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"vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo"
Colossians 3:3

CONTENTS

For the Faculty of Northwest Theological Seminary:
James T. Dennison, Jr. (Editor), Scott F. Sanborn, J. Peter Vosteen

Logo Design and Cover Layout:
James T. Dennison, III

Member of the Westminster Assembly Rejects Republication of the Covenant of Works at Mt. Sinai.....	3
James T. Dennison, Jr.	
Did Paul Really Teach Republication as “Defined” by VanDrunen? Part 2.....	8
Scott F. Sanborn	
The Confession of the <i>Ecclesia Locarnensis Reformata</i> of July 9, 1554.....	27
James T. Dennison, Jr.	
Bart Ehrman on Suffering in the Bible: A Critical Review.....	35
Scott F. Sanborn	
Review	
Scott F. Sanborn on Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, <i>Invitation To Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar</i>	57

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Member of the Westminster Assembly Rejects Republication of the Covenant of Works at Mt. Sinai

Compiled and Introduced by James T. Dennison, Jr.

Obadiah Sedgwick (c.1600-1658) was a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.¹ Educated at Oxford, he became curate at St. Mildred's, Bread Street, London in 1630 and remained there until he was suspended by Bishop William Juxon in 1637 during Archbishop Laud's 'reign of terror'. He then became vicar at Coggeshall, Essex in 1639, but returned to St. Mildred's with the convening of the Long Parliament in 1641. He preached frequently before Parliament between 1642 and 1648, in part due to his friendship with John Pym (leader of the Puritan party in Parliament), Stephen Marshall (great *jure divino* Presbyterian at the Assembly and one author of the famous *SMECTYMNUUS* of 1641) and Denzil Holles (one of the famous five 'flown birds' whom Charles I attempted to arrest when he breached the privilege of Parliament on January 4, 1642—an act which helped precipitate the English Civil War or so-called 'War of the Three Kingdoms'). In 1646, Sedgwick became pastor at St. Paul's, Covent Garden where he remained until shortly before his death. His works (most of which are sermons) are available in the Short-Title Collection (STC) of Early English Books.²

Quotations below are from *The Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant, Wherein is Set Forth the Nature, Conditions and Excellencies of it, and How a Sinner Should do to Enter into it, and the Danger of Refusing this Covenant Relation* (1660).³ Three additional members of the Westminster Assembly signed the "To the Reader" endorsement of the volume: Humphrey Chambers, Edmund Calamy and Simeon Ash. The fourth name on that page is Adoniram Byfield, one of the two scribes or recording secretaries of the Assembly of Divines.

Modern spelling and punctuation has been used in the quotations below. Material in brackets [] corrects typos in the original, provides translations or indicates the sense in view of lacunae. Bold headers for the sections below are provided by the compiler.

The Sinaitic Covenant a Covenant of Grace, Not in Any Sense a Covenant of Works

It may be objected that the Law given at Mount Sinai was a covenant of works and yet that was delivered by the hand of a mediator (Gal. 3:19). I shall say no more to this at present, but that the Law given on Mount Sinai though materially it respected works, yet formally and intentionally, it was not then given and established as a covenant of works (10).

¹ His name appears on the Assembly roster in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland edition of the Westminster Standards and related documents (*The Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms with the Scripture Proofs* . . . [1970] 14). Cf. A. F. Mitchell and John Struthers, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* . . . (1874) lxxxii.

² Biographical details are gathered from: Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans* (1813) 3:295-97; *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB), 1st ed. (repr. 1949-50), 17:1121-22; DNB, rev. ed. (2004) 49:652.

³ A digital copy is available here: <http://books.google.com/books?id=ZbBDAAAACAAJ>

It may be argued: why the covenant of works should be first and the covenant of grace next? From the capacity of man, who being at the first created righteous, was thereby fitted for a covenant of works, and his created condition was unfit for a covenant of grace; but being fallen, his sinful condition became fit and meet for a covenant of grace, and utterly unfit for a covenant of works (117).

[Speaking of the covenant of grace, Sedgwick writes] . . . this covenant be [i.e., is] the same for substance in Abraham's and Moses' time (118).

The covenant of works would not admit any person unless he were righteous and inherently righteous, and perfectly righteous (the covenant of works was never made with the sinner but with the righteous): it condemns and casts out the sinner, but never does accept of him or let him in (166).

The covenant of works does so insist upon works, that the least mixture of diminution or imperfection renders the work incapable and distasteful: the work must be in every regard perfect for matter and manner and measure, or else (as to that covenant) it was faulty and rejected (167).

. . . none of the people of God in any age of the world (since the fall of Adam) had a covenant of works given unto them by God (171).

1. That God never did, not [*sic*, nor] will set up for sinners a covenant of works. 2. That he did not in giving the Law to the Israelites, set it up. 3. That this covenant on Mount Sinai was a covenant of grace . . . That God never did (since the fall) set up a covenant of works: and I will give you arguments to demonstrate it. He did set up immediately after the fall a covenant of grace (this the Scripture clearly shows us): but a covenant of works is inconsistent with a covenant of grace; and a covenant of grace is inconsistent with a covenant of works. They are mutually destructive one to the other. *If of works, then no more of grace*, says the apostle (Rom. 11:6). So that you must either deny that God did set up a covenant of grace for sinners (which the Scriptures affirm) or you must grant that a covenant of grace is inconsistent with a covenant of works (which the Scriptures deny [*sic!*, i.e., affirm]⁴) or you must confess that there is no covenant of works (since the fall) set up by God for sinners (173).

⁴ We believe that a typo or misprint is apparent here. Having found no section of *addenda et corrigenda* either at the beginning or the end of this work, we observe that Sedgwick has been establishing antitheses between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace in this paragraph. Therefore, to say that "the Scriptures deny" that a "covenant of grace is inconsistent with a covenant of works" is: (1) to contradict what he states in context here (note the three sentences which precede the remark under consideration); and (2) to contradict what he concludes from the paragraph which follows the above on page 173. In that subsequent paragraph, he clearly states that the coexistence of a covenant of grace with a covenant of works for sinners is "most inglorious and absurd". There are two options for correcting the error. One is to change "inconsistent" to "consistent" (*sic!*). The other is to render the clause as indicated in brackets above. We lean to the latter option because it is parallel to the pattern of affirmation which the rest of the sentence demonstrates. Thus, we would suggest the following complete sentence: "So that you must either deny that God did set up a covenant of grace for sinners (which the Scriptures affirm) or you must grant that a covenant of grace is inconsistent with a covenant of works (which the Scriptures affirm) or you must confess that there is no covenant of works (since the fall) set up by God for sinners" [with "which the Scriptures affirm" implied]. That is: (a) Scripture affirms that God set up a covenant of grace for sinners; (b) Scripture affirms that a

But if God should have set up a covenant of works for sinners, after he has set up a covenant of grace, he should have put the sinner upon contradictions (173).

But if God should set up a covenant of works after a covenant of grace, this would void and frustrate a covenant of grace (174).

As God never did (after the fall) make a covenant of works with sinners, so in particular *he did not make such a covenant with the Israelites* when he gave the Law unto them from Mount Sinai—he did not give that Law for to be a covenant of works . . . [The] covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, and the seed of Abraham were those Israelites. And if those who are the seed of Abraham were under that covenant of grace with Abraham, they could not be put off to another covenant of works . . . (174).

That covenant which was confirmed by blood and sprinkling (which typified the blood of Christ confirming and ratifying the covenant) was no covenant of works. But the covenant which God then made with the Israelites was confirmed by blood, Ex. 24:7-8 . . . and therefore that covenant with that people was not a covenant of works which never was nor shall be confirmed by the blood of Christ (174).

If the Law had been given to the Israelites for a covenant of works, then upon the breaking of that covenant all the Israelites had been cut off from all hope of salvation. My reason is this—because a covenant of works once broken, presently condemns and (as to it) salvation therefore becomes impossible, it not at all admitting of repentance or of mercy, or of a righteousness and satisfaction by another. But there was no such covenant made with the Israelites . . . (175).

It had been a strange kindness in God to help the children of Israel out of Egypt by an outstretched arm and after this to make such a covenant with them that they should never have found mercy nor salvation (as in a covenant of works there is not) (175).

The covenant made with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai was at least subserviently the covenant of grace and given for gracious ends and purposes. I say a covenant of grace for the substance of it, though propounded in a more dark way and in a manner fitting for the state of that people and that present time and condition of the church—namely so as to convince them of sin and of their own impotency and of the great need of Christ and to fly for mercy to God revealed in Christ and to be a rule of life for a people in covenant with God that so they might inherit the promises of mercy (175).

If you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6) . . . Now I beseech you, mark me! Is there any covenant (unless of grace) wherein the Lord does thus own and thus exalt a people? Is it not merely of the grace of God in Christ by whom we are made kings and priests to God? Is it imaginable that any people should be (as it were) God's own proper goods which he loves, which he sets his heart upon, which he keeps in store

covenant of grace is inconsistent with a covenant of works; (c) Scripture affirms that there is no covenant of works (since the fall) set up by God for sinners.

for himself, for his own special use, which he will not part withal, which God accounts as his rare and exquisite and precious treasure (as all this word *segulah* does signify) and yet this people are not in a covenant of grace? (175)

The covenant of works was made without a mediator . . . There was none and needed none because there was no difference between God and man. Man was then righteous, perfectly righteous. A mediator is a third person between two different parties to make up the breach which arises between them; but when the covenant of works was made between God and man, all was righteousness. Therefore, all was peace—there was no use of a mediator to bring them into peace . . . But in the covenant of grace there is a mediator, *Jesus the mediator of the new covenant* (Heb. 12:24) (9-10).

Merit

The nature of merit which: (1) must be *opus indebitum* [“an indebted work”]—for he who does no more than he ought to do, or suffers what he deserves to suffer, merits nothing by his doing or by his suffering; (2) must be *opus perfectum* [“a perfect work”]—against which no exception can be taken—nothing is meritorious which is short and faulty; (3) must be *opus infinitum* [“an infinite work”]—a work of infinite value and worth which cannot only stand before justice, but plead also with it and challenge it for the dignity of what is done or suffered.

Now these qualifications (not to mention any more) set the crown on the head of Christ alone and strike it off from us and all our works, yea the best, for they are: (1) but debts—our best obedience is but so and our best repentance is but so; (2) but imperfect—*when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants*, and so much iniquity accompanies our holy offerings that we need Jesus Christ to be our Aaron to bear them, and need to pray as he that mourned for his sins, *Domine, lava lachrymas meas* [“O Lord, wash my tears”⁵]; (3) were they perfect, yet are they but of a finite worth and rise not to the far more exceeding merit in sin, nor yet to the surpassing worth of the divine mercy . . . (460-61).

. . . God does not enjoin on his people nor does he expect from them any worthiness as a reason of any of his blessings. Indeed he does command his people to seek unto him and to trust upon him for all that good which he promises to give unto them. But for any personal worthiness as a reason of his goodness and bounty unto us, this he neither requires nor expects . . . A personal worthiness of the blessing of the covenant is impossible on our part; we are in an absolute incapacity of meriting any good from the hands of God . . . Consider either our best doings or our greatest sufferings—no merit or worthiness is to be found in either of them. For our doings, when we have done all that we can, Christ says that we must say (and confess) *that we are but unprofitable servants* (Luke 17:10) (354).

But let me now punctually demonstrate this assertion that there can be no worthiness or meriting from us for any good thing. No gift of God can really merit for us any good from God, but all the good that we have is the gift of God. Therefore, the first proposition is clear because in receiving only what is given, an obligation rests only upon us, but none upon the giver; and therefore we merit nothing, no more than a beggar can merit from us by receiving an alms from us. The

⁵ Attributed to Augustine. The more complete allusion suggests “wash my tears *in your blood*.”

second proposition is as clear—that all the good we have or can do is from God: *every good and perfect gift comes from him* (Jam. 1:17); *what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* (1 Cor. 4:7) . . . No debt which we owe to God has merit or worthiness in it (does any man merit ought at any hand by paying unto me what he owes unto me?). But all the good we have or can do is a debt which we owe to God. Therefore, [we] cannot merit anything from him.

A personal worthiness for any good from God is inconsistent with a covenant of grace . . . It is inconsistent with the covenant of grace for according to that covenant, all is given and all is freely given . . . yea, the worthiness of our works and the riches of God's grace do one destroy and remove the other (Rom. 11:6). . . [W]here do you find any one word in Scripture that Jesus Christ has left anything for us to merit? Or that any of our works gain so much of his prerogative as to merit by his merits? The merits of Christ make our good works accepted with God, but they do not make our works to merit . . . (355).

. . . you may not look on any performance of yours as causes meriting and purchasing any blessing unto you. . . All the good that we can do is but what we ought to do; and no duty of man can be meritorious with God. All the good we do is done by the strength of Christ; therefore it cannot merit seeing it is done not by our own strength, but Christ's (662).

Temporal Blessings

. . . all these blessings which God does promise to give unto his people in covenant, he will and does give them, not for any worthiness in them, but only upon the account of his own graciousness . . . Consider all the blessings of the covenant for soul or body, for this life or for the next, life spiritual or temporal—the reason of them lies not in our worthiness, but only and altogether in God's graciousness; not in the receivers, but only in the giver (353).

Did Paul Really Teach Republication as “Defined” by VanDrunen? Part 2¹

Scott F. Sanborn

Kline’s View Contradictory

We have seen that Kline’s view implies that the Mosaic covenant administers two contrary principles. In what follows, we will suggest that this is arbitrary and contradictory. This will set us up for a discussion of Romans 7 and an evaluation of whether VanDrunen’s use of that text to defend Kline’s position is justified.

Kline’s position is completely arbitrary. It is arbitrary because it does not do justice to the nature of a completely holy God who (according to a non-gracious works arrangement) must judge the least breach of sin with eternal condemnation. The fact that it is arbitrary is further supported by the fact that Dr. Kline can only defend it by saying that justice is whatever God says it is. As we see it, this only suggests that we should accept Dr. Kline’s interpretation of what constitutes merit even though it is arbitrary and self-contradictory.

How does it present a contradiction? It does so if Dr. Kline holds to the Reformed doctrine of the necessity of the atonement. According to that doctrine, God must judge the least breach of sin with eternal judgment. If he forgives sinners, his moral nature will not allow him to do this arbitrarily. He must punish sin with eternal condemnation to satisfy his justice. But how can he satisfy his *eternal* justice? How can he satisfy it in such a way that sin is eternally condemned in time? For unless it is condemned in time (before the end of eternity—which never ends), the sinner will never be released. He can only do this by judging it in an eternal person who can thereby satisfy eternal wrath in a moment of time. From this we can see that God is morally incapable of arbitrarily dispensing justice. He must dispense his eternal wrath on the least affront to his holiness. He cannot give the least breach of his commandments anything but eternal wrath. He cannot dispense his justice arbitrarily.

Therefore, if a covenant comes to sinners with anything but the surety of Christ, it will only condemn them eternally. It cannot reward them with any good gifts, temporal or eternal, apart from the surety of Christ.

What about the gifts of God’s common grace? We admit that (while they are indirect benefits of Christ’s work) they are not promised to anyone with the surety and guarantee of Christ’s work. However, this further suggests that they are not promised to anyone *period*! They are not promised to sinners on the ground of their works. They are purely gifts that are indirect benefits of Christ’s work. Because Christ has redeemed a people, he will uphold the world for a time until he gathers all his elect into his fold. But no guarantee is given to any of the reprobate that they

¹ This article continues the argument begun in my, “Did Paul Really Teach Republication as ‘Defined’ by VanDrunen? Part 1.” *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 27/1 (May 2012):10-36. This article is in part a response to David VanDrunen’s article “Israel’s Recapitulation of Adam’s Probation under the Law of Moses.” *Westminster Theological Journal* 73 (2011):303-24.

will enjoy these gifts of common grace for even one moment longer. They do not receive them as a result of their merits. Thus, God never gives gifts to sinners on the ground of their merits, be those gifts favors of common or special grace.

If we assume that Dr. Kline held to the doctrine of the necessity of the atonement, we believe he was caught in a contradiction. On the one hand, this doctrine teaches that it is impossible for God to relax his standard of justice and give sinners any gifts on the ultimate ground of their sinful works. However, this is exactly what Dr. Kline's view requires. Dr. Kline's view requires that sinners are rewarded with temporal gifts on the ultimate ground of their sinful works. Why do I say the ultimate ground? Because Dr. Kline explicitly claims that they receive them as a result of their works, the opposite of grace. That is, they receive them as a result of their merits, the *opposite* of the merits of Christ's work.

This is the natural implication of Dr. Kline creating two absolutely antithetical administrations in the Mosaic economy. If it is of works (in absolute antithesis to grace) then it cannot be grounded in justifying grace. We acknowledge that Dr. Kline may seem to weaken this claim by saying that it is the sanctifying work of Christ in Israel that enables her to keep the law.

However, he still maintains that the covenant that offers these gifts is itself simply a works covenant. Thus, we believe this still contradicts the doctrine of the necessity of the atonement. For in Dr. Kline's view, God is still accepting imperfect obedience for rewards. That is, God is justly capable of accepting sinful actions and rewarding them. If God is justly capable of doing this for temporal rewards, why is he not capable of doing this for eternal life?

In fact, why is he not justly capable of accepting the imperfect work of the Holy Spirit for eternal life (Rome)? Dr. Kline cannot answer these questions. It is only when God cannot accept anything short of perfect justice, that the doctrine of justification is upheld properly. Thus, while claiming to defend the doctrine of justification, Dr. Kline's system actually undermines it. Therefore, the contradiction in Dr. Kline's system amounts to this:

- A. God *cannot* justly accept sinful works as meritorious (necessity of the atonement)
- B. God can justly accept sinful works as meritorious (Israel merits land blessings)

The Kline/VanDrunen Connection

When *LNF*² argues that the Mosaic covenant republished the covenant of works *in some sense*, Dr. Kline's view is one of the senses, if not the most important sense, that it seeks to defend. Again, this can be seen from a combination of T. David Gordon's chapter ("Abraham and Sinai Contrasted in Galatians 3:6-14," pp. 240-58) and Brian Estelle's chapter ("Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1-14 in Biblical Theological Development," pp. 109-46). Gordon himself not only reflects the substance of Kline's thinking, but he even uses similar vocabulary to describe it.

² Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, David VanDrunen, eds., *The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant* (2009).

. . . the Sinai covenant itself . . . was a different covenant, different in kind, characteristically legal, Gentile-excluding, non-justifying because it was characterized by works . . .³

With Gordon's past collegial relationship with Dr. Kline, together with similar arguments, no one should doubt the connection.

Gordon clearly argues that the Mosaic covenant is different in *substance* and *kind* from the Abrahamic covenant while arguing (like Kline again) that the Mosaic covenant is an administration of the covenant of grace. The claim that it is different in substance and kind is at odds with the Presbyterian tradition of covenant theology in which the Abraham, Mosaic and new covenants are all one in *essence* (grace), though different in administration. However, it fits well with Dr. Kline's own teaching, in which there is at least an element in the Mosaic covenant that stands in sharp antithesis to the Abrahamic covenant of grace.

Since Dr. Kline taught that the Mosaic covenant actually administered blessings according to two completely opposite principles (works and grace), he implicitly taught that it was governed by two *essentially* different natures. Thus, Gordon is following him by drawing out this necessary implication.

As for Brian Estelle, he was not only an editor of the *LNF*, he also appealed to an article by Gordon on the covenant.⁴ Thus, Estelle implicitly defends the view that the Mosaic covenant is (at least in one respect) essentially different from the Abrahamic covenant. Here is one similarity to Kline. Another similarity is found in the fact that Estelle also argued that Israel *merited* her blessings in the land.⁵ This is best seen as a reflection of Dr. Kline's teaching. Thus, Estelle taught that the Mosaic covenant was (at least in one respect) *meritorious* and therein *essentially* different from eternal redeeming grace.

It is reasonable to conclude that (like Kline) this essential difference between elements within the Mosaic covenant is what allowed Estelle to assert that Israel merited her blessings in the land. These elements go together as a package in Kline, and Estelle (his disciple) asserts them both as well.

