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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring issue of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. This issue has as its theme the teachings of Islam. First featured is a well-attended debate that took place here at Midwestern between Jay Smith, a noted Christian apologist to Islam, and Khalil Meek, a former Southern Baptist Convert to Islam. Following that, we have an article by one of Midwestern's Old Testament Professors, Dr. N. Blake Hearson, along with one of our Doctoral students in Old Testament, Russell Meek, dealing with the apologetic problem of divine violence in the Old Testament as it relates to the ongoing debate between Christianity and Islam (i.e., how can Christians object to Muslim terrorism, while their own Old Testament contains many examples of seemingly similar violence carried out with divine approval?). Rounding out our theme section is a discussion of folk Islam, by Midwestern's Missions Professor and Interim President, Dr. Robin Hadaway, that features the teachings of Sufism, a mystical movement within Islam. As a final contribution to our theme section, Dr. Michael McMullen, Professor of History at Midwestern, has edited a previously unpublished sermon by prominent 18th century American Theologian, Jonathan Edwards, on John 3:36, dealing with the issue of the exclusivity of Christ as the way of Salvation.

In addition to articles relating to the issue's primary theme, we also include three other contributions that we hope you our readers will find interesting and helpful. The first is by Dr. Robert M. Frazier, Professor of Philosophy at Geneva College, on the subject of *ressentiment* in Kierkegaard. Though Dr. Frazier's article does not address the current political situation directly, in my view this is a very important article for this particular moment in history as the political left (especially though, sadly, not exclusively) increasingly comes to rely, not on the attractiveness of its political platform, but its ability to first of all foster resentment in people, and then to exploit that resentment as the force cementing loyalties to its own political agendas.

Next comes an article by Professor Donald T. Williams, Chair of the Department of Humanities and Natural Sciences at Toccoa Falls College. Dr. Williams defends C. S. Lewis's famous "Liar, Lord, or Lunatic Trilemma" against recent objections. Finally, the editor contributes an article on Mitt Romney, Mormonism, and abortion, showing how the Mormon view of when and how the soul enters the body of the unborn child leads to significantly different views on abortion from those commonly held by Evangelicals.

Finally we include several reviews of significant books, that we hope you will enjoy.

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Christian/Muslim Debate
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INTRODUCTION

On March 17, 2011, Christian apologist Jay Smith and Islamic apologist Khalil Meek took part in a debate, “Which Way America: The Bible or the Qur’an?” The debate comprised one part of the larger annual Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR) conference at MBTS. The debate transcript follows the brief introduction to the two debaters.

Jay Smith is an evangelist and apologist who regularly debates radical Muslims at *Speakers’ Corner* in London, England. Smith has a Master’s degree in Islamic studies from Fuller Theological Seminary and is currently working on a Ph.D. at the Melbourne School of Theology. Born in India, he was influenced by a stay at L’Abri, while a world traveler, and later was convicted to minister to the underserved 800-million Muslim population. Smith emphasizes the use of polemics alongside apologetics with Muslims, and has been described as the



Jay Smith

Unapologetic Apologist in *Christianity Today*. Smith heads up Hyde Park Christian Fellowship in London, England.

Khalil Meek is a native of Texas, raised in a Baptist family in Dallas. He aspired to be a Baptist minister after graduating from college. In 1989, while studying comparative religion in preparation for Seminary, Meek became an American-Muslim convert. He graduated from the University of North Texas. He has been the owner and CEO of Mecca Logistics, Vice President

of ROC Transport, and General Manager of All American Flooring in Dallas. He is also the past President and cofounder of the Islamic Association of Lewisville and a past board of director's member and former President of Council on American Islamic Relations. Meek is the president and co-founder of the Muslim Legal Fund of America, a charitable organization founded to defend the legal civil rights of American Muslims.

JAY SMITH

“May the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.” I want to thank Dr. Roberts for this debate. It’s really his debate. He’s the man that really put this together. I want to thank you, the staff, for inviting us here and for the students who are participating. Khalil, I want to thank you for finally agreeing to come. We went through six different debaters and finally Khalil agreed to do the debate, so give him an awful lot of credit for coming to a Seminary and debating this issue.

This is an important issue, and the debate we are doing tonight is looking at two different scriptures. We are looking at two different revelations; one, the Bible, and the other, the Qur’an. Khalil is going to support the Qur’an so I’m not going to spend too much time defending that. I don’t want to; there’s no reason for me to do that. I’m going to be defending the Bible.

But in order to even start this debate we need to define terms. We need to ask, “What is it we are debating about?”, and, “What Scriptures

are we looking at?”, and, “Exactly what part of Scripture?” For the Muslim, the Qur’an (this is my Qur’an here; it is not a big as yours for obvious reasons), the Qur’an, for Muslims, is basically their revelation that was revealed to the Prophet between 610 and 632, so Muslims tell us. If you take the Qur’an and just split it in half, this first half would be the Medinan and the second would be the Meccan. The Meccan comes first chronologically, while the Medinan comes second. Rule of thumb: there are some Medinan in the Meccan material and when you look at the Qur’an you will find that the Meccan material has material that much of us, many of us Christians could accept. There’s not too much in the Meccan material that we would disagree with. God is up here, man is down here. Man is to obey, man is to submit, and that’s what the word “Muslim” means, “a person who submits.”

It’s when you get to this first part, the Medinan *Surahs* that it becomes problematic for us, and it’s there that I am going to be zeroing in on in most of my time tonight. Why? Because it’s the Medinan material that is the most important for Muslims, since it’s the most authoritative part. It is the one that comes later; it is that material revealed to the Prophet from 622 to 632, the last ten years of his life, so Muslims tell us. This means, not only is it the latest, but according to the Qur’an, if you have any contradictions between the two halves, if you have any contradictions between any two verses, you apply what they call the law of abrogation. In *Surah 2:106* (when I say *Surah* I mean book, when I say *Ayat* I mean verse) and in *Surah 16:101* you have the law of abrogation which stipulates that if you have two verses that disagree you always go with the later verse. Therefore you always, always go with the Medinan verses, and that’s why I’m going to spend most of my time in the Medinan *Surahs*.

The same thing exists for the Bible. We also have two Testaments, do we not? We have the Old Testament and we have the New Testament. The old, obviously, is a Testament that is full of violence, so there is an enormous amount of material we no longer accept today. I’m not going to spend much time in the Old Testament today because there is no reason to because I do not follow the Old Testament today. I follow the New Testament. The Old Testament is important; it’s foundational for everything I am going to do. It’s foundational in order to understand the New Testament, but how I walk,



Khalil Meek

talk, eat, sleep is how Jesus walked, talked, ate, and slept, and everything Jesus does, or did, is what I am to do. Therefore, I go to the New Testament for my paradigm; I go to the New Testament for my revelation, and that's why I only accept what is in the New Testament as to how I'm to live today. Are you following that?

I'm going to be talking an awful lot about Jesus and an awful lot about His gospel. I love Jesus and I love His gospel and that's why we've chosen this subject today, because to understand who a Christian is in America in the 21st century, you need to go to the New Testament and you need to come back to Jesus Christ. To understand who a Muslim is in the 21st century (I'm going to let Khalil do that), but He's going to have to go back to scripture and I'm going to force him to go back to scripture because I don't want to know his opinion, I don't want to know his experience, I don't want to know what's happening in Texas today. I want to find out how Islam or what Islam says about how we're to live today. Are you following that? That's why we have noted that this debate is on scripture because I don't care about someone's opinion or someone's experience in one part of the world. I want to find out what the Prophet did in Islam. I want to find out what Jesus did. I want to go back to the foundations and that's what the debate is centered on tonight. I also want to bring it around to understand where we are going in the United States, in the 21st century, about us right now sitting here. Whether we are going to go to the Bible or to the Qur'an?

When you look at the foundations of this country, when you look and see where we came from; the puritans, when they came they came basically to get away from the state that was there in Europe. In Europe there was an awful lot of persecution against religious freedoms and that's why many of our puritans, certainly the pilgrim settlers when they came, the Congregational church, the Baptists who came after, many of them fled to this country to get away from that persecution, because they believed in the separation of church and state, which is what we see in Matthew 22:21. That's why I want to think through exactly what is it that we really see as the practical application of where the church is.

I thought it was great that Dr. Roberts talked about the separation of church and state. Jesus was asked that question. He was asked who was he to pay taxes to. He said, "Look at the coin and tell me whose image is on that coin," in chapter 22. Caesar's image was on that coin. He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesars and give to God what belongs to God," and in that one verse he separated church from state, and that's what we follow here in United States; the separation of church and state. That idea you don't find in the Qur'an. In *Surah* 3:104 it's very clear that the Islamic state is based on a hierarchical model; a model with Allah at the top, underneath which comes the Caliph. The Caliph is chosen from the

Ulemma, who are really just scholars. So the religious scholars dictate and create and basically form the power of the state. It's a theocratic state. Underneath come the Ummah, which are the believers. Next come the Al-Kitab, which are you and me, the 'people of the book', including the Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. And at the very bottom come the Kafir, the pagans. It's a very hierarchical state. Whereas we separate the two (church and state), Islam brings the two together, and at the root, at the very beginning of the initiation of our country, the pilgrims and the puritans wanted that ideal.

So we've been based on that ideal much more so than in Europe where I live, where there is still an awful lot of church and state together, and that's what causing many of the problems. Thank God that we do not have that here in the United States, and thank God that we are following that Biblical precept. There is one point where the Bible has initiated for us exactly our ideal. The puritan settlers in America had a vision of their homeland as a light on the hill taken from Matthew 5:14. This phrase has been uttered throughout US history as America's self-designation and self-understanding. The Qur'an had no role to play in that designation. The Mayflower Compact of 1776, which stipulated that there is no taxation without representation, has been one of our ideals, yet Islam in its very initiating era, back in the 7th century and 8th century, was imposing taxes on Jews and Christians—known as Jizyah tax, which you can find in the Qur'an as well, *Surah* 9:29. Everything I am going to give you tonight is going to come either from the Qur'an or the Bible, and it's that Jizyah tax which was incorporated along with the 'Kharaj' tax. The two together imposed 15 percent to 25 percent taxation on the Christians' and Jews', all of it earnings given to the state. Muslims only had to pay the Zakat, which is 2.5 percent. No taxation without representation is based, and built on a Biblical model, not on a Qur'anic model.

The US Constitution enshrines liberty and equality, too, as key concepts. We see this liberty and equality based on Biblical scripture again. Galatians 3:28, "For there is no different between Jew and Gentile, slave or free, man or woman, all are equal in Jesus Christ." I love that because that helps me to know how I am to act towards my fellow man, even my enemies. We are all equal in Jesus Christ. You don't have references like that in the Qur'an. We don't have something that can equate or parallel that kind of verse, and what you will find is that there is inequality built into the Qur'an. I will get into it a little bit more later, looking at the inequality in women's issues.

The first Amendment, freedom of speech, where we are permitted here in this country to criticize anyone and anything, that's also based on the model we see in the New Testament. Where our Lord and Savior was criticized, and was vilified. Look at how he reacted to criticism. He did

not stand against it. He did not even let those who were defending him defend him. The disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, there in Matthew 26, the one time he could have been defended and where he was defended; look and see what Jesus said, “Peter put away your sword for he who lives by the sword dies by the sword.” Anybody can criticize our Lord, anybody may criticize the Lord Jesus Christ, and it happens every day, and we allow people to do that, because that’s the freedom we have in this country, based on that precept, and the example of Jesus Christ.

Look at the Qur’an and see that’s not permitted. In *Surah* 33:60–61 you will see those who criticize the Prophet are to be put to death. In *Surah* 8:12–13, the same injunction is found; you are not permitted to criticize, you are not permitted to slander. That’s why today almost right across the Muslim world you will see example after example where you are not permitted to criticize the Qur’an. Pakistan, right next to where I grew up, there is a law which stipulates that if you criticize the Qur’an or if you criticize the Prophet, it is a capital offense—this law the Muslims tried to bring into existence there in the United Kingdom back in February 2006, called ‘the incitement to religious hatred’ law. Maybe you heard about it. It went to parliament three times. Thank God it lost, but it lost only by one vote. Had that law gone through I would not be able to do what I am doing today. I would not be able to criticize the Qur’an, or criticize the prophet Muhammad, even in the UK. We do allow people to criticize, following the example found with Jesus Christ.

Slavery was eradicated primarily by Christians. William Wilberforce, a Christian, in 1807. What exactly did he do? He used what he saw in Galatians 3:28. He also went to Philemon 16, and there he saw where Paul not only sent back a slave to his master, but in verse 16 Paul redefined the relationship between a master and slave, saying, ‘no longer are you slave to master; now you are brothers in Christ’, and thus redefining slavery. William Wilberforce spent his whole life, I’m sorry, his whole political career trying to eradicate slavery, which he finally accomplished in 1807, and from that time on it had a rippling effect right across the world, so all of Europe finally eradicated slavery.

We had a war in this country over that issue. Thank God the right side won. I’m sorry I am a little bit in the south, so I need to be careful where I am. In the 1860’s we eradicated slavery here, and now in every other country on earth, the latest of which were Muslim nations. Saudi Arabia finally eradicated slavery in 1960. The last country to legalize slavery was Mauritania in 1981. I was alive, and many of you were alive at that time. Thank God for William Wilberforce and thank God for the New Testament. Thank God for that foundation, which has enabled us to eradicate slavery. That’s why the whole abolition of slavery is uniquely a

Christian endeavor. You will not find an abolition movement that I am aware of in Islam.

We will now look at the whole makeup of the Khilafah (Islamic State) versus the Kingdom of God. Let's look at that real quickly. I see I am going to run out of time, so I need to try to put these into real quick terms. I did a debate back in 1999 with a cleric named Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad. I don't know if you know him Khalil, he is a friend of mine, not the easiest guy to get along with. He started the Al Muhajiroun party, the most radical group and the most radical party in the United Kingdom. He had a debate with me on the 'Kingdom of God versus the Khilafah'. We had about a thousand radical Muslims there, and I could only get 300 Christians to come to that debate. They did not want to be in the same room with all of those radical Muslims. I love radical Muslims. They are my favorite kind of Muslims, men like Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad, because they source everything they say. He went from scripture to scripture, showing us what the Khilafah would look like in Britain, quoting from verses like *Surah* 8:38 and 39. He said women are going to have to cover up according to *Surah* 33:59, and women who refuse to cover up, 'we must beat them' (see *Surah* 4:34). As to those who steal, we will cut off their hands (*Surah* 5:38); and concerning apostasy, we'll get rid of apostasy in Britain. Why? We will beat them with 100 lashes (see *Surah* 24:2). Everything he said, he supported in scripture, going from verse to verse to verse, taken right out of the Qur'an. I understood what he was saying; and it gave me a throbbing headache by the end of it. Then he turned to me and said, "Mr. Smith, let me see your Khilafah, let me see your Kingdom; how is it you are going to live?" I got up there and I said, "I am going to show you our Kingdom right now. I want all of the Christians to raise their hands." They did not want to raise their hands, not in front of a thousand radical Muslims. I said "come on, get your hands up there, I want you to raise your hands." And then I just started doing this, counting, "One, two, three...there is the Kingdom of God. One, two, three...look; it's right here. One, two...there it is again, Sheikh, right in this room. Because in Matthew 18:20, it says very clearly "where there are two or three gathered in my name, there I'm with you." That's the Kingdom of God. It's not a hierarchy; it's not a theocratic state; it's not a piece of real estate. It's not based on war, on weapons of mass destruction. It has no source to protect it. No, it's not a place; it's a relationship. The Kingdom of God as we know it is in this room today, and where Jesus is, there is the Kingdom of God. We have two completely different Kingdoms, with two completely different paradigms, from two completely different scriptures."

What about the Bible and the Qur'an? Let's do a comparison between these two books. Now we are probably going to be doing an

awful lot of that tonight, and I'll start it off and see where Khalil goes with it. I'm not sure what Khalil is going to say. I hope I do keep to the Bible and I hope you do keep to the Qur'an. If not, I'm going to make sure you come back to it because that is really what we are arguing, these two books.

When you look at these two books probably the best thing to do is to start out with women's issues because I think this is what most people want to talk about. What is it that these two books say on women? Since there are so many issues we could use let's just try to keep to that real quickly. For you women, if there are any Muslim women here or those watching on the video in the other rooms, go to just two *Surahs*, two books in the Qur'an, *Surah 4* and *Surah 2*. In *Surah 4*, I am going to give you 4 references, and in *Surah 2*, I'm going to give you 2. Just go to them and see and compare them with what we have in the New Testament.



In *Surah 4:3* it stipulates that a man may have up to 4 wives, a woman may not have up to 4 husbands (thank God). But a man may have up to 4 wives. Already in marriage you will see that there is an inequality in marriage. It's very clear in the New Testament, in 1 Timothy 3:2, that an elder of the church may only have one wife, for life. We are not permitted to divorce and that's why I wear this ring. This commits me to my wife, for life. Thank God we have elevated marriage to where it belongs. Why? Because the Bible says so; it's right there in 1 Timothy. It's also found in Matthew 19:5.

In *Surah 4:11* it stipulates that a woman has half the inheritance of a man. We don't have any law on inheritance. I don't know of any Western culture which allows a man or women to have any unequal inheritance. In verse 24 of that same *Surah* it says that a man may have as many women 'as his right hand possesses'. These are women who are prisoners of war, these are concubines. Above and beyond the four wives, he can have as many concubines as he can procure in battle. We have absolutely no verse in the New Testament that allows us to have concubines; it doesn't exist.

In *Surah 4:34*, ten verses later, it stipulates that a man is the protector of his wife, but to those women who stand against their husband, the husband may first admonish her. If that doesn't work, he may throw her from the bed, and if that doesn't work, he may beat her. And the word in Arabic is 'Dharaba', meaning "to scourge." Now in my English

translation it has in parenthesis “lightly,” but that was only included after 1935 because here in the west we don’t allow our men to beat our women, so therefore they had to put “lightly” in there. But folks, there is no word “lightly” in the Arabic text.

Surah 2:282 says that a woman has half the testimony in court as a man. Man has double the testimony of a woman. When, Aisha, the favored wife of Muhammad asked him why this is so, he said because women are more disobedient and less intelligent. I don’t know how you feel about that, but I know that’s not the case in the United Kingdom. Girls outperform boys in every category by the time they are in high school level of age, and by the time they get to University 70 percent of our graduates in the United Kingdom are women. We men can’t keep up to them. Thank God we don’t have verses like that in the Bible.

