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1996

# The Annual Symposia of Concordia Theological Seminary (January 1997)

## THE TWELFTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

### “Sola Scriptura in the Church Today”

Tuesday, January 21, 1997

- 1: 00 p.m. Welcome and Introduction, Dr. Dean O. Wenthe,  
President of Concordia Theological Seminary
- 1:15 p.m. “Have Evangelicals Forgotten *Sola Scriptura*  
Today? Or Did They Never Learn It.” Dr. Wayne A.  
Grudem, Associate Professor of Biblical and  
Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity  
School, Deerfield, Illinois.
- 2:15 p.m. “Paul’s Use of Scripture as Authoritative.” Dr. Lane  
A. Burgland, Assistant Professor of Exegetical  
Theology (New Testament), Concordia Theological  
Seminary.
- 3:00 p.m. Afternoon Tea (in the Commons)
- 3:15 p.m. Vespers (in the Chapel)
- 3:30 p.m. “*Sola Scriptural* and the Old Testament.” Dr. Walter  
A. Maier III, Associate Professor of Exegetical  
Theology (Old Testament), Concordia Theological  
Seminary.
- 4:15 p.m. “Hearers of the Word: The Gospel of Luke as  
Scripture for a Liturgical Community.” Dr. Arthur  
A. Just, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology  
(New Testament), Concordia Theological Seminary.

Wednesday, January 22, 1997

- 8:30 a.m. “*Sola Scriptura* in the Church Today.” Dr. James G.  
Bollhagen, Associate Professor of Exegetical  
Theology (Old Testament), Concordia Theological  
Seminary.

- 9:15 a.m. "Back to the Beginning: The Protoevangelium in Scripture Itself." Dr. Douglas McC. L. Judisch, Professor of Exegetical Theology (Old Testament), Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 10:00 a.m. Morning Worship (in the Chapel)
- 11:00 a.m. "*Sola Scriptura* and the Interpretation of the Eating and Drinking of John 6:51-53." Dr. Walter A. Maier II, Professor of Exegetical Theology (New Testament), Concordia Theological Seminary.

**THE TENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM  
ON THE LUTHERAN LITURGY**  
in conjunction with

**THE TWENTIETH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM  
ON THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS**

**"Things Indifferent: Limits of Formula of Concord X"  
"New and Old Liturgical and Doctrinal Controversies"**

**Wednesday, January 22, 1997**

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome and Introduction
- 1:15 p.m. "Formula of Concordia X: A Revised, Enlarged, and Slightly Amended Edition." Dr. David P. Scaer, Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology Department, Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 2:00 p.m. "Religion, Culture, and Our Worship." Dr. Gene E. Veith, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Concordia University. Mequon, Wisconsin.
- 3:00 p.m. Coffee (in the Commons)
- 3:30 p.m. "Matthias Flacius and the Adiaphora." Dr. Oliver K. Olson, Associate Professor Emeritus, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- 4:30 p.m. Choral Vespers: The Schola Cantorum of the Seminary



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**Thursday, January 23, 1997**

- 8:00 a.m. "Adiaphora: Marriage and Funeral Liturgies." Dr. Bryan Spinks, Lecturer, University of Cambridge; Guest Lecturer, University of Notre Dame (1996) and Yale University (1997).
- 9:00 a.m. "Church-Growth Liturgies in a Lutheran Context." Professor Kurt E. Marquart, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 10:00 a.m. Choral Matins: The Kantorei of the Seminary
- 11:00 a.m. "Is Worship a Matter of Indifference to Evangelicals?" Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, President and Professor of Church History, Westminster Theological Seminary in California, Escondido, California.
- 12:15 p.m. Luncheon (in the Dining Hall)
- 1:30 p.m. Organ Recital: Kantor Richard C. Resch
- 2:00 p.m. Vespers (in the Chapel)
- 2:30 p.m. "The Meeting of Christianity and American Culture in Evangelicalism," Dr. Michael S. Horton, Editor of *Modern Reformation*; President of Christians United for Reformation, Anaheim, California.
- 3:45 p.m. "Melancthon and the Adiaphoristic Controversy." Dr. Lowell C. Green, Adjunct Professor of History, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York.
- 6:30 p.m. Symposium Banquet: Dr. Gilbert Meilaender, Jr., Board of Directors Professor of Christian Ethics, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana.

**Friday, January 24, 1997**

- 8:30 a.m. "What It Means to Be a Lutheran University." Mr. James Nuechterlein, Editor of *First Things*; Associate Director of the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York City.
- 10:00 a.m. Morning Worship (in the Chapel)
- 10:30 a.m. Coffee (in the Commons)

- 11:00 a.m.      Panel Discussion. "Distinguishing the 'Spirits'  
—American, Neo-Evangelical and Lutheran—Have  
the Differences Permanently Eroded?"
- 12:15 p.m.      Close of the Symposia

## OBSERVATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Attendance and Recordings

More than five hundred and fifty people attended the various sessions and events in the course of the Twelfth Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology and the Tenth Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Liturgy in conjunction with the Twentieth Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions. Audiotapes (at \$4.20 each plus shipping costs) and videotapes (at \$10.50 each plus shipping costs) of all the sessions in the symposia are available from the Bookstore of Concordia Theological Seminary.

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### Future Exegetical Papers

As was announced orally in the course of the Twelfth Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology, the Department of Exegetical Theology of Concordia Theological Seminary is now inviting the submission of proposals by anyone interested in making a presentation in one of several sectional meetings (of twenty-five minutes in length) which are scheduled to be held in the course of the Thirteenth Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology in January of 1998. Abstracts (of a page or less in length) of proposed papers are to be submitted by October 1, 1996, to the Sectional Committee of the Department of Exegetical Theology (in care of Dr. Charles Gieschen).

# The Future Role of the Bible in Seminary Education

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

“In the minds of most people, ranking close to the library as a conserving activity [of the seminary], is the teaching of the Bible,” declared the President of Illif School of Theology in Denver, Colorado in 1995.<sup>1</sup> He went on to say (somewhat matter-of-factly, for his purpose was to show how the Bible does not sanctify the *status quo*), “In every seminary, both mainstream and evangelical, biblical studies has a prominent position in the curriculum and requirements.”<sup>2</sup>

But it is precisely this assumption that must now be carefully examined. With all the talk of a major “paradigm shift” that is coming in the theological curriculum, it may well be the case that talk about the Bible maintaining a “prominent position in the curriculum” is purely propaganda for the purposes of assuring some of the more mature, but worried laity, that the seminary is continuing on track with the central task of teaching the Bible as it has in the past. It is at this point that the discussion must engage the modern nay-sayers head-on if the Bible is to continue to have the central role it exerted in the past and the role that most still assume it is going to have in the future.

## The Shape of the Curriculum in the Twenty-First Century

Most seminaries that have had an evangelical thrust in their curriculum and faculty in the past have experienced an enormous growth from the years of 1968 to about 1985. However, following the middle of the 1980s, the programs leading to the degree of Master of Divinity in seminaries accredited by the Association of Theological Schools began to suffer up to a fifty-percent loss in overall enrollments (bolstered in part only by the presence of large numbers of Korean and female students). This meant that fewer students were answering the call to take pastoral positions in the 1990s than in the previous decades. What makes this trend even more alarming is the estimate that “at least 40 percent of our ordained pastors in some mainline denominations [will be] retiring at the age of 65 by the year 2000 (and all indications are that this percentage will probably be [even] much higher).”<sup>3</sup>

Given this startling turn of events, it is all the more surprising that the new word on the lips of many boards and administrators is “downsizing.”<sup>4</sup> Adding to the fuel already in this fire is the recently conducted review by the J. J. Murdock Charitable Trust of Graduate Theological

Education in the Pacific Northwest.<sup>5</sup> Many have concluded that the most significant contribution of this study was in the area of curriculum and faculty. Based on the responses which they received from all segments of those quizzed, its conclusions are extremely pertinent to our study of the future role of the Bible in theological education. They conclude the following:

- (1.) The seminary curriculum is neither user-friendly to its users nor friendly to the church. Supposedly, there is too much academic work with too little concern for application and the needs of the church.
- (2.) The students tend to model the professionals of the academy rather than the professionals of the church. The present curriculum emphasizes too much of the "head" with too little of ministry skills.
- (3.) The curriculum has been driven by language and theological content skills, both of which graduates quickly lose or replace in favor of more pressing needs in the church.
- (4.) The curriculum must be expanded to become more friendly to the users, stressing things like management skills, finances, relational skills, counseling, preaching skills, leadership skills, planning and conflict management and personal spiritual development.

With such a long wish-list, is clear that something will have to give in the curriculum. Since in most seminaries the significant amount of time spent in learning Greek and Hebrew, along with courses in the Bible, consumes the largest portion of the overall curriculum, the hit must be taken in that area first of all. Is this a step however, in the right direction, and will it be an answer to our ills? This is the question that must be faced now.

### **The Value of the Old Testament**

One of the oldest questions in the history of the church is this: what is the value or worth of studying or using that portion of the Bible to which we refer as the Old Testament? Perhaps Christianity would stand to gain more from jettisoning her linages with the Old Testament than

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she would lose. Much time, after all, is consumed in most seminaries teaching Hebrew and the Old Testament corpus. If that same time could be spent on more practical subjects, the ministry of the church would be much further ahead, or at least such is the imagined result.

“The problem,” however, of “the Old Testament . . . is not just one of many. It is the master problem of theology,” warned Emil G. Kraeling.<sup>6</sup> Kraeling proceeded to show why such is the case:

Once one has awakened to the commanding importance of this question, one will be able to see that it runs through the whole of Christian history like a scarlet thread. Yea more: one can see that much of the difference in theology springs from the extent to which they build Old Testament ideas and impulses into primitive Christian patterns.<sup>7</sup>

The tragedy today is that more and more Christians are beginning to agree with the awful estimate which Adolf Harnack gave of the use of the Old Testament in Christian thinking, living, and study. Harnack disturbingly concluded as follows:

The early church was quite right to keep the Old Testament in the beginning, but she should have jettisoned it very soon. It was a disaster for the Lutheran reform to keep it in the sixteenth century. But for Protestantism to cling to it as a canonical document in the twentieth century is a sin of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis.<sup>8</sup>

Yet the fact remains true to the present day that almost every aberration in Christian theology can be traced back to some incorrect estimate of the use or abandonment of the Old Testament.

Everyone, for example, knows by now that Marcion declared that the God of the Old Testament was a different God from the God of the New Testament. Marcion labeled the God of the Old Testament a “demiurge,” an inferior being who created and ruled over the world, but who was not good in the same sense that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was. But the early church vigorously disagreed with Marcion’s analysis. The same God whom we worship is the one who had spoken many times and in many ways in the past to our fathers by the prophets, but who has spoken in these last days through His Son,

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2a). He is the same God!

There is more, however, to the unity of the Bible than the fact that both testaments refer to the same God. The central message of the promise of God forms one continuous thread throughout both testaments. The increasing loss, however, of even any desire to study the unity of the Bible has placed both the church and the seminary in an extremely vulnerable position. It has meant that the seminary has offered, and thus the church has received, a more fragmented approach to comprehending the wholeness of the Biblical message.

Already in 1979 Professor James Smart, the former Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Union Seminary in New York City, observed the following:

Scholars and churchmen must come awake to the fact that some of the most capable students have not been making the journey very successfully from school to church, from fact to faith, from historical record to sermon text, from cultural artifact to Christian revelation.<sup>9</sup>

Most locate the problem in the fact that the seminaries are placing too much emphasis on the teaching of the theoretical subjects rather than on the more needed practical subjects in the practice of ministry. But that analysis seems to be more reflective of the values and priorities of our society today than they are of the overwhelming data of Scripture.

The great failure of the moment, as judged from the perspective of Scripture, is that there is an enormous famine in progress in many churches for the word of God. It may well be that the warnings of Amos 8:11 have come true:

The days are coming, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord.

Despite the push to replicate the methods and techniques of the marketplace in the church in order to stimulate the growth of the church, Deuteronomy 8:3 is still true: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” There may be wisdom in supplementing the primary task of feeding God’s people

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through the dynamic word of God, but in no case must this central task be exchanged or discounted in favor of a thousand other good objectives. Instead of supporting the present mania in theological education for diversity, discontinuity, pluralism, and fragmentation, it is time for evangelical seminaries, who place different values on Scripture, to resist the present trend. In place of the bifurcation, fragmentation, isolationism, and compartmentalization that are so much a part of current fashion, we ought to stick to what is most important according to our commitments in the past and teach the Old Testament as part of the unity of Scripture—and as foundational and essential to an effective pastorate. To the degree that God's people are fed with the real bread of the word of God, we will be spared from the unnecessary compounding of the demands of the perceived needs of so many who are driving the church wild with their frivolous agendas.

No one is better qualified to pronounce on this matter than the psychiatrist and Christian writer John White. He decried the present trend to substitute counseling for the exposition of the word of God. He explained as follows:

Until about fifteen years ago psychology was seen by most Christians as hostile to the gospel. Let someone who professes the name of Jesus baptize secular psychology and present it as something compatible with Scripture truth, and most Christians are happy to swallow theological hemlock in the form of "psychological insights."

Over the past fifteen years there has been a tendency for churches to place increasing reliance on trained pastoral counselors . . . to me it seems to suggest weaknesses in or indifference to expository preaching within evangelical churches . . .

Why do we have to turn to the human sciences at all? Why? Because for years we have failed to expound the whole of the Scripture. Because from our weakened exposition and our superficial topical talks we have produced a generation of Christian sheep who have no shepherd. And now we are damning ourselves more deeply than ever by our recourse to the wisdom of the world.

What I do as a psychiatrist and what my psychologist colleagues do in their research or their counseling is of infinitely less value to distressed Christians than what God says in His word. But pastoral shepherds, like the sheep they guide, are following. . . a new Pied Piper of Hamelin who is leading them into the dark caves of humanistic hedonism.<sup>10</sup>

There just are no substitutes for declaring the whole counsel of God to the whole body of believers. All additives prove in the end to be more carcinogenic and detrimental to our spiritual health than we had ever imagined.

Some, however, will still ask, "Where, then, shall we find any practical usefulness of that portion of the canon called the Old Testament? Surely we are finished with that section of the Bible now that Christ has come." The Apostle Paul, to be sure, instructed Timothy that the Old Testament was "profitable" and "useful" in 2 Timothy 3:16-17,<sup>11</sup> but how is that usefulness to be recognized in our day and age? There are, in fact, at least four areas where the value of the Old Testament comes through quite clearly: in doctrine, in ethics, in practical living, and in preaching. Without the input of the Old Testament in these areas, the church will continue to be as bankrupt in all four areas as many are at the present time.

First of all, then, there are a number of doctrines that come to their fullest expression in the text of the Old Testament. Some that come to mind immediately are the doctrines of creation (Genesis 1-2), the fall (Genesis 3), the law of God (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5), the incomparable greatness of God (Isaiah 40), the substitutionary atonement (Isaiah 52: 13-53:12), the new heavens and the new earth (Isaiah 65-66), and the second advent of our Lord (Zechariah 14). This list could go on, but these points are enough to demonstrate how bereft of a balanced theology the church would be if her seminaries suddenly decided to make room for the newer practical studies by jettisoning a significant portion of her biblical studies of the Old Testament.

To be, however, even more blunt about the situation, if we avoid the Old Testament and depend solely for the entire structure of systematic theology on the New Testament, we shall be providing the seedbed for the heresies of tomorrow or, at least (in the merciful providence of



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God), room for yet another para-church ministry that seems to flourish on picking up areas where the church has defaulted in its performance. It is impossible to say that we are declaring the “whole counsel of God,” as the Apostle Paul was able to announce in Ephesus in Acts 20:27, if we neglect or devalue 77.2 percent of what God had to say in His word.

It is also very clear by now that our generation has left an ethical and moral conundrum of enormous proportions which is due, in part, to a tendency to avoid instructing God’s people in the law of God in the Old Testament. Little or no instruction was given about the value of pre-born life prior to 1973, but now we find that we are reaping what we have sown as we are now approaching thirty million babies lost to abortion since 1973 in the United States alone—a figure that represents the total population of Canada at present and a figure that represents almost five times the six million Jews of whom Hitler authorized extermination! And at this very moment another threat sits on our doorstep with little or no instruction from the biblical text—euthanasia, or assisted death by doctors. In a recent poll over sixty-six percent of the American population saw nothing wrong with suicide assisted by doctors! Do not these results indicate that more and more moral black holes are turning up in our day because the teachings on ethical matters from the Old Testament have been abandoned or ignored?

