:1–10 since it makes these verses of one piece with what has preceded. Then just as the discussion of the Beast’s final judgment took us back to the beginning of the Christian era (17:8, 10), so the binding of Satan (20:2–3) may readily be understood as going back to the same point before his final judgment is presented (20:10). On this basis, the newness of the main character in 20:1–10 *can* be appealed to, to show how unlikely it would be for these verses to follow chapter nineteen in chronological succession.

Climaxes of the Major Divisions of Revelation

The most conclusive feature in the proof that the major divisions of the Apocalypse are parallel in their temporal scope rather than chronologically successive is that the climax of each formal division is the end of the gospel age. Further confirmation arises from the observation of the same phenomenon at the climax of certain parenthetical visions contained within the boundaries of the major divisions. The seven letters to the churches precede the visions proper—see below on progression in the Apocalypse—and do not close with a picture of the end of this age. Futurists who claim that 4:1 on deals with the final segment of

this age only, usually torture the seven letters into the form of a historical succession leading up to the end, but to no avail.

SEALS: The seals reach the end of the age already in their *sixth* member (6:12–17).

(a) The vision is beyond doubt based on Jesus’s Olivet Discourse.¹¹ There these astronomical phenomena and the terror of the unbelieving accompany “the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” The cataclysm of the sixth seal is, therefore, also the end.

(b) “The great day of their wrath is come”—ἡλθεν (*ēlthen*) (6:17). This “great day” in Scripture is the consummation of all things. (Compare 1 Thess. 5:2–3; Mal. 4:1; Joel 2:10–11). Swete takes the language as symbolical of national-social changes and decay toward the end, and therefore at this verse, though recognizing that the language refers to the end itself, he is forced to makeshift, “fear anticipates the actual event—there have been epochs in history when the conscience of mankind has antedated the judgment and believed it imminent.”¹² Fatal to this is the obvious fact that 6:17 is no longer in the first person as 6:16’s “Fall on us, and hide us.” This is the inspired comment of the Seer on what has preceded and cannot possibly be construed as the mistaken notion of the terror or conscience-stricken. The only reason for so construing it is that an anti-recapitulation view demands such. I believe this is the most vulnerable spot in the entire book for the opponents of our view who can elsewhere present a somewhat plausible interpretation by calling all the climaxes anticipations or interludes and by appealing to their telescopic-structure concept. None of these escapes works here. The case for the non-recapitulationist absolutely breaks on 6:17.

(c) The lists of natural catastrophes and varieties of unbelieving men affected by this judgment is in each case seven, the number of divine completeness, especially in dealing with the world; this is emphasized by the πᾶς (*pas*) before the last two members of each list.

(d) The characteristic of wrath is not appropriate to the Lamb during the time when the sincere offer of salvation is being made based on the Lamb that was slain. Such is appropriate only when the day of salvation is past, and those who have rejected him receive their due.

(e) The removal of the “heaven” (6:14) corresponds to the heavens fleeing away in connection with the Great White Throne Judgment (20:11), which is admittedly the end.

Since the sixth seal has introduced the great day of God’s wrath, what are we to expect in the *seventh* seal? There is much dispute as to what constitutes the contents of this seal. The answers range from one verse, 8:1, to the whole of the Apocalypse from 8:1 on. This is probably the most crucial single point in the book for an understanding of the structure.

Düsterdieck presents a telescopic structure of the Apocalypse whereby each of the seals, trumpets, and bowls-series evolves out of the preceding one. He argues at length against recapitulation and in favor of temporal succession, largely on the basis of the seventh seal.¹³ We are led to expect by the crisis to which things have come at the sixth seal, the climactic effect of which is heightened by the visions of chapter seven, that the opening of the seventh seal will reveal the extreme end and final catastrophe, and that with “a certain fulness of

¹¹ Matthew 24:29–30; Mark 13:24–26; Luke 21:25–27; cf. 2 Peter 3:10–12.

¹² Henry Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 95. So also Isbon Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1919), 266.

¹³ Friedrich Düsterdieck, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John* (Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament), (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1887), 260–63.

significant contents.”¹⁴ This expectation is not at all met if we limit the contents of the seventh seal to “there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour” (8:1). It is fully met if we accept the view that the trumpets and all the rest of Revelation evolve out of this seventh seal and form its contents.

In answer to these remarks of Düsterdieck we advance the following considerations:

1. The sixth seal does *not* lead us to expect a final catastrophe for the simple reason that it is itself the final catastrophe that befalls this fallen world. Beyond the cosmic cataclysm and the unspeakable terror of eternally lost souls in the presence of the wrathful Lamb and the throne of God revealed in the sixth seal, what final catastrophe is there that needs to be considered with any fulness of contents? Only the lake of fire remains, and Revelation nowhere elaborates with fulness upon that state. Furthermore, the blessed estate of the righteous in glory has already been dwelt upon at length in the second parenthetical vision of chapter 7 by the time we reach 8:1. We conclude, therefore, that a brief summary statement only should be expected at the opening of the seventh seal. This is exactly what we have. It takes the form of an impressive period of silence; the fact that the duration of this period is described in approximate terminology—ὥς (*ōs*)—indicates that this was the impression made on the Seer and that the half-hour is not meant as a symbolic number. Surely if we put ourselves in the Seer’s place in the midst of these tremendous visions and especially at this point when the air has just been filled with the shrieks of the lost and praises of the saints, we must acknowledge that a period that seemed like a half-hour of purest silence would make and leave an indelible impression.

Granting that silence itself is a legitimate symbol, what better way could be found to present this symbol?—in fact, what other way? A priori, silence seems as legitimate a symbol as its opposite, a thundering noise. If the latter stands for God’s judgments going forth, why should not the former symbolize God’s judgments completed? This meaning is confirmed when we answer the question, “What is the connotation of silence in the prophetic language of Scripture?” In Isaiah 47:5 and 1 Samuel 2:9 the wicked are assigned to the silence of darkness, consequent upon the vengeance of God. In Zechariah 2:13 silence prevails because God has delivered his people and dwells in their midst.

Düsterdieck’s puerile objection¹⁵ against the silence obtaining on earth since it is said to be in heaven, is flatly contradicted by Zechariah 2:13 which relates “before Jehovah” with the silence on earth! This would leave the way open also to find Revelation 8:1 at least partially fulfilled in the silence of the lost in their eternal abode, or for a view like Fairbairn’s (see below).

Habakkuk 2:20 associates silence with God’s being in his holy temple. All of these ideas fit admirably into the final, eternal state which the seventh seal is required to symbolize. In the light of prophetic usage, this silence of Revelation 8:1 is a rich and comprehensive symbol, indeed. Fairbairn interprets: “The struggle of conflict is over, the noise and tumult of war have ceased, and the whole field lies prostrate before the one sovereign and undisputed Lord.”¹⁶

2. Still another possible view which has at least as much to recommend it as Düsterdieck’s is that the silence represents a withholding of revelation. Revelation 7:13–17

¹⁴ Düsterdieck, 260–63.

¹⁵ Düsterdieck, 262.

¹⁶ Patrick Fairbairn, *Prophecy, Viewed in Respect to its Distinctive Nature, its Special Function, and Proper Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1865), 407.

corresponds very closely to Revelation 21:1–8. Now since the only revelation in the entire book that marks a material advance beyond what is related in the sixth seal and 7:13–17 is the final vision of the holy city immediately after 21:1–8, it may be that immediately after 7:13–17, in 8:1, we have silence because the time had not yet come to present this last crowning vision, even though the preceding material leads to that point.

3. There are grave flaws in Düsterdieck's interpretation both materially and formally:

(a) He is forced to read into silence—with no semblance of biblical warrant—the idea of hushed, still excitement in anticipation of the coming trumpet judgments. But where is the information on the part of the heavenly host concerning coming judgments? To ground the anticipations of the heaven-dwellers, he must drag the vision of the seven angels with the trumpets forcibly into the half-hour period of silence and thus willfully ignore the fact that these angels are clearly separated as a distinct vision by the phrase “And I saw,” which is a common manner of dividing visions in Revelation.

Quite similar is the view of A. Pieters. Concerning the sixth seal he says: “In Scene 3 of this Act (see program) men begin to be aware of the gathering storm”¹⁷ (the removal of the heaven as a scroll, Pieters apparently considers a gentle spring zephyr). Then of the seventh seal, “So the hosts of heaven stand silent, in breathless expectancy, waiting for the solemn pageant to proceed. Notice that this silence is, again, a purely dramatic touch, having no prophetic or doctrinal significance in itself, but placed here because the principles of dramatic art require it.”¹⁸ Such extreme insistence on the resemblance of the Revelation to a drama cheapens the divine Word as much, if not more, than classifying biblical apocalyptic on a mere par with and as of one cloth with other early apocalypses which Pieters is careful to guard against.¹⁹ It is asking too much of us, to require us to cease comparing Scripture with Scripture to determine Scripture's meaning, in favor of comparing Scriptures with the devices of the Greek stage!

(b) From a formal viewpoint it does not seem warranted to consider the cycle of trumpets as evolving from the cycle of seals. The trumpet cycle is clearly marked off as a formal unit by the phenomena of 8:5 which are repeated at the close of the cycle (11:19). Also, the seven-sealed book does not appear again, though—if the remainder of the visions constituted the contents of the seventh seal—we should expect that when its revelations were exhausted there would be a final reference to it, at least.

Furthermore, the ease with which 8:1 might seem to blend into 8:2 is altogether in keeping with other transitional passages in Revelation, which is simply an evidence of a good literary style. The transition from the trumpets to the next cycle is so smooth that there has been dispute whether 11:19 goes with what precedes or “should be the beginning of the next chapter, introducing a new vision.”²⁰ Compare also the beginning of the bowls cycles (15:1); this major heptad is “another sign in heaven,” and thus blends with the earlier signs of the previous cycle (12:1, 3). Again, the last two major divisions have an affinity to the bowls' cycle, for they are introduced by “one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls” (17:1 and 21:9). In so subtle a way the Revelation is even in its formal arrangement made a living, moving organism, rather than a row of detached blocks of material.

¹⁷ Albertus Pieters, *The Lamb, the Woman, and the Dragon: An Exposition of the Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1937), 124.

¹⁸ Pieters, 131.

¹⁹ Pieters, chapter 2, especially 31–32.

²⁰ Pieters, 157.

4. Even though it be granted that Düsterdieck's view of the formal relation of the seventh seal and the trumpet series were correct, this would not at all militate against recapitulation. For instance, Milligan writes, "We cannot, therefore, separate the trumpets from the seventh seal. The former are not independent of the latter but are evidently developed out of it, although the succession is one of thought rather than time."²¹

Also, Düsterdieck's interpretation of the half-hour silence, if accepted, does not put recapitulation into discard. Lenski understands the silence with Düsterdieck as the hushed expectation of the heavenly hosts but does not conclude that what follows is the contents of the seventh seal. Rather, the climactic nature of the sixth seal decides him on the need of recapitulation if the book is to continue.²²

But the shining example that all of Düsterdieck's arguments do not avail against recapitulation is Düsterdieck. For in his view the great final catastrophe is not introduced immediately in the trumpet series but much later. Meanwhile the visions immediately evolving from the seventh seal describe "the trial of the patience of saints who are regarded as *awaiting* the day of the Lord."²³ When we observe that Düsterdieck admits that in the sixth seal "the day of the Lord *begins*,"²⁴ it becomes apparent that Düsterdieck is himself a recapitulationist.