Probably the most difficult verse to read is *Surah 2:223*. In *Surah 2:223*, it says that a woman is a tilth for her husband, and that a man may plow his wife anytime he wants. It’s a horrible verse, it’s a horrendous verse. I’ve used it in debates before, and asked women to try to exegete that verse. I’ve yet to see a Muslim that can really exegete that verse properly. It is basically saying that a man may commit marital rape.

We don’t have verses like that in the New Testament. Thank God we don’t have verses like that. Talk about the testimony of a woman. Look at the greatest event in the whole history of mankind. The greatest event that the Bible speaks of is the resurrection of Jesus. The Old Testament was pointing to and anticipating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and who did Jesus show himself to on the day of resurrection? To the disciples? No. To a man? No. It was to a woman that Jesus showed himself first, knowing that the Testimony of a Jewish woman was half of that of a man in Judaism, yet Jesus purposely showed himself to a woman, knowing this was going to be the testimony for the greatest event in all of history.

Then we get to the final thing, and that is, equality. Galatians 3:28 I have already gone over. Hebrews 4:14–16 says both can approach God directly. 1 Peter 3:7 says you are equal together. 1 Corinthians 7:1–4 stipulates that our bodies are equal; a husband’s body is equal to that of his wife.

I thank God for the New Testament. I thank God for the gospel. I thank God for Jesus Christ, because the gospel is a corrective to what I see in the Qur’an. It is older than the Qur’an, and yet it is still as relevant today as the day it was written down. I give you the Bible and I give you the Man behind the Bible, Jesus Christ.



KHALIL MEEK

It's again a pleasure to be here. Thank you, Doctor Roberts. Thank you Jay. That was very impressive. And thank all of you for coming tonight. I think that what I want to impress is that whatever we take from here, let's take it as an educational forum, as something we can benefit from when we leave. I want to start with reciting a verse in the holy

Qur'an which is the first chapter, which is the *Surah* that the Muslim's pray 5 times a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. To give you an idea of the prayer that the Muslim offers, it says:

In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful, praise be to God the cherisher and sustainer of all the world. Most gracious, most merciful, master of the day of judgment, you alone do we worship and you alone do we ask for help. Show us this great way, the way of those on whom you have bestowed your grace and whose portion is not wrath and who go not astray, amen.

This prayer in the Qur'an is the prayer that the Muslims are seeking guidance for, and then what follows is the guidance that we believe came from God Almighty in the Qur'an. To begin, I want everybody to be clear that Islam is a monotheistic religion inviting all people to recognize and believe and worship God, to believe in heaven and hell and the day of judgment, to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and to follow divine guidance. Islam considers itself a universal religion and message. Islam is a universal religion with a comprehensive way of life for all people, all times, and all regions of the world. Islam considers itself a faith of human unity. It calls to mankind regardless of their race, their gender to unite in worship of the one true God. Islam considers all people as brothers and sisters and rejects discrimination on the basis of gender, color, race, or ethnic background. Mankind is one family.

There are about 1.7 billion Muslims in the world today, roughly a fourth of the world's population, 57 countries with Muslim populations a majority, and 22 of those are Arab countries. Eighteen to twenty-five percent of Muslims are Arab and the rest are non-Arab. The country with the largest Muslim population is Indonesia. And we can say that Islam

has tremendous cultural diversity with freedoms of expression, flexibility, and adaptability. If you don't know Islam has what's called a beautiful, prosperous, proud, history full of rich diversity, global presence, and significant impact. Muslims believe that they have contributed to every facet of society and were the backbone of the Renaissance for Europe in the 10th to the 12th century. We believe that our schools here in America, our markets, our towns, our homes, our hospitals, our universities have all been effected by Muslims who had for roughly 700 years, from the 7th century AD to 1400–1700 AD, been the leaders of the world in almost every discipline. You can't show me anything, I do believe, that was a leader in the Christian world or any European country, as far as science, chemistry, physics, biology, astronomy, anatomy, botany, poetry, mathematics, algebra, geometry,



engineering, technology, agricultural, arts and crafts, calligraphy, social services, hospitals, medicine, law and justice, human rights, civil rights, commerce, industry, education, universities, learning, knowledge, exploration, hygiene, ethics, and etiquette that Muslims weren't considered the most civilized, prosperous, productive communities on the planet during that time. The European families were sending their kids to learn from the largest libraries where universities had been instituted by the Muslims. Where we had paved roads and illuminated streets, so the Muslim civilization has contributed from the very beginning to western culture and western civilization.

As I get into that in a minute, I want to continue with what is Islam? Jay told us that it means, what did you say? I don't want to put words in your mouth. The definition of Islam, ok, to be in 'obedience'. The word means 'peace through submission', and it means 'willful surrender', peaceful submission or voluntary obedience meaning we have a free will that God has given us and that we have divine guidance. God has asked us to submit that free will and follow divine guidance. If we do so of our own volition, of our own voluntary efforts then we are submitting our free will to divine guidance. This is what the word Islam means. And then once we submit our free will to divine guidance, we attain peace through the submission with ourselves, with others. We do it spiritually,

mentally, and physically, and this is with our creator, ourselves, and anyone. In the Qur'an it says in verse 2:256, which is in the Medinan *Surahs*, that '*there is no compulsion in religion*'. The right direction is distinct from error, and he who rejects false deities and believes in God, or Allah, has grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is the hearer and knower.

So, if we are submitting our free will to this divine guidance, what is the guidance that we are submitting to? For the Muslim the Qur'an literally means the recitation and central religious authority and text of Islam. Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the book of divine guidance and the direction for mankind. Muslims consider the text in its original Arabic to be the literal word of God revealed verbatim to the prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years, and Muslims view the Qur'an as God's final revelation. The reason we say final is that Muslims also believe that Abraham received divine guidance through the scrolls. We believe that Moses received divine guidance through the Torah. We believe in the psalms of David and we believe in the gospel, or the Injil, the good news of Jesus Christ. Muslims say that according to the Qur'an, in verse 3:84, again Medinan, we believed in Allah, God, in that which was revealed to us and that which was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes and that which was given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and unto God we submit.

Muslims believe that this, the religion of Christianity and the religion of Islam are compliments to each other. We believe the Injil given to Jesus and the books delivered to Moses are divinely inspired and are God's word. We may take exception to the preservations of those texts as we have them today, and we may have to be convinced of the authority that what you're presenting is what Moses said or this is what Jesus said, but if Jesus was in the room, Moses was in the room, he's our prophet. We believe every single word Jesus ever said. We believe every single word Moses said. We believe every single word that Muhammad said. So, what we want to make clear is that we're not "us" against Jesus, or Muslims are different. We have a different belief in Jesus' message. We have a different belief in what that is and I want to go into that for just a second.

So, who is God that we are following? We say "Allah," and some people say, well, they believe in Allah and we believe in God. We believe in Jesus and they have their God and we have our God. I think that is ignorance of language because the word Allah means the God, the creator, the unique, the one and only, the cherisher, sustainer, the sovereign, the almighty, the real, the eternal, the everlasting. It is the word that I think every Christian would say is God Almighty. The word

Allah in Arabic is unique. It has no gender. Allah is not masculine or feminine; Allah has no mother, no father. Allah has no children, no relatives. Allah is not part of creation. Allah is the creator, and if you can touch it, taste it, see it, smell it, it is not Allah. For salvation in Islam means we believe in a creator who is unseen, and he is like nothing in the world and that the creation is dependent on the creator at all times, and God is sovereign to the creation.

What Muslims believe and what salvation relies on for the Muslim is a concept called Tawhid, and that Tawhid means the complete oneness of God, absolute pure monotheism. God has no equal, no partners. Nothing is worthy of worship except Allah. Nothing else is worthy of praise except Allah. Allah has power over all things. Everything depends on Allah. Allah is not dependent on anything. Allah is perfect, supreme, sovereign. Allah deserves all reverence, worship, praise, respect, and devotion, but Allah, even though he is not tangible—we can't taste him, see him, touch God, but we do believe that God has attributes that you know God by, and we have a very rich, deep, full understanding of God. We have an emotional attachment, a feeling and presence of God in our lives 24/7. But we know God through the attributes and these attributes belong to God, and they are called the most beautiful names of God. And we know these attributes from the Qur'an itself, when God is referred to as the most compassionate, the Merciful, the King, the Holy, the Peaceful, the Guarantee of Security, the Protector, the Almighty, the Compeller—there's 99 names here—the All-embracing, the Wise, the Loving One, the Most Glorious, the Unique. I can read them, but from these attributes we know as Muslims what God is and who God is, and what God believes, and what is godly to us. We have such a rich understanding and presence with God; it is a very beautiful relationship.

What does the Qur'an say about Christians? The Qur'an says about Christians, it says quoting verse 2:62, *'surely those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians and the Sabians, whoever believes in God in the last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their lord and there should be no fear on them nor shall they grieve'*. It also says in the Qur'an 5:82, *"And nearest among them in love to the believers"*—that means from Christian, the nearest to the Muslim, from other people of all of humanity. It says, *"The nearest among them, in love to the believers you will find those who say we are Christian because amongst these are men devout to learning and men who have renounced the world and they are not arrogant."* It says in 61:14, the Qur'an, *"All who believe, be helpers of God, and Jesus the Son of Mary said to his disciples, 'Who will be my helpers and work with the work of God?' Said the disciples, 'We are God's helper.' Then a portion of the children of Israel believed and a portion disbelieved and we gave power*

to those who believed against their enemies and they became the ones that prevailed.”

So, when we say this is what the Qur’an says to the Christian, what do we believe about Jesus exactly? The Muslims know Jesus as Isa in Arabic. Muslims respect, love, honor, and revere Jesus. Jesus is considered a great messenger and prophet. The phrase “*peace be upon him*” is added after His name mentioned along with all the other prophets of God. Jesus was born from the Virgin Mary. He is a word from God. However, Muslims do not consider Jesus to be divine. The Muslims do not consider Jesus to be the Son of God. In the Qur’an it says that Jesus is the likeness of Adam, and Adam was created from dust. So, for the Muslim it shows the power of God, the majesty of God. It says that God can do anything, but for the Muslim we take Him as a prophet and we never believe He said, “*I am God, worship me and take me as God besides Allah.*” There are titles that refer to Jesus in the Qur’an: the Son of Mary, the Messiah, the Christ, the Servant of God, the Messenger of God, the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the Sign of God. Jesus is mentioned 25 times in places in the Bible always with honor and respect. The Qur’an says, “And we believe in Allah,” (oh I already read that).

The Qur’an also says something about Mary. There’s an entire chapter in the Qur’an about the Virgin Mary, and the Muslims love and revere Mary as the Mother of Jesus. Mary is considered pious, chaste, pure, and virtuous. Mary is regarded as the best woman who was ever created. Muslims believe in the virgin birth. Mary was the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur’an. There is an entire chapter in the Qur’an entitled Mary and an entire chapter in the Qur’an about Mary’s father, Amram.

So for Muslims we don’t set up this barrier of “us against them.” We don’t see the Christian community as “them” and we’re “us.” We see it as a continuing message. We may have disagreed on how to understand that message. We have a disagreement on how to interpret salvation. We have issues, but when you get to the core of it, we have the same ethics, the same morality, and I’ll talk about what Jay said, but I want to make my presentation clear.

For the Muslims we believe that Muhammad was a mercy to mankind. That he was the last messenger and the last prophet, the seal of prophecy and the truthful one, and “honest” is what his name means. He was a universal prophet. He was spoken of in the Bible. He was born in Mecca. He is a descendant of Ishmael and from the first born son of Abraham. He received the revelation of the Qur’an at the age of 40 through the angel Gabriel and died in the year 632. Muhammad is not a substitute for Jesus in Islam. We don’t pray to Muhammad; we don’t pray through Muhammad. He is not a savior for the Muslims. He’s a

prophet, he's a warner, and he's a mercy of mankind. Muhammad is considered a human being, a servant messenger of God. Muhammad had the noble mission which was to invite humanity to worship the one and only Creator. Muhammad was a pure warner to mankind on the Day of Judgment and our accountability before God. Muhammad taught mankind the way to be honest, upright living, based on the commandments of God. For Muslims he is a religious teacher, a social reformer, a ruler, governor, legislator, moral guide, faithful friend, a devoted husband, and a loving father.

When you get into the ethics and morality of the Qur'an, in which Jay was taking exception to... I want to make it clear, you can take my Qur'an or his Qur'an and, if it's in English, open it up and I will let you take the challenge, and on every single page you will find these morals or these ethics espoused. The guidance that the Qur'an gives us for Muslim character and ethics, says that faith requires action, excel in goodness, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, be educated, seek knowledge, have integrity, be honest and sincere, be modest, humble and pious, be pure, clean and sober, be just, noble and steadfast. Show forgiveness, be kind and generous, be optimistic, thankful and happy. Obey the Ten Commandments and trust God with all your heart, soul, and mind. These are the individual personal references.



You'll find also on every page references to Muslim character as a group, or as a community. It says mankind is one family. If one person suffers, everyone suffers. All life is sacred. All human rights should be protected. Love one another. Show moderation in everything. Love for others what you love for yourself. Take care of the orphans, widows, and the needy. Defend the weak, free the oppressed, fulfill your trust, commitments, and promises, and be just. Islam considers humanity, humans, as vicegerents or Khalifah in the world, which will bring us to our topic, if there is on every page of the Qur'an at least one reference to one of the ethics in morality, we're doing good.

What are the sayings of the Prophet? The Prophet said God has no mercy on one who has no mercy for others. None of you truly believes until he wishes for his own brother, what he wishes for himself. He who eats his fill while his neighbor goes without food is not a believer. Powerful is not he who knocks another down, indeed powerful is he who

controls himself in a fit of anger. Allah does not judge according to your bodies' appearance, but he scans your heart and looks into your deeds. The Prophet said the property, the life, and property of all people are considered sacred, whether a person is Muslim or not. There is no supremacy. All people are equal; piety, not racism. To quote, it says, "*No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab, nor does a white man have any superiority over a black, or a black man have superiority over a white. You are all the children of Adam, and Adam was created from clay.*"

I want to get to what the difference between what the Christians view of governance and why America should be following the Qur'an or the Bible, by saying three moral deeds and then focusing on one. You should want for your brother what you want for yourself. This is reported that the messenger said, peace be upon him, "*Gabriel impressed upon me kind treatment towards the neighbors, so much that I thought as if he would confer upon him the right of inheritance,*" and then "*one part of the 'Ummah', or the community, is in pain, the rest feels the pain with them.*" This is narrated by Bashir "*the similitude of believers, and regards to mutual love, affection, fellow-feelings, is that of one body and when one limb hurts and aches the whole body aches, because the sleeplessness and the fever that would be caused, and finally oppression is worse than death.*"

In the Qur'an you will find so many statements about justice and oppression. It says oppression is worse than death and in the hadith it says, "*Oh my servants I have forbidden the oppression upon myself and I've made it forbidden amongst you.*" The holy prophet said a person should help his brother whether he is an oppressor or the oppressed. If he's the oppressor he should prevent him from doing it. For that is his help, and if he is the oppressed he should be helped against the oppression.

Ok, I'm having a good time. Alright, then I just want to get to Islam, and this is going to be my rebuttal to what Jay says to the Qur'an. He takes a verse out of it and says this and this and this, and the impression from what he is saying means you should take this as oppressive, you should take this as unequal, you should take this as something that is not good for you, and this is better because we don't have anything like it. Okay? To that I am going to say, and I am going to refer to just a few verses here... In the Qur'an, "Allah," it says in verse *Surah 40:41*, "*And Allah wills no injustice for his slaves.*" *Surah 3:108*, "*And Allah wills no injustice to the world.*" *Surah 4, Surah 40*, "*Surely Allah wrongs not even the wake of an atom.*" *Surah 18:49*, "*And your Lord treats no one with injustice.*" The forbidden injustice includes all forms. The first, the highest level and most extreme form of injustice, is *shirk*, disbelieving in

God and associating partners. Everything else that is considered oppression and injustice is talked about in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is a detail of how to interact with your parents, your mother, your father, your siblings, society, your business. Everything is in detail and what makes the Muslim Qur'an unique from the Bible, the Qur'an says you were put on this earth as a vicegerent, a khalifah, and that you are to enjoin what is good and to forbid what is evil, and you are to stop oppression and you are to stop injustice.

Let me just finish with this, that every rule and item in the Qur'an is just. It is not oppressive and it is something that the Muslims should participate in its observance. So, when we come to a Christian saying we will render to Caesar what's Caesar's and render to God what is God's, the Muslims says we have the right or we should actually help our brothers and sisters at all times and not leave it up to a secular state. We shouldn't leave it up to a secular person to take us here, take us there, and all of us just deal with it internally as a faith, and that we survive until we get to the Day of Judgment, or we do what little good we can, and in our own way that is under the legality of the State. The Muslims says it is enjoined upon you and me to fight for the things that are right, what God demands, what God says is better and should be believed so, I apologize for running over, but thank you. As-Salāmu `Alaykum.

JAY SMITH (10 minute rebuttal)

I wish that I had more than 10 minutes to respond. I have 11 points here. I don't know if I can get through all 11. I think what we have seen is Khalil giving an impassionate speech, one that he has given many times before, but you notice that he didn't quote scripture until the very end, and I think that's the problem with many Muslims. I thought that it was fascinating that he started out with the *Surah* 1 which is the Fatiha. Khalil, if you look at that *Surah*, look at verse 7 and look at where it says, "*Those who earn your anger, nor are we not like those who went astray.*" Do you know who "those" are? Look in the footnotes of your Qur'an, those who earn your anger are Jews, and those who are lead astray are Christians. It's a cursing prayer. That's a prayer which is a curse against us. That's



why I refuse to read that prayer. Now, how do I know that? Well, I go back to the traditions. If you look at every one of your commentators in the 9th, 10th, till the 12th century, they all show that Muhammad was asked that question, who are those that earn Allah's anger? He said they are the Jews. Who are those that lead them astray? They are the Christians. I refuse to use that prayer, and we do not go to that prayer, and yet that's the prayer that you and every Muslim prays. As you heard him say before they start their prayers, they are cursing us. I think that exposes exactly the problem with many Muslims today. They are not reading their Qur'an correctly. They are not understanding it, nor exegeting the verses. You need to read the Qur'an, and you need to exegete it.