Some, of course, will reply by saying that our ethical values are to come only from what the New Testament repeats from the Old Testament or what the New Testament initiates. If such, however, be the case, would not those Christians who say the New Testament teaches nothing about abortion be approved as choosing the proper course of action? And what shall we say to those who now wish to marry close relatives, practice bestiality, experiment in the areas of bio-medical oddities similar to Hitler’s scientists, who did such bizarre experiments on twins and the like? None of these topics, and more, are addressed in the New Testament.

Closely related to the theme of morality is the theme of practical lifestyle. Few sections of the Bible offer more down-to-earth guidance for living life than can be found in the wisdom-books. The extremely popular demand for para-church seminars that focus on basic conflicts in the family proves that there is a deep hunger among God’s people to

know how we are to live.

Likewise, a theology of culture, values, and possessions is offered in Ecclesiastes—a most positive statement on matters like the possession and power of enjoyment of things like leisure-time, spouses, food, drink, paychecks, knowledge, and goods. All these are gifts from God, but the gift of a thing has been kept separate from the power to enjoy the gift (Ecclesiastes 6:2) so that we might realize that no good thing, in and of itself, can satisfy people until each comes to know God and place all these things in their proper perspective. Indeed, the allegory of marital fidelity in Proverbs 5 (15-23) provides an entry into the figures and symbols of the Song of Songs, since they were both written by the same author. The powerful conclusion to this book of Solomon is to be found in Song of Songs 8 (6-7)—marital love cannot be bought, exchanged, or arbitrarily traded for other things; it is as a ‘flame from the Lord’ (verse 7).

All of these points call for a preaching mission in the church that gives high visibility to the part of the Bible that represents over three-fourths of what God had to say to us. A strong exposition of the word of God is needed—one that dares to announce the whole counsel of God’s will. It must be a message that has a strong prophetic element of *foretelling* the word over against the current national, international, economic, societal, familial, and personal morasses of our day. Yet how can we expect the pastors of the church to produce such expositions of the Bible when the trend is to downplay and downsize the biblical requirements in the seminary in favor of many of the newly perceived needs of the modern congregation.

### The Biblical Language

It must also be asked if it is necessary to continue to study the Bible in its original languages. Ever since the revival of the study of Hebrew among Christians in the fifteenth century, prior to the Protestant Reformation, the study of Hebrew was taken for granted as an essential basis for biblical exegesis. Since 1549, for example, Hebrew has been required to receive the degree of Master of Arts from the University of Cambridge. Thus the founders of Harvard College, being graduates of Cambridge, followed in the steps of their *alma mater* in stressing the importance of Hebrew in the preparation of ministers of the gospel.

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The motivating forces that led the founders of Harvard to such action were clearly stated:

After God had carried us safe to New England, and we had builded our houses, provided for our livelihood, rear'd convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government: One of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our *present ministers shall lie in the dust*.<sup>12</sup>

The reading of the Bible in the original tongues of Greek and Hebrew was seen as a prerequisite for the Protestant ministry in the life of this nation during its earliest days.<sup>13</sup> Evangelicalism can be no less dedicated to the same principle of studying the original languages. The reason for this undertaking has little, if anything, to do with tradition or an outmoded scholasticism. It is, rather, that no translation is inerrant; the appeal to inerrancy can only be to the original texts as represented by the best Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. As the Jewish poet Haim Nacham Bialik put it, "Reading the bible in translation is like kissing your bride through a veil." Nor is this point a matter of minor importance; for, in an area where the souls of mortals hang on the exact form of the divine word disclosed from heaven, mere approximations are even less acceptable than are generalized approximations in the area of science that affects our bodily health for some three score and ten years.

Greek and Hebrew study involves more than a mere ability to parse verbs and look up words in a lexicon or concordance or in one of several analytical tools in ways that can be taught in a matter of two to four hours of instruction. It involves, instead, the patient tracing of the "threads" of meaning through the syntax of the original language. Translations are unable to expose the "joints" or "seams" of the units of thought to the degree that a working knowledge of the original languages is able to give. It is the tracing of these connecting points in the syntax of a passage that is so vital in constructing sermons that reflect the original authority of the word of God.

Against the main eddies of our time that opt for subjectivistic meanings of the text of Scripture and argue that there are no absolutes

left (such as the authorial truth-intentions of the writers of Scripture who first stood in the council of God) stands the evangelical seminary that refuses to teach less than the original text of Scripture. It will help the seminarian very little to delete these types of study, for the approach has already been tried in liberal seminaries and has invariably led to a diminution of both the quality and the motivation for the study of Scripture.

The frequently heard objection that some pastors claim they have forgotten all the Greek and Hebrew which they ever learned must also be faced here. The criticism is that most students will not become Greek or Hebrew scholars and there is, therefore no reason why they should go to all the trouble of acquiring this knowledge. And since most of this learning will be lost by most pastors, should not the requirement be dropped altogether? If, however, this logic is correct, then on the same basis one could argue that all learning ought to be dropped—since much of it is forgotten as well!

A.T. Robertson, in his introduction to his massive Greek grammar, relates the following story:

At the age of sixteen John Brown, of Haddington, startled a bookseller by asking for a copy of the Greek Testament. He was barefooted and clad in ragged homespun clothes. He was a shepherd boy from the hills of Scotland. "What would *you* do with that book?" a professor scornfully asked? "I'll try to read it," the lad replied and proceeded to read off a passage in the Gospel of John. He went off in triumph with the coveted prize, but the story spread that he was a wizard and had learned Greek by the black art. He was actually arraigned for witchcraft, but in 1746 the elders and deacons at Abernathy gave him only a vote of acquittal, though the minister would not sign it . . . Surely young John Brown of Haddington should forever put to shame those theological students and busy pastors who neglect the Greek Testament, though teacher, grammar, lexicon are at their disposal.<sup>14</sup>

Such students and pastors should, indeed, be put to shame.

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### The Future of the Study of Bible in the Seminary

The lesson from the history of theological seminaries is that biblical orthodoxy depends on students being firmly grounded in the exegetical skills of interpreting the Bible. Pastors must, to be sure, excel in the practical areas of theology. They cannot do so if the foundation of their ministry is not an excellent understanding of Scripture and skills in the use of the original languages to provide the exegesis of that text.

The student rebellion, for example, in February of 1909 at Princeton Theological Seminary recently reorganized at that time,<sup>15</sup> should be adequate warning to all who long for similar paradigmatic shifts that would diminish the emphasis on the biblical languages and the mastery of Scripture itself.<sup>16</sup> At Princeton the students formulated and signed a petition that was presented to the Board of Directors asking that there be a decrease of hours in exegesis, both Hebrew and Greek, and that more practical courses be offered in its place, just as was being done Union Theological Seminary in New York City. The students suggested that more studies could be offered in sociology in place of the deleted courses in the Bible and the biblical languages.<sup>17</sup>

J. Gresham Machen, one of the leading professors of the New Testament of that day, steadfastly resisted this revision of the curriculum. In a letter to his parents on February 21, 1909, he wrote,

The students are exhibiting a spirit of dissatisfaction with the instruction that is offered to them. [They had particularly singled out the courses of President Francis Lindey Patton, William Park Armstrong (New Testament), and John D. Davis (Old Testament)]. . . Other seminaries have yielded to the incessant clamor for the "practical," and we are being assailed both from within and from without. I only hope the authorities will have the courage to keep our standard high, not bother about losses of students, and wait for better times. It is the only course of action that can be successful in the long run.<sup>18</sup>

Machen, of course, was proven to be right, for those who revised the curriculum to de-emphasize the biblical languages in favor of more practical courses exhibited a more latitudinarian theological perspective. Much to Machen's dismay, Princeton Seminary finally capitulated to the

students after President Patton retired in 1913. On the surface the issue appeared to be rather superficial, but in the end it was bound up with the very nature and purpose of a seminary. While the exegetical and practical aspects of pastoral ministry are inseparable, the exegetical is foundational to the practical and not vice versa. Therein lies the whole case for a strong emphasis on the Bible along with the biblical languages.

Machen's position (as ours today ought to be) was squarely where the editorial in *The Presbyterian* placed it on May 12, 1909. It declared that the difference of opinion arose "out of the deeper difference as to the purpose of a theological seminary":

If its primary purpose is to give young men a clear and systematic understanding of the truth of God revealed in His Word and the history and life of His church, one course of study will be readily outlined. If the purpose is, in some haste, to prepare young men to study the varying thought and attempt the regulation of the social order of the present time, a very different method of instruction will be necessary.<sup>19</sup>

For the sake of the future of theological education, the watchword for the coming days ought to be "Back to the Biblical Text" a good pastor "keeps his finger on the text while he ministers in the house of God and while he preaches the sermon." Thus, on matters of principle, we ought to stand unflinchingly, no matter how strong the pressure is to change the paradigm and to avoid some of the losses that may be experienced in enrollment, in approval and funding by the makers of current opinion and in the accolades of those who value innovation more than faithfulness to the word of God. For people will not live by practical ministries alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

### The Endnotes

1. Donald E. Messer *Calling Church and Seminary into the Twenty-First Century* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 76.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 30.

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4. Timothy C. Morgan, "Re-Engineering the Seminary: Crisis of Credibility Forces Change," *Christianity Today* (October 24, 1994).
  5. This study costing \$100,000 was financed by the Murdock Trust. John Woodyard was the program officer who reported on the findings.
  6. Emil G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1955), 8.
  7. *Ibid.*, 7.
  8. Adolf Harnack *Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, second edition (Leipzig: 1924), 217. This translation appears in Salvador Muñoz Iglesias, "Old Testament Values Superseded by the New," in *How Does the Christian Confront the Old Testament?* Concilium, volume 30 (New York: Paulist Press, 1968), 99-100. The earlier statement of Harnack's edition of 1921 appears in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 14, note 5.
  9. James Smart *The Past, Present, and Future of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 974-95.
  10. John White, *Flirting with the Word* (Wheaton, Illinois: Shaw, 1982), 114-117. One may also see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Crisis in Expository Preaching Today," *Preaching* 11.2 (1995), 4-12.
  11. One may see the discussion of the four verbs in this passage in *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*, 26-32.
  12. *New England's First Fruits* (London, 1643).
  13. One may see the article by Robert H. Pfeiffer, "The Teaching of Hebrew in Colonial America," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 45 (1954-1955), 363-373.
  14. A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), xix. Ian Murray repeated the same story in his "Biographical Introduction" to John Brown's *Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1961, reprinting the edition of 1862), iii. Murray tells the story in this way: "Early one morning in the year 1738 a shepherd boy with homespun clothes and bare feet stood at the counter of Alexander McCulloch's bookshop in the university city of St. Andrews. The

startled shopkeeper was yet more surprised when he heard the youth's request; it was for a Greek New Testament. "Boy," exclaimed the Professor of Greek who happened to be in the shop at that moment, "if you can read that book, you shall have it for nothing." Soon a rather thick leather volume was in the lad's hands and to the astonishment of all present he read a passage and won his prize. By the afternoon sixteen-year-old John Brown was back amongst his flock on the hills of Abernathy, having walked some forty-eight miles since the previous evening to obtain his treasure."

15. Whereas the college had been established in 1746 to educate Presbyterian ministers and was known for many years as "The Theological Seminary," in 1902 a reorganization was effected by the division of the seminary from the college. The college was known as the College of New Jersey and the seminary came to be known as Princeton Theological Seminary.
16. For an account of the "Rebellion of 1909," one may see Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1977), 149-153.
17. This information comes from an article in the *Baltimore News*, as reported in Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, 149. The case is also described by Wayne G. Strickland, "Seminary Education: A Philosophical Paradigm Shift in Process," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 32:2 (June 1989), 227-235, especially 233-235.
18. Stonehouse, 150-151.
19. *Ibid.*, 152-153.

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# From Text to Context: Hermeneutical Principles for Applying the Word of God

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This study deals with principles for working with the word of God.<sup>1</sup> The goal is to elucidate the methods by which we apply Holy Scripture to people today. We shall review several principles for interpreting the word. We call the discipline of interpreting the Bible “hermeneutics.” By emphasizing hermeneutics the desire here is to emphasize its importance in every aspect of pastoral ministry. The word of God does apply to all of life. And the application of the word is a “way of life” in the Christian ministry.

We use hermeneutical principles in every private devotion, in each letter we write that contains a verse of the Bible, in each bedside visit, in all of counseling—whether with a person who has a problem with drugs or alcohol, a family engaged in a dispute, or a delinquent member. We are always using and applying the word of God to the lives of people. Among the many tasks of a minister of the gospel, however, no single pastoral work is more demanding than preaching a good sermon. The principles of hermeneutics must be applied more carefully in preaching than in any other task. The goal and end of hermeneutics, in fact, as of pastoral ministry, is the dynamic preaching of a powerful sermon. We may also call it a careful application of the word of God to people in groups. It is relating the word to real life.

In the title of this essay, “From Text to Context,” the word “text” refers to the word of God and “context” means chiefly application. Until a few years ago hermeneutics was not ordinarily seen as including application. Earlier textbooks on homiletics gave no directions on how to apply the word of God. Missiologists have recently helped us, sometimes even forced us, to apply a text from the Bible according to sound principles. Missiologists have seen the need to make application across cultures. Much more attention, therefore, is being given now (as also in this essay) to the formulation of principles to be used in applying the word of God.

## I. The Four Contexts of the Text

We begin, of course, with a text. Whether this text is assigned to us by a pericopal calendar of the church year or by some other series, or

even if we choose a text on our own, we still need a text. The sermon is based on a text of Scripture. The sermon proclaims the text of the Bible.

There is a very important distinction that we must note at the beginning here. The Bible is the word of God. God speaks in the Bible. The voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, can still be heard (John 10:3-5). He calls His sheep through the word of God. His sheep hear His voice, and they follow Him. If we listen to Scripture we can hear the *ipsissima verba*, the very words of Jesus.

Hearers will not hear the voice of Jesus in sermons, however, unless we preach that word. If we just read the word of the text and then preach about something else, the voice of God will not be heard in our preaching. Most sermons, unfortunately, are only sharing some opinions “rather than proclaiming the Word.” Sermons are powerful when we proclaim the word, not when we merely share some thoughts.

We may take James 3:1-12 as a text by way of example. We have studied it, we have compared the original Greek with the vernacular; we understand each word. The big word in this chapter is “tongue” (γλῶσσα), used once in verse 5, twice in verse 6, once in verse 8. The word-pictures in this chapter, and in James generally, are from farming or rural life—horses, bridles, bits, wild animals, birds, snakes, aquatic creatures. Even the special word used for “sin” in verse 2 (“for we all sin”) really means “stumble, trip”(πταίω); it is usually describes a horse that slips in mud or sand.<sup>2</sup> Other farming words are “trees,” “forest fire,” “spring of salt,” and “fresh water.” Marine vocabulary is sprinkled in as well—“ship,” “rudder” (for guiding a ship), “pilot,” and “making a straight course.” The vocabulary is rustic and very descriptive. There are twelve *hapax legomena* (words used only once) in chapter 3, indicating the literary craftsmanship of James. His language is quite elegant. He even “invents” a new Greek word which he uses twice, in 1:8 and in 4:8, δίψυχος meaning “double-minded, doubting.” It describes the person who prays without faith; “double-mindedness” is a major negative theme in this letter. While looking at the Greek text we also glance at the critical apparatus at the bottom of the page. The Letter of James is excessively heavy in small variant readings. A third of the

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Greek page is given over to variant readings. No variants in our text, however, significantly change the meaning of the text.

We have looked at the grammatical structure and found no difficult constructions. Even the three conditional sentences in chapter 3 (verses 2, 3, and 4) are the simple particular variety that Greek identifies with a one-time event. Verse 6 depicts the tongue under four metaphors: a “fire,” “a world of iniquity,” “the defiler of the whole body,” and “the igniter of all nature.”

Perhaps we have read one or two good commentaries—an old one like Huther's in the series called Meyer's Commentary and a new one like Adamson's in the series called the New International Commentary.<sup>3</sup> Now we are ready to think about the contexts. The broadest context is the theological context.