We reaffirm, in concluding this matter, that the cycle of seals brings us to the Judgment at the sixth seal and into the eternal state in the silence of the seventh. As to formal structure, the evidence is wanting for the view that the visions are arranged in telescopic fashion; and even were this not the case, the essential synchronous nature of the revelations of the visions would be unaffected.

Part 2

TRUMPETS: The language describing what follows the sounding of the *seventh* trumpet is almost unanimously taken as depicting the close of history. "The kingdom of the world is become—ἐγένετο (*egeneto*)—the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ." (11:15). "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came—ἦλθεν (*elthen*)—and the time of the dead to be judged." (11:17,18). "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets" was the preliminary announcement (10:7). To be sure there have been diehards of the successive historical school who have so far lost their bearings as to refer all this to the victory of the Goths and other Arians under Narses, or to the victory of Christianity over Judaism involved in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the like. But most interpreters have acknowledged the force of the language (which—together with 12:1ff.—compels some to accept the fact of recapitulation here, if nowhere else). Swete: "With the seventh trumpet blast the Kingdom of God has come and the general judgment is at hand. Thus, this section of the Apocalypse

²¹ Milligan, *Lectures*, 51.

²² Richard Lenski, *Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), 266.

²³ Düsterdieck, 263.

²⁴ Düsterdieck, 233, line 21.

brings the course of history down to the verge of the Parousia.”²⁵ Pieters: “This is, therefore, the triumphant consummation of the divine enterprise.”²⁶ Even W. Scott: Chapter 11:18 “records the last historical action—the judgment of the dead. There is no history beyond it.”²⁷

Düsterdieck,²⁸ Charles,²⁹ and Beckwith³⁰ admit that the language describes the consummation but call 11:15–18 proleptic and introductory. The third woe, or contents of the seventh trumpet, we are told, are not found in this passage but in the remaining visions of the book. As the trumpets were said to evolve out of the seventh seal, now 12:1ff. evolves from the seventh trumpet, and the bowls in particular are thought of as the third woe. But for this there is not a shred of evidence:

(a) There is nothing after 11:19 which is called the third woe or seventh trumpet. The third woe is not mentioned at 11:19 because it would sound ridiculously didactic.

(b) Charles vainly tries to prove that each of the three woes is properly prefaced by the prayers of the saints or a vision of the heavenly temple, which means that 11:15–19 is this preface, and the woe must follow. To do this he must identify the first woe with the first trumpet which is manifestly impossible in view of the subsequent 8:13 “woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are yet to sound.”

(c) Beckwith rightly insists that the third woe can no more be missing than one of the trumpets, but he refuses to see the third woe in 11:15–19, although he confesses that this leaves the precise calamity meant uncertain. “We should therefore expect immediately after the trumpet blast of v.15 some great calamity to be sent upon the world corresponding to the first and second woes, but this does not occur.”³¹ This is a gross underestimating of the contents of 11:15–19. Lenski well remarks, “To say that here no Woe appears is to ignore the fact that the destruction of the destroyers in the final judgment is a Woe greater than any other.”³² Furthermore, the vision which these verses contain consummates in the revelation of the ark of the covenant in the temple of God in heaven; this is no mere preparation for more historical events but signifies that the whole covenant is now fulfilled through the grace of our faithful God.

Thus, also we take it that in v.15–19 we have the entire seventh trumpet complete. . . .

Yet this seventh trumpet and third Woe, by placing us at the final consummation, involves all that now follows in further visions. But not in such a way that these visions follow in a temporal succession—all time has ended—but so that John and we see anew and with greater fulness all that the final consummation involves.³³

So Lenski aptly states the relation of the ensuing cycles to that of the trumpets as both parallel and progressive.

²⁵ Swete, 146.

²⁶ Pieters, 157.

²⁷ Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 4th ed., (London: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), 245.

²⁸ Düsterdieck, 328ff.

²⁹ Robert Charles, *Revelation of St. John* (International Critical Commentary), (New York: Scribner, 1920), 292.

³⁰ Beckwith, 606ff.

³¹ Beckwith, 608.

³² Lenski, 356.

³³ Lenski, 358.

DEEPER CONFLICT: The closing vision of the *Deeper Conflict* division again pictures the end (14:14–20). A simple comparison of the vision with Matthew 13:39, 41; 24:30–31 is enough to settle this. [Also, in the symbolic numbers of 14:20, a thousand and six hundred are elements of absolute completion: 100, (the number of completion, 10, squared or intensified) times 16 (the number of the earth or creation, 4, squared or intensified).] “The revelations of vv.8–13 now culminate in a vision of the Parousia, represented as a time of general ingathering of the fruits of life,”³⁴ is Swete’s comment. The opponents of recapitulation still flounder about in a mess of devices though making even further concessions here than at previous climaxes. Charles indulges in amending the text (he excinds 14:15–17) and calls the rest “a proleptic vision of the preliminary Messianic judgment executed by the Son of man on the heathen nations which is described in detail in 19:11–16 and further apparently in 20:7–10, and under another form in 17:14”!³⁵ (Why he refuses to call the phenomenon of recapitulation, which he seems to recognize in these passages, by the name ‘recapitulation’ is difficult to understand.) Düsterdieck again expressly discounts recapitulation while he admits that the vision “brings, it is true, a preliminary representation of the final judgment.”³⁶ He prefers to call this another example of the proleptical character of the structure. Similarly, Beckwith grants that “the universal use of the figures employed here show that the judgment here symbolized is the great judgment of the last day.”³⁷ He refuses to solve the difficulty this brings to his successive arrangement of the vision as some critics do by “the supposition that the passage stood originally at the end of another apocalypse, or of an earlier form of our Apocalypse,” which is fine, but he can only say this “announces in anticipation the coming of the great catastrophe.”

At each new climax this talk of anticipations and preliminaries sounds more feeble. At previous climaxes we were told these evolved the ensuing material out of themselves; but here we must be willing to accept arbitrary statements to the effect that this full, detailed, striking vision admittedly symbolizing the Parousia is only an anticipation. There is no single vision in chapters nineteen and twenty that any more vividly depicts the final separation of the good from the evil and the punishment of the latter! Why not take the passage at face value and admit that since we are here at the end, to continue we must recapitulate?

BOWLS: The pouring out of the *seventh bowl* produces a devastating, cosmical, cataclysmic judgment with points of marked similarity to the visions of the sixth seal and seventh trumpet (16:17–21). The end of the world has come again.³⁸ A great voice out of the temple and from the throne says, “It is done”—*γέγονεν* (*gegonen*) — the perfect tense eloquently describing God’s redemptive plan as fully executed and now followed by the predestined state of eternal blessedness accruing from that finished work of the Redeemer. (A more subtle mark of the finality of this judgment appears, as Beckwith indicates, in the seven-fold use of a form of *μέγας* (*meγas*).)

The absolute finality of this judgment Swete makes relative to the course of the Roman Empire which he misinterprets Babylon to mean. However, he does show more insight into the *scope* of this symbol when he adds, “But Rome does not exhaust St. John’s conception of

³⁴ Swete, 188.

³⁵ Charles, II, 18.

³⁶ Düsterdieck, 404.

³⁷ Beckwith, 661–67.

³⁸ So, Milligan, *Lectures*, Hendriksen, Lenski.

Babylon . . . other ages may witness the rise and fall of other mistresses of the world not less magnificent and depraved.”³⁹ Beckwith at least places the vision properly at the close of the age for he acknowledges that it is the last form of Beastly power (Anti-Christ, to him) that destroys Babylon (Rome, to him).⁴⁰ But he continues to minimize the significance of these climaxes, for he says of Rome, “she is overwhelmed in a ruin only implied here.”⁴¹ Of course, the subject of Babylon’s fall is treated more fully in the following chapters for that is their special theme, but it would take all the climax out of the progression within the judgments of the seven bowls of wrath to make the last a mere implication and not an actual description of the vengeance of Christ when he comes as a thief (16:15) to destroy the hosts of evil gathered for a last ungodly effort against God and the saints (16:16, compare 17:14; 19:19; 20:9).

FINAL JUDGMENTS: The division on *Final Judgments* (17:1–21:8) on any reasonable evaluation of the language brings us to the end of history again. Even H. Cowles, tenacious preterist, though claiming that even chapter nineteen refers to the destruction of the city of imperial Rome, at least grants that the final judgment is foreshadowed here.⁴² While there is general agreement that the main theme or emphasis of these chapters is the end of the age (though a recapitulationist does not overlook the fact that the beginning of the Gospel Age is also included in the scope—17:8, 10, 18; 20:1–3), interpretations vary greatly, of course, within the more limited scope of the end of the age, with the particular view to be adopted depending on whether the judgments on Babylon, the Beasts, Satan, and men are considered synchronous with one another, successive, or some combination of the two. Charles, Düsterdieck, and Beckwith refer 17:8 to the fall of Rome and mysteriously bridge the gap to the end of time in 19:1ff.—whether by prophetic foreshortening or by supposing the prophet was just mistaken in thinking it was the Antichrist of the end-time who would destroy Rome, probably matters little to these gentlemen. Indeed, Charles in this section raves much of sources and fragments and from chapter twenty on says, “the traditional order of the text in these three chapters is intolerably disordered and hopelessly unintelligible.”⁴³ Such enlightening remarks serve well to indicate the problems that have long made these chapters the tinderbox of exegetical warfare, but they are of no value for an understanding of the text. However, all these men grant the point we desire to make here as a link in the case for recapitulation, i.e., in its climactic element this section presents the Final Judgment.

OBSERVATIONS: As for our own view of these chapters, the following observations may suffice:

1. Not without bearing on the chronological relations of these visions is the question, in connection with the fall of Babylon, of how we are to understand the fact that the Beast which courts the harlot, in its final state and in association with the ten kings, hates and destroys her. A very obvious question over which the commentators for the most part brush hastily. In answering it, exegetes fail in direct proportion as they have denied or minimized the religious significance of Babylon and have dwelt upon the seductiveness of the world—

³⁹ Swete, 226.

⁴⁰ Swete, 159, 286.

⁴¹ Swete, 686.

⁴² Henry Cowles, *Revelation of John With Notes* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), 9.

⁴³ Charles, II, 437.

the “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life.” It does no good to point out that Judas the betrayer at last was not happy with the thirty pieces of silver and hanged himself—thousands of other ungodly men have faced destruction in full pursuit of the philosophy “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die” and thus have to the very end clung with no revulsion of feelings to the seductiveness of the world. This, history’s last hour, looms large in importance in the eschatological perspective of Revelation. Satan is loosed from the abyss; the mightiest anti-Christian powers are marshalled for this last desperate conflict with God. Why should Antichrist scorn any anti-Christian agency’s help at such an hour? The only sound basis for explaining the Beast’s strange change in attitude toward Babylon is the consideration of the change in its own character which Scripture indicates. Whether we understand the Antichrist to be a personal being or the last form of world-imperial opposition to Christ, we must acknowledge that the Bible associates Antichrist with self-deification and non-tolerance towards all other worship, true or false. In 2 Thessalonians 2:4, the man of sin “opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.” In Daniel the little horn of the fourth beast not only speaks words against the Most High and wears out his saints (7:25), but also, he magnifies himself above every god (11:36ff.—the basis of 2 Thess. 2), honoring only the god of fortresses—that is, physical might or war as such.⁴⁴ In Revelation 13 again, the last form of the Beast, i.e., to whom it is given to overcome the saints (13:7), is given authority that “all that dwell on the earth shall worship him.” (13:8). During the gospel age, Satan tolerates any false-gospel or religion or apostate church pointing men to some sort of being or principle of benevolence beyond. But when the last hour of intensified conflict has come, Satan endeavors to concentrate the energies, efforts, might, and worship of the whole world in his Antichrist. Therefore, the Beast at the last not only persecutes the true followers of the Lamb but also destroys all other pretenses at religion—that is, Babylon.