You said that Islam means peace. Do you understand Arabic? 'Islam' is a fourth form verb; 'Salaam' is a first form verb. 'Salaam' means peace. You do not impose a fourth form onto a first form, unless you are an American living in Texas, and therein is the problem. Anyone who speaks Arabic cannot do that, and it's only Americans and British, and Europeans who are saying that. But ask any Arab speaker, and we have some right here, sitting here. Ask them if Islam means peace; or does it mean submission, obedience; and to whom?—to God.

The god you are using, let me just tell you about that god. Allah, means 'the god'. Anybody can be "the god." But see in our Bible, it is very clear as to who God is. It's very clear that Moses wanted to know who God was, and in Exodus 3 he asked, "What is your name?" What name did God give at that time? He said, "My name is Yahweh." YHWH: four little letters. And then He said "This is my name forever." Every prophet knew that name. You will find that name in the Old Testament 6,823 times. Every time you see L-O-R-D in capital letters [in the English Bible] that is the name of God. What's more, Jesus knew that name. In John 8:58, Jesus not only used that name, when he was asked, "*How do you know Abraham?*" he said, "*Before Abraham was... 'Yahweh'*", [in English] 'I AM, who I AM'. He claimed that name for Himself. That's how important that name is.

It's the Bible that tells me who God is. It's the Bible uniquely that gives me the real name for God, the unique name for God, so unique and so personal that Jews even today will not pronounce that name, and yet you tell me that your prophet knows God. Yet, he doesn't know that name. 'Allah' is a generic name. Anybody can be called Allah. If he's a prophet of God why doesn't he know God's unique name, like my Jesus knows His name, and claimed that name for himself? You say we share the same God. No we don't.

You went through a whole list of all the litany of different definitions of God: merciful, compassion; interesting you didn't go *wadud*, which is

‘loving’. That is one of His names, you’re right. Do you realize that compassion by definition, mercy by definition, and *wadud* by definition require an object; so where is the object of God’s love before Adam and Eve were created? I can only understand how God could be loving if there was always love within the Godhead, God the Father always loving God the Son, always loving God the Holy Spirit. The three have always communicated in love, so when I am made in His image, as it says in Genesis 1:26–27, I am imbued with that love. That’s how I can be a human, that’s how I can be compassionate, and that’s why I can be loving, because my God was already loving. Where do you see that in Allah? Where do you see it in a god who is ‘one’, a monad; which insinuates that even the name for god, even the god that you are talking about, requires Adam and Eve to make his name? That’s the beauty I have with my God.

You said that there is no racism, that there’s no problem with gender equality. Look at the verses I gave you. *Surah 4:3, Surah 4:11, Surah 4:24, Surah 4:34*. Please exegete these verses for me. Show me if you don’t find gender inequality? All the way through the Qur’an there is gender inequality. As far as racism, what about the Jews in the Qur’an? Look at *Surah 5:51* and *Surah 5:57*, “*Take not for friends Jews and Christians for they are one another and he who takes them as a friend is one of them.*” What about *Surah 9:29*? “*Make war on the people of the book...until they pay the Zakat.*” Now remember *Surah 9* [according to tradition] is the last *Surah*, the last revelation that was given to Muhammad. Therefore, it is the most authoritative *Surah* in the Qur’an; and when you look at *Surah 9* just look and see what it says about those who don’t believe. *Surah 9:5*, “*Slay the unbeliever wherever ye find them. Besiege them. Lay and wait for them with every kind of ambush.*” Does that sound very peaceful to you? *Surah 8:39*, “*Slay the unbeliever so that there is no more Fitnah in the land*” (that means no unbelief), “*until all belief is in Allah.*” Does that sound peaceful to you? *Surah 47*, is a good one to go to. The first three verses of *Surah 47* define who a believer is, and who an unbeliever is, and then in verse 4 it says “*cut off the heads of the unbeliever.*” It continues on with verse six, which says, “*Those who participate in jihad, if they should die or if they should live, great is their reward in heaven, for they shall be in paradise.*” We don’t have verses like that in the New Testament. No, and that’s why I love the New Testament.

You never talked about peace, real peace. There’s no verse in the Qur’an that tells you to “*love your enemy.*” Show me one? I have been working for 29 years and I have asked many Muslims [this question]. I have read the Qur’an many times through. I have yet to find a place that says “*love your enemy*”, as we see in Luke 6:27, and as we see in

Matthew 5:44. It's so good to be able to come back to the Bible. It's so good to come back to Jesus Christ, because there I see real peace. I know Muslims have strived for this, and they have tried to find some type of parallel, some type of object that they can go to, to come close to what we see in the person of Jesus Christ; and for 1,400 years they've not been able to find it. Because the Bible is so clear, the New Testament is so clear, the gospel of Jesus Christ is so clear, that it is a gospel of peace.

"*There's no difference between Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman, all are equal in Christ*" [Galatians 3:28]. Give me a verse like that in the Qur'an? That's why today we have the abolition of slavery. That's why we can go around the world, and we can bring people back to God. And who is that God? Well, he is Jesus Christ.

You give him the name 'Isa'. Who is Isa? Where is that name in Arabic? Isa is the wrong name. What is the name for Jesus in Arabic? It is *Yesua*, the same as *Yeshua* in Hebrew. Every Christian knew that name, every Arab Christian for 600 years, and for 2000 years every Arab Christian knows that the name for Jesus is *Yesua*.

So, how did the Qur'an get it wrong, and where did that name come from? Well we now know. In fact if you look at the 93 references to Jesus in the Qur'an, you will see over and over again He is Isa 25 times. And when you look at the stories, you will see that the stories are all basically, most of them, are stories of Jesus Christ which can be traced back to other borrowings. In fact, many of the stories of Jesus Christ are traced back to sectarian writings of Jesus Christ, Gnostic writings, Docetic writings, and particularly Syriac writings, some of it coming from the 'Diatessaron', written by Tatian in the late 2nd century. And when you look at the Diatessaron, to the writings concerning Jesus Christ there, the name for Jesus there is *Iesu*. When you take *Iesu* and you put it into Arabic, it becomes 'Isa'. So, you've got the wrong Jesus. He's not the Jesus I know, and the reason I know that (and you say we share the same thing)...look at the Jesus that's there.

The Jesus in the Qur'an spends all his time declining his divinity, and he allows another man to go on the cross, and never dies Himself on the cross. It's found in *Surah 4:157*, and that one little verse damns all of us for eternity. That's not my Jesus. My Jesus came to die. My Jesus certainly died, but he didn't stay dead. 'Friday's here but Sunday's a-coming'. That's why we celebrate Sunday. That's what you need to celebrate, and you need to come on back home with us. Come on back to your Southern Baptist roots. Come on back to these people right here, because then and only then, can you find salvation. It's that Jesus that I want to offer to you tonight. It's that Jesus that came and died, and he didn't stay dead. He rose again on the third day, and that's the Jesus that

destroyed death in that one act, and that's my Jesus, that's my Bible, and that's my scripture, and I give it all to you Khalil.

KHALIL MEEK (10 minute rebuttal)



The verse in the Qur'an that he said is referring to the Jews and Christians, which says, *"In the name of God most gracious, most merciful, praise be to God the cherisher and sustainer of all the world's most gracious, most merciful master of the day of judgment, you alone do we worship, you alone do we ask for help, show us the straightway, the way of those on whom you have bestowed your grace, who's portion is not wrath and who go not astray"*—and he says that "go not astray" means the Jews and the Christian. It speaks for itself. It says that for those who

go astray. From God's message, it's everybody. That would include a Jew, a Christian, a Hindu, an atheist, and agnostic, and anybody besides a Muslim. So yes, it applies to you. Yes, it applies to the Jew, but it applies to people who aren't following God's message, and then that we say that the Christian has gone to excess, so that's how you get involved.

He wants to say that women are an issue in Islam. He wants to say that the Qur'an has all these issues of inequality, but he skipped over all the verses, and I'm not articulate enough to memorize them, but where it says a man and a woman are equal in faith, a man and a woman are equal in the sight of God...that a woman has to pray, a man has to pray. Women have to fast, men have to fast. Women have to give charity, men have to give charity. All the responsibilities, the rights and joining good and forbidding evil are the same for men and women. The righteousness, the salvation are the same for men and women. But there is a difference between men and women in Islam in social responsibility, and he leaves out the fact that in Islam men are the maintainers of women so that at all times a man must maintain the woman. She doesn't have to work, she doesn't have to go out and earn a living, and if the husband dies, the brother, the uncle, the state, somebody has to take care of her. At no point is a woman to maintain herself. So we have rules in inheritance. So we have rules that apply to women that are different because of the way the Qur'an is written, to say that men are the maintainers of women. And it is just scholars that debate this day in and day out—I can't. But

they all look at these issues and say these are ridiculous to say that it is inequality.

Alright, in Islam, the Prophet did this in the 6th century. We are talking 623 AD. Tell me if this was the status of women in Christianity in 623 AD? That he said that women again are equal to men in all religious affairs, and with equal rights, equal status? The right to inheritance, the right to marriage, the right to divorce, the right to choose a marriage, the right to keep her name, the right to refuse marriage proposals, the right to own her own property, the right to work, the right to be educated. She couldn't be traded, bought, or sold. All of her money is hers; all of her property is hers. Men are required to give the dowry. Women are assets to society, honored in society, to be protected by men, to be respected, loved, and admired and an integral part of all societal affairs. These verses are there. He knows them; he didn't mention them. The Prophet said in his hadith, he said, "*The keys to heaven lay at the feet of the mother.*" He was asked, "*after God, who is our reverence, loyalty, devotion to be to*", and he said "*your mother*", and they said...whoa, this is an Arab society, which was pretty male chauvinistic at the time...and he said "*then who*", and he said "*your mother*"...he said "*ok, we got it...then who*"... "*your mother*"... "*then who*", "*your father.*" Three times he was told your mother was to have the love, honor, respect above the father in your lives. Your mother deserves that respect. The Prophet said he who is best to his wife, is best in the sight of God, and the Prophet taught us to be kind, gentle, loving with women.

If you go to a Muslim gathering (you do it without me there, no pretext, no set up). Just say, a show of hands of women who have scars, how many of you feel oppressed, or is Islam a male chauvinistic religion (which is the implication of what he was saying)? You won't see any hands. You'll say did Islam start women's lib? Who believes that Islam is the beginning of women's liberation? All the Muslim sisters would raise their hands. Now, I'm challenging you to do that on your own, in your own way. Ask a Muslim. He talks so good, I can't keep up with all of the things he brings out.

I want to bring up just a second that he eloquently said, "*I throw the Old Testament away, I follow Jesus.*" In the Qur'an we're told that..."*say God...say Allah is the eternal, the everlasting, say he is Allah the one and only, Allah the eternal, the absolute. He begets not, nor was he begotten and there is nothing like unto him.*" He says this Allah is still foreign to him. He doesn't get it. If you translate any book in Arabic for an Arab Christian, or an Arab Copt, or for a Jewish person, in Arabic they would have to choose the name Allah, because it is the word that means God, all of the essence and the meaning that we all, or that I think we all agree on, are the attributes of God, and that Allah is a unique

name that is known as Elohim [in the Hebrew Old Testament], and it was known before the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and it is the only name that is pure, that can't be pluralized; it can't be genderized. It is so unique that Allah called himself by the name of Allah.

When we say that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and that through His death and resurrection we have this loving salvation, I don't think he means what he said, and you can correct me. Did Jesus die on the cross? Did your God die on the cross? The eternal, the everlasting, the first and the last...He died? So, who ran the affairs when he was dead? Right, that's an insult to God. That means God is not sovereign. So, I have been told it is half a God. That man died, but God didn't die. But if God is eternal then absolute death is not part of it.

If Jesus did die on the cross, here's another question, and maybe if you have time to rebut it. If he died and he died for our sins, and it's true, then I accept it. Jesus died, he conquered death, he paid the atonement, right? Where's God's mercy and forgiveness? I'm going to ask you to answer that? If you demand payment, then it seems to negate mercy, and if God punishes himself, or an innocent, it seems to defy his justice. There are many issues, it's a paradox. There are books written, I brought them, I don't want to talk about them, because there is no time, but it's not a Muslim critique. I'm not here to criticize the Bible and tell about the challenges in it, but I wanted to bring Christian references to say that it is not a unique issue for us to say that there might be issues with the Bible.

When he speaks of the Old Testament and the New Testament and he says that this is what Jesus said...There are Christian denominations, not to mention many of them, such that Jesus seminar who disagree. I am sure anybody in here who is a student has heard about it. But these people that wrote this book analyze it in a very analytical way what Jesus said and said, based on the time, and the language. And I'm sure there is a rebuttal to this, but this is a Christian document, nothing to do with Muslims chastising it.

I've got a book here from Dennis McKenzie. This guy wrote as many errors and discrepancies as you can. I've got another book that is the apologetics to it, so I am sure it exists, so when he rattles off these things like a machine gun, which is impressive, and it's very good and it shows that you did your work, the Muslims have the exact same thing. I can sit here and go, "*Here's every response to it and there it is.*" You gave me so many, that in 10 minutes no human being could answer them with any kind of intelligence. So, he made a point, but what I am saying is if you want to go that direction, then we need to round them up.

What I want to challenge you to do is to pick up the Qur'an. I don't want to run from it. I want to give you one. Anyone who wants one, ask

me, I will bring one for you. Read it. Highlight the stuff you disagree with. All of the verses he said have a context, and all of them have meaning. You'll see from the *Surahs* what you read, and it will mean something to you, and all I say is, read it. I'll read the Bible. I'll sit and discuss it with you. But don't just take it out like a shredder and go, "*Ok this is what they believe and how can I accept it.*" Then I say, "*Well I can do the same thing.*" We are not going to get anywhere, and I can't do it as good as he did it.

But when you go hearing the other gospels, then who inspired the other people to choose the right gospel? If they are all correct, then which of the gospels are the inspired words. We have other gospels that aren't included, and they may be inspired. Who was the one that got to make the decision at the council; who said they were inspired? Were they all inspired, or were they not inspired, [do we believe] that God just somehow miraculously did it for us? Again, Christian sources, not mine. So, if we want to get into that, my message to the group tonight (and we will get into the Q & A and I can actually give answers to detailed questions) just ask them again one at a time, slower.

But in Islam, because again, in the Qur'an, he criticized the Qur'an...you'll have to ask me [the questions] again. I didn't write the questions clear enough.

When we get to Q & A and questions come about "*In America do we want Islam or the Qur'an, or do we want the Bible?*" and I want to get into the Qur'an, everything in it provides justice for everybody. So, anytime there is injustice, every day, you see injustice. Right? The Qur'an tells you how to deal with it. Wouldn't you like to know that? Wouldn't you like to know what God is telling you on how to deal with that? Wouldn't you like to be able to do something about it? Would you like to just wait for the statement to come in and if you have a tyrant in the United States for the last 200 years [would he be] the greatest thing since sliced bread?

Let's go back to the crusades, let's go to the inquisition, let's go to the witch-hunts, let's go somewhere else and say, "*Oh, let's have this discussion, how great it is.*" It's from the same Bible, same Christians, but a big difference in application. Maybe you got it right and I like the message I hear. I really like the message that you gave about Christianity. Right? I liked that. Praise God! But, it's short of being complete. It doesn't give you any guidance; it doesn't give you the prayer. It doesn't give you the structure on how to enjoin good and forbid evil and take that responsibility. That's ownership.

God has empowered us to be here for a test, and to be the vicegerents, and to practice his message, and we can't just abrogate it and hope and love and 'kumbaya'. We have to do something, and the

Qur'an tells us how, in the most beautiful manners, and in the most beautiful way, and I encourage you to read it and see for yourself the guidance that you will get.

Thank you and as-Salamu-Alaykum. Oh, I have to address that. He attacks as-Salamu-Alaykum. The root of the word Salam, right, in as-Salamu-Alaykum, right? What does as-Salamu-Alaykum mean? {Salam is peace be unto you} Salam is peace be unto you, right? That same root...S.L.M...right {first form verb} S.L.M.? {Absolutely} Ok, so as-Salamu-Alaykum means peace be unto you...the whole world...Islam, right, it's a religion of peace and it's peaceful, willful, submission. Arabic, I'll bring scholars for this, this is simple, like A.B.C., and he's just taking advantage of an English speaking non-Arabic person, but that is insulting to say that the word means what he said. Thank you. As-Salāmu `Alaykum.

Q & A

To Jay Smith: How do you compare the statement of Jesus in Matthew 10:34 that says, "Jesus said that I came not to bring peace but a sword," with the crusades and the inquisition? Doesn't Matthew 10 support the crusades?

Jay Smith: My answer will let you know that I am not a Southern Baptist. I am a Mennonite, so I love this question. I could go for three hours on this one, but I will to keep it short, to three minutes. If you look at that whole chapter (and I enjoin all of you to go look at that chapter), you will see that it is the commissioning of the twelve, and there Christ is saying to the twelve, *"I am sending you out as a lamb before wolves. You're going to be hated, you're going to be persecuted, you're going to be flogged, you're going to be jailed, and you're going to be killed."* Those are the five things he promises there in that chapter. That's quite a commissioning. Do you commission like that here at the Seminary? You should if you don't, because that is exactly what Christ demands of every one of us. Then he goes to say in verse 34, *"For I have not come to bring peace, I have come to bring the sword."* Look at the very next verse: *"I have come to put father against son, mother against daughter."* This sword is going to be used against us. We are not permitted that sword. The whole chapter is about persecution. Every one of the disciples was hated. They were flogged; they were jailed. Every one of them was persecuted, and every one of the disciples fulfilled their commission. Every one of them was killed, except for John. That's my Jesus and that the commissioning that it takes if we're going to follow

Jesus Christ. That's the price we have to be willing to pay. We are not permitted to use that sword.

Now, you want to talk about the crusades. If you look at the crusades and you look at the inquisition, you must ask yourself one simple question: Who was running the crusade, and who was running the inquisition? It was the state that was running both of them, in the name of the church. Was the state permitted to do that? Remember we said at the very beginning that we separate church and state. That's right there in Matthew 22:21, so, therefore the state has no right taking on the name of Jesus Christ, and the church has no right taking over the state. The two are separate; so when the state and church were merged under Constantine in the 4th century AD, basically he created an aberration. That was never intended in Christ's preaching, so therefore, I have to go back to Jesus Christ, as I always do every night. And that's what I will do in this debate. I have to ask Jesus Christ what would he have done with the crusades, and I know the answer. Jesus would have condemned the crusades. If Jesus condemns the crusades, I also have to condemn the crusades.