#### *A. The Theological Context*

It is no secret that James does not talk much about the person or work of Jesus Christ. He uses the name “Jesus Christ” only twice. In 1:1 he calls himself “a servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ” The second place is 2:1, where he tells his readers “to hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory without partiality.” These verses contain all which James says about Jesus and the work of salvation done by Him. It is for this reason that the theological context is so important.

Who is the central person of the Bible? It is God. To whom does all of Scripture witness? It bears witness to Jesus Christ. Jesus told the Pharisees: “the Scriptures testify to Me” (John 5:39). According to the theological context, then, we are to relate all of Scripture to Jesus Christ. James does not proclaim the suffering and death of Christ by which Christ won our redemption. This “gap” has been noted long ago. The Lutheran Confessions, for example, twice say that “James speaks of those who are already justified.”<sup>4</sup> The letter of James, in other words, like most of the epistles of the New Testament, is written for believers, while the gospels were written for believers and unbelievers.

The theological context of Scripture further demonstrates that the main teaching of Scripture is justification before God by grace,

through faith. This teaching runs through all of Scripture. It is the main content already of the earliest book of the Bible, namely, Job. Job says that God is righteous but man is a sinner. Man cannot hide his sin from God. God is his Prosecutor, his Umpire, his Acquitter and Redeemer.<sup>5</sup> Again, the same confessional writings affirm that justification by grace through faith “is the chief topic of Christian doctrine; . . . it is of special service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scripture; . . . it alone opens the door to the entire Bible.”<sup>6</sup> The Apology continues to speak about the two principal topics of Scripture, namely, “the law, and the promises, that is, the gospel.”

These bold statements hold before us the vital theological context of every text of Scripture. Luke concluded his gospel with Jesus’ words to the eleven, urging “that repentance for the remission of sins be preached in His name to all nations” (Luke 24:46-57). A friend once told the author on the basis applying this verse: “If you cannot preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ, then you ought not preach.” The apostles bid us do exactly the same. It is the mandate of preachers.

### B. *The Historical Context*

We move with James 3 to the *historical context*. The historical context includes the standard isagogical questions: who, what, when, why, to whom, where, etc. We may reflect especially upon the four main questions: who, when, why, and to whom?

*Who?* The author is “James, servant of God and of Jesus Christ” (James 1:1) He was the brother of Jude (Jude 1). James is either the son of Mary and Joseph or, much more likely the son of Alphaeus and Mary, thus a cousin of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> He was head of the church in Jerusalem in A.D. 49, when the Apostolic Council was held (Acts 15). He carries much authority in the early church in Jerusalem.

*When?* The dates suggested by different scholars vary between A.D. 45 and 90. The early date is preferable. Hence, James was perhaps the first book written by and for Christians.

*Why?* This short letter is not an evangelistic book, nor is it a book on doctrine. It is a treatise or diatribe in letter form, encouraging

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Christians to live their faith in ways that honor God. The thoughts are similar to the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12). The theme of the letter is expressed in 1:12: Blessed is the man who endures testing, for after he is approved he will receive the crown of life which has been promised to those who love Him.”

James is a “general” or a “catholic” letter. It speaks a message for Christians everywhere. Its purpose, in sum, is to exhort Christians to practice what they believe, to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Faith without works is dead.

*To Whom?* The first verse states that the addressees are “the tribes in the dispersion.” Most early Christians were converted Jews. The “scattering” may refer to the dispersion that occurred after James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee, was beheaded in A.D. 44 (Acts 12:2). Each persecution scattered more Christians. As they were scattered the gospel spread.

### *B. The Literary Context*

James does not teach very much gospel. The epistle is almost all law, which is why Luther called it an “epistle of straw.” Yet many pericopal series use James. Nesper lists ten series which take texts from James 3 alone.<sup>8</sup>

Sermons based on texts from James are often neither Christian nor textual. They are less than Christian because the preacher forgets about the theological context. They are less than textual because the preacher ignores the literary context. By literary context is meant the setting of the text in the book.

We are all guilty of jerking a text out of its literary context. We should never read a single paragraph from a good novel. Yet we deal with the Bible in this way all the time. David Black decries the fact that many Christians have memorized countless passages from the Bible, but they cannot fit them into the context from which they came.<sup>9</sup> Many examples can be given, such as Romans 1:17b, but the just shall live by faith,” a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4. If that verse is torn from its context, no one will know what Paul means by “the just person.” Is he “just” because he keeps the law? Or is he “just” because he has the “righteousness of God revealed in the gospel?”

And does “faith” mean some energy that makes us alive, like gasoline in the car? Or is “faith” merely the hand which clings to the merits of Jesus Christ?

Often people memorize just one part of a verse and they forget the other part. In this way Roman 8:28 can easily become the confession of an unbeliever: “We know that all things work together for those who love God.” People often stop there and forget how Paul finished the sentence: “to those who are called according to His purpose.” Paul wanted to define further “those who love God” by emphasizing how much God loved them, even by calling them according to His eternal purpose. The second part helps us to understand what the basis for “love to God” really is; it is God’s prior and eternal love for those who love Him.<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:28 by no means represents the happy-go-lucky optimism of a worldling as some suppose.

We return to the literary context of James 3. In a short letter the immediate context is the whole letter. The remote context includes all literature like James, especially the wisdom-literature. The main topic of James 3:1-12, the control of the tongue, is often discussed in wisdom-writings such as Proverbs. The evils of the tongue that are “hated by God” are, for example, in Proverbs 6 “a lying tongue” (verse 17) and the “flattering tongue” (verse 24). We recall, in fact, that one of the most severe judgments of God came when “the whole earth had one tongue” at Babel (Genesis 11:1). God decided to control the outbursts of pride by confusing the tongues of people (verse 7). Hence, James’ exhortation stands in a long Jewish tradition which is concerned about the sins of the tongue.

Within the letter of James is the admonition to every believer “to be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger”; because human wrath does not work the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20). If your religion does not enable you “to bridle your tongue,” then your religion is vain (1:26). Christians are to speak and to act as people who will “soon be judged” (2:12). “Every idle word, [ῥῆμα] that people speak, they shall give account for it in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). The warning of James is directed especially to certain people who were rashly wanting to be teachers: “You know that we [i.e., teachers] shall receive a stricter judgment” (3:1).

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We are trying, then, to understand what James 3 meant to people when they first heard these words. We must first understand *what the text meant* before we can go on to *what the text means today*. We are coming closer, however, to seeing the under-structure beneath the text of James 3.

### C. The Context of Culture

What did a Jewish Christian of the *diaspora* in the first century feel when he heard that he was to put a “bridle on the tongue,” that “the tongue is a fire,” and “the tongue defiles the whole body, sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire by hell” (ὕπο τῆς γέενης)? The cultural setting suggests many applications of the text. We must be careful to sort out which applications fit with the intended meaning of the text and which are our own ideas. Even within the text itself, some distinction may be necessary between supra-cultural and any which are purely cultural. We must sort, therefore, the cultural from the supra-cultural.

The goal, of course, of exegesis is to join the intended meaning of the text to the situation in life today. There are, in back, guidelines and principles to follow in knowing which elements of a text are cultural, historical, and theological. We may take another example, the “holy kiss.” Four times Paul commands Christians to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (ἐν φιλήματι ἀγίῳ, Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). Peter puts it this way, “Greet one another with a kiss of love” (ἐν φιλήματι ἀγάπης). Some translations incorrectly give “kiss of peace” (e.g., NEB). Any good concordance will help classify the uses of “kiss.” Crudens makes three categories: (1.) The kiss of reverence and subjection to a superior; (2.) the kiss of love and affection (Genesis 27:26-27; 1 Samuel 20:41); and (3.) the kiss of idolatrous reverence and adoration (Hosea 13:2).<sup>11</sup>

Paul’s command to give “the holy kiss” is an application of a supra-cultural principle. Beneath the surface command the apostle is reminding Christians to show their love to one another. They are all members of the body of Christ, the church. The ethical call to purity of heart and mind joins the command to show love to one another. It is important that Christians exchange expressions of love also in

their greeting with one another.

We return, then, to the exhortation on the use of the tongue in James. We have already noted that James is admonishing teachers of the word of God on the basis of the “stricter judgment” under which they stand. They have no cause, therefore, to be anxious to become teachers (James 3:1-2).

A related pattern in the Old Testament involves the use and misuse the name of God. Exodus 20 asserts the abiding commandment of God: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). James speaks about the tongue “defiling the whole body” (3:6) and the tongue as a tool for “blessing God and cursing people who are made in the image of God” (3:9), and he compares the mouth to a fountain from which fresh and bitter water flows (3:11). James uses other commands from Exodus 20 in chapter 2:8-11. He specifically speaks about those who “blaspheme the beautiful name of Him who called you” (2:7). James, therefore, is telling his readers to respect the name of God. Deep respect, in fact, for the names of God in general and so for “Jesus” in particular pervades the writing of the New Testament. The writer to the Hebrews, for instance, transfers the Jewish reverence for the divine name to “Jesus.” He uses “Jesus” as the name of the Son of God twelve times, and each time he treats that name with special respect by using the figure of speech known as *hyberbaton*. It is may likewise be by reason of special reverence that James himself uses the name “Jesus” only two times in his epistles.

The process of identifying cultural factors, then and now, and of wedding the meaning then with meaning now, we call “contextualization.” Such a process, however requires us to move into the specific cultural context of James. He is writing to Hellenistic Jews of the *diaspora* who are living in a Greek and Roman cultural environment. A good commentary will describe the cultural world of the readers. Several vivid pictures appear.

*Verses 1-2:* The teachers are the teachers in the church. Their office, like the offices of apostle and prophet is a gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:7). They were



entrusted with the task of transmitting Christian teaching to others (2 Timothy 2:2).<sup>12</sup> If their teaching is erroneous, they are teachers who “slip” or “stumble” (πταίειν). This double-mindedness (δίψυχος in 1:8 and 4:8, a word which James apparently coined) expresses the chief concern of this letter.

*Verses 3-4:* The pictures involve a small bit in the mouth of a large horse and of the small rudder in the large ship; the small controls the great. This picture was familiar to any one in the first century in the Roman world. Good commentaries, such as the one on James by Douglas Moo, give cross-references to cultural similarities. The Greek tragedian Sophocles spoke of “spirited horses that are broken by the use of a small bit” (*Antigone*, 477). Aristotle commented on the small rudder turning the “huge mass” of a ship (*Quaestiones Mechanici*, 5). Philo used these images to illustrate God’s control of the cosmos.<sup>13</sup>

*Verse 5:* This verse is a summary of 1-4. It introduces the new extension of the dangerous power of the tongue. The tongue can set the world or, more specifically, a forest on fire (ὕλη meaning “wood” in the first instance and then more generally “material substance”). The Old Testament compares the speech of a fool to a “scorching fire” (Proverbs 16:27). Jeshua ben-Sirach says that the tongue “will not be master over the godly, and they will not be burned in its flame” (Sirach 28:22). Anyone living in dry Palestine would understand how a small brush fire could fan into a disastrous blaze.

*Verse 6:* This is a key-verse in the discourse and it may be the central core of a chiasmic structure. The tongue is a fire that pollutes (σπιλοῦν) the whole body. Pure religion has the opposite effect, namely, “to keep oneself unstained (ἄσπιλον) from the world” (1:27). The expression “the world of iniquity” (ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας) expresses the usual biblical view of the world as an evil world. When sin entered in Genesis 3, the curse of sin affected the ground, the larger environment, relationships between humans, and relationships with God. John uses *cosmos* in this sense in, for example, John 3:16 and 1 John 2:15. Corresponding ideas can be found in Stoic doctrine, in Middle-Platonism, the unending cycle of reincarnations in the Orphic religion.<sup>14</sup>

The tongue “is set on fire by Gehenna,” which is to say that all the tongue’s tremendous incendiary powers come ultimately from hell itself. Such was the teaching of Jesus, who described the ultimate condemnation as the “unquenchable fire of Gehenna” (Mark 9:43-48). “Gehenna” is a transliteration of a Hebrew word referring to the Valley of Hinnom, which was used in the intertestamental period as a picture of the place of final condemnation.

*Verses 7-8:* These verses intensify and extend the picture of the untamable and destructive powers of the tongue. All of the subhuman creation can be tamed. Man’s tongue cannot be tamed by anyone. It is in verse 8 where the first hint of outside help in the control of the beastly tongue is heard. None of us humans can tame the tongue . . . only God can!

*Verses 9-12:* The double-minded nature of the tongue is likened to the restless and unstable situation of man in general. It is inconsistent that blessing and cursing come from the same mouth. A well cannot produce sweet and bitter water at the same time. An olive tree cannot produce figs, nor a fig tree olives.

### A Summary of the Text

The cultural setting points to the chief theological truth of this text: If we first are right with God, then our relations with the world and with our tongues will begin to fall into place. We are summoned first, in other words, to mend our relations with God by observing the First Table of the Law. Only then can we practice our relationships with our neighbors as taught in the Second Table of the Law. If Christ gives us new and clean hearts, then our tongues will praise God and speak well of others.

A sermon on this text, with complementary reference to James 1:17 (which speaks of “every good and perfect gift” coming down “from heaven”), might follow the ensuing outline:

#### The Tongue As the Gift of God

- I. The Proper Use of the Tongue
  - A. To call upon the Name of God (Exodus 20:7)
    1. In prayer and praise (James 1:5-6)
    2. In teaching the word of God (James 3:1-2)

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- B. To spread the word of grace in the *diaspora*
    - 1. In visiting the needy (James 1:27)
    - 2. In being a fountain of pure water and a tree of good fruit (James 3:10-12)
  - II. The Dangers of the Tongue
    - A. Misused power (James 3:4-5)
      - 1. The analogy of a horse
      - 2. The analogy of a ship
      - 3. An analogy on example taken from one's own life
    - B. Destructive power (James 3:6-8)
      - 1. The destructiveness of a fire out of control
      - 2. The destructiveness of an untamed animal
      - 3. The destruction wrought by our tongues too
  - III. The Lesson of James
    - A. The specific lesson: gift of the tongue
      - 1. When the heart is redeemed by Christ
      - 2. When the heart is converted by the Holy Spirit
      - 3. When the tongue is used in prayer, praise, and evangelism
    - B. The larger lesson
      - 1. Overcoming "double-mindedness"
      - 2. Putting faith into practice (James 2:20-26)

### Guidelines for Applications of the Word of God

One problem in applying the word of God centers in knowing which parts of the word are always applicable and which portion of the word presents an application to a specific culture and is therefore applicable with equal directness only when a current culture is equivalent to the ancient in some regard. Several "models" have been proposed principles to be used in making the needed distinctions.

#### A. *Fee and Stuart Model*

Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart are co-authors of a "best-selling" book on hermeneutics, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*.<sup>15</sup> While each author follows his own distinctive rules for contextualizing, their principles may be combined for the purposes of this paper.

### 1. *The Problem*

Modern Christians “automatically” interpret Paul’s directive to Timothy “bring my cloak which I left with Carpus” (2 Timothy 4:13) as a command that applied only to Timothy. They understand the command, on the other hand, to “endure hardship . . . like a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3) as an admonition from God to every Christian. Some Christians flinch when they read Paul’s advice to Timothy: “Stop drinking water only, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23); they want at least to substitute grape juice for the wine. When, on the other hand, Paul exhorts Timothy “to continue in the word” (2 Timothy 3:14-16), the same readers see this exhortation as an imperative addressed to all Christians for all times. References to long hair versus short hair, enrolling widows, teaching by women, dealing with homosexuals, going to pagan courts, eating meat that had been offered to idols, and entering a pagan temple with a friend, have all resulted in questions as to cultural consideration.

### 2. *The Rules.*

Fee and Stuart list many rules designed to guide Christians today in knowing what in the Bible applies today and what applied only when the words were written. An attempt to summarize them follows.

(1.) The basic rule is this: A text can never mean what it never meant to its author and his readers. Hence we must always get back to the original situation of the text. If, for example, eating and drinking the flesh of Jesus in John 6:53 meant the Lord’s Supper to readers of John, then it means the same today. If, on the other hand, such was not the meaning that Jesus intended then, it is not now.