Even though this interpretation of Revelation 17:16 be rejected, it is plain that there must be some succession from 17:16 to 19:19–21, for the Beast and ten horns cannot be destroyed before they themselves make the harlot desolate. A possible difficulty of harmonization presents itself in the *prima facie* impression of the sixth and seventh vials (16:14–20), for there the Beast’s forces are gathered to the battle (16:14–15) which we identify with that of 19:19–21, in the sixth vial, whereas the wrath of God is poured out on Babylon in the seventh vial. However, these bowls of wrath are not successive even though the last two go beyond the others to the end of the age. The first five are *no doubt* synchronous judgments, and we may allow for interlocking of details in the last two. Probably the meaning is that Antichrist rises to power gathering his forces, then destroys Babylon (Revelation 19:19ff. omits this since Babylon’s fall has already been disposed of in chapters seventeen and eighteen), and is presently brought to naught himself at the manifestation of the presence of Christ.

2. The careers of the harlot-Babylon, the Beast, and False Prophet were intertwined in chapter seventeen where it was revealed that the Beast would destroy Babylon; and the Lamb, the Beast. Then in chapter eighteen the separate strand of Babylon’s fall was elaborated, with the point of view now being that her fall, though executed by the Beast, was the Final Judgment of God. Then in chapter nineteen the other strand of the Final Judgment of Christ on the Beast and False Prophet is developed more fully, which involves (see 19:19–

⁴⁴ So, Carl Friedrich Keil, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, trans. by M.G. Easton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872), 461–67.

20) a recapitulation of 17:11–14. This recapitulation covers, however, only the climactic battle, not the whole New Testament age. Now in chapter twenty the Final Judgment on Satan is the theme, and since his career during the gospel age has not yet been described in this major division, by way of necessary background for a proper presentation and understanding of this final judgment, as in the cases of Babylon and the Beast in chapter seventeen, that career is covered, directly in 20:1–3 and by implication in 20:4–6. There is, therefore, another example of recapitulation of the Christian dispensation, with 20:1–6 synchronous with 17:3–6, 8a, 9, 10a. Also, Satan’s judgment (20:7–10) is thus parallel to 17:8b, 10b–14, and 19:11–21. We do not detain ourselves with a full discussion of the question of Chiliasm but would merely add that in the symmetrically synchronous structure of the entire Revelation as propounded in this paper a millennium understood in the premillennial school’s sense would stick out like a very sore thumb.

3. The reaping of the harvest of the earth’s redeemed and the gathering of the clusters of the vine for the great winepress of God’s wrath (14:14–20) finds a striking parallel in the casting of the reprobate from the presence of the Great White Throne into the lake of fire and the blessing of the elect in the new heaven and new earth where “God himself shall be with them” (20:11–21:8). Why is the past career of individuals, not found written in the book of life, described as preparation for their judgment? Their lives have no meaning and their individual careers no unity apart from the great anti-Christian powers whose dupes and agents they were; but these have already been fully disposed of (17–19), and all that remains is that those who were enslaved to them and meekly followed them in life should now share their calamity and follow them in death. Also, in the case of the redeemed, to relate their earthly course were to relate them anew to their foes; but why resurrect them again since God has cast them in final judgment into the second death? The synchronism in these last two instances is therefore limited in scope to the day of final judgments as pictured in this main division and elsewhere in the “Revelation.”

4. For the sake of completeness the nature of the climaxes of certain *parenthetical* visions is briefly indicated here:

(a) Before the opening of the seventh seal are two consolatory visions. The second (7:9–17) is a grave problem for all seeking strict succession in Revelation. Grotius thinks of Syrian Christians after the fall of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.! Elliott finds the fulfillment before 395 A.D. but is compelled to speak of the realization of glory by the collective body of the church of all generations. Barnes also, though arriving at 410 A.D. in 7:1–8, admits 7:9–17 is “an episode having no immediate connexion with what precedes or with what follows” and picturing the totality of the redeemed in heaven.⁴⁵ Swete⁴⁶ talks as usual of mere anticipations of “the issue of the final judgment” and recognizes that “the whole of the episode . . . finds echoes in the last two chapters of the book.”

Conclusive indications that this is the finale of the redemptive program of God are:

(i) The remarkably close parallel of 7:15–17 with 21:3–6, which follows the cosmic regeneration (20:1,2).

(ii) The great tribulation is past (7:14), which, on any interpretation of the phrase—comprehensive of the whole gospel age or restricted in some peculiar way to the end time—means the gospel age is completed.

⁴⁵ Compilation of views by Johann Lange, *Revelation of John* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1874), 11.

⁴⁶ Swete, 100–106. So, also, Beckwith, 540; Düsterdieck, 252.

(iii) The innumerable and universal multitude indicate the great commission is fulfilled and the end come.

(b) The episode of Revelation 11:1–13, immediately before the seventh trumpet, also is concluded by age-ending events. (For a detailed discussion of this, see below, “Eschatological Perspective of Revelation.”)

(c) Towards the close of the section, the Deeper Conflict (12–14), is a vision (14:1–5) which is perhaps not strictly parenthetical, and yet since it is complete in itself and not the climax of this section, this may be the proper place to treat of it. It presents the Lamb and one hundred forty-four thousand redeemed on Mt. Zion (compare Hebrews 12:22–24). Swete tries to make it out as an earthly scene, but Düsterdieck acknowledges,

In like manner, just as in ch. vii:9 sqq., an inspiring prospect of the heavenly glory of believers abiding faithful in the great tribulation still impending is afforded before this trouble itself is stated, so also in the first part of ch. xiv. (vv.1–5) a scene is represented in which a multitude of departed believers . . . manifests the glorious reward of the victors.⁴⁷

Though we do not agree with all the details of this analogy, the exegesis of 14:1–5 is essentially correct.

The number of the redeemed is certainly the symbolic number for the completed church of both testaments;⁴⁸ the whole church thus in heaven is a feature of the consummation. With this finality accord all the details. The redeemed are viewed as having been purchased out from—ἀπό (*apo*)—the earth and from men, and as having overcome spiritually (i.e., they “were not defiled—*aorist tense*—with women,” v.4), and therefore they are following—*present tense*—the Lamb “whithersoever he goeth,” v.4, (compare 1 Thess. 4:17, “so shall we ever be with the Lord.”).

Conclusions from the Exegesis of the Climaxes

The evidence has now been presented to demonstrate that the climax of each of the major formal divisions of Revelation from 4:1 to 21:8 brings the reader to the close of history. This hardly seems coincidental. At each of these points the opponents of recapitulation have sought to escape the force of the argument by claiming that these passages did not form part of the basic succession but were sidelights, interludes, anticipations, introductory summaries, and the like. Such excuses might carry some weight in those visions which are classified above as parenthetical. It seems plausible enough to consider these as anticipations of a final order of things which actually arrives only with later chapters in the Apocalypse, but as granted to John beforehand to sustain his spirit, as it were, through the visions of tribulation and woe to come. Even in these three instances, however, it should be noted that each of them occurs in immediate connection with the closing vision of their cycle (except that in chapter fourteen, a trio of angelic warnings intervene). Since the final triumph of God’s kingdom is depicted in these closing visions immediately following, it seems more likely that the assurance contained in these parenthetical visions has primarily a backward reference to the calamitous judgments described in the earlier stages of their cycle. Thus, they corroborate the interpretation of the division climaxes as being actually climaxes of what has preceded rather than anticipations of what is yet to come.

⁴⁷ Düsterdieck, 389–90.

⁴⁸ See Lenski, 249–50.

Where it is applied to all the climaxes of the major divisions, this “anticipation” evasion is altogether arbitrary. Especially since it requires an instance of exegetical violence impossible to defend in order to maintain this theory at one point—and that the very earliest climax, i.e., the sixth seal—the suspicion is hard to avoid that the preconceived notion that the end of the age cannot be presented before the end of the Apocalypse determines the interpretation of all the major climaxes. Furthermore, what is the need of so many anticipations? Is the author afraid he will lose his reader’s attention unless he keeps reminding him that great things are coming? If the earlier climaxes are all mere anticipations, the reader must be disappointed when he finds that the real thing at the end has not so very much more to add to the pictures of the “anticipations”! As for those opponents of recapitulation who tone down the obvious finality of these climaxes to mean something just short of history’s close, the Book of Revelation becomes grotesquely futuristic. If at 6:12–17 the day of judgment dawns and then even at 14:14–20 it is only a preliminary phase of the Judgment that has arrived, concerning what within so meager a scope of time has the author been so verbose in the intervening chapters? Can it possibly warrant so much attention?

Why not therefore accept the synchronous structure which the climaxes demand? At the climax of each cycle the universe is shaken to the foundations, or Christ returns to earth in Final Judgment, or the hosts of heaven triumphantly proclaim that God’s wrath has been poured out and his kingdom consummated—but all such, *we are told*, is a letdown from what we should be expecting! It is but a little prelude. *We must realize* that the seventh seal includes all the remainder of the book, and so again with the seventh trumpet—in spite of the facts that the seventh seal, seventh trumpet, etc. are never alluded to again and that each cycle is beautifully rounded off in its seventh member, and that the succeeding cycle is always a new beginning marked by a formal introduction. That the final Judgment section of the book goes beyond the previous climaxes in intensity and fulness of treatment is quite in keeping with parallelism. For each parallel section has its own theme to deal with, and also our position is that there is a logical progress in the intensity of God’s judgments as found in the successive cycle-themes.

Part 3

Successive Events Interpretation Refuted

Recapitulationists are often likely to defend their position, or rather attack their opponent’s position, with facts which fit into the idea of synchronism perfectly, but which might also be construed plausibly in the opposing arrangement. For instance, at 12:1ff. almost everyone is frank to acknowledge that the birth of Christ is symbolized. This is altogether in accord with the parallel-series structure which teaches that each cycle takes us back to the beginning of the Christian era as well as climaxing with the close of the era. But Beckwith also can find a proper place for it, since he considers all of chapters 12–14 “as part of the preliminaries to the events which culminate in the great conflict with Satan and his agents and the overthrow of these, now to be enacted in the seventh trumpet series.”⁴⁹ It is quite a simple matter, therefore, to point out how all the material demonstrates a synchronous structure (which to be sure creates a very strong presumption for that view), but it is an

⁴⁹ Beckwith, 275.

altogether different proposition to demonstrate conclusively the falsity of a non-synchronous structure. I believe that there are only two ways of combatting a view of the structure such as Beckwith suggests (we have used them partially in the conclusions we drew from the evidence gathered from the climaxes): 1. To point out the unwieldy arrangement which you are driven to in order to avoid the logical consequences of the accumulation of evidence for synchronism; 2. To demonstrate by exegesis the impossibility or unlikelihood of chronological succession within those visions where Beckwith allows for succession.