I want to ask Khalil, can he condemn the crusades? Because if he is willing to condemn the crusades, then he is going to have go back to his own prophet Muhammad, and from 622–627 AD, look and see what Muhammad did when he moved to Medina. Look and see what he did to the Jews. There in 624, 625, and 627 he threw out the Banu Qaynuqa family, he threw out the Banu Nadir family, and finally in 627, he took 800 men and slit their throats from the Banu Qurayza family. So, within 5 years of moving to Medina (he was not from Medina himself), he had eradicated the three major Jewish tribes there in Medina. We call that genocide. If any Muslim is going to condemn the crusades, I want to hear them condemn their prophet. Do not condemn the crusades unless you are a Christian, because we are the only ones that can condemn it. Why? Because of Jesus Christ.

“Put away you sword,” Jesus says to Peter, “For he who lives by the sword, dies by the sword.” That's my Jesus. That's how I look at Matthew 10. That's my commissioning and that's the commissioning for every one of you who wants to follow Jesus Christ. That's a high commission. But that's a commissioning we need to follow.

Khalil Meek: As far as what Jesus meant when he said a sword, and if it's from God or not, I'll leave it up to Jay, but as far as the crusades, I'll condemn them for you. That was pretty obvious, that was not a good question. And as for the Prophet (peace be upon him), when he went to Medina, he was the first to sign a constitution, the first to sign a bill

where it says that all these tribes and all these people who were fighting amongst themselves (that's why the Prophet was invited there). He was supposed to be the arbitrator, he was supposed to solve their disputes, and give them protection from the Meccan's who wanted to kill him. So, when he went to the tribe of Medina and he wrote a constitution, and it's all for one and one for all, and we are all going to be the protectors of each other, and everybody is going to be treated equal, and so forth. When the Meccans came to attack the Prophet in Medina, the people of the Jewish tribe went against them, and basically committed treason and an act of war; thus there were consequences for that. The Prophet (peace be upon him) when he handed them the consequences, he didn't go to the Jews and say, "*You did this.*" He said, "*How do you want to be judged, by me or your own law?*" They said, "*Our law,*" so they picked their leader, a Jewish leader, and said, "*What do you recommend we do with these people?*" The Jewish leader says, "*Kill them.*" Prophet says, "*Okay.*"

*To **Khalil Meek:** If Christianity is a compliment to Islam and we are not opposing religions, why does the most Islamic nation, Saudi Arabia, outlaw Christianity?*

Khalil Meek: They're idiots. They are not Islamic-ly practicing the law. I mean this is stupid, the Qur'an says.... I read you the verse from the Qur'an. Ask them not me. However, there are Christians who live in every Muslim country. If what they do is outlawed, they should be in jail. If we are all out to kill them, like he read...how many of you have heard the saying that the Muslims want to kill the infidels? That if you're not Muslim...you have to accept Islam or we are going to kill you until the end of time? Show your hands...anybody? If that's the case, you should be ducking. There are 6-7 million Muslims in America today. There's 1.7 billion Muslims. Every country has hundreds, if not thousands or hundreds of thousands of Christians and Jews, along with Muslims living together, every day. If our Qur'an, at the basic level, in the most eloquent way says to kill you, then we are idiots. It's only the radical person that could come up with some extreme weird way to interpret, which they are interpreting wrong, because it says only when you are attacked, and only until the aggression ends, and only until the people who are fighting you stop. If it was in the time of peace and everything else, then you would concede the stupidity of that. I'd like to hear the apologetics for why 1.7 billion Muslims who fundamentally know they are supposed to be killing people aren't figuring out a way to be doing more damage? Why do they let Christians come on in? Why do they have churches, and why do they let the Jews have synagogues? Why do they let people practice their faith

however they want? Why don't they make them pray? Why don't they make them fast? Why don't they imply all of the things that Muslims do to them? I'll let him answer that. Thank you.

Jay Smith: Yeah, to be fair I don't use Saudi Arabia as my model of Islam. What we do know about Saudi Arabia, however, is that it follows the Wahhabi movement, and the Wahhabi movement comes from a man named Ibn Wahab who actually learned this material in the 1700's, but he got it from a man named Ibn Taymiyyah, who lived in the 1300's, who actually, if you look at Ibn Taymiyyah teachings, went right back to the Qur'an, and everything he said was basically the same thing that Martin Luther was going to say two hundred years later. The reformation of Islam has already come and gone. It came in 1300 with Ibn Taymiyyah, and what was his rallying cry? "*Go back to scripture.*" What Wahab did is go back to scripture and it's just not one or two or three verses. I am going to give you 149 verses right here, read them. These are right from the Qur'an; every one of them is violent. Over 149 verses in the Qur'an, all from the Medinan *Surahs*. That's why the Wahhabi movement is doing this. That's why we are not permitted to go there. That's why there is violence in the world today, and much of the violence is coming at the hands of Muslims, whether we like it or not. When Muslims go back to their scriptures...not Khalil, I'm not saying Khalil is this. In fact, Khalil is a great guy, because he lives in Texas. He has no choice but not to use these verses, because he lives in Texas. We don't allow him to apply those verses. It's when those verses are applied, as they were applied by your prophet, between 625 and 63 AD, especially the last two years, but up until 632 AD (look and see what he did between 630 and 632 AD, and look at his biography), and just read how he applied those verses. That's what scares me, because that is what I see coming from areas of Islam today. That's why we are even having this debate, because of what scripture says. What his scripture says, versus what our scripture says, shows me a vast difference.

Jay, a question. What is your opinion of the apostasy law in the Qur'an?

Jay Smith: The apostasy law is a difficult law because it's found in every and all four of the schools of Islamic Fiqh. The Hanbali school, the Maliki school, the Shafi'i school, and the Hanafi school. All four schools of law have what we know as the apostasy law. The apostasy law stipulates that if anybody leaves the religion of Islam they are given 3 days to repent, and after 3 days if they do not repent and return to Islam,

they must be killed, usually by the brother or the father from the family. That law is found in all of Islamic jurisprudence.

Now where does it come from in the Qur'an? The only verse that really intimates it is *Surah* 4:89. In *Surah* 4:89 you will find that law assumed. Many Muslims have a difficult time trying to interpret that because it seems to suggest therefore that if somebody leaves Islam it's a capital offense.

Thank God we don't have an apostasy law in Christianity. Anybody can leave at any time. In fact, I love the example that Jesus gives of the prodigal son, because there you see the example of how God does treat those who reject Him, as the father with the prodigal son. The prodigal son left his father took his inheritance, went to a faraway land and squandered his inheritance. What did the father do? Did the father ever reject his son? No. Not my Lord, not my God. Not the God of the Bible. That's why Jesus gave us that example. The father waited for the son to come home, and when he saw the son in the distance he went up and hugged him and brought him home and he had a banquet because that is how my God is. My God lets me reject him anytime I want, but He never stops loving me.

That idea you won't find in the Qur'an. In *Surah* 18:74, 80-81 there is even a story of a man [Al-Khidr] who goes and shows Moses how he is to act. He comes up to a boy and he kills the boy in *Surah* 18:74. Moses asks, "*Why is it that you have done this?*" In verses 80-81 of *Surah* 18 he then explains why. In verse 81 he says, "*We have killed him because of his unbelief so he would not lead astray his parents, so that you may have another son who will believe.*" So there are two references in the Qur'an, *Surah* 4:89, *Surah* 18:80-81. Read them and see and tell me how you can interpret them any other way? Thank God we don't have that in the New Testament. Thank God, that He allows us to accept Him freely and yes to reject Him freely. There will be eternal consequences, yes, to everything we choose, and that's why I want to make sure everybody here does make the right choice and does it before they die, because then it will be too late. We can reject God but not on the pain of death in this life. That will be in the hereafter. Come on home to Jesus Christ.

Khalil Meek: Apostasy in Islam...the Qur'an says "*there is no compulsion in religion*", and I haven't heard him refute that, and if somebody were to die because they didn't choose to be a Muslim, that seems to be compelling, very compelling. If you interpret any verse in the Qur'an to say that, then you would have to also interpret the no compulsion in religion to satisfy it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) I am unaware of any application of apostasy with those two verses that

you referred to. I have a scholar here that wrote a dissertation on this and took every conceivable thought, in fact, from all the four schools of thought, and he wrote the opinion that you can't have apostasy in Islam. My God and the Qur'an do not have apostasy, and you can see where people have come and gone out of Islam, again in a practical sense, it is not applied. If the Muslims again are supposed to be killing those who leave the religion, then we are not getting it, we are not very good at it, because this is happening. From history, the only time that something is similar to apostasy, is when you get somebody who is in treason, or is in a capital offense with the state; outside of that no apostasy.



For Khalil Meek: If Muslims believe in Jesus even as a prophet, why don't they accept his teachings as true, just as they accept Muhammad's. If so, how can you deny John 14:6 when Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Thank you for what you have shared with us.

Khalil Meek: Yes, I definitely believe in what Jesus said as true, and I want to ask another question, because it is totally relevant...when Jesus said, "*The Father is greater than I. I of my own self do nothing, why callist me good? There is none good but the Father, my Father and your Father, our Father who art in heaven.*" People came to him, "*Who do you say you are?*" We say, "*You are Christ the Messiah, the Son of*

God.” He turns around and tells them, “No, tell them no, say no such thing.” There is apologetics for all of this, right? But I am telling you, Jesus came out with some explicit statements. He says, “*I am not God; the Father is greater than I. I don’t do anything.*” And then you say, “*I am the truth, the light, and the way and no man comes to me but through the Father.*” Well, I would say that would apply to Moses, Abraham, Muhammad, Jesus and every prophet. “*I am the truth, the light, and the way, and nobody is going to get there unless you follow what I tell you, unless you apply what you hear, unless you act upon the advice you are given and the guidance I am sharing with you.*” There is no way you are going to make it unless you submit your will to that guidance. So, when he says this in John, again, if he said this, I’ll just take it at face value, yes, he said it. “*I am the truth, the light, and the way, and no man comes to me but through the Father,*” then I would say it applies to every prophet, and he denied it in so many other places. If he wants to respond, let him.

Jay Smith: This could be a whole debate right here, because it really does come to Jesus Christ. Did He ever claim to be God? Not just that verse, but look at all the places He claimed to be God. I’m just going to show two references, so you can go to them. When you look at where He claimed to be God, He didn’t ever say, “*I am God*” in English, but he did say it in Hebrew, and he certainly did it so the Jews would understand. One of them is right there in front of the Sanhedrin where Caiaphas turns to him, the chief priest, and says, “*Are you the Messiah, are you the Son of God?*” Those are two divine claims right there. Jesus says “*Yes, I am,*” and then he went on and made a third claim by saying, “*You shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds*” referring back to Daniel chapter 7:14. That’s a third divine claim for divinity. Look at the reaction of the chief priest: he tore his cloak and he turned to the priest there and said, “*You need no other proof, this man has blasphemed, he deserves death.*” I can’t think of any other interpretation of that reference, proving that Jesus went way beyond his prophethood; he went way beyond certainly calling himself a priest, and king. He was claiming to be God. We know that because we can see that in Philippians 2:6–11, and when he talks about, why is it that...no one is good but God? That is a rhetorical phrase. He was saying, “*if you really realize what you are talking about, I am God, for that is what you are saying.*” I can go reference after reference, and I have already given you John 8:58, for I think that is another good claim right there; so there are four claims for divinity right there. Way beyond prophet and king, Jesus truly is God.



*Personal question to **Jay Smith**: have there been any threats on your life?*

Jay Smith: Oh my, yes I do get threats on my life, and this is nothing against Khalil or his brethren. The threats that I get on my life are primarily because of what I say and what I do. I don't know if you know, but I go down to Speaker's Corner every Sunday. I get up on a ladder; it puts me about as high as I am right now, so I feel right at home. The only problem is you should be heckling me. When I get heckled, I get some death threats. Not all the time, but I do occasionally get death threats. I don't worry about them, because we have a big God, and my God is going to protect me, and I'm still here, and I have been doing this for 29 years. Jerry, you were with me, you know what it's like. He's been up on the ladder and it's great fun isn't it? The heckling we get and the vitriol we get, well, I love it, because I feel like I'm right back in the first century. Right back there with Paul, because Paul got the same death threats, did he not? When Paul was going around there in Ephesus, there in Laodicea, and Cappadocia, and Berea; in fact, everywhere he went. He went right into the synagogues, and what happened? He confronted the Jews with what they had done to the Messiah, and look and see what happened to him. He got thrown in to prison, he got whipped, he was

stoned almost to death twice, he caused a riot there in Ephesus, and they finally killed him in Rome. That's my man.

Therefore, I don't mind death threats, because I am following in the steps of Paul, and I am doing the same thing that Paul did. He did it in the first century, and I am doing it in the twenty-first century, and I wish there were hundreds more Pauls, and maybe Paulines, who'd come and do what I do. That's why I love radical Muslims, and I don't mind if they are going to give me a death threat. I would just like to know when it is coming. Whenever I see a man say it in my ear, if I am on the ladder, I will stop what's happening and I will turn towards the man and I tell the crowd, "*Look at this man, memorize his face. This man has just...*"—and I will tell them what he has just said, and I say, "*If I die tomorrow, blame him.*" After that he's not going to touch me. Folks, be careful, don't worry, don't worry about death threats. You are going to get them. I get them. If it happens, then that means we are going to be with God that much earlier. God's not going to give you up. God's not going to let you go, until your time is finished. He's got a place for you, he's got a whole work for you, and I thank God that I serve him. That's a loving God that I am willing to die for, and I refuse to take [have killed] anyone with me. There is the difference between Christianity and Islam. The Qur'anic Allah demands that his sons die for him, while the Biblical God sends His Son to die for us.



Violent Christian Texts: A Response to Khalil Meek



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Noted Christian apologist Jay Smith recently debated Muslim apologist Khalil Meek at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.¹ In Smith's opening statement he said, "I'm not going to spend much time in the Old Testament today because there is no reason to, because I do not follow the Old Testament today. I follow the New Testament . . . It's foundational to understand the Old Testament . . . I only accept what's in the New Testament as to how I'm to live today." During Meek's closing statement, he responded to Smith by saying:

Jay conveniently just took the Old Testament and threw it in the trash, said "I don't need it I got the New Testament, I'm walking with Christ and it's all love and affection." But it was the same God that wrote the Old Testament, I'm assuming. Is that correct? Well, he inspired it. So we have the same God that had some laws and if you read them, I could do the same chapter-verse. Okay, look at this, look at this, kill these people. "Oh, but I

¹ A transcript of the debate has been printed as the opening piece in this issue of the journal.

throw that part in the trash. My God doesn't do that." Well, your God did that, right? Now if he got over it, grew out, he got a different vision, that's impressive, right? But he applied a law for a long time, and that law is so similar.

Smith responded by saying:

I don't throw away the Old Testament. I didn't say that tonight; get me right. Of course we don't throw away the Old Testament. We have Old Testament scholars in the audience tonight. We have to go to the Old Testament, but we leave it in 1400 BC . . . He, God gave us a whole new covenant and that covenant is a covenant that is full, basically has no more rules and regulations . . . God does not regress, he progresses. God doesn't change, we do.

Meek brought up a legitimate point in his critique. How do Christians deal with the violent texts of the Old Testament? If we leave the Old Testament in 1400 BC then why do we not leave the New Testament in the first century AD? Smith's statements point to the idea of a radical dichotomy between the Old and New Testaments that is foreign to the minds of the New Testament authors. Therefore Meek's critique of Smith has some validity, and we must address the implications of divinely ordained violence in both the Old Testament and the New. To this end, we will examine some notorious texts relating to violence in the Old Testament (Israel's conquest of Canaan and imprecatory Psalms), then analyze what the New Testament says about violence in order to develop a biblical theology relating to divinely sanctioned violence. In the end, we will see that these violent texts, as part of the Christian canon and as "profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness"² can only be appropriately applied to our current situation as part of an overarching biblical theology. Methodologically a series of relevant questions will be put to the selected texts, which will yield a framework with which to interpret and apply these difficult passages.³

² 2 Tim 3:16 (HCSB). Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

³ See R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939): 37–38. Cf. D. P. Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* (PTMS 107; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009): 44.

VIOLENCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT*Israel's Conquest of Canaan*

Perhaps the most touted examples of biblical violence are the narratives that command and detail Israel's conquest of Canaan. There is little doubt that these texts pose difficult hermeneutical issues that must be addressed in order to integrate them into a comprehensive biblical theology. The texts are numerous, but we will limit our discussion to one illustrative example.⁴

When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess, and He drives out many nations before you—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and powerful than you—and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you and you defeat them, you must completely destroy them. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, because they will turn your sons away from Me to worship other gods. Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and He will swiftly destroy you. Instead, this is what you are to do to them: tear down their altars, smash their standing pillars, cut down their Asherah poles, and burn up their carved images.

For you are a holy people belonging to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be His own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD was devoted to you and chose you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the LORD loved you and kept the oath He swore to your fathers, He brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from the place of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know that Yahweh your God is God, the faithful God who keeps His gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commands. But He directly pays back and destroys those who hate Him. He will not hesitate to directly pay back the one who hates Him. So keep the command—the statutes and ordinances—that I am giving you to follow today. (Deut 7:1–11)

⁴ For example, see Exod 33:1–3; Num 21:1–35; 33:50–56; Deut 2:26–3:29; Josh 6:20–21; 10:28–40; 11:10–23; etc.

***What is Israel's relationship to Yahweh,
and does any other nation have a
similar relationship?***

We know from Exodus that after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, Israel consistently rebelled against Yahweh, yet in the above passage we learn that they are a holy people, chosen by God from all the other nations. Their relationship with God is unique—unlike any relationship that any nation has had before or since. In fact, the nation of Israel at this point is a theocracy—ruled by God. This is demonstrated by the fact that when Israel later asks God for a king, he states that the people have rejected him as their king (1 Sam 8:7). God does plan for Israel to receive a king but that king is to rule over them as Yahweh's subsidiary, whose primary task is to be an example to the people of how to live in relationship with him.⁵ Clearly, in the opinion of Deuteronomy, the nation of Israel was in a unique relationship with God that afforded them a unique role in human history.