Therefore, like Dr. Kline, Estelle argues that insofar as the Mosaic covenant is *essentially* a works covenant (the opposite of grace), Israel actually *merited* blessings in the land. We now have two chapters of *LNF* that clearly defend Dr. Kline's position

We are reminded again that David VanDrunen was one of three editors of this book. By accepting these chapters for publication, he suggested that the *senses* they promote are acceptable in the Reformed tradition. And he has written his most recent article as a defense of *LNF* (without repudiating any of its views). This is the case even after the book has received criticism. Thus, he has implicitly endorsed Dr. Kline's views as acceptable and as defensible

³*LNF*, 251.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 130, n. 92.

⁵ “. . . obedience plays a somewhat different role under the old covenant . . . in the old covenant there was the need for compliance so that this would be the meritorious ground for Israel's continuance in the land . . .,” *ibid.*, 136.

from the Pauline epistles. This latter point can also be seen from the fact that Dr. VanDrunen's argument on Romans 5 is practically identical to Dr. Kline's.

In addition, Dr. VanDrunen consistently follows Dr. Kline on most issues. And even though Dr. Kline, as a disciple of Cornelius Van Til, rejected natural law, VanDrunen has reformulated the doctrine of natural law to represent the views of Dr. Kline as much as possible. Thus, there is every reason to interpret Dr. VanDrunen's own words in *LNF* and his most recent article in light of Dr. Kline's teaching whenever we find parallels between them.

In the *LNF* for instance, we find Dr. VanDrunen writing:

... by the "works principle" I refer to the idea as it is discussed in many other essays in this collection. I take the works principle to describe the law's demand for perfect, personal obedience, with sanctions of blessing and curse to follow obedience and disobedience respectively to this demand. The Reformed tradition held that the works principle was proclaimed in the original covenant of works, that with Adam at creation. As explored throughout this volume, much of the Reformed tradition has also seen a works principle operative in the Mosaic covenant within God's broader, gracious dealings with Israel, not as a way of attaining everlasting life (impossible for sinners) but for redemptive-historical, typological purposes such as reminding sinners of their fall and judgment under Adam, their inability to provide perfect obedience to God themselves, and their hope of a coming Messiah who would himself be born under this works principle and satisfy its requirements on behalf of his people.⁶

Here Dr. VanDrunen expresses his agreement with "many other essays in this collection", likely including Estelle and perhaps Gordon. As for Dr. Kline, admittedly, we have not found in Dr. Kline the definition of the works principle that Dr. VanDrunen proposes. For VanDrunen, the works principle always seems to involve the promise of eternal life for perfect obedience. However, Dr. Kline (unless I have missed something) seems to restrict the works principle to the particular arrangement that he finds in a particular covenant. Thus, for Kline, the Mosaic covenant did not promise eternal life for perfect obedience, but only temporal life in the land for various degrees of imperfect obedience. And Dr. Kline called this merit.

Nonetheless, the rest of Dr. VanDrunen's definition of the works principle follows Dr. Kline. He equates the works principle given to Israel with the works principle found in Adam. He states that the works principle did not simply involve a hypothetical promise that no one ever kept. Instead, he believes with Kline that the works principle is actually "operative in the Mosaic covenant". The way he couches this sentence leaves room for Dr. Kline's claim that insofar as Israel did keep the law, she merited her blessings in the land (although this is not explicit, at least with respect to the term "merit").

However, the substance of merit is there. VanDrunen's claim that the works principle was "operative" reflects the use of that term by Estelle. Estelle writes:

⁶ Ibid., 284-85.

. . . a works principle in the old covenant was operative in some sense because the text clearly states that it was a fracturable covenant, “not like the one they broke.”⁷

Estelle adds to this a footnote, clearly indicating what he meant by the works principle being operative.

From this passage alone it seems evident that the Scriptures considered this works principle operating realistically and not just hypothetically.⁸

It would seem probable that when VanDrunen used the term “operative”, he included this realistic sense and not simply the hypothetical sense. As an editor of the book, he certainly did not reject it. And his compliance with this view, that Israel actually merited her land blessings, is also suggested by a footnote. There VanDrunen argues:

Because both the works principle and redemptive grace were administered in the Mosaic covenant, God did not enforce the works principle strictly and in fact taught his OT people something about the connection of obedience and blessing by giving them, at times, temporal reward for relative (imperfect) obedience.⁹

First of all, we find that VanDrunen reflects the teaching of Dr. Kline that “both the works principle and redemptive grace were administered in the Mosaic covenant”. Second, VanDrunen states that it is *because* of this arrangement that Israel received blessings in the land rather than complete cursing. In other words, Dr. VanDrunen believes that a mixing together of grace with the meritorious works principle is what allowed Israel to receive blessings in the land.

Here we find a close parallel between Kline’s view and VanDrunen. Both believe that Israel merited her blessings. At the same time, both assert that it was ultimately a result of God’s mercy. Klineans often contend that Kline’s assertion that mercy is ultimately behind this works arrangement should keep him from criticism. However, here we find a follower of Kline (i.e., VanDrunen) interpreting this grace as simply one ingredient in the mixture that allows Israel to merit her blessings. This is the opposite of claiming (with Reformed orthodoxy) that the full positive merits of Christ must be the alone lens through which God judges Israel’s works.

For VanDrunen, this grace also alleviated the severity of the curse. Because of the grace, the curse was alleviated. Nonetheless, it should follow on this construction that the curse still genuinely abides on Israel, though relaxed by grace. This has implications for the nature of the curse that does fall on Israel. It is essentially and truly a curse. Notice that it is because of the mixture of grace with the works principle that “God did not enforce the works principle strictly”. The implication seems to be that insofar as Israel was cursed, this was an expression of the works

⁷ Ibid., 130.

⁸ Ibid., n. 93.

⁹ Ibid., 301, n. 30.

principle. We would think that this should amount to condign wrath, as we have suggested with Kline.

In concluding this section, we have found that Dr. VanDrunen implicitly concurs with Gordon that the covenants are substantially different. Here they both follow Kline. He implicitly concurs with Estelle, that Israel merits her blessings in the land, also from Kline. Dr. VanDrunen himself agrees on the whole with Kline's view of the works principle. VanDrunen also formulates that principle in such a way that the works principle plays a positive role in dispensing earthly blessings to Israel, like Kline. VanDrunen implies that the Israelites were all under the curse essentially, like Kline. He was Kline's student and his other views resemble Kline's. If it walks like a duck (and I mean nothing derogatory to VanDrunen here) and talks like a duck, it is a duck.

Dr. VanDrunen is promoting Dr. Kline's views; thus he is promoting all the problematic elements of those views that we have seen above. The attempt to argue that the Mosaic covenant in *some sense* republishes the covenant of works is primarily the attempt to defend Dr. Kline's unique views.

In response, Dr. VanDrunen may suggest that chapter 3 of *LNF* lays out the distinction between the formal aspect of the Mosaic covenant and its essence. Thus, he is not arguing for anything essentially meritorious or condemnatory. However, once again, it seems to us that those who claim this distinction but are actually defending Dr. Kline's views are really giving the "form" its own unique essential nature. And this essential nature is different in kind from the covenant of grace. That is, they say that the Mosaic covenant was only formally a covenant of works, but when they define this they define it in terms of an essential nature. For they say that it is the absolute opposite of grace.

Going back to our illustration of the marble statue may help jog our memory here. A marble statue possesses the form of something else, say a human being. However, this form of the human being in the statue is simply a series of combined cuts in the marble. The statue has no other essence than the marble. The series of cuts are simply a combination of circumstances. They do not constitute their own essential nature.

If someone were to argue that the statue has the form of a human being, we would be fine with this. But if they would go on to give this form the unique characteristics of a human being (intelligence, will and affections, etc.), we would object that they are now attaching essentially human characteristics to this statue. If they said, but I am only ascribing these characteristics to the form of the statue, we would say they are confused. No, in some way they actually believe that the statue is essentially a human being.

So it is with some writers in *LNF*. They say that the Mosaic covenant only has the form of the covenant of works just like the statue only has the form of a human being. But when they explain this form they are like the person who says the statue's form has intelligence, will, and affections. For they say that the Mosaic covenant of grace promises blessings in the land according to a principle that is the exact opposite of grace.

This is essentially merit and can no more be called the form of a covenant of grace than intelligence, will, and affection can be called the form of a statue.

Now it can be said that a statue *reminds* us of intelligence, will and affection *in a human being*. But this intelligence, will, and affection are only properly the characteristics of the human being. The form itself does not possess the characteristics of intelligence, will, and affections. So also, if VanDrunen and his colleagues were to simply say that the formal administration of the Mosaic covenant and its temporal promises reminds one of the covenant of works but is not itself a covenant of works in any aspect of its essential nature, this would be fine. Still, they would have to clarify a number of things, and would have to deny merit to Israel's obedience. But this is not what they do. Instead, they say that the Mosaic covenant itself is a covenant of works promising land blessings according to merit, the opposite of grace. This is to speak of the essential nature of the Mosaic covenant no matter how much they claim they are only talking about its form. It is like saying the form of a statue actually possesses intelligence, will, and affection. It is to speak nonsense.

Clearly, as we have seen, Dr. Kline's own view expresses his conviction that there is an essential difference between the grace principle and the merit principle. He considers them complete opposites. And the one who is rewarded by merit receives his due reward in strict justice. It is reasonable to conclude that his followers who defend essentially different covenants and merit also believe that the essence of Israel's merit is different from the essence of justifying grace. The two are opposites. This is implicitly the view VanDrunen is attempting to defend by his appeal to Romans 7. But does the passage justify this?

VanDrunen: Supported by Romans 7?

In the Reformed tradition, system and exegesis have gone hand in hand. Because the Scriptures are regarded as the word of God, what one text says cannot contradict another text. Scripture interprets Scripture. Thus, those interpretations that both do full justice to the particulars of each text and then are found not to contradict the particulars of other texts are considered the most probable.

Since Dr. Kline's view (followed by VanDrunen) presents a self-contradictory paradigm, the burden of proof falls on him to prove that Paul's language necessitates his paradigm. Of course, we only say this hypothetically since we do not believe that Paul was self-contradictory. Thus, to put it another way, VanDrunen must show how his view is not self-contradictory and is necessitated by Paul's language. In other words, the burden of proof is on Dr. VanDrunen to prove that his position does better justice to Paul's language than other paradigms that appear more consistent. Then he must add to that an explanation of why his system is not self-contradictory.

While Dr. VanDrunen first looks at Romans 5 and then Romans 7, we will reverse the order. VanDrunen apparently appeals to Romans 7 to prove that "Israel's experience" was *essentially* a "*recapitulation* of Adam's".¹⁰ At best he proves that Israel's experience under the law reminds

¹⁰ "Israel's Recapitulation," 310.

us of Adam's, that is, that there is an analogy between the two. Then without arguing the point,¹¹ he assumes that this analogy proves his particular paradigm which he uses to account for it. That is, he believes this is a defense of all the paradigms presented in *LNF*. Thus, without explicitly saying so, he presents it as a defense of Dr. Kline's view of Israel *essentially recapitulating* Adam's *meritorious works*. The implicit claim is that Israel merited her blessings in the land, as Dr. VanDrunen believes.

However, VanDrunen has presented us with no reason to conclude that the analogy between Adam and Israel in Romans 7 necessitates the conclusion that Israel merited her blessings in the land. I have suggested that the legal administration of the Mosaic covenant is simply a reminder of the covenant of works, and I see no reason to see why this does not do full justice to the allusions to both Adam and Israel as those under the law. The situation of Israel reminds us of that of Adam like the statue reminds us of a human being. But the covenant with Israel no more has the essential nature of the covenant with Adam than the statue has the essential nature of a human being. There is no need to posit a works principle here working in the Mosaic covenant that is in absolute antithesis to grace in order to do justice to this analogy.

VanDrunen has argued for his view based on interpreting Romans 7 as a reference to those under the law. However, when we see how Paul describes the nature of this situation, we find that he considers Israel's situation exactly insofar as they are under the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of grace. Thus, I agree with VanDrunen to the extent that I believe Romans 7 describes the person under the law.¹² However, the focus of this passage is on *regenerate* old covenant saints. That is, it shows that the *grace of sanctification* arose from the administration of the law, that very administration that reminds us of the covenant of works.

The law administered sanctification. It administered grace. As such, it was a redemptive covenant of grace. It is only as a result of this that condemnation was administered on those in Israel.

¹¹ I do not mean by this that VanDrunen does not attempt to argue that "in some sense" this argues for the republication of the covenant of works at Sinai. But he fails to argue for Dr. Kline's distinctive approach from Rom. 7. If he says that was not his purpose, then we can claim that he did not do a good job defending all the senses found in the *LNF*, even though he introduces the article with the impression that he is defending the book ("Israel's Recapitulation," 303-4). Once again, we believe this excuse would be hiding behind his vague thesis.

¹² While space does not allow us to fully argue for the position that Romans 7:14-25 deals with the period of the old covenant, we provide several arguments here in summary. First, Paul nowhere describes new covenant Christians as "sold into bondage to sin" (v. 14). However, he does consider old covenant believers as under bondage (relatively speaking, Gal. 4:1-3). Second, Rom. 7:5-6 seems to be a summary of what follows in chapters 7 and 8. 7:5 appears to summarize 7:7-25, the repetition of the terms "body" and "death" also confirming this (7:5, 24). The "now" of 7:6 appears to be picked up in Rom. 8:1, which continues with a discussion of the newness of the "Spirit" (7:6, 8: 2, 4-6, 9-16). Thus, 7:6 seems to summarize 8:1ff. The "now" of 8:1 presents a similar "now" of redemptive history that we find in Rom. 3:21—"but now the righteousness of God is manifest". Thus, 8:1ff looks to this new age in redemptive history and 7:7-25, characterized by "the oldness of the letter" (7:6), looks back to those under the old covenant. And Rom. 8:15 seems to present the contrast between chapter 7's "spirit of slavery leading to fear" and chapter 8's "spirit of adoption as sons". Third, the present tense of vv. 14ff does not refer to the present time because these verses are an answer to the rhetorical question of verse 12, which refers to the period of the law. The fact that verse 12 refers to this period is substantiated by the fact that it follows up the rhetorical question of verse 7, which also refers to the period under the law previously alluded to in 7:6, "the oldness of the letter".

The fact that Paul is here referring to the saints of the old covenant is especially apparent in Romans 7:22: “For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man”. This reminds us of the Old Testament Psalmist (e.g., Psalm 119:14, 11, 162). No unregenerate person can truly rejoice in the law of God. It is nothing but a curse to him or her. Further, Paul states that this rejoicing takes place in the inner man, a phrase that Paul elsewhere uses to describe the true person, the inner person of the heart (2 Cor. 4:18). This does not describe a hypocrite for the unregenerate are only darkened in the inner man (Eph. 4:17, 18). They do not rejoice in the law of God in the inner man.

While not essential to our argument, another indication points in the same direction. This description does not seem to describe Paul’s *unregenerate* Pharisaic past as some assume. For the depiction of this person as one who is convicted of sin seems to stand in contrast to Paul’s own self-assessment before his conversion, as one who was blameless according to the law (Phil. 3:6). In terms of keeping the law, he had believed himself blameless. On the other hand, the person in Romans 7 recognizes his guilt before God even while he rejoices in God’s law.

Finally, this covenant union of God with Israel (the implied first marriage of 7:2-3) reflects the language of the prophets to describe God’s *gracious marriage* with Israel in the Mosaic covenant (Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 16:8). When Israel was bound to God through the law (“bound by the law”, 7:2) in the older administration this bond was essentially one of grace. “I also swore to you and entered into covenant with you so that you became mine,” declares the Lord, hereby indicating the grace that was the essence of this covenant. As a result of this marriage, they rejoiced in his law. As God says, “I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothals (Jer. 2:2).

Our main point here will be that the covenant by which this person is “bound” to the law (7:1, 2, 6) is what brings about the situation in Romans 7:7-25. That is, this covenant is a covenant that confronts them with the law, regenerates their hearts to rejoice in it, and yet leaves them (relatively speaking) in a state of bondage (as to circumstances alone¹³) compared to the greater freedom of the new covenant era.

This amounts to being “bound” to a covenant of grace that is uniquely legally administered. It is not being bound to a meritorious covenant of works. And for believing Israel, it does not amount to being absolutely under condemnation, but only to that which reminds us of complete condemnation in Adam. For the language of “wretched man that I am” reminds us of the self-deprecation that people placed upon themselves when sent into exile. They considered themselves “wretched”. This was the state of believers in Israel who were sent into exile. Their exile reminded them of the complete condemnation that fell upon Adam. But their experience of the curse was not truly condemnation as it should have been if they were in any sense under a complete works covenant. However, had they been under complete condemnation then they would not have been justified, without which no one is a participant in the Holy Spirit.

The fact that Israel is “bound” to the law as a covenant of grace legally administered (Rom. 7) has implications for the rest of Romans. The language of being “bound” to the law (7:1, 6) is similar to that of being “under the law” elsewhere in this epistle (e.g., 6:14). Thus, when Paul

¹³ Like the cuts in a statue.

elsewhere refers to being under the law, insofar as he is reflecting on Israel's situation under the law, he is not considering the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of works but as a covenant of grace.

Dr. Kline and VanDrunen's approach to the old covenant cannot do justice to this. First, VanDrunen's view assumes that Israel's situation is so like Adam's that the Israelites actually merited their blessings in the land. However, there is no indication in Romans 7 that the believer who loves the law is meriting his blessings insofar as he keeps the law. The Klinean may respond, "Ah, but insofar as he disobeys the law, condemnation results. This implies that insofar as he keeps the law, blessings results." This is true, and a real connection between obedience and blessings does exist. But what is the nature of that connection? Is it one that arises from a merit that is the complete opposite of grace? Or does it simply arise from a unique legal administration of the covenant of grace? VanDrunen has produced no evidence from this text that it must arise from a merit that is the complete opposite of grace.

And since the text suggests that this old covenant saint's obedience arises from his covenant bond, there is every reason to conclude that the "life" in the land that does result is a consequence of that same covenant also.

VanDrunen has produced no convincing evidence that this covenant, *insofar as it actually administers blessings to Israel*, is the administration of two completely opposite principles. He has indicated some of the themes of "life" found in both Adam and Israel¹⁴, but he has not shown why this necessitates the conclusion that the "life" actually administered to Israel through her *imperfect obedience* must arise from her merits.

Because his position is so at variance with the other claims of Reformed systematic theology, we believe the burden of proof lies on him to prove this. Instead, we see no reason to believe that the conviction that the Mosaic covenant is a covenant of grace uniquely legally administered does not do full justice to these connections in Romans 7.

A further indication of this is the fact that the curse that comes on believing Israel (Rom. 7:24), is not *essentially* the wrath of God, the very opposite of grace. As a result, there is no reason to believe that anything else related to Israel's covenant bond to God is essentially the opposite of grace. That is, there is no reason to conclude that the connection between her obedience and life is essentially meritorious, the very opposite of grace.

If Israel received her blessings in the land by works, the complete opposite of grace, it should follow that her disobedience and its curse are also the complete opposite of grace. That is, it should follow that the curse or loss of land blessings that comes upon Israel for her disobedience is wrath, the complete opposite of grace. The reason for this is that these are the two sides of the same covenant. If the blessings of the covenant come by works, then the flipside (the curses of the covenant) must also be a result of Israel's breach of those same works. The blessings and curses result from the same covenant, the same works possessing the same nature. Therefore, if the works and the blessings that result are the opposite of grace, it must follow that disobedience to these works and the curses which result are also the complete opposite of grace. As such, it

¹⁴ Ibid., 312.

should follow that Israel, in her disobedience to the law, was under wrath, the complete opposite of grace.