1. To illustrate the extremely awkward balance of material necessitated by the successive-events school, we briefly consider Beckwith's general evaluation of Revelation 1–18.⁵⁰ Revelation 1:10–3:22 is an “*introductory* vision designed to *prepare* the Church to meet the future foretold in the other visions.” Chapters 4 and 5 furnish “the *foundation* and assurance of all that follows.” Chapter 6 contains “*preparative* and *premonitory* manifestations which come before the immediate forerunners of the End.” Chapter 7 is a *prelude* to the seventh seal. Chapters 8 and 9 present the first six trumpets of sore judgments” which more immediately *precede* the End” and prepare for it. Chapters 10 and 11 are “an *interlude* which serves to *prepare* for the new vision and lends impressiveness to it,” and they conclude with the seventh trumpet which merely “*proclaims* the period of the End.” Chapters 12 and 13 are “*preliminaries*.” In chapter 14 the first vision “is *anticipatory*; it stands *outside* of the events moving toward the last issue”; the announcements of the angels are “*prefatory* to the march of events which is to begin again in chapter XV”; the last vision also must be understood as part of a paragraph which “announces in *anticipation* the coming of a great catastrophe.”⁵¹ Chapter 15 contains an “*announcement, anticipatory* hymn of praise, and immediate *preparation* for the outpouring of the plagues.” We are it seems quite ignorant or timid and failed to get prepared enough in the previous chapters and needed this more immediate preparation of chapter 15. But now that we are considered sufficiently prepared for the great bowls of chapter 16, they come! —but turn out to be only for the purpose to “*specifically prepare* the reader for the great events which are to follow.” To Beckwith these “great events” are the fall of Rome and destruction of Antichrist in chapters 17–19. But strange to say after the wearying array of anticipations, announcements, introductions, preludes, proclamations, preparations, and pre-what-have-yous, even the fall of Rome does not actually appear at all! For after chapter 18 Beckwith admits, “After these manifold assurances of the coming destruction, the Prophet passes over in anticipation to the end, *without allusion* to the beginning or progress of the destroyer's work”! Yes, the destruction of Antichrist is really pictured—but of course not before an angelic chorus sings “*anticipating*, as if already come, the full establishment of the Kingdom”⁵² of God. The dispensationalists turn most of Revelation into their “Great Tribulation”—Beckwith, the “Great Anticipation.”

2. Before chapter 17, succession is allowed by Beckwith only in the visions immediately following upon the opening of each seal, the sounding of each trumpet, and the pouring out of each bowl. We have already dealt with the climaxes of these series and have seen how Beckwith is forced to adopt a telescopic structure for which there is no warrant to avoid the fact that history is finished several times en route. Also, at the sixth seal it has been observed

⁵⁰ Beckwith, 255–85.

⁵¹ Beckwith, 661.

⁵² Beckwith, 286.

that Beckwith simply begs the question in the face of the evidence contradicting his view. The following features also do not accord with the successive events view:

a. In the sixth bowl (16:12–16) we are brought to the gathering of the kings of the world to the war of the great day of God, the Almighty, which is beyond doubt the same event as is described in 19:19. John must, therefore, have recapitulated between these two points. Beckwith does not avoid the issue by suggesting the gathering takes place in 16:12–16 and the battle itself is described in 19:19ff.⁵³ The gathering is also described in chapter 19, and the results of the battle already appear under the seventh bowl. Düsterdieck is likewise hard-pressed here and speaks of this as an allusion⁵⁴ and compares it to the mention of the Beast from the Abyss in 11:7 before he actually came on the scene in chapter 13, claiming that both are proleptic; he also indulges in non-existent distinctions between indications and express statements.⁵⁵ Even this much, however, is a fatal concession for a system that had already been compelled to narrow its successive passages into so exceedingly meager a portion of the Revelation.

b. In the early members of the seals-trumpets-bowls heptads, i.e., those members which do not specifically describe the end of the age, general principles of God's rule of the world or his judgments on evil-doers are presented, not specific historical events. Such general agencies as war, natural calamities, famines are at work at all times throughout the gospel era. They may be viewed from different points of view and possess logical progression from seals to bowls, but this logical progression does not work itself out in orderly succession or uniformly everywhere down through the centuries to the end; for in any period of history, God's providence may be observed working from the various points of view presented in Revelation in the cases of different individuals and groups. Concerning this matter, especially in connection with the seals, Fairbairn says, "It must ever appear arbitrary to limit to single epochs or particular individuals what has purposely been left indefinite in these respects on the sacred page. Nor can it by any possibility be done so as to produce general confidence and satisfaction."⁵⁶ Beckwith recognizes the indefiniteness also, at least in part, for he believes the seals should be regarded as "the beginning of woes" spoken of by Jesus in his Olivet discourse. (See also excursus below on Milligan's view of this relationship). This is true of the first five seals—the last two seals bring the Lord's return itself and its consequences—but these woes continue to the very threshold of Christ's coming. There is then no room for a development in the form of God's judgment; it can now come only in one last overwhelming stroke. The progress in the trumpets and bowls beyond the seals cannot therefore be a chronological succession but rather an increase in intensity logically, and this can be given its proper elbow room only by making the three series of judgments synchronous and each covering the gospel age in its scope.

Milligan: Revelation; Matthew 24; Gospel of John

Prof. Milligan⁵⁷ has gone to an extreme in finding correspondence between Jesus's discourse in Matthew 24 and the seals-trumpets-bowls series of Revelation. He does well to point out the use of recapitulation in Matthew 24, which prepares the mind to expect the

⁵³ Beckwith, 685.

⁵⁴ Düsterdieck, 44.

⁵⁵ Düsterdieck, 419.

⁵⁶ Fairbairn, 415.

⁵⁷ Milligan, *Lectures*, 42–59.

same in the prophecy of Revelation. (The same purpose is served even more strikingly by the synchronism which obtains in the Old Testament apocalyptic book, Daniel, especially chapters 2 and 7.) Also, the emphasis on grounding the interpretation of Revelation on more didactic portions of scriptural prophecy is well placed. In fact, in spite of questionable steps en route, his conclusions concerning the formal structure of Matthew 24 seem well taken. Also, in a general way, the seals do correspond in respect to them with the first section of Matthew 24, i.e., 24:4–14, the history of the church and world in its broad features. But in the following respects there is a forcing and straining of the material:

1. Milligan would make the theme of the second section of Matthew 24 (vv. 15–22), which is supposed to correspond to the trumpets, God’s judgments on the world in contrast to the apostate or false church, which he takes as the primary subject of the next section, Matthew 24:23–28. The obvious reference, however, to the fall of Jerusalem in 24:15–22 (not to speak now of double references or prophetic foreshortening), and especially the parallel use in Luke 21:23, “for there shall be great distress upon the *land*, and wrath to *this people*,” makes it plain that the apostate church of the Old Testament (possibly used here also as typical of the apostate church of the New Testament) is the main theme of this section—not the world.

2. His main subject for Matthew 24:23–28, the apostate New Testament church, may stand. However, he fails to establish that the supposed corresponding cycle in Revelation, i.e., the bowls, shares this primary subject. Some might take exception to his assuming Babylon to symbolize the apostate church, but in this I think he is on the right track. Granting this, he points to Babylon in the third bowl judgment and says, “the object of judgment mentioned under any one member of a group throws light upon the object of judgment under its other members, although under them it may not be so distinctly noted.” The fatal objection to the application of such a principle here *is* that the object of judgment is distinctly noted in the first, fifth, and sixth bowls as “the men that had the mark of the Beast,” “the throne of the Beast,” and “the dragon . . . Beast . . . and false prophet . . . the kings of the whole world” respectively, which are clearly designations not of the apostate church but the world. That is, the bowl-judgments are more comprehensive than Milligan’s system of correspondence will allow.

In a similar vein, but on a much larger scale of correspondence, Milligan⁵⁸ defends the thesis that the whole structure of Revelation is patterned in its arrangement of ideas on the structure of the life of Christ in the Gospel of John. Thus, both John’s Gospel and Revelation start with a prologue containing the main ideas to be developed in the main body. John 1:19–2:11 sets forth the Redeemer on the field of history before the conflict; Revelation 2–3 depicts the church in the world before the struggle. (But the marks of a severe struggle are already evident in the church). John 2:12–4:54 shows Christ in victory over sinful hearts and diseased bodies, as assurance against the coming struggle (but in John 4:1 the hostility has already started); Revelation 4–5 presents assurances of the church’s victory. John 5:1–12:50 describes Jesus’s conflict with the Jews and Revelation 6:1–18:24, the church’s struggle with the world. (But this is exceedingly general, and this in the bulk of both writings). John 13–17, Jesus pauses with his disciples at the end of a struggle substantially finished; Revelation 19:1–10, the church pauses to celebrate Babylon’s fall and to consign her enemies to death. (But it is arbitrary to single out this as an outstanding instance of a pause after victory in Revelation, especially in view of its synchronous structure.) Revelation 19:11–22:5, new

⁵⁸ Milligan, *Book of Revelation* throughout; *Lectures*, 61ff.

conflict, victory and epilogue; John 19–21, cross, resurrection and epilogue. (But again, it is arbitrary to select only these chapters of the Apocalypse as describing these subjects.)

Milligan has hold of a truth here that is altogether too neglected in the commentaries. That truth is not that the logical structure of John's Gospel and Revelation agree in any striking way; it is unfortunate that he burdens the truth he has with this forced, artificial construction which cannot do justice to either Gospel or Revelation. But the truth epitomized in the quotation-statement, " 'As thou didst send me into the world,'—that is the Gospel;— 'Even so sent I them into the world,'—that is the Apocalypse,'"⁵⁹ is as instructive as it is attractive.

On the subject of recapitulation much more might be said. The evaluation of the problems already discussed would, however, be determinative of our view elsewhere since they cover the most crucial passages. If these features of Revelation do not recommend the synchronous structure to the student of this book, it is not likely that the consideration of any other passages would. Now, to avoid the impression that parallelism is the most prominent characteristic of Revelation and thus obscure its true nature, I would like to suggest briefly some manifestations of the equally important progressive-climactic course of thought evident in the Apocalypse.

Logical Progression in Structure of Revelation

PATH TO HEAVEN: The outline, of the book here adopted, itself suggests one feature of the climactic order of thought. Revelation 1:9–3:22 pictures the church in the world and Revelation 21:9–22:5, the church in glory. Thus understood the visions are properly bounded instead of dribbling off, as regards the thought content, into loose ends at start and finish. Also, this makes prominent one of the, if not *the*, main purposes of all the visions of judgment and woe included within these bounds. To be sure, it is through such judgments that Christ brings every foe of his to be the footstool of his feet, but it is by this same process that his church is purified from every defilement and made to be his holy bride. This process of cleansing, this transformation of the church, a pilgrim below, into the church at home in the Father's glorious mansions above, is adequately introduced and concluded only if the contrast of these two terminal main divisions of Revelation is recognized. Only when the church on earth, partaking of the sin and imperfection of this world, and the finished glorious creation of God's redemptive program are thus presented in all their contrast, are the ways and the wisdom of God in suffering his people to tread their persecuted path through this life justified to men.

This instructive feature of the book is lost in an outline like Hendriksen's, for the crowning vision of the church in glory is thrown in on his view simply as part of the seventh main section, the part that brings that section to the usual climax. Thus, it is on a par merely with the climaxes of the other divisions, and its obvious distinctiveness is lost. It is clear to all that the seven letters constitute a separate division of the book for their epistolary form is distinctive, and they form one of the obvious heptads. In the case of 21:9ff., however, it may possibly be urged that it should be included as a mere continuation of 21:8 and thus become part of the division on Final Judgments. We will, therefore, defend the construction adopted here, especially since this affords the opportunity to confirm the contrast between the seven

⁵⁹ Milligan, *Lectures*, 69.

letters' picture of the church and this last vision of the redeemed in glory, as being the author's specific intention.

1. It is true that the subject matter of 21:1–8 and 21:9–22:5 is quite similar. In the nature of the case this should be expected since every series ends with the close of the age or eternity, making it necessary, if a final vision of the consummation be added, that it blends into or parallels the previous climax in this way. Also, 21:1–8 has not a right to belong to the last unique vision, since it is not unique but bears a very close resemblance in thought and language to other climaxes such as 7:9–17 and 14:1–5. As for its general similarity to 21:9–22:5, this is but another evidence of the author's skill in making his transitions logically as well as formally smooth.