Whom is Israel Commanded to destroy and why?

In the text from Deuteronomy 7, as well as others, Israel is commanded to destroy nations that have consistently rebelled against Yahweh. Long before that nation of Israel stood on the borders of the Promised Land, God told Abraham that “the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure” (Gen 15:16). It would be more than 400 years before the scales were tipped. The destruction of the Amorites is the outworking of God's judgment after a lengthy period of grace.⁶ Yahweh does not allow Israel to commit violence against anyone based on her (Israel's) own assessment or desire. The Israelites are the tool of punishment in this case but the judgment comes from God. Indeed, the Israelites are prohibited from committing murder—the selfish, unjustified killing of another human being—in Deuteronomy 5, merely two chapters before the text under discussion. The commanded destruction is God's just judgment of the Amorite nation after a prolonged period of clemency, not capricious violence. God does not advocate wholesale, nonsensical violence. Instead, Yahweh uses Israel to judge the nations that have consistently rebelled against him. Yahweh

⁵ See Deut 17:14–20.

⁶ The Amorites seem to be synonymous with the Canaanites here. Israel and Judah both experience similar judgment from God by the Assyrians and Babylonians. God's judgment, then, is not prejudicial.

does not command Israel to destroy *all* non-Israelites, that is, non-believers. In fact, Israel is actually *prohibited* from destroying some nations (Edom, Moab, and Ammon).⁷ The fact of the matter is that God's judgment on the Amorites follows a regular pattern in the way He deals with the nations. Each nation apparently receives an extended forbearance before they reach a terminus that tips the scales resulting in divine judgment. The punishment of God that follows is usually enacted by the hands of another nation, whether that nation understands its role or not.

Israel is no exception to this rule and actually receives punishment earlier than pagan nations, ostensibly because of their special relationship with God and the resulting higher level of responsibility.⁸ For example, Yahweh sends ten plagues on Egypt, each of which is increasingly destructive. The final plague, the death of every firstborn in Egypt, comes only after a lengthy period of grace during which the Egyptians could have repented, thus averting the disaster.⁹ God also allows 400 years of rebellion before he destroys the Amorites, and even sends Jonah to preach repentance to Nineveh and, much to Jonah's chagrin, refuses to destroy them after they repent. God's judgment in almost every case is preceded by an incredible level of grace and longsuffering.

A second reason that Israel is commanded to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan is that their mere presence would tempt Israel to turn from Yahweh and commit idolatry (Deut 7:4). The people's relationship with Yahweh was of extreme importance, so they must take their holiness seriously. In order to do this, it was necessary to rid the land of false worshipers.¹⁰ In fact, the land of Canaan was to serve as a second Garden of Eden in which the Israelites would have fellowship with God. Therefore disobedience would not be tolerated and Israel is commanded to enact Yahweh's judgment, through violence, against particular people groups for particular sins. They are not given *carte blanche* to commit violence against whomever they please. Indeed, the destruction of the Canaanite groups should have been a warning to the people of Israel themselves.

⁷ See Deut 2. P. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 179.

⁸ See for example the Book of Habakkuk wherein Judah faces imminent judgment from God, and relatively more wicked Babylonians are the tool that God uses to enact the judgment.

⁹ Indeed, the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites for some time, seemingly without penalty, before God sent Moses and then unleashed the plagues.

¹⁰ See D. L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11* (WBC 6A; Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), 159–60. Though he reads this text figuratively, his comments on the importance of the holiness in Israel are helpful.

Much like Adam and Eve, failure and disobedience on the part of the Israelites would result in exile and death. For example, when Israel was about to purge the Canaanites of Ai, Achan disobeyed the Lord and took some of the *verboden* material plunder from Jericho. The resulting judgment on the Israelites was immediate. They lost the initial battle with Ai at the cost of many lives and Achan and his whole family had to be put to death before peace with God could be reestablished. Whereas the Canaanites had been given a 400 year grace period, the Israelites, who were bearers of greater revelation and responsibility, faced more immediate judgment. This idea of the extreme responsibility of the children of God is not left in the Old Testament. In the New Testament Jesus cites the metaphor of the leaven to warn of the negative influence of certain religious and secular leaders on the disciples' relationship with God.¹¹ Paul, seemingly picking up on this metaphor, notes that sin has a detrimental effect on the whole body.¹² In a similar vein, Jesus uses the stark image of tearing one's eye out rather than committing sin with it.¹³ While this picture is hyperbole, the principle of extreme sacrifice rather than facing complete judgment remains the same. The loss of an eye is preferable to the fires of Hell.

We will see below that there are exceptions to Yahweh's command to destroy, but it is helpful here to demonstrate some differences between biblical commands to enact violent judgment and the Quran's call to *jihad*. The Quran advocates violence against anyone categorized as "infidel," that is an unbeliever. For example, speaking of unbelievers who refuse to convert to Islam, Surah 4:89 states, "but if they do not turn away, seize them and kill them wherever you find them and take not from among them any ally or helper."¹⁴ Speaking of *jihad* in another place, the Quran indicates that those who practice it are free from blame: "And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them" (Surah 8:17).

It is important to note both the similarities and differences with the biblical mandates to commit violence. First, Surah 4:89 does allow for conversion to Islam as a way for unbelievers to escape death, which parallels, in a limited way, the grace that Yahweh extends to those who repent and follow him. However, this is where the similarities end, and the differences are significant.

First, it must be noted that the conversion that Islam seeks from infidels is fundamentally different from Yahweh's offer of grace to those

¹¹ Matt 16:6ff.

¹² 1 Cor 5:6.

¹³ Matt 18:9.

¹⁴ All Quranic quotations are taken from <http://quran.com>.

who repent and follow him, which signifies change in one's life and heart rather than mere conversion to avoid death. Second, the Quran does not advocate jihad as a means for executing judgment for sin, as is the case in Yahweh's judgment. Third, though the Quran indicates that the death was at Allah's hands, it always comes in the form of humans committing violence against other humans. There are multiple instances in which Yahweh uses supernatural means to enact his violent judgment, as was the case with the Egyptians. Fourth, the Quran does not allow for a period of grace in which "infidels" can repent. Only the biblical account presents a God who is longsuffering, patient, slow to anger, and eager to forgive. Fifth, Yahweh's chosen people are not exempt from his violent judgment if they also rebel against him, but the Quran indicates that only infidels need fear violent judgment. Sixth, the Quran's mandate for jihad encompasses all people at all times and is still valid for Muslims. In contrast, the Israelites were not given *carte blanche* to destroy any and every unbeliever. Biblical accounts of God's violent judgment are against specific nations, for a specific time. Furthermore, Christ's sacrificial death significantly changed the landscape of biblical faith, a concept that will be developed further below.

***Are there exceptions to the command to destroy everything?*¹⁵**

Israel is God's special people, a billboard to the nations in a way similar to the description of God's people in the New Testament—they "are to some a scent of death leading to death, but to others, a scent of life leading to life" (2 Cor 2:16). To those like Rahab and Ruth, who choose to forsake their national and familial allegiances and follow Yahweh, Israel is a scent of life leading to life. As Yahweh's special people, they show the nations how to have a relationship with God. Rahab and Ruth, members of nations that are to be destroyed, each receive mercy from Yahweh. This shows that the command to destroy everything is not necessarily absolute—allowances are made for those who choose to follow Yahweh.¹⁶ Furthermore, even those who do not respond with repentance are given long periods of grace prior to the enactment of judgment.¹⁷

¹⁵ For an excellent analysis of Yahweh's differentiation in judgment in the book of Jeremiah see R. J. R. Plant, *Good Figs, Bad Figs: Judicial Differentiation in the Book of Jeremiah* (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

¹⁶ See Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?*, 178–79.

¹⁷ For example, the Amorites (Gen 15:6), Nineveh (Jonah), Babylonia (Habakkuk).

Does the New Testament change the role of the people of God?

To bring this text to bear on the Christian, we must now ask whether the New Testament changes the role that believers play in the violent judgment of nations. The answer, of course, is that there are significant differences that change the way that Christians interact with nonbelievers. First, it is important to note that there is no longer a single political entity that has Yahweh as its ruler. During Jesus' ministry, he states that his kingdom is not a kingdom of this earth (John 18:36–37). Instead, he came to take the violent judgment of God on Himself so that people might finally have a right relationship with God. Because of this salvific action, the people of God are now members of many different nations scattered throughout the world. Second, the Church is now God's ambassador to the nations. Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 28 to go "and make disciples of all nations." The church accomplishes this through preaching the gospel. Like Jonah, the church is to go to the nations, but unlike Israel, it is not to enact His violent judgment upon them. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a command for Christians to commit violence against those who reject God.¹⁸ God still oversees the nations, but his servants do not enact his earthly judgment in the way that Israel did.

Understanding the reason for the non-violent role of the church is crucial. God is not inconsistent. His requirements for the punishment of sin remain steadfast even in the New Testament. The difference between the Testaments lies in the fact that God takes the violence of His judgment on sin upon Himself at the cross.¹⁹ The failures of mankind are put upon the person of Jesus, God incarnate, so that those who accept Him may have fellowship with God. However, God still demanded violent judgment. The church is the beneficiary of God taking violence upon Himself and therefore the church reflects this willingness to absorb violence from others.²⁰ Yet, even this form of grace has limits for those who refuse to accept the gift of Jesus' suffering for their sake. Even as Achan and his family paid the death penalty for their disobedience within the community of faith, Ananias and Saphirra were struck down for their deception concerning the things of God.²¹ Likewise, the Canaanites had a

¹⁸ The disciples are told in Matt 10:14 to "shake the dust off your feet when you leave that town" as a sign against the town that it has rejected the gospel. They are not, however, told to enact God's judgment against them; that is reserved for the end of time.

¹⁹ Phil 2:7; Col 1:20; 2:14.

²⁰ Matt 10:38; 16:34.

²¹ Acts 5:1–11.

lengthy period of grace followed by judgment when they refused to change their ways. So too will those who refuse the gift of the Son of God eventually pay the price of violent judgment. The Book of Revelation focuses on the salvation of the faithful and the violent punishment of the wicked after the period of God's longsuffering comes to an end.

Christians, then, must recognize that the violence commanded in the conquest of Canaan was a unique command for a unique time and a unique people. While God does still enact judgment, because of the cross he does not use the people of God in the same way as he did during the time of biblical Israel.²² Based on the differences between the biblical context and modern context, it would be inappropriate to use the Old Testament texts as a justification for Christian violence, though they remain beneficial for building up the Church and a warning to all that God is consistent in His demands. Restored fellowship with God is always the goal in both the past and present. Consistent refusal of this fellowship did, does and will have a terrible price.

Imprecatory Psalms

Imprecatory psalms also pose a particularly difficult problem for interpreters of the Bible. How are we to deal with outright requests for violence against others? How does this fit into a biblical theology of violence? Again, we will treat only one example of this type of literature.²³

Remember, LORD, *what* the Edomites said that day at Jerusalem: "Destroy it! Destroy it down to its foundations!"

Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is the one who pays you back what you have done to us.

Happy is he who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rocks.
(Ps 137:7-9)

To whom is the Psalmist speaking?

Probably the most important aspect to keep in mind when dealing with imprecatory psalms is that they are prayers from an individual to the living God, asking him to act on their behalf. The Psalmist is speaking out of a prior relationship with Yahweh, which a crucial aspect in

²² "If a disaster occurs in a city, hasn't the LORD done it?" (Amos 3:6).

²³ For other imprecatory Psalms, see Pss 55, 58, 69, and 109.

interpretation.²⁴ This is not a text written by an unbeliever who is railing against his enemies. Instead, it is a believer who is struggling with the injustices that he sees, and is thus seeking a way to cope with his *feelings* of violence. Note, that the writer does not enact violence against others; he requests God to do so, then leaves God to perform righteous judgment. A request for judgment in the form of violence is vastly different from actively enforcing vigilante justice.

Does the New Testament change one's application of this Psalm?

This text, while startlingly violent, does not require the same type of hermeneutical effort as the previous passage because it neither commands nor records actual violent acts. The example of the New Testament accords with the approach of this Psalmist. For example, when someone rejected the disciples' message, Jesus told them to perform a sign against them (shaking the dust from their feet), and that their judgment would be worse than Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 10:14). The judgment itself is not carried out by the disciples, but they do, in a way, request that God enact judgment against those who reject him. In the same way, Psalm 137 does not enact violence, but asks God to act on behalf of the one who has been wronged. This, then, is an appropriate way for Christians to respond. It would be wrong for them to commit violence, but it is entirely fitting for them to ask God to act on their behalf. Since Christians are now recipients of the grace of God by his enacting violent judgment against us on the cross, they must be willing to show that same grace to others. Therefore, while they are justified in asking God to act on their behalf, they are expected to extend to others the same grace that God has extended to them.²⁵ God may extend grace when the guilty parties repent and like Jonah, believers need to accept this because they themselves have benefitted from just such grace.

This text, along with the Deuteronomy text, helps to round out our biblical theology of violence. So far, we have seen that violence is justified when God commands a nation to use violence as his judgment against another nation. This is a unique situation that does not carry over into the life of New Testament believers because their relationship with God as their ruler is quite different. This is also not meant to imply that the government is not justified in enacting judgment on individuals (Rom

²⁴ W. W. Klein, C. L. Blomberg, and R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (2nd ed.; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 353.

²⁵ For a stirring examination of this Psalm, see J. Goldingay, *Psalms. Volume 3: Psalms 90–150* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms; ed. T. Longman III; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 599–614.

13:4). God currently uses government to enact violent judgment, both on individuals and on other nations; however, Christians must recognize and affirm the mystery of God as Lord of history—while governments ideally should use biblical truth to guide their decisions, they can no longer claim that God has commanded them to destroy other nations, as was the case with Israel. In much the same way as the nations that surrounded Israel, modern governments are under the authority of God and will answer to Him whether they currently recognize this fact or not. There is certainly a tension present in the life of the believer—one may long for justice, but must extend grace and leave the judging in God’s hands, who may choose to extend to others the same grace he has extended to us.

(NON)VIOLENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The relationship of God to his people is quite different in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. Accordingly, God does not use his people to bring about the violent judgment of others in the same way that he did with Israel.

A New Kingdom

There are two instances in John’s Passion Narrative (John 18–19) that help Christians to understand the relationship that we now have with God as our king. First, when Jesus is being taken into custody, Peter draws his sword and cuts off Malchus’ ear. Jesus reprimands Peter’s act of violence: “Sheathe your sword! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given Me?” (John 18:11). According to our modern sensibilities, Peter had every right to defend his Lord against unjust arrest and the violence that was to follow, but instead Jesus stays his hand, choosing instead to receive the cup of suffering that Yahweh had allotted him. This is consistent with Jesus’ earlier command to “love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:44). Rather than enacting God’s judgment against others, Christians are to wait for God himself to enact that judgment and recognize that their judgment has fallen unjustly on Jesus.

Second, when Jesus stands before Pilate, he makes it clear that he is establishing a heavenly kingdom: “ ‘My kingdom is not of this world,’ said Jesus. ‘If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. As it is, My kingdom does not have its origin here’ ” (John 18:36). This forms a crucial part of the distinction between New Testament believers and the people of Israel—Yahweh is still our king, but our citizenship is not of the current earthly order. Rather, Christians are now citizens of a transnational, spiritual

kingdom whose goal is the spread of the gospel and the inauguration of the New Heavens and the New Earth. If we were still citizens of a fallen earthly kingdom, like Israel, then we would be justified in enacting God's judgment at God's command. However, we are citizens of a heavenly, borderless kingdom. Because of this, Christians are not commanded to enact God's violent judgment like Israel did, though governments still retain the sword for that very purpose (Rom 13:4). Members of God's international kingdom (that is, Christians), though, must be willing to forego administering God's justice themselves, and extend the same grace to others as God extended to us on the cross.

Is the God of the New Testament Only a God of Love?

Based on a cursory reading of the New Testament and the passages we examine above, it may be easy to assume that God as revealed in the New Testament is only a God of love. After all it is the love and grace of God, demonstrated on the cross, which allows believers to have access to God through faith in Christ. Khalil Meek asserted that the God revealed in the Old Testament is the same as the God revealed in the New Testament; we could not agree more. We saw earlier that God extended grace to non-Israelites in the Old Testament (Ruth, Rahab, even the Amorites and Ninevites!). We also saw that God enacted violent judgment in the New Testament, specifically on his Son, Jesus Christ, who bore God's wrath for the sins of humanity. Beyond this, though, the book of Revelation also indicates that God's violent judgment will once again come upon those who rebel against him (e.g., Rev 8:1–9:21; 11:1–19; 19:11–21).

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that these texts must be incorporated into a larger biblical theology of violence that demonstrates that God desires "all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). So, to answer Khalil Meek, yes, Christians do have violent texts. However, none of these texts advocate wholesale, undifferentiated violence against others, and all contain a significant element of grace. As noted above, the cross was an extremely violent act of God's judgment on His Son in order to clear the guilty and pay the price they deserve. The Book of Revelation is full of violent judgment on those, who, after a prolonged period of grace and chance to repent, refuse to change their ways and submit to God. God is consistent. He shows tremendous grace but punishment is also consistently enacted. In the Old Testament punishment came primarily but not exclusively at

the hands of other nations.²⁶ In the New Testament the violence of God's punishment came at the cross and will come again at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Noting the consistency of God's character in both mercy and judgment is the Good News and warning that all people, including Muslims, need to hear.

²⁶ Sodom and Gomorrah for example were destroyed directly by God.

Contextualizing the Gospel to the Worldview of Folk Muslims



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A recent article in the *Kansas City Star* emphasizes the sway folk Islam holds over many Muslims today.

For more than two years, Ali Hussain Sibat of Lebanon has been imprisoned in Saudi Arabia, convicted of sorcery and sentenced to death...His crimes: manipulating spirits, predicting the future, concocting potions and conjuring spells on a call-in TV show called "The Hidden" on a Lebanese channel, Scheherazade. It was, in effect, a Middle Eastern psychic hot line...Sibat was jailed after agreeing to give a woman a potion so that her husband would divorce his second wife. "Most of my treatments were with honey and seeds," He said. "You would put the charm in the honey and drink from it."²

¹ Prior to coming to Midwestern, Dr. Hadaway served for eighteen years as a Christian worker with the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Sudan, Tanzania, Kenya, and Brazil.

² "‘Sorcerer’ Awaits Beheading by Saudi Officials," *Kansas City Star* (April 25, 2010): A:26.