(2.) Whenever we share similar cultural backgrounds, the word of God means for us today the same thing which it meant then. Statements like “all have sinned” (Romans 5:12) and “by grace are we saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8) and injunctions to clothe ourselves with “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12) still address us and all believers, of course. The opposite principle applies: If the word then applied only to a cultural situation of that day, then the word applies only indirectly to us today. The dress of women, cosmetics, jewelry,

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television, playing cards, dancing, mixed swimming, and the like must be evaluated on the basis of general principles drawn from word of God.

(3.) When the Bible narrated history—as in the case of about forty percent of the Old Testament—we are to relate the narratives to three levels of importance.

(a.) The upper level deals with creation or redemption of the world, including the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ.

(b.) The middle level deals with the nation of Israel or of Christ.

(c.) The bottom level deals with the many individual occurrences, such as Jacob meeting his brother Esau, Joseph's life in Egypt, Paul's imprisonments in Caesarea and Rome, and his fortnight at sea between Crete and Malta (Acts 27).

Relating happenings on the lower levels to those on the higher levels helps the interpreter to keep a balance and to set aside unimportant information. Stuart says specifically that the Old Testament points to Christ (John 5:39), while not every narrative is messianic. Those narratives which are messianic, either by direct prophecy or by typology, are on the upper level (1 Corinthians 10:4). Thus, the atonement of Jesus is the central act of all Holy Scripture.

(4.) In culturally related matters one should distinguish the central core teaching—at the top or middle level—from what is outward or external. Thus, the fall of mankind and the redemption of all by Christ is central, while the holy kiss, head-coverings, and charismatic gifts are peripheral.

(5.) One needs to ask whether the New Testament suggests options when it prescribes a certain practice. When Paul tells women to cover their heads in 1 Corinthians 11, he indicates that this practice is a "custom" (συνήθεια) which nature (φύσις) teaches. The woman's head-covering is to show submission. In whatever the woman can show submission, she should. The underlying theological truth should be preserved, even when a particular custom has no prescriptive force on us in a culture with differing symbols.

In regard to homosexuality the New Testament gives no options. Even though homosexuality was widely practiced in the ancient world and was regarded as an acceptable form of sexual expression, the New Testament is consistently opposed. It does not distinguish between “abusive” and “non-abusive” homosexuality. The Bible as a whole, indeed, witnesses against homosexual relations (Romans 1:24-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Leviticus 18-22; 20:13).<sup>16</sup>

*B. Bishop Ting*

*1. The Basic Model*

Bishop K. H. Ting, Director of the Chinese Christian Council of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, asks three sets of questions in order to know how and when to apply a teaching of Holy Scripture.<sup>17</sup> The questions are these:

- (1.) In the biblical context what was the purpose of the passage in question? What results did it produce?
- (2.) In our context what is God’s purpose and what are the results which He anticipates in relating the passage in question to us?
- (3.) In our context, in quoting the passage in question, to what are we pointing? What is our purpose? What results do we anticipate?

The first question deals with background, with what the passage meant then. This consideration helps us to “avoid far-fetched conjectures.” The second question puts the reader’s name on the message from God. It tells the reader what it means now. The third question helps the reader avoid impure motives in speaking about this word of God or the hopes he has.

*2. An Application of the Model*

By way of example, we may apply Ting’s three sets of questions to the biblical and confessional teaching of justification through faith. (1.) What was the purpose of Paul and of Martin Luther in stressing justification by faith? What results did it produce?

Paul was opposing the observance of laws and rituals, circumcision,

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and the like as a standard of righteousness. Only the one-time sacrifice of Christ can and has reconciled God to humankind. It is not behavior in accordance with the law, but only faith in the grace of God on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ that justifies us. The *result* of this teaching was that the ethnic narrowness of Judaism was replaced by a world-wide religion. The preaching of justification by faith exerted great influence in the history of religion and in the course of all history. Luther's stress on justification by grace through faith likewise emphasized again the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, by which the separation of humanity from God has been overcome by God Himself.

(2.) The second set of questions relates to our own situation. In our context what is God's purpose and what results come from preaching justification by faith? This unchanging truth enables Christians to come boldly before God in prayer for guidance and help. This doctrine, Bishop Ting asserts, is the basis for the "self-government, self-support, and self-propagation" movement in the Chinese Church. Justification by faith is the doctrinal point of departure for the independent initiative of the Chinese Christians.

(3.) The third set of questions builds on the second. In our context what is the correct purpose and the good result of speaking about justification by faith? What would be an incorrect purpose and harmful result?

It is good to hold up Jesus Christ to show that a human being cannot make up his short-comings before God. Only by faith in Christ will we be accepted as righteous before God. Justification by faith also shows us our responsibility within the church and in the world. Two bad consequences result when the doctrine of justification is over-emphasized so that the wholeness and balance of all doctrines are destroyed. The first harmful result from an over-emphasis is that Christians show contempt and even enmity for ordinary people and they set themselves up as better than others. Bishop Ting cites James 1:16-17 to show that Christians should not view those who are not Christian as enemies. A second harmful result from an exaggerated emphasis on justification is that Christians think that they can sin freely and boldly on the ground that God's grace freely covers their sins. Ting cites Roman 6 (1-2a, 15) and Hebrews 10:26 to thwart this

misconception. He concludes this example of contextualizing a doctrine by stressing the need for Christians today to make “Christ manifest in their actions.”

*C. Grant Osborne*

Grant Osborne’s book of five hundred pages in fine print, entitled *The Hermeneutical Spiral* is the most comprehensive textbook today on biblical hermeneutics.<sup>18</sup> It combines depth of theory with extensive description of practice. The discipline of hermeneutics finds its proper goal in dynamic preaching and teaching of the word of God. As professor of Trinity Evangelical Seminary in Deerfield, Illinois, Grant Osborne is required to accept the full authority of the word of God. For the purpose, however, of understanding his hermeneutical principles, we should note that he distinguishes three levels of authority:

Level 1 . . . The Text . . . Implicit Authority

Level 2 . . . Interpretation . . . Derived Authority

Level 3 . . . Contextualization . . . Applied Authority<sup>19</sup>

It is important to understand these levels of working with the text of Holy Scripture in order to appreciate why and how Osborne guards the intended meaning of the text through the levels of interpretation and contextualization (application). The authority of the word is lost if the application does not bring the intended meaning to the modern hearer and learner.

Osborne devotes two chapters to homiletical contextualization.<sup>20</sup> He cautions us that the most important part of our task is to base application on the intended meaning of the text. Sermon preparation must be a devotional exercise—“a first-person encounter”—before it becomes proclamation—“a second-person encounter.” “The goal is to wed the text with the current context of the congregation.” He speaks of the problem of “distanciation” (the cultural distance between biblical times and today). This gap is not correctly bridged by allegorizing, spiritualizing, or moralizing—examples with which the history of thought is replete.

Osborne sets forth three steps as his model of interpretation and



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application:

(1.) One must, first of all, determine the situation behind the text, separating any cultural application from the supra-cultural elements of the divine word. Paul's "urban evangelism" approach in Acts 18-19 teaches us the need for evangelism and the power of the gospel over all evil, including its authority over the unclean spirits of magic. His burning, however, of all the books on magic and witchcraft is not a command to us to burn down every "porn-shop" and brothel.

(2.) One must delineate the underlying theological principle beneath the surface message of the text. The theological principle is the bridge that spans the gulf between past and present. Didactic passages, such as the injunction to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), are usually relevant for all time. Passages like 1 Corinthians 11:1-2 on head-coverings are also easily explained if the deeper theological meaning is seen. Sometimes the underlying meaning requires more study. Osborne cites the narrative flow in John 9 in which "the progressive coming to sight of the man born blind" is contrasted with the "growing blindness of the Pharisees."

(3.) The third stage entails a search for parallel situations in the current life of the congregation. The pastor must be close to flock. He must live with them and become, in a sense, a "sociologist" who analyzes the deeper needs of his people. The applications in sermon and class should (a.) follow the same pattern that the biblical writer used, and (b.) it should be as personal as possible, but (c.) it should remain evangelical and constructive in the life of the Christian.

### Summary and Conclusion

We have spoken, then, of why and how readers are to examine the contexts as well as the texts of Holy Scripture. If we separate the text completely from its context, we are not preaching the word of God according to its intended meaning. It can be correctly said that if we ignore the context, we are not really proclaiming the word of God. We are only sharing our own ideas.

Most of the above discussion has been devoted to the how? Of contextualizing or applying the word of God. This study has pointed to the four contexts of any text—theological, historical, literary, and

cultural—and has shown how each is an essential part of the process of preparing to preach and teach.

Three models, finally, were briefly presented which contain significant insights on how to bring together what the word of God meant to its original readers with what it means today. Each has some valuable lessons for us today. There are, at the same time, disagreements of considerable significance among the authors of the three models presented. Thus, teaching in the church by women, which is forbidden by Paul in 2 Timothy 2, is permitted by both Fee-Stuart and Osborne. Both recognize, at least, that in 2 Timothy 2 the top level of teaching, related to creation and redemption, is involved. Paul specifies a standard of the “top level” when he speaks of “the law” (ὁ νόμος as in 1 Corinthians 14:34). Only Bishop Ting, however, recognizes the need for the supra-cultural gospel to influence and change the cultural structures of society. The church is called to change society, not society to dictate the ethics of the church.

### The Endnotes

1. This paper was first read to the APATS (Asian Program for Advanced Training and Service) in Hsinchu, Taiwan (Republic of China), in November of 1994. The author has spent three years at China Lutheran Seminary teaching courses on exegetical theology in the Master of Divinity program. He is emeritus professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. In addition to the Master of Divinity, he possesses the degrees of Master of Arts in Classics from Washington University in St. Louis and Doctor of Philosophy in Classics, New Testament, and Early Christian Literature from the University of Chicago.
2. BAGD and M-M, *sub voce*, cite references which show not only the physical act of stumbling, for example, against the rocks (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 4.2,3), but also the result of the slipping (“be ruined, be lost”), as in 2 Peter 1:10.
3. John Huther, *The General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude*, translated by Gloag-Croom-Clarke, Meyer's Commentary of the New Testament, X (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1883). James Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing

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- House, 1976).
4. Apology to the Augsburg Confession, 2.248; and Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, III. *Triglotta*, 931.
  5. One may see especially Job 31-32.
  6. Apology IV (II).
  7. Offered here are the Epiphanian and the Jeromian (Hieronymoan) views; the Helvetian view that James is a child of Joseph through a previous marriage is less commonly held.
  8. Paul W. Nesper, *Biblical Texts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1952), 440. He shows a total of 49 pericopal texts from James, while there are only 42 from 1 Peter.
  9. David Alan Black, *Using New Testament Greek in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 70 and following.
  10. C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans*, 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975), 431.
  11. Alexander Cruden, *Complete Concordance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 367-368. The concordances of Thayer and Strong provide similar information.
  12. We should avoid the appealing metaphorical significance of tongue and body which Bo Reicke sees here, namely, of the tongue as the teacher-preacher and of the body as the church. Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude*, The Anchor Bible (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1964), 37-40.
  13. Philo, *On the Creation*, 88. One may see also his comparison of the mind of man to the charioteer who controls all, *On the Migration of Abraham*, 67. One may compare Strobacrus, Ecclesiastes 3.17, and Plutarch. Moo takes his references from M. Dibelius, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, revised and translated by H. Greeven (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).
  14. This cycle is described in Pythagorean writing, in Plato's *Timaeus* (where Plato said he learned it from Pythagoras), in the Stoic literature at least as late as Marcus Aurelius (*The Meditations*). Marcus was the philosopher-emperor of Rome A.D. 161-180. One may see *παλιγγενεσία* in Gerhard Kittel or Colin Brown, *sub*

*voce*, for a complete picture of the cycle beginning with the “technic fire” and ending with the “regeneration” of all organic and inorganic matter.

15. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic Books, 1982). Fee covers the chapters on the New Testament and Stuart those on the Old Testament.
16. Fee and Stuart understand the admonition by Paul regarding the role of women in the church as a cultural application. The injunction in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 of silence and submission on women is so broad that it excludes them from almost any service in the church; it must therefore, Fee and Stuart maintain, constitute a specific application to the culture of Corinth. First Timothy 2:11-12, which forbids women to teach in the church, is likewise said to be culturally relative by virtue of other female troubles discussed in 1 Timothy 5:11-16 and 2 Timothy 3:6-9. Women are, indeed, engaged in teaching in Acts 18:26 and 21:8, in 1 Corinthians 11:5, and elsewhere. Fee and Stuart express such opinions frequently, especially on pages 65-70.
17. *How to Study the Bible*, translated and published in Shatin, N.T., (Hong Kong: Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre, 1981), 29-35. The example of justification by grace through faith is also essentially Ting's argument.
18. Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991).
19. *Ibid.*, 8.
20. *Ibid.*, 318-365: Chapter 15, “Homiletics I: Contextualization,” and Chapter 16, “Homiletics II: The Sermon.”

# Metrics in Hebrew Poetry: The Book of Lamentations Revisited

David Noel Freedman  
and  
Erich A. von Fange

The state of the art of grasping the structure of Hebrew poetry as expressed in the Book of Lamentations has been outlined in detail by Freedman (1972) and Hillers (1972). Analyses of all or part of the text of Lamentations have been developed by Andersen and Forbes (1983) Cross (1983) Radday and Pollatschek (1986) and Shea (1979). Kugel (1982) poses strong views of biblical poetry as non-metric parallelism in the continuing dialog on the mystery of this form of writing. To his credit is his stress on the message, rather than the structure. All in all, the greater surprise is not how much is known about Hebrew poetry, but rather how much knowledge of the art has been tragically and irretrievably lost, a consequence of centuries of persecution and destruction of the people who developed this art form more than three millennia ago. The few who could have handed down the answers in their writings over the centuries to the questions scholars ask about the form did not or could not.

The purpose of this paper is to apply several procedures to the text of Lamentations drawn from descriptive and inferential statistics which may not have been reported in the literature up to this time. This application is made without any illusion that the art and genius of this genre of poetry may be so easily explained. Since, however, so little is known about the structure of this form of poetry, any advance, no matter how slight, may be welcomed by those who are interested in the analysis of this form of ancient literature. Four metrical systems in poetry are generally recognized: the syllabic, the accentual, the accentual-syllabic, and the quantitative. The first three analyses below, following Freedman (1972), treat only the syllabic, which is to say, the number of syllables per line without regard to the stress of the syllables relative to each other. This view of poetry is based on the conviction that the empirical study of poetry demonstrates that meter is a prime physical and emotional constituent of poetic meaning (Fussel, 1979). Here then, we focus on accentual analyses.

Specifically, we shall first explore the following aspects of the syllabic structure of Hebrew poetry as expressed in the Book of

## Lamentations:

- (1.) The Colon: Is Budde's qina meter hypothesis from the nineteenth century actually supported by modern statistical analysis?
- (2.) The Line: Can unbalanced line length as a rhythmic device (suggested by Budde's qina meter for the colon) be demonstrated through statistical analysis?
- (3.) The Stanza: Can statistical analysis provide insights into the anomalous four-line stanzas (1:7 and 2:19)?

Data for this aspect of the study were furnished by Freedman (Appendix B). Conventional statistical tests were applied to the data. Such tests are able to identify differences or relationships which may not appropriately be attributed to chance. It is important to note that such analyses treat the poem as a whole rather than verse by verse. If we find only chance differences in a given analysis, our results support the strongly held view that there is no meter in that poem. If, on the other hand, if we find differences which cannot properly be attributed to chance, then a case is made for structure or meter in the poem. At the outset it should be stated that statistical analysis is not without its own special problems and hazards, since inferential statistics by definition is a way of dealing with some forms of uncertainty. In another context Portnow and Petersen (1984) have emphasized possible hazards and errors in applying statistical analysis to the study of biblical texts, and such cautions are always in order.

The first question is this: Do the colons of each line of the Book of Lamentations demonstrate Budde's hypothesis of a deliberate long-short pattern? In order to test the hypothesis derived from this question, Freedman's "A" and "B" counts for Lamentations 1 in Appendix B were analyzed by means of Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests, that is, it was hypothesized that the syllable-count of the first colon of each line tended to be greater than the second of that line. Similarly, the remainder of Lamentations was analyzed line by line in the same way. The results are recorded in Table 1 and leave little room for debate. All 22 tests for Lamentations 1-4 provided strong support for Budde's hypothesis. Lamentations 5, which contains unique features, displayed a pattern of colons of equal length.

