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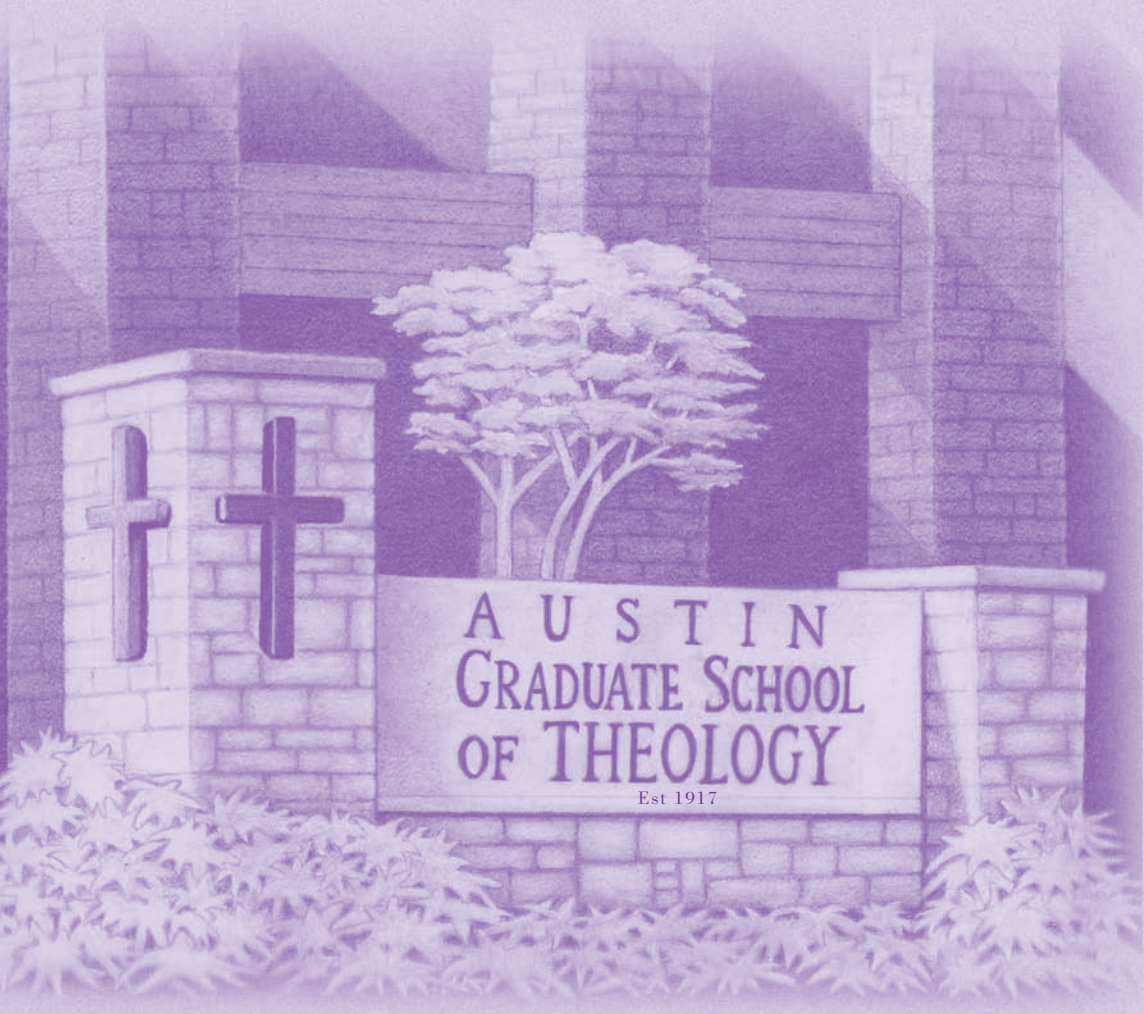

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With this issue of *Christian Studies*, I begin the duty and privilege of serving the faculty as editor. Since its inaugural issue in 1980, this journal, known at that time simply as the "Faculty Bulletin," has been in the capable hands of its founding editor, Michael Weed. It is with gratitude for Dr. Weed's visionary labor and with humility for the work at hand that I assume the role of editor, with the indispensable aid of the managing editor, Todd Hall.

From its inception, this publication has sought to provide responsible and biblical theological reflection that is beneficial and accessible to the scholar as well as to the interested "layperson." This aim is summed up well in the journal's motto: Scholarship for the Church. I want to assure our readers, old and new alike, that we press on toward the future mindful of what has come before. As in the past, so in the future, the goal of this journal will be not merely to publish the "results of scholarly research," but to address real issues in the faith and practice of the church and of individual believers. As in the past, it will continue to be a publication of the faculty of Austin Graduate School of Theology, but also with contributions from other scholars. Within these parameters, the intent is to provide readers with the best theological writing in Churches of Christ, but also with a reach that extends beyond our walls.

All issues of *Christian Studies*, including this one, are available online, via the Austin Grad website, at http://austingrad.edu/resources/christian-studies-publication. If you find the content beneficial, please share this journal, in its print and online forms, with others.

In that first issue of the "Faculty Bulletin" that appeared thirty-five years ago was a contribution by Paul Watson. Watson is an Old Testament scholar who taught at the Institute for Christian Studies (now Austin Grad) from 1979-1983. He had a lasting impact on his colleagues and students during his years as a professor here. He left the Institute to work in full-time congregational ministry, where he has continued to influence countless souls for God's kingdom. This issue of *Christian Studies*, whose theme is "The Old Testament and the Life of the Church," is dedicated to Paul Watson and to the legacy of scholarship and ministry that he has passed on—and continues

to pass on—to the church. The contributors bring this gift to him, and to us all, in the hope that it will bring honor to whom honor is due.

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The Israel of God

Allan J. McNicol

Several decades ago in the days when Austin Graduate School of Theology offered courses in connection with the University of Texas I found myself in a classroom teaching a group of mainly Jewish undergraduate students. It happened in the following way. At the time various seminary professors and campus ministers in the university area, through a Bible Chair arrangement, could offer courses in the University curriculum. This particular year the local Rabbi was on sabbatical and someone was needed to teach his course on the Religion of the Pharisees. I work in the general area and quickly found myself in the classroom with a group of students primarily with close associations with the Hillel Center.[1]

[1] Paul Watson, to whom this essay is dedicated, spent several years (1979–1983) in Austin teaching in this program. My association with Paul goes back to Yale Divinity School where he was the teaching assistant to the professor in a class I took as a student. In Austin Paul and I team-taught the courses our school offered on Biblical Theology. I especially admire Paul for making a decision that few seminary teachers do. Our purpose in this school is to prepare students for ministry. Paul did this well. But he also went a step further. He practiced what he taught. He left the school and chose to enter full-time ministry himself.

Paul is one of the talented group of teachers (including Jack Lewis, Claude Cox, Tony Ash, John Willis, and J. J. M. Roberts) who from about the middle of the last century, fostered serious interest in critical study of the Old Testament among Churches of Christ. Many others have followed in their steps; but these stood out as the initial scholar-leaders. Of course any movement of renewal is never complete. One issue that still needs attention is biblical theology—especially the area of the relationship between the Testaments as it applies to the theological stance of Churches of Christ. This essay is offered as a small preliminary step on this topic.

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To say the least, the class was an interesting venture. Most teachers will say that there are some classes where the teacher learns more than the students. This was one of them. After several students dropped because they were uncomfortable being introduced to Judaism by a Gentile teacher, we bonded together. At least, in my judgment, over the rest of the way we had a worthwhile intellectual journey.

The class left me with one dominant impression. The students were extremely knowledgeable about the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). They knew Leviticus and Numbers as well as a traditional member of Churches of Christ knew Acts. On the other hand, these students (mainly representative of Reform Judaism) had very little familiarity with the Prophets and Wisdom Literature of their Bible. Hence my impression: even allowing for the influence of the synagogue, there was a vast difference between the way Jews and Christians were reading the same Scriptures. For these Jewish students, the Torah was central. As people of the covenant they wanted to be informed about Jewish law and how one remains faithful to it. Thus they also sought out the teaching of the rabbis, using them to enter into dialectical discussion with the Scriptures. Usually that meant consulting what they had to say about the Torah and not the Prophets or Writings.

For Christians, reading the Scriptures of Israel is a different experience. To abbreviate, these Scriptures are constitutive for the biblical narrative of salvation but are also preparatory for the main thrust that followed: the act of redemption through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christian interest in the Prophets usually comes through the belief that the appearance of Jesus is central for the fulfillment of the prophetic hopes for a new age. Even more startling, for Christians, the inauguration of the New Covenant through the death of Jesus is often contrasted with the Sinai covenant. Christians regularly characterize this covenant as “old” (hence Old Testament) and, in some quarters, presumed no longer in effect or even relevant. Thus, not only do we approach the same texts with different theological presuppositions; we also concentrate on different texts within the canon.

A Proposal

My encounter with the Jewish students was an important learning experience. It was a reminder about how Christians often ignore large bodies of

the biblical text and brush over difficulties in connecting the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.[2] In this essay I propose to visit again the issue of the relationship between the Testaments. I will not list the various time-honored approaches and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. Rather, I will argue that the point of unity between the Testaments is that they reveal a consistent narrative: the birth, history, and destiny of the people of God. I maintain that if the Bible is read within this framework, readers will have a deeper appreciation for the authority of both the Old and New Testaments. Since this essay emerges in the context of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement I will note how this movement has treated the issue of the relationship of the two Testaments, including some of the problems we have encountered. I will conclude this exercise in biblical theology with two New Testament examples (Matthew and Ephesians) which suggest that my thesis may promote a more fruitful appreciation for the canonical message.

The Restoration Movement and the Relationship of the Testaments

We will shortly have another significant anniversary in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement: Alexander Campbell's "Sermon on the Law" was delivered on September 1, 1816, to a meeting of the Redstone Baptist Association in Virginia.[3] This was early in the time of Campbell's loose af-

[2] Of course, Jews have no interest in connecting their Scriptures with what Christians call the New Testament. But it is worthy of notice that many seem to act as though the Hebrew Scriptures are incomplete without the use of the rabbinic materials. From the earliest times Christians considered the Scriptures of Israel to be normative and appealed to them as authoritative (1 Cor 15:3–5). Denis Farkasfalvy makes a key comment: "[T]aking over the Scriptures of the Old Testament should not be conceived of as if Christians continued to hold the same beliefs about them and used them in the same ways as Jews did previously. In spite of all the similarities and concepts regarding inspiration, prophecy and hermeneutical practices, belief in Christ as the fulfillment of Scriptures creates a qualitative difference between Judaism and the Church so that their relationship to the old Scriptures is no longer the same." William R. Farmer and Denis M. Farkasfalvy, *The Formation of the New Testament Canon: An Ecumenical Approach* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 108. That seems to be as true today as the earliest days of the church.

[3] The sermon was preached from notes and there is no original transcribed copy. According to Everett Ferguson, "Alexander Campbell's 'Sermon on the Law': A Historical and Theological Examination," *Restoration Quarterly* 29/1 (1987): 71–72, the sermon aroused considerable controversy, and shortly after Campbell wrote it out "as he remembered it." It was then distributed as a pamphlet. Throughout the nine-

filiation with the Baptists (an association which lasted close to fifteen years). The sermon, based on Romans 8:3, followed common forms of argumentation of the time. A series of premises was noted about the law (of Moses). This included its inadequacies and the answer offered to them—righteousness and eternal life in Christ. The sermon ended with practical conclusions drawn from the premises. The heart of the sermon was that a clear distinction was drawn between the Old and New Testaments. In matters of normative practice the Old Testament was for Israel, the New Testament for the church. In contemporary parlance, nothing could be reckoned to be a salvation issue unless it was warranted by the New Testament.

The real target at which Campbell was aiming was a certain understanding of the Mosaic Law popular at the time in the Reformed tradition.[4] When spiritually interpreted, the Old Testament covenants, especially Sinai, were thought to contain not only eternal laws but also the gospel demands. Christ is eternal and thus, in a real sense, must have been present in the course of the Old Testament.[5]

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teenth century it was reprinted in various places. Even today it is easily available on the internet. References in this essay are from *The Millennial Harbinger* Series 3, vol. 3/9 (1846): 42–44. In introducing the reprint Campbell made an important comment. "It is, therefore, highly probable to my mind, that but for the persecution begun on the alleged heresy of this sermon, whether the present reformation had ever been advocated by me." Here Campbell is referring to a difference that clearly became apparent between him and Calvinists on the issue of the nature and normativity of the Old Testament covenants.

[4] Gary Hall, "The Old Testament in the Early Stone-Campbell Movement," in *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement*, vol. 2: *Engaging Basic Christian Doctrine*, ed. William R. Baker (Abilene: ACU Press, 2006), 246–47, gives a helpful summary of the views Campbell opposed. The Old Testament laws were commonly divided into three parts: the moral, civil, and the ceremonial law. In substance, the Mosaic or Old Covenant was understood to be identical with the New Covenant, only under different administrations. The "moral" part of the law was still in effect and considered binding for the Christian. Through the use of various forms of symbolic exegesis much of the civil and ceremonial aspects of the law emerged in restated form in the New Covenant. Despite the questionable exegesis, this discrimen had one advantage: it did preserve the normativity of the Old Testament. Versions of this position are still popular in many contemporary Evangelical circles. Note most of the essays in *Five Views of Law and Gospel*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

[5] In my own work in studying the theology of the modern Reformed professor of Old Testament, Brevard Childs, I have come to see how important this claim was for

Campbell set himself strongly against this hermeneutic. He argued that the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is a historical book. It must be read in the same way one would critically study an ancient historical work. When one approaches it this way one discovers quickly that the Old Testament is essentially a collection of literature documenting what took place as Israel entered into covenant relationship with the Holy One. Specifically, the Law of Moses "was given to the Jewish nation and no one else."[6]

Thus, the foundation for the familiar Restorationist theological discrimen of maintaining a clear distinction between the covenants was put in place. What is striking is how persistent this theological position has remained over the years. The significant works on biblical theology in the Restoration tradition continued within these parameters.[7] It is still not uncommon practice for Bible teachers in Restorationist churches to instruct students that there are three different dispensations in the Bible (Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian).[8] One should determine the purpose of each stage and subsequently ad-

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him. Cf. Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 97-122.