Thus, if we can show that the curse on Israel in Romans 7 is not wrath, the complete opposite of grace, it should follow that Israel does not receive her blessings by works, the complete opposite of grace. Instead, if the curse on believing Israel is ultimately judicial chastisement by grace, then its opposite—the blessings on believing Israel in the land—flow from that same grace. More precisely, if the *curses* are essentially administrations of the principle of grace, then the *blessings* are essentially administrations of that same principle of grace. They are not an administration of a meritorious works principle completely opposed to grace, as Kline claims. That is, if the “curses” on believing Israel are essentially by grace so are the blessings.

To substantiate this, we will indicate two things, first that those in Rom. 7:14-25 are under the curse of God and second, that this is not *essentially* the curse of God. It is only *formally* God’s curse. First, the curse is indicated by the language “wretched man that I am” (Rom. 7:24). When people called themselves wretched, they were not simply saying that they were sinful. They were also saying that they were cursed. Thus, Revelation 3:17 associates the term “wretched” with other terms of poverty and curse. In extra-biblical literature, it is the language people used when they were banished from their city.¹⁵ This gives pregnant meaning to the statement “who will deliver me from this body of death?” The person who is cursed, cut off in exile and death, asked who will deliver him from it. Confirmation for the fact that this person is cursed is found in Rom. 8:1: “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.” Since Romans 8:1 is presenting a new situation that is in relative contrast to Rom. 7:14-25, it is affirming that those in Rom. 7:14-25 were under condemnation and death.

However, those in Rom. 7:14-25 are not under the *essential* wrath of God. They are the elect who rejoice in the law of God in the inner man (7:22). One of these was Daniel in exile who claimed he was under God’s curse. “The curse has been poured out on us” (Dan. 9: 11). However, Daniel was not under the *essential* wrath of God. He was one of the righteous in Israel (Ezek. 14:14, 20) and he was justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ to come. Thus, he was only formally under the curse.¹⁶ This must also be the case with the regenerate old covenant saints of Rom. 7:22. The curse on them was only formally God’s wrath. It was not essentially the same as the wrath that came upon sinners in Adam. Thus, the curse on believing Israel is only a *reminder* of God’s wrath executed in the covenant of works; it is not essentially the same curse.

It follows that just as the curse on believing Israel simply *reminds* us of the wrath of God that resulted from Adam’s disobedience, so also the life that results from Israel’s obedience simply

¹⁵ See *The Trojan Women* by Euripides. In the only scene of the play, Hecuba states, “Ah me! ah me! Whose slave shall I become in my old age? in what far clime? a poor old drone, the wretched copy of a corpse, set to keep the gate or tend their children, I who once held royal rank in Troy.” Hecuba also contrasts her wretched state to that of hope in these words, “None of all the many sons and daughters have I born comes to aid a wretched mother. Why then raise me up? What hope is left us?” Finally, the chorus states, “I met my doom and fell a wretched captive to the Argives by reason of a four-footed beast that moved on wheels.”

¹⁶ For more on this point, see my “Paul and Semi-Eschatological Justification: With a critique of N.T. Wright.” *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 24/2 (September 2009).

reminds us of the life offered to Adam. The *results* of the Mosaic covenant (its blessings and curses) for believing Israel are not substantially the same as those of the Adamic covenant. So also, the *means* of obtaining those results (for Israel) are not substantially the same as the means by which Adam might obtain either of his results. Thus, the *means* by which Israel must obtain her result of life in the land is *not substantially the same as Adam's means of obtaining eternal life*. It is not meritorious, the opposite of grace.

And this parallel is not broken by the other side, that of Israel's disobedience. Even though her disobedience reminds us of Adam's disobedience, there is a significant difference between the disobedience of Adam and that of believing Israel.¹⁷ In the very act of Adam's disobedience, he was in complete rebellion against God. However, the saint in Rom. 7 has a different nature. His heart essentially loves the law of God in the inner man. At the same time, he finds another law at work in himself (7:25). This struggle arising from a regenerate heart was not to be found in Adam. It is this very fact that implied that believing Israel (unlike Adam) was not genuinely under God's wrath. That is, it was Israel's covenant bond with God (with its accompanying justification) that implied that she was not truly under God's wrath.

So it is Israel's covenant bond with God (with its accompanying justification) that implies that she is truly *not* a meritor. If she were, there is no reason to believe that she (like Adam) could not have merited eternal life. But the very fact that all that she received only *reminded* her of the promised eternal life indicates that the stipulation she received only *reminded* her of the stipulation given to Adam. Neither of them were substantially the same. Thus, the stipulation given her was not essentially meritorious, the opposite of grace.

Second, as we have seen, Dr. Kline's view is a complete contradiction, despite the rhetoric. For in that view the law is essentially both a covenant of grace and a covenant of works. It should thereby follow that the person in Rom. 7 would only rejoice in the law insofar as it is a covenant of grace. But insofar as it is *essentially* a covenant of works, he should cower from it *absolutely*. On this view, he should have a completely dialectical relationship to the law. That is, his relationship to the law should be one of complete contradiction. He should rejoice in it insofar as it is the means of his sanctification, but he should cower from it completely insofar as it condemns him absolutely. And thus, he should rejoice in it absolutely as a means of grace and fear it absolutely as a means of his complete condemnation.

Of course, this undermines all obligation (both to rejoice and to fear) for no one is obligated by a complete contradiction. She is only obligated by a consistently holy God. And as we have seen, Dr. Kline must arbitrarily gloss over this contradiction and assert a works covenant that does not condemn him absolutely for his sinful works.

Because of these difficulties, we believe that the burden of proof is on VanDrunen to demonstrate that his position is not contradictory and that it is the best explanation for accounting for the way in which Israel's situation reminds us of Adam's in Romans 7.

¹⁷ In his article (though not with specific reference to Romans 7), VanDrunen does acknowledge some differences between Adam's situation and that of Israel. However, he does not work out the implications of this in terms of denying the meritorious nature of Israel's obedience.

Of course, we recognize that the person in Rom. 7 finds two principles at war within himself (7:25). However, these principles do not place him in two contradictory covenantal situations, one of absolute grace and absolute condemnation. They can exist within him only because of the justifying verdict of Christ, administered by the covenant of grace. As such they can exist only because this situation of being bound to the law is the bond of the covenant of grace. If VanDrunen says that he agrees with this, he must show how his system can account for it. That is, how does his system avoid leading (without arbitrary pleading) to these absurd contradictions? How can it account for a passage in which someone is bound to the law and its curse and is regenerated in this very bond? How can it account for the fact that they are justified and sanctified by this bond and not absolutely condemned by its curse? If it cannot account for this, then it is not supported by the passage. We think his problems are insurmountable.

For VanDrunen's view of being "under the law" only considers it in absolute antithesis to justification. Thus, he must see every instance of being "under the law", even as it was administered in Israel, as the absolute opposite of grace and justification. It must be meritorious for him. Any instance in which justification and sanctification are administrations of being under the law, even in Israel, break this paradigm. They are inconsistent with it and thus cannot account for it.

On the other hand, we believe that these problems are overcome when we realize that: (1) Israel was bound to the law as a covenant of justifying and sanctifying grace uniquely legally administered; and (2) this unique legal administration reminded one of the Adamic covenant of works. This fully supports the doctrine of justification insofar as Paul is contrasting justification by grace alone through faith alone to the Adamic covenant of works. And it does justice to the fact that Israel (after the fall) was justified and regenerated by being bound to the law, i.e., the legal administration of the covenant of grace at Sinai.

Answering a Possible Objection

We realize that Dr. VanDrunen may reply to our argument, claiming that he believes that the grace in the Mosaic covenant relaxed the works principle. As a result, he may object that he also believes that Israel was not under God's condign wrath. Thus, he might claim that the relaxing of the works principle in Israel fully suffices to explain the fact that Israel was not under God's condign wrath. And if this is proved, then he may claim that with the relaxing of the curse we also have a relaxing of the works, so that imperfect works are now acceptable, though still in absolute contradiction to justifying grace. In this way, he might try to avoid the contradictory nature of his view. However, we believe this would neither provide a coherent theological construction, nor would it do justice to the exegesis of our passage (Rom. 7).

First, as to the theological construction, it would seem that VanDrunen's position requires that the works covenant is relaxed either intensively or extensively. That is, such a view must posit that either *all of believing Israel's sins are partially forgiven* insofar as she receives land blessings (relaxed intensively) or *only some of her sins are completely forgiven* insofar as she receives land blessings (relaxed extensively). He might also hold to a mixture of these two views (some sins being forgiven partially and some completely), but if both possibilities are refuted, so is their mixture.

We begin by dealing with the view that they are relaxed intensively. This view would suggest that God accepts imperfect obedience across the board followed by a relaxed curse. However, it makes no sense to speak of God accepting imperfect works by merit, in absolute antithesis to justifying grace (VanDrunen and Kline). As per our discussion of the necessity of the atonement, God can only accept perfect works as meritorious. He is only capable of accepting imperfect works insofar as they are shielded by the justifying verdict of Christ. (This was the case for true Israel.) Such works are not essentially meritorious, the opposite of justifying grace. It is therefore impossible for God to accept imperfect works as essentially meritorious, the complete opposite of justifying grace. When God *did* accept believing Israel's obedience as a means of rewarding her blessings in the land, he did so only as a result of his justifying verdict in Christ. By this verdict God forgave all of true Israel's sins intensively, one hundred percent to an eternal and eschatological degree. Thus, she was essentially removed from the complete condign wrath of God for all her sins. And she was imputed with the perfect righteousness of Christ whereby she was given eternal life. Thus, an intensive relaxing of the works covenant and its curse is not feasible.

What if VanDrunen teaches that the Mosaic covenant in its gracious element merely relaxes the covenant of works in an extensive sense? This might seem to fit with his view, for if this works paradigm is works (the complete opposite of grace) it must presumably be absolute works in some respect. Then it should follow that Israel is still under the condign wrath of God (the complete opposite of grace) even though she is not under that condign wrath for all of her sins. A relaxing of works (the complete opposite of grace) on this construction only entails the forgiveness of some sins, and leaves Israel under the complete condign wrath of God for other sins that have not been forgiven.

This view makes believing Israelites no better off than certain unbelievers who have committed fewer sins than they. For faithful Israelites (on this view) have simply had some of their sins forgiven. And therefore, just as certain unbelievers with fewer sins are fully under the covenant of works (it has not been relaxed for them), it should follow that believing Israelites are fully under the covenant of works. This does not present us with a relaxed covenant of works, but one in full force.

This view also impinges the justice of God. Following the necessity of the atonement, God can only forgive sins in Christ. This means he can only forgive the sins of those united to Christ. One is either truly in Christ or not. And if one is in Christ, Christ has borne all his sins on the cross and has been raised for his complete justification. It is therefore unjust for God to curse such a one again since Christ has borne his curse. Thus, when one is forensically united to Christ, he is completely united to his justifying verdict. It is impossible for only some of his sins to be forgiven while he is held truly judicially accountable for others. This must include any notion of those in Christ being truly and essentially judicially accountable before God, even if it is only in relation to the land of Israel. If someone is truly under God's wrath in any sense, he cannot simultaneously have his sins truly forgiven (even in another sense). If someone is in Christ all his sins are truly forgiven in all senses. This is because Christ's work is eschatological and therefore cosmic. He takes upon himself the wrath of God and the opposition of the whole cosmos for all the sins of his people. Thus, he bares all their sins in every one of their relations. And the results

of this are imputed to them fully when they are united to his justifying verdict by faith. We are not claiming that Dr. VanDrunen consciously holds to all the implications of the view we are opposing. However, if he believes that Israel was partially under a works covenant, the complete opposite of grace, we believe this impinges on God's justice, as we have noted.

To jump ahead a bit, we also believe this view is at odds with Rom. 7 by suggesting that the OT believer possessed a complete dialectical relation to the law. For then he would not only have rejoiced in the law (Rom. 7:22) but also simultaneously cowered from it completely under God's absolute wrath, as we have explained previously. Therefore, we conclude that true Israel is not under the essential condign wrath of God for any of her sins. It follows that the works principle has not merely been relaxed. It has been reversed. God's Son has performed the works and borne the wrath, thereby removing believing Israel completely from the condign eternal wrath of God. This is grace, the complete opposite of an essentially works covenant. It is not merely the relaxing of such a works covenant. How then can VanDrunen speak of a relaxing of the works covenant in any coherent fashion?

Second, Dr. VanDrunen's position is not supported by our passage (Romans 7). Dr. VanDrunen's position is that the Mosaic Law contains two contrary modes of administration, one by works and another by grace. We grant that he does not seek to support this precise position (that it contains two contrary modes of administration) from Rom. 7. However, by including Rom. 7 in his article as a proof text, he does suggest that Rom. 7 supports Kline's meritorious works paradigm (which is one of the two proposed modes of administration). And thus he must be able to show how Kline's view that the Mosaic Law contains two contrary modes of administration (one by works and another by grace) is consistent with Rom. 7. Since an absolute works principle inflicts essential condign wrath, he must be able to explain how this is consistent with a passage (Rom. 7) in which Israel is not under God's condign wrath.

We have only found one explanation in VanDrunen's writings whereby he might try to reconcile these two things. This is his claim that these curses are a relaxing of the works principle, one of two principles administered in the Mosaic covenant. We believe we have seen the absurdity of this view and we cannot reasonably believe that the apostle Paul taught it. However, for the sake of argument we will look at Rom. 7 again from another angle and ask if this view is possibly taught in this passage. In other words, does Rom. 7 teach that there are two contrary principles (that of works and that of grace) at work in the Mosaic law and does it seek to reconcile these by teaching that the covenant of works has been relaxed?

It is true that our passage speaks of two laws. "So then, on the one hand, I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh, the law of sin" (Rom. 7:25). However, these are not two administrations of God himself within the Mosaic law. They are not two principles administered by the Mosaic covenant. Instead, one is the law of God, administered by God himself, and the other is the law of sin found *within the sinner*. This is how it is further defined in Rom. 8: 3, which states, "What the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh." The law of God here is represented singularly, and the law of sin is the flesh within sinful human beings. This accords with Rom. 7:5 (which we believe is a summary of Rom. 7:13-25). It states: "While we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit to death." It is these sinful

passions which cause us to be bound to the law (Rom. 7:6, 4) in such a way that we bear fruit to death (Rom. 7:5), rather than life. But the law of God itself is one single administration, possessing a unitary character. This is the implication of the argument in Rom. 7:7-12, in which sin takes the opportunity through the commandment, resulting in death (Rom. 7:8). However, the conclusion with respect to the law itself is that it has a unitary character which is holy, righteous and good (Rom. 7:12). Thus, we do not find anything in Romans 7 that might support VanDrunen's claim (though he does not make it with respect to Romans 7 specifically) that we find two principles within the law of a contrary nature, one of grace and one of works, the absolute opposite of grace. Instead, we find one law which both causes the believer to rejoice by grace (Rom. 7:22) and simultaneously leads to his death (Rom. 7:24).¹⁸

This fits with the Mosaic law as a covenant of grace uniquely legally administered to Israel. It administers redemptive grace in which the believer might rejoice, but with such a legal administration that it leads unto death. This legal administration is that of the covenant of grace. As a result, this OT believer's death (Rom. 7:24) is not his eternal death under God's condign wrath, but simply death to life in the inheritance (i.e., the land of Canaan). This is not simply the relaxing of the covenant of works, but the reversal of the covenant of works, so that such a saint is no longer touched by God's condign wrath in any respect. As a result, all the discipline that he experiences under the law is simply God's judicial chastisement in accordance with the covenant of grace administered in the land of Israel.

Clearly, the Mosaic covenant of grace places believing Israel under the judicial chastisement of God rather than his essential condign wrath. Thus, we return to our initial argument and conclude with it. The blessings of the covenant must have the same character as the curses. Thus, if the "curses" on true Israel are essentially God's grace (Rom. 7:24), so are his blessings. And if Israel does not *truly* merit her "curses" (for by her true merit she would merit eternal death) then she does not truly merit her blessings.

This is true for both options of interpreting VanDrunen's relaxed covenant of works (both the intensive and extensive positions). If true Israel is in no way essentially under God's condign wrath, she is not partially under the administration of works, the complete opposite of grace (the relaxed extensive view). And if the *curses* of the covenant are not partially the administration of works, the complete opposite of grace, it should follow that the *blessings* of the covenant are not partially the result of works, the complete opposite of grace. And so Dr. Kline's view (which seems in some sense to rely on the extensive position) is in no respect supported by Romans 7. For Kline's view is that the Mosaic covenant is made up of two absolutely opposing *parts*—one of grace and one of meritorious works.

Instead, Dr. Kline's view is implicitly refuted by Rom. 7 (both extensively and intensively). For, as we have seen, *the curses of the covenant as they touch believing Israel are in no respect the*

¹⁸ Following the claim that Scripture interprets Scripture, VanDrunen may claim that the distinction between the works principle and the opposing grace principle in the Mosaic law is taught elsewhere in Scripture and only presupposed here in Rom. 7. If so, let him bring forth his passage(s). However, we are dealing here with Rom. 7 because this is one of the passages he used to prove that a meritorious works principle (the complete opposite of grace) was taught in Paul. And we believe it is clear that it is both neither taught here and is actually falsified by the passage.

essential condign wrath of God. They are essentially his judicial chastisement. Thus, they essentially arise from the principle of grace in the Mosaic covenant of grace. If this is true of the curses, it must also be true of the blessings (the flip side of the covenant). These “curses” arise essentially from the principle of grace (the complete opposite of merit. If they arose from merit, these curses would *merit* Israel the eternal punishment her sins deserve.) *So also the blessings must in all respects essentially arise from the principle of grace (the complete opposite of merit).* Romans 7, therefore, implies that Israel does *not* receive her blessings by her meritorious works, as Kline claims.

The Eschatological Orientation of Romans 7 is Not Meritorious

Another problem with this view (if one understands the eschatological thrust of Rom. 7) is it must assume that Israel was striving toward the eschaton by strict merit. For the OT believer in Rom. 7 is not simply seeking to keep the law in abstraction. Instead, the law has an eschatological orientation (just as it had its origin in an eschatological intrusion at Mt. Sinai). And by keeping it, this OT believer is laying hold of and striving toward the eschatological future, a future that is semi-realized in Christ. That Paul understood the matter this way is indicated in Rom. 8:3. “What the law could not do weak as it was by the flesh, God did.” And what did God do? He brought the age of the “Spirit”. Here Paul is reflecting back on Rom. 7:13-25 and telling us that he was there describing the law’s inability to bring the age of the Spirit because of the weakness of the flesh. This includes man’s moral inability (even under grace) to bring it, as well as his natural inability to bring it now as a result of the fall and curse. This latter point was always kept before the face of Israel by the curse of the law, which while it was not the essential curse of his condign wrath to the believing among her, was a reminder of that wrath upon the world, a wrath that kept any mere mortal from bringing the eschatological age.

Thus we suggest that in Rom. 7:13-25 believing Israel was *striving in Christ toward the future but relying on Christ to bring the future*. This is a necessary conclusion from the fact that believing Israel rejoiced in the law of God in the inner man (Rom. 7:22).

If, on the other hand, her blessings come by a merit that is the complete opposite of justifying grace (Kline), Israel must be striving toward the fullness of these blessings by strict merit.¹⁹ She must be striving toward the eschaton by strict merit. This is in direct conflict with her seeking salvation by grace since that grace finds its foundation in the eschaton. And if she strives toward the eschaton by strict merit, how can she simultaneously look to the eschaton for grace. How can she rejoice in the law of God in the inner man (Rom. 7:22)?

Israel’s striving to keep the law is grounded in the indicative of redemption, by which she rejoices in the law of God in the inner man. Since she recognizes that her obedience and blessing are grounded in grace (the opposite of merit), she ultimately looks to God himself to

¹⁹ Sometimes Klineans deny that they believe in strict merit. However, they never articulate a consistent paradigm for accounting for this claim. And the paradigm that Dr. Meredith G. Kline has given us in which merit is the complete opposite of grace is nothing other than strict merit despite the rhetoric to the contrary by some of his followers. Because of Kline’s formulations, the burden of proof lies on them to prove that it is not strict merit. In fact, much of the first installment of our article on VanDrunen was given to showing that Kline’s view was in fact strict merit. VanDrunen, by following Kline, was implicitly following Kline in this direction.

deliver her and bring the future eschaton. Recognizing her inadequacy (even as a vessel of grace) to bring the eschaton, she looks to Christ alone to do it. There is no sense here that insofar as Israel is being blessed, she is blessed by merit, the opposite of grace. In fact, such a view is at odds with the passage, grounded as it is in the indicative of redemption administered in the law.