Table 1 is read as follows: The length in syllables of the first colon (“A” count) was compared verse by verse with the length of the second colon in line 1. The sum of the syllables for the twenty-two first colons is 164 while the sum of the second colons is 127. According to the Wilcoxon test the difference in length between the first and second colons, measured in syllables, is too great to be attributed to chance factors. The asterisks in Table 1 indicate each test which produced a significant difference. It is important to note that in every case, without exception, the first colons exceed the second colons in length significantly. The analysis of stresses in Table 1 is discussed later in the paper.

The second question is this: Can unbalanced line length as a rhythmic device (suggested by Budde's unbalanced quina meter found in the colons) be demonstrated through statistical analysis?

The 838 syllables of Lamentations 1 divide themselves up as follows, as seen in Appendix B and Table 1:

Lines 1 of the 22 stanzas: 291 total syllables.

Lines 2 of the 22 stanzas: 264 total syllables.

Lines 3 of the 22 stanzas: 271 total syllables.

One Line 4: 11 syllables (analyzed below).

Have the first lines been made deliberately longer than the second? We examine the question of line-length by means of the chi-square goodness-of-fit test. First we observe within each stanza how line 1 compares in syllable length with line 2. In each of the 22 stanzas there are three possibilities: line lengths may be the same; the first line may be longer than the second; or line 2 may be longer than line 1. If each combination occurs as a matter of chance, (that is to say, if the poet ends the line when he completes the thought), we should expect each option to occur about equally often, which is to say, seven and a third ( $7 \frac{1}{3}$ ) times for each option out of twenty-two stanzas.

The result of this analysis, as reported in Table 2, was a chi-square of 13.55 with two degrees of freedom, giving a probability of less than .005 that the differences observed could have been due to chance:  $X^2(2) = 13.55, p < .005$ . By actual count line 2 was shorter

than line 1 in sixteen (16) of the twenty-two (22) stanzas. We conclude that line 2 was significantly shorter than line 1 in the poem. It follows, then, that the difference was a deliberate poetic device.

In comparing line 1 with line 3 in each stanza, we note that in eleven (11) of the twenty-two (22) stanzas line 3 was shorter than line 1, but the resulting  $X^2(2) = 2.7$  was a non-significant difference. Figure 1 is a graphic depiction of the meter and implied rhythmic structure of the poem.

The line length of lines in Lamentations 2, 3, and 4 demonstrates careful crafting by the poet, but with a very different design. In each case, whether stanzas consist of three lines or two, it is striking to observe that each set of twenty-two first lines, twenty-two second lines, twenty-two third lines (where they occur) was given an equal quota of syllables by the poet ("A" counts): Lamentations 2: 279, 279, 280; Lamentations 3: 283, 284, 286; Lamentations 4: 297, 303.

One may also see the "B" counts in Table 1. Lamentations 5 consists of one line stanzas. The pattern of deliberately creating equal line-lengths in each poem is just as striking as the unequal pattern found in Lamentations 1. Lamentations 4 is especially instructive on metric structure. In terms of syllable-counts eight (8) stanzas are "long-short" (i.e., line 1 is longer than line 2), and precisely eight (8) stanzas balance them with a "short-long" pattern. The remaining six (6) stanzas consist of lines of equal length. There seems to be no indication of random line-length despite the fact that line-lengths do vary.

The third question is this: Is there evidence supporting the view that the anomalous four-line stanzas in Lamentations 1 and 2 were part of the original structure of the poems? The results of the analyses of the first two questions show beyond reasonable doubt that great care was exercised in crafting the poems within predetermined structural patterns: colons of a long-short pattern, lines made deliberately unequal, and a second pattern of lines made deliberately equal. We also see below that there are examples of poems of apparently predetermined fixed length in terms of total number of syllables. Findings such as these provide a method of approaching an analysis of the third question which will either support the position taken by some that one of the four lines under examination here was



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a later addition to the stanza or, on the other hand, support the position that a fourth line was part of the plan at the outset.

The total number of syllables per poem divided by the number of stanzas (twenty-two of course) in each poem provides a quota of syllables per stanza. We can fairly assume that the writer kept his counts stanza by stanza in order to balance the poem as a whole within its predetermined structure. The advantage of analyzing acrostics is that we can control the stanzas without question, and we can control the lines in Lamentations 3 (and perhaps Lamentations 5 as well). Most other biblical poetry cannot be analyzed with equal assurance, since the structure in terms of verses and chapters was rather arbitrarily added many centuries later than the time of writing of the texts .

We may now explore the view that the poet could express a thought in any stanza which went beyond the syllable quota, but in every case this action had to be balanced off somewhere by another stanza which was shorter by an equal amount. The poems vary in the amount of freedom taken by the writer and the manner in which longer and shorter stanzas were balanced. The necessity of such a pattern becomes a matter of logic. If total length in number of syllables is fixed for an acrostic, which seems clearly demonstrable, then some kind of quota system is required. Otherwise the poet is likely to end up with too many or too few syllables toward the end of the poem.

One observation of interest in Lamentations 1 is how closely the actual count follows the quota throughout the poem as shown in Table 3. The entire pattern, stanza by stanza, of actual syllable-counts versus the cumulative quota-counts is instructive of the painstaking manner in which the poem may have been crafted.

The lines that make up the stanzas, however, could vary without affecting the structure described above. Adding a line does not affect the overall pattern; *exempli gratia*, stanza length is calculated at thirty-nine (39) syllables, which is multiplied by twenty-two (22). The total of 858 syllables holds regardless of the number of lines. We can argue that this interesting speculation into the art of the poet can be supported since there is no real difference in length between chapter 3 with sixty-six (66) lines and chapters 1 and 2 with sixty-seven (67).

All have twenty-two (22) stanzas. How does the "norm" of 858 syllables per acrostic poem relate to the difficult choice of using "A" counts or "B" counts? The "A" counts are all low and the "B" counts are all high, which is virtually what we would expect.

The stanzas preceding and following Lamentations 1:7 (the four-line stanza) may speak to the question of whether or not a fourth line was added to the original text. We may argue on the basis of syllable-quotas per stanza, regardless of how the quotas are met in the poem as a whole, that the maximum deviation from the quota ought to occur in stanza 1:7 if indeed a fourth line was a later addition. The maximum deviation in the entire poem, however, is found in 1:6; and, therefore, the additional line in 1:7 may be the poet's way of again returning toward balance for reasons we shall explore in the discussion below. One may observe in Figure 2 that stanzas 1:4 and 1:10 are closely in balance with respect to the quota of syllables allotted to each stanza cumulatively. Stanzas 1:5 and 1:6 head progressively into maximum negative imbalance and are immediately followed by the peculiar 4-line stanza at 1:7. Stanzas 1:8 and 1:9 are the mirror image of 1:5 and 1:6 which serve the function of bringing the allotment of syllables back into complete balance. Visually, the structure appears as shown in figure 2, and it seems reasonable to conclude that 1:7 with its four-line structure is indeed an integral part of the plan for the poem as a whole.

The metric pattern in Lamentations 2 is very different from that in Lamentations 1, but there is support in a different way for the integrity of the four-line stanza in Lamentations 2:19. We may argue again that, if a fourth line were a later addition to the original three lines, maximum deviation from the cumulative quota of syllables ought to occur at that point in the poem. The maximum deviation, however, occurs at 2:14 and we find again that the four-line structure at 2:19 serves to bring the metric structure toward balance. It seems that such a function would be an impossibility if a fourth line were a later addition. One might argue that the entire poem preceding 2:19 anticipates a climactic longer stanza just before the close, since all stanzas preceding 2:19 without exception are on the deficit side of their syllable-quota.

Anyone acquainted with the structure of modern hymnody will

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observe points of similarity with the structure of ancient Hebrew poetry as expressed in the Book of Lamentations. Both patterns, unbalanced line-lengths, and patterns of equal line-length in terms of syllable counts, are commonly found in the chorale and in other hymn forms. While much of the best in poetry is written in lines of equal meter, the pattern of Lamentations 1 as illustrated in Figure 1 is especially intriguing. The pattern cries out to be sung instead of spoken. We need not be disturbed by the fact that the stanzas in all the poems vary somewhat in length as shown in Table 1. If the text is sung, there are simple devices to equalize the length of the text for each stanza in order to fit the music; but it may be equally important to recognize the dramatic effect of departing from the quota of syllables for each stanza. Furthermore, we may assume that the ancient Hebrew poet used devices analogous to the manner in which William Shakespeare fit his thoughts within the tight structure of the sonnet. Overall, however, despite the exceptions and poetic devices, the falling rhythm shines through.

Perhaps the irregular stanza might be viewed as a kind of *meter rubato* in the way it is echoed in the *tempo rubato* of Chopin. To heighten dramatic effect Chopin stole a little time here and lingered a bit too long there throughout a masterwork instead of following a steady unchanging beat. The poet is not a mason laying down uniform cinder blocks all in a neat row. He is juggling phrasing, varying, contrasting, intertwining ideas, climaxing, to convey his poetic message. The text itself finally must provide the answers to the anomalies in the structure of the poems. As Freedman (1972) has observed: "In the poems there is a wide range of variation in the length of lines and stanzas. These deviations form their own patterns, as we have observed, and the end product was strictly controlled by factors of overall length and a strong sense of balance.

Table 4 illustrates two important methods of quantifying how the syllable-counts vary within the poems. A standard deviation (SD) of 1.7 informs us that two-thirds ( $2/3$ ) or about 68% of all syllable-counts in a given set of colons fall within 1.7 in either direction of the mean, and 2 standard deviations in either direction cover 95% of all variation. The larger the standard deviation, the larger is the amount of variation. Another useful concept, the coefficient of variation, is

simply the size of the standard deviation as compared with the mean or average. A coefficient of variation of .10 (written as 10) tells us that the standard deviation is about one-tenth (1/10) the size of the mean. Both the standard deviation and the coefficient of variation provide a way of making meaningful comparisons. By way of illustration we find that the lines of four short free-verse poems of Walt Whitman have coefficients of variation as follows (Allison, 1983): 24, 33, 46, 30. These are larger than anything we find in Lamentations. Such analyses may be useful in studying the difference between free verse and blank verse and perhaps other aspects of poetic structure.

The anomalous four-line stanzas call for additional comment. If the idea is accepted that they are integral to the text, again the confirmation must lie in the text itself in terms of climax, emotional peak, outburst of grief, focus, deliberate jarring, the jolt of the unexpected, all with the purpose of heightening the impact of the message. The fourth line is like the beauty spot to accent the face; it is like the anomalous pitch or volume or rhythm in the climax of a musical masterpiece, unlike anything before or after in the composition.

The Book of Lamentations includes poetic structure with tight, disciplined boundaries, such as the rigid demands of the acrostic or the lines of equal length regardless of the thought expressed. Yet such tightly disciplined structures are found in all the arts, and the artistic genius revels in expression within such voluntary bounds. No one has ever argued that the Haiku or the fugue suffers artistically from its rigid structure. Its beauty, on the contrary, is marvelously enhanced. There is good reason to believe that the poet knew exactly where he was in syllable-counts at the end of each stanza of each poem. Figure 3 suggests a simple pebble-counting system which would show the poet exactly where he was at all times during the writing of the poem.

Analysis of the syllabic structure of Lamentations has proved to be a fruitful way of demonstrating that a definite structure was built into the Book of Lamentations. There is design in the ancient Hebrew poetry here, as opposed to the idea that the poet's thoughts were expressed in nothing more than free verse (the idea that the poet expressed a thought and continued speaking in each verse or line or

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colon until he had finished expressing the thought) and thus any apparent structure coincidental. That this view is untenable in the face of strong evidence has been amply demonstrated. Important as parallelism is as a poetic device, there is more to Hebrew poetry than this one attribute.

An additional way of examining the possibility of structure is to analyze the pattern, if any, of stresses or accents in each colon and line. This sort of analysis is not without its hazards and frustrations as Freedman (1986) has described. It is well known that stress-counts may vary somewhat depending on the assumptions made about the text. There is, nevertheless, sufficient certainty in enough of the text that structure may be examined, and at the same time one may grant minor variations in some of the stress-counts. These alternate counts, however, are not of sufficient magnitude to blur a decision as to whether or not design is present.

With this qualification in mind, the results below of the analysis of stress-counts are striking. The accent-counts for each chapter of Lamentations, as yet unpublished, were provided by Freedman (1986), as may be seen in Appendix B and Table 1.

The fourth question is this: Can unbalanced stress patterns as a rhythmic device (suggested by Budde's unbalanced qina-meter hypothesis) be demonstrated through statistical analysis? On the basis of the stress-counts in Appendix B twelve tests (Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests) of stress patterns by colons were conducted as follows: Lamentations 1-3 (9 tests for the nine lines), Lamentations 4 (2 tests), and Lamentations 5 (1 test). In each of the twelve analyses the number of stresses in the first colon was significantly greater than in the second, as shown in Table 1. These results appear to be a remarkable confirmation of Budde's hypothesis. The pattern of stresses in each line can hardly be a matter of chance or coincidence.

Perhaps the most striking result discovered is that in Lamentations 5, where the syllabic structure is carefully balanced, we find that the number of stresses in the first colons is significantly greater than in second colons.

A further analysis of stress patterns was undertaken by comparing the total number of stresses per line within each chapter of Lamenta-

tions 1-4. In Lamentations 1 we find still another way in which the idea of the falling rhythm is expressed. The total number of stresses in lines 1 is significantly greater than those in lines 2 and of lines 3. The complexity is striking; in all these cases—lines 1, 2, and 3—the totals of the first colons are greater than those of the second ones. At the same time a second falling rhythm occurs in that the mean totals of the stresses in lines 1 are significantly greater than those in both lines 2 and 3. And all of these things are crafted into the poem in addition to what we earlier discovered of the syllabic pattern of Lamentations 1. Thus three different but superimposed forms of Budde's hypothesis are found in Lamentations 1.

In Lamentations 2, 3, and 4 the number of stresses is in balance for each line. There are no significant differences in the number of stresses per line within each of the chapters. Chapters 1-4 of Lamentations, despite the difference just noted, are remarkably similar in the number of stresses per line, a further indication of careful crafting of the structure of the poem.

Lamentations 5 differs remarkably from the earlier chapters in Lamentations, yet follows a pattern which is found in a number of other Old Testament poems. It has the proper number of verses for the acrostic, yet no acrostic has yet been discovered in it. It consists of 22 single-line verses. For this distinctive pattern the lines are longer and there are more stresses per line as compared with the earlier chapters. The poet has changed to another style in the final chapter.

One might suppose that syllable-counts and stress-counts are tied closely to one another, but Table 5 shows that the two may run quite different courses independent of one another. Only three of twelve comparisons, expressed in Pearson product-moment correlation-coefficients ( $r$ ), show significant relationships between stress and syllable counts. Stress-counts and syllable-counts are not locked together.

### Summary and Conclusions

What we appear to have, then, in the Book of Lamentations is an example of great complexity and sophistication in terms of the craft of poetry. We are beginning to glimpse new vistas of structure not previously imagined or explored. We are finding patterns of syllabic

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structure interwoven with patterns of stresses analogous to the ancient art of contrapuntal writing, the art of the fugue. Syllabic structure and stress-pattern, each going its own way, are still related in a most marvelous fashion. We know nothing of the musical accompaniment for these poems. We can only assume that the music was a further enhancement of the structure already supplied by syllabic structure and stress-pattern, that somehow it made straight what is crooked—that is, it placed rhythmic regularity on the individual colons and lines and verses which vary from one to the other, yet reveal a remarkable unity and patterning overall. The following conclusions seem well supported by the analyses in this study:

- (1.) Budde's hypothesis is powerfully and remarkably supported by means of conventional statistical tests. All colons in Lamentations 1 2, 3, and 4 (not 5) exhibit this support. Many of the tests show less than one chance in 10,000 that the structure could be a chance one. The pattern is true of both "A" and "B" counts equally well.
- (2.) In Lamentations 1, lines 1 are significantly longer than lines 2 in the "A" and "B" counts. Lines 3 appear to fall between lines 1 and 2 in length. The whole pattern as suggested in Figure 1 may be a carefully planned rhythmic device. The differences are unusual and perhaps imply that Lamentations 1 has a distinctly different structure from that of the rest of Lamentations.
- (3.) Lamentations 2, 3, 4, and 5 are different poetic structures from Lamentations 1 in some important respects. Lamentations 2 shows no significant differences in line-length. In Lamentations 3 the line-lengths are carefully equalized. Lamentations 4 shows no significant differences in line-length, but the lines are now about 14 syllables in length instead of the 12-13 syllables per line in previous chapters. Lamentations 5 lines are 16 syllables in length.
- (4.) There is evidence of some kind of counting system to keep the stanzas balanced as to length, as, for example, a longer stanza being balanced by a shorter one. The poet, therefore, worked his craft within a tightly disciplined pattern of length

of colons, lines, and stanzas. A simple practice of counting pebbles or tokens is suggested.