[6] Campbell, "Sermon on the Law." To utilize the Old Testament as narrative for the practices of the Christian community was a fundamental category mistake. It was like claiming a proclamation made by the President of the United States as binding on the subjects of the French Government. Moreover, not giving sufficient guidance on "polygamy, divorce, slavery, revenge, etc." it was an incomplete moral system; indeed, it was only an anticipation of the perfect form of the statutes of the New Covenant. Here, as an aside, Campbell seems to be close to advocating a view of progressive revelation. In any case, it seemed perfectly understandable to him to claim that for the followers of Christ the Old Testament had been superseded. There is much that has stood the test of time in his analysis. Nevertheless, one wonders whether he appreciated that he would leave a legacy of confusion among his theological heirs with respect to how precisely the Old Testament was authoritative.

[7] In the 19th century note Walter Scott; *The Gospel Restored: A Discourse of the True Gospel of Jesus Christ* (reprint of 1836 edition; Kansas City: Old Paths Book Club, 1949); Robert Milligan, *An Exposition and Defense of the Scheme of Redemption* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1957). Probably the most significant work on biblical theology expressive of the mainstream views in Churches of Christ in the twentieth century was that of Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996). Although the latter is primarily concerned with ecclesiology it is significant that the opening section (1–18) deals comprehensively with the question of covenant in biblical religion.

[8] In some circles these are remembered by the nomenclature starlight, moonlight, and sunlight.

just one's life to the demands of the dispensation that is relevant.[9] This has had a number of odd effects with respect to the way certain sections of the Bible are studied. Not only have Leviticus and Numbers been ignored, even the Gospels—written for early Christian believers after the New Covenant was in effect—have sometimes been marginalized. Some have argued that since Jesus lived and taught under the Mosaic dispensation, Jesus' teachings during his earthly ministry are not applicable to the people of the New Covenant. Clearly, this confusion can be traced to widespread misunderstanding about the relationship between the covenants. The whole matter needs to be seriously revisited.

Revisiting our Understanding of the Testaments

While it is clear that there is a connection between the Old and New Testaments, finding that connection has proved elusive. James Barr has noted the problem. He states that at the heart of the New Testament is the claim that the Father of Jesus was the God of Israel. It is therefore a matter of more than trivial interest that, for theological reasons, we should study the actions of that God in the Old Testament.[10] Thus it seems to be an obvious truism when people use the cliché, "You can't understand the New Testament without or apart from the Old."[11]

On the other hand, for the average reader, let alone the literary critic, the contents of the two Testaments are very different. Sometimes they appear to be in dissimilar worlds. For example, Barr notices that many issues of major concern in the Old Testament (polemics against the nations or the divisions between Israel and Judah) are hardly taken up in the New Testament. At the same time issues such as Adam, the Fall, sin and death, so central to the theology of Paul, are mainly peripheral to the Old Testament.[12] Indeed, the two Testaments are very different in emphasis and content. How do we keep them together? The difficulty is present whether one follows Campbell's emphasis on stressing the distinction between the covenants, the Reforma-

[9] Hall, "The Old Testament," 247–48.
[10] James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 373.
[11] James Barr, "Biblical Theology," 373.
[12] James Barr, "Biblical Theology," 375.

tional dialectic between law and grace or the *sensus plenior* hermeneutic traditionally used in Catholic exegesis.

In this connection, one other point needs to be made. Campbell had a deep and lively appreciation for tracing texts in the Old Testament that supposedly functioned as shadows and types for practices that emerged in the New Testament. Indeed, it is well documented that Campbell used the traditional "proofs from prophecy" in his defense of the Christian faith.[13] Even today as I talk with students and listen weekly to short talks at the Lord's table I am regularly reinforced with the impression that these are the grounds that many believers use to connect the Testaments and bolster faith.

But we need to be careful at this point. Alexander Campbell was a transitional figure. He was rock solid in traditional convictions about the faith. But by reading the Bible with similar literary tools that one would read any other ancient literary work, he also stood near the beginning of the modern era, when this latter manner of reading would have tremendous significance. This would mean that in the academy and other influential circles the kind of figural reading of biblical texts popular in Campbell's era would fall on hard times. More and more, understanding the point of a text centered on what it was saying in its original context. This manner of reading a biblical text has been devastating to the kinds of theological argumentation that build on "proofs" from prophecy and typology. As a prominent scholar of the last generation has noted:

> The classical apologetic argument, that Jesus was the Messiah because he fulfilled the messianic prophecies, simply does not work any longer. It presupposes that a Christian concept of "the Messiah" was first read into the Old Testament. A number of [OT] texts that Christians had used to talk about Jesus Christ did not at all relate to "the Messiah."[14]

I do not wish to demean the creativity of many great exegetes who used typology in Christian and Jewish history. Much of their exegesis I personally

[13] Gary Hall, "The Old Testament," 246–50.

[14] Nils Dahl, "The Crucified Messiah and The Endangered Promises," in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 70.

find suggestive. All that I am saying is that the tide of modernity has not been kind to it.

Thus it seems to me that the time to revisit this conversation is overdue. The still widespread view in Restorationist circles that the Bible should be divided into three distinct dispensations, each with its own promises and demands, remains a basic presupposition among many Bible teachers. When this premise is linked with a reading of Galatians 3 that presumes that the key promises to Abraham were fulfilled in Christ, separate and apart from the Mosaic administration, the rug is pulled out from under those advocating serious engagement with the Torah. Whether or not it was the intent of early Restoration leaders, an undue emphasis came to be placed on such texts as Galatians 3, 2 Corinthians 3:5–18, and Hebrews. The emphasis was always on freedom from the Law/Torah (the divine teaching). It was not balanced with texts like Romans 3:31 where Paul is stressing that the Law is the revelation of the character and will of God and that the righteousness it demands is realized only in Christ.[15] Thus it should be a major area of concern that in many Restorationist quarters the Ten Commandments are casually dismissed.

This re-assessment of the relationship between the Testaments should especially focus on the concept of covenant itself. It is claimed that Campbell took note of a diverse number of covenants in the Bible.[16] But it is far from clear whether this has left much of an impression on his successors. Critical scholarship has worked at great length on covenant in the twentieth century. Scholars have discovered a multiplicity of covenants in use among the Hebrews and in the wider Ancient Near East. It is recognized that at different

[15] Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 298–99. Rom 3:31 and similar texts should be read in conjunction with Jer 30:3–31:34, where the Lord promises the people of God a return to the land and contingent blessings including the forgiveness of sins. Presumably, this new or "resumed" covenant (there were no new stipulations to Moses) was meant to be fulfilled with the return of the exiles. For Paul the law "written on hearts" of Jer 31:33 was completed in Christ—the only one who kept the law, so that it was impossible for God to claim that his covenant was broken. Believers in Christ, aware that they fall short of God's standard, through grace, appropriately claim the benefits of Christ with respect to Jer 31:31–34. See Norbert Lohfink, *The Covenant Never Revoked: Biblical Reflections on Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, trans. John J. Scullion (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 52–57.

[16] Gary Hall, "The Old Testament," 247, 260.

times in the history of Israel various covenants overlapped with one another. For example, the covenant with Noah was universal (Gen 8:1–19). Other covenants were between individuals (Gen 31:43–54). It is a good question what an ancient Jew would say if you asked whether he were in covenant. It would be very doubtful if any ancient Hebrew would list the main covenants of the Hebrew Bible along the lines taught in Restorationist Bible classes.

Let us consider one example. The book of Sirach is in the Greek Bible but not in the Hebrew Scriptures. It was compiled about 200 B.C. Among the Jewish people these were the last days of the Aaronide dynasty of high priests who, in the absence of kingship, had provided leadership for several centuries in Judea. Sirach concludes his work by rehearsing a summary of the story of the people of God at this time.[17] Notably, Sirach fits his narrative into a structure of seven major covenants. They are the covenants with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, Phinehas, and David (Sirach 44:17–47:11). Moses is praised for a number of things including *receiving* the commandments (45:1–6); but he is not mentioned as a covenant maker.[18] That honor is left to Aaron who inaugurates "an everlasting covenant" (45:7). This is passed on to Israel through his sons.[19]

My only reason in enumerating this history is to make a basic point. Sirach's reckoning of the covenantal history of the people of God was one perspective. No doubt there were many others at different times. If Christians are going to connect the New Testament with Israel's Scripture through a narrative of the history of covenant making they will be undertaking a difficult task. The historical record of the Hebrew people indicates there was no unanimity about this process. Indeed, it seems to be the case that there were different covenant theologies in Israel's history over the centuries. We are therefore using a "weak reed" if we seek to connect the Old and New Testa-

[17] The summary is traditionally called "The Praise of Famous Men" (Sirach 44:12–50:24). In recent years commentators have found other titles to avoid the sexist overtones of the earlier reference.

[18] Ellis Rivkin, *A Hidden Revolution: The Pharisees Search for the Kingdom Within* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 191-207.

[19] This line is duly noted as Aaron, Eleazar, Phinehas, and Zadok. Noticeably the tribe of Levi is marginalized and there is no reference to Jeremiah's promise of a New Covenant. Biblical scholars note that this listing is highly dependent on post-exilic developments in Judea. Nevertheless it is not idiosyncratic. Biblical books such as Chronicles would have been sympathetic to the listing.

ments through some scheme of the history of covenant making among the people of God.

Thus I come to my proposal. Sir Walter Scott is reported to have said that the Bible is "The Book." To me, as for many throughout the centuries, this means that—if indeed it is a book—a basic narrative can be drawn from its pages. I would suggest that the Old and New Testaments constitute a unity by telling the story of God's relationship with Israel, the people of God. To put it in its simplest form, this narrative takes the reader from the origins of Israel through a complicated development to a vision of its anticipated consummation. Herein rests the unity.

There is no question that the Hebrew Scriptures tell the story of how God called Israel to be his people. I suggest that the way to understand the New Testament is to view it as the climax of the same narrative. In Galatians 6:16, in a beautiful benedictory statement, Paul invokes blessings upon the entire "Israel of God." Whatever we make of this text, it reminds us that both the writers and the writings that we know as the New Testament emerged out of the formative matrix of Israel. The New Testament understands that Israel is central to its story. Unfortunately, this factor is often neglected when Gentiles approach its pages. Several closing paragraphs will only allow a couple of sketches that are illustrative of my suggestions for a different reading. To make the effort manageable, I will note how my proposed reading of the biblical narrative provides insight into two representative writings: Matthew and Ephesians.

Israel's Narrative Continues

Matthew

From the time of the earliest collections of the canonical Scriptures, Matthew stood at the head of the New Testament canon. If there is to be a narrative connection between the Old and New Testaments, Matthew is vital. The Jewish people had lived in servitude for most of the previous five centuries. Now Matthew gives us the story of a prophet from Galilee, which stood at the margins of the traditional boundaries of the land. This prophet launches a renewal movement among the entire people of Israel. Anticipating the consummation of all things he seeks to prepare his people to be part of a community that will stand at the last day.

I would draw attention to the fact that Matthew presumes the people of God are Israel. These people stand in direct continuity with their predecessors in Hebrew Scripture. They are the same people. They are seeking renewal.

Into this environment Jesus is born. Immediately, a reader versed in Scripture knows something extraordinary is taking place. Usually the future king of Israel is born of the lineage of David and at his coronation adopted as Son of God. In the opening chapter of Matthew it is the opposite. Jesus, the Son of God, is born to a virgin. Through Joseph he is adopted into the Davidic lineage. His coronation will take place after his death when he is enthroned to God's right hand (Matt 22:41–46; 28:16–20).

As in the Hebrew Scriptures, there are two groups of people in Matthew: Jews and Gentiles. When Matthew is expounded in the church today this needs to be taken into consideration. Believers would do well to hear Matthew in a similar way as the ancient Hebrew who longed for the restoration of his people.

After the confirmation of Jesus' sonship at his baptism (3:16–17), and his successful resistance of Satan (4:1–11), Jesus announces the restoration of Israel is at hand (4:15–16).[20] The emergence of the awaited kingdom is at hand (4:23). As signs of this new era a sampling of Jesus' teachings and healings are given (5:1–9:35). Notably, they presume that instruction in Torah is a prerequisite (5:19; 23:23). Obedience to the Torah as interpreted by Jesus is necessary to attain the higher righteousness that is demanded for entrance into the kingdom (5:17–20; 22:34–40; 28:20). As a statement of his ultimacy, Jesus is reckoned to be the only Teacher (23:8–9).

However, any teacher must have assistants for his task. Out of the group of earliest followers Jesus selects twelve disciples (10:1–4). They are tasked to inaugurate a restoration throughout Israel through the announcement of the nearness of the kingdom (10:5–42). The mission is to continue until the consummation of all things, which will climax with the *parousia* of the Son of Man (10:23). The twelve are to constitute the foundation of Jesus' "assembly" or "church" (*ekklēsia*, 16:16–19; 18:18). They are given the keys of

[20] The reference is to the outlying tribes of ancient Israel ("Those who sat in darkness have seen a great light") and is drawn from Isa 9:1–2.

the kingdom—which I understand to be the depository of the special instructions of the "one teacher."[21] In no way did Matthew indicate the church was to be an entity separate and apart from the traditional people of God.[22] The church is simply the renewed people of God. They are the people of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34 who, by remaining faithful to the word of the one Teacher, will survive at the final consummation (25:31–46).

Although the church emerges out of Israel and its story, as the end-time people of God, according to Matthew, it was destined to become open to all nations. Believing Gentiles could enter the people of God while not losing their identity as Gentiles. Thus, despite its own special characteristics Matthew coheres with the narrative of the New Testament on the reception of the Gentiles.

Indeed, this is evident from the beginning of the Gospel. In Matthew 1:1, Jesus' Davidic ancestry is traced back to Abraham, the father of the promises of blessing to the nations (Gen 12:1–3). At birth Jesus is visited by Magi and, in keeping with the testimony of Isaiah, receives gifts from Gentiles (cf. Isa 60:6). Some of the greatest expressions of faith in Jesus' mission come from the Gentiles (Matt 8:5–13; 15:21–28). Ultimately, the commission to go only to Israel will be extended to include the Gentiles, presumably because at the consummation of the age people of all nations will be held accountable for their response (Matt 24:14; 25:31–32). At the end of Matthew, the commission is to take the gospel to all nations, which, I believe, is inclusive of a continuing mission to Israel as well (Matt 28:16-20).