Muslims number slightly over 1.2 billion persons worldwide, making Islam the world's second largest religion.³ Folk Islam mixes "pristine Islam with the ancient religious traditions and practices of ordinary people."⁴ Estimates project that seventy percent⁵ of Muslims follow folk Islam.⁶ Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou state, "The failure to understand folk religions has been a major blind spot in missions."⁷

Historically the major approaches for reaching Muslims with the Gospel⁸ coalesce around three broad categories. The techniques of apologetics, polemics and dialogue comprise the first method. The second seeks some common ground by contextualizing Muslim culture and Islamic forms.⁹ The third approach combines portions of the first two techniques.

I contend that cognitive methods possess limited effectiveness with folk Muslims because rational arguments fail to answer the 'why' questions posed by folk religion. Most contextualization techniques also miss the mark because only a small number of Muslims practice official Islam.¹⁰ I argue for an approach contextualized to folk Islam's worldview.

³ P. Marshall, R Green, L. Gilbert, *Islam at the Crossroads* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2002), 73.

⁴ W. J. Saal, *Reaching Muslims for Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 51.

⁵ Ninety years ago S. M. Zwemer (*The Influence of Animism on Islam* [New York: Macmillan, 1920], viii) placed the practitioners of popular Islam at ninety-four percent.

⁶ P. Parshall, *Bridges to Islam: a Christian Perspective on Folk Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2006), 2.

⁷ P. G. Hiebert, R. D. Shaw, T. Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 29. These authors call folk religion "the religious beliefs of the common people" (p. 74). Stephen Neil says about forty percent of the world holds to this worldview (in D. J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991], 223).

⁸ For this article I use the description of the Christian Gospel found in First Corinthians 15:1–5.

⁹ D. J. Hesselgrave & E. Rommen, 2000. *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 113–14.

¹⁰ B. A. Musk, *Popular Islam: An Investigation into the Phenomenology and Ethnotheological Bases of Popular Islamic Belief and Practice* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation; Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1984), 338 (UNISA).

FOLK RELIGION AND ISLAM

Joshua Massey divides Muslims into nine categories: *Nominal Muslims, fringe Muslims, liberal left-wing Muslims, conservative right-wing Muslims*,¹¹ *ultra-orthodox Muslims*,¹² *modern Muslims, communistic Muslims, rice Muslims, and mystical Muslims*.¹³ Massey says this last category is composed of “*Sufis and folk Muslims*”¹⁴ who, according to *Wahhabis* and conservative right-wing Muslims, are desperately in need of serious reform.” Two principal streams feed into folk Islam. These include (1) Islamic influences from official Islam (especially *Sufism*) and (2) Traditional religious practices (including ATR—African Traditional Religion).

Islamic Influences on Folk Islam

The most basic beliefs of Muslims are set forth in what is known as the ‘Five Pillars of Islam.’ *Understanding Islam* (1989), a book published by the Saudi Arabian government, lists these pillars as the declaration of faith, prayer, *zakat*, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. In addition to the Qur’an, Muslims revere the *hadith*¹⁵ and the *sunna*.¹⁶

¹¹ Petterson calls this category ‘political Islam’ and states, “Neither political Islam nor Islamic fundamentalism should be equated with extremism, for although some Islamists are extremists, most of course are not.” (*Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict, and Catastrophe* [Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999], 191).

¹² Esposito and Mogahed place the percentage of “politically radicalized” Muslims at about seven percent. This figure comes from a Gallup Poll survey conducted in the ten most populous Muslim countries, making up eighty percent of Islam (J. L. Esposito & D. Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* [New York: Gallup Press, 2007], 70, 193).

¹³ J. Massey, “His Ways are not Our Ways,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (1999):198.

¹⁴ Massey places *Sufis* and folk Muslims under the category of “mystical Muslims.” I suggest that folk Muslims are the broader classification and *Sufis* (or mystical Muslims) a subset. While *Sufis* are folk Muslims, not all folk Muslims are “mystical.”

¹⁵ The *hadith* is a collection of stories and sayings about Muhammad (see G. W. Braswell Jr., *Islam: Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power* [Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996], 11).

¹⁶ *Understanding Islam and the Muslims* (Washington, DC: Islamic affairs department, the embassy of Saudi Arabia, 1989) 13, 16–17, 20. M. Ruthven says, “it [the *Sunna*] means the living ‘practical’ [quotation his] tradition, assumed to be based on the general practice and authority of the Prophet and his com-

Many writers see a strong link between official Islam and folk religion. Musk writes, “In Many respects, the formal religion couches within its own codifications and condoned practices, elements of folk Islam.”¹⁷ Zwemer comments, “Not only do we find bibliolatry, i.e. worship of the Book, but also bibliomancy, i.e. the use of the Qur’an for magical or superstitious purposes.”¹⁸ He also noted that pagan superstitions “are imbedded in the Koran and were not altogether rejected by Mohammad himself, much less by his companions.”¹⁹ Lewis adds, “the Qur’an itself provides scriptural warrant for the existence of a host of subsidiary powers and spirits.”²⁰

Subdivisions in Official Islam.

Official Islam deemphasizes their divisions and portrays Muslims as a unified family.²¹ Despite this claim, Khalid Duran counts seventy-three different sects within Islam.²² Marshall, Green and Gilbert narrow the segments of Islam to three groups—*Sunni*’s, *Shi’ites*, and *Sufi*’s, stating, “for simplicity’s sake...Islam can be divided into three fundamental groups, the third generally being part of either of the first two.”²³

Sunni Islam

The *Sunnis* are identified with orthodoxy in Islam. Braswell places their number at ninety percent of all Muslims,²⁴ while others put the estimate at about eighty-five percent.²⁵ The Ninth Century Muslim theologian Shafi’i undertook a revision of Islamic law, developing what became known as *Sharia*.²⁶ Shafi’i’ established the Islamic hermeneutic

panions.” (*Islam in the World*. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006], 134). See also, *Understanding Islam and the Muslims*, 12)

¹⁷ Musk, *Holy War*, 229.

¹⁸ Zwemer, *Influence of Animism*, 23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰ I. M. Lewis, *Islam in Tropical Africa* (2nd ed.; London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1980), 60.

²¹ S. H. Nasr, 2003. *Islam: Religion, History, and Civilization* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 14–15.

²² In P. Marshall, R. Green, L. Gilbert, *Islam at the Crossroads* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 27.

²³ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁴ Braswell, *Islam: Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power*, 90.

²⁵ Esposito & Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?* 2.

²⁶ Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 133. Watt says, “In addition to its doctrinal teaching the Qur’an contains liturgical and legal or social prescriptions for the

that stands today for determining orthodoxy in Islam, combining a high view of the Qur'an with an acceptable level of Mohammad veneration.

Although *Sunnis* represent officialdom in Islam, the fervent *Wahhabis*²⁷ sometimes stray into folk practices. Wheatcroft calls the ascetic and extremist practices of *Wahhabi Sunnis* folk Islam.²⁸ During the days of Shafi'i, *Sunni* rationalists (*ahl al-kalam*) argued for the deity of the Qur'an while *Sunni* traditionalists (*ahl al-hadith*²⁹) made a case for the supremacy of the Prophet's example.³⁰

Shi'a Islam

The minority *Shi'a* branch of Islam is disparaged by the *Sunnis* primarily because of their folk practices. After Muhammad died in 632 a succession of four *caliphs* was chosen from the *Quraysh* tribe in Arabia to lead the movement.³¹ Islam divided over the question of a successor to the fourth *caliph*, Ali.³²

Shi'ites believe Ali inherited the Prophet's infallibility in Qur'anic interpretation and leadership. These qualities coupled with his blood kinship³³ with Mohammad cause *Shi'ites* to regard Ali as the first *Imam*. *Shi'ites* reject the *Sunni caliphate*³⁴ and believe Islamic spiritual authority is invested in the *Imam*. The martyrdoms of Ali (661) and his

life of the community of Muslims. These rules were greatly elaborated by Muslim jurists in later times to constitute what is now known as 'Islamic law' or 'the *Shari'a*.'" Watt, (*Mohammad: Prophet and Statesman* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961], 162).

²⁷ The followers of Abd el Wahhab are ultra-conservative and puritanical and are the foremost *Sunni* subject. Wahhab lived between 1703-1787 (G. Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads: the Hadendoa [Beja] of the Gash Delta and Their Transition to Sedentary Village Life* [Sudan] [Unpublished doctoral dissertation. New York: Columbia University, 1987], 447-48).

²⁸ A. Wheatcroft, *Infidels: A History of the Conflict Between Christendom and Islam* (New York: Random House, 2004), 358.

²⁹ People of the *Hadith* (story).

³⁰ Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 134-35.

³¹ Braswell, *Islam: Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power*, 90.

³² P. Sookhdeo, *Global Jihad* (McLean, VA: Isaac Publishing, 2007), 216.

Ali was a son-in-law of the Prophet and the husband of his sole surviving child, Fatima (S. Numani, *'Umar* [London: I.B. Taurus, 2004], 20). Also, Ali was the father of Muhammad's only grandchildren, Hassan and Hussein.

³³ Ali was also the Prophet's cousin.

³⁴ Ali was both the fourth *caliph* of the *Sunnis* and the first *Imam* of the *Shi'ites* (Braswell, *Islam: Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power*, 91).

sons Hassan (680) and Hussein (680) by *Kharijite*³⁵ and *Sunni* partisans established a permanent schism in Islam.³⁶

Shi'ites and *Sunnis* broke ranks over the question of succession to the Prophet.³⁷ Nasr says, "The *Shi'ites* believed that such a person [the Imam³⁸] should also be able to interpret the Qur'an and the Law and in fact possess inward knowledge."³⁹ The personality cult surrounding Ali and his successors has opened the door for many practices not acceptable to orthodox Islam.

Sufi Islam

Sufism represents a template or overlay upon Islam, as well as a subdivision of the faith. *Sufis* are often called the mystics of the religion and come from both the *Sunni* and *Shi'ite* camps.⁴⁰ Ernst estimates about half of all Muslims today practice a form of *Sufism*.⁴¹ Karrar asserts that almost all of Islam in Sudan is based upon it.⁴² Parshall claims folk Islam cannot be understood apart from *Sufism*.⁴³

According to Chittick there are two principle kinds of *Sufis*: (1) God-intoxicated and (2) contemplative. The former often display ecstatic

³⁵ The *Karijites* repudiated both Ali and his *Sunni* successor, Mu'awiyya. *Kharijites* (i.e. Seceders) continue in small communities in North Africa (Braswell, *Islam: Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power*, 95–96).

³⁶ Sookhdeo, *Global Jihad*, 131–32.

³⁷ L. B. Hamada, *Understanding the Arab World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 117.

³⁸ A. S. Ahmed writes, "An *Imam* is a senior figure often in charge of a large mosque. The title of *Imam* is also given to highly respected spiritual figures directly descended from the Prophet who are the basis for twelve *Imam Shi'ism*." (*Islam Today: A Short Introduction to the Muslim World* [London: I.B. Taurus, 2001], 9).

³⁹ Nasr, *Islam*, 11–12.

⁴⁰ Marshall, Green, Gilbert, *Islam at the Crossroads*, 28. I believe *Sufis* can be viewed as the "charismatics" of Islam in more than one way. *Sufis* introduced mysticism to their religion, stressing feelings and emotions (Braswell, *Islam: Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power*, 97). Just as charismatic beliefs can be found within most branches of Christianity, so *Sufism* is present within most of the Muslim subdivisions.

⁴¹ C. W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), xiii.

⁴² A. S. Karrar, *The Sufi Brotherhoods in the Sudan* (London: C. Hurst, 1992), 2.

⁴³ Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*, 12.

behavior while the latter spend time pondering the inner life.⁴⁴ *Sufism* developed in the eighth century through teachers such as Junaid who attempted to combine asceticism and mysticism with a proper observance of *Sharia*.⁴⁵ Ruthven says,

They came to be known as *Sufis*, after the woolen garments (*suf*=wool)⁴⁶ allegedly worn by the early exemplars of this movement, as well as by the followers of Jesus whom they particularly admired.⁴⁷

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1084–1111) brought *Sufism* to respectability. Ghazali believed both in the necessity of ritual and feeling.⁴⁸ He held that religious certainty depends on religious experience.⁴⁹ Although never founding a *Sufi* brotherhood (i.e. *tariqa*⁵⁰ or *Sufi* order),⁵¹ Ruthven states, “he has been called the greatest Muslim after Muhammad.”⁵²

Sufi ‘doctrine’ can best be gleaned from reading their aphorisms and poetry. *Sufi* (and many *Shi’a*) writers practice an allegorical hermeneutic called *tawil*⁵³ that is generally rejected by *Sunnis*.⁵⁴

Chittick points out there are three major Qur’anic themes in ancient Islamic teaching: (1) submission (i.e. *islam*), (2) faith (i.e. *iman*), and (3)

⁴⁴ W. C. Chittick, *Sufism: a Short Introduction* Oxford: One World. 2000), 29.

⁴⁵ Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 227.

⁴⁶ Ernst proposes another origin of the word; “the term *Sufi* was linked with the Arabic word *suffa* or bench (source of the English word *sofa*)” (*Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 22).

⁴⁷ Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 221–222.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴⁹ Braswell, *Islam: Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power*, 98

⁵⁰ *Tariq* or *tarik* is Arabic for “way, road, highway, trail, track, path, track, or path.” *Tariqa* or *tarika*, are derivatives and mean “manner, mode, means, way, method, procedure, system, creed, faith religion, religious brotherhood, or dervish order” (Wehr 1976:559).

⁵¹ Al-Sanusi (d. 1859) compiled a list (in Ernst, *Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 112–113) of the forty traditional *Sufi* orders. The forty Sacred [*Sufi*] Traditions of the nineteenth century are still preeminent (L. Bakhtiar, *Sufi: Expressions of the Mystic Quest* [New York: Avon Books, 1976], 7). New *Sufi* brotherhoods, however, continue to be founded as individuals receive new visions, revelations, and commissions from the Prophet (Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads*, 444).

⁵² Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 35.

⁵³ *Tawil* is the common Arabic word for “long, large, big, tall, high” (Wehr 1976:576). *Sufis* use the word in the sense of the ‘larger, greater, and deeper’ meaning.

⁵⁴ Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 232.

doing the beautiful (i.e. *ibsan*).⁵⁵ *Sufism* sees the latter, doing the beautiful, as its “special domain.”⁵⁶

Nasr identifies the essence of *Sufism* as a meditation called *al-dhikr* (remembrance).⁵⁷ *Dhikr* ritual requires the *Sufi* to repeat the ninety-nine names of God to unlock the special meaning within each name, producing a spiritual state.⁵⁸ This is often performed with ritual ecstatic dancing performed by the ‘whirling dervishes’ repeating the *tahlil* formula.⁵⁹ This mandatory recitation of God’s ninety-nine names (*dhikr*) sets the *Sufis* apart.⁶⁰

Sufis are also known for their pursuit of esoteric knowledge called ‘*arif*’⁶¹ (or *Gnostic*). Ernst says, “the preferred term was *ma’rifa* or ‘*irfan*,’⁶² meaning a special knowledge or *gnosis* that transcended ordinary reality.”⁶³ An emphasis upon discipleship also characterizes *Sufism*.⁶⁴ “He who has no *Shaykh*, his *Shaykh* is Satan” is a commonly quoted aphorism.⁶⁵ New initiates take an oath of fealty to God, Islam, and their *sheikh*. Ausenda states, “The *Sufi sheikh* is the intermediary between his followers and God.”⁶⁶ These *sheikhs*, especially the departed ones,⁶⁷ are believed to possess a force known as *baraka*.⁶⁸

This power can include such unusual abilities as thought-reading, healing the sick, reviving the dead, controlling the elements and animals, flying, walking on water, shape-shifting,

⁵⁵ Chittick, *Sufism*, 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁷ Nasr, *Islam*, 81.

⁵⁸ Ahmed, *Islam Today*, 50.

⁵⁹ The *tahiil* formula is, “*la ilaha il-la allah*: ‘There is no deity but God.’” (In Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 255).

⁶⁰ Chittick, *Sufism*, 57.

⁶¹ ‘*Arif* is derived from the Arabic word *arafa*, “to know”. The term also means “expert, master, or connoisseur” (Wehr 1976:607).

⁶² Both *ma’rifa* (knowledge) and ‘*irfan* (gnosis) are also derivatives of ‘*arafa*, the Arabic word ‘to know’ (Wehr 1976:605, 606).

⁶³ Ernst, *Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 28.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

⁶⁵ Abu Yazid al-Bitami in Karrar, *Sufi Brotherhoods*, 2.

⁶⁶ Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads*, 449.

⁶⁷ The *Hadendoa* Beja believe the souls of dead *sheikhs* have supernatural powers (Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads*, 437).

⁶⁸ Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 136. When used religiously “*baraka*” is usually translated as either spiritual “power” or “blessing” (in Wehr 1976:54).

and bilocation. *Sufi* theorists often warned that miracles were temptations by which God tested the adept.⁶⁹

Orthodox Islam resists the claims of the *Sufis*, believing divine revelation has ceased.⁷⁰ “Most of the leading [*Sufi*] *sheikhs* claim to receive their vocations, or confirmations of them, directly from God or the Prophet in dreams and visions.”⁷¹ Such an event occurred in Sudan relatively recently. In 1951 at the age of twenty-one, Sheikh Ali Betai began a preaching ministry in eastern Sudan calling on followers to repeat the *shahada*⁷² thirty times, read the Qur’an, and recite thirteen times, “Thanks be to God.”⁷³ The young mystic claimed to have seen the Prophet in numerous dreams. The *Sheikh* died in 1978, and his son Suleiman Ali Betai took his place.⁷⁴

Many *Sufi* folk practices in Sudan center on the *faki*,⁷⁵ or traditional healer. The word is similar to the term *fakir* (i.e. poor man).⁷⁶ Among the Beja and other Sudanese tribes, the *faki* is revered and often also holds the office of *sheikh*.⁷⁷ Jacobson says, “Although a *fagir* in the Red Sea Hills [Beja territory] sometimes uses herbal remedies, they mainly em-

⁶⁹ Ernst, *Shambala Guide to Sufism*, 68.

⁷⁰ Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 247.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁷² The first pillar of Islam is the repetition of the *Shahada*: “There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God.”

⁷³ Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads*, 446.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 444–46. While in Hamash Koreb in 1991 I sought out Suleiman Ali Betai. My family and I met with the *sheikh* and his followers in Kassala, Sudan later that year.