The Klinean (assuming he agrees with us that Rom. 7 in some sense describes those under the law) may respond that there are elements of striving found here that are unique to the old covenant era. For instance, the language of being “sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14) and its corresponding “prisoner of the law of sin” (7:23) which describe the old covenant believer’s obedience to the law do not describe that of the new covenant believer anywhere in Paul. In fact, Paul’s claim that for the new covenant believer “the body is dead because of sin” (Rom. 8:10) is in contrast to the language of Rom. 7:23 where “I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.” Further, the old covenant believer is under the curse (Rom. 7:24), as we have noted.

We admit that this striving was according to the administration of the law. In this, Israel was called to keep the law and by means of her sanctified obedience to the law to receive the blessings of the land and cleanse that inheritance of evil and curse. This was something unique to her under the law. New Testament Christians have a greater freedom from the law (by degrees) than Old Testament saints. As a result, as new covenant Christians lay up treasures in heaven (as believing Israel also did through her obedience to the law) they do not receive blessings as opposed to curses in an arena that is their inheritance. For all that is their inheritance in Christ is now without curse because Christ has borne the curse of the law. In this way, they have a greater freedom from the world. But we can only affirm these things while we simultaneously affirm that Israel received her blessings as a result of the justifying grace that came to her through the Mosaic covenant. In this way, her blessings did not come to her as a result of meritorious works, the complete opposite of grace. And as theologians, we are responsible to present as clear a theological paradigm to account for our claims as possible within the current discussion. We have attempted (even if inadequately) to do that by suggesting how these various elements of scripture can be accounted for with the paradigm of the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of grace uniquely legally administered.²⁰ VanDrunen does not give us any coherent theological paradigm to account for his views. And he does not even interact in any serious way with the current discussion. The article we are critiquing certainly does not do this, and we are not aware of any other from him or his colleagues that does. We can only conclude that he is skirting the issues.

Thus, we return to the question we asked at the beginning of our first installment of this article. The issue is not whether Rom. 7 alludes to the temptation and fall of Adam, but what paradigm best accounts for this, all the rest of the elements in Rom. 7, the rest of Paul and the Scriptures?²¹

²⁰ See for instance, my “Paul and Semi-Eschatological Justification: With a Critique of N. T. Wright.” *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 24/2 (September 2009): 13-39. See also, “‘Entitlement’ in Reformed Covenant Theology: A Review.” *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 24/3 (December 2009): 130-38.

²¹ Thus, we should recognize that some theologians who believe that there is an analogy between Adam and Israel in Paul do not believe this supports the Klinean paradigm. However, VanDrunen appeals to such theologians who believe in this analogy as if they implicitly support the Klinean position. This is the case with VanDrunen’s appeals to Herman Ridderbos’s claim that the fall is alluded to in Rom. 7. VanDrunen is not simply noting that Ridderbos

The eschatological thrust of Rom. 7 makes it impossible for Israel to receive her blessings by means of merit, the complete opposite of justifying grace. The nature of her indicative is an eschatological gracious law in which she rejoices (Rom. 7:22). And the future to which she is thereby striving must be an eschatological future of grace in Christ (Rom. 8:3). Thus, the means by which she is striving toward it must be essentially gracious. Otherwise, she cannot be striving toward it in union with Christ and all her striving must be taking place outside of union with Christ, which is completely at odds with the redemptive historical life and hope of the Old Testament. And it is completely at odds with rejoicing in the law of God in the inner man, for such rejoicing can only take place in Christ Jesus.

We have suggested that our interpretation of Rom. 7 has implications for interpreting the rest of Rom. 5-7. Thus, we hope to follow up this article with another in which we will trace out some of these implications, also touching on other issues and passages in VanDrunen's article. The thoughtful reader should be able to draw out some of these implications for himself. We believe that these connections will show that VanDrunen's appeal to Rom. 5 will not support his position. For insofar as Romans 5 reflects on Israel under the law, it must also consider her bound to the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of grace uniquely legally administered, not to a covenant of works.

Conclusion

We have attempted to peer a little closer into the nature of VanDrunen's vague thesis, finding its roots in Dr. Meredith G. Kline. Those roots appear to be an antithetical brew of grace and its complete opposite, merit—a merit by which man receives his due, just reward from God. This is not the teaching of the apostle Paul in Rom. 7 or elsewhere. The way in which Paul magnifies the grace of Christ in all eras of the history of redemption is even manifest in the struggle of Rom. 7, the personal struggle in union with the one who strived with loud cries, yet without sin, in union with the one who bore the curse and who was raised in the Spirit. Now you have come to the banquet of the Son of God, to feast on his word from heaven and to rejoice in the great abundance of this resurrection age, as the Son rejoices over you. For his heart is mirrored in the Psalmist and is now mirrored in you. You have received the fullness of what the Psalmist possessed by grace. You are liberated in Christ. Come and rejoice!

sees the fall alluded to in Rom. 7 and now he (VanDrunen) will articulate why we should see something in this allusion that Ridderbos does not see (many exegetes do this). No, VanDrunen uses Ridderbos almost directly to alleviate our fears about Kline's works principle. This is misusing Ridderbos since Ridderbos's view of the law in Paul does not fit with this paradigm. As we have seen, others who do not hold to Kline's paradigm can find analogies in Paul between Adam and Israel, and this was also the case for Ridderbos (see for instance, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 156-58). We hope to have the opportunity to articulate this fact at greater length in a later article.

The Confession of the *Ecclesia Locarnensis Reformata* of July 9, 1554

Introduction and Translation
by
James T. Dennison, Jr.

*As the Lord has joined us in so many ways, both spiritual and political,
and especially by geography and a common exile, let us be linked by an
indissoluble chain and bond, so that when we have need of you we can
approach you with confidence and you may do the same with us.*

Thus wrote Celso Martinengo (1515-1557), pastor of the Italian Church of Geneva, Switzerland, to the Locarnesi of Zurich, Switzerland, on May 29, 1555.¹ Through this literary window, we become spectators of a drama that opens vistas upon the Italian Reformation and, in ways special to us, the Italian Calvinistic Reformation. Celso Massimiliano Martinengo became pastor of the Italian Church in Geneva in 1552, arriving from Basel where he was a close friend *de martyr à Lucques* (i.e., Peter Martyr Vermigli, 1500-1562).² He was *aussitôt établi* (“immediately established”) as pastor of the reconstituted church of Italian refugees by the Geneva Company of Pastors on his arrival in March.³

Geneva’s Italian community, all of whom had fled the Catholic Inquisition after embracing the Protestant Reformation in their homeland (especially Lucca⁴), had established a fledgling congregation in Calvin’s “citadel” in 1542. Bernard Ochino (1487-1564) began to preach to this group in that year,⁵ but the body of exiled Italians did not constitute a formal “church,”⁶ undoubtedly on account of the fluctuation in their numbers. When Ochino left in 1545 (eventually settling in Augsburg in 1546), the small group drifted to other worshipping assemblies in the city. However, with the arrival of Galeazzo Caracciolo (1517-1586) in 1551,

¹ This is one of two surviving letters from the Italian pilgrims of Geneva to their compatriot sojourners in Zurich; the second epistle came from the ruling elders of the Italian Church in Geneva on August 1, 1555 encouraging the Lucarno brethren with solidarity in the Protestant faith. Cf. Mark Taplin, *The Italian Reformers and the Zurich Church, c. 1540-1620* (2003) 98-99. The background provided by Taplin’s work is foundational to my article and translation.

² Martinengo had become a Protestant through Peter Martyr’s influence at San Frediano in Lucca, where the former was a canon and the latter the prior. About 1541, Vermigli established a small Bible institute in which Martinengo taught Greek, Jerome Zanchius (1516-1590) taught doctrine and the converted Jew, Emmanuel Tremellius (1510-1580), taught Hebrew.

³ *Registres de la Compaigne des Pasteurs de Genève au Temps de Calvin, 1546-1553* (1964) 137.

⁴ For background on the Lucchesi, cf. James T. Dennison, Jr., “The Life and Career of Francis Turretin,” in Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elencitic Theology* (1997) 3:639-58. Additional details may be found in the introductions to: “The Confession of the Italian Church of Geneva (1558)” and the “Lattanzio Ragnoni’s *Formulario* (1559)” in James T. Dennison, Jr., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation* (2010) 2:111-16 and 161-80 respectively (hereafter *RCET*).

⁵ The Italian exiles first met in the Chapel of the Cardinal of Ostia located in Cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Genève. This Chapel was later called L’auditoire de Philosophie and is known today as the Chapelle des frères Macchabées.

⁶ Ochino had no official office, nor did the group have official status under the 1541 *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques*; cf. Dennison, Turretin, *op. cit.*, 3:651, n. 20.

the Italian ‘Church’ was reborn and Martinengo was sought out, called and installed.⁷ Caracciolo⁸ was a remarkable businessman as well as a fervent evangelical.⁹ Caracciolo was also part of the “Peter Martyr Vermigli” connection of the Italian (Protestant) Diaspora; he had been converted by Vermigli’s preaching from 1 and 2 Corinthians in 1540/1541.¹⁰ In fact, when Vermigli settled in 1542 in Strasbourg with Martin Bucer (1491-1551), Caracciolo visited him, perhaps in a struggle with his conscience over his wife’s adamant refusal to abandon Roman Catholicism. Nevertheless, he returned to Naples and his family, though his great-uncle, Giampietro Carafa (1476-1559), reconstituted the Inquisition in Italy in 1542 and would become Pope Paul IV in 1555. It was the Inquisition that pressured Galeazzo’s faith, further straining the relationship with his wife (Vittoria Carafa), his own family and his six children, finally sending him from Naples on March 21, 1551.¹¹ Without informing his family, he departed for Augsburg¹² and the court of Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (1500-1558), no friend to the Reformation—all of which Caracciolo soon discerned. In addition, though ensconced in ‘Lutheran’ Augsburg, Caracciolo soon learned that church was no friend of the Calvinistic (Reformed) Reformation. Subsequently, on June 8, 1551,¹³ Galeazzo passed through the gates of Geneva and immediately set to work to organize a worshipping Italian church in the city.¹⁴ It was

⁷ The congregation initially met in the College de la Rive (though this site no longer exists, it was located north of the present College, founded as the Academy by Calvin in 1559) until November 1551 when the Council assigned them La Madelaine for Sunday services (still located where it was in the 16th century). During the week, they held services in the Auditoire (originally built as Notre Dame de la Neuve); it is called Auditoire de Calvin today and is on the south side of the Cathédrale. For the location of Caracciolo’s residence on the north side of the Cathédrale, a few houses east of Calvin’s, cf. William Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva* (1967) 175.

⁸ He was heir to the title Marquis of Vico, but forfeited the use of it when he was declared a heretic (it was awarded to his oldest son). However, in Geneva, he was routinely addressed with this honorific. Cf. Calvin’s letter “Au Marquis de Vico”, July 19, 1558 in *Corpus Reformatorum* (1877) 45:255-59 (*Calvini Opera* 17)—hereafter *CR* and *CO* respectively; see also Calvin’s “Dedictory” to the revised edition of his commentary on 1 Corinthians (1556), which echoes the impact of the Corinthian correspondence upon Caracciolo.

⁹ His devotion to the Protestant and Reformed faith was tested when he “left (his) wife . . . for the sake of the kingdom of God” (Luke 19:29). His wife’s refusal to join him in abandoning Catholicism and Italy resulted in a famous divorce case in Calvin’s Geneva; cf. Robert Kingdon, “The Galeazzo Caracciolo Case: Divorce for Religious Desertion,” in *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin’s Geneva* (1995) 143-65. For a biographical sketch including a likeness of Caracciolo, cf. Machiel A. van den Berg, *Friends of Calvin* (2009) 196-205.

¹⁰ His odyssey began with the circle gathered around Juan de Valdés (1498 or 1509/10-1541), whose formative impact on young Italian evangelicals (including Peter Martyr Vermigli) was profound. For Valdés, see the introduction to his “Catechism (1549)” in *RCET* 1:527-36. Vermigli was appointed prior of San Frediano in Lucca in 1542, where his preaching on Paul’s epistles changed the lives of many, including members of the Turretini/Turretin family. Lucchesi and Locarnesi alike owed a great debt to this “phoenix from the ashes of Savanarola”.

¹¹ Repeated appeals for Vittoria to join him in Geneva and several perilous trips to Italy in order to attempt to persuade her in person to fidelity to their bond were consistently rebuffed. Galeazzo finally resorted to ‘the Pauline privilege’ (1 Cor. 7:15) and was granted a divorce from his wife by the Council and Pastors of Geneva on Nov. 7, 1559. On Jan. 15, 1560, he married a widow, Anna Framéry, and spent twenty-six happy years with her until his death. She died a short time later in 1587; cf. Kingdon for details.

¹² Perhaps on account of his service to the Emperor in 1532 when Charles was resident in Brussels.

¹³ Note Calvin’s remark in a letter dated June 15, 1551 that he has “recently arrived” (*CR* 42:134/*CO* 14). Caracciolo would come to Calvin’s defense in the infamous anti-predestinarian controversy of 1551 with the latter’s nemesis, Jerome Bolsec (†1585) (cf. “Consensus Genevensis: Calvin on Eternal Predestination [1552],” in *RCET*, 1:692-820). van den Berg (*op. cit.*, 197, n. 2) notes that he was a “witness à charge” (“witness for the prosecution”) during the trial of Bolsec in the Fall of 1551. Bolsec was expelled from Geneva on Dec. 23, 1551.

¹⁴ Caracciolo was made a citizen of Geneva in 1555 and subsequently awarded a seat in the Council of Two Hundred and the Council of Sixty. In 1556, he was elected a ruling elder in the Italian Church.

a congregation which would attract numerous Protestant exiles, many of whom were sophisticated humanists. Among the latter were the closet anti-Trinitarians: Giorgio Biandrata (1516-1588), Matteo Gribaldi (1506-1564), Giovanni Gentile (ca. 1520-1566), Paolo Alciati (ca. 1515-1573) and more;¹⁵ even Lelio Sozzini (Socinus) (1525-1562) visited the city in the winter of 1548/49.¹⁶ The specter of anti-Trinitarianism would also hang over the Italian Church of Zurich, as we shall show below.

Italian Evangelicals in Locarno

The confessional subject of this article was the product of a bitter clash between evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics in 16th century Locarno.¹⁷ This all too common Reformation and Counter-Reformation stand-off began in this city with the infiltration of the gospel of Zwingli. It was 1526 when an ex-Carmelite monk named Baldassare Fontana began to disseminate the evangelical faith in the city.¹⁸ But it was a schoolmaster, Giovanni Beccaria, who solidified the Reformation in the city beginning in 1535.¹⁹ Dubbed the “Apostle of Locarno”, Beccaria had abandoned Roman Catholicism by reading the Bible (*sola Scriptura* leading to *soli Christi*). Beccaria was in correspondence with Greek and Hebrew professor, Konrad Pellikan (1478-1556) of Zurich, perhaps in conjunction with evangelical literature supplied by a favorable Protestant magistrate, Joachim Böldi of Glarus.²⁰ He was joined by other early Locarnesi converts, notably: Taddeo Duno (de Dunis), a physician²¹; a merchant, Ludovico Ronco²²;

¹⁵ The insinuation of the radical Italian anti-Trinitarianism into the Italian congregation came to a head in May 1558. The “Confession of the Italian Church of Geneva (1558)” (*RCET*, 2:111-16) was drafted by John Calvin and the successor to Celso Martinengo, namely Lattanzio Ragnoni (†1559), who was chosen pastor on the former’s death in 1557 (cf. n. 4 above for Ragnoni’s *Formulario*, itself an orthodox Trinitarian and Reformed declaration directed, in part, against the Italian radicals). The Confession was a brief but direct Trinitarian response to the emerging Unitarianism humanists who were devoted disciples of the late Michael Servetus (1511-1553). Caracciolo’s signature does not appear on this document (*RCET*, 2:116) because he was on a journey to Italy at the time in his final attempt at a face-to-face appeal with his incorrigible Catholic wife. During his absence, Calvin directs a letter to him in Italy dated July 19, 1558 in which he describes the trials with the anti-Trinitarians and the formulation of the Confession of the Italian Church; cf. *CR* 45 (*CO* 17): 255-59—English translation available in Jules Bonnet, *Letters of John Calvin* (1858) 3:440-46.

¹⁶ It was his treatise, *Brevis explication in primum Johannis caput* (1561), which launched the Socinian (i.e., Unitarian) attack on the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Lelio’s nephew, Faustus Sozzini (1539-1604), would borrow from his uncle’s work in leading this neo-pagan charge against the revealed doctrine of the Trinitarian Deity, especially from his refuge in Poland (Rakov/Racovia). For more on the Trinitarian disputes in the Italian Church in Geneva, see the Confessions cited in n. 3 above. NB as well the Hungarian and Transylvanian documents in that volume.

¹⁷ Locarno had belonged to the Duchy of Milan until the 15th century. It was in the late 15th and early 16th century that the city on Lake Maggiore was transferred to the Swiss Confederation; cf. Taplin, 67ff. which includes a map of the region.

¹⁸ Thomas M’Crie, *History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Italy in the Sixteenth Century* (1833) 161. He wrote to Zwingli: “Fainting with thirst, I come to the fountain of living water, like the poor Lazarus or humble woman of Canaan, who would be satisfied with the crumbs from the Lord’s table” (cited in *The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal* 19 [January 1846]: 23; cf. M’Crie, 57). Taplin’s essay omits this letter and dates Fontana’s initial appearance in Locarno to 1531 (70).

¹⁹ Cesare Cantù suggests he hailed from Milan, *Gli eretici d’Italia* (1866) 3:85.

²⁰ Taplin, 71.

²¹ Duno would compose *De persequutione adversus Locarnensis* (ms dated 1602) as a record of events he experienced; cf. Taplin, 70.

²² Ronco would wed Caterina Merenda, the second wife of Peter Martyr Vermigli, when she was widowed on his death in 1562.

Varnerio Castiglione; the lawyer, Martino Muralto (de Muralto); and a native itinerant ‘evangelist’ named Benedetto di Locarno who had been preaching the Reformation in Italy and Sicily before returning home. Eventually, a church was organized (1546) with the assistance of a Protestant minister from Chiavenna.²³

From 1546 to 1548, the church grew steadily (“believers increasing daily”—Beccaria wrote to Pellikan). Roman Catholic reaction was now galvanized by the governor of Lucerne, Jakob Feer, who was alarmed at the Protestant advance in Locarno and directed that Beccaria be banished. A year later, Beccaria was challenged to a debate with a Dominican monk named Fra Lorenzo.²⁴ They confronted one another on August 5, 1549. As Beccaria bested his opponent from the Word of God, the governor (Niklaus Wirz) interrupted by addressing Beccaria with the demand, “Do you agree with the doctrine of the Church of Rome?” Beccaria replied, “Insofar as it agrees with the Word of God.” Wirz ordered the arrest of Beccaria, but the crowd surrounding the debate hall was so enraged at this breach of privilege that Wirz was forced to reconsider and set Beccaria free. He immediately escaped to Zurich where he appealed for help for the beleaguered church in Locarno.

For the next five years (1549-1554), the Locarnesi Protestants remained quiet and withdrawn, seeking to maintain the peace of the community. But finally, the town clerk, Walter Roll, an inveterate Catholic, joined with other magistrates to press the matter of conformity to the Roman Church. First labeling the Protestants a “sect”, he mandated attendance at confession and Easter Mass for all inhabitants of Locarno (February 1553).²⁵ It was then decreed that all inhabitants of Locarno pledge their faith in the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church upon pain of deprivation (of property) and expatriation (from Locarno). The edict was read March 10, 1554. In July 9, 1554, the statement of faith below was delivered to the city fathers in rebuttal of the charges of sectarianism and “Anabaptism”.