2. There is a distinction that should not be overlooked. After the brief statement that John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband, v. 2, the remainder of the revelation in 21:1–8 concerning the future of the saints is by *audition*, not direct vision. On the contrary, the whole of 21:9–22:5 is visionary in form.

3. It may seem to some that this is an insignificant or superficial consideration, but in light of the use of the phrase in the structure of Revelation, I believe some weight must be given to the fact that in the introduction to the vision of 21:9–22:5 John says that the angel "carried me away *in the Spirit*"—*ἐν Πνεύματι (en Pneumati)*—to see the holy city. This is the fourth and last appearance of such a statement. The evidence shows that this phrase is used most discriminatingly, since it appears in the introduction to what are probably the four fundamental sections of the book. It occurs in 1:10 which is introductory to the other (of what we are calling) terminal divisions of the Revelation, the Church Imperfect in the World. It occurs again in 4:2, after the seven letters and in the introduction to all the visions of the church's conflict with the world and God's non-final judgments on the wicked. Thirdly it occurs in 17:3 in the introduction to the Final Judgments, the outcome of the conflict. This affords a very striking parallel in the entirety of its introduction (17:1–3) to the last case (21:9–10), as well as in the contrast of its subject matter, representing the outcome of the apostate church whereas the outcome of the faithful church is found in 21:9ff. In 1:10ff., the church is in the midst of the world; in 21:9ff., the church has been taken out of the world. In 4:2ff., the church is in conflict with and overcome by the world; in 21:9ff., the church is at peace having overcome the world. In 17:3ff., the church apostate appears transformed to the world; in 21:9ff., the church glorified appears perfectly purified from the world. In these simple contrasts is the heart of the Apocalyptic message.

4. The unique appropriateness of 21:9–22:5 to serve as the closing contrast to the opening picture of the church in this present evil world (Revelation 2–3) appears in a detailed analysis of the fact that the imperfections attending the residence of the church on earth are conspicuous by their absence or their opposites in Revelation 21:9ff.:

In *Ephesus* (2:2) were false prophets; the *holy city* (21:14) has walls founded on the twelve true apostles of the Lamb.

In *Philadelphia* (3:9) and *Smyrna* (2:9) were false Jews; the *gates of the new Jerusalem* (21:12) are inscribed with the names of the tribes of true Israel.

Pergamum dwelt where Satan's throne was (2:12); the *church at last* shall dwell where God's throne is (22:1).

In *Sardis*, the most part was dead (3:1); in *the new Jerusalem* are "only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (21:27).

It was necessary that the *churches of Asia* should serve as lampstands in the world (1:20; 2:5); *in glory* “they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun, for the Lord God shall give them light,” (22:5, compare 21:23), “and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof” (21:23–24).

The *church of John’s day* was filled with impurities—heresies and spiritual fornication (2:14–15, 20), imperfection and lukewarmness and liars (3:2, 9, 16); the *church of the eternal day* is marked by purity (21:18,21), the absence of “anything unclean, or that maketh an abomination and a lie” (21:27), indeed it is patterned after the Holy of Holies (21:16).

In the *cities of Asia*, the servants of God must face persecution (2:8–10; 3:10) resting on God’s promises to overcomers; in the *heavenly city*, the saints reign for ever and ever (22:5), and the overcomers inherit the promises (2:7, compare 22:2; 2:11, compare 21:27 and 22:3; 2:17, compare 22:4; 2:26–28, compare 22:5 and 21:22 [22:16]; 3:5, compare 21:27 and 22:5; 3:12, compare 21:10 and 22:4; 3:21, compare 22:1 and 22:5).

To make this analysis is practically to exhaust the contents of both divisions. So exhaustive a contrast is not a coincidence. Of course, these elements of contrast are found elsewhere in Revelation (see below), but in 21:9–22:5 there is an accumulation of points of contrast that indicate distinctiveness.

5. When to the facts of (a) the *a priori* desirability of a closing section to parallel by contrast the picture of the church in the seven letters, and (b) the actual extraordinary qualifications of 21:9–22:5 to be such, we add the previously observed affinity of 21:1–8 with the section beginning at 17:1 (including the further observation now that the appearance of the new heaven and new earth in 21:1 further associates 21:1–8 with the preceding since the fleeing away of heaven and earth (20:11) clamors for such a reappearance before this main division closes), the case for a new major division at 21:9 seems to be established. (It is interesting to notice that thus understood the conclusion of this Final Judgments section (21:1–8) closely parallels the end of the seven seals section (7:9–8:1); the close of the trumpets (11:19), and bowls (16:17–21) sections are akin, and the lone middle section of the Deeper Conflict is unique in its conclusion.)

It thus appears that there are five synchronous sections in Revelation, each of which ranges over the whole gospel dispensation and climaxes with a definite presentation of the eschatological finale, and in which as a whole the emphasis gravitates increasingly toward the end of the age, and which are bounded on either side by a section which, while not describing a period of time or subject matter not elsewhere alluded to or developed, yet does not fulfill the qualification of the others of covering the whole New Testament age. The final section obviously does not at any point take us back to the beginning of the New Testament dispensation. The seven letters just as obviously do not present a definite picture of the eschatological finale. It is perhaps the greatest single weakness of Hendriksen’s view that he is compelled to make the mere applicability of the seven churches of Asia’s conditions to the church of any period in the New Testament age the entire basis for the parallelism of this division with the others. In so doing he must ignore the following: (a) These letters formed an aspect of John’s experience in receiving the entire Revelation, distinct from all that follows. (b) They do not, and in the nature of the case could not, picture the end as the following series do at their climaxes. (c) The formal introductions of material contrasted to the seven letters as “the things which must come to pass hereafter” is evident in 4:1, re-emphasizing the break in the experience of the prophet at this point. The terminal sections are therefore not synchronous with the central five sections, but do not thereby mar the

symmetry of Revelation but rather enhance it formally, while they also ground and crown the logical development in the book.

In this feature we have the most comprehensive example of progress of thought in the Apocalypse. As the Lord who bought her endured the contradiction of sinners against him and the pain of the cross before entering into the glory and joy that was set before him, so the church must carry the cross of affliction from within and from without until she is rewarded at length with the crown of life. This fundamental contrast and the progress inherent in it is made prominent in the opening and closing divisions of Revelation—the church imperfect and suffering in this evil world, and the church perfect and triumphant in that holy city Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from God.

The foregoing has made the distinctiveness of the terminal sections clear, but I trust in so doing the usual error in this regard has been avoided, namely, isolating the seven letters too completely from the rest. We have observed that the progress evident between the terminal sections illuminates the purpose of the intervening visions of judgment, and thereby all is logically knit together. It should also be observed that while 4:1 serves as a plain boundary line between what precedes and follows, this is not an absolute boundary even chronologically. In the following visions of “the things which must come to pass hereafter,” we are time and again brought back to the ministry of Christ and the inception of the church’s mission which of course precede the “things that are” as John beheld them in the church of his day in the seven letters.

PATH TO HELL: The progress which inheres in Revelation is exhibited in another way which appears as we further guard the *seven letters* from the isolationist policy, though not forgetting their distinctiveness, by a recognition of their *germinal* nature. There is not a major character (not speaking now of divine persons, though this were no exception) in Revelation which is not introduced and viewed from the point of view of church life in 1:9–3:22.

1. There was of course within the seven churches the *true church* invisible which the Head of the church could commend (2:2, 6; 2:9–10; 2:13; 2:19, 24; 3:4; 3:8–10; 3:19). Their ultimate estate of glory and the fulfillment of the promises made to them has already been discussed, i.e., the crowning vision of the New Jerusalem. But also throughout the book this body of the faithful appears, sometimes in similar visions of the crown attained (6:10–11; 7:9–17; 11:11–13; 14:1–5; 14:14–16; 15:2–4; 20:4–6; 21:1–8), sometimes suffering for their testimony more clearly than in the seven letters (6:9,11; 11:3–10; 12:13–17, compare 13:17; 18:24; 19:19; 20:9), or as protected of God and distinguished from the world, thus meeting the exigencies of new developments in the context (7:3–8; 11:1), or as the body of whom is Christ according to the flesh (12:1, 2, 5).

2. Also within the seven churches of Asia could be found *false, apostatizing* influences (2:2, 6; 2:9; 2:14–15; 2:20–23; 3:1; 3:9; 3:15–17). This leaven is seen working increasingly elsewhere in Revelation (9:1–19;⁶⁰ 11:2). The full, vile description and the final destruction of this agency is described towards the close (14:8; 16:19; 17–18) and seems to afford more delight in its fall to the hosts of heaven than the destruction of any other foe of the church (19:1–5), just as its plain and full manifestation in that wilderness where he had last seen the radiant woman occasions the Seer more surprise than any other revelation (17:6).

3. The world outside, the *imperial power*, is reflected in the seven letters in the persecution of the churches (2:9–10; 2:13). There is a very clear progress in the extensive

⁶⁰ So, Fairbairn.

development of this subject. In the fifth seal (6:9–10) the presence of Christian martyrs is evidence of the world's manner of receiving the gospel and dispensations of God's providence in the first four seals (compare 7:14). In chapter 11 is a remarkable anticipation and development of this theme in the Beast from the Abyss slaying the two witnesses. Then in chapter 13 the Beast is fully described in his Satanic agency, hellish power, and hatred of the saints (compare 14:9; 16:1,5,13,14,16). Its relation to Babylon is expounded, and its own entire history illuminated in chapter 17 (vv. 3–13) and its defiance of God in 17:14; 16:16; and 19:19. The climax of this career in judgment is fully described in 19:11–16, 20–21 (compare 6:15; 11:15; 14:11; 16:19; 17:14).

4. Almost inseparable from the imperial power in Revelation is *secularism*, man's prophethood gone astray, the wisdom of this world which genders materialism, false science and philosophy, and buries the souls of men in the interests of this world, enslaving them especially to the power of this world as manifested in imperial force. I believe the baneful effect of this secular drag upon the church appears in the loss of the Ephesians' first love (2:4), in the deadness and imperfection of the Sardis church (3:1–2), and in the lukewarmness that prevailed in Laodicea due to their dependence on their riches in the things of this world (3:15–18). Then beyond the seven letters, it is this wisdom of the world which opposes the foolishness of the gospel and makes the prophet's experience bitter in sounding forth the good news to many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings (10:10–11). On the other hand, this same worldly wisdom causes the merchants of the nations and the kings of the people to lament the destruction of the false apostate religion (chapter 18). Again, this worldly propaganda is seen for what it is, a fellow-beast of the imperial agent of Satan, deceiving men by its lamb-like features but enslaving them to the first Beast by its dragon-like claims—it is the false prophet (13:11–18). With the Beast and Satan, this false prophet gathers the nations to their destruction in the last conflict with God (16:13–14, 16) and is cast itself into the lake of fire at last (19:20).