⁷⁵ A Sudanese Arabic term for *fakir* “It [*fiki, faki, fagir or fakir*] is generally rendered in English as a holy man or religious leader and is used, indifferently to describe the Head of a religious sect big or small, the guardian of a holy tomb, a man of well known piety who has no particular diocese or religious function, a curer and a school master of a *Khalwa* or Koran school” Hussey (1923:35).

⁷⁶ The term *fakir* (poor man) describes anyone who is a member of a *Sufi tariqa* (sometimes spelled *fagir*). A female is a *fakira* or *fagira*.

⁷⁷ Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads*, 425. Karrar writes about the levels of *sheikhs*; “Al-Mirghani distinguishes between three grades (*maratib*, sg. *martaba*) of *shaykh*. The first and most sublime was that of *shaykh al-tahqiq*, namely one who had attained complete spiritual truth and was qualified to lead aspirants toward that goal... The second category was the *Shaykh al-tabarruk*, a general title adopted by al-Mirghani for his representatives, who derived their position and *baraka* from him... The last grade in al-Mirghani’s category of *shaykhs* was that of *shaykh al-qira’a*, i.e., teacher of the Qur’an or other Islamic sciences...” (*Sufi Brotherhoods*, 126).

ploy treatment by the Qur'an in their practice."⁷⁸ Cures include drinking Qur'anic pages to cure various maladies and using the book as a charm to keep away evil spirits.

Traditional Religious Influences on Folk Islam

The second stream that feeds into folk Islam includes traditional religious practices, especially in Africa. Moyo says, "For the masses of Muslim Africans, African traditional beliefs and practices have continued, although with some adaptations to conform to similar practices in Islam."⁷⁹

Kapteijns describes the Beja people of Sudan as "'mixers,' retaining many non-Islamic customary practices."⁸⁰ Jacobsen states "Beja people very much live in a world in which spirits are present."⁸¹ They call the *jinn*⁸² "ins," not desiring to risk offense by verbalizing their true names.⁸³ The Beja employ numerous folk practices to counter these *jinn*. After speaking about illness many Beja spit on the ground, asking for God's protection from evil.⁸⁴ Traditionalists hang a decorated straw mat or an embroidered blanket on their walls to repel the *jinn*.⁸⁵ Most Beja children wear amulets to protect against spirit attack and the evil eye.⁸⁶ Halim (1939:28) records traditional healers fumigating patients with chameleon or hedgehog skin in order to counteract fevers caused by demonic activity.⁸⁷

⁷⁸ F. F. Jacobsen, *Theories of Sickness and Misfortune among the Hadendoa Beja of the Sudan* (London & New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998), 67.

⁷⁹ A. Moyo, "Religion in Africa," in *Understanding contemporary Africa* (3rd ed. eds. A. A. Gordon and D. L. Gordon; Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 323.

⁸⁰ L. Kapteijns, "The Historiography of the Northern Sudan from 1500 to the Establishment of British Colonial Rule: A Critical Overview," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22.2 (1989): 254.

⁸¹ Jacobsen, *Sickness and Misfortune*, 69.

⁸² The *jinn* are the spirits in Islam. Usually evil, sometime capricious, dealing with the *jinn* is the subject of much Beja folk Islam.

⁸³ Jacobsen, *Sickness and Misfortune*, 150–51.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁸⁵ Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads*, 414–15.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 150–51. They keep their number of children and animals secret due to the fear of the evil eye (*Ibid.*, 33, 46, 171).

⁸⁷ A. A. Halim, "Native Medicine and Way of Treatment in the Northern Sudan," *Sudan Notes and Records* 22 (1939): 28.

In addition to *jinn* and devils, Beja folk Islam adds other spiritual beings to their faith schema. These divinities are called ‘spirit humans’⁸⁸ and may alternately benefit or harm tribe members.⁸⁹ These include *Were-hyenas*, who transform themselves back and forth between animals and humans, frighten many Beja.⁹⁰ While working with the Beja people of Sudan, I noticed their religion was similar to the ATR I observed among the Sukuma tribe of Tanzania. Methods for reaching folk Muslims with the Gospel must be calibrated for an encounter with an Islam differing from Qur’anic orthodoxy.



Beja Wedding, Jumping

Current Contextualization Approaches with Muslims

Byang H. Kato defines contextualization as “...making concepts or ideals relevant in a given situation.”⁹¹ Hesselgrave and Rommen declare “there is not yet a commonly accepted definition of the word *contextualization*, but only a series of proposals, all of them vying for acceptance.”⁹² Numerous proposals for finding ‘common ground’ when evangelizing non-Christian faiths have been proposed.⁹³ This “fulfillment approach,”

⁸⁸ Most Beja dismiss the notion of ‘spirit humans’ as ancestors. I asked an English speaking Beja leader residing in the USA about these spirit humans. Ibrahim said they are not *jinn* but “helpers of the *jinn*” (Ibrahim 2010). These spirits could be classified as ‘familiar spirits.’

⁸⁹ Jacobsen, *Sickness and Misfortune*, 58.

⁹⁰ Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads*, 429.

⁹¹ In Hesselgrave & Rommen, *Contextualization*, 33.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 35 (authors’ italics).

⁹³ D. J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2005), 100.

as Hesselgrave calls it, seeks to meet humankind's yearning for God.⁹⁴ Another method, the "similarity approach"⁹⁵ seeks to discover redemptive analogies⁹⁶ and cultural points of contact to find 'common ground' with adherents of non-Christian religions.

Musk says, "While such bridging movements may be meaningful to the intellectual Muslim, they fall a long way short of communicating with Muslims committed to a folk-Islamic worldview."⁹⁷ Schlorff goes even further, stating, "Contextualization is not the key whatever the model is followed."⁹⁸ Apologetic, polemic and dialog techniques possess some value for the educated elite who holds to Islamic orthodoxy and can read the Qur'an.⁹⁹ Since all of these methods have failed to reach folk Muslims (and for that matter, orthodox Muslims) in great numbers other avenues need to be explored.¹⁰⁰

A Worldview Contextualization Approach with Folk Muslims

Since the 1930's Christian workers have largely ignored the issue of folk Islam.¹⁰¹ An appeal toward the heart requires a focus on the worldview¹⁰² of the folk Muslim.

Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou present a three-fold model for observing cultural religious values.¹⁰³ They state that whereas most Westerners function out of a sense of guilt, traditional societies (like the Beja) operate out of fear of the supernatural. These authors postulate that group societies (like Middle Eastern Muslims) follow a shame-honor orientation. Muller uses this model to further analyze cultures.

When analyzing a culture, one must look for the primary cultural characteristic, and then the secondary ones. As an example, many North American Native cultures are made up of elements

⁹⁴ Ibid., 100, 102.

⁹⁵ This is the classification of Hesselgrave, *Paradigm*, 102.

⁹⁶ Concepts in a host culture that can be used to illustrate the Christian Gospel message.

⁹⁷ Musk, *Holy War*, 285.

⁹⁸ S. Schlorff, *Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims* (Upper Darby, PA: Middle East Resources, 2006), 161.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 58.

¹⁰⁰ Pikkert, *Protestant Missionaries*, 187.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 277.

¹⁰² Hiebert (2008:15) defines worldview as the "fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people make about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives."

¹⁰³ Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 226.

of both **(1) shame-based** and **(2) fear-based cultures**. On the other hand, much of North American culture has been made up almost exclusively of **(3) guilt-based** principles, although this has changed in the last two decades.¹⁰⁴

In addition to these three worldviews, I see a fourth cultural religious value present among folk Muslims, especially *Sufis*—the ‘existential-transcendent’ worldview. This section evaluates the four religious value axes as to their suitability with folk Muslims.

Guilt-Innocence Worldview Axis

A guilt-innocence theme dominates many propositional Gospel presentations such as Campus Crusade’s the *Four Spiritual Laws*, the Billy Graham Association’s *Steps to Peace with God*, and the Navigators’ *Bridge to Life*. The concept of guilt and innocence before God characterizes not only a legitimate religious world-view value but Biblical truths that must be communicated to all. The *Chicago statement on inerrancy* states, “We affirm that the Bible expresses God’s truth in propositional statements, and we declare that Biblical truth is both objective and absolute.”¹⁰⁵ Although propositional constructs should supplement other methods when communicating with folk Muslims, the truth embedded within cognitive arguments must be conveyed.

Shame-honor Worldview Axis

Patai claims “in Arab culture, shame is more pronounced than guilt.”¹⁰⁶ Missiologists such as Musk and Muller believe the Gospel should be contextualized in the Middle East to meet the “culture-driven needs by focusing on Christianity’s answer to issues of honor and shame.”¹⁰⁷

Since the Bible addresses the shame-honor worldview inherent in the Muslim perspective, the Christian must discover the Biblical parallels. For instance, in John 8:3–11 a woman caught in adultery receives forgiveness from Jesus rather than the stoning required by Jewish and Islamic law. In another section Jesus says (in Luke 6:27b–29a), “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you,

¹⁰⁴ Muller, *Honor and Shame*, 20 (bolding and numbering mine).

¹⁰⁵ In Hesselgrave, *Paradigms*, 268.

¹⁰⁶ R. Patai, *The Arab Mind* (rev. ed.; New York: Hatherleigh, 1983), 113.

¹⁰⁷ In Pikkert, *Protestant Missionaries*, 177–78.

pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also.”

These verses resonate in a shame-honor culture, while simultaneously confronting their core presuppositions. Pikkert states, “The most common reason why Muslims become Christians is the person of Jesus Christ, sometimes through fascination by the Qur’an’s testimony about Him.”¹⁰⁸ One of the national leaders in Sudan told me that he came to faith because Jesus taught forgiveness rather than taking revenge.¹⁰⁹

Fear-power Worldview Axis

Concerning cultures that see the world as a battle between competing supernatural forces, Muller observes, “The paradigm that these people live in is one of fear versus power.”¹¹⁰ In this worldview a close relationship exists between both ‘power over’ and ‘fear of’ the supernatural.

Kraft, Peter Wagner and John Wimber developed the idea into a controversial movement known as ‘third wave Pentecostalism.’¹¹¹ Hesselgrave explains:

Included are such supernatural phenomenon as healing the sick, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, exorcising demons and territorial spirits, neutralizing poisonous bites, overcoming Satanic attacks of various kinds, and even **raising the dead**. Related practices include concerted prayer and fasting, the laying on of hands, anointing with oil, the use of special handkerchiefs and other objects, **slaying in the spirit, spiritual mapping**, and prayer walking.¹¹²

Many Scriptures speak to the reality of spiritual warfare. Jesus said in John 3:8b “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Ephesians 6:10–12 exhorts the believer to do battle with supernatural forces. The question centers on the kind of power to be exercised. If the missionary attempts to match the magician

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 192.

¹⁰⁹ Author’s interview with H. Jonadab, 8 Jan, 2006, Khartoum, Sudan.

¹¹⁰ R. Muller, *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, 2000), 42.

¹¹¹ This term is synonymous with Neo-Pentecostalism in many parts of the world (Bledsoe 2010:14, 25, 43). Bledsoe (2010) says that third-wave Pentecostalism (i.e. Neo-Pentecostalism) includes groups that have clearly gone beyond what most evangelicals would consider orthodox.

¹¹² Hesselgrave, *Paradigms*, 268. Italics mine.

miracle-for-miracle then he or she becomes like another sorcerer displaying power rather than a messenger bringing the Gospel. Even Jesus refused the devil's request that He perform displays of power in Luke 4:12.

Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou stress that pointing to the preeminence of the cross better represents the Gospel than manifestations of power. Miraculous displays do not necessarily result in belief.¹¹³ Even the magicians of Egypt replicated the plagues (Exodus 7:22) that God produced through Moses, yet Pharaoh was not convinced. Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou remind us that no phenomena is self-authenticating, rather "miraculous healings, speaking in tongues, exorcism, prophecies, resurrections, and other extraordinary experiences are reported in all major religions."¹¹⁴ Much has been written about power encounters but reports of their occurrence are anecdotal and sporadic.¹¹⁵ I believe God manifests His power, but He utilizes the miraculous as more an ancillary method than a primary strategy.

Although many conversion testimonies from former Muslims attest to dreams and visions,¹¹⁶ a word of caution is in order. All spiritual experiences should be evaluated by Scripture. 1 John 4:1 warns, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Several of the Muslim converts associated with my work in North Africa attest that dreams¹¹⁷ peaked their interest in Christianity. None, however, reported seeing Jesus. One must be cautious about identifying every 'man in white' in a vision or dream as Jesus Christ. Ausenda reports that since boyhood, the Prophet Mohammad appeared in the dreams of the Beja *Sufi Sheikh* Ali Betai.¹¹⁸ Upon reaching adulthood, Betai proclaimed to the Beja people the content of his special dreams.

¹¹³ Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 374.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 374-75.

¹¹⁵ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms*, 179.

¹¹⁶ P. Pikkert, *Protestant Missionaries to the Middle East: Ambassadors of Christ or Culture?* (Hamilton, ON: WEC-Canada, 2008), 195, and Musk, *Holy War*, 304.

¹¹⁷ 'Isa dreamed that a giant wooden cross hit him on the forehead and woke him up. This happened three times in succession. 'Isa asked a Christian worker under my supervision what this meant. He replied, "I think God is trying to get your attention" ('Isa 2006). 'Isa met with my friend and became a believer. Months later I attended 'Isa's baptism in the Red Sea.

¹¹⁸ Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads*, 444.

I saw him [Muhammad] face to face. The Prophet lit the whole countryside, and I saw with my eyes many people with him; all the good men from early times, now dead. The Prophet said to me: "Build a mosque here in this place."

God brings power encounters at the time and place of His choosing. Christian workers who attempt to encourage others to seek these encounters risk falling prey to the very folk practices they desire to expose.

According to Musk, "Ideal Islam has no resources to deal with the everyday concerns and nightly dreads of ordinary Muslims."¹¹⁹ The question then surfaces, what is the best approach to reach folk Muslims?

The apostle (in 1 John 4:18) speaks directly to the fear-power paradigm; "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love." 1 John 5:8 confronts the ATR worldview with these words; "For there are three that testify; the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement."

This passage addresses all three worldviews. First, the blood addresses the guilt-innocence worldview by fulfilling the forensic legal demands of a blood sacrifice. Second, the water represents baptism; symbolizing a public identification with Christ and humility before God, which deals with shame-honor concerns. Third, the Spirit of God who honored Christ at His baptism (John 1:32–33) stands in clear contrast to the spirits of ATR. This three-fold testimony¹²⁰ conquers the 'world'¹²¹ and the spiritual forces of ATR.

Existential-Transcendent Worldview Axis

There is a strain within folk religion that searches for significance. This 'felt need' for spirituality constitutes the 'existential-transcendent' worldview axis. Formal Islam emphasizes God's transcendence over His

¹¹⁹ Musk, *Holy War*, 259.

¹²⁰ Westcott (1892:181, bold mine) supports this interpretation: "There can be no doubt that the Death upon the Cross satisfies the conception of 'coming by blood.' By so dying the Lord made known His work as Redeemer; and opened the fountain of His life to men. The 'coming by water,' which naturally corresponds to this final act of sacrifice, **is the Baptism**, whereby the Lord declared His purpose 'to fulfill all righteousness' (Matt. iii.15)."

¹²¹ Westcott (1892:179) writes, "Under the title 'the world' St. John gathers up the sum of all the limited transitory powers opposed to God which make obedience difficult."

immanence.¹²² While many solve their middle-level problems by ATR-like practices, others follow the *Sufi* path.

Sufis have been called the mystics of Islam,¹²³ longing for a personal relationship with God.¹²⁴ Parshall claims, “The Muslim mystic hopes, even in this mortal life, to win a glimpse of immortality.”¹²⁵ In their eagerness to follow God in a disciplined way, individual *Sufis* submit to a mentor (*Shaykh*) for guidance.¹²⁶ As the Christian challenges the *Sufi* to follow the ‘Master Teacher’ in discipleship, the words of Jesus speak to the everyday needs of folk Muslims.

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and ‘you will find rest for your souls.’ For My yoke is easy and My burden light. My yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30).

Sufism also contains a concept similar to Christianity’s ‘new birth.’ When taking on the ‘way of *Sufism*’ (*tasawwuf*), the new initiate ‘dies to self’ (*fana*, self-extinction) in order to ‘live to God’.¹²⁷ This new ‘life in God,’ *baqa* (subsistence) allows the *Sufi* to be “perfected, transmuted and eternalized through God and in God.”¹²⁸ In John 3:3 Jesus remonstrates the Jewish ruler Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Some *Sufis* refer to this mentioned passage and the ‘born twice’ concept in their quest for spiritual truth.¹²⁹

Sufi respect for the Biblical characters in the Qur’an offers common ground. Most Muslims think highly of Jesus and many who become Christians do so because of the lofty description of Him in the *Qur’an*.¹³⁰ *Sufis* especially revere Christ. The *Sufi* poet Al-Hallaj “looked to Jesus as

¹²² K. Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (Oxford, UK: One-world, 1997), 9.

¹²³ Sookhdeo, *Global Jihad*, 167.

¹²⁴ O. B. Jenkins, *The Path of Love: Jesus in Mystical Islam* (Nairobi: Communication Press, 1984), 7.

¹²⁵ Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*, 13.

¹²⁶ Karrar, *Sufi Brotherhoods*, 152.

¹²⁷ Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 228.

¹²⁸ A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), 58.

¹²⁹ Chittick, *Sufism*, 138. According to Chittick some *Sufis* suggest that the ‘born again’ concept is similar to the *hadith*’s ‘die before you die’ prescription.

¹³⁰ Pikkert, *Protestant Missionaries*, 192–93.

the supreme example of glorified, perfected humanity; as the actualizer of this Qur'anic concept of the image of God in man."¹³¹

In addition, *Sufis* possess quite a developed theology of spiritual 'veils.' Veil theory in *Sufism* flows from interpretations of fourteen occurrences of the Arabic verb *kashf* (remove) in the Qur'an. Chittick says that symbolic death (death to self) and literal death are considered veils and "the quest for voluntary death is one of the basic themes of *Sufi* literature."¹³²

True *Sufis* experience the lifting of the veil in this life described in paradoxical imagery.¹³³ Ibn Arabi portrays the entire universe as a veil.¹³⁴ He further describes the goal of the *Sufi* path as obliteration "through which all awareness of the individual self is erased by the intensity of the unveiling."¹³⁵ The Christian worker should refer to the Bible passages¹³⁶ about veils and apply the analogies for salvation.