- (5.) The anomalous four-line stanzas were planned to be such. Very striking in 1 is the way in which the author anticipates the longer stanza by shortening the previous two stanzas to make room for a fourth line within the overall quota of 38 ("A" count) or 39 ("B" count) syllables per stanza.
- (6.) The analysis of accent or stress, despite all its problems, provides further insights into the complex structure of ancient Hebrew poetry.
- (7.) The methods of analysis used in this investigation seem well suited to further application in the study of ancient Hebrew poetry.

We have briefly examined several aspects of the Book of Lamentations and have found that statistical analysis, both descriptive and inferential, shows possibilities of shedding some light on the craft of ancient Hebrew poetry which may not have been apparent from other forms of analysis. One may still, of course, ask this question: "Why should the argument be on whether ancient Hebrew poetry is metric structure or parallelism in form? Why should there not be parallelism within a tightly disciplined metric structure, just as the acrostic itself is a tightly defined structure within which the poet displayed his art?"

Further investigation into other acrostics as well as other forms of Hebrew poetry is likely to shed additional light on the mystery of the construction of Hebrew poetry. Tantalizing things are in the air for the "obsessed" researcher. Someone must open up the mystery of the non-alphabetic poem of 22 (normally) stanzas. What other device besides the alphabet would make up the initial sound or word of 22 verses? The cryptic and intriguing device which plays on the letter *aleph* in Deuteronomy 32 suggested by Skehan (1971) suggests that there are other surprises awaiting discovery in the structure of ancient Hebrew poetry. There is some hint that the ancient division of the Semitic alphabet into two equal halves—the abecedary (A-B-C-D) and the elementum (L-M-N)—may play some role in the analysis of some of the acrostic poems, but this task awaits development.



## APPENDIX A: TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE 1

## ANALYSIS OF LAMENTATIONS BY COLONS

Lam	Lines	Syllables		Syllables		Stresses	Total
		'A' Count	Total	'B' Count	Total		
1	1	164:127*	291	169:130*	299	66:48*	114
	2	147:117*	264	154:120*	274	57:46*	103
	3	150:121*	271	159:121*	280	60:46*	106
			837	866			327
2	1	157:122*	279	160:124*	284	65:51*	116
	2	164:120*	279	158:124*	282	64:46*	110
	3	159:120*	280	165:121*	286	65:49*	114
			850	864			344
3	1	166:117*	283	168:120*	288	68:43*	111
	2	167:117*	284	170:119*	289	67:46*	113
	3	167:119*	286	169:121*	290	66:46*	112
			853	867			336
4	1	163:134*	297	166:138*	304	66:48*	114
	2	160:143*	303	160:144*	304	60:52*	112
			600		608		226
5	1	181:173	354	191:184	375	70:62*	132

NOTES: Lam 1:7 Line 4: 7:4; 8:5; 2:2  
Lam 2:19 Line 4: 7:5; 7:5; 2:2

\*A significant or "non-chance" difference is indicated; the first total is significantly larger than the second.

TABLE 2  
 LAMENTATIONS 1:  
 ANALYSIS OF LINE LENGTH BY SYLLABLES  
 FIRST LINES COMPARED WITH SECOND LINES

	N	X <sup>2</sup>
Lines are equal	2	
Line 1 has more syllables	16	13.55*
Line 2 has more syllables	4	
Total Lines	22	

FIRST LINES COMPARED WITH THIRD LINE

	N	X <sup>2</sup>
Lines are equal	5	
Line 1 has more syllables	11	2.70
Line 3 has more syllables	6	
Total Lines	22	

\* A significant difference is indicated.

FIGURE 1

The Plan of Lamentations 1 ('A' Count): Meter and Implied Rhythm

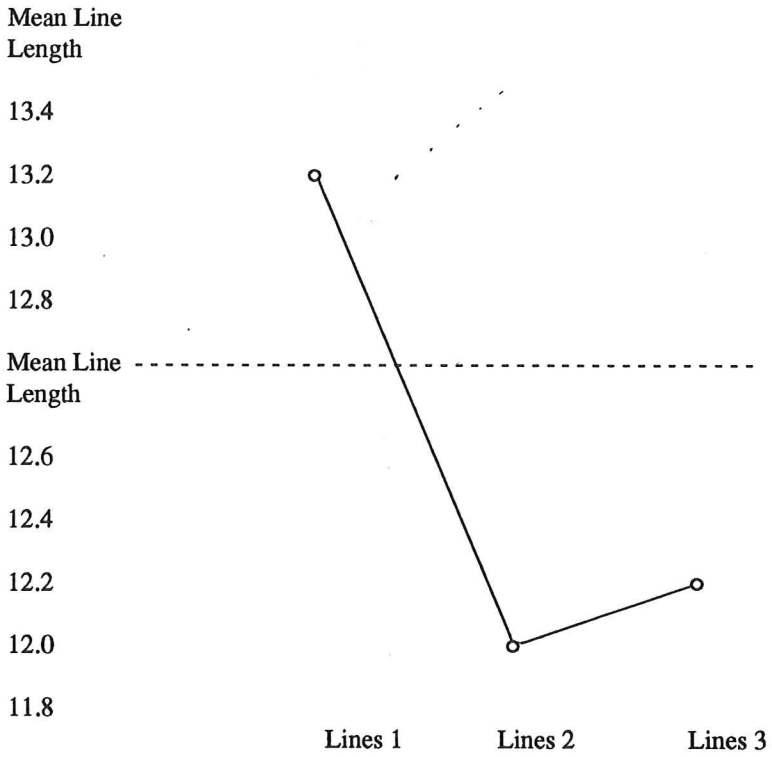
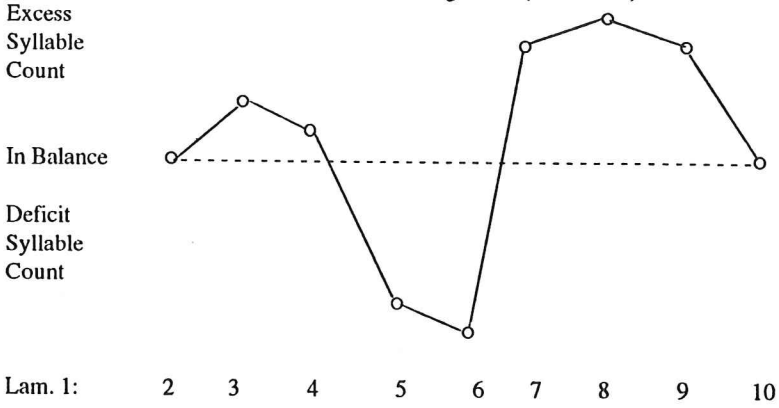


TABLE 3

THE SYLLABLE QUOTA CONCEPT: LAMENTATIONS 1  
BY STANZAS 'A' COUNTS

Stanza	Quota (38)	Actual
1	38	38
2	76	76
3	114	116
4	152	153
5	190	185
6	228	221
7	266	270
8	304	310
9	342	346
10	380	380
11	418	419
12	456	459
13	494	497
14	532	533
15	570	569
16	608	610
17	646	648
18	684	685
19	722	724
20	760	760
21	798	802
22	836	838

FIGURE 2  
LAMENTATIONS 1:2 through 1:10 ('A' Count)



NOTE: The maximum deficit is in verse 6; the anomalous stanza is in verse 7; the maximum number of surplus syllables is in verse 8.

TABLE 4  
 VARIATION OF LINE SYLLABLE COUNTS ('B') OF  
 LAMENTATIONS COMPARED WITH FREE  
 VERSE PATTERNS OF WHITMAN

Chapter	Lines	Mean	S.D.	C.V.
1	1	13.6	1.7	13
	2	12.5	1.5	12
	3	12.7	1.9	15
2	1	12.9	1.8	14
	2	12.8	1.1	9
	3	13.0	2.4	18
3	1	13.1	1.9	15
	2	13.1	2.0	15
	3	13.2	1.5	11
4	1	13.8	1.1	8
	2	13.8	1.7	8
5	1	17.0	2.0	12
Whitman	A	18.2	4.4	24
	B	14.2	4.2	30
	C	12.0	5.5	46
	D	14.3	4.2	30

NOTES: "S.D." signifies "standard deviation."  
 "C.V." signifies "coefficient of variation."

FIGURE 3

A Suggested Pebble-Counting System for Controlling Stanza Length  
when Overall Length Is Controlled

Stanza	Deficit	Balance	Excess	
1		0000000		
2		0000000		
3		00000	00	
4		000000	0	
5	00000	00		
6	0000000			maximum deficit
7		000	0000	anomalous stanza
8		0	000000	maximum excess
9		000	0000	
10		0000000		
11		000000	0	
12		0000	000	
13		0000	000	
14		000000	0	
15	0	000000		
16		00000	00	
17		00000	00	
18		000000	0	
19		00000	00	
20		0000000		
21		000	0000	
22		00000	00	

NOTE: When all the pebbles are in the balance bowl, the quota of syllables is exactly in balance. In Stanza 3 there is a net excess of two syllables, which is reduced to a net excess of one in Stanza 4. Stanzas 5 and 6 are shorter apparently to prepare for the additional line in Stanza 7. By the time we reach Stanza 10, the poem is back in perfect balance.

TABLE 5

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SYLLABLE COUNTS ('A') AND STRESS  
COUNTS FOR LAMENTATIONS 1-5

Chapter	Lines	Mean Syllables	Mean Stresses	Correlation
1	1	13.2	5.2	+.49*
	2	12.0	4.8	+.26
	3	12.3	4.8	+.30
2	1	12.7	5.4	+.21
	2	12.7	5.1	+.14
	3	12.7	5.2	-.09
3	1	12.9	5.2	+.49*
	2	12.9	5.1	+.24
	3	13.0	5.1	+.12
4	1	13.5	5.2	+.50*
	2	13.8	4.9	+.33
5	1	16.1	6.0	+.34

\* A significant (non-chance) relationship is indicated



## APPENDIX B

## Lamentations 1 Colon Counts: Syllables and Stresses

V	Syllable: "A" Counts						Syllable: "B" Counts						Stress Counts					
	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b
1	9	4	7	6	7	5	9	4	7	6	7	5	4	2	2	2	2	2
2	7	7	5	5	7	7	7	7	5	6	8	7	3	2	2	2	3	2
3	9	6	7	6	7	5	9	6	7	6	9	5	3	2	3	2	3	2
4	7	7	7	6	6	4	7	7	8	7	7	4	3	3	3	2	2	2
5	6	5	5	5	8	3	7	6	5	6	9	3	3	2	2	2	3	2
6	7	4	8	6	7	4	7	4	9	6	7	4	3	2	3	2	3	2
7	7	8	4	7	7	5	7	9	5	7	7	5	2	3	2	4	4	2
8	8	8	8	6	5	5	9	8	10	6	6	5	3	3	3	2	2	2
9	6	7	6	5	7	5	7	7	6	5	7	5	2	2	2	2	3	2
10	5	5	6	5	5	8	5	6	6	5	5	8	3	2	2	2	2	2
11	6	5	9	4	8	7	6	5	9	4	8	7	3	2	3	2	3	2
12	9	6	8	5	6	6	9	6	8	5	6	6	4	2	3	2	3	3
13	10	4	6	6	7	5	10	4	6	6	7	5	3	2	3	2	2	2
14	6	7	6	4	7	6	6	7	6	4	7	6	3	2	2	2	2	3
15	6	6	6	5	6	7	6	6	6	5	6	7	3	2	3	2	3	2
16	10	6	9	4	7	5	10	6	9	4	7	5	4	3	3	2	3	2
17	8	5	7	5	7	6	9	5	7	5	7	6	3	2	3	2	2	2
18	5	6	6	6	8	6	5	6	7	6	8	6	3	2	3	2	2	2
19	8	5	7	5	6	7	8	5	7	5	6	7	2	2	2	2	3	2
20	7	6	7	6	6	4	7	6	7	6	6	4	3	2	3	2	3	2
21	9	5	7	5	10	6	9	5	7	5	13	6	3	2	3	2	5	2
22	9	5	6	5	6	5	10	5	7	5	6	5	3	2	2	2	2	2

NOTE: Lamentations 1:7 contains a fourth line: "A"-7:4; "B" 8:5; stresses 2:2. Counts for such additional lines are always included in the totals for reason stated in the text. It is freely acknowledged that a small number of colons lend themselves to different evaluations as to number of syllables and stresses. Thus minor discrepancies will occur in the counts, but the total impact of these variants does not change the outcome of statistical analysis.

## Lamentations 2 Colon Counts: Syllables and Stresses

V	Syllable: "A" Counts						Syllable: "B" Counts						Stress Counts					
	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b
1	10	4	6	5	8	4	10	4	6	5	8	4	4	2	3	2	3	2
2	8	6	6	7	4	8	9	6	6	7	4	9	3	3	2	3	2	3
3	6	5	7	5	11	5	6	5	7	5	11	5	3	2	3	2	4	2
4	7	7	8	5	7	0	7	7	8	5	7	0	3	3	3	2	3	0
5	8	5	7	5	7	7	8	5	8	5	7	7	3	2	3	2	3	2
6	7	5	7	5	7	4	7	5	7	5	7	4	3	2	3	2	3	2
7	8	5	6	6	8	4	8	5	6	7	8	4	3	2	3	2	4	2
8	4	8	3	8	7	5	4	8	3	8	7	5	2	3	2	3	3	2
9	8	8	5	6	8	5	9	9	6	6	9	5	3	3	3	2	3	2
10	5	8	7	5	7	7	5	8	7	5	7	7	2	3	3	2	3	2
11	8	6	7	5	8	5	8	6	7	5	8	5	3	2	3	2	3	2
12	7	6	8	4	6	5	7	6	8	4	6	5	2	3	2	2	2	2
13	9	6	9	6	7	4	9	6	9	6	7	4	3	2	3	2	3	2
14	6	4	8	6	4	7	6	4	8	6	4	7	3	2	3	2	2	3
15	7	5	9	6	8	11	7	5	9	6	8	11	3	3	3	2	3	5
16	6	4	8	6	9	6	6	4	8	6	9	6	3	2	3	2	3	2
17	8	5	7	6	8	5	8	5	7	6	8	5	4	2	4	2	3	3
18	8	5	7	5	7	6	8	5	7	5	7	6	3	2	3	2	3	2
19	6	5	6	6	6	5	7	5	6	6	6	5	3	2	3	2	3	2
20	8	5	8	6	10	5	8	6	8	6	10	5	3	3	3	2	3	2
21	7	4	8	5	6	5	7	4	8	5	8	7	3	2	2	2	3	2
22	6	6	9	5	9	5	6	6	9	5	9	5	3	2	4	2	3	2

NOTE: Lamentations 2:4 lacks a second colon in line 3. Lamentations 2:19 contains a fourth line: "A"=7:5; "B"=7:5; stresses 2:2.