5. The deep, underlying *Satanic power* set against the purposes of God is also specifically indicated in the churches of Asia (2:9,13, 24; 3:9). A widely recognized element of progress is the increased intensity of the spiritual conflict beginning at 12:1. Satan is now plainly exposed as the bitter foe of Christ and his people; he is the unseen source and strength of all the persecuting efforts of Beast and false prophet (12:17, compare 13:1, 11). When at the end they are overwhelmed by the Lamb, this constitutes the final overthrow of Satan also. (If national imperial power as such is utterly and finally uprooted from the world, i.e., the Beast is cast into the lake of fire, at 19:19, how can Satan still be using the nations as his agents of hostility against the saints in 20:8 if chronologically this is a thousand years later? He cannot; the author has recapitulated between these points.) As a vision of Satan appears just before the specific introduction of his agents (chapters 12 and 13)—though chronologically there is no difference since it was through the Beast in the form of Rome and Babylon in the form of Judaism that Satan opposed Christ at his birth and in his earthly ministry (12:3ff.), so also when these specific agencies have completely disappeared (19:20) before the wrath of the Lamb, Satan is brought to the reader's attention again and his destruction is pictured—and as in the inception of the anti-Christian efforts so now in their final overthrow, Satan is not to be chronologically separated from his agents, but rather their fall is his—19:20 and 20:10 are one. Being thus bounded by these two visions of Satan, the intervening careers of the Beast and False-Prophet are forcefully portrayed as Satanic in their source, character, and end; and thereby all is eloquently climaxed.

What is germinal in the seven letters develops in the progress inherent in Revelation. What is at first barely suggested as working behind the scenes and producing the effects observable on the surface of the earlier visions, presently appears itself on the surface fully described; then hastens on to judgment. To be sure the various climaxes throughout Revelation present the final judgment; but there is an increasing emphasis on the identity of the basic powers involved in this judgment, until in 17:1–21:8 this progress in thought is consummated with each hostile character being dealt with in turn with finality so that they never again darken the Seer's vision. To summarize, there is progress from the seven letters' germinal forms on to the end in the clarity of the identity and nature of the agents producing the Apocalyptic history, in the fierceness and depth of the world's hatred for Christ, climaxing in one last unrestrained effort which is visited with Judgment, in the metamorphosis of the falsely professing church into a state of unrestrained harlotry, as well as in the perfecting of the church, the bride of Christ.

PATH OF WRATH: The counterpart to the progress in ungodly activity is naturally progress in the *judgments of God*. This is a rather comprehensive feature and widely acknowledged. Involved in this deepening of judgment to meet the deepening of sin are the seals-trumpets-bowls heptads. There is an increasing ominousness in the thoughts of opening seals, of sounding trumpets, and of pouring out bowls of wrath. Again, the fraction which is typical of the judgments are successively one fourth, one third, and in the bowls which are called "the last" plagues, judgment is no longer fractional but complete in its effects. Also, the identity of the objects of judgment becomes increasingly specific, in step with the same feature in the progress of the world's hostility. This matter might be further elaborated,⁶¹ but since it is generally accepted, we conclude by indicating that the climax of this process is the great Final Judgments, and thus sin and punishment climax, and disappear together.

No doubt the careful seeker could point to many other evidences of climactic arrangement in the Apocalypse. The three features indicated above are, however, the most comprehensive examples, namely, the germinal nature of the seven letters with the gradual development of the characters and careers of the forces detectable therein, especially in their hostility to God; the increasing severity of the judgments of God; and the perfecting of the faithful church and her deliverance from the present evil world into the glory and joy of the eternal city of God.

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⁶¹ See Milligan, *Lectures*, 104ff.; and Fairbairn, 415 (seals); 424 (trumpets); 427 (vials).

ServantReading

Covenant Theology Today

A Review Article

By Bryan Estelle

Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives, by eds., Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020, 672 pages, \$35.00.

The faculty of Reformed Theological Seminary have produced a massive and comprehensive book on various aspects of covenant theology. The annotated bibliography itself, produced by John R. Muether, is worth the price of the book, although it too is already dated and needs revision (more below). The book is organized around three parts: biblical covenants, historical theology, and finally a section entitled collateral and theological studies.

Ligon Duncan, the chancellor, CEO, and professor of systematic and historical theology, writes the foreword. Then, the book begins with an article by Guy M. Richard on “The Covenant of Redemption.” We can be grateful to the editors (and Guy Richard) that this is included since this doctrine has been treated so diminutively in the past generation. Nevertheless, some important recent bibliography is not cited in this article. Richard P. Belcher takes up the covenant of works in the second chapter. Perhaps one of the most controverted areas he tackles is under the subheading, “The Role of Grace in the Covenant of Works” (69). I do appreciate Belcher’s strong defense of the covenant of works (COW). Nevertheless, discussions of “merit” with regard to Adam will have to take into consideration now and in the future the recent work of Harrison Perkins in *Catholicity and the Covenant of Works*.¹

Of course, it would be unfair to criticize Belcher for failure to engage this work since it just appeared. However, it is a shame that Perkin’s work was not published prior to the book under review, since it could possibly have helped at least one author in the book (D. Blair Smith) from making historical gaffes (367–68). Prior to this work, we only had Aaron C. Denlinger’s work, *Omnes in Adam ex pacto Dei*,² which discussed the issue of merit *ex pacto* (i.e., covenantal merit) among seventeenth-century Reformed theologians. But now, with Perkin’s work, we know that James Ussher himself held to a *notion* of merit that challenges all the disproportionality arguments (i.e., that Adam’s portended

¹ Harrison Perkins, *Catholicity and the Covenant of Works: James Ussher and the Reformed Tradition*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

² Aaron C. Denlinger, *Omnes in Adam ex pacto Dei: Ambrogio Catarino’s Doctrine of Covenant Solidarity and Its Influence on Post-Reformation Reformed Theologians* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

intrinsic obedience would have been “out of proportion” to the infinite reward of life offered) so commonly bandied about today, even in the book under review. One of the most important aspects of the discussion of the covenant of works is whether Adam had the ability by his God given natural strength to obey and meet the terms of the covenant or whether he needed added grace (e.g., the Roman Catholic doctrine of *donum superadditum*) in order to rise to the obedience required. Perkin’s work has shown that Ussher, who was profoundly influential on the Westminster divines, thought that “Adam was able to earn the eternal state for himself and his posterity by use of faculties granted to him by creation.”³ Although Ussher was not enthusiastic about the word “merit,” he was very precise in his formulations to suggest that merit *ex pacto* as opposed to some notion of condign, congruent, or ontological merit was the category to use. Ussher maintained that “Adam could earn a reward from God in a relationship of justice where the covenant defined the terms.”⁴ Although Ussher and all orthodox Reformed theologians would agree that human beings cannot properly merit anything from God, nevertheless, we now know that in the sixteenth and up to the eighteenth centuries, Reformed theologians covering a wide geographical area, used the category of *ex pacto* merit—especially in their discussion of the COW—to polemicize against Roman Catholic paradigms, as demonstrated by Perkins in “*Meritum ex Pacto* in the Reformed Tradition.”⁵ To Belcher’s credit, he is willing to talk about the weaknesses of John Murray’s approach to the COW. Any future discussions of the COW will have to integrate John Fesko’s exquisitely written and recently published work, *The Covenant of Works*,⁶ since it is now the most important work of historical survey and analysis on the study of the COW.

The next article by Guy Waters (one of the editors), tackles the issue of the “Covenant of Works in the New Testament.” Water’s treatment, as one would expect, is confessional and robust with exegetical nuance. However, the reader should be aware that his treatment of Galatians 3:10–12 with regard to the law and what the Judaizers’ teaching about justification requires, namely “the fulfillment of the entirety of the law’s commandments for justifying righteousness,” (95) is only one interpretation of this crucial passage. And to this author, it does not cohere with Paul’s intentions in light of his laconic discussion of Christ’s work in Galatians 4:4–5.

True enough, God does require personal and perfect obedience to his law, and the reality is that no mere human being following the fall is able to fulfill such demands due to innate moral corruption. The real issue here is whether Paul is referring to the Judaizers’ aberrant teaching or describing a reality that existed in the old covenant that showcases a typological works principle that Christ has fulfilled. Consider the OPC’s report of the Committee to Study the Doctrine of Justification which was commended for Study by the Seventy-third General Assembly (2006):

³ Perkins, *Catholicity and the Covenant of Works*, 104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁵ Harrison Perkins, “*Meritum ex Pacto* in the Reformed Tradition,” *Mid America Journal of Theology* 31 (2020): 57–87.

⁶ John Fesko, *The Covenant of Works: The Origins, Development, and Reception of the Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

In Galatians 4:4 Paul writes that Christ was “born under the law.” This statement indicates, with marvelous brevity, what Christ’s redemptive work entailed. To say that Christ was “born under the law” is striking, for being “under the law” is precisely the state from which we have been redeemed and to which Paul warns that we must never return (Gal. 4:21; Rom. 6:14–15). In what condition does that put Christ? First, it puts Christ under the curse of the law, culminating in his crucifixion. Being under the law entails a curse for Christ because he stood in the place of sinful people, whose failure to obey all the law brought that curse (Gal. 3:10, 13). In addition, however, being “under the law” means that in order to live one must *do the law* (Gal. 3:12); it means that one is justified according to the obligation to *perform the entire law* (Gal. 5:3–4). To be justified and live, then, Christ had to render positive obedience to the law’s demands. The fact that he was justified and lives in everlasting glory indicates that Christ in fact did obey the law perfectly. And this he did for our redemption (Gal. 4:5).⁷

In short, the reference to Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12, according to this view, is that Paul is not referring to the misappropriation of the law by the Judaizers. After all, does it make any sense that Paul will use a faulty view of the Judaizers (Gal. 3:12) to describe positively a works principle that Christ has fulfilled perfectly in order to secure our salvation in Gal 4:4–5? It is noteworthy that Water’s position is followed by others in this volume, e.g., J. Nicholas Reid in “The Mosaic Covenant” (169). Waters has another article later in the book, “Covenant in Paul.” Here, he continues his claim that Paul is correcting his opponents misreading of the Mosaic covenant but also develops in a very helpful and clear manner the relationship between the two Adams. Echoing WCF 7:5–6, Waters takes pains to emphasize that the Mosaic covenant is an evangelical administration of the one gracious covenant that God inaugurated in Genesis 3:15 (the covenant of Grace). In fact, he repeats the phrase four times in the space of three pages (237–39). Thankfully, he comes around to register certain discontinuities when he engages 2 Corinthians 3 and Galatians 3–4 (243).

John D. Currid’s article, “Adam and the Beginning of the Covenant of Grace,” showcases sensitivity to NT echoes and works hard to speak plainly and clearly by explaining difficult terms. Miles Van Pelt’s article, “The Noahic Covenant of the Covenant of Grace,” is well done. Aside from too many split infinitives in the body and the footnotes, VanPelt affirms, significantly, that the Noahic covenant is a non-redemptive covenant. VanPelt does an able job of distinguishing and separating the covenant described in Genesis 6:18 from the Noahic covenant in Genesis 9. The importance of this may not be understated. Too many biblical theologians do not maintain this, and if it is not rigorously maintained, then the consequences for a proper view of Christianity and culture results in fuzzy boundaries.

The next article by Scott Redd, “The Abrahamic Covenant,” covers many important areas and overall is well done. I appreciate that he engaged the difficult issue of conditionality in the covenants: after all its demands are designed, defined, and fulfilled by God alone, its basis is unconditional, inviolable, and irrevocable. Human beings in no way fulfill conditions in the Abrahamic covenant in order to receive grace. Nevertheless,

⁷ *Justification: Report of the Committee to Study the Doctrine of Justification* (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee of Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2007), 35.

as Bavinck says, this covenant was destined to become bilateral in its administration since human beings are expected to offer grateful obedience. This difficult topic is handled very well by Nicholas Reid in the next article (153). Finally, there are a couple of typographical errors here. First, the reference to Genesis 15:1 on page 139 should be 15:2, and the Hebrew of Genesis 15:18 on the next page is incorrectly pointed.