Yet I am absolutely convinced that Matthew is a very Jewish book and interpreters ignore this at their peril. It has a strong defensive posture defending the church, anchored on the Twelve, over against the leaders and teachers of mainstream Israel of the day (21:43). We who come on the other side of

[21] According to Matthew 18 this teaching was nothing like the later tradition of St. Peter meeting us at the gates of heaven and determining who would or would not gain entrance to the fold. Instead the task is to shepherd the community of the end-time with a view to help the straying brother (18:10–14). They are to encourage the flock through their teaching from the Master on prayer, forgiveness, the love commandment, and even such matters as the proper use of wealth. Note Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 327–53.

[22] Konradt, *Israel, Church*, 336.

this founding situation within Israel appreciate its strong overtones in defense of the universality of the people of God. We should appreciate it just as much for its deep roots in the story of Israel.

Ephesians

After looking at a book anchored deeply in the Jewish world we now turn to a writing that emerged out of a Gentile context within the Greco-Roman world. In Ephesians the Gentiles have become the dominant figures in the communities addressed. Yet, despite a situation in which the recipients differ greatly from those in Matthew, the need to accommodate and develop an appropriate relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers remains a central concern. What is striking is that even in this neighborhood the centrality of Israel is stressed.

This is clearly seen in Ephesians 2:11–22, a key passage in the letter.[23] Because the Gentiles did not belong to "the commonwealth of Israel"—the possessors of the covenants of promise (Rom 9:4)—they were without hope (2:11–12). Indeed, the Gentiles were "far off" (2:17). Outside of the gates of the household of God, they were "strangers and sojourners" (2:19). The Gentiles who have become part of God's people need to remember that they were once in a situation where they had no hope of salvation (2:11–12; 4:17–19; 5:3–13).

Astonishingly, the writer of this letter needed to remind the primarily Gentile audience of a basic fact. Israel had a long history as the people of God. In the day-to-day world, where there were few believers of Jewish origin, this reality was becoming increasingly difficult.[24] Now the shoe was on the other foot. There was even a danger of dismissing the heritage of Israel.

Ephesians will have nothing of this disparagement of Israel. The writer echoes Romans 11:16–24, stating that it was always the plan of the Creator to bring unification between the Jew and the Gentile. This was a mystery, the

[23] Derwood C. Smith, "Cultic Language in Ephesians 2:19-22: A Test Case," *Restoration Quarterly* 31/4 (1989): 207–17.

[24] Nils Dahl, "Gentiles, Christians, and Israelites in the Epistle to the Ephesians," in *Studies in Ephesians*, ed. David Hellholm, et al., Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 1/131 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 444–47.

outcome of which was now unfolding (3:1–13; 6:10–20). The story of the people of God is a process culminating in one unified body of both circumcised and uncircumcised believers brought together in the church through Jesus. Contrary to the evil powers that reckoned they were in control of the universe, it is in this one unified body (the church) that God's wisdom concerning his purpose for the human community is made known (3:9–12). This reality should be accepted and not resisted by the Gentiles.

On the other hand, although the Law still determines the life of the people of God, a certain shaping of Torah rules that emerged to maintain Israel's distinctiveness from other peoples was no longer valid (Eph 2:14–15).[25] No doubt this included circumcision and some other features designed to separate the Jews from others. But for the biblical narrative to work it remained a matter of absolute necessity to recognize the need for unification of Jew and Gentile in the one people of God. Or, in keeping with the theme of this essay, Old and New Testament must be reckoned to constitute one book.

Conclusion

In this essay I attempted to raise a question about the implications of the claim made in Campbell's essay that Christians are no longer under the Law of Moses. In my judgment, the implications have taken us in unfortunate directions. Specifically, in some quarters, the normative authority of Scripture has been limited to Acts and the Epistles. More generally, we have had a problem understanding the central place of Israel in the Bible. What is the authority of the Old Testament? Even when we read the New Testament, how do we account for the central importance of Israel in God's plan? Is our traditional reading of covenant plausible?

If the Bible is "The Book," I have suggested that it must have a common narrative. I believe that common narrative tells the story of the people of God. Starting with the call and divine promises to Abraham, the story culminates in the emergence of a universal community of Jews and Gentiles united through Jesus Christ. For us, the majesty of the Bible's one story of the "Israel of God" should unite the two Testaments, rather than pulling them apart.

[25] Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 77.

The First Restoration Movement: The Chronicler's Program of Restoration and Churches of Christ Today[1]

R. Mark Shipp

Introduction

I remember in my youth gospel meetings, sermons, and lectures in which the "Restoration Movement," or "restoration principles," were articulated. The point was that the New Testament alone was the standard for doctrine and organization, and the first-century church provided the pattern for our belief and practice. The "restoration" assumed that there was something which had fallen into disrepair or disuse and needed to be recovered or repaired.

The restoration appeal has fallen on hard times. Sermons, Bible studies, and lectures on the validity of restoration principles are rarely articulated in many Churches of Christ in recent years. While this may vary from place to place, there is no doubt that many Churches of Christ have either questioned its continuing validity, or have "voted with their feet" by engaging other traditions or systems of thought.

While there is little doubt that at times restoration appeals have been overstated or replaced by sectarian ones, what are the elements of restoration thought which have continuing relevance? What about the principles of turning to Scripture alone for our doctrine, including ordinances and organization of the church, and the need for repair or restoration of such practices where

[1] First presented in an abbreviated form at Austin Graduate School of Theology Friends' Day, November 18, 2014. This author is indebted to Paul Watson for his friendship and for being a wonderful model of scholarship at the service of the Church.

they have lapsed? Are there any biblical precedents for restoration, or are we guilty of the thing we have charged others with doing, that of man-made movements without biblical warrant? My suggestion is that the book of Chronicles present the program of the restoration of Israel in the post-exilic age, and that the Chronicler's appeals may also benefit those who are interested in the renewal of the contemporary church. I will look at the book of Chronicles as a guide for the relevance of the past, for the recovery of particular practices and institutions, and for the unity of God's people.

The Chronicler's Understanding of the Past and Its Relevance

The Chronicler is interested in recapturing the past as a model for the present. I will look at the Chronicler's interest in the past in these four ways: the Chronicler's use of genealogies, his re-telling of the story of the kings of Judah, the Chronicler and the past made contemporary, and the Chronicler's idealizing of the past.

The Chronicler's use of genealogies. The Chronicler is the first in the Bible to begin his writing with extensive genealogies. These genealogies do more than just chart family relationships. They establish that the post-exilic community of Judah was the legitimate heir to the promises and covenants to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David. But those promises had fallen on hard times. After the exile, Judah had a precarious hold on its identity. They had no national self-determination. They had no king and the promises to David appeared to be null and void. The twelve tribes were only a memory, and the land of Israel, Dan to Beersheba, was reduced to a small province surrounding Jerusalem. All Israel, a common phrase in Chronicles,[2] was in serious need of restoration.

The Chronicler based his program of restoration in several *origins*—in the most ancient ancestral fathers following the creation account of Genesis (1 Chronicles 1:1–23), in Abraham and the patriarchs (1:24–34; 2:1–2:2), and in the secondary creations of Israel at Sinai and especially the kingdom and covenant with David (genealogies of Judah and David, chapters 2–4) as models for the future. The genealogies establish that the community of Israel

[2] David gathered "all Israel," 1 Chron 11:1; "all Israel" went with David to capture Jerusalem, 1 Chron 11:4; "all Israel" agreed to make David king, 1 Chron 12:38, and 40 other occurrences in Chronicles.

forged in the past is the same as the one striving to be the people of God in the present, looking towards the future in an ongoing and incomplete restoration.[3]

The Chronicler is not the only biblical writer showing the relevance of the past through genealogies. The Gospel of Matthew also begins with genealogies: Jesus the Christ is the heir to the history, the covenants, and the promises of the Old Testament (Matt 1:1). He is the legitimate son of David and son of Abraham. The new community of Israel, forged in the new covenant in the body and blood of Jesus, is both the continuation of the promises and covenants of the past and the signal of a new beginning (Matt. 26:26–29). Both the Chronicler's restoration and the new covenant in Jesus plant one foot squarely in the past while looking forward to God's acts of redemption and restoration of his people and of his creation in the future.

The re-telling of the story of the kings of Judah. It is through the retelling of the story of the kings of Judah that the Chronicler makes plain his method and emphases. The Chronicles narrative begins in 1 Chronicles 10 with the death of Saul and David's accession to the throne, because he, unlike Saul, "sought the Lord."[4] The story ends with the demise of Judean kingship in exile, but with the possibility of a renewed king, kingdom, worship, and land with the edict of Cyrus. Roughly two-thirds of the book of Chronicles tells the story of two kings, David and Solomon, because they were the initiators and paradigms of kingship and worship in Judah. All kings who followed in Judah (north Israelite kings being almost completely left out of the story) are compared to these two paradigmatic kings who "sought the Lord." The Chronicler tells the story of the kings of Judah relative to whether, and the extent to which, they sought the Lord.

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[3] One may see this in particular in 1 Chronicles 9:1–3. "Israel" is the first on the list of entities being restored after the exile (v. 2). This is followed by priests, Levites, and temple servants (v. 2), and then by "some of the people of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh," that is, all of Israel that was left (v. 3). It was first necessary to establish the *bona fides* of the post-exilic community as the same as that which went into exile by the extensive "enrollment in genealogies" (v. 1).

[4] Note there are 38 occurrences of the Hebrew *darash* ("seek") in Chronicles. See especially the reason for the rejection of Saul: "[He] did not seek guidance from the LORD. Therefore the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse" (1 Chron 10:14). Also, David left instructions with Solomon to do as he had done: to set his heart and mind to "seek the Lord" (1 Chron 28:9).

The past made contemporary. The past is brought forward and made contemporary in the book of Chronicles. This may be seen even in the Chronicler's use of sources, especially the Deuteronomic History (Joshua through 2 Kings, with Deuteronomy as an introduction). In one half of the book, the Chronicler quotes copiously from the earlier history. On the other hand, in the accounts of most kings the Chronicler adds his own non-synoptic narratives, based upon other sources and written in the Hebrew of the post-exilic age. Thus one half of the Chronicler's history is in the classical Hebrew of the monarchical period, and one half in the Hebrew of a later day. The end result is like reading Shakespeare with every other page in updated, modern English. One cannot fail to see the ancient stories of the past brought forward and given the "new dress" of the present.

There is another sense in which the past is made relevant to the present, from the Chronicler's point of view: the institutions he describes, such as Levitical orders, give every appearance of being the highly organized and diversified phenomena we see developing in the post-exilic age.[5] Thus the Chronicler makes apparent that the structure of the Levitical organization in the post-exilic age has its inception and warrant in the initiatives of David and Solomon. The effect is much like that of medieval portrayals of the Passion: the characters are from the first century A.D., but their garb is distinctly medieval European.

The past as ideal model.[6] The Chronicler not only "brings the past forward." He also idealizes the past as the model for the present, with an eye towards Israel's future restoration. The picture the Chronicler paints of David and Solomon, the priesthood, the Levites, and the unity of the twelve tribes is a truly optimistic one, which never existed in reality. But these ideal portraits

[5] In earlier texts of the Old Testament, there is little, if any, evidence for the complex organization of priests and the Levitical orders of gatekeepers and singers, such as we see in 1 Chronicles 15–16. In pre-exilic texts, the Levites are "Levitical priests" or members of the tribe of Levi. Outside of post-exilic texts, there is only one mention in the Old Testament of the priests and the Levites both performing cultic functions, in 1 Kings 8:4. In post-exilic texts (Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Ezekiel), the number swells to over seventy.

[6] For a good discussion of how the Chronicler uses the past see Simon J. De Vries, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Forms of Old Testament Literature vol. XI (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 17–20.

make sense if the Chronicler is holding them out as models and blueprints for post-exilic Judah to emulate in its program of restoration.[7]

The American Restoration Movement and the past. There is a weakness in the Restoration Movement as it has sometimes been articulated. Much like the Chronicler, our focus has often been on the past as a Golden Age which needs to be recovered, but a corollary to this emphasis has been often implied, if not expressly stated: if the external signs of the church's life were recovered, the sanctity and mission of the church would necessarily follow. Perhaps we should learn a lesson from our Reformed neighbors and their Latin motto, *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda* ("the church reformed, always reforming"): *ecclesia restituta, semper restituenda*—"the church restored, always to be restored*."* Restoration is never complete or perfect, for we are imperfect people. It will always be an unfinished task. The past is important to any restoration movement, but returning to the first century A.D. is not enough. Any restoration of the church of the past must also look to the future. We are grounded in our origin stories, our *primordium,* but in our imperfection we are looking to the future in anticipation of the perfect restoration of all things. An implication of this imperfect restoration is that humility becomes us. Perhaps the restoration of a humble, searching spirit is a prerequisite to the *ecclesia restituta*. It involves also the recognition that the restoration is not static and oriented only to the past, but toward the future as well.

The Restoration of the Institutions of King and Temple

The Chronicler is concerned with Israel's institutions, especially the "twin pillars" of *king* and *temple*.[8] The narrative section of Chronicles begins with the death of Saul and the elevation of David to the kingship over Israel.

[7] The word "blueprint," plan, or "pattern," Hebrew *tabnît*, is used in 1 Chronicles 28:11–12 and 18–19.

[8] Note that the institution of kingship is paramount in Chronicles. Some have argued that kingship is subsumed under the temple and its worship, and that the restoration of kingship is not in the Chronicler's purview. For a good survey of the evidence in favor of Davidic kingship as a critical institution in itself, and with ongoing significance to the Chronicler, see Steven McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004). For a discussion of the temple as the prevailing motif in the Chronicler's history, see Steven Tuell, *First and Second Chronicles*, Interpretation Commentary (Louisville: John Knox, 2004), 11–12.

All of the rest of 1 Chronicles and much of 2 Chronicles deal with the kings of Judah, especially the first two, David and Solomon. The Chronicler is concerned with the apparent demise of the eternal covenant with David in light of the absence of a Davidic king on the throne in the post-exilic age.

David and Solomon as models of faithful rule.[9] The Chronicler portrays David and Solomon, his exemplary kings, almost like marble statues in their perfection. This is not because the Chronicler could not read or was unaware of their serious lapses, but because their kingship, as it should have been, was the ideal model for the post-exilic community of Israel. Like the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 12, whose failings are omitted, David and Solomon are exemplary because they "sought the Lord."