**Lamentations 3 Colon Counts: Syllables and Stresses**

V	Syllable: "A" Counts						Syllable: "B" Counts						Stress Counts					
	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b
1	8	5	7	4	6	5	8	5	7	4	6	5	4	2	3	2	3	2
2	8	5	7	5	8	5	8	5	7	5	8	5	3	2	3	2	2	2
3	8	5	8	6	8	6	8	5	8	6	8	6	3	2	3	2	3	2
4	5	6	10	5	9	6	5	6	11	5	9	6	3	2	3	2	3	2
5	6	5	9	7	8	5	6	5	9	7	8	5	2	2	3	2	2	2
6	8	6	8	5	7	7	8	6	8	5	7	7	3	2	3	2	3	2
7	8	4	7	4	6	4	8	4	7	4	6	4	3	2	3	2	3	2
8	8	7	7	6	9	5	8	7	7	7	9	5	3	2	2	2	4	2
9	6	6	7	5	6	4	6	6	7	5	6	4	3	2	3	2	3	2
10	7	5	7	5	8	5	7	5	7	5	8	5	3	2	3	3	3	2
11	7	3	7	5	7	6	7	3	7	5	7	6	3	1	3	2	3	2
12	6	5	6	5	8	6	6	5	6	5	8	6	3	2	3	3	3	2
13	7	6	7	6	7	5	7	6	7	6	7	5	3	2	3	2	3	2
14	11	7	9	5	9	5	11	7	9	5	9	6	3	2	3	2	3	2
15	10	5	7	6	9	5	10	7	7	6	9	5	3	2	3	2	3	2
16	7	5	7	5	7	5	7	5	7	5	7	5	3	2	4	2	4	2
17	9	5	6	5	8	6	9	5	6	5	8	6	3	2	2	2	3	3
18	7	5	7	5	6	6	7	5	7	5	6	6	3	2	3	2	3	2
19	7	5	9	8	7	5	7	5	11	8	9	6	3	2	4	2	3	2
20	8	4	9	5	7	6	9	5	9	5	7	6	4	2	3	2	3	2
21	7	7	8	5	9	6	8	7	8	5	9	6	3	2	3	2	3	2
22	8	6	8	5	8	6	8	6	8	6	8	6	4	2	4	2	3	3

NOTE: The 66 verses of Lamentations 3 are analyzed according to their acrostic pattern, i.e., as though Lamentations 3 consisted of 22 verses of three lines each

## Lamentations 4 Colon Counts: Syllables and Stresses

V	Syllable: "A" Counts				Syllable: "B" Counts				Stress Counts			
	1a	1b	2a	2b	1a	1b	2a	2b	1a	1b	2a	2b
1	6	6	7	5	6	6	7	5	3	3	3	2
2	7	6	9	6	8	7	9	6	3	2	4	3
3	7	6	6	6	7	6	6	6	3	2	2	2
4	6	6	7	5	6	6	7	5	3	2	3	2
5	8	6	8	6	8	6	8	6	2	2	3	2
6	8	5	7	7	8	5	7	7	3	2	3	3
7	7	5	8	5	8	5	8	5	3	2	3	2
8	7	7	7	6	7	7	7	6	3	2	3	3
9	8	6	9	6	8	6	9	6	4	2	3	2
10	9	6	7	5	9	6	7	5	3	2	3	2
11	8	6	7	7	8	6	7	8	3	3	3	2
12	7	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	3	2	3	2
13	6	6	7	4	7	7	7	4	2	2	2	2
14	7	6	5	7	7	6	5	7	3	2	2	2
15	9	8	6	12	9	8	6	12	4	3	2	4
16	7	7	9	7	7	7	9	7	3	2	3	2
17	9	6	9	5	9	6	9	5	3	2	2	2
18	6	7	5	11	6	7	5	11	2	2	2	4
19	8	5	8	8	8	5	8	8	3	2	2	3
20	8	6	8	5	8	6	8	5	4	2	3	2
21	8	5	6	7	8	6	6	7	3	3	3	2
22	7	7	8	6	7	7	8	6	3	2	3	2

Lamentations 5 Colon Counts: Syllables and Stresses

V	Syllable: "A" Counts		Syllable: "B" Counts		Stress Counts	
	1a	1b	1a	1b	1a	1b
1	9	10	9	11	4	3
2	10	6	11	6	3	2
3	8	8	9	8	3	2
4	8	8	9	8	3	3
5	8	8	8	9	3	3
6	6	5	7	7	3	3
7	9	11	10	12	3	3
8	8	6	8	6	3	3
9	9	7	9	8	3	3
10	9	8	9	8	3	3
11	7	9	7	9	3	3
12	7	9	7	9	3	3
13	8	9	8	9	3	3
14	8	8	9	8	3	2
15	7	8	7	9	3	3
16	8	8	9	8	3	3
17	9	9	9	9	4	3
18	7	7	7	7	3	2
19	9	6	9	7	4	3
20	8	8	9	9	3	3
21	11	7	13	8	4	3
22	8	8	8	9	3	3

NOTE: Lamentations 5 continues the pattern of 22 verses, but it is not an alphabetic acrostic.

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### References and Note

1. Alexander Allison and others. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. Third Edition. New York: Norton, 1903. The poems selected were the following: "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night"; "Beat! Beat! Drums!"; "On the Beach at Night"; "To a Locomotive in Winter."
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of statistics was avoided as much as possible. Tests used for the study included the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test, the sign test, the chi-square test, the t-test, and the Pearson product-moment correlation test. Much of the data originally analyzed by means of t-tests were reworked with the Wilcoxon test. Results were the same for establishing significant differences, but for theoretical considerations, the Wilcoxon is the preferred test.

## Books Received

Fackre, Gabriel, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders. *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?: Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized*. Edited by John Sanders. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995. 168 Pages. Paper.

Phillips, Timothy R. and Okholm, Dennis L., editors. *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995. 238 Pages. Paper.

Dawn, Marva J. *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995. xi + 316 Pages. Paper. \$16.99.

Fee, Gordon D. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995. xlvii + 497 Pages. Cloth. \$34.99.

Lawson, Steven J. *Faith Under Fire: Standing Strong When Satan Attacks*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1995. xv + 219 Pages. Cloth. \$17.99.

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Wallis, Bascom. *Mark's Memory of the Future: A Study in the Art of Theology*. N. Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1995. ix + 234 Pages. Paper. \$14.95.

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Johnson, Phillip E. *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law & Education*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995. 245 Pages. Cloth. \$19.99.



## Book Reviews

TEACHING CREATION SCIENCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. By Duane T. Gish. El Cajon, California: Institute for Creation Research, 1995.

In recent years a considerable number of excellent books have been published examining the claims of evolution and creation as theories explaining the origin of the universe and living organisms. Busy pastors are handicapped in examining this literature both because of lack of time and scientific background. Hence Dr. Duane Gish's little seventy-page volume is particularly welcome. Not only is it brief, it is written in non-technical language well suited for the general public.

Dr. Gish is well known as an able and stout defender of the concept of creation and a perceptive critic of evolutionary theory. A holder of a doctorate in biochemistry, he enjoys a rich background of research both in distinguished universities and in industry. He presently serves as Senior Vice-President of the Institute for Creation Research and is also a founder and member of the board of the Creation Research Society.

The announced goal of this little volume is to demonstrate how creationism may be taught in public schools without violating the Constitution of the United States of America. In accomplishing this task, however, Gish provides a concise and compelling presentation of evidence which clearly shows the superiority of creation over evolution as a theory explaining origins. All this work is done from a purely scientific point of view, although Dr. Gish personally accepts creation primarily as an article of faith based upon the Holy Scriptures. His thesis in this booklet is that the created universe itself calls for the conclusion that there is a Creator. Both evolution and creation are ultimately based upon faith. Gish writes, "No theory of origins can be devoid of philosophical and religious implications. Creation implies the existence of a Creator. . . . On the other hand, evolution is a non-theistic theory of origins which by definition excludes the intervention of an outside agency of any kind. Evolutionists believe that by employing natural laws and processes *plus nothing* it is possible to explain the origin of the universe and all that it contains" (page 4).

Many, unfortunately, believe that evolution has been proven as a scientific fact and, consequently, are willing to bend their theology to accommodate "science." Gish shows that such surrender is totally unnecessary. He contends rather, that the scientific findings provide powerful support for creation. In building his case Gish includes an impressive array of quotations from scientists in various fields. He is careful to include a high percentage of evolutionists who admit the problems facing the theory. Nor does he quote them out of context. It is evident that evolutionists hold to the theory, despite these many problems and defects, largely because they cannot bring themselves to accept the religious concept of a Creator. Gish quotes the British molecular biologist Michael Denton. Denton, who is neither a Christian nor a professing

creationist, writes, "The hold of the evolutionary paradigm is so powerful, that an idea which is more like a principle of medieval astrology than a serious twentieth-century scientific theory has become a reality for evolutionary biologists" (page 30).

Gish concludes: "There is a vast body of well-established scientific evidence that supports creation while exposing fallacies and weaknesses in evolution theory. Thus creation of the universe and its living inhabitants by the direct volitional acts of a Creator independent of and external to the natural universe is not only a credible explanation for our origin but is an explanation that is far superior to the notion that the universe created itself naturally and that life arose spontaneously on this planet" (page 63). Another valuable feature of this little book is a two-page list of suggestions for further reading. This up-to-date bibliography will be helpful to anyone wishing to follow up on Gish's excellent review of the current situation.

Paul A. Zimmerman  
Traverse City, Michigan

THE THEOLOGY OF MATTHEW. By Ulrich Luz. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Narrative criticism is more and more the criticism of choice among scholars and to date seems to be the most productive in providing usable theological substance. Luz follows the traditional views concerning Matthew's use of Q, Mark, his own private source, and his own variation which provides for a written source for the Sermon on the Mount (pages 6-10). Ultimately questions of origin are less important than the meaning of the *story* for the community. On the one hand, this approach takes the text at its face value, treating each word or discourse with equal value; but, on the other hand, it tends to be historically agnostic by ignoring the question of whether the things narrated really happened. Luz himself has admittedly become less confident of finding authentic words of Jesus (page 142). Historical questions are not ultimate for narrative criticism, which sees the gospel *chiefly* in terms of the evangelist and his readers. We are not really learning about Jesus but about Matthew and his community, which are poles between which the story or narrative slides back and forth. Since the *gospel*, in this case Matthew, is the only source, we are never quite sure what his readers understood when they heard it.

On the positive side, with narrative criticism the gospel can be approached *theologically*. What did Matthew and his hearers believe? The prologue, for

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example, now has clear christological implications (pages 22-41). Seeing the gospels only in historical terms produces a meager theological harvest, but narrative criticism can operate without any agreed historical foundation. It is a science of interpreting texts without asking or presupposing events. Easter is “a clear act of God impinging on the physical world” which only later (as for example, in the *Gospel of Peter*) is transformed into “an objective and describable event” (page 137). Many may seek instruction as to how one distinguishes between “act” and “event” and how or why this former develops into the latter.

Narrative criticism assumes that the writings of each author often reflects the beliefs of different communities. These communities could have opposing theologies, as, for example, those of Matthew and Paul (pages 146-153). Now comes the problem of why this opposition was unrecognized, not only by those who put a full-blown canon together, but even earlier by those churches which first heard both authors read in their services. There is no solution in saying that those communities saw a unity among these writings which modern scholars see as diverse.

Again, these remarks are not to slight the benefits or the attractiveness of the approach. Events following the crucifixion are correctly seen as signs of the judgment (page 136). But still the practitioner slides from side to side, from profound theological insight to agnosticism. Narrative criticism is really *story criticism* and, even where one agrees with some conclusions, finding this or that story line seems arbitrary. Luz, for example, places the law *after* the gospel in his interpretation of the Great Commission: “Jesus’ commandments are the gospel that his disciples owe to the world.”

Those who practice this method in our circles leave no doubt about an historical foundation for the gospels, but this historical certainty is *not* derived from narrative criticism. It must be imported into the process or it comes in faith, which *cannot*, of course, provide historical certainty. Narrative criticism does allow a document to be understood on its own terms, something which is often done by those who correctly see the Bible as totality. It also places too much weight on the individual books, ignoring the problem that writings did not arise *autonomously*, but in relation to other communities and writings. The approach is somewhat anti-incarnational or, at least, anti-catholic—each church for itself! In theology or exegesis the historical question can only be temporarily ignored. When narrative criticism asks this question, it crosses the boundaries which it has established for itself.

David P. Scaer

READING SCRIPTURE IN PUBLIC. By Thomas Edward McComiskey. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.

If the parish pastor does not sense a noticeable hush coming over the congregation as it is seated following the collect in the Divine Service, it probably means that the pastor should obtain and read this small book. For the congregation that does not quiet itself for the reading of Holy Scripture, suggests Thomas McComiskey, is probably not hearing the Scripture read in an arresting fashion. McComiskey urges the reader of Scripture, by the interpretive act of reading, to "create a solemn worshipful moment in the service" and makes the unassailable point that, because "the way we read the Bible says much about the way we view it," it is all too possible to "hear the Scriptures read in a manner that fails to reflect their authority."

Inasmuch as the reading of Scripture is a delivery of the grace of God, preparation for the task is a self-evident requirement for the reader. With this point in mind, McComiskey seeks to provide an approach to weekly preparation rather than a once-for-all-time make over of one's reading style. He calls attention to the different reading styles which are called forth by different literary structures, notes the effects of punctuation and phrasing upon the spoken text, and cautions the reader to pay attention to the presence of Hebraic and Greek constructions, which remain embedded in English versions. He insists, above all, upon the subordination of self by the reader to the author's intended meaning.

Reading about reading is no substitute for actually hearing a text read well; the book, therefore, would benefit from an accompanying audio-tape. But any set of audio-tapes of the Bible as read by Alexander Scourby will suffice to this end. This book explains why we drop what we are doing and listen when Scourby reads and why we should seek to have this same effect upon our own hearers.

Andrew W. Dimit  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

PAUL AND PERSEVERANCE: STAYING IN AND FALLING AWAY. By Judith M. Gundry Volf. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1990.

Judith M. Gundry Volf's *Paul and Perseverance*, a slightly revised version of her dissertation submitted in 1988 to the University of Tübingen, is a thorough if not consummate treatment of the Pauline understanding of election and perseverance. Though her conclusions fit comfortably within her

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Reformed tradition, her exegesis is both stimulating and instructive—and, from a Lutheran perspective, can foster a fresh examination of these themes, especially in the wake of the “decision theology” which has dominated so much of American religious life and has left its mark on Lutheranism as well. Rarely does one encounter so much careful exegesis in a given amount of space. Volf deserves a hearing—not because she is correct, but because she is so rigorous in her grappling with the texts.

For Volf, the teaching of Paul is that “sure continuity characterizes the salvation of individual believers” (page 283). In line with the Lutheran Confessions, she sees the apostle as portraying “the various aspects of Christian’s salvation as interconnected links of a chain [Romans 8:28-30] whose last member is glorification.” This “chain” of God’s predetermined intervention in human lives is not to be construed, however, as a logical deduction “which guarantees final salvation with mathematical certainty,” for the faithfulness of God alone is salvation’s guarantee (page 283). Her understanding of the Pauline doctrine of election is quite compatible with the Formula of Concord: God works through His own predetermined “means” (word and sacrament) to bring about the salvation of those whom He both foreknew and elected for eternal salvation (FC: SE11).

The real rub, however, comes in Volf’s treatment of Pauline “perseverance.” Can one fall from grace? Is the axiom true: “once saved always saved”? It is her contention that it is. In her exegesis of numerous Pauline texts Volf has concluded that Paul does not lay out before the believer the prospect of losing his or her salvation; indeed, “repentance,” as she sees it, is directed not to the converted with a view toward the possible loss of faith, but only to the as yet unconverted or to the Christian in the sense of encouraging a more manifest Christian witness. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 is interpreted, for example, not as a warning that sin on the part of the Christian can lead to eternal condemnation, but as an example of the paternal chastisement by God: those in the Corinthian church who have “died” (verse 30) are not to be seen as receiving eternal condemnation; rather, the illnesses and deaths in the congregation have as their effective goal to “scare” or shame the members into God-pleasing behavior (but one may compare FC: Epitome 7:16-19). Their illness or death is a sign not of their unbelief, but of the will of God to formulate holiness within His body (page 112):

The Corinthian Christians who became guilty of the body and blood of the Lord by participating inappropriately in the Lord’s Supper and who were chastised with physical death will, in the end, be saved. Paul does not make repentance from sin for which a Christian incurs temporal judgment pivotal for escape from final condemnation.