Nic Reid writes on the Mosaic covenant. Reid, an expert in Assyriology, should be commended for tackling the issue of the exile and its relationship to conditionality in the Mosaic covenant. He is irenic and generous in his discussion of others with whom he differs. Moreover, he rightly cites WCF 7.5–6 which insists that the Mosaic covenant is part of the administration of the covenant of grace. Nevertheless, Reid makes a claim regarding the Pentateuch which potentially has systemic ramifications for any biblical theology of covenant and calls for reconsideration.

On page 153, following the work of L. Michael Morales, he claims that the Pentateuch's main theme is God's opening a way for humanity to dwell in the divine presence and further claims that Leviticus 16, which of course discusses the Day of Atonement, is the "literary and theological centre" of the Pentateuch. Mary Douglass and many other legal experts on the Pentateuch would challenge this notion, claiming that Leviticus 19, not 16, is the theological center of the Pentateuch. This is no small quibble. Reid claims:

If this thesis is correct, the broader perspective of the law is the context of facilitating worship and dwelling with God, thus facilitating the relationship that already exists between God and his people. The Mosaic covenant, then, as a covenant arrangement, does not use law to create the relationship between God and Israel. Rather, it provides a way for that relationship to be maintained, especially through ongoing atonement. (153)

This sounds at first glance commendable; however, the real problems, seismic at that, lie below the surface. By foregrounding and making primary the personal and relational dimension of the covenant (following Morales), Reid has made a methodological error that does not allow him to incorporate the importance and primacy of legal categories in his system. Secondly, and related to the first criticism, is that when one makes grace (or "relationship") primary in their evaluation of biblical covenants, this begs for more precision and nuance. If the Bible communicates that the covenant at creation in the garden was a covenant in which God assigned a stipulated work to Adam as the representative head of the human race with the promise of a reward upon the condition of performance of that work, and if creation precedes redemption, then law must be the foundation of any biblical covenantal system. A similar point could be made with regard to the Covenant of Redemption. Only when *law is made the foundation of covenant relationships and primary in a covenantal system* can consistent covenantal integrity be maintained. Although law and love, or law and kinship or relationship, are typically contrasted in contemporary theology, such should not be part of our system in covenant theology. Reid authors another chapter later in the book, "Ancient Near Eastern Backgrounds to Covenants" (447–65). Not surprisingly, given his profound training in ANE studies, this article is very well done. This is especially the case since he deals with the controverted area of "land grants" and the various theologians that have attempted to

incorporate insights from that area of study into covenant theology. Reid takes pains to correct Moshe Weinfeld's influence in this area, particularly citing Gary Knopper's important work (recently deceased). An abbreviation used in footnote 47 (*KASKAL*) is missing in the list of abbreviations on pages 15–21. On that topic, the important NT journal abbreviation *JSNT* is also missing, even though it too is cited in the book.

Belcher covers "The Davidic Covenant" next. Although the majority of his time is taken up in exegesis of 2 Samuel 7, he introduces a well-done intertextual comparison between that passage and 1 Chronicles 17. Michael McKelvey covers the new covenant in Jeremiah and the book of Isaiah in the next chapter. He aims to discuss how the new covenant is a central concern of the prophetic literature.

Michael Kruger shifts the discussion to the NT in the next chapter entitled "Covenant in the Gospels." He recognizes that although the word covenant is missing by and large from the NT Gospel accounts, the concept is not. He tackles the notion of the genre of the Gospels and thankfully recognizes and affirms that the exodus is the backdrop for the Gospel genre, first proposed by M. G. Kline and later embraced and enjoined by many NT scholars. Kruger does not equivocate about the legal elements in the Mosaic covenant and recognizes Jesus's obedience echoing Adam's arrangement in the garden. Bob Cara covers covenant extensively in his chapter the "Covenant in Hebrews." He notes that the author of Hebrews uses the word more than all other NT writers combined. Cara expounds the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new covenant in the book. He designates the writer to Hebrews's treatment of covenant as "contrast within continuity" (249). The reader can learn much about the function and use of typology from this chapter. It is marked by smooth prose which leaves the reader appropriately adoring God's developing redemptive history.

Gregory R. Lanier, one of the relatively newer additions to the RTS faculty, had one of the more creative and interesting chapters to this reviewer in "Covenant in the Johannine Epistles and Revelation." He handles well the recurring issue about unilateral versus bilateral arrangements in the covenant (274). He appropriately recognizes John's allusions to exodus and new exodus categories.

Ligon Duncan leads the segue into the historical chapters with "Covenant in the Early Church." Duncan demonstrates deliberate attention to his role in writing in such a way that fits well with the other essays. Doug Kelly's article "Covenant in Medieval Theology" thankfully demonstrates the influence of Thomas Aquinas on the Medieval period and his overall influence on theology; however, besides this it does not add much that is new in any way.

Howard Griffith (recently deceased and one of the authors to whom the book is dedicated) writes on "Covenant in Reformation Theology." His article is largely indebted to Peter Lillback's book, *The Binding of God*.⁸ His discussion of Luther is engaging and he also comments on Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin. D. Blair Smith writes on "Post-Reformation Developments" in the next chapter. I have already made some comments on the weaknesses evident in this essay. One strength is that he is clear on the unilateral/bilateral distinction that comes up repeatedly in the book (cf. 371).

The article by Bruce Baugus on "Covenant Theology in the Dutch Reformed Tradition" was one of the most rigorous and interesting in the book. It is well done. To

⁸ Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

his credit, he leans heavily on Brian Lee's dissertation (written under Richard Muller, professor of historical theology) on Cocceius. Mark McDowell's article on "Barth and the Torrances" makes gains in helping us understand the influence of these theologians and the diminution of legal categories in discourse on the covenants. Michael Allen engages the recent trends in theology towards participatory categories. He engages with the work of John Webster (recently deceased), who was concerned about overreach of participationist language and enjoined a return to covenantal categories. He also engages Michael Horton's four-volume dogmatics, which is guided by the topics of covenant and eschatology.

Part 3 contains essays under "Collateral and Theological Studies." I have already commented on Nic Reid's article in this section earlier. Peter Lee takes up the subject of "Covenant and Second Temple Judaism." Lee covers background texts that deal with the Abrahamic, Sinaitic, Davidic, new covenants, and even a "Covenant of Eternal Priesthood" in the War Scroll from Qumran. Most interesting here is how often the NT teaching on a subject (e.g., "works of the law") is vastly different than what occurs in Second Temple texts, especially from Qumran.

Benjamin Gladd tackles "Covenant in New Testament Scholarship" in the next article, which helpfully outlines the state of the question in NT studies today. His chapter primarily outlines the rise and fall of influence of New Perspective(s) on Paul.

Palmer Robertson pens some new and interesting thoughts on Israel in "Israel and the Nations in God's Covenants." He claims that "if the Abrahamic covenant provided redemptive blessings to all nations, then the Mosaic covenant also must provide redemptive blessings to the nations." This, and his following argumentation, is a stretch, at best. Better is the terse, simple, and clear prose of T. David Gordon, who claims in his recently published commentary on Galatians, *Promise, Law, Faith: Covenant-Historical Reasoning in Galatians*,

Paul also indicated that the new covenant realities are similar in kind to the Abrahamic realities and dissimilar in kind to the Sinai covenant realities. The Abrahamic and new covenants comprehend Gentiles within their blessings, whereas the Sinai covenant is made with a single nation.⁹

The next chapter, by Michael Glodo, is simply titled, "Dispensationalism." Glodo is irenic in his tone, but he also engages in a critique of their views. This is a helpful chapter since Dispensationalism has been influential and remains so in certain quarters of the Presbyterian church, not to mention the rise of Christian Zionism as well by some evangelicals in unconditional support of Israel as a kind of divine imperative.

In the next chapter, Scott Swain discusses "New Covenant Theologies" (hence, NCT) or as they sometimes fashion themselves "progressive covenantalism" (hereafter PC), views held by a number of leading evangelical NT scholars. After tracing the biblical data for differences between the old and new covenants (including a great analogy of likening the distinction between a puppy and a dog vis-à-vis a dog and a cat), Swain engages the state of the question in the NCT writings (often self-published and therefore difficult to access). NCT and PC writers are occupied with the question of continuity and

⁹ T. David Gordon, *Promise, Law, Faith: Covenant-Historical Reasoning in Galatians* (Hendrickson, 2019), 40.

discontinuity in redemptive history. After a lengthy exegesis of Jeremiah 31:31–34, Swain concludes that they suffer from an “overrealized eschatology.”

The final chapter, by Derek Thomas, is on “Covenant, Assurance, and Salvation.” In this chapter, he takes up the issues of how the sacraments are “holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace” (572–74) and answers the question of how the sacraments “confirm our interest in Christ.” Something is missing in his footnote, #15, since he says, “A basic bibliography on paedocommunion includes the following volumes,” but then he only cites one book. Perhaps something fell out of the note, or perhaps he meant to say “volume,” singular, instead of the following volumes since he does include a title previous to this sentence. Kevin DeYoung provides a short “afterword.”

In conclusion, this volume demonstrates that we can have confessional unity, with appropriate exegetical diversity, and without unanimity among our reformed academic colleagues and ministers. To that end, many can profit from the book. I learned much from many of the essays. Since many of these authors are ministerial and professional colleagues, and some I consider friends, I have attempted to deal with their project in a charitable vein, even when I disagreed.

Even so, I did wonder what the ultimate purpose for writing this book was. First, there is way too much redundancy in the book. The editors probably should have been more deliberate with the assignments to their authors in order to avoid this. Second, with the exception of a few articles, there was not enough serious rigor in the articles so that it could be helpful to the academic guild. Third, the section dealing with “collateral studies” lacked robust systematic conclusions. Finally, it was too detailed and too lengthy for the typical busy pastor. Although the authors were committed to classic Reformed theology as found especially in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the essays were somewhat uneven, and they lacked an overall coherent argument. Nevertheless, in a day when participatory categories threaten to swallow up discussion engaging covenant as the architectonic organizing principle in Scripture, I was grateful for their courageous confessional stance.

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ServantReading

Dual Citizens: Politics and American Evangelicals by Timothy Padgett, ed.

Darryl G. Hart

Dual Citizens: Politics and American Evangelicals by Timothy Padgett, ed. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020, 489 pages, \$28.99.

Is the Religious Right, associated primarily with figures like Jerry Falwell (the elder), Pat Robertson, and James Dobson, an organic expression of evangelicalism, or was it the imposition of Republican operatives who saw a bloc of voters worried about secularism and moral relativism that cultivated their support? Those may not be the only alternatives for evaluating the Religious Right, but the question is useful for framing the relationship, to put it simply, between Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell. The former came to prominence in 1949 as the modern-day George Whitefield. In addition, Graham rose to fame as part of the so-called neo-evangelical (now simply evangelical) movement that was important for launching organizations such as the National Association of Evangelicals (1942), Fuller Seminary (1947), and *Christianity Today* magazine (1956). (Graham lent support by serving on the boards of the latter two institutions.) The Moral Majority that Falwell headed, in contrast, began in 1979, and the Lynchburg Baptist pastor had more of a footing in fundamentalism than evangelicalism. That contrast could imply that evangelicalism was more a religious than a political movement, and its public face was more moderate than indignant. The Religious Right, in turn, was from the start political in purpose, and its confrontational stances on abortion, feminism, sexual promiscuity, not to mention nuclear arsenals, may have felt more fundamentalist than evangelical.