The Davidic/Solomonic priesthood and worship as a model. The Chronicler is also concerned with temple worship, organization, and priesthood. Every reforming king restored the reading and practice of the Torah, or decreed the purification and restoration of the priesthood and temple worship. To the Chronicler, worship was more than temple sacrifice. There was power in worship: when the people of Judah were threatened by the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites during the reign of Jehoshaphat, the Levites sang to the Lord and God smote the enemy.

The covenant with David thus involved two elements: God's eternal election of David as king and his election of the temple. It was unthinkable to the Chronicler that God's promises to David could falter or be abrogated. If Judah would seek the Lord, as David and Solomon had done, God might once again restore king, temple, and worship. But the Chronicler never suggests that the recovery of Israel's king and temple was to be accomplished through human initiative and activity alone, although human activity is involved. The priests and prophets are to be faithful in fulfilling their roles in worship, consecration, and teaching the Torah. The kings of Judah and the people of Israel are to "seek God with all their heart," humble themselves, and practice faithfully the Torah and the recovery of these institutions would result through God's initiative.

[9] For a discussion of David and Solomon as models of kingship, see Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 14 (Waco: Word, 1986), xxxii–xxxv.

The American Restoration Movement and the restoration of institutions. I suggest this is a failure of the Restoration Movement as it has sometimes been practiced: that God left the church in human hands, and the outcome of its unity and spiritual growth more or less depends upon us. The difference between David and Saul in 1 Chronicles 10:13–14 is that David sought the Lord with all his heart. Perhaps seeking the Lord with all our heart is the necessary prerequisite to the renewal of the visible manifestations of the church.

There are other serious implications of this for our church life today. The recovery of kingship for us involves the confession of Christ as king and his enthronement in our hearts and the lives of our churches. The recovery of worship involves the recognition of divine initiative, both in our baptism and in the Lord's Supper, where Christ is the host. Also, as in restoration movements narrated in Chronicles, teaching Scripture and singing hymns are powerful elements in faithful response to God.

The Chronicler and the Unity of Israel

The Chronicler and "all Israel". The Chronicler is concerned with the restoration of the *land* promised to the fathers and "all Israel" as a *unity of twelve tribes*.[10] With every restoration in Judah's history—those of Hezekiah and Josiah in particular—came recovery of territory lost in faithless periods of Judah's history and also the reconciliation of errant brothers to the North. The Chronicler portrays an ideal picture of Josiah's reform, extending all the way to Naphtali in the far north of the defunct kingdom of North Israel, not just to Bethel, as 2 Kings records. The Chronicler's genealogies record a return of North Israelite exiles with the Judeans in 539 BC. Those who came over to David when he was in the wilderness running from Saul included many North Israelites. This emphasis on "all Israel" sits in tension with the reality of the Chronicler's history. The Chronicler has essentially "edited out" all of the stories about the North from 1–2 Kings. It is the history of the kingdom of Judah, which alone was left of God's broken and scattered people. But the restoration of Judah has implications for God's ultimate restoration, that of "all Israel," the whole community of faith and the recipients of

[10] For the importance of "all Israel" to the Chronicler's theology, see Braun, xxxv–xxxvii.

the promise. The unity and restoration of all Israel, therefore, was a future hope, something the Chronicler only saw "in a glass darkly."

The Churches of Christ and the unity of believers. We, like the Chronicler, see the evidence of the broken community in the shattered fragments of the unity for which Christ prayed. Like the Chronicler, the restoration appeal to unity sits in uneasy tension with the reality of fragmentation. To the Chronicler, Israel's unity was both a declared reality and a longing for the future. So it is with us. The unity of the church is both a declared reality and an eschatological longing, as we seek the Lord's presence and his healing of the fractured body of Christ.

What may we do to promote such unity within the fractured body? While we did not begin the divisions in the church, nor will we in all likelihood eliminate them, there are several practical things we can do. The first is to foster a spirit of kindness and forbearance for our religious neighbors who name the name of Christ. Ugliness and sectarianism have never been virtues, but sins. The second is to announce our commitments and invite others to respond, dialogue, and even join with us as we attempt to live faithfully. Our school's statement of faith illustrates this: "Austin Graduate School of Theology is a seminary associated with Churches of Christ and in conversation with all who confess Jesus as Lord." Finally, where we can, we should invite others to participate in our labors of ministry. The Timeless Psalter/Commentary project is a concrete example of ecumenism.[11] All who name the name of Christ are invited to submit psalm lyrics and musical settings, for Christians all agree on the importance of the psalms.

Conclusion

What is right about restorationism? It focuses upon the recovery of our origins in the past, but it needs to be oriented towards the future as well and the realization that all our efforts are incomplete and God's restoration of all things awaits the final day. It involves the recovery of the church and its

[11] R. Mark Shipp, ed. *Timeless: Ancient Psalms for the Church Today. Vol. 1, Psalms 1–41: In the Day of Distress* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2011). Volume 2 is in production. See also *Be Still and Know: Timeless Psalms of Trust, Confidence, and Hope*, CD published by Austin Christian Acappella, 2014, and *Where Are You, Lord? From Lament to Praise in the Psalms,* Austin Christian Acappella, 2015.

worship, but we need to recognize that Christ is the one who builds the church and is its host in worship. It calls its scattered members to unity, but does so in a spirit of kindness and love.

Biblical "Restorationism": A Response to Mark Shipp

Jeffrey Peterson

Since the second century and the career of Marcion, the Christian church has faced the temptation to resolve tensions between the Scriptures of Israel (the "Old Testament," or OT) and the specifically Christian Scriptures (the "New Testament," or NT) by abandoning the former, whether formally or practically. Yet the OT is essential to the expression of the Christian gospel from the time of its first proclamation, and without the background it supplies, the faith is bound to be misconstrued, as it was by Marcion himself.[1] In the words of Austin Farrer, "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are included under a single name [viz., 'the Bible'] for no other reason than this, that through them the person and work of Jesus Christ are understood. The New fulfills the Old, the Old is indispensable for understanding the New."[2] Students of the New Testament and Christian theology are thus indebted to those scholars who devote themselves to explicating the OT, and especially to those who do so with an eye towards exhibiting how its message is indis-

[1] For interpretation of Israel's Scriptures in the earliest period of Christian theology, see especially Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992). For Marcion, see now Judith M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[2] Austin Farrer, "Introduction," in *The Core of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 7.

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pensable for comprehending that of the NT, and how the former is fulfilled in the latter.[3]

Mark Shipp's essay invites reflection on what the books of Chronicles can teach Christians of the Restoration tradition about how we may find guidance for our future in an increasingly disorienting present by acquiring perspective on the past. In Shipp's discussion of "The First Restoration Movement," I appreciate the attention given both to the details of the scriptural text and to the larger message of the books under consideration. I believe he has rightly seen with the author of Chronicles that we are grounded in our history—whether we think of the history of Israel, the ministry of Jesus, the early church, the Protestant Reformation, the movement for unity through restoration launched in early nineteenth-century America, or our own families and formative churches or even our individual stories of discipleship. Recalling our history of response to God's saving initiatives—however narrowly or broadly we define the word "our"—is surely one way in which the people of God orient ourselves as we seek to follow him through time. But taken as a whole, the work of the Chronicler also invites us to recognize our imperfection and look to the future for God's final restoration of all things (ourselves included) in conformity with his will.

The characteristic perspective of the NT on God's consummation of his purposes is often labeled "inaugurated eschatology."[4] The phrase suggests that at some point in the past God has acted decisively in the history of his people and his creation so as to ensure the future that he intends for them, and that the arc from past act to future consummation determines the character and demands of our present. In the NT, the focal point of history, which

[3] It is a pleasure to offer this response to the work of one such scholar associated with Austin Graduate School of Theology, Mark Shipp, in honor of the life's work of another, Paul Watson. It was not my privilege to serve as Paul's teaching colleague (when the school was known as the Institute for Christian Studies), but I have learned much from his exposition of Old Testament texts at numerous sessions of our annual Sermon Seminar since 1993, and I regard the use to which he has put his scholarly gifts in the ministry of preaching as exemplary. An earlier draft of this essay was presented as a response to the original version of Mark's essay at the AGST Friends' Day, 18 October 2014, in Austin, Texas.

[4] See for example J. B. Green, "Kingdom of God/Heaven," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2d ed.; ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin; Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: InterVarsity, 2013), 469.

decisively determines all that comes after and begins even now the consummation of God's saving purpose, is of course the passion and resurrection of Jesus.[5] Strikingly, John Thompson finds "inaugurated eschatology" in the vision of God's future for his people presented in Chronicles.[6] In the words of Scott Hahn, "Chronicles tells Israel's history backwards, from the perspective of the end, the *qēṣ*, the zenith of history foretold by the prophets," and thus achieves a "prophetic historiography that looks forward not to the end of history, but to the fullness of time and fulfillment of what is anticipated in Israel's liturgy, which is always open to what God holds in store for the future."[7] Indeed, one might consider from the point of view of the various OT witnesses whether the moment at which God's future was decisively set in motion is the founding of the Davidic dynasty, or the exodus from Egypt, or the call of Abraham, or the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, or even creation itself.[8]

Shipp's identification in Chronicles of an ecumenical agenda aimed at reuniting God's scattered and divided people to form "all Israel" is suggestive for those involved with a ministry "associated with Churches of Christ and in conversation with all who confess Jesus as Lord."[9] On Shipp's reading, the Chronicler was pained by division within God's people, and his history indicates his longing for the time when they would all be reunited by divine power, but he also believed that the center around which God would accomplish this work was the heir of David seated on a throne restored to Zion where God's temple would also be rebuilt; that is, the Chronicler hoped

[5] See Dale C. Allison, *The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

[6] See J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, New American Commentary, vol. 9 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), p. 41.

[7] Scott Hahn, *The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire: A Theological Commentary on 1–2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 12–13.

[8] I have argued elsewhere that on Paul's interpretation of Gen 1:26 in 1 Cor 15:49, God's stated intention to "make [a] man in our image, after our likeness" is ultimately fulfilled only in the *parousia* of Christ ("'The Image of the Man from Heaven': Christological Exegesis in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1997, chapter 5).

[9] AGST mission statement (http://austingrad.edu/about-us/mission, accessed 13 April 2015).

for God to reunite his scattered people by restoring those who had abandoned and even rejected the visible center of unity he had established in Jerusalem.

This is reminiscent of the stance toward ecumenical conversation that Everett Ferguson has commended to Churches of Christ.[10] In such "distinctive" observances as believers' baptism, weekly communion, and *a cappella* singing, Ferguson encourages us to recognize practices with deep roots in ancient Christian tradition. These observances deserve to be recognized as founding marks of the church from which Christians have departed in the course of the centuries, and which were indeed restored to a significant degree in the movement led by the Campbells and Stone and their associates.[11]

This recognition permits Churches of Christ to approach ecumenical endeavor as recipients and bearers of ancient Christian tradition who decline, in the words of G. K. Chesterton, "to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about."[12] Such a stance might not eliminate the practical obstacles that impede greater visible union between Christian churches, but it might foster an ecumenical dialogue conducted in a spirit of mutual appreciation rather than apology, as a conversation between communions that offer one another gifts vouchsafed to our possession by the providence of God.

I close with one point on which I would question Shipp and one suggestion for supplementing the proposal he offers on the basis of Chronicles. The question concerns whether the books of Chronicles ought to be read as a self-contained literary work, or whether Ezra and Nehemiah should be treated as the self-conscious continuation of the story Chronicles tells. I suggest the latter perspective commends itself; whether or not the works were composed by the same human author, the opening of Ezra clearly picks up on the conclusion of 2 Chronicles. The narrative of Chronicles ends with the decree of

[10] See Everett Ferguson, "Churches of Christ: Who We Are and Who We Ought to Be," *Christian Studies* 18 (2000–01): 41–52.

[11] To balance this perspective with developments in other communions, one would need to reckon with the history of the Liturgical Movement, in the course of which during the twentieth century a number of communions converged in appreciation and reappropriation of the worship practices of the ancient Christian Church. For a survey, see L. Sheppard, *The People Worship: A History of the Liturgical Movement* (New York: Hawthorn, 1967).

[12] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York and London: John Lane, 1909), 85.

Cyrus, King of Persia, that allowed the exiles to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple of the LORD (2 Chron 36:22–23); Ezra opens with the same decree and tells us what happened next.[13] So even if the works were written by different authors (and even should that also be the case for the books of Ezra and Nehemiah), the editor or editors who brought them together present them as telling a continuous story.[14] In that story, the actions that the returning exiles take in Ezra and Nehemiah—rebuilding the temple, purifying the community, ordering the community's life and worship under the Law of God, rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem—constitute aspects of the way Judah "sought the LORD" and prepared for the yet greater works that God would do in their future, intimated in Chronicles.

If Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah belong together, then Shipp's point that the restoration anticipated in Chronicles was "not to be accomplished through human initiative and activity alone, although human activity is involved" needs to be received with great care, and with considerable weight placed on the final qualification. Of a certainty, unaided human effort will not finally achieve all God's purposes for his creation or for our lives, but our actions inspired by the biblical vision of God's coming restoration of all things to conformity with his will are indispensable to our part in this story.

This deserves attention, because many contemporary Protestants, including many in Churches of Christ, are heirs to a rediscovery of grace that scorns all human effort, actions, or "works," the term typically employed in English when a negative connotation is present. Yet Paul, the great expositor of grace in the NT, in the letters in which he develops the subject most fully, follows these expositions with multiple chapters of exhortation (in Galatians 5–6 and Romans 12–14) to actions that are reasonably regarded as good

[13] Morna Hooker compares this narrative overlap to the ascension narratives at the conclusion of Luke and the opening of Acts and regards it as an indication "that the second volume is a continuation of the story told in the first" (*Endings: Invitations to Discipleship* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003], 51–52). In the case of Acts, the parallel is strengthened by recognition that there, as in Luke, the ascension is dated on Easter Day, and the "forty days" during which Jesus "appeared" to the disciples (Acts 1:3) follow the ascension rather than preceding it; see Henk Jan de Jonge, "The Chronology of the Ascension Stories in Luke and Acts," *New Testament Studies* 59 (2013): 151–171.