Brief Confession of the Articles of the Christian Faith and Sacraments by the Believers of Locarno²⁶

We believe in one God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, who governs, rules and guides all things by his wisdom and who has adopted us into the inheritance of his kingdom by his eternal counsel through the death of his only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, natural, coeternal and consubstantial—our Lord. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, not from the seed of man, [but] from the Father (on account of his great love, Eph. 2:4), sent into the world (Gal. 4:4) in the fullness of time for this purpose—that having redeemed them (Eph. 1:7) by his death and blood, those whom he had elected from eternity

²³ *Martyrologia; or Records of Religious Persecution* (1851) 3:493.

²⁴ Cf. the review of Ferdinand Meyer, *Die Evangelische Gemeinde in Locarno . . .* (1836) in *The Presbyterian Review and Religious Journal* 19 (January 1846): 22-41. The dispute was to include 15 Theses on papal supremacy, justification, purgatory, etc. In fact, the encounter never advanced beyond the first proposition and descended into chaos on the interference by Wirz.

²⁵ Taplin, 74.

²⁶ I have translated the Latin text which is found in Emidio Campi and Christian Moser, “Das Bekenntnis von Locarno 1554,” in E. Busch, et al, *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften*, Bd. 1/3 (1550-1558) (Neukirchener, 2007) 329-38, esp. 335-38.

(Eph. 1:4), were brought and reconciled for a people unto himself. Born of the virgin Mary, true God and man, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was wounded for our transgressions and afflicted for our sins (Isa. 53:5). Crucified and was truly dead and was buried, he descended into hell and came alive again the third day; afterwards he ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, so that he may intercede for us (Rom. 8:34), our sole advocate and mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), from thence he is coming to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, the third person in the Godhead (*divinitate*), through whom our hearts are illumined and regenerated.

And in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the living temple of God (2 Cor. 6:16), outside of which there is no salvation.

The remission of our sins through the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7), the resurrection of the flesh, of which Christ is the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:23), the down-payment and pledge (*pignus*) (Eph. 1:14²⁷) of our resurrection.

Life everlasting and then “we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17).

Concerning the Sacraments

On the sacraments, of which there are two—baptism and the Lord’s supper—we consider two things: one external, which is to be sure the visible sign; the other internal, which is invisible, by which the visible is signified.

We think baptism ought to be conferred on children as on adults without any papist ceremonies; and that it is to be in no way repeated, whatever the fanatical Anabaptists prattle. By which baptism, we bear witness ourselves, assenting to the promises of Christ, washed by the blood of Christ, put to death and being raised up with him, in order that we may walk henceforth in newness of life.

Through the Lord’s supper, we bear witness to the body of Christ offered on the cross and his blood poured out for our sins—that it is true food and life-giving drink and the salvation of our souls. And celebrating the gracious remembrance of such benefits, we give thanks to God the Father through his Son our Lord.

That which is left, of serving the Lord, we do not doubt that our adversaries henceforth will take occasion of slandering us as rebaptisers (*annabaptismi*), because we are forced to baptize our little children privately in our dwellings by minister friends from the churches of the Rhetian lords, since we ourselves have neither public ministry nor public place. But, if God the Father of mercies vouchsafes to effect through you our lords, that which holds among us (as we are confident), in granting us a public place and authority to call a public minister approved by you (we do not doubt that you know about the matter), we do not disagree a finger’s width²⁸ from the

²⁷ Campi and Moser’s citation here reads Eph. 1:12 (p. 336, n. 28) which is a mistake for v. 14 where the Vulgate contains *pignus* (as v. 12 does not).

²⁸ Or a “finger nail’s width” from the Latin *latum quidem unguem*.

churches of our lords—Zurich, Bern, Basel and Schafusia—and our adversaries unjustly accuse (us) as heretics. Therefore, God vouchsafes for his mercy to effect our salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Amen.

Offered to our four illustrious lords of public affairs on July 9, 1554.

Ejection from Locarno

The following November, the Swiss Diet declared that the Locarno evangelicals were to return to the Catholic Church or vacate the city by March 3, 1555.²⁹ Two hundred families demurred. They were given a day to reconsider. The following afternoon, two hundred fathers and their families walked two abreast into the town hall. They were once again asked to abandon their Protestant faith. In unison, they replied, “We will live in it! We will die in it! It is the only saving faith!”³⁰

On March 5, 1555, this band of dissidents was ordered to quit the city. In the dead of winter, with most of the Alpine passes frozen shut, this group of exiles made their way to the northern end of Lake Maggiore, crossed near Bellinzona into Helvetia and settled at Roveredo. Here they passed a frigid two months awaiting the thaw of the passes in order to complete their odyssey to Zurich. The previous December, Antonio Mario Bessozi of Chiavenna (banished from Locarno in 1552) had written to Zwingli’s successor in Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), asking permission for the *Ecclesia Locarnensis reformata* to settle in his city. Bullinger encouraged the move and on May 12, 1555, one hundred thirty-three Locarnesi arrived in Zurich.³¹

The city fathers assigned the group a place of worship in the Third church of Zurich (St. Peter’s).³² The exile community urged Beccaria to assume the duties of pastor, but he declined (though he appears to have supplied the congregation for a few months). Next choice was Bernard Ochino, now in Basel and recently returned from London where he had labored in the company of Peter Martyr Vermigli since 1547. The death of King Edward VI of England (1553) and the succession of ‘Bloody’ Mary Tudor forced both Italian Calvinists to flee for the continent in 1554. Vermigli took refuge in Strasbourg. Ochino accepted the invitation to become the first pastor of the Italian church in Zurich (even as he had provided the initial preaching in the Italian church of Geneva). His first sermon to the new group was delivered June 23, 1555.³³ Less than two weeks prior (June 12, 1555), the congregation had been organized with the election of four ruling elders: Giovanni Beccaria, Ludovico Ronco, Alberto Trevano and Martino Muralto. Peter Martyr Vermigli would be added to this elder board when he arrived as Old Testament Professor at the Zurich Academy in 1556.

Troubles in Zurich

²⁹ John Calvin dispatched a letter to Bullinger on January 13, 1555 in which he wrote, “I should have wished exceedingly to encourage the unfortunate brethren of Locarno by some consolation at least, that they might understand that we feel sympathy for them . . .” (Jules Bonnet, *Letters of John Calvin* [1858] 3:115).

³⁰ *Martyrologia*, op. cit., 494.

³¹ Taplin, 79ff.

³² Ibid., 83.

³³ Ibid., 85.

Still, trouble seemed to follow the Locarnesi evangelicals like a plague.³⁴ The heterodox (and worse) Italian humanists who roamed Europe at this time sought the kindred culture of their native nationality and gravitated to the Italian communities in Reformation cities. Zurich was no different in this regard than Geneva (see above). Already in the spring of 1555, Bullinger was alerted to a visit in Zurich by Lelio Sozzini. The former was urged to protect the Locarnesi from the errors of their guest. Lelio's nephew, Faustus, would himself visit Zurich in 1558 and 1562.³⁵ Emerging anti-Trinitarian Socinianism was a danger to the *ecclesia Locarnensis reformata* as it was a peril to evangelical and Reformed Italian congregations everywhere. In 1563, with the publication of Ochino's *Dialogi XXX*, it appeared that the pastor of the Italian church in Locarno had imbibed the festering Servetian and Socinian error.³⁶ "Dialogues 19 and 20" of his book hinted that the historic orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was: a papal error—a papal imposition (the common propaganda line of the anti-Trinitarians); not found in the Bible (the duplicitous "no creed but the Bible" slogan of the rationalistic humanists—fundamentalists of the left, turning the teaching of Scripture on its head, as all left-wing fundamentalists still do); a "three-headed god" notion fabricated by the ancient councils of the church (so as to suppress free inquiry and liberty of conscience). Taplin's review of this portion of Ochino's tome is judicious, but leaves us with the ambiguity which has dogged the Italian pastor since the work was published, i.e., both anti-Trinitarians and Trinitarians claim him in this phase of his later career and each in turn does so with no little justification. Ochino would be banished from Zurich in 1563. Even Bullinger would despair of defending him, for in proposing a qualified New Testament doctrine of polygamy ("Dialogue 21"), Ochino had finally become *persona non grata*. On November 21, 1563, the Council of Locarno ordered him to vacate the city before the end of the year. Sadly, Ochino would die in disgrace, poverty and exile in Moravia the following year.

The theological difficulties provoked by Italian humanism were matched by bias against the Italian community on the part of the natives of Zurich. One of the innovative and energetic ventures of the Italian Protestant Diaspora in 16th century Europe was the formation of what has been labeled the *Grand Boutique*. This mercantile enterprise featured the manufacture and sale of textiles, and in particular the flossed silk goods eagerly sought throughout the continent. The business was very popular as well as highly profitable. One of the notable versions of this 'capitalistic' enterprise was the joint effort between Francesco Turretini and David and Heinrich Wertmüller/Werdmüller established in Zurich in 1587.³⁷

But the success of the Locarnesi provoked jealousy within the guilds which controlled industry and commerce in Zurich. So intense was the hostility of the opponents of the energetic Italian community that the Council placed a guard around St. Peter's church during the Italian worship service in order to prevent disturbances from without.³⁸ By 1558, the Council, in sympathy with the xenophobia of native Zurichers, barred the Locarnesi from citizenship in the city as well as membership in the local labor guilds. The prejudices of the modern labor union movement have deep roots—hostility to industry, enterprise and ultimately capitalism goes back to the

³⁴ Italian humanistic/rationalistic anti-Trinitarianism was designated the "Italian Plague".

³⁵ Ibid., 144-45.

³⁶ Ibid., 111-169 for full discussion.

³⁷ Cf. Dennison, "The Life and Career of Francis Turretin," in Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (1997) 3:640. Turretini had launched his silk business in Geneva in 1575.

³⁸ Taplin, 104.

protectionist schemes of the Middle Ages and beyond. Envy and greed still shackle initiative, innovation and hard work.

The ‘little flock’ of Italian Calvinists, drawn into union with the justifying God-man alone, found themselves ‘strangers and exiles’ wherever they settled in Reformation Europe.³⁹ These who abandoned Catholicism for Protestantism cut themselves off from their native geography and culture. As pilgrims of evangelical and Reformed Christianity, they struggled to find a place—a place to live without persecution, a place to worship without ridicule and eviction, a place to work without prejudice, a place to confess their faith without qualification. The Locarnesi of Zurich, like the Lucchesi of Geneva, adapted in measure to their exile, but it is the voice of their profession, their confession, their affirmation that reveals their sojourning heart—the hearts of those possessed by the end of the age and the eschatological Pilgrim in whom and through whom they reached journey’s end, even as they dwelt between the times.

³⁹ Their ‘theological host’ in Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger, would dedicate his *Cent sermons sur l’Apocalypse de Jésus Christ* (1564) to the *fugitifs & chassez* (“fugitives and cast offs/exiles”) of French, Italian and English strangers in Geneva. Cf. the “Preface” dated September 1, 1557. The exilic experience defines the identity of the Italian Protestant Diaspora, as even their patrons and sponsors acknowledged.

Bart Ehrman on Suffering in the Bible: A Critical Review¹

Scott F. Sanborn

In this book, Bart Ehrman explains how he gradually left his Evangelical Christian faith and became an Agnostic. It largely began when he had to teach a course on suffering. After this, he did not find most of the biblical answers satisfactory. Instead, he found them *morally* repulsive. He goes on to discuss what he believes the various biblical answers to suffering are, some of them mutually exclusive.

However, we hope to show that his account of morality and his overall approach to the biblical views of suffering are not satisfactory. And as to his personal narrative, his sense of the injustice about the biblical answers flows from the Semi-Pelagian perspective of his Evangelical days, a sense fully answered by the Augustinian view of sin and salvation. In Bart Ehrman, we find a scholar who has been instrumental in reinforcing a bias against Christianity already found in the culture, but whose final reasons for leaving it are unsatisfactory and do not do justice to the message of the New Testament.

Dr. Ehrman discusses six views of suffering that he believes are found in the Bible. He further argues that some of these are mutually exclusive. There is no surprise here, coming as it does from a higher critic who regularly argues that the Bible contains many contradictions. For the sake of space, we will not here summarize in detail Dr. Ehrman's six views of suffering, but lay them out one by one as we examine them. However, they are essentially the views that suffering either arises: (1) as a punishment from God; (2) from people who abuse others; (3) for redemptive purposes; (4) as a test from God; (5) that we cannot know why there is suffering in the world; and (6) the apocalyptic answer to suffering.

Before laying out Ehrman's views on suffering, we consider one minor point for those who are sympathetic to Ehrman and consider him a great historian. We admit that Ehrman is broadly educated; however, we believe his prejudices against Christianity can lead him to faulty conclusions. For instance, he claims that Paul held to a four-story universe and believed that the world was flat. Putting aside the question of Paul's divine inspiration, how can a historian of the ancient world make such a bold claim? It is a fable that people in the time of Columbus believed that the world was flat. They knew that the world was round. Among other things, the ancient Greeks recognized that, as ships approached land, their masts appeared in the horizon before their hulls. This was one indication that the world was round. The ancient Greeks had even calculated the circumference of the globe with a fair degree of accuracy. Thus, educated people during the fifteenth century knew that India was much farther around the globe than Columbus realized. This knowledge was available to educated people in the Roman Empire such as Paul. Being well educated in Jerusalem, Paul's education would not have been restricted to a set of narrow Jewish concerns isolated from the broader educated world. It is well known that the rabbis were influenced by Greco-Roman rhetoric and there is no reason to question their

¹ A review of Bart D. Ehrman, *God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2008. 294 pp. Hardcover. ISBN: 0-0611-7397-5. \$25.95.

awareness of other well known facts of the period. Ehrman's assertion that Paul believed the world was flat seems to us a rhetorical appeal to modern readers who are not aware of these facts. It is less than honest historical reporting.

Suffering as Punishment for Sin

Now we look at Dr. Ehrman's six views of suffering. First, Dr. Ehrman lays out the biblical view that suffering is punishment for sin. To put it more precisely, this is the view that human suffering is the expression of God's just punishment of sinners. Dr. Ehrman presents this view as if it were only one of several views, even though he believes it is quite characteristic of many biblical writers. We, on the other hand, believe that it is the universal assumption of all biblical writers, even those who express other aspects of revelation, explaining why the people of God suffer. But we will see how this is the case when we look at the other views presented by Ehrman.

One of Ehrman's main objections to this biblical view is that he finds it "morally" repulsive. But we must ask "how can Dr. Ehrman justify his *moral* revulsion against the biblical view that suffering is God's punishment for sin?" Dr. Ehrman is an agnostic, and he does not give us any reason why morality exists. So therefore, how can he reasonably be morally repulsed by the Bible? How can he answer the claim that Fyodor Dostoyevsky puts into the mouth of his main character Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* that if there is no God, there is no morality? If we are simply the random results of a chance universe, why is there any injustice in suffering at all? Is not suffering, on this account, simply the natural occurrence of the struggle for existence? So where is the *moral* problem of suffering in his worldview? And on what ground can Ehrman be morally repulsed when one being causes another to suffer.

The only way to coherently raise the problem of suffering is within a theistic framework. Only if there is a just divine being who controls the world can we rightly ask, "Why is there suffering?" That is, only if God always deals justly with human beings and suffering is not natural to them can we ask, "Why do humans suffer?" Only then does this apparent problem of evil arise.

But Dr. Ehrman may say, "That is precisely the point. I am morally repelled by a worldview (the Christian-theistic one) that has such an apparent problem of evil and tries to answer it by saying that suffering is God's just punishment for sin." However, if Dr. Ehrman makes such a claim then his own worldview must have a basis for making moral claims (justifying its moral revulsion). In addition, his worldview must also contain a reason for believing that human suffering is an evil. For if it is not an evil then Dr. Ehrman has no justification for being morally repulsed by the way in which another worldview seeks to deal with it. For example, if you are morally repulsed by the way a thief seeks to justify theft, it is only because you yourself (at some level) have a just reason for believing that stealing is wrong. So if Dr. Ehrman is morally repulsed by the Christian-theistic notion that suffering is the just punishment of God, he can only do so because he (at some level) has a just reason for believing that suffering is wrong.

However, Dr. Ehrman's agnostic worldview cannot articulate a just reason for believing that suffering is wrong. For only if there is a sovereign God who controls the universe and must keep his creatures from suffering when it is just to do so is suffering wrong. In an agnostic worldview

controlled by chance, it is simply a random occurrence, but not an evil. And only in a theistic worldview is there any justification for morality (and thus moral claims, such as moral revulsion) at all.

As Dostoyevsky recognized, without God there is no morality. For if there is no ultimate standard for right and wrong, how can we claim that something is truly right rather than wrong? How do the concepts of right and wrong have any true ultimate meaning in a universe that in the final analysis is governed by chance? Dr. Ehrman provides us no reasonable explanation for answering this problem and therefore of justifying his “moral” revulsion to Christianity’s claim that suffering is God’s just punishment of sin. His claim is mere sentimental posturing aimed at inculcating this same sentiment in his readers.

This is the case not only with Dr. Ehrman’s appeal to the suffering of children, but also with respect to the Jewish Holocaust. The Jewish Holocaust and the killing fields of Cambodia, together with the millions murdered by Mao and Stalin (which he does not mention), are atrocities of the twentieth century carried out by mad-men who will bear the judgment of God. But they are moral atrocities only within a theistic worldview. And it is precisely the denigration of this worldview that produced the men and women who carried out these murderous actions. Thus, Dr. Ehrman, as one of many in our day who promote Agnosticism, may be helping sow the seeds for the next set of mass murders in times to come.

If the problem of evil or suffering only makes sense within a theistic framework, then we may ask, “Does the Bible present a coherent view of sin and suffering?” And we believe that it does. The New Testament teaches that all human beings are by nature sinners and rebels against God (Rom. 3:10-18). The modern world cannot accept this, saying that people are not really that bad. However, the mass murders of the 20th century should give us pause, showing the evils that lurk within the human heart—evils that are ready to be unleashed when people are liberated from the restraints of society (think Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*).

Those who believe this is too gloomy a view of human nature fail to look beyond the way we are cordial to most people in most circumstances. They fail to see that sin is first of all sin against God, our failure and refusal to worship the God who made us and gives us all good things. If anyone neglected their spouse and treated that person as if he or she did not exist, we would say they hate that person. How much more is it the case with God—the God in whom we live and move and have our existence? If we do not thank and worship him, is it not because we hate him, as Paul said (Rom. 1:30)? God has made himself so plain to us, and though we perceive him, we refuse to acknowledge him (Rom. 1:18-32).

This helps explain why sin deserves suffering, even eternal punishment. It deserves eternal punishment because this God who we rebel against is an eternal being—a being with no beginning or end. As such, God is outside of time and (apart from Christ) sees all your sins continuously for eternity. That is, since he does not move with the flow of time, all of time is continually before him. Just as you look at a landscape and see all the events in the curvature of space simultaneously, so God looks at the line of history and sees all the events in the curvature of time simultaneously. They are constantly before his view. Any sin that you commit against

him is constantly before his view for all eternity. As such, he must judge you for it as long as both you and he have existence. That is, he must judge it eternally.

This biblical view is connected to God's own holy nature. Sin is at the very least the attempt to ignore God and thus do away with him. It is the desire to kill him. This of course can never succeed. However, God cannot invite a heart with such a disposition into union with his heart. For when one unites his heart with another heart their hearts possess the same purpose. Thus, if God were to unite his heart with one who desired to kill him, he would now desire to kill himself. However, this is impossible. God is unchangeable. He is also eternal and can never die. If he were to desire to kill himself this would result in self-annihilation, which is impossible for an eternal being. Thus, God can never even desire this. As such, God cannot invite a heart which desires to kill him into union with his heart. He must reject it. Such a heart cannot continue to receive the goodness of God's presence; instead, it must receive the opposite, which is his wrath. This is his just sentence against all those who wish to extinguish him.