This collection from *Christianity Today* in the book under review, *Dual Citizens*, should supply evidence for a plausible answer to the question posed above. Although the editor, Timothy D. Padgett, introduces the essays with a tip of the cap to two-kingdoms theology—Christians live in tension between ultimate loyalty to God and proximate allegiance to the civil magistrate—the book reads like a warm-up for the Religious Right. That is not to say that Falwell and other evangelical spokesmen who came to prominence during the Reagan presidency rejected this model of divided citizenship, as if the Religious Right was theocratic or favored Christian nationalism. Instead, this book suggests continuity between evangelicalism of the Nixon era and the conservative Protestantism of the Reagan and Bush presidencies era because so many of the contributions sound like arguments that contemporary evangelical activists still make.

Padgett arranges the articles around five themes: the presidency, evangelicalism's right and left political sides, foreign policy, domestic issues, and patriotism (or nationalism). Although all the essays come from the magazine proper, some are

anonymous as the collective voice of the editors while others come from writers who occasionally wrote for the magazine. Padgett does not clarify which if any of these authors were on the staff of *Christianity Today*. That leaves a question about which articles reflect the magazine's internal outlook and which were part of the editors' effort to include a diversity of opinions. Either way, the contributions, coming as they do from the flagship publication of the evangelical movement, reveal something of the outlook of born-again Americans between 1956 and 2016. As such, *Dual Citizens* presents the sort of expectations and points of view that made the Religious Right possible.

The difference between an official editorial and a guest contribution is obvious in the section on presidents. Here readers will see a critical piece from 1978 on Jimmy Carter, which asks whether the president actually lived up to his own standards. The author is John B. Anderson, the Illinois Congressman who ran as a third-party candidate against both Carter and Ronald Reagan two years later. The piece reads like the reasoning of a person looking for votes and testing campaign talking points. Otherwise, the section is solidly behind Republican presidents. An early op-ed column from 1956 about the presidential contest revealed that the magazine's ministerial readers favored Dwight D. Eisenhower over Adlai Stevenson eight-to-one. The editorial itself was not as partisan—it ended with a call for the country to find its way back to the “centrality of the gospel” (21). But it certainly indicated where the magazine's readership was electorally. With John F. Kennedy, the magazine, even after the election, was still raising questions about a Roman Catholic's undivided loyalty to the American Constitution. One official editorial on LBJ showed support for the Vietnam War as long as it was based on “freedom for all, opposition to all tyranny, and peace with justice” (36). Of the two editorials on Nixon, one expressed hope for a national day of prayer and the other defended Billy Graham's close relationship to Nixon (“no evidence that he has watered down his convictions to gain access”) (40). The magazine did not approve of Watergate, but it did not hammer Nixon even as it spoke positively about Gerald Ford, even trying to find evidence of an evangelical faith in the Vice President. By the time of Reagan's 1980 victory, the magazine was downplaying evangelical influence on the election and calling for greater maturity among evangelicals as citizens. From Clinton to the 2016 election, Padgett includes no official editorials but a mix of writers, some not household names, addressing each president. One possible inference from these essays on the presidency is that even as evangelicals became more identifiably political, the magazine moved from its largely pro-Republican position to one of seeming neutrality.

Such moderation was not for reason of avoiding issues. Most of the essays in the volume repeat the core political convictions of evangelicals (at least as the editors of *Christianity Today* understood them). Some of these concerns are evident in the section on domestic affairs which includes several articles on race and civil rights (in support), and abortion (opposition). But in other essays about elections or government more generally, readers will see recurring themes: anti-Communism, lower taxes, religious freedom, separation of church and state, freedom of speech and the press, just treatment of the poor, pro-life, and pro-family. In foreign policy, the magazine was firmly anti-Communist in the way it framed Vietnam and the Cold War. Later armed conflicts in Kosovo or Iraq allowed writers to draw upon just war theory in ways that expressed support for American intervention. Very few writers, aside from the discussion of just war, employed arguments from schools of political theory or foreign policy. Only in the

section on the Evangelical Left and the Religious Right did Jim Wallis, the founder of *Sojourners*, directly appeal to the left's talking points of "the priority of the poor" and nuclear disarmament (186). Wallis was quick to add that his politics came directly from Scripture.

The other contributor to the book who has at least seven articles and who could sound the most theoretical in his use of political philosophy is Chuck Colson. The aid (of Nixon) who went to jail for his involvement in Watergate converted while in prison, returned to society, started Prison Ministries, and became a popular evangelical pundit on American life through books and his radio editorials on Break Point. Colson is one of the lower visibility figures in the Religious Right. His manner was polished and clearly different from a pastor like Jerry Falwell who seemed to rely on biblical provocation more than political common ground. Colson's ability to present evangelical convictions in principled ways that were intended to persuade (rather than assert or clarify) was likely a reason that he wrote regularly for *Christianity Today*. At the same time, Colson did not back away from the culture-war side of his positions. In 1985 he wrote, "If you start reading the Bible you will see that there is a whole agenda that God has laid before us on the makeup of a righteous society" (178). For Colson, the list started with abortion. That way of stating the problem indicated that in the 1980s, the heyday of the Moral Majority, the editors and readers of *Christianity Today* were far more part of the Religious Right than they would become by the presidency of George W. Bush.

Overall, *Dual Citizens* is a valuable collection of writers and points of view in the gate-keeping periodical of the evangelical movement. Readers may be disappointed that the book includes less material that explains how Christians should calculate their loyalties to God and Caesar. It certainly provides evidence of how others made that calculation. In that sense, its usefulness is that of a documentary collection. That is, it gives readers examples of what some persons at a particular time thought about certain topics. *Dual Citizens* is especially instructive in taking the political pulse of evangelical Protestants before the rise of the Religious Right.

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ServantReading

Small Preaching by Jonathan T. Pennington

By Charles M. Wingard

Small Preaching: 25 Little Things You Can Do Now to Become a Better Preacher by Jonathan T. Pennington. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021, 119 pages, \$18.99, hardcover.

Preachers need books on the theology of preaching, works that demonstrate its biblical warrant. Preachers also need how-to books on the preparation and delivery of sermons. Carelessly crafted sermons dishonor the Savior, as does a delivery that fails to compel attention.

But there is a third kind of book on preaching that preachers will do well to read. These books offer the mature reflections on the intangibles of preaching—matters of pastoral bearing, mental attitude, and habits of preparation. Jonathan T. Pennington, preaching pastor at Sojourn East Church in Louisville, Kentucky and associate professor at Southern Seminary, provides just this kind of book in *Small Preaching*.

The book's twenty-five brief essays fall under three headings: the person of the preacher, the preparation for preaching, and the practice of preaching.

In section one—the person of the preacher—the author clarifies important interactions that take place between congregation and preacher. The pastor must be able to receive both praise and criticism with grace. On the one hand, ministries are crippled when preachers seek the affirmation of men instead of the approbation of God. On the other hand, the inability to receive criticism has left many ministers angry, hurting, and wracked by doubt. Pennington's counsel is sound: "The wise pastor will look at praise not as an idolatrous source of life but as a gift that enables a healthy life" (12) and will view criticism as "an opportunity for growth" (15).

Other topics in this section include identifying the distinction between preaching and teaching, and the benefits that come from preparing sermons with a group of fellow preachers. The latter idea raises the question: Is this common or even doable? The author shares his own experience of a group of pastors in his city who concurrently preach from the same texts each week, an arrangement he knows will not work for most pastors. Therefore, he proposes that ministers in the same geographic area share constructive ideas together either in person or by virtual meeting platforms.

Section two—the preparation of preaching—offers much common sense advice. The author reminds that "when it comes to preaching content, less is often more" (54). For each sermon, hardworking preachers gather far more material than should be used—and

risk overwhelming their congregations with too much information. They leave the place of worship knowing less, not more. A fine Christian man once put it to me like this: “My preacher tries to pour twelve ounces of content into my eight-ounce brain. What spills over is wasted on me.”

In the previous section, Pennington counseled preaching shorter sermons and saving more extensive teaching for other venues (29). Preaching is by definition monological; teaching can be dialogical, providing opportunities for questions and clarifications (31). Discerning how much is too much is an art all preachers must learn.

Homiletics textbooks debate the merits of taking a manuscript into the pulpit. But who can argue with the author’s counsel that “writing is thinking” and “the means by which thought is created”? (40). So, whether you take a manuscript into the pulpit or not, there is value to writing out your sermon prior to entering the pulpit. I point out to my students that when a preacher’s explanation of a text is unclear, the fault is frequently his, because he himself lacks a clear understanding of the text. Clear writing facilitates clear thinking and clear preaching.

Section three—the practice of preaching—covers a wide range of topics: the first and last minute of a sermon, the use of the church and cultural calendars, the benefits and challenges of *lectio continua* preaching.

I found especially helpful the chapter titled “The Power of Predictions.” The preacher is encouraged to “learn to ask thoughtful questions that invite [his] hearers to ponder and anticipate what [he’s] discussing” (87). The author points to studies demonstrating the value these questions play in promoting both the understanding and retention of instructional material (86–87).

Pennington is serious about the preacher and his work. A book of this kind is provocative in the best of ways. It compels the preacher to look at his work through the eyes of a seasoned preacher. It serves as a corrective by revealing areas for improvement that might otherwise escape his notice. And in areas of disagreement with the author, the book forces the preacher to sharpen his positions. The goal of this book is to make us better preachers, and to that end, the author has succeeded.

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ServantPoetry

On Imagination

By Phillis Wheatley (1753?–1784)

Thy various works, imperial queen, we see,
How bright their forms! how deck'd with pomp by thee!
Thy wond'rous acts in beauteous order stand,
And all attest how potent is thine hand.

From *Helicon's* refulgent heights attend,
Ye sacred choir, and my attempts befriend:
To tell her glories with a faithful tongue,
Ye blooming graces, triumph in my song.

Now here, now there, the roving *Fancy* flies,
Till some lov'd object strikes her wand'ring eyes,
Whose silken fetters all the senses bind,
And soft captivity involves the mind.

Imagination! who can sing thy force?
Or who describe the swiftness of thy course?
Soaring through air to find the bright abode,
Th' empyreal palace of the thund'ring God,
We on thy pinions can surpass the wind,
And leave the rolling universe behind:
From star to star the mental optics rove,
Measure the skies, and range the realms above.
There in one view we grasp the mighty whole,
Or with new worlds amaze th' unbounded soul.

Though *Winter* frowns to *Fancy's* raptur'd eyes
The fields may flourish, and gay scenes arise;
The frozen deeps may break their iron bands,
And bid their waters murmur o'er the sands.

Fair *Flora* may resume her fragrant reign,
And with her flow'ry riches deck the plain;
Sylvanus may diffuse his honours round,
And all the forest may with leaves be crown'd:
Show'rs may descend, and dews their gems disclose,
And nectar sparkle on the blooming rose.

Such is thy pow'r, nor are thine orders vain,
O thou the leader of the mental train:
In full perfection all thy works are wrought,
And thine the sceptre o'er the realms of thought.
Before thy throne the subject-passions bow,
Of subject-passions sov'reign ruler thou;
At thy command joy rushes on the heart,
And through the glowing veins the spirits dart.

Fancy might now her silken pinions try
To rise from earth, and sweep th' expanse on high:
From *Tithon's* bed now might *Aurora* rise,
Her cheeks all glowing with celestial dies,
While a pure stream of light o'erflows the skies.
The monarch of the day I might behold,
And all the mountains tipt with radiant gold,
But I reluctant leave the pleasing views,
Which *Fancy* dresses to delight the *Muse*;
Winter austere forbids me to aspire,
And northern tempests damp the rising fire;
They chill the tides of *Fancy's* flowing sea,
Cease then, my song, cease the unequal lay.