[14] See David Noel Freedman, *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1991), 75–78, 83–85, 92–93, 99–100.

"works" (or "deeds" or "actions," all translations of the one Greek noun *ergon*; cf. Rom 2:6–7, 15; 13:3; 1 Cor 3:13–15; 15:58; 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 2:10; 4:12; Col 1:10; 3:17). We cannot achieve our own standing in grace, and apart from God we can do nothing, but empowered by God's Spirit and freely invited into the communion of his saints, we are charged with doing the good works that further God's purposes in our little corner of creation, and that give him scope for yet greater redemptive work in the future. In Paul's words, the church is God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10 ESV; cf. also Phil 2:12–13 on God as working [*energōn*] through the actions of believers).[15]

As for the concluding suggestion, it seems to me that what Shipp discovers in Chronicles can be usefully complemented with the perspective of a NT text well known to Restorationists. The book of Acts also commends to its readers a sort of "program of restoration," in which our actions under the guidance of God's Spirit prepare for greater acts of divine deliverance in our future. Luke urges Christians of the second generation, who form his immediate audience, to take as their model of faithfulness the church of the first Christian generation, through which God worked so powerfully.[16]

The story that Luke–Acts tells is focused on events between ca. AD 30 and 60, between the beginning of Jesus' ministry and Paul's imprisonment in Rome midway through Nero's reign. Luke tells us, however, that he relates this story with the edification of later readers in view, represented by Theophilus in the prefaces to his two volumes (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). At points in his narrative, Luke registers his concerns regarding the church in Theophilus' generation. Thus, in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul urges them, "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of

[15] On the authorship of Ephesians, see especially Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 2–61.

[16] Classes that Anthony L. Ash taught some years ago at the annual Abilene Christian University Bible Lectureship in Abilene, Texas, inspired the interpretation of Acts sketched here. Despite a recent scholarly trend to date the book in the first third of the second century, I continue to find convincing the judgment of Hans Conzelmann: "Dating the composition of Acts somewhere between 80 and 100 best fits all of the evidence" (*Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], xxxiii).

which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28 NRSV), with urgency given to this appeal by the prediction that "after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them" (Acts 20:29–30 NRSV). Alone of the Evangelists, Luke records Jesus' question, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8 ESV). François Bovon finds here a concern for the "danger of faith cooling off" during the church's "patient waiting for a distant end of the history of salvation."[17] Perhaps the question also signals Luke's concern about the possible, or even the actual, effects of the ravenous leaders that Paul warns about in the post-apostolic era.

Throughout his Gospel and Acts, Luke commends to his readers the examples of those who waited on God's salvation and were rewarded for their patience with the outpouring of his Spirit, which empowered them for effective witness to his Anointed One, Jesus. This pattern appears already in Luke's infancy narrative, which shares with Chronicles a focus on the temple and an approbation of those who humbly passed their days praising God and waiting on his deliverance there. Thus, Simeon is the first figure in Luke's narrative to perceive through the Holy Spirit that the newborn Messiah Jesus will be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles," as well as "for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:32 ESV), and the prophetess Anna joins Mary and Zechariah in speaking of Jesus as fulfilling the hopes of those "waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38 ESV).

This pattern comes to fruition in the opening chapters of Acts, as Jesus' disciples, now relocated from Galilee to Jerusalem, "stay in the city until … clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49 ESV) and are then filled with the Spirit of God poured out on them by the risen Jesus, and thus empowered for witness. In this respect, as in others that Luke notes, their experience recapitulates Jesus' own, as his ministry likewise began with the reception of the Spirit (Luke 3:21–22), which supplied the power by which he ministered (Luke 4:1, 14) and offered his own powerful testimony to God's fulfillment of his saving purposes (Luke 4:16–30).

[17] François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51–19:27*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 537.

The "acts of the apostles" that Luke records are, as often noted, the acts of the Holy Spirit; but they are also the acts of the risen Christ, who bestows this Spirit on believers (Acts 2:32–33) and makes possible their extension of his ministry throughout the inhabited world and across the decades (now centuries). This is one key to the significance of Luke's narrative, and another is found in Luke's description of the elements of communal life that followed the Spirit's initial outpouring and history's first 3000 baptisms in the name of Jesus. These first Christians devoted themselves to (1) the *apostles' teaching* on the fulfillment of God's saving purposes for Israel and the nations, now beginning to be decisively fulfilled in Jesus' death and resurrection and the community formed in consequence; (2) the *sharing of possessions* (*koinōnia*) as required to address the needs of this newly formed community's members; (3) the breaking of bread in the presence of the risen Lord; and (4) the daily communal and individual prayers by which Christians sought God's guidance and protection for their ministry.[18]

As Luke's readers, we are invited to devote ourselves to the same practices as the first generation of believers. These practices are not ends in themselves, to be observed legalistically, but are rather means of grace by which God can restore to the church in our time the spirit and vitality that Acts describes, a movement towards restoration that every Christian should be able to support.[19] In adopting such a program of restoration, we take our place in a history with deep roots in the scriptural witness, as Shipp's reflections on Chronicles show, and we ready ourselves for the future God has prepared for us and all his servants.

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[18] This expansive paraphrase of Acts 2:42 draws on the whole picture of Jesus and his community presented in Luke–Acts; see initially Luke 24:13–35 (the breaking of bread as the occasion for the presence of the risen Christ), 36–49 (the source of the apostles' teaching in Jesus' post-resurrection instruction; cf. Acts 1:3); Acts 2:43–47; 4:32–37; 6:1–7 (the sharing of possessions); 3:1; 4:23–31 (prayer in the life of the community).

[19] As in the prophets and elsewhere in the Bible, the danger of a merely external observance of the law of God that does not include the proper motivation is acknowledged in Luke–Acts, notably in the parable of the Good Samaritan and its introduction (Luke 10:25–37). But as is also generally true in Scripture, outright opposition between the interior disposition of the faithful and their external actions is not characteristic of Luke–Acts; indeed, Jesus tests the strength of a ruler's desire to inherit eternal life by challenging him to undertake a stringent renunciation of material wealth (Luke 18:18–30).

Finding a Way Past Lament:
When God Is Absent and Thanksgiving Impossible

Glenn Pemberton

Lament is a language in motion, and where lament moves its reader is a question the guild appears to have settled in unanimity.[1] For example, reflecting this consensus, the titles of my final chapters in my earlier work, *Hurting with God,* point to where we hope lament leads: "Will You Hide Yourself Forever?" (chapter 10), "Where is Your Steadfast Love of Old?" (chapter 11), and "You have Turned my Mourning into Dancing!" (chapter 12).[2] These titles suggest that lament leads to God's liberation from trouble and, as a result, to the joy of thanksgiving. I confess that my work is one among many Western studies of the book of Psalms in the past thirty years that suggests or affirms thanksgiving to be the next step after lament.[3] This is

[1] An earlier form of this paper was presented at the 2014 Sermon Seminar hosted by Austin Graduate School of Theology. The eager reception at that event prompts my submission of this essay in honor of my friend and brother Paul Watson.

[2] Glenn Pemberton, *Hurting with God: Learning to Lament with the Psalms* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2012); this paper reflects the new direction in which I move in *After Lament: Psalms for Learning to Trust Again* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2014).

[3] To mention a few of many examples see: Mark Futado, *Joy Comes in the Morning: Psalms for all Seasons* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004); Denise Dombkowski Hopkins, *Journey Through the Psalms*, revised and expanded (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002); C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001); and J. Clinton McCann, Jr. and James C. Howell, *Preaching the Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

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a congruence born of form criticism,[4] the optimism of American culture, and the enormous influence of Walter Brueggemann's 1980 essay, "The Psalms and the Life of Faith—A Suggested Typology of Function," followed shortly after by his monograph, *The Message of the Psalms* (in which he organizes the psalms into three categories: Psalms of Orientation, Psalms of Disorientation, and Psalms of New Orientation).[5]

Unfortunately, what Brueggemann and other early form-critical scholars took for granted about the movement after lament or after disorientation is not part of the equation in contemporary studies, and is altogether lacking in present-day proclamation that expects songs of joy to *always* replace our psalms of lament.[6] Neither Brueggemann nor Gunkel would ever agree that lament *always* leads to thanksgiving; nonetheless, the present consensus leaves this impression. This study is an attempt to step into the consensus and conclusions drawn from it and ask the difficult questions that lead to unsettling answers. Lament does not always lead to thanksgiving. Instead, under closer examination we find that lament leads first to trust in God—a point assumed by Brueggemann and others, but lacking an explicit claim and presentation of evidence. This paper, then, will try to present the evidence that will lead us to a better understanding of what happens after lament and the direction in which lament tries to lead its reader.

Before we race to another extreme position or sound as if we are denying thanksgiving as a proper outcome of lament, we need to confirm that sometimes psalms of thanksgiving do follow psalms of lament. Two brief observations support this possible movement. First, a number of laments declare

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[4] In Hermann Gunkel's monumental work (*Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James Nogalski [Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998]), the chapter on "Individual Thanksgiving Songs" (7) comes immediately after the "Individual Complaint Songs" (6), a suggestive placement, even if unintended.

[5] Walter Brueggemann, "Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17 (1980): 3–32; and *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

[6] Of course, not everyone adopts form-criticism or Brueggemann's three-part organization of form-critical categories. For a brief survey of other approaches see my essay "Hebrew Wisdom and Lyrical Literature: A Brief Field Report for the Early Twenty-First Century," *Restoration Quarterly* 55 (2013): 129–30.

that they will give thanks or give thank offerings to God. For example, consider the conclusions of Psalms 52 and 56:

I will thank you forever,
because of what you have done.
In the presence of the faithful
I will proclaim your name, for it is good. (52:9) [7]

My vows to you I must perform, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.
For you have delivered my soul from death,
and my feet from falling,
so that I may walk before God
in the light of life. (56:12–13)

It is simple enough to see that each of these psalms takes a path from lament to thanksgiving.

Second, some thanksgiving psalms look back to a preceding lament, or state that they are written as a response to a promise made in lament. So for example, Psalm 30, a thanksgiving psalm, retells the unexpected movement out of orientation and into disorientation (30:6–7). The poet then recites part of an earlier lament to the Lord.

To you, O Lord, I cried,
and to the Lord I made supplication:
"What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise you?

[7] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

Will it tell of your faithfulness?
Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me!
O Lord, be my helper!" (30:8-10)

Psalm 30 is the poet's response of gratitude to the Lord for answering the earlier lament. Another thanksgiving psalm, Psalm 113, also looks back as the writer recounts a deathly crisis (v. 3), crying out to God (v. 4), and the Lord's intervention (vv. 5–11). Then the psalm poses a question, "What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me?" and answers:

I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people…

I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the Lord.
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,
in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord! (116:12–14,17–19)

Once again there is a strong connection between the prior crisis, lament, and the new psalm to accompany thanksgiving sacrifices (see also Pss 66:13–15 and 107:21–22).

So then, sometimes lament may lead to thanksgiving: lament psalms may urge readers to give thanks to the Lord, and thanksgiving psalms may refer back to a lament. What the Psalter does not support, however, is the notion that lament *always* moves toward thanksgiving. We need a more nuanced exploration of where laments first lead their readers.

A Fresh Analysis of the Laments: Which Way Do They Go?

The Achilles' heel in the thesis that lament always leads to thanksgiving is the presupposition that in every case of lament God hears the prayer and God intervenes to help (cf. Exod 2:23–25). My objection is, what if…? What if the cry does not rise up to God? What if God doesn't hear? What if God doesn't "take notice?" In other words, what if—for whatever reason—the Lord chooses not to intervene? At a minimum Psalms 88 and 89 suggest that there are times when the Lord's people cry out, but God refuses to help.[8]

So I introduce a different hypothesis: *the psalms of lament do not regularly move the poet or reader toward a gift of new life and so to thanksgiving. Instead, these psalms consistently move their readers first into a position of trust in a God who may or may not surprise them with joy*. Consequently, New Orientation begins with trust as readers await the Lord's answer. The Lord may then offer a "surprising gift of new life" that leads to thanksgiving; or the Lord may say "no" and challenge the readers to even greater trust as they begin to readjust life to a new normal that they did not want.[9] In support of my hypothesis I offer six observations.

I. First, the sixty or so laments in the Psalms, encourage the reader to move in diverse and overlapping directions: 39 laments mention thanksgiving, 28 mention praise, and 17 mention joy or rejoicing. At first glance this data appears to support the thesis that lament invariably leads to thanksgiving or praise. It is not until we see a barrage of related words and concepts such as wait, hope, take refuge, rely on, and more—that another theme emerges in these and other laments. The first position these psalms take and advocate in the midst of crisis is to trust the Lord.

Once admitted into the dialogue, the concept of trust changes the landscape. Of the directions mentioned above, thanksgiving is most frequent (65% of the laments), praise comes next (47% of the laments), and then joy

[8] This point is established by Moses' appeals for God to let him enter the promised land. Eventually, according to the Deuteronomist, the Lord said, "Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again!" (Deut 3:26). The New Testament also affirms this point by Paul's prayers that God would remove his "thorn in the flesh," and God's implied answer 'no': "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:7-10).

[9] Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms,* 123.

(28%; for gifted mathematicians, remember these are overlapping categories). But if we consider the motif of trust or reliance: 51 of the 60 laments speak of trust in one way or another (85% of the laments). Thus, a simple argument of frequency suggests that the laments may be less concerned about thanksgiving or praise and more concerned with trusting the Lord.

II. Second, the motif of trust precedes and supports thanksgiving, praise, and rejoicing. So, for example,

> But I *trusted* in your steadfast love;
> my heart shall *rejoice* in your salvation. (13:5, emphasis mine)

> The Lord is my strength and my shield;
> *in him my heart trusts*;
> so I am helped, and my heart exults,
> and with my song *I give thanks* to him. (28:7, emphasis mine)

> But I am like a green olive tree
> in the house of God.
> *I trust in the steadfast love of God*
> forever and ever.
> *I will thank you forever,*
> because of what you have done… (52:8–9, emphasis mine)

In these and other psalms trust is the first posture the psalmist takes or models, from which later springs thanksgiving, joy, or praise. For these poets, joy, praise, and thanksgiving come most naturally from a heart that first and foremost trusts the Lord, regardless of what may happen.