According to Paul, this is the case now (Rom. 1:32; 3:9-19) after the fall of human beings in Adam (Rom. 5: 18, 19). And it is exemplified in every human heart through continual experience. For he continually neglects and thereby rejects the worship of the God who has created and sustains him. And since people know deep down that this requires God's justice, their disdain for him is further exemplified in their hatred of the God who is just and who requires eternal and just recompense for sin.

Dr. Ehrman seems not to have grasped this even during his Evangelical days. For at that time, he thought of the many children who suffered as "innocent" sufferers. We admit that many children who suffer at the hands of powerful regimes are innocent of committing crimes for which those governments could justly execute them. That is, they are innocent of murder or treason in society. And we deplore their unjust mistreatment and slaughter. However, they are not innocent of sinning against God. They do not worship God even to the degree that their underdeveloped capacities might allow. The selfishness of many an infant in its cradle is familiar to mothers worldwide. How much more do they fail to have a sense of reliance on the divine goodness? For this God can justly inflict them with suffering and death, whether at the hand of other humans or natural disasters.

This is connected to the union of these children with Adam, who fell and rebelled against God. All suffering for those in Adam is a foretaste of God's final wrath and just punishment of sin. This union with Adam is also something that is not appreciated in our modern egalitarian society. It is thought that no one should die for the sin of another. That is, no one should die because of their connection with anyone else. However, this is not the experience of people worldwide. In wars throughout the centuries people have died because they are connected to other people in a city or nation. A nation may go to war as the result of one person or a counsel of leaders, a decision over which many people in the country had no direct control. And this may mean their death. So also with the children who starve in foreign countries; children that Ehrman points to, believing them to be examples that cannot be explained by Scripture. These children die partially as a result of where they live, what families they are connected to and perhaps how well their parents provide for them in a time of few resources. We suffer the results of being connected to others. And so this is the case with respect to the connection of the whole human race with

Adam. We are joined to him and thus suffer the consequences of his fall and rebellion against God. We deserve the just punishment of sin as a result of his sin and judgment (Rom. 5:12-21).

Some may object that while this union of people together in suffering is the case in the world around us, it ought not to be the case with a just God. Here of course, we might ask in return how justice really exists in an Agnostic universe. And if it cannot, on what basis do Agnostics define what is just? How can they tell us what God ought to do to be just? How can they say it is unjust for God to judge us in Adam?

Nonetheless, theologians like Jonathan Edwards (i.e., see his *Original Sin*) have shown that what God has done fits with the sense of justice he has given us, even when we reject its source in him. The common objection against our guilt in Adam rests on the assumption that we were not there in Adam and thus cannot be held accountable for his sin. However, Edwards (for one) has shown that this was not the case. According to Edwards, for the apostle Paul, we were so united to Adam in his one act of rebellion that we ourselves truly sinned in him. We refer readers to his treatment for a further examination of the reasoning behind this claim.

Dr. Ehrman rejects this biblical view of suffering—that suffering is God’s punishment for sin. But he can only do so because even as a professing Christian he probably did not accept the Pauline view that no one is innocent in the sight of God. We are all rebels against him. The Semi-Pelagianism (i.e., Arminianism) of his Evangelical views most likely kept Ehrman from grasping this Pauline teaching. However, Paul (rightly understood) presents a coherent view of sin and suffering. And it is only within a theistic worldview (such as we have in Paul) that suffering needs to be explained. For only in that framework do we need to ask the question, if God is just (and as such cannot justly cause the *truly* innocent to suffer) why is there suffering? However, within Atheism and Ehrman’s Agnosticism, this is not a question to be answered because within these worldviews a just God either does not exist or plays no central role. And without a just God in your worldview, you have no ultimate ground for universal justice. As such, Ehrman has no moral ground on which to stand in his criticisms of Adolph Hitler, Pol Pot or the Bible. We do not put the Bible in the same category as the former two mad-men (far from it!), but on Ehrman’s system, he has no moral ground for differentiating them or criticizing any of them. He has no moral ground at all.

Evil is Caused by Evil People Who Abuse Others

Ehrman discusses several other biblical answers to the problem of suffering (as he sees it) and rejects all but one of them. In our opinion he wrongly treats them mostly as isolated views that are not fully integrated with one another. While we admit that different biblical authors may have different emphases, we believe these views are more synthetically and organically related than Ehrman admits. Thus, part of our discussion will involve briefly highlighting their interdependence.

Ehrman considers the biblical view that evil is caused by evil people who abuse others. While he does believe that some biblical authors have more than one view of suffering, he generally considers this view as distinct from the view that suffering is the punishment of sin. He does not see how the two views are integrated. However, Reformed theologians have rightly deduced

from the Scriptures that God executes his judgment on the wicked through the wicked deeds of others.

Admittedly, Ehrman is here dealing with a subject that, when rightly understood, deals with the abuse of God's people by the ungodly. And it is here especially that the Scriptures make it plain that God tests his people through the wicked intentions of the ungodly. We find this from Moses to Paul, as Paul quotes Ex. 9: 6 with respect to Pharaoh—"I raised you up for this very purpose, to demonstrate my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth" (Rom. 9:17).

However, one may object to our critique, noting that Ehrman deals with this subject under the next two categories of suffering. But that is part of our point. These categories are not as neatly divided as Ehrman suggests.

God Works in Suffering to Achieve Redemptive Purposes

This leads us to Ehrman's next category—that God works in suffering to achieve redemptive purposes. Here he highlights the stories of Joseph and Jesus. For Joseph, a primary text is Genesis 50:20: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (cf. Gen. 50:5, 7-8). Ehrman sharply distinguishes the aspect of redemptive suffering found in this verse from his above category—that evil results from the evil intentions of others. However, anyone can observe in this passage, that Joseph puts them both together. This verse says God had a purpose in the suffering, but it also makes it clear that Joseph's brothers had an evil intention. This fits with Ehrman's previous category as well.

Most notably, Ehrman makes Jesus' sufferings just one aspect of this category, that suffering has a redemptive purpose. He does not believe that all of Scripture speaks of Christ. And as we shall see, he specifically denies that the prophets spoke of any time beyond their own. Fitting with this view, he also implicitly denies that the biblical narratives speak of the future. Thus, he does not see the story of Jesus in the story Joseph as he is abused by his brothers, sold into slavery, wrongly abused, suffers in the depth of the pit, and is raised to reign and give food to the nations. As a result, when he comes to Jesus, Ehrman simply treats him as one more example of suffering that achieves a redemptive purpose. However, the New Testament makes it very clear that all things in the old anticipated and looked forward to Christ (cf. Lk. 24:27; 1 Cor. 10:4). All the promises of God are yes and amen in him (2 Cor. 1:20). This is crucial because Christ's sufferings are not simply one more example of redemptive suffering. They are the only sufferings that were truly redemptive. It is only the benefits of Christ's sufferings that were administered to the suffering saints of the Old Testament in the midst of their sufferings. Joseph's sufferings were not redemptive.

We sinners deserve eternal punishment for our sins against God, the only eternal being. Only Christ can bear this *eternal* wrath because he was also *eternal* God. We deserve to be in hell forever and ever. If Christ were merely a perfect man and paid our penalty, he would have to suffer punishment forever and ever and never leave it. But even then there would never come a point at which our punishment was fully satisfied. So we could never come to heaven.

Only if Christ is *eternal* God, can he bear *eternal* wrath in a moment of time and satisfy it completely. Thus, no one else's suffering was truly redemptive. That is, it was not the ground of redemption. But God so united Old Testament saints with Christ to come that they truly experienced Christ's sufferings and redemption in their sufferings. However, they never experienced them in a way that their sufferings became the ground of salvation for themselves or others. In Joseph's case, God simply united Joseph to Christ in such a way that he became the instrumental means of delivering God's people from famine. But Christ's sufferings alone were the ground of their deliverance, even from famine. Ehrman undermines this by making Christ's sufferings simply one subcategory of the broader category of redemptive suffering.

Ehrman's failure to see the foundational nature of Christ's redemptive suffering plays into his failure to make union with Christ a central or even subsidiary category of suffering in Scripture.² However, for the New Testament writers, all the sufferings of saints recorded in the Old Testament anticipate, lay hold of and foretell Christ's sufferings to come. Likewise, all the saints of the New Testament era possess Christ's life in their sufferings. And so they lay hold of Christ's sufferings in their own sufferings. In other words, they are united to Christ in their sufferings. We will expand on this toward the end of our review when we critique Ehrman's view of Paul's eschatology.

Job: Suffering as a Test from God

Next we turn to Dr. Ehrman's fourth biblical teaching on suffering. That is, suffering is a test from God to see if his people will remain faithful to him even when it does not pay to do so. He sees this in the story section of Job, which he calls a folktale. This language of "folktale" just underscores Ehrman's higher critical cards again, and shows that he cannot do justice to the redemptive *historical* character of revelation and its organically unfolding nature.

Once again, we believe that this teaching of suffering in Job is artificially separated from the others. While we admit that one biblical author may give greater emphasis to the aspect of testing and one to providential care (perhaps with Joseph), these biblical authors nowhere reveal that they intend to pit one of these perspectives over against the other, and in some cases their interrelationships are apparent. In the book of Job, we see God's ultimate control over all the proceedings. They are under his oversight. And for the writer it would seem that God must have a *purpose* for this whole ordeal—a purpose to which he is directing it. For in the book, God essentially asks Job if he can fathom his divine mind (Job 38). He cannot, for God has an infinite mind that no man can comprehend. There is a divine purpose for everything that God has created and so God has a divine purpose in the sufferings of Job. He is not simply testing Job to see if something might result, but he is sovereign over all things and thus directs them to an end. The book also presupposes the "other" biblical view that suffering results from sin. And it does this even though it undercuts mistaken conclusions of what this may mean in the suffering of God's people.

²Ehrman so fails to see this that he seems to suggest that suffering is redemptive for all people. However, in both the Old and New Testaments those who are not God's covenant people are under his wrath in their sufferings. They are not under his redemptive care.

Following Dr. Ehrman's claim that there are different and contradictory views of suffering in the Bible, he also believes that the Book of Job presents two entirely different (read "incompatible") views of suffering. He does this based on a higher critical claim that the narrative sections of the book of Job (sometimes referred to as the "frame story") were written by a different author (or authors) than the poetry sections of the book. He believes that the frame story teaches that suffering is a test from God to see if his people will remain faithful to him even when it does not pay to do so. However, he believes that the poetry claims that there is no answer to suffering. That is, God does not reveal this information to creatures like us. Thus, we will deal here with Dr. Ehrman's claim that, first, the frame story and the poetry come from different hands; and secondly the frame story and the poetry have different answers to suffering.

First we deal with the claim that the story and poetry sections are distinct sources. Higher critics like Dr. Ehrman often claim that they are carrying out a scientific analysis of the Bible. However, the claim to dissect the book of Job into its narrative and poetic components and the claim that these come from different authorial hands is highly unproven and therefore unscientific. It is very reasonable for an author to write narrative sections of his work and poetry sections for that same work. As such they come from his one authorial hand. To claim that they come from different hands is simply a hypothesis—an unproven hypothesis. The scientific method, as it has been developed from Francis Bacon to the present, begins with observations. Based on these observations a scientist draws a hypothesis. However, the process is not supposed to end there. After a hypothesis is made, the scientist is then called upon to look for other evidence to either prove or disprove her hypothesis. Only when that hypothesis is further substantiated by other evidence does it become a theory. And only after a theory has been further substantiated by continuous evidence can it be called a scientific law. Karl Popper has added to that (in partial correction of his positivist scientific colleagues) the notion of falsifiability, believing that no theory can call itself scientific which is non-falsifiable—that is, that has no criterion by whereby it might be falsified. These higher critical theories which differentiate the narrative and poetic sections of Job are unscientific since they treat something that is merely a hypothesis as if it had the strength of a scientific theory. All that these scholars have essentially done is make some observations and draw the hypothesis that the narrative sections of the book of Job come from a different authorial hand than the poetic sections. But they cannot acquire enough further evidence to substantiate this claim; in fact, they *have* none. Therefore, their view does not even arise to the degree of probability found in a scientific theory. And if we were to apply Popper's criterion, they certainly have not given us a principle by which their theory could be falsified. But even without a criterion of falsifiability, their claims are merely conjectural hypotheses.

Then what they do is add another hypothesis upon hypothesis. And this is what we have with Dr. Ehrman: he piles hypothesis upon hypothesis, assuming the previous hypothesis to have the strength of a scientific theory or law. But the house has no real foundation, as it is founded upon weak and dubious evidence. Such higher critical theories lack so little evidence that critics of this kind come up with numerous theories that merely seem to fit their fancy. Someone has even

argued that there is an initial core story behind the actual narrative sections of Job, which he thinks he can ferret out at least to some degree.³

Thus, Ehrman has scanty evidence to prove his position for distinguishing the poetic from the narrative sections of Job. In addition we can point to elements that make this theory problematic. First, while there are some who have claimed that the narrative sections of the book of Job can stand by themselves as a complete story, we find this claim questionable. First, if the narrative sections of the book of Job (Job 1-2; 42:7-17) are to be considered a whole story, they are missing much of what usually constitutes a complete story. For instance, there is no real second act in this story. Most dramas (curtain or no curtain) can be divided into a three-act structure, the second act being the longest of the three. The first act includes an inciting incident such as we find in Job 1:13-19, in which messengers come to Job telling him of the tragic events that have befallen him and his house. It is only after the inciting incident in most dramas that we begin act two. However, sometimes there is a series of inciting incidents in act one, which may be represented in the book of Job by the second incident, in which he is given sore boils (2:7-8). With the arrival of his three friends (Job 2:11-13), we may have the transition from act one to act two. During act two, most dramas have some stages of opposition and conflict, which then bring their character to his or her lowest point or highest point, if it is a tragedy. We may call this the point just prior to the dramatic turnaround in which the character then has a reversal of fortunes, leading us into act three and the final climax. This is similar to Aristotle's rising and falling action, the dramatic turnaround being similar to the peak or hinge that separates the rising action from the falling action. If the narrative sections of Job (chapters 1-2 and 42:7-17) are one complete narrative, there really is no second act; in fact there is no dramatic turnaround or point of transition from the rising to the falling action. Instead, we are simply left with the *results* of Job's dramatic turnaround in Job 42:7-17, results which place us in act three. Thus we have no complete story in the narrative sections of Job. It is missing act two in its entirety.

On the other hand, if both the poetic and narrative sections of Job were composed as one complete literary unit, these problems disappear. Admittedly, the poetry is not narrative prose. However, the poetry continues the story and has narrative elements in it. That is, narrative history is behind the poetry in the poetic sections. And Job's friends continue the temptations of Satan for Job to give up his faith in God. The conflict between Job and his three friends can be seen as a set of three stages of opposition and conflict in which Job progressively wins the argument against them. After three sets of speeches and responses, Job's friends cannot answer him. In this way, Job may be seen to come to his highest point in this stage of the drama. However, from the point of view of the book, his highest point at this stage is also a point that is low in comparison to the transformation that will occur for him with the speeches of Elihu and the appearance and Word of God himself.

Some, of course, have denied the originality of Elihu's speeches, noting a difference in the poetic style from that of Job and his three friends. However, as Mark Twain once pointed out in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, it is to the advantage of an author to give his characters unique speech in order to distinguish them from one another. There is no reason to believe this is not the case with Elihu, whose poetry, while perhaps inferior in style, may either

³ Aron Pinker, "The Core Story in the Prologue—Epilogue of the Book of Job." *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, vol. 6, article 1. Available at <http://www.jhsonline.org>.

represent his youth or be contrasted with his superior wisdom. As William Henry Green pointed out, Elihu's speech puts before Job his sin of pride.⁴ In this way he sets up God's speech in the whirlwind. Elihu makes arguments that will prepare the way for God's appearance, while God (who need not submit to the bar of man's justice) simply need appear and make his case. In addition, we might note here the connection of the Elihu speech to the frame story. If Elihu brings before Job his pride, then this is likely a development of the story that is already implicit in the narrative sections of Job 1-2. Shimon Bar-Efrat has pointed out an implicit distinction between sinning with the lips and sinning with the heart in the book of Job. In Job 1:5, Job presents offerings for his children after the feast in case they have sinned in their hearts, whereas Job 2:10 states, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips." Bar-Efrat believes that this may indicate that Job may have sinned in his heart at this point (2:10), though he had not sinned with his lips. If so, we have an indication of Job's pride, which then is rebuked by Elihu in the poetic section of the book, thereby connecting the narrative and poetic sections of the book.

In addition, the Elihu speeches (Job 32-37) and God's speeches (Job 38-41) provide the context for the transition from the rising to the falling action in a dramatic narrative. That is, we have room here for a dramatic turnaround in which Job comes to understand his true need and is transformed. This may take place in stages, but it nonetheless happens in this section, providing a transition from the second to the third acts in a dramatic narrative. We begin to see this when Job does not answer Elihu's first speech (33:32-33). Job had previously responded to his three friends and had won his case with them. Now he is silent before the speech of Elihu. At the end of Elihu's speeches, Job is also silent and does not speak (Job 37: 24). Instead, God appears in the whirlwind (Job 38:1), and Job's first response is, "Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to you? I lay my hand on my mouth" (Job 40:4). Thus Job is silenced and here we find the transition in the life of Job. We seem to be observing a dramatic turnaround or the peak of a rising and falling action which may be occurring in stages. It appears to find its culmination in Job 42:1-6, where Job repents. Or this may simply be a further transformation of Job occurring in act three of our drama. Nonetheless, however we may see this transformation take place; it is the *poetic* section which has provided this transition. Without the poetry, it does not exist.

In addition, if the narrative section of Job is supposedly a complete narrative, we run into some serious difficulties. Job 2:11-13 tell us of Job's three friends sitting around him in silence. They say nothing and do nothing at the conclusion of this narrative section. If this is the case, then why does God speak to them in Job 42:7-9, rebuking them? For if this is where the narrative section picks up, they have said nothing, whereas Job 42:7 states, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." Here the Lord is not rebuking them for complete silence, but for their fallacious speech, which they have not spoken, if 42:7 follows directly after 2:13. Therefore the poetic section is necessary to this narrative and its cogency. Job 42:8-9 continues on this assumption. Nor does Job 42:10 make any sense without the intervening poetry, for there the Lord restores the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends. However, if they had not sinned by their speech, there would have been no reason for him to pray for them. And *this* intercessory prayer is part of the Lord's restoring of Job and his fortunes. On Ehrman's higher critical views then, Job 42:7-10 could not have been part of the original narrative either. It would have had to begin with 42:11. However, if this is the case, once again we have no complete narrative. For then, Job 2:13, in

⁴ William Henry Green, "The Book of Job." *Biblical Reparatory and Princeton Review* 29 (1857): 296.

which Job sits down with his friends is simply followed by Job having his fortunes restored with all his brothers and sisters coming to be with him. There is no explanation for the dramatic transition that must have taken place between these passages. Thus we conclude that this view—in which the narrative sections come from a hand different than that of the poetic sections—is strained and dubious.

This makes Dr. Ehrman's claim that the frame story and the poetry have different answers to suffering just as problematic. He claims that from the frame story we learn that the righteous sufferer will be recompensed, while from the poetic section we learn that there is no answer to suffering. Thus, once again, he claims that they have two different answers to suffering.

We have indicated the dubious nature of the separation of the narrative from the poetic sections of the book and this alone should suffice to undermine his position. However, we will also consider the nature of the answers to suffering given in these sections of the book and see that they are compatible. First, we consider the narrative prose sections of Job. It is true, Job is tested here by God. And he is tested as to whether he will bless God in the midst of much of earthly suffering. And the blessing of God is not without blessing to his servants. Job does not seem to believe that his life in God is completely without blessing when he says to his wife, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity" (Job 2:10). And the narrative prose does not leave him without hope. It gives him a reward (Job 42). In accordance with his patriarchal status during the patriarchal age, there is every reason to believe that his recompense is an anticipation of the eschatological blessings to come. That is, the narrative implicitly teaches that in the world to come those who trust in their God will receive life in the flesh and everlasting blessings. This accords with Abraham, who was promised that he would be heir of the world, i.e., the world to come (Rom. 4:13).