Rather, Christians' relation to God as God's children is here presented as definitive for their final destiny. (p. 112)

At issue here is not whether God will see through on His promise to save the elect, but whether true "saving" faith can ever exist for a time in one who is not "elect." Though perhaps not intended, the approach of Volf has the effect of making justification the effectual beginning of the salvation of a Christian (one may note the affinities here with Roman Catholicism) rather than the status in which the Christian must continually walk. Baptism, for example, in the Lutheran Symbols is not merely the first link in the chain of salvation (i.e., the "calling" of Romans 8:30), but rather "the daily garment which [the Christian] is to wear all the time" (LC 4:84); "a Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever continued" (4:65) precisely because of the very real tension of sin and forgiveness. Forgiveness is always the desperate and eschatological *need* of the Christian even if it is also the assured hope and expectation of the one divinely elected to everlasting salvation.

Patrick J. Bayen  
Lexington, Kentucky

CALVIN AND SOCIAL WELFARE: DEACONS AND THE BOURSE FRANÇAISE. By Jeannine E. Olson. Cranbury, New Jersey: Susquehanna University Press, 1989.

Increasingly historians of the Reformation are asking questions about how the reformers actually implemented religious change when they were in a position to do so. It is relatively easy to investigate what a Luther or a Calvin *said* ought to be done, but it is an entirely different matter to find out what actually happened. While the former sort of inquiry relies primarily upon the published record, the latter often involves trying to make sense of old hand-written records, usually imperfectly preserved—visitation-records, account-books, episcopal registers, and the like. Deciphering them is difficult enough, but then using them to tell the story of what the Reformation actually meant for those who lived in it is work that demands skill, erudition, and enormous patience. Jeannine Olson's *Calvin and Social Welfare* is the product of such work.

By careful and thorough examination of the records left in the state archives of Geneva, Professor Olson has uncovered the story of the *Bourse Française* (literally, the "French Fund"), a welfare system established by Geneva during the days of John Calvin for the support of foreign refugees. Calvin himself laid the theoretical foundations for the organizational structure of such a fund by his contention that the diaconate was an office established in the New Testament

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not for the proclamation of the word but for the relief of the poor and needy. Accordingly, as Geneva became a place of refuge for Protestant exiles in the 1540s, Calvin and his followers accepted it as their obligation to do something on behalf of these newcomers by establishing the *Bourse Française* and placing it under the supervision of deacons. The virtue of the work of Olson is that it shows how the church of Geneva converted Protestant theory into actual practice.

Not everyone will find a book like this interesting reading. Although the prose of Olson is quite readable, her argument is based in part on statistics that show patterns and amounts with the result that her text includes five tables and thirteen appendixes with titles like "Selected Expenditures from the Extraordinary Accounts of the *Bourse Française*: August 1559-November 1562." However, those who do read the work will discover some fascinating bits of information. For example, the *Bourse* not only spent money to provide food, housing, and clothes for the refugees but also to care for the sick and in some cases to pay for schooling and vocational training. Furthermore, Olson also shows that for some years before the outbreak of the wars of religion in France in 1562 as well as after, the administrators of the fund used their resources to support Protestant efforts in that country by purchasing Bibles, catechisms, and hymnals for distribution and by supplying aid to Protestant ministers and their families who were being persecuted in France. Finally, it was this fund that paid the copyist of Calvin's sermons!

The work of Professor Olson is obviously that of a specialist in the Genevan Reformation that will appeal primarily to other such specialists. But some of the readers of this journal may be particularly interested in how the Reformation actually worked and in how one would go about answering such a question. *Calvin and Social Welfare* is to be recommended to anyone with interest of this kind.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

ISAIAH IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK, I-VIII2. By Richard Schneck. BIBAL Dissertation Series, 1. Vallejo, California: BIBAL Press, 1994. xii and 339 pages.

The revised and amplified version of a doctoral dissertation presented in 1992 to the faculty of theology of the Universidad Javeriana in Bogota, Colombia, this volume attempts to show that at least one significant reference to the book of Isaiah appears in each of the first eight chapters of the Gospel of Mark. For Schneck (professor of Sacred Scripture in Universidad Católica

del Ecuador) the frequency of such references shows that Isaiah was the evangelist's favorite prophetic book. More than any other, therefore, Isaiah was influential in shaping the plot and christology of the gospel.

In his introductory remarks Schneck offers a number of important preliminary observations. According to Schneck, the evangelist cites and alludes to the Old Testament using a variety of literary techniques—word repetition, contrasting motifs, concentric patterns, etc., which Schneck views largely as a “mnemonic device in order to aid the preacher and to act as a prompt for the catechist” (page 2, comparing pages 14-17). The Old Testament, he asserts, represents “the privileged background for a correct interpretation” of the New Testament (page 17). The correct starting point for any examination of the gospel's use of Isaiah is, therefore, the texts of Mark and Isaiah. The voluminous secondary literature on this topic must be judiciously considered, and a wide range of interpretive methods is to be considered. But such methods should be used in a complementary fashion, and the text of Mark itself is to be treated in order that it might tell a story.

The gospel's references to Isaiah are then examined according to the following outline: the beginning of the good news (1:1-4a, 9-11); controversy and confrontation (2:7, 16-20; 2:27); Jesus speaking parables (4:12, 24); the miracles of Jesus (5:1-20; 6:34-44); Jesus teaching and healing (7:1-23, 31-27); and the obduracy of the human heart (8:14-21, 22-26). Mark's references to Isaiah are determined to be of three types: (1.) quotations from the Old Testament; (2.) Definite allusions (where it is assumed that the writer had in mind a specific passage of Scripture); and (3.) Literary and other parallels. The evangelist's references evince consistent regard for the Old Testament context from which they came. And they are derived, it seems, from sources of mixed type, including the Septuagint, Masoretic Text, and the Targums. The evangelist, concludes Schneck, “cites Isaiah more than any other Old Testament source because such a preference already existed in the primitive tradition” (page 248).

Schneck's thesis concerning the evangelist's predilection for Isaiah is an attractive one. And there is much, it would seem, to support it. No other classical prophet is explicitly identified, as is Isaiah, in this gospel. It is questionable, however, whether Schneck has convincingly established that which he set out to prove, namely, that a “significant” reference to Isaiah appears in each of the gospel's first eight chapters. Much of his argument relies far too heavily on references which can, at best, be described as “indirect allusions,” but in other cases only qualify as references with “several points of contact,” or with nothing more than “similar wording-phrases,” etc. (noting especially pages 252-253). Schneck's evidence for the influence of a variety



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of textual types depends on these same references, not on the more certain basis of the gospel's explicit citations. His overall effort to demonstrate clearly the pervasive influence of Isaiah therefore fails to convince.

Bruce Schuchard  
Victor, Iowa

THE ENGLISH BIBLE FROM KJV TO NIV: A HISTORY AND EVALUATION. By Jack P. Lewis. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.

Some can still remember when the King James Version was *the* English Bible. Those days, however, are long gone and English-speaking Christians must *choose* a Bible from an ever-increasing number, and pastors must be prepared to guide them. There is no substitute, of course, for actually studying a version in the light of the original text, but also important is reading the reviews of others who have taken the time and have the expertise to evaluate the current crop of English Bibles; and *The English Bible from KJV to NIV* is a good place to begin such reading.

Jack Lewis, a retired professor of the Bible at Harding Graduate School of Religion, has put together a very useful handbook on the main versions used today—as the title indicates—from the King James Version (1611) to the New International Version (1978). Actually, however, this second edition has been expanded to incorporate analyses of the New King James Version (1982), the Revised English Bible (1989), and the New Revised Standard Version (1990). It also includes, with only minor changes, chapters from the first edition of the Good News Bible, Living Bible, New World Translation (Jehovah's Witnesses), New American Bible, Jerusalem Bible, New American Standard, New English Bible, Revised Standard Version, and American Standard Version, as well as a couple of brief introductory chapters on the history of the English Bible and “doctrinal problems in the King James Version.”

The chapter on the doctrinal problems in the KJV indicates two characteristics of the work—(1.) that the author accepts the Bible as the word of God and therefore considers doctrine an important consideration in the evaluation of a translation, and (2.) that one of the purposes of the work is to demonstrate the propriety of replacing the King James Version with a contemporary translation. With respect to the first point, Lewis regularly assesses a version from the standpoint not just of accuracy but of accuracy as it pertains to doctrine. So, for example, he is especially critical of the New World Translation, and rightly so, for its “tendentious” treatment of passages

dealing with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the crucifixion, and eschatology (pages 230-234). But even in the case of more widely accepted translations like the RSV or the NKJV, Lewis does not hesitate to criticize a particular rendering as giving “an unbiblical doctrine” (as the RSV in Romans 11:20, [page 127]) or as lending “encouragement to the dispensational interpretation” (as the NKJV in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, [page 347]).

With respect to the King James Version, Lewis argues not only that archaic language hinders contemporary communication of the word, but also that the majority of textual scholars today—though certainly not all—reject the underlying text of the versions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so that the KJV does not fully represent the text of the original Scripture. For this reason, too, Lewis questions the value of the New King James Version, the only one of the contemporary versions to use the *Textus Receptus* for the New Testament, and wonders whether this translation does not represent “the last gasp in traditionalism’s dying struggle to maintain itself” (pages 334-335). Not everyone, of course, will agree with Lewis’ assessment and he does not pretend to treat the issue in a comprehensive manner; but by raising the question of the text—and not just with respect to the KJV and the NKJV but in the case of each version discussed—Lewis indicates to his reader the mind of the translators as they approached their task regarding an issue that does much to explain the final outcome of their endeavors.

Besides the underlying text of each version and the accuracy of the translation, Lewis also discusses philosophy of translation (e.g., dynamic equivalence versus formal equivalence), English style (e.g., capitalizing divine names), changes in subsequent editions, and whatever else he deems relevant to the description and evaluation of a particular translation. In each case he provides copious examples to demonstrate the point which he is making.

The examples themselves are worth the price of the book, since even when Lewis himself does not make a judgment regarding an issue, the citations permit the reader to do so. Regarding, for example, the use of feminist terminology in the New RSV, Lewis is not particularly exercised, content simply to remark that “only time will tell how the NRSV effort [to eliminate traditional terminology] commends itself to the Bible-reading public” (page 403). Lewis does, however, cite several instances of the various ways in which the translators have accommodated the feminist point of view so that the tendentious and inaccurate nature of this translation is evident even without Lewis saying so explicitly—e.g., singulars changed to plurals and *andres adelphoi* rendered “friends” (on pages 401-404 one may find the entire list). Thus, on account of the abundance of examples cited, readers can form their own opinions regarding this and other characteristics of the versions discussed

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in Lewis' book. He also includes a brief treatment of the history and background of each version as well as a very good bibliography for those interested in doing more research. Although one may not always agree with Lewis' conclusions, his clear discussion of the issues and his thorough presentation of the evidence make this book an excellent resource for the evaluation of contemporary versions of the English Bible.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

**BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE EARLY CHURCH: AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO PATRISTIC EXEGESIS.** By Manlio Simonetti. Translated by John A. Hughes. Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1994.

This volume is an English translation of a short essay in Italian first published in 1981. As a result of his teaching experiences Simonetti thought it necessary to fill a perceived gap in the literature regarding the exegesis of the fathers of the church by supplying an historical outline. Thus, this book is concise and yet argues a line of historical development in exegesis.

The author has been true to his task. He provides a good introduction to the exegetical writings available in this period. His analysis, on the other hand, of these writings is not always helpful and at times very shaky. Simonetti concludes, for example, that Ignatius indicates a "certain suspicion. . . *vis-à-vis* the Old Testament, reflecting a strongly anti-Jewish approach (page13). Specific references to the Old Testament are limited in the seven letters of Ignatius, but the very context of the remarks assumes a familiarity with the details of the creation-narrative, the temple, the importance of blood, and the Psalms. The epistles of Ignatius are not primarily exegetical works, but pastoral encouragements to hear the word of God from faithful bishops who give the gifts of Christ. It is, therefore, a significant leap to argue that they indicate opposition to the Old Testament.

Simonetti does, on the other hand, offer some helpful historical insights into the divergence of the so-called "schools" of Alexandria and Antioch. He also sets forth the context of pagan thought that frequently forced Christian responses to criticism. The discussion of allegories, types, *theoria*, and literal interpretations recognizes that these were not always opposed to each other. As the author supplies some comments on each exegete, he makes references to specific works which indicate the level of interest in various biblical books.

There is, finally, a helpful chapter on the decline of exegetical activity in the fifth and sixth centuries. It is in this period that *catenae* gained favor. These contained the biblical text surrounded by the interpretations of selected authors.

At first glance this approach may seem a good idea, but, much like the practice of biblical proof-texting, the context became less important than the “sound-bite” offered from the fathers. In addition, the comments of the fathers sometimes became the final word on the text. Good Lutheran exegesis will anchor itself in the unity of Scripture, read the wisdom of the fathers of the church, know the Lutheran Confessions, and then venture out upon the deep and sometimes treacherous waters of Scripture.

This book would serve well as a textbook. (It will be more valuable if future printings correct the large number of typographical errors.) It would also serve as a historical reference point for exegetical discussions in our own day. The author makes frequent references to the connection between preaching and exegetical writing. Is literal exegesis or allegorical exegesis more valuable for proclamation? What effect did the literacy of the hearers have upon the preaching task and exegetical style? These and many other important questions are raised. More importantly, this work will suggest a need to read some of the fathers themselves and give one an idea where to start.

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GOSPELS AND TRADITION: STUDIES ON REDACTION CRITICISM OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS. By Robert H. Stein. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991.

*Gospels and Tradition* is a compilation of previously published articles by Robert H. Stein, gathered around the general theme of redaction criticism. The intent of the work is to argue for the validity and vitality of the hermeneutic, especially within evangelicalism, the tradition with which he wishes to be identified. The introduction and opening chapter set forth the understanding and evaluation of the discipline by Stein. Redaction criticism is quite narrow in scope; its objectives, as Stein sees it, are four-fold: to ascertain “(1.) what theological views the evangelist presents that are foreign to his sources; (2.) what unusual theological emphasis or emphases the evangelist places upon the sources he received; (3.) what theological purpose or purposes the evangelist has in writing his gospel; and (4.) out of what *Sitz im Leben* the evangelist writes his gospel” (pages 17-18). The last two, he repeatedly observes, are the most slippery for the exegete. The redaction of the evangelist of received texts is not to be equated with his “theology”; the latter includes that which he leaves intact as well as that which he changes.

In chapter two Stein analyzes the Lukan prologue (1:1-4) and postulates that

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the author of the third gospel knew of at least three *Sitze im Leben* of the gospel materials: (1.) the situation of the historical Jesus; (2.) the situation in which the eyewitnesses “delivered” orally “these things fulfilled among us”; and (3.) the situation to which Luke and his writing belong. It is the task of the exegete to be cognizant of and uncover, if possible, these three levels of Christian witness, each of which is involved in the “divinely inspired purpose” for the writing of the gospel (page 47). The evangelicalism of Stein keeps him from falling prey to the current penchant for asserting that “older is better”; and this is true for his treatment of “authenticity” as well.

The strength of Stein’s approach lies in its ability to flesh out the gospel as it moves to levels two and three. The pitfalls lie in the inherent subjectivity of the method, for the redaction critic must begin by assuming that the evangelist had certain materials at his disposal with which to work. In the case of Mark (assuming Markan priority, as Stein does), this assumption puts the exegete at a disadvantage since the sources of Mark are not equally at our disposal. For that reason the remaining eight chapters of Stein’s book deal with questions relating to the redaction of Mark, that is, how Mark wishes the reader to understand and apply specific events in the life of Jesus. Stein’s conclusions fall on the conservative side; the transfiguration, for example, is not a misplaced account of the resurrection. Unfortunately, no new ground is broken here; the sections on Markan techniques (“sandwiching” of pericopes, etc.) and vocabulary have been treated sufficiently elsewhere.

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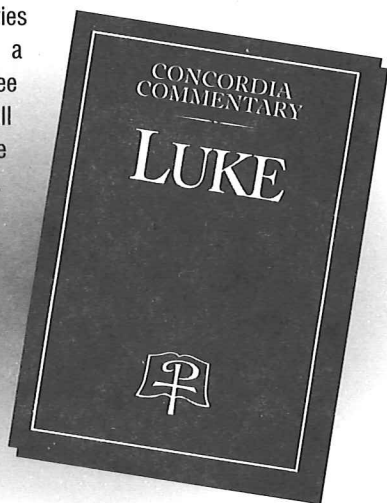
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