III. Now that I have introduced the key idea of trust, I need to clarify where trust lives and thrives—and conversely, how trust dies. According to the Psalms, trust thrives as people see God's response to human need and as

they recognize God's characteristic faithfulness. The more people see or learn of God's help for those in seasons of disorientation, the more trust grows. But trust withers and dies from a lack of awareness of God's presence and/or a failure to experience or see God's help. Thus, on one hand, a believer grows in trust as the Lord establishes a track record of fidelity. On the other hand, when faced with adversity, uncertainty about the Lord's faithfulness leads a believer to despair. The key factor in whether a believer reacts in despair or trusts the Lord is the presence of an active, strong memory of the Lord's help in the past.

Psalm 77 provides a good example of the crucial role of memory in the dichotomy of trust or despair. Here the poet cries out to God from intense adversity.

> I cry aloud to God,
>
> aloud to God, that he may hear me.
>
> In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
>
> in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;
>
> my soul refuses to be comforted. (77:1–2)

The trouble is severe and God does not appear to be responsive (77:3–6), so much so that the writer begins to wonder about God's faithfulness and at the same time begins movement toward despair:

> Will the Lord spurn forever,
>
> and never again be favorable?
>
> Has his steadfast love ceased forever?
>
> Are his promises at an end for all time?
>
> Has God forgotten to be gracious?
>
> Has he in anger shut up his compassion? (77:7–9)

With the psalmist near collapse, the poet recalls the key source of trust—*memory* of the Lord's prior help. So the psalmist writes:

> I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;
>
> I will remember your wonders of old.
>
> I will meditate on all your work,
>
> and muse on your mighty deeds…
>
> You are the God who works wonders;
>
> you have displayed your might among the peoples. (77:11–12, 14)

From this point until the end of the psalm, the writer recalls the exodus (77:15–20): a theophany of the Lord coming to save his people (77:15–19), and the Lord leading his people "like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (77:20). Memory of the Lord's prior help saves the day and enables the poet to trust the Lord.

A variation of this pattern is testimony by others of what the Lord has done, even centuries or generations before the present moment. Psalm 78 opens with stress upon the importance of telling what has happened in the past, "the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might," to coming generations (78:1–6, as in Deut 6:4–9). The reason this exercise is important is not because the Lord enacted a law that older generations must teach the children (78:5), but because this is the only way that new generations will be able to "set their hope in God," that is, trust the Lord (78:7). The remainder of the psalm rehearses Israel's many failures when they forgot what God had done for them in the past (78:10–11, 19–20, 22, 32, 42–43), in order to establish the point that only in memory is there hope for their relationship with God (78:35f). Here and elsewhere in the Psalms, it is remembering God's faithful help that enables a believer to live by trust (or faith) even when present indicators may recommend giving up. So Psalm 103 begins,

> Bless the Lord, O my soul,
>
> and *do not forget* all his benefits—

who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (103:2–5, emphasis mine)

Memory of all the Lord's benefits enables this poet to affirm the Lord's self-revelation to Moses:

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever. (103:8–9; cf. Exod 34:6)

Now this poet can confirm and remind others of the Lord's compassion and forgiveness (103:10–14) and the Lord's steadfast love (103:17–18).

Trust, then, lives in the space between our memory of God's past actions and the present moment. Trust is easy when the present moment does not challenge or threaten our well-being. Trust remains probable as long as our memory of the Lord's past interventions or our recollection of the Lord's character outweighs the present crisis. But when memory begins to falter or the Lord's prior help is overshadowed by the new threat, trust does not come easily; without support, trust may erode and fall into despair.

IV. Eleven laments exhibit trust or encourage the reader to rely upon the Lord without any mention of thanksgiving, praise, or rejoicing.[10] Two of these psalms include only a verse or two of spoken confidence in the Lord, but despite their brevity, they exhibit strong trust in the Lord (6:9–10, 17:6, 15).

[10] Psalms 2, 3, 6, 12, 17, 55, 62, 74, 77, 85, 130.

The other nine laments include substantial statements of faith in God's fidelity. This assurance comes from:

An oracle of salvation. In Psalm 12, after a hyperbolic complaint that "there is no longer anyone who is godly" (12:1), the Lord responds:

> "Because the poor are despoiled,
> because the needy groan,
> I will now rise up," says the Lord;
> "I will place them in the safety for which they long." (12:5)
> In response the poet affirms new confidence in the Lord:
> You, O Lord, will protect us;
> you will guard us from this generation forever. (12:7)

Remembering God's past fidelity. See the discussion above (III) about the relationship of memory to trust, especially in Psalm 77. As a reminder, recall how the poet cried out to the Lord and almost gave up until he or she *remembered to remember*. Memory of the Lord's ways saved the day.

> I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;
> I will remember your wonders of old.
> I will meditate on all your work,
> and muse on your mighty deeds. (77:11–12)

Recognition that the Lord reigns. The Psalter opens with the claim that the Lord has set his king "on Zion, my holy hill" (2:4–6); thus, a human king may rule from Zion, but the human king is nothing more than the son and representative of the true King (2:7–12; see also 55:19). Much later, amid the total destruction of the sanctuary in Jerusalem, remarkably, the poet of Psalm 74 is able to affirm trust because of memory that the Lord reigns:

Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the earth.
You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. (74:12-13)[11]

Finally, assurance comes from what appears to be a long life with the Lord. In other words, it is the faith and life that the writer brings to the text that provides substance for the assertions of confidence. In this category, Psalm 62 stands as remarkable testimony to trust. The psalm begins,

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken. (62:1–2)

To open public prayer with such confidence might be easy if the threat were mild or innocuous. But that is not the case in Psalm 62. Instead, the opponents are at work to bring down the poet (or the one he represents)—hitting, attacking over and over again as if trying to knock down a wall (62:3–4). But again, the writer has total confidence in God. With variation the opening confession of trust comes again:

For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken. (62:5–6)

[11] Psalm 74 does ask in passing, "let the poor and needy praise your name" (74:21b).

The poet's "salvation" (62:1) from those who only want to bring him down is "my hope" (62:5). And his hope is completely and totally in God as the psalm turns into testimony to others:

> On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
> my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
> Trust in him at all times, O people;
> pour out your heart before him;
> God is a refuge for us. (62:7–8)

The poet asserts that humans are of no help. Those of low estate are a mere "breath" (*hebel*: Ecclesiastes' favorite word for "vanity" [NRSV], "meaningless" [NIV], "useless" [NCV], "futile" [NJPS]) and those of high estate are nothing more than a "delusion" (62:9), a false image of strength and security. And when added together "breath" + "delusion" = "lighter than a breath" (*hebel*). More human help equals even less genuine help. Money is also a false hope (62:10). In fact, there is only one set of truths that stands the test of time:

> …power belongs to God,
> and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
> For you repay to all according to their work (62:11b–12).

The poet can see beyond the smoke and mirrors, as well as past the fear of the moment. Speaking from what can only be described as a long life with the Lord, the poet knows to wait patiently for God to intervene. And I suppose even if God were not to intervene, this poet would still wait for the one who has proven to be the only true rock and fortress in life. (see also 3:3–8, 55:22, 130:3–4, 7–8)

Of course these psalmists want God to help them. And yet, these eleven laments emphasize trusting God even if there is no change in their situation.

V. Now I introduce the difficult psalms into evidence: Psalms 38, 39, 44, 60, 80, 88, 89, and 90. These eight laments (13% of the laments) do not conclude with the genre-typical assertion of praise or confidence in the Lord, and they assert little or no intention to give thanks, praise, or rejoice in the body of the lament.[12] The presence of these psalms in the Psalter crushes any normative claim about laments leading to thanksgiving. For these writers God has already failed Israel and her king, or the community and its leaders. These psalms do work to reunite the reader with God, to forge a path back to God by providing words to speak, recalling God's past faithfulness, and more;[13] but this path leads to a God who has said "no" and massively disappointed the community, permitting the unimaginable, even violating covenant promises—it is not a path to a place where God has or will (ever) make everything all right. Consequently, the challenge for the future, including any psalm that follows, is to help the reader maintain or regain trust in God.

VI. Finally, since the advent of Gerald Wilson's hypothesis for reading the Psalms as a book, and the subsequent development of his thesis by other scholars, any analysis of the Psalms needs to consider the possible relevance of the shape of the Psalter and the message of the book.[14] Not every study will find Wilson's work germane; for this paper, however, the shape and message of the Book of Psalms (as a whole) is another supporting pillar for

[12] Psalm 44:4–8 appears to be the words sung by the ancestors for whom God acted boldly (44:1–3); Psalm 60 concludes with slight confidence (vv. 11–12); Psalm 80 concludes with a promise that if God will help they will never turn back (80:18); at most, Psalm 88 addresses the Lord in the first line as "God of my salvation"; Psalm 89 also begins with two verses that promise song and proclamation of God's steadfast love, but then set up God (89:4–37) for harsh accusation of breaking his covenant with Israel (89:38-51); Psalm 90 addresses the Lord as "our dwelling place" (v. 1) and asks for the Lord to turn away so that "we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us…" (vv. 14–15).

[13] See my essay, "When God is the Problem: From Allegation to Apologia in the Psalms," *Stone Campbell Journal* 17 (2014): 63-76.

[14] Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter,* SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); in less technical forms see Gerald H. Wilson, "Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms," in *Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, JSOTSup 159, ed. J. Clinton McCann, Jr. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 72-82; or the explanation by Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997).

my contention about the place of trust in the movement from lament to thanksgiving.

Briefly summarized, Wilson and followers observe that the Book of Psalms begins with a double introduction that sets key themes: 1) blessing for the righteous and the downfall of the wicked (Psalm 1), and 2) the Lord's commitment to the Davidic kingdom (Psalm 2). Books I-III catalog the struggles of the nation and its king against a horde of enemies. Finally, the monarchy collapses at the end of Book III, documented by Psalms 88 and 89. Book IV opens with a dirge for the death of the kingdom (Psalm 90) and then turns the conversation in a surprising direction. Instead of a renewal of the kingdom like those in the new province of Persia want, the poets proclaim the reign of the Lord (Pss 93–99). Life with God is still possible, not in the resumption of an independent nation with a king from the Davidic dynasty, but under the reign of the Lord.

Before proclaiming the reign of God, however, Psalm 91 calls the reader to trust, beginning:

> You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
> who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
> will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
> my God, in whom I trust." (91:1–2)

The psalmist continues with an evocative description of a fowler stalking the believer (91:3a), an image that quickly morphs into a deadly plague set loose in the community to punish the wicked. While thousands may fall, those who have taken refuge in the Lord find protection under the Lord's wings. Consequently, "You will only look with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked" (v. 8). Nothing can touch those in the safe refuge beneath the Lord's wings (vv. 3b, 9–10); even more, those in this refuge have no fears. They will not fear "the terror of the night" (v. 5a), "the pestilence that stalks in darkness" (v. 6a), or the "destruction that wastes at noonday" (v. 6b). A second reinforcing image emerges in verses 11–13: God commands the angels to lift and carry the believer to safety (vv. 11–12). Conse-

quently, it doesn't matter where they step, the angels will not let them stub a toe (v. 12) or be injured by stepping on adders or lions (v. 13). God's refuge means no harm and no fear.

> Those who love me, I will deliver;
> I will protect those who know my name.
> When they call to me, I will answer them;
> I will be with them in trouble,
> I will rescue them and honor them.
> With long life I will satisfy them,
> and show them my salvation. (91:14–16)

From beginning to end, Psalm 91 leads the reader beleaguered by the tragedy and lament of Psalms 88–91 to trust and find refuge in the shadow of the Most High.

Then, from a position of complete trust Psalm 92 marches to the new cadence of thanksgiving:

> It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
> to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
> to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
> and your faithfulness by night,
> to the music of the lute and the harp,
> to the melody of the lyre.
> For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
> at the works of your hands I sing for joy. (92:1–3)

Now the Psalter is surprised by the joy of new orientation—a movement that the dullard cannot understand (92:5–6). Even if the evildoers sprout and flourish for a time and the world seems upside down (as in Pss 88–90), the

Lord will bring judgment to the wicked (92:7–9) and the Lord will exalt the righteous (92:10–11). In fact, the righteous will be planted and will flourish in the house of God, living and producing fruit to an old age (92:12–14). And in all of this, the Lord will demonstrate that he is upright "and there is no unrighteousness in him" (92:15), as was claimed in the charges of Psalm 89:38–51.

So with these two psalms the Psalter invites the reader back to trust the Lord and break out in thanksgiving (in that order)—as they reimagine life and begin the hard work of adapting to a new normal, which now includes a God who reigns (Pss 93–99) and a God who said "no" and who continues to say "no" to the hopes for an independent nation under the leadership of a new Davidic king.

Conclusion

The Psalms, her poets, and redactors do not live on Fantasy Island where every wish comes true, but in the real world of disappointment and loss. This study has reconsidered this real world of the Psalms and we have reached several conclusions. First, if we understand Brueggemann's category of New Orientation to be occupied only or solely by those surprised by joy—those who got what they wanted from God—then we need to revise our understanding of the category or find new terminology to express the most frequent encouragement in lament: the move to hope, rely, take refuge, wait, or however it might be expressed—to trust the Lord.

Second, the laments most often take believers to a place of waiting and trusting the Lord. From here, the Lord may suddenly respond to and surprise those who have taken refuge beneath his wings. Or from here, believers may be faced with a Job-like challenge: will I continue to live in trust of this God to whom I have prayed, but who says no? Will I continue to serve a God who disappoints? This is no academic or theoretical question for the people of God.

Third, this study has recognized the function of Psalms 91 and 92 in the message of the Book of Psalms. These two psalms have been something of a gap or mystery in reading the Psalter as a book. Here, however, their function matches the paradigm established by this paper, namely, the first move

after lament (Pss 88–90) is to trust (Psalm 91), followed by thanksgiving (Psalm 92)—all in view of the reign of the Lord (Pss 93–99).