The poetry sections of the book also suggest an eschatological orientation. Part of Job's struggle against his three friends involves the temptation to deny the general integrity of his faith (by grace) and thereby his hope. In this he succeeds, culminating in his confession in Job 19:26: "in my flesh I shall see God". Job's sin is that at the very least he comes close to questioning God's justice and does not justify God. This reveals his pride and his failure to bless and trust God as he ought. But he is right not to accuse himself in the manner his friends suggest he should and thereby deny that God is his Lord. He lays hold of his eschatological hope (even if weakly at times in the earlier chapters) and this accords with his reward in the concluding narrative prose section of the book (Job 42:7-17).

In accordance with this, the poetry sections also lead Job to trust in his God as the one who cares for him, loves him and does all things for his good. As William Henry Green has pointed out, God's speech is not simply an answer of sheer power. It is not one in which God simply indicates to Job that he must submit to the Almighty since he is more powerful than Job. If this were God's answer, it would not be contrary to Job's earlier thoughts, in which Job considered God's treatment of him arbitrary, i.e., an arbitrary exertion of his power. Instead, according to Green, God shows forth in the whirlwind his full attributes, by which Job should trust in God's purpose in his suffering.⁵

⁵ Ibid., 303.

This theme fits together with the implicit result of trusting God found in the narrative epilogue of the book. Pride is contrasted to trusting God, as Elihu spoke against pride in Job 35:12-13 when he said, “There they cry out, but He does not answer because of the pride of evil men; surely God will not listen to an empty cry, nor will the Almighty regard it.” But for Elihu, God will listen to the humble, to those who trust in him. And for Elihu this implicitly has an eschatological orientation when he looks at the suffering Job and states, “He pays a man according to his work...the Almighty will not pervert justice” (Job 34:11-12). And so, as Job is humbled in 40:3-5 and then once again in 42:1-6, he repents in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). He humbles himself and now trusts in the Lord. This humility is seen once again in the narrative section in 42:9 where Job implicitly gives a sacrifice and offering for his three friends, despite the fact that they have violently abused him with their words. He has humbled himself. He has come to a greater trust in the Lord and thus the Lord restores his fortunes. As a result, the poetry and the narrative fit together with this theme of humbling men’s pride. Job is now humbled to trust in his God even more so, laying greater hold on his God and the eschatological life to come. Next, we give an example of a scholar with higher critical sympathies who implicitly disagrees with Dr. Ehrman’s approach to the book of Job. Robert Alter, who claims to accept the view that there are different literary strata within the book, nonetheless claims that the view that God’s speech provides no answer is shortsighted.⁶ That is, Alter claims that the view that God provides no answer to suffering or implies that there is no answer is shortsighted. In fact, as we have seen, this is Ehrman’s view. By implication, Alter is contending that Ehrman’s view is shortsighted. To prove his case, Alter shows numerous connections between God’s speech in the whirlwind and Job’s first piece of poetry in the book. Through these connections, Dr. Alter shows that God’s speech in the whirlwind answers Job’s objections in his first piece of poetry. The poetry does not provide the answer that Job expected, but it is an answer. Thus the poetry does not teach that there is no answer to suffering, rather it provides its own answer.

According to Alter, the wonders of God’s work in nature give Job a larger perspective beyond himself and perhaps of his own sense of unfairness. Thus it provides an answer to Job by opening up his horizons. Alter’s work, in showing the connections between the whirlwind speech and the first bit of Job’s poetry, shows us that indeed the whirlwind speech is God’s response to Job’s cries, though one that is fully in accordance with God’s own glorious nature and shows forth the wonders of his attributes as Job’s Lord.

We might also ask ourselves whether God’s speech in the whirlwind displays the new creation. Certainly it is the appearance of God Himself, which is a foretaste of his eschatological appearance at the end of the ages. Thus, it implicitly reveals his eschatological glory—the glory of the age to come. Thus, we might wonder if God’s revelation of his power over creation and the display of his multiple and wondrous attributes in the creation reveals the fact that he is able (and perhaps willing) to bring a new creation—one in which those attributes will be displayed in their fullness.

In fact, God’s speech in the whirlwind, in which he speaks of his power over nature, may reveal redemption as the means of that new creation. Some have suggested that his description of Behemoth (the hippopotamus) and Leviathan (the crocodile) may be allusions to more than these natural beasts. They may even speak of the great enemy of God’s people, Satan himself. One

⁶ For the discussion that follows, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (1985) 105-38.

indication that in fact Leviathan may be more than a simple crocodile is both his allusion earlier in the book and also the questions that are asked with respect to him (Job 41:1-7). For instance, when the author says, “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fish hook?” God is implying that you cannot. Verse 2 states, “Can you put a rope in his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook?” Here it seems that God is implying you cannot. Yet this is precisely how the Egyptians used to capture crocodiles. So perhaps God is saying, “The creature I am talking about cannot be captured in such a way,” that is, “the true Leviathan cannot be so captured, but *I* have control over him, and *I* will deliver you from his hand.” Even if this is not the case, the eschatological appearance of God (Job 38-42) indicates God’s display of the new creation to come. And in this way, we are drawn to Job 42:10-17 in which Job’s restoration is an anticipation of the world to come—life before the throne of God for his suffering servant. In this way, we are led ahead to the true servant, to whom Job was united, namely Christ Jesus, the Lord who suffered the abuse of men and the loss of all things, and yet—giving up himself a sacrifice for his abusers, and praying for them—was in his resurrection restored to life everlasting in the presence of God, given a true and everlasting family and a glorious household, in which he would live out all his days for eternity.

This is Job’s—the book of Job’s—true answer to the problem of suffering. That is, at the very least, it is an eschatological answer no matter how imperfectly we may understand it. Thus, the poetry and the narrative provide the same answer, not merely a horizontal, philosophical answer, but a transcendent, eternal, eschatological one. They are in complete harmony in Christ Jesus.

Understanding Suffering is Beyond Mere Mortals

Ehrman tries to make a fifth category of suffering distinct from the others. And the dialogue sections of Job fall under this category. Ehrman claims that according to the fifth view, we cannot know why there is suffering in the world—either (1) because God chooses not to reveal this information to creatures like ourselves (Job’s poetry) or (2) because it is beyond mere mortals (Ecclesiastes). We have already critiqued Ehrman’s views on Job’s poetry. Thus, we turn briefly to Ecclesiastes.

Ehrman also takes a higher critical approach to the book of Ecclesiastes (no surprise), assuming that the author did not look beyond the horizon of his own day. On this view, Ecclesiastes has no eschatology. It does not look to the future. And thus its writer can see no resolution to suffering. He is ignorant of its purpose, if it has any at all. Ehrman finds himself identifying with this view of suffering more than any other. However, this view is more a matter of Ehrman reading his own views onto Ecclesiastes in the same way that the questers read themselves back onto the “historical” Jesus.

We admit that to the common observer, at first glance, Ecclesiastes seems more gloomy or reticent than other works. But as we see it, it must be read in its redemptive-historical context. In this context, Solomon (denied to be the writer by higher critics) looks back at his life and the decline of the kingdom during that time. That is, the book must be read with the background of Deuteronomy in mind, among other things. Solomon recognizes more fully than before the vanity of the Deuteronomic blessings of the land. He sees the unraveling of those blessings in the decline of the monarchy that is before him. These provisional blessings are vanity compared to the eternal God. And thus he ends the book with an eschatological note: “fear God and keep his

commandments”. This is not vanity. And if it is not vanity, it has a vector that leads beyond the vain and fleeting. It has an eschatological orientation. In it, Solomon is lead to the eschatological kingdom of heaven—a kingdom whose blessings are not vain, but eternal in Christ Jesus, the true and everlasting king.

With this eschatological orientation, Solomon sheds light on the nature of the vanity of life in this fleeting world and thus on the nature of suffering, which involves the diminution of its fleeting blessings. This author is not ignorant of the causes of suffering. Instead, he suggests its nature in relationship to vain things and contrasts it ultimately to the world to come. Ehrman cannot appeal to Ecclesiastes for his own Agnostic view of God, future glory and the nature of suffering. Ecclesiastes is fully in line with the other biblical writers and is part of the chain of the unfolding revelation of suffering in Christ from the old to the new era. This fits with what that we saw Paul developing in 2 Corinthians 4, as he viewed suffering in light of the progressive movement from the old to the new covenant.

The Apocalyptic View of Suffering

Finally, Ehrman presents the apocalyptic view of suffering. In his opinion, this means that God does not bring disasters, but his cosmic enemies do. However, by presenting the matter this way, he suggests that biblical authors expressing the apocalyptic view do not hold to the other biblical views Ehrman articulates. That is, the apocalyptic writers do not believe that suffering is God’s punishment for sin (Ehrman’s first view), nor that God works suffering to achieve his purposes (view 3) or to test his people (view 4). That is, this way of putting the apocalyptic view seems to suggest that it is at odds with any view that asserts that God is behind suffering in some way.

However, we must object to this way of formulating the apocalyptic view of suffering. Certainly apocalypticism deals with cosmic battles and thus the forces set against God’s people. But even here it is not opposed to the view that God brings suffering. In fact, apocalypticism often teaches this very thing. For instance, in the book of Revelation, John describes the bowls of God’s wrath which bring suffering—the sores on the ungodly, etc. (Rev. 6:1-12). In biblical apocalypticism, God’s enemies do bring suffering, but they do so ultimately because God executes his wrath through them. And God is just to use his enemies in this way, for this is his just punishment upon them for their own sins.

Ehrman even states that Paul held to the apocalyptic view as he formulates it. That is, for Ehrman, Paul believed that God does *not* bring disasters, only God’s enemies do so. However, this does not fit with the whole picture we have of the apostle. Who can forget Paul’s words, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23)? Undoubtedly this means that *God* judges people with death because they have earned and deserve it for their sins.

Without question, Paul has an eschatological view of the gospel, but it is precisely this eschatological view that leads to his belief that God will judge the ungodly (Rom. 2:6; 1:32). And their present suffering is a foretaste of God’s wrath insofar as “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18).

For Paul, clearly *God* does bring disasters. These disasters are his just punishment of the wicked. And as we have seen, Paul believed the Christians suffer in union with Christ. Thus, he would have agreed with the writer to the Hebrews that God brings suffering to his people as judicial chastisement, not as punishment (Heb. 12:4-13). This is because Christ has borne their punishment.

In connection with Ehrman's formulation of the apocalyptic view, we should note his higher critical approach to prophecy. He does not believe in it. That is, he claims that the prophets were only looking to events in their own times. Isaiah was looking merely to events in the immediate life of Israel, not to those in the distant future. Thus, Ehrman denies all prophetic references to Christ.

He puts it provocatively, saying that the prophets were not star gazers. They were not looking to present day events taking place in our newspapers. He regards this view as self-centered. We acknowledge, against Dispensationalism, that the OT prophets were not giving rigid one-to-one descriptions of events in our own time. But they were looking ahead to Christ to come and to the eschatological kingdom he would bring. And thus, insofar as this semi-eschatological age in general is a fulfillment of the prophetic promises, they prophesied about us in Christ. However, they prophesied about us only insofar as we are caught up in Christ's redemptive drama. The glory of God in Christ is the final end of their prophecy, not the socio-political events of the present time.

We believe it is actually Ehrman who attributes a self-centered view to the prophets rather than one that is God-centered, looking to the ultimate plan and consummate glory of God. For he states that the prophets merely looked to the calendar of their own newspapers (if we may put it that way). And he goes on to add that their prophetic projections of Israel's restoration were not fulfilled. We, on the contrary, believe with the New Testament writers that they were fulfilled in Christ. They were fulfilled in his life, death, resurrection and present reign at the right hand of the Father. And they shall find their consummate fulfillment upon his return with eternal glory. Ehrman, by restricting the prophecies to the newspaper reports of the prophet's own day reduces them to the same man-centered horizontal scheme as those Dispensationalists he criticizes, who focus on present day news reports. But he is worse than they, for at least they see an element of fulfillment in Christ where he sees none.

The test case that Ehrman presents for prophecy is the book of Daniel. Ehrman believes it is of a late date, that of the second century B.C. Thus, for Ehrman, Daniel cannot have written it in the sixth century B. C. The upshot of this critical view is that the events Daniel describes are not prophecy. For Ehrman, they describe events that had already taken place when the book was written. So the book does not present prophecy of future events, for this would require supernatural revelation, and Ehrman does not want this.

Thus, what are Ehrman's arguments for a late date for Daniel? First, Ehrman claims (following many higher critics) that both the Hebrew and the Aramaic of the book could not have been written in the sixth century B.C. However, this does not deal adequately with all the evidence. Kenneth A. Kitchen has made a compellingly argument from original documents that the Aramaic of Daniel could have been written in the sixth century B.C. Also, comparing Daniel's

grammatical constructions of Aramaic to those of the sixth and second centuries, he has shown that the book was more likely written in the sixth century.⁷ Alongside him, W. J. Martin has given evidence to seriously question the view that the Hebrew of Daniel could only have arisen after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.⁸ All in all, the language of Daniel points more to the sixth than the second century B.C., right in line with Daniel's presence in Babylon.

Second, Ehrman believes that Daniel speaks only of Antiochus Epiphanes and not of a little horn beyond him. Since he takes a second century B.C. date for the book, he can claim that it does not prophesy about anything beyond the writer's contemporaries. We have already noted the evidence for the early date of the book. But here we also note that even on the assumptions of the late date, this view of restricting Daniel's prophecy to Antiochus Epiphanes cannot stand. Daniel also prophesies of another ruler to come after Antiochus Epiphanes, namely the Anti-Christ.

This is seen in the difference between Daniel's vision in Dan. 8:23-25 and that in 7:24-25. Dan. 8:23-25 speaks of someone who arises from Greece, the third kingdom. This is Antiochus Epiphanes. But 7:24-25 speaks of someone who arises from a fourth kingdom (Dan. 7:23). This cannot be Greece and thus cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes. He is interpreted by Paul to be the Anti-Christ (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

Finally (and this brings us back to the theme of suffering), Ehrman believes that the book of Daniel presents a different view of suffering from the earlier prophets. He believes that Daniel's view of suffering fits more with the intertestamental apocalyptic writers than the early prophets of the Hebrew Bible.

What are the differences he notes? They are six in nature. At least half of them are developed from Ehrman's approach to apocalypticism which we have already questioned, namely, that God does not bring disasters. Each of Ehrman's professed differences is associated with a question. The first question is, "Why do people suffer?" Amos claims that people are suffering because they have violated his will and he is punishing them. Daniel teaches that people suffer because of evil forces in the world (the beasts)—the forces opposed to God and those who side with him (Dan. 7).

While Daniel certainly presents a different aspect of the multifaceted jewel of revelation than Amos, we believe that Ehrman has wrongly pitted these two against one another as if they hold mutually exclusive views. This especially can be seen in Ehrman's neglect of Daniel 9. That chapter clearly teaches that Israel has suffered and gone into exile because of her sins. "Indeed all Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, not obeying your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against him" (Dan. 9:11). Daniel clearly teaches (like Amos) that God's people are suffering because they have violated his law and he is chastening them.

⁷K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (1966) 89-96.

⁸W. J. Martin, "The Hebrew of Daniel," D. J. Wiseman, ed., *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (1965) 28-30.

This passage also melts away Ehrman's next three differences. He believes that for Amos, God causes suffering, but for Daniel only the forces opposed to God cause suffering. However, Daniel 9 teaches that God also inflicts suffering. Ehrman believes that in Amos the people are at fault for suffering because they have sinned, but in Daniel the forces aligned against God persecute God's people. Again we do not deny that in Daniel the persecution of the saints is revealed in a way not found in Amos. However, Daniel and Amos cannot thereby be pitted against one another since Daniel also teaches that the people are at fault for their suffering as a result of their sins.

Ehrman's fourth difference is in answer to the question, "What causes suffering?" According to Ehrman, Amos teaches that it is caused by the sinful activity of God's people, but Daniel claims it is caused by the upright behavior of those who side with God. However, once again this neglects Daniel 9 in which God's people also suffer in exile because of their sin.

Since we have clearly seen that the differences between Daniel and Amos above are simply different nuances that are mutually compatible, there is every reason to believe that Ehrman's last two differences may also have this nature. And this we believe to be the case. His fifth difference answers the question, "How will suffering end?" Amos answers, "When God's people repent," and Daniel answers, "When God destroys the forces opposed to him and sets up his kingdom". Again, there are differences of emphasis between Amos and Daniel and organic development in Daniel. But we ask, "Why are these conceptions mutually incompatible?" When God destroys those opposed to his people, they will repent. No problem here.

Finally, Ehrman's sixth difference answers the question, "When will it end?" As Ehrman sees it, for Amos it will end in an undisclosed future time, but for Daniel it will end soon, when God intervenes. However, once again, there is no incompatibility here. Even if Ehrman's general outline is correct, Amos might not disclose the nearness of the future while Daniel expands on this same future, saying that it will come soon, when God intervenes. Again, we do not deny the different historical differences between the time and locations of Amos and Daniel. However, we reject the inference (even if not explicitly stated) that these are incompatible differences and differences of such a nature that they indicate that Daniel is a second century document. Daniel organically unfolds the prophetic revelation in a way that Amos does not, but the two are connected by an organic continuity that cannot be artificially severed.

Finally, having dealt with some of Ehrman's views on OT prophecy and eschatology we turn to his views on NT eschatology. This can be divided into two overall claims. The first is the higher critical view that the NT authors believed that Christ would return in their own lifetimes. The second follows from this, namely that most of the NT authors looked only for a future eschatology on the vertical horizon of history. They did not believe that Christ's resurrection into heaven was a foretaste of the world to come. That is, for Ehrman most NT authors did not believe that the eschaton was possessed by Christ and his church now as a transcendent reality, i.e., above in the heavenly places.

First, Ehrman claims that Paul and John believed that Christ would come soon, but these apostles were wrong. Ehrman's astonishing proof-text for Paul is 1 Thess. 4:15: "that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who have fallen asleep". Ehrman

takes Paul to mean that he as an individual will be among the “we” who will be alive when Christ has come. However, this is clearly a wooden way to take the passage linguistically. If Paul’s “we” must include himself individually, by similar logic it must include every individual designated within the category of “we”. And the Thessalonians are all addressed as “we”; “we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:18). Thus, on this logic it must include every one of the Thessalonians. However, Paul’s use of the phrase “we who are still alive” hypothetically distinguishes it from “we” who have died, implying that “we” may not include all those he is addressing or even Paul himself.

Going further, “the dead” are the dead “in Christ” which are all Christians who are dead in Christ. Thus by way of mirror opposition, the “we” must include all those alive in Christ, not just the Thessalonians. Thus, if Paul is saying that we who are alive and left means I Paul will be alive and left, then Paul is saying that all we Christians who might hear my words will be alive and left. However, this is absurd. Clearly the “we” is not used in 1 Thess. 4:15 without qualification. Paul limits a category within the “we”. He speaks of a subcategory within the broader category of “we”, namely, “we who are alive and left”, as suggested above. This no more indicates that Paul (as an individual within the broader category of “we”) will be alive and left than anyone else within the broader category of “we” will be alive and left. It simply indicates that some within the Christian communion will be alive and left when Christ returns.

If Paul never claimed that he would be alive when Christ returns what shall we say regarding the hope of the NT authors that Christ will come back soon? To this we say, with Geerhardus Vos, that NT authors saw themselves so much in terms of their present position in the heavenly places that they saw heaven as their primary abode.⁹ This was the heavenly eschatological abode of eternity, the same abode that (from this eternal perspective) was coming soon. If you are presently living in the heavenly arena to which you are also looking forward, it is right at the door. This is how the early Christians viewed themselves. As such, they saw Christ’s return as harkening soon. The longed for consummation was at the door and it continues to be such for all who live from the same point of view as the NT authors.

This brings us to a consideration of Ehrman’s view that the NT authors only believed in a horizontal eschatology and that they reverted to a vertical eschatology when Christ did not come soon on the horizontal plane of history. Interestingly, Ehrman takes a pre-millennial interpretation of the book of Revelation. Thus, this must color his understanding of the author’s (not the apostle John, on his view) horizontal eschatology. Ehrman believes that this transition from the horizontal to the vertical view of eschatology takes place in the NT itself, John (in his gospel) holding to the vertical view.

However, we believe the amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 does greater justice to the passage. It is consistent with the other NT authors, who universally teach that the new heavens and new earth arise directly after the next (second) coming of Christ (e.g., Matt. 25:31, 34, 41; 2 Pet. 3:3-4, 7, 10-13) and that the resurrection of the just and unjust occur simultaneously (John 5:29; Acts 24:15). The next event on the eschatological calendar is the future resurrection day in which the dead will be raised forever (1 Cor. 15:51-55) and the wicked judged forever (1 Thess.

⁹ Geerhardus Vos, “The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of Spirit,” *Biblical and Theological Studies* (1912) 209-59. Available online at www.biblicaltheology.org.

5:2-7 with 2 Thess. 1:5-10). The pre-tribulation rapture view (admittedly not held by Ehrman) claims falsely that a secret rapture occurs in Paul in 1 Thess. 4:13-18. But this is falsified by the fact that in the following verses (1 Thess. 5:2-7), it is clear that this is the same day in which destruction (the eternal destruction of 2 Thess. 1:9) comes on the ungodly as a thief. Everywhere else in the NT then the new heavens and earth follow right after Christ's next return.

Some have argued that there is progressive revelation from Paul to John, revealing only to John that there will be a millennial kingdom just as there was progressive revelation from the OT apostles, revealing only to the NT apostles that there would be a distinction between the first and second coming of Christ. But this is fallacious because progressive revelation revealing new epochs (such as a millennial kingdom) are always preceded by significant redemptive historical events. Thus between the OT prophets and the NT apostles we have the death and resurrection of Christ. This newly disclosed period between Christ's first and second coming interpret and explain that event and its significance. We have no such event (even of a remotely similar character between the death of Peter and Paul and that of John's revelation on the island of Patmos). Thus, there is no objective redemptive historical event which requires a millennial kingdom as Christ's death and resurrection into heaven required this new era between his two advents. There is no ground for this kind of progressive revelation and it cannot be used to explain the supposed fact that to John was now revealed a millennial kingdom of which Paul and Peter knew nothing.

The clincher in Rev. 20 itself is the fact that the end of Rev. 19 (the Battle of Armageddon) and the end of Rev. 20 (the battle of Gog and Magog) are described in Ezek. 38-39 as the same event. Rev. 19:17-18, 21 clearly pick up the language of Ezek. 39:17-20, implying that Rev. 19's battle of Armageddon is the same as the battle of Gog and Magog (Ezek. 38:2-3, 18; 39:1). Therefore, the battle of Armageddon in Rev. 19 is the same as the battle of Gog and Magog in Rev. 20: 8-9. We must conclude that after the end of Rev. 19, Rev. 20 goes back, re-describing history before the battle of Armageddon and then describing the battle once again in Rev. 20:8-9. As a result, Rev. 20:1-6 does not describe a thousand year reign between Christ's next return and the new heavens and new earth. It describes events that are now occurring. And we believe it describes the present heavenly reign of those who have died in the Lord. This is just one indication that the book of Revelation teaches a transcendent eschatology.

For clear indications that Paul taught a transcendent eschatology, we could point to his description of the Jerusalem above (Gal. 4:26), the transcendent city of God in heaven to which the saints are now united as an anticipation of the age to come. And we could articulate its connection to the rest of the teaching of Galatians which contrasts this heavenly perspective to the earthly perspective of the Judaizers. We could also discuss the justification of God's name in Romans—how he has justified his name by eternally cursing his people's sins in Christ and thereby bringing them into a heavenly inheritance of the Spirit. None of his people can be snatched from this inheritance as they were taken from the inheritance of Israel's land of old, thereby bringing shame to God's name. Thus this transcendent eschatology so protects God's people and glorifies his name forever among the nations. But we will confine ourselves to these sketches of Paul's transcendent eschatology in Galatians and Romans and focus more attention on its display in 2 Corinthians. This will also give us a greater glimpse into his view of suffering.

2 Corinthians reveals Paul's transcendent eschatology as it teaches the union of Christ's apostles and the church with Christ's sufferings. That is, because the eschatological glory of Christ is found in the church as she suffers the loss of the things of this world, this glory must transcend the world. For Paul, this glory is a transcendent eschatology. It is a present transcendent eschatology as well as a future eschatology. We find this in 2 Cor. 4:7 where Paul states, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of power may be of God and not of ourselves." This glory possessed in us is the glory of Christ's resurrection life discussed in chapter 3 (v. 18). It is a glory in earthen vessels. That is, we possess Christ's glory in our sufferings as we are "afflicted in every way", "perplexed", and "persecuted" (2 Cor. 4:8-9). But since we possess the life of the resurrected Christ, we are "not crushed", "not despairing", and "not forsaken" (2 Cor. 4:8-9). Thus, this must be a glory that transcends the world. By being semi-eschatological possessors of the glory to come in Christ, we are united to him in his sufferings. As Paul says in the next verse: "always carrying about in our body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (v. 10). For Paul, union with Christ's resurrection precedes union with his sufferings. Transcendent eschatology precedes suffering in union with Christ.

In this way, the saints are lifted to heaven in the midst of their sufferings. As Paul says, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

In this later passage, we additionally get a glimmer into the *organic progress* of union with Christ in redemptive history, something that is also missing in Ehrman. That is, Paul is here saying that union with Christ in the new covenant possesses greater richness than it did under the old covenant. This can be seen from the fact that 2 Cor. 4 follows after 2 Cor. 3, in which Paul makes a relative contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant administrations of God's grace. This further emphasizes the transcendent nature of this new covenant semi-eschatological glory, for it surpasses the old covenant glory which was partially embodied in earthly types and shadows.

This also appears in Paul's commission. Since Paul is united to Christ's resurrection glory after the historical accomplishment of Christ's resurrection, Paul possesses a greater fullness of that glory in his ministry than Moses in his old covenant ministry. "For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory" (2 Cor. 3:9). And this is also true of Christians living in the age of the new covenant who are "a letter of Christ . . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3).

As we have noted, this transcendent nature of Paul's eschatology has implications for the union of new covenant saints with Christ's sufferings. If they possess a greater glory, then they have a sweeter union with Christ in their sufferings than old covenant saints. This is implied in the next chapter. For if union with Christ's glory is the ground of union with his sufferings, then it follows that when one possesses greater union with Christ's glory, he or she also possesses greater union with Christ's sufferings.

In accordance with this, it is fitting that the way Paul speaks of union with Christ's sufferings (2 Cor. 4:7-8) places him outside of the land of Israel. To the degree that the old covenant was glorious, it set a hedge to protect God's people from such persecution. But Paul has the greater glory of the new covenant. And it is so much more powerful that it can protect him from harm in the midst of persecution, for it is more fully transcendent and eternal.

Admittedly, there is continuity between the sufferings of old covenant saints and those of the new. And this seems to be implied by Paul's very use of an allusion to the Old Testament: "Having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,' we also believe, therefore also we speak" (2 Cor. 4:13). Even if Paul is implying that he has "the same spirit of faith" as the Corinthians rather than the Psalmist, he is quoting the Psalmist to articulate that faith. Thus, he is showing his essential unity with the Psalmist as well, suggesting that their glory was essentially transcendent, though partially embodied in types and shadows. At the same time, the way Paul speaks of union with Christ's sufferings (2 Cor. 4:7-8) expresses the fuller semi-eschatological antitheses found in the new covenant era. That is, this redemptive era possesses fuller transcendent glory in Christ, resulting in a greater antithesis to this present age. And this allows the Christian's loss of this age to involve greater union with Christ than previously. Though the new age is in essential unity with the old, it possesses a greater fullness of that glory—a glory that brings a greater antithesis between this world and the arena of heaven. As a result, Paul can return to this antithesis between heaven and earth again in 2 Cor. 6:8-10. This displays Paul's transcendent eschatology.

It is in this context that he states, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are unseen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Here we have a *greater* contrast between the seen and the unseen than was found in the old covenant with its visible glory and blessings. Now, under the new age, the blessings of the covenant are more fully unseen and spiritual, more transcendent. Thus the contrast Paul is making finds greater expression in the new covenant, even though it was essentially true for old covenant saints as well. The faith of the old covenant was an identification with the glory it administered (2 Cor. 4:13). And so is the faith of the new. And thus in the new we find a fuller flowering of this faith, one that accords with our greater possession of heavenly glory, even now. As a result, Paul walks by faith not by sight in a greater way than the saints of old. For he possesses a greater degree of eternal glory in union with the risen Christ, the one who will never die again and who forever lives in the invisible arena of glory. Paul's transcendent eschatology is the foundation for his life of faith and suffering in Christ.

Paul's discussion expresses an organic progression of redemption from the old to the new. And thus it expresses an organic unfolding of the saints's subjective appropriation of redemption. The subjective appropriation is in union with the objective progress of redemption and revelation. The *ordo salutis* is intimately joined to the *historia salutis*. Both are in Christ.

If we are following Paul, it is the recognition of this organic unfolding that should guide us in interpreting Scripture. It should enlighten our understanding of the various nuances of different biblical authors as they discuss suffering. As the saints possess greater and more transcendent glory, they are drawn more fully from the glories of this world. Thus, they suffer the loss of this

world more fully in union with the sufferings of Christ. For Christ laid aside the glories of this world for the glories of heaven, both for himself and his people. Therefore, following in the footsteps of Paul, we should interpret the various nuances of suffering in the Old Testament in light of this organic progression from the old to the new eras. This is the path Paul sets for us. We have only scratched the surface of it here. But it is interesting to note that it is Paul's transcendent eschatology (with its organic implications and which Ehrman denies) that sets the path for undermining Ehrman's approach of finding disparate views of suffering in the Bible.

Ehrman's book is rubbish, especially when compared to the transcendent glory of Christ. These pages are no answer to suffering and do enormous injustice to the Bible's marvelous teaching concerning it.

It is only as the church reflects upon the glories of the risen Christ that she will assess her suffering and persecution properly. Only as she lays her life in the lap of the Lord Jesus by faith will she find peace in the midst of the storm. For he loves her and has given his life up for her. He has suffered eternal torments for her that her sufferings may now be but a momentary and light affliction by comparison, lightened by the load he bore. And now that glory, which he possesses, which far outweighs them all, will be theirs. And it is even now theirs as he shines his face upon them, as they bask in his eternal glory and love, being lifted up to glory in the midst of their afflictions, that he may lighten their load and carry them in his bosom. Is he not a wondrous Savior?

Review

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Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, *Invitation To Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishers, 2006. 364 pp. Hardcover. ISBN: 0-8254-2650-2. \$49.99. Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, *Invitation To Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar—Workbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishers, 2006. 335 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 0-8254-2652-9. \$29.99. Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, *Invitation To Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar—6-Volume Set*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishers, 2006. 6 DVDs. ISBN: 0-8254-2651-0. \$49.99.

Invitation To Biblical Hebrew, with all its accompanying materials, is a very helpful way to master the Hebrew vowel pointing system. As a complete introduction to first year Hebrew, it is especially suited to students with an analytical bent. Others will find it helpful as a complementary grammar to accompany a more inductive introductory text. Those who have already studied first year Hebrew will especially find it useful as it provides a method for mastering the Hebrew vowel pointing system not found in most other grammars.

The first six chapters of the grammar deal with phonological principles. The rest of the grammar deals with morphological principles divided into several sections: the first dealing with particles, the next with nouns and adjectives, followed by the verbs. The verbs are divided into strong and weak verbs. To help students master the vowel pointing system, Fuller and Choi give students a set of principles to rework the vowel points of Hebrew words, bringing them back to their proto-Hebrew form. Then, they provide another set of principles (some differing with respect to nouns and verbs) in order to bring the proto-Hebrew form of the words back to the Hebrew form. This system especially helps students understand how the vowel pointing changes as prefixes and suffixes are added onto the words.

The first six chapters dealing with phonological principles lead the student up to chapter six, dealing with the rules of proto-Hebrew. This is the pinnacle of the first part of the grammar, if not the grammar as a whole. Chapters one through five lead the student through a very clear explanation of how to divide syllables and how letters, vowels and certain points (such as the shewa, the dagesh, the qames, qames-hatuf and gutturals) are to be properly assessed. That is, the student first learns how to divide syllables and from this knowledge learns to distinguish silent from vocal shewa, dagesh lene from dagesh forte, qames from qames-hatuf, etc.

As an introductory grammar, this book provides a detailed explanation of particles. However, the next section on nouns and adjectives is especially helpful in the way it applies this method of going back to proto-Hebrew and going ahead to biblical Hebrew with respect to the vowel points. By means of this system, students learn how to add endings on masculine and feminine nouns and how those endings change the vowel pointing system. Using a special set of rules provided for going back to proto-Hebrew, students then see how to go forward to biblical Hebrew when adding suffixes and how this changes the vowel pointing system. They learn from

this that the system of vowel pointing and the way it changes with endings is usually quite regular. The same applies to adjectives as to nouns, as well as to construct states.

Fuller and Choi's explanation of segolate nouns is especially detailed and helpful among beginning grammars. Here they also use a system for bringing the segolate nouns back to their proto-Hebrew form and then bringing them forward once again to biblical Hebrew. Segolate nouns are then divided into a dabar pattern and a segolate pattern without the dagesh lene in the third radical. This division among segolate noun endings helps the student in understanding patterns for their endings, patterns by which proto-Hebrew vowel pointing changes to biblical Hebrew vowel pointing. This includes a good discussion of how these changes occur in segolate nouns with gutturals.

Fuller and Choi's analysis of the strong verb breaks it down into elemental parts and then gives the student a set of rules for constructing the various forms. Its mastery sets up the student for an understanding of the weak verb, which can be constructed with similar principles based on an understanding of the movement from proto-Hebrew to biblical Hebrew vowel pointing. As for the strong verb, Fuller and Choi have the student memorize the qal perfect and imperfect forms, as is normal in most Hebrew grammars. However, their analysis of the qal and the way they break it down helps the student to produce the pi'el, pu'al, hithpa'el, hiph'il, hoph'al and niph'al without memorizing their entire paradigms. As for the qal, Fuller and Choi have the student memorize a set of thematic vowels for the perfect and the imperfect. Then students are asked to memorize a basic set of boxes for the pi'el, pu'al, hithpa'el, hiph'il, hoph'al and niph'al. A set of three boxes is memorized for each of these in terms of the perfect, imperfect, imperative, infinitive and participle. These boxes essentially correspond to the three root consonants of the verb, the first box being the first root consonant. Memorized with the boxes are preformative letters and vowel points. Under the boxes are the first essential vowels and in the boxes are any necessary dageshes. In addition to memorizing the boxes, students are asked to memorize separately a set of thematic vowels for the perfect and imperfect. Thus for example, the hiph'il has two thematic vowels in the perfect and two possible thematic vowels in the imperfect. The hoph'al has a thematic vowel for both the perfect and the imperfect. With the knowledge of the various boxes, together with a knowledge of the thematic vowels and the mastery of the qal perfect and imperfect forms, a student is able to construct the rest of the verbs in pi'el, pu'al, hithpa'el, hiph'il, hoph'al and niph'al without memorizing these forms. This is true also for the construction of the infinitive absolute, infinitive construct, participle and imperatives. Several additional rules help the students in constructing these forms. In this way, the student is able to dissect the strong verb and to reproduce it without having to memorize every single form in the language.

The discussion of the weak verbs is built on that of the strong verb as in other grammars. However, since Fuller and Choi provide us with a way of analyzing the strong verb by dissecting it into its various components, we are now equipped to understand the weak verb in a similar fashion. In each category of the weak verb, they then introduce us to the weaknesses or "infirmities" of a particular weak verb, then to its strong areas. This is followed by a remedy for the infirmity or weakness of the verb. Necessary special cases are also handled. In each case, knowledge derived from the strong verb—its boxes, thematic vowels and the form of the qal—help the student in constructing the weak verb. In addition, the knowledge of how vowel pointing

changed from proto-Hebrew to biblical Hebrew is also incorporated and helps the student to understand more clearly the vowel pointing system of the Hebrew Bible.

It is to be admitted that this system of understanding Hebrew is highly analytic and deductive rather than essentially inductive. This will pose a challenge to certain students, many of whom may wish to either begin by studying a more inductive approach or simultaneously work together with another introductory grammar. Another difficulty for some beginners is the amount of information to which they are introduced all at one point. For instance, when introduced to the pronouns, the student is introduced to all of them at once. Of course, this element is no less a problem in other introductory grammars such as those by Jacob Weingreen and Thomas O. Lambdin. This is where a grammar such as that by Moshe Greenberg, which introduces pronouns gradually, has its advantages. Fuller and Choi's text also uses some idiosyncratic pedagogical aides. For instance, it categorizes a-class thematic vowels as red. Then it uses the term red or "communist" thematic vowels when describing these a-class vowels and their other characteristics without reminding us that red symbolizes a-class vowels. This requires the student to keep in mind two sets of signs—*a-class* vowels and the fact that *red* symbolizes a-class vowels. It would have been far easier for the student if the text had simply referred to these as a-class vowels throughout. As another reviewer has pointed out¹, there are also some areas of grammar on which the text could be more precise and expansive—for instance, in describing the various uses and meanings of verbal forms. Nonetheless, the overall approach in Fuller and Choi is very helpful in guiding the student to master the components of biblical Hebrew and its vowel pointing system with minimal memorization.

The workbook for *An Invitation To Biblical Hebrew* provides exercises for the chapters in the book. These exercises help reinforce the mastery of the grammar and vowel pointing system of the Hebrew language. They are oriented in this direction rather than providing additional reading exercises in Hebrew. This is one of the weaknesses of this grammar and its workbook, i.e., the student does not have his or her mastery of the grammar reinforced by more readings in Hebrew or in the Hebrew Bible. (The grammar book provides readings in Hebrew, but they are more limited than in other Hebrew grammars.) However, the drills in the workbook should enable the student to more thoroughly master the grammatical material found in the grammar text.

The set of six DVDs produced for *An Invitation To Biblical Hebrew* comprise a set of thirty-eight lectures oriented toward the thirty-eight chapters in the book. Dr. Fuller gives the lectures in an informal setting in which he is seated with a dry-erase board on his desk and notes from his grammar. Each lecture is essentially a summary of each chapter in the grammar book, with only occasional additional insights added. However, Dr. Fuller does write on the dry-erase board, which is especially helpful in showing the students how to form the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, though he has his own unique way of writing the letters in cursive. While the lectures do not provide much in the way of additional information to the grammar, for many students this visual medium (in which some exercises are written on a board) can be a help in reinforcing the lessons. Some may even wish to view the lessons a first time on the DVD prior to going to the grammar. However, it is unlikely that students will be able to grasp the lecture material and make good use of it without using the grammar and mastering the principles found in it.

¹ Robert C. Stallman, *JETS* 51/1 (March 2008) 102.

In addition, it should be observed that it may be difficult for many university and seminary based courses in first year Hebrew to complete all thirty-eight chapters of this grammar with the dense analytical material found in them. Still, this is not impossible with dedicated students.

Fuller and Choi have done us all a great service with their many hours of labor in constructing these course materials in biblical Hebrew. If one masters the principles found in this book and supplements that with readings in the Hebrew Bible or through a supplementary grammar, one should be able to better understand the Hebrew vowel pointing system and how the various grammatical points of Hebrew are dissected and reproduced than is found in many other Hebrew grammars. One of my students, who had taken some first year Hebrew previously, told me that in terms of helping him dissect the grammar and vowel pointing system, he thought this grammar was the Mounce of biblical Hebrew. That is quite a compliment!

—Scott Sanborn