Fourth and finally, we must not allow the pressure of Western optimism to push us into a misreading of the psalms and their role in the life of faith. On this point Brueggemann warned us over thirty years ago:

It is my judgment that this action of the church [singing songs of orientation in a world experienced as disoriented] is less an evangelical defiance guided by faith, and much more a frightened, numb denial and deception that does not want to acknowledge or experience the disorientation of life. The reason for such relentless affirmation of orientation seems to come, not from faith, but from the wishful optimism of our culture.[15]

Brueggemann's words are equally true today in our relentless rush to answer lament with thanksgiving. The Psalms clash with our Western optimism and our gospel of health and wealth. The first movement of lament is to reestablish or reinforce trust in the Lord, without short-circuiting the life of faith by expecting a gift that may never come—an expectation that is theologically and practically dangerous. Above all else the laments create a paradigm that leads us to trust the Lord, regardless of what may or may not follow. This is the reality behind Psalm 11.

The background to Psalm 11 is not unlike the dire predictions we hear today, that every generation has heard: What are we going to do now? What if a super virus resistant to antibiotics strikes? What if another powerful terrorist group emerges? With the same anxiety, one voice in Psalm 11 has assessed the situation in Jerusalem or Samaria (or Washington, D.C.) and concluded that the foundations of society are crumbling and the righteous are in mortal danger (11:3). The wicked are marking, aiming, and about to let loose their arrows at the righteous (v. 2). Run for your life while you still can! Or, stated with more poetic beauty, "Flee like a bird to the mountains" (v. 1b). After all, if the foundations of society are crumbling, "what else can the righteous do?" (v. 3b).

Another voice speaks in Psalm 11, a voice of faith—a person who has taken refuge in the Lord (11:1a) and refuses the frenzy: "How can you say to me, 'Flee like a bird to the mountains?'" (v. 1b). This believer is not naïve or

[15] Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, 51.

unable to see the troubles confronting society. In fact, this believer is the only one with vision clear enough to put matters into perspective. Only this poet sees:

> The Lord is in his holy temple;
> the Lord's throne is in heaven. (11:4a)

The Lord reigns. The Lord is not off on vacation while the world goes to hell in a backpack loaded with a bomb. God is watching, testing, and discerning who is righteous and wicked (vv. 4b-5). And God has his own plans for the wicked (v. 6) and the righteous (v. 7). Psalm 11 follows a path to New Orientation. But this path is not revealed in a moment of joy out of thanksgiving for prayer answered. Rather, it is found in simple trust that sees God on a throne. And that is enough to see the poet—and us—through.

Reflections on the Value of Isaiah for the Life of the Modern Church[1]

J. J. M. Roberts

For the writers of the New Testament, including the Apostle Paul, Scripture meant the Old Testament. In 1 Cor 10:1-11 Paul uses the OT accounts of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings as a warning to Christians. In vv. 6 and 11 he says, "Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did...These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come." Indeed, the classic proof text for biblical inspiration in 2 Tim 3:16—"All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work"

[1] I have known Paul Watson since our freshman year at Abilene Christian College. We were both Greek majors, so we had lots of classes together, and the last year or so of our time there, Paul and his first wife Ann and I and my first wife Genie shared the two halves of a duplex house. We became good family friends, and we kept up with one another through our divinity school experience and graduate school, though I went to Harvard in Cambridge, MA, while Paul went to Yale in New Haven, CT. The friendly Harvard-Yale rivalry was symptomatic of other differences between us. We have remained good friends over the years as both of us lost our first wives to sickness or accident and both of us remarried, and as our academic and church careers have taken us in different directions, but, apart from our common Christian commitment and a common interest in good scholarship, I am not sure that we have ever agreed on many of the important issues of the day, whether of scholarship or politics. In a period of deeply divisive and partisan social and political conflict, it is perhaps a helpful reminder that friendship does not require anywhere near total unanimity in opinion.

(NRSV)—clearly refers to the Old Testament. In the preceding verse the author characterizes Timothy as a person who "from childhood" had "known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 15). In 2 Tim 1:5, the author speaks of Timothy's "sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you." Since, according to Acts 16:1-5, Paul chose the young man Timothy to accompany him early in his second missionary journey, well before any of the New Testament documents or letters had actually been composed, it should be clear that the reference in 2 Timothy was to the Old Testament scriptures, not to the New Testament, none of which existed when Timothy was a child.

Of course, the New Testament is included in Scripture for later generations of Christians who had access to these writings. The author of Colossians urges that his letter to the Colossians be also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that the Colossians read his letter to the Laodiceans (Col 4:16). Moreover, the author of 2 Peter refers to the two letters he had written to his Christian communities as a reminder of the words of "the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles" (2 Pet 3:1-2), and he goes on to mention the letters of "our beloved brother Paul," in which "there are some things hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures" (my emphasis, 2 Pet 3:15-16). The emerging collection of New Testament writings was clearly being read in the Christian communities that had access to them as authoritative writings, as Scripture, alongside the more ancient Scripture of the Old Testament.

In the mid-second century, however, under the influence of the heretic Marcion, "who rejected the Jewish roots of the church and postulated two gods, the just Creator of the world" versus "the merciful Father of Jesus Christ," the Old Testament was rejected as the work of this alien God of wrath, and even New Testament Scripture was limited to a revised version of Luke and ten edited letters of Paul.[2] The view that two different gods are responsible for the Old and New Testament may strike modern church people as odd, but unfortunately an only slightly variant form of Marcionism is still

[2] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd. ed. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 612-13.

alive and well in segments of the Church of Christ and in the larger Christian church. Dispensational theology, which tries to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15) between Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations, can lead very easily to the disparagement of the Old Testament as no longer relevant to Christians, since we live under the Christian dispensation, and the old Law is no longer binding, having been nailed to the cross (Col 2:14).

Growing up in the Church of Christ in West Texas I heard the complaint more than once, rooted in a poor understanding of this theology, that preachers should not preach on the Old Testament, since it was no longer in force and basically irrelevant for our lives today. In more recent years I naively assumed that our tradition had progressed beyond that misunderstanding until an incident in a church in New Hampshire reminded me that old heresies never die; they just reappear in new forms. A "progressive" teacher was teaching on Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew, when he encountered something in the text that he regarded as not "spiritual" enough and "too Jewish" to come from Jesus. To my astonishment he claimed that the portrait of Jesus in the Gospel had been "contaminated" by the "Jewishness" of the Old Testament. I immediately reacted by explaining that this point of view was nothing more than the ancient Marcionite heresy barely disguised in new clothes. I am not sure, however, how much the audience really cared one way or another. The temptation to remake Jesus in our own image or to "spiritualize" away sayings or demands that we do not like is ever with us, and it is amazing how much the "historical Jesus" winds up looking like our ideal portrait of ourselves, uncontaminated by the actual words of the ancient texts.

One of the fundamental problems of any Marcionite or pseudo-Marcionite limitation of the canon, even allowing the whole corpus of the New Testament, is that the New Testament was composed in a very brief period in which the social and political situations of the Christian communities were relatively homogeneous. During the compositional period of the New Testament, the Christian community was very much a minority religious movement within the Roman imperial system. The Christian community had no political power, and it was subject to severe persecution, both from older, larger, and more powerful religious and societal groups, as well as

from the imperial authorities. In such a climate, it was helpful to hunker down, not to draw unnecessary attention to oneself. The world in which modern Christians live, particularly in the democratic societies of Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, is quite different. Christians are no longer an obscure religious minority. They actively participate in government, sometimes as heads of state, and they must decide what kind of public policies are compatible with their Christian faith, while recognizing at the same time that the state they lead is not "Christian," that the population they serve is both religiously and irreligiously quite diverse. In this regard, the Old Testament texts may prove more helpful to modern Christians looking for political guidance than the more homogeneous texts of the New Testament. The Old Testament was composed over a much longer period of time, parts of it when Israel under David and Solomon was a major imperial power, parts of it when Israel and Judah were major regional powers, parts of it when they were vassal states subject to far more powerful imperial states, and parts of it when the Jewish community was very much a minority community under the domination of successive empires. Within this much broader historical framework of the Old Testament, one may perhaps expect to find more relevant advice for the modern political concerns of Christian citizens, politicians, and government officials, than in the more narrow social and historical framework of the New Testament.

To focus on Isaiah of Jerusalem, his ministry spanned the years from ca. 738 BC to perhaps as late as 686 BC, early in the reign of Manasseh (687/6–642 BC). Isaiah's ministry began in the last year of Uzziah/Azariah (Isa 6:1), when Jotham was already a co-regent (2 Kgs 15:5), and Judah was a significant independent regional power. With the fall of north Syrian Kullani (biblical Calno [Isa 10:9] or Calneh [Amos 6:2]) in 738 BC and the death of Uzziah/Azariah the same year, followed by the growing hostility of Rezin of Damascus and his Israelite and Philistine allies, Judah's political position deteriorated quickly under Jotham (2 Kgs 15:37) and his successor Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:5-6; Isa 9:10-11) who, to save himself from these regional enemies, accepted vassaldom under the Assyrians (2 Kgs 16:7-18). Isaiah had opposed this move (Isa 7:1-9), and had very little, if anything, positive to say about Ahaz and his court. His disparaging comments in Isa 3:4, 12, and 7:13 are aimed at Ahaz and his court. Isaiah was initially more positively inclined

toward Hezekiah (Isa 8:23b–9:6; 14:28-32), but when Hezekiah attempted to throw off the Assyrian yoke by linking his fate through diplomatic agreements to the eastern coalition of the Aramaeans of Babylon (Isa 39:1-8) and their Elamite allies and the southern power of the Nubian rulers of Egypt (Isa 30:1-7; 31:1-9), Isaiah severely criticized the policies of Hezekiah's court. Following this failed revolt against Assyria, Hezekiah and his successor Manasseh remained Assyrian vassals with little freedom of action, though how many, if any, of Isaiah's oracles actually date to the years following Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701 BC remains disputed and uncertain.

Before applying Isaiah's insights to any modern situation, however, it is also important to take seriously the huge religious and political gap between his world and the world of the modern Christian of the democratic West. Isaiah lived in a hereditary monarchy with religious undergirding, and even in his visions of the ideal future he never articulates any hope or desire for a different political structure. Moreover, the dominant theological strand which influenced his thinking, a construct which I have characterized as the "Zion Tradition," is quite different from the theological beliefs of modern Christians, though the Zion Tradition was instrumental in the development of messianic hopes that ultimately led to Christian beliefs in Jesus as the Messiah, son of God, and ruler of the kingdom of God until the final judgment.[3] The Zion Tradition consisted of three main points: 1) Yahweh/God was the supreme deity, creator, and ruler of the whole universe; 2) Yahweh/God had appointed David and his continuing dynasty as God's human regents to exercise God's imperial rule according to God's justice; and 3) Yahweh/God had chosen Zion/Jerusalem as God's imperial capital from where God's rule would be exercised. Of these three main points, only the first remains basically unaltered in modern Christian belief. Far from a belief in the continuation of the earthly political rule of David's descendants, Christians see Jesus as the heir of David, but Jesus' kingdom is not a kingdom of this world (John 18:36), a very important shift that caused the earliest disciples of Jesus difficulty (Matt 16:21-23; Acts 1:6). Moreover, in Christian thought the political

[3] See my "Solomon's Jerusalem and the Zion Tradition," in A. G. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, SBLSS 18 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 163-70, and the literature cited there.

importance of the earthly Jerusalem has also experienced a major spiritualizing shift, so that the new Jerusalem of Christian hope is no longer the earthly, physical Jerusalem of Palestine, but the heavenly Jerusalem where faithful Christians hope to spend eternity in the presence of God and the Lamb (Gal 4:25-26; Rev 21-22).

Isaiah lived in the late eighth and early seventh centuries BC, long before either of these spiritualizing transitions in thought had occurred. His visions, even of the ideal future, remained far more earthbound and worldly than modern Christian beliefs, and one needs to remember that in applying his insights to modern situations. Isaiah's criticisms of Ahaz's diplomatic submission to the Assyrian emperor Tiglath-pileser III and Hezekiah's opposing policy of trying to throw off the Assyrian yoke through diplomatic dealings with Nubian Egypt, the Philistines, and eventually Babylon, for instance, are rooted in Isaiah's firm belief in God's commitment to the Davidic dynasty and Jerusalem. If Ahaz and Hezekiah really believed in the promises of God emphasized in their own royal theology, Isaiah claimed that these faithless leaders then would not go running off in fear to seek salvation from human political powers. No such divine promises extend to the President of the United States or Washington, D.C., however, and it is not at all clear that Isaiah's opposition to defensive alliances, rooted as it was in particular divine promises, has any relevance for modern geo-political crises faced by contemporary believers in positions of political responsibility.

On the other hand, Isaiah's oracles against governmental corruption involving judicial bribery (Isa 1:23; 5:23; cf. Micah 3:9-11) and unjust laws (Isa 10:1-2) allowing the rich and powerful to confiscate the private property of the innocent poor remain relevant, whatever the differences in political systems between his time and ours. In Isaiah's troubled time, with the vast influx of landless refugees from the north following Assyria's conquest of Israel, the surplus of cheap labor made the acquisition of more farmland economically attractive, and, to judge from the oracles of Isaiah and his contemporary Micah of Moresheth (Micah 2:1-2, 8-9), many of Judah's wealthy and elite families did whatever was required to radically increase their landholdings, including bribing government officials and getting laws passed that made their acquisitions quicker and easier at the expense of their poorer, less influential neighbors (Isa 5:8). For these families, men and women alike

(note Isaiah's two oracles explicitly targeting the women of leisure [Isa 3:16–4:1; 32:9-14]), at least according to Isaiah,[4] it was a time of excess, of flagrant display of wealth (large and beautiful houses [5:9; 32:13-13]; elaborate clothing [3:18-23]; excessive drinking and partying [5:11-12, 22; 28:7-8; cf. Micah 2:11]), with little regard for the cohesiveness of the larger community or of their responsibility toward God and their fellow citizens.

Despite his criticism of the leisured class, however, Isaiah himself appears to have come from this same class, with whom he appears to have shared the same educational background in the wisdom tradition and the same religious background in the royal Zion Tradition. Moreover, despite his criticism of his patrician social class, he never opted for a populist point of view or desired a radical social rearrangement of the patriarchal and monarchical system of which he was a part. For Isaiah, the traditionalist, it was not a blessing, but divine judgment, when he threatens Judah with a breakdown in society that results in their being ruled by women and children (3:4, 12), when youth will be insolent to the elder, and the base to the honorable (3:5), when the only criterion for being a leader is whether one has food or a cloak (3:6-7). In contrast, in Isaiah's ideal future, after the refining judgment (1:24-28), the Davidic king and his royal officials will rule justly (32:1), and the larger ruling class, of which Isaiah was a part, will once again be noble in fact, not just pronounced such by fawning seekers of favors (32:5-8).

Of course, Isaiah, like the Old Testament in general, was concerned with the welfare of the poor and powerless, the proverbial stranger, orphan, and widow—those who did not have the social safety net of extended family connections to protect them from avaricious predators. In his view, however, the just and compassionate treatment of the poor was also the best way for the wealthy and powerful to maintain their own security. Isaiah quotes Yahweh as saying to these leaders, "This is rest, give rest to the weary/ This is repose, give repose to the needy," but Isaiah continues with the negative judgment, "but they refused to hear"(Isa 28:12).[5] The leaders' selfish refusal

[4] It should be remembered that Isaiah's oracles are polemical in nature, and polemical literature by its very nature seldom portrays the opponents in a completely objective fashion. There was another side to this debate to which we no longer have access, but of which Isaiah's contemporaries would have been aware.

[5] Reading *wzʾt hmnwḥh hnyḥw lʿyp wzʾt hmrgʿh hrgyʿw lʾbywn wlʾ ʾbw šmwʿ* (see my "A Note on Isaiah 28:12," *HTR* 73 (1980): 48-51.

to consider the wellbeing of the whole community, including the weak and powerless, would ultimately lead, according to Isaiah, to the leaders themselves losing their own security, eventually undermining any status they had as "leaders" (Isa 3:6-7).

In citing Isaiah's and the Old Testament's concern for the poor, however, the modern interpreter addressing contemporary social and political issues needs to exercise discernment. Despite widely-accepted claims for the Old Testament's "preferential treatment" of the poor, the legal material in the Old Testament is quite explicit in rejecting any partiality in the exercise of justice—"You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit" (Exod 23:2-3). One is not to distort justice or show partiality, whether for the rich or the poor; "justice, and only justice, you shall pursue" (Deut 16:18-20). When "justice" is qualified by such popular modifiers as "social justice," one needs to look closely to see whether genuine "justice" has simply been replaced by a "crowd-pleasing injustice." Moreover, just because a modern political or social program is supposed to help the poor is no guarantee that it actually will. Past welfare programs genuinely intended to help the poor in our country have in some cases had the opposite effect.

A case in point is the economic incentive such programs have had in removing the husband from welfare families. This incentive has contributed to the breakdown of family structure and has done much to create a continuing dependency on the state by significant segments of poor urban populations in this country. One may have a genuine concern for the poor and still be very skeptical of, and even opposed to, particular programs that are supposed to help them. Reasonable people may reach far different conclusions on the likelihood of success of a particular proposal for helping the poor, and the reasoned refusal to back such a proposal is hardly a sign that the nay-sayer is against the poor or that the proposal's backers are more compassionate or religious.

In the contemporary political debate in this country, much has been made of "the politics of fear," whatever that may mean to the various parties in the debate. On this point Isaiah has much to say. Based on the Zion Tradition's promises to the Davidic dynasty and Jerusalem, Isaiah urged first Ahaz (Isa

7-8) and then Hezekiah (Isa 14:28-32; 18; 20; 28) to calmly trust God, not to fear the enemies' vain threats, and certainly not to rush into vassal treaties with human suzerains that compromised the dynasty's fundamental religious beliefs and switched reliance on God to reliance on "violent oppression and deceit" (Isa 30:12).[6] When Ahaz refused Isaiah's repeated promises of divine support and instead, in sheer terror, turned to Tiglath-pileser III as his savior, Isaiah received another revelation from God in Isa 8:11-15. God warned Isaiah and his supporters not to call everything treason which this people called treason, nor to fear (*tirʾĕû*) what they feared, nor to be terrified (*taʿărîṣû*) by what terrified them. Rather they were to sanctify (*taqdîšû*) Yahweh of Hosts and make him their object of fear (*môraʾăkem*) and their object of terror (*măʿărīṣkem*). If one acted out of a fear and terror of Yahweh, that is, out of genuine piety, then Yahweh would be a *miqdāš*, a place of sanctuary or refuge. If not, however, Yahweh would be a stone (*ʾeben*) and a rock (*ṣûr*). Both these words could be used to refer to God's protection. Samuel set up an *ʾeben* which he named Ebenezer to commemorate Yahweh's help in battle against the Philistines, and Isaiah speaks of the large stones that Yahweh uses as the foundation for his unshakable sanctuary in Zion (Isa 28:16), while *ṣûr* is widely used as an epithet for Yahweh as a place of refuge (Pss 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14; 27:5; 28:1; *passim*). Isaiah uses it that way in Isa 17:10 and 30:29.

In Isa 8:14, however, both terms are given an opposite meaning by their modifiers. For those who act out of fear—not of Yahweh but of some human object of terror—Yahweh will become to them not a stone of help or a rock of refuge but a stone of toe stumping and a rock of stumbling, a snare and a trap; they will stumble and fall and be broken, and they will be snared and caught. Because Ahaz would not listen to Isaiah, Isaiah withdrew with his disciples and the children God had given him as signs and portents to wait and see what Yahweh of Hosts who lived on Mount Zion would do (Isa 8:16-18).

[6] See my extended discussion in "Security and Justice in Isaiah," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 13/1 (2010): 71-79, from which some of the following comments are taken. Note also the detailed discussion of this passage in my "Isaiah, National Security, and the Politics of Fear," in R. Jewett, W. L. Alloway, Jr., and J. G. Lacey (eds.), *The Bible and the American Future* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009), 72-91.

Perhaps one should comment further on this idea of making God one's object of fear. Even many Christians seem uncomfortable with the idea of "fearing" God, as though somehow "fearing" God is in conflict with "loving" God, and only "loving" God is compatible with the superior ethic of Jesus. Such Marcionite ideas have little to do with Jesus or the New Testament. 1 Pet 3:14-15 actually quotes Isa 8:12-15 in preparing Christians to stand up to persecution:

> But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.

Against his disciples' fear of persecution, Jesus himself said, "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!" (Lk 12:4-5; see Matt 10:28).

When I was a young child growing up on a farm in west Texas, we had a windmill about 50 yards from our back door. One of my chores was to shut down the windmill in the early evening before supper, so that if a windstorm came up during the night, the windmill would not be damaged. Being a child, I occasionally forgot to do it. Then at supper, hearing the creaking of the windmill still running, my father would tell me to get up and go turn the windmill off. By that time it was dark outside, country dark, with none of the ambient light familiar in our modern cities. I was afraid of the dark and whatever unknown I might encounter in the dark. For a young child, 50 yards was a long way to go in the dark. Because of this fear of the unknown, I did not want to obey my father. On the other hand, I feared my father, who was not a permissive, modern dad. If I did not obey, the punishment would be certain, swift, and painful, and I would still have to go into the dark after the punishment. My fear of my father put my fear of the dark in perspective. In the same way, the fear of God puts all lesser fears into perspective and gives one the freedom to be obedient in scary and dangerous times.

To return to the contemporary issue of "the politics of fear" and Isaiah's potential contribution to this discussion, there are a number of points to be made. Issues of economic or foreign policy are complex, requiring expertise, careful analysis, good intelligence, flexibility, and a healthy dose of sheer luck, and, given such complexity, it is not surprising that reasonable people often hold diametrically opposing points of view. Most of our day to day decisions in life, however, are not that ambiguous or that needful of prolonged, careful analysis. We know right from wrong—lying, cheating, stealing, adultery, murder, the contemptuous mistreatment of others, and the like, is wrong, and we know they are wrong. It is just a question of whether we choose to do what we know is right. Various vices may get in the way of our doing the right—laziness, pride, or selfish desire for example—but we are generally aware of the conflict between what we should do and what we may choose to do instead. In times of overpowering fear, however, such fear may convince us, at least subliminally, that we live in special circumstances and that under these circumstances the old rules no longer apply.

Political debate is important enough in a democratic society that one might expect serious statesmen and honorable politicians to represent fairly the opinions of their opponents, that is, to tell the truth, not to attack straw men; but such expectations are widely disappointed today. For example, when a right-wing blogger edits a video recording of an Obama speech given in Brussels to make Obama say negative things about the US constitution that he did not say, that is an abominable lie that undermines constructive debate. On the other hand, when the administration insists for weeks against the evidence on the ground that the attack on the consulate in Benghazi was a spontaneous demonstration provoked by an anti-Muslim video, that is also an intentional lie. One hardly needs to mention, "If you like your doctor, you can keep him, period" or "If you like your insurance, you can keep it," or Jonathan Gruber's revelations about the helpful lack of transparency in the administration's passing of the unread Obama Care law. Normal, orderly, truthful, perhaps even lawful, process is often the first casualty of fear, or in highly partisan times, perhaps even of mere irritation. In contemporary politics we see it in the suspension of long-established bipartisan senate rules for debate and amendment, in presidential arrogation of the duty of congress to make the law, and in various government bureaucracies' partisan abuse of

the law. Of course, it is always someone else's fault when we suspend the rules and refuse to follow due process.

One might hope, in such circumstances, that the press, the fourth estate, would shine the light of truth, of factuality, on contemporary political debate, but that is a forlorn hope today. The press is just as partisan as the rest of society, more concerned about the "correct message" than about what might be "inconvenient truth." In this world the Christian believer must maintain his or her independence of judgment, question the popular narrative of either the right or the left, and attempt to do so with civility, patience, and grace. Such a stance will probably make the modern believer about as popular as Isaiah was in his day, but the circle of Isaiah and his disciples, though small, is not a bad company in which to stand.

A Written Legacy:
A Bibliography of Paul L. Watson

M. Todd Hall
with Paul Watson, Michael Weed, and Allan McNicol

From 1979 to 1986, Paul L. Watson served Austin Grad (then the Institute for Christian Studies) as a member of the faculty, first as a full-time faculty member and then as an adjunct professor. In his service, he helped in the development of the vision of the school, specifically as an institution living in service of the church. In 1983, Paul embarked on a full time ministry career that would span more than two decades, serving the Cole Mill Road Church of Christ in Durham, North Carolina, as both pulpit minister and, for several years, as elder. Throughout this time, Paul continued his service of scholarship as well, teaching courses as adjunct professor for several schools, including Abilene Christian University, Austin Grad, Amridge University, and the Institute for Theology and Christian Ministry in St. Petersburg, Russia. In addition, Paul continued publishing for both the academy and the church.

Throughout his academic and preaching careers, Paul evidenced both academic and leadership capability. Paul did his undergraduate work at ACU (then ACC), and subsequently completed a Master of Divinity degree and a Ph.D. in Old Testament from Yale Divinity School. Paul explains that his intention was to engage in a teaching career upon his graduation with the doctorate. His early publications reflect this academic concern.

Along the way, though, Paul made a decision that (as Allan McNicol pointed out) few academics make. Paul became the embodiment of "Scholarship for the Church" and left full-time teaching for service of the church in the pulpit. His subsequent publications reflect a deep concern for the inter-

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section of scholarship and the life of the church. For decades, then, Paul has offered service both to the Cole Mill Road congregation and the broader fellowship of Churches of Christ in both the pulpit and the study. We are grateful for his scholarly and pastoral work.

In addition to his work, Paul has also proven to be an excellent colleague and friend. Michael Weed and Allan McNicol fondly recall discussions with Paul around the faculty lunch table, discussions that have continued over the years. Throughout his ministry, Paul has shown a strength of character and integrity that have inspired the Christians he served both in joy and in tragedy. Michael and Allan also remember grieving with Paul and his children over the loss of his wife Ann, and rejoicing with Paul as he built a new life with his wife Kay, also widowed, and their children. Having recently celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary, Paul and Kay continue their life together in faithful service to the church.

My own interactions with Paul have revealed a man who, in addition to his scholarly and pastoral acumen, exhibits immense grace, wisdom, and patience. He has shown deep concern for ways in which scholarship intersects with the church and specifically the church's ministers, and his careful and thoughtful deliberation on such matters serves as a guide for those who follow him in these thoughts.

Here we offer, in gratitude, a limited bibliography of Paul's scholarly and pastoral work. This list of course does not capture the entirety of the man who has served the church for so many years. It does, though, offer a glimpse into his deeply pastoral heart, and it provides a written legacy of a faithful servant and friend who continues to offer insight and wisdom to the church.

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"John's Use of the Old Testament." Two lectures; Ohio Valley College, March, 1999.

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The Theological Task

Not merely the most important but also the most relevant and beautiful problems in dogmatics begin at the very point where the fable of 'unprofitable scholasticism' and the slogan about the 'Greek thinking of the fathers' persuade us that we ought to stop.

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*

Purpose of Prayer

So let us stretch ourselves prayerfully upward to the more lofty elevation of the kindly Rays of God. Imagine a great shining chain hanging downward from the heights of heaven to the world below. We grab hold of it with one hand and then another, and we seem to be pulling it down toward us. Actually it is already there on the heights and down below and instead of pulling it to us we are being lifted upward to that brilliance above, to the dazzling light of those beams....

That is why we must begin with a prayer before everything we do, but especially when we are about to talk of God. We will not pull down to ourselves that power which is both everywhere and yet nowhere, but by divine reminders and invocations we may commend ourselves to it and be joined to it.

Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*

Historical Understanding

Real historical understanding is not achieved by the subordination of the past to the present, but rather by our making the past our present and attempting to see life with the eyes of another century than our own.

Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*

Tradition

Tradition is only democracy extended through time…an extension of the franchise. Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead.

G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

Lowly and Despised

In the splendid cathedral the Honorable Right Reverend Private Chief Royal Chaplain comes forward, the chosen favorite of the elite world; he comes forward before a chosen circle of the chosen ones and, deeply *moved*, preaches on the text he has himself chosen, "God has chosen the lowly and the despised in the world"—and no one laughs.

Søren Kierkegaard, *The Moment*

A Little Stoicism

In every work examine the things that have to be done first and what is to follow, and only then get started on it. If you don't, you will go along eagerly at first, because you have given no consideration to what is coming next; later when difficulties appear the work will come to an ignoble halt. You want to win at Olympia? I do too, by the gods; for it is a fine thing. But look at what comes first, and what comes next, and then take on the work….

If someone tells you that somebody else is saying awful things about you, don't defend yourself against the accusations, but reply, "He must not know about the other faults that I have, if these are the only ones he mentioned."

Epictetus, *Enchiridion*

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