The *Sufi* should be challenged to turn to the Lord through Christ, remove the veil, behold God's glory, receive the Holy Spirit, and be transformed into conformity with God's image. The Apostle Paul writes (in 2 Corinthians 3:16) "but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." The *Sufi* should also be told that only the believer in Jesus can experience real unveiling and view God's true glory. Hebrews (10:19–20) says, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated through the veil, that is, his flesh."

CONCLUSION

Hesselgrave observes, "A mind-boggling variety of approaches to 'disciplining the nations' has been advocated during the era of modern missions."¹³⁷ This article asks what evangelistic approaches are most appropriate for reaching folk Muslims?

¹³¹ Jenkins, *Path of Love*, 27–28.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid. 139–140.

¹³⁴ In *ibid.*, 147.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 149. Arberry writes that some *Sufis* "introduced **the Logos doctrine into Islam**, by which is meant the theory that God's vice-regent controlling the material universe is 'the Idea of Muhammad'" (*Sufism*, 93, bolding mine).

¹³⁶ The Apostle Paul's 'veil passage' in Second Corinthians 3:7–4:4, a portion of which is quoted above, contains some parallel Christian mystical thoughts which should intrigue the *Sufi* seeker.

¹³⁷ Hesselgrave, *Paradigms*, 184.

Some evangelists have formulated polemic arguments in order to refute Islam. In addition, current trends in contextualizing Muslim forms and Qur'anic passages are troubling. Trial-and-error experimentation with Islamic religious structures and Qur'anic interpretation has often resulted in syncretism or confusion. The debate on the use or non-use of all these methods is a moot point with regard to popular Islam. Such questions rarely cross the minds of folk Muslims. Since the majority are folk Muslims, I propose approaches contextualized to their unique worldview.

Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou say a "worldview theme that runs through nearly all folk religious belief systems is near constant fear and the need for security."¹³⁸ The Gospel of Christ alone possesses the power to liberate those held captive in terror. 1 John (4:18) states, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love." Traditional religion must be confronted for it belongs to the kingdom of darkness and "is non-ethical and non-accountable. In essence, it is a manifestation of mankind's subservience to the Evil One."¹³⁹

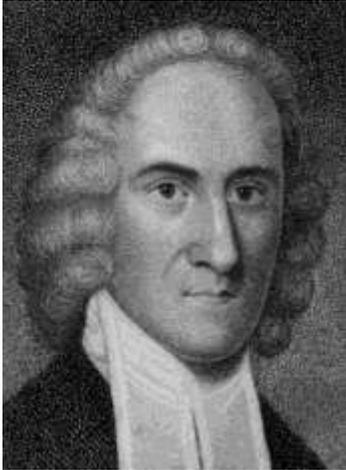
Folk Islam contains elements of all three major religious values (guilt-innocence, shame-honor, fear-power), but I insist that traditional religion influenced folk Muslims hold primarily to a fear-power paradigm. *Sufis*, however, possess a distinct worldview I call the existential-transcendent religious value axis. Reaching *Sufis* requires appealing to their desire for a deeper spiritual life.

Folk Islam demands examination because most Muslims live outside the Arab world and practice popular forms of Islam. Christians engaging folk Muslims should aim at the heart and not only for the intellect. Individuals come to Christ as they respond to fulfilling God-given felt needs. As Christian workers concentrate on the everyday concerns of folk Muslims, more of them will come to know Christ personally and Biblically.

¹³⁸ Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 87.

¹³⁹ Musk, *Holy War*, 115.

THEME CLASSIC: A Previously Unpublished Sermon by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) on John 3:36.



Jonathan Edwards

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This sermon, which is an example of a message Edwards preached and re-preached, with dated notation and alterations for the re-preaching, is a clear message on the uniqueness of Christ. It actually forms part of a pair on the same text, with this sermon being the first of the two. Edwards's point is unambiguous. There is no salvation outside of Christ. Christ and Christ alone, is the only way by which any can be saved, that is how the Father has ordered it. The honor of his majesty has been affronted and only the Son could and did repair it. If salvation was achievable any other way then, Edwards makes clear, the Son has died needlessly. There are also great warnings here. Warnings not to prevaricate, not to be offended and especially, warnings of what terrible suffering lays ahead for those who willfully reject the only means offered to obtain eternal life.

The sermon manuscript is a typical duodecimal booklet, consisting of fifteen leaves, with no evidence of damage. As stated, in the main body of the sermon there are clear alterations, additions and corrections in Edwards's own hand, but nothing on the scale of a major rework of

the sermon as a whole. This sermon has never, to the knowledge of the present writer, appeared in print before. I have transcribed the sermon directly from the original manuscript, which is housed in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University. For accuracy and consistency, some punctuation has been added, Edwards was clearly unconcerned about such things in his own manuscripts. Where Edwards has deleted words, even whole sentences, I have not included those deletions.

In reworking this sermon, Edwards sometimes reproduced later what he had deleted earlier. Had I retained these deletions, it would have lead to significant repetition and an inaccurate sense of Edwards's message. Therefore I have followed the original author's lead and left them out.

One final note, Edwards's abbreviations have been filled out, 'X' for 'Christ' for example, but otherwise his words have not been modernized or altered in any way.

EDWARDS ON JOHN 3:36

December 1734. 4 May 1755. Stockbridge Indians.

John 3:36 (1) Unless persons believe in Jesus Christ they shall not see eternal life.

John 3:36, And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life. These are part of what was said by John the Baptist to some of his disciples when they came to him and told him that he that was with him beyond Jordan, to whom he bore witness, baptized and that all men came to him. The disciples of John did not seem to like it that Jesus should baptize, they looked upon it that in so doing, he took upon him to do that work that belonged alone to their master, they looked upon it as his prerogative to baptize and they supposed that John would resent it when they told him of it. John the Baptist formerly used to be flocked after, all Judah and Jerusalem went out to him to be baptized of him, but now Christ had taken over the work of baptizing and the people began to leave John and to flock after Christ. John's disciples thought that their master would not like this, but that he would look upon Christ as his rival and would be jealous of him, as one that got away his honor and the respect of the people. But John receives their account quite in another manner than they expected, says he, A man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven, and tells them that they themselves know that he told them that he was not the Christ, but that he was sent before him, and signifies to 'em that instead of resenting of it as they expected, he rejoiced at it, verse 29, and says in verse 30, that Jesus must increase....He speaks of it

as what he expected and is glad of, and then teaches his disciples how much Christ is above him and how worthy to have honor above him. And not only so, but instead of being jealous of Christ because he had so many disciples, he teaches in the words of the text, the absolute necessity of becoming his disciples, that all must become his disciples, he that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life and he.... In this verse may be observed two things, 1. The benefit of believing in Christ, that hereby we shall obtain everlasting life, He that believeth.... and 2. The necessity of it, here manifested two ways viz.

1. In the impossibility of obtaining life without it, viz. that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life. That is, they shall have no part nor portion in it, however they may endeavor after it, if they don't believe....they shall never reach it.

2. The positive misery that they are the subjects of, the wrath of God. In the former clause is his privative misery, 'tis the clause that signifies the impossibility of not obtaining life without believing that.

I would speak at this time from this.

Doctrine. Unless persons believe in Jesus Christ they shall never see eternal life.

I would here shew briefly, 1. What is meant by believing in Christ, 2. That it is so, and secondly, Why it is so.

I. What is meant by believing in Jesus Christ, and here take this definition of faith in Christ. It is the person's soul entirely uniting in, or closing with Christ for his Savior; acquiescing in his reality and goodness as a Savior, as the Gospel reveals him. It is necessary that there should accompany faith, a sense of our own sinfulness and our own misery, for without this a man's heart never will close with Christ for his Savior, for he sees no need of a Savior that don't see the evil he needs to be saved from. A man unless he be sensible that he is sick, won't apply to a Physician. So there must accompany a true and saving faith, a sense of our own utter unworthiness of any mercy, and worthiness or desert of eternal perdition. For if a man ben't sensible that he don't deserve salvation himself, he won't see any need of Christ to deliver from misery, for if he don't deserve it he can't see why he mayn't be delivered from misery on his own account without a Savior.

Thus he that truly believes in Christ is sensible of his necessity of a Savior, so he is convinced that there is a Savior. He is convinced of the reality of Christ as a Savior. He sees that he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, and the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel is the way to life, and he sees the excellency of Christ, his beauty and loveliness is inwardly revealed to him, whereby he appears more worthy and excellent than all creatures, and he sees his goodness as a Savior.

[He is] convinced of the desirableness of that that is offered through him, the desirableness of salvation from sin as well as punishment, the desirableness of that kind of happiness that he has purchased that consists in holiness, and he sees that Christ is sufficient to procure and work out this salvation, and he sees the excellency of the way of salvation by him. It appears a desirable and excellent way to him. The soul is so convinced of these things that it rests in them, it entirely acquiesces in it, that Christ is the Savior, that he is an excellent and glorious One, and a sufficient Savior, and that his salvation is good, and that he is a Savior suitable for him, fit for and adapted to his case. And hence the soul entirely closes with this Savior, the whole soul closes, opposition is overcome, the soul chooses this Savior, it flies to him, it cleaves to him and trusts in him and gives up itself to him. This is saving, justifying faith in Jesus Christ.

II . Unless persons do thus believe in the Lord Jesus Christ they will never see eternal life. I shall mention no other evidence of it but this, viz. that God hath declared that it shall not be.

He hath peremptorily declared it not only in our text but very often elsewhere: Mark 16:16, he that believeth not shall be damned; 1 John 5:12, he that hath the son hath Life, but he that... John 3:18, he that believeth not is condemned already; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting d.; John 8:24, If ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins; John 12:48, he that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath One that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him on the last day; 2 Thessalonians 2:12, That they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness; Hebrews 2:2,3, How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?; Hebrews 3:18, And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest but to them that believeth not; Hebrews 12:25, If they escaped not that refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; Revelation 21:8, The fearful and

unbelieving shall have their part in the lake that burneth....Thus you see how often and how plainly God has declared that those that do not believe shall not be saved but shall perish eternally.

Here therefore, let it be considered

1. That God is the dispenser of life. None can give it but he. If he refuses to give life 'tis impossible it should be obtained. Men are not stronger than God, they can't wrest salvation out of God's hands. We are entirely in his hands, in body and soul at his disposal and he can dispose us to life or death and make us happy or miserable just as he will. Heaven and hell are his, he has the keys of them and he opens and no man shuts, and he shuts and no man opens, Revelation 3:17. Therefore, since he has so often and so peremptorily declared that no man that don't believe in Christ shall ever see Life, we may be sure it will be so.

2. God cannot lie or repent. 'Tis Impossible that God should declare that he will do thus and thus, and not make it good. Numbers 23:19, He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man.... Hath he said and shall he not....God's Word is firm and more steadfast than the mountains and everlasting hills. His Word is established in the heavens. Matthew 24:35, Heaven and earth shall pass away but my Word.... Therefore as God will not and cannot lie, so surely those that do not believe in Christ never shall see life.

I proceed now to show,

III. Why it is so. Why God never will bestow life on 'em that don't believe in Jesus Christ.

1. The Truth of God in the Law will not allow. The Law of God is an established rule of proceeding with men that God has fixed and will never depart from. Matthew 5:18, For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, not one jot nor tittle....The Law requires perfect obedience and threatens eternal death to the breakers of it, and therefore as we have all sinned, we are all under the condemning sentence of the Law, and therefore as the Law stands good 'tis impossible that we should be saved unless it be by One that has fulfilled and satisfied the Law. They that are under the Law are under the curse, for 'tis written, Cursed is everyone that continueth....Galatians 3:10, and therefore we can't be delivered but by him that was made a curse for us, and so is made satisfaction to the Law, verse 13, and we can't have the benefit of his

satisfaction, unless we are in him and united to him, and we can't be united to him unless our hearts close with him by faith.

2. God will not bestow eternal life on those that don't believe in Jesus Christ, as he has respect to the honor of his majesty. We by sin have affronted the majesty of God and cast contempt on him, and therefore as God has respect, we cannot be accepted but through him who has repaired the honor of God's majesty. If we come to God out of Christ he will be a consuming fire to us, will glorify his majesty that we have injured in our everlasting destruction. If God should accept of a sinner to life that don't believe in Christ, he would thereby greatly dishonor himself, he would lay his own honor in the dust. But has too much respect to his own glory to do thus, he will not and cannot dishonor himself.

3. He will not....As he has respect to the honor of his Son. God hath appointed his Son to be the Savior and he hath designed him to this honor of being the author of eternal salvation, and therefore if we could obtain salvation out of Christ, God would thereby manifest that his Son is a needless Savior. This takes away from Christ the honor of his dying love, for if so Christ laid down his life needlessly, he might have spared his blood. There is a great show of kindness in Christ's dying a cruel death but all for nothing. If righteousness comes by the Law then Christ is dead in vain, Galatians 2:21. God designed his Son the honor of being the only Savior, that that should be his prerogative to save men, that he should be the medium of all salvation, that he should be the only means of eternal life to the children of men. But if men could be saved without believing in Christ, Christ would lose this honor. But Christ shall not fail of his due honor. God will see that his Son obtains the honor that he designed him, and he will not so order things in his providence that he should be deprived of it. We have account in John 12:28, that Christ when going to Jerusalem prayed the Father, saying Father, glorify thy Son, and he was answered by a voice from heaven: I have both glorified and will....God infinitely loves his Son and will see to it that he has the honor of the only Savior and therefore will bestow life on none but them that believe on him.

Application.

1. The use may be of awakening to unbelievers or to convince unbelievers of the doleful state that they are in. This doctrine may well be terrifying to you, for you are the person spoken of in the text, That believeth not the Son. You are one of that sort of persons that remaining

of that sort never obtain eternal life. You do not believe on Christ but are an unbeliever, are one of them that know not Christ, that continues in rejection of Christ, one who stumbles at the Word being disobedient. Christ is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to you. You will not come to Christ that you might have life. You are one that never acted one act of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in your life. You are one of those children in whom there is no faith spoken of in Deuteronomy 32:20. You are one of those that know not God and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are one of that same sort of persons spoken of in Luke 19:27, But those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.

You are one that neglects so great salvation. You are one of them that refuses him that speaketh from heaven. You are one of them that has made God a liar and do so by your daily practice by your living in the sin of unbelief, for this is the sin not only that you have [been] guilty of once or twice, but that you have lived in all your lifetime. You have had great advantages for faith. You have lived under great means of faith but yet never have believed. Your unbelief is not circumstanced as the unbelief of the heathen and of the Papists and many others is, but you remain in unbelief though you have had instructions and Gospel calls and invitations all your days. How terrible therefore may these words be to you that are in the text, He that believeth not the Son shall not see life. If you continue in the state and condition that you are now in, it is impossible you shall obtain salvation.

However easy and quiet you may be in your present condition, yet this assure yourself of, that if you haven't a great alteration in your state you never shall be saved. Let those that are under the convictions of the Spirit of God and are concerned for their salvation, consider this, you are concerned that you may obtain life. You are making that enquiry, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? But take notice of this that unless you believe you shall not see life. You stand in great need of eternal life and how doleful will your case be if you never obtain it but how much soever you need it you never shall obtain it unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you desire earnestly to see life, if you are afraid of death and are earnestly seeking that you may escape, if you are in never so great distress about, and wish and long never so much that you may obtain salvation, yet it will not be without faith in Jesus Christ and faith is what you are [a] stranger to. How doleful a state and condition therefore are you in.

Here consider

1. How dreadful that death is that you must see if you don't see life. I mean that eternal death that is threatened in the Law. You must see life or death. Temporal death is awful and terrible. Men have a great dread of it, it is the king of terrors. But what is temporal death to eternal? What is the first death to the second? What are the pains and agonies of a dying man to the agonies of the soul in hell? What are the dark and melancholy circumstances of the dying and dead body, the pale countenance, the distressed features, the eyes set and the ghostly appearance of the dead corpse, to the inconceivably dark, gloomy and dreadful horrors of the damned soul? What is the pit of the grave to the pit of hell? The circumstances of the body in the grave, all turned to putrefaction and worms, is but a shadow of the dismal circumstances of the soul that has the torment of the worm that never dies under the second death.

Men dread death, so if they were sensible what eternal death is, would dread it thousand ten thousand times more. Temporal death under its most dreadful circumstances and appearances is but a flea bite to it. Our longest line is not sufficient to measure the depth of woe and misery that the soul is sunk into. Under the second death the abyss of sorrow and despair that they are in, is unfathomable, who knows it, who can tell it? Who can describe the blackness of darkness? What tongue or pen sufficient to set forth the dolefulness of the horrors and desperation of the damned? Psalm 90:11, Who knows the power of thine....

2. Consider that you are now in a state of spiritual death, and so have been ever since you were born you have never seen life. Your soul is dead, 'tis separated from the fountain of spiritual life and remains therefore in a dismal state and condition. You are as it were, a walking corpse, and if your heart was exposed to view and all the evil and wickedness that reigns there, you would appear more awfully than a dead corpse. If the filth and abomination that is in your heart were exposed to view you would appear more loathsome than a dead corpse that is rotten and turned to corruption. This is the state that you are and the state you have continued in all your days hitherto. Unbelievers are dead men, Matthew 8:22, Let the dead bury their dead.

3. You shall see others admitted to eternal life when you, if you continue in unbelief shall be shut out from it. You shall see others admitted into glory who shall come and sit down in the Kingdom of God and shall be received by Christ and admitted as his friends and shall be confessed and acknowledged as such by him before his Father and before his angels. You shall see multitudes of all kinds, and nations of all ranks

degrees and orders of men, and you would feign enter in but you shall be thrust out. Luke 13:28,29, There shall be weeping and gnashing.How will you plead, Lord, Lord, open to us....You will see others that you have known and have been acquainted with....

But you if you don't believe in Christ, you never shall see life. Let you do what you will. Let you labor never so hard and long. Let you make never so many prayers. If you should give all your goods to feed the poor and should give up yourself, all your life, to fasting, and should weep an ocean of tears and yea, tears of blood and should at last give your body to be burned you never shall see life unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.



Michael D. MacMullen

Kierkegaard, *Ressentiment*, and the Present Age: Exploring the Contours of Social Deception



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If one were asked to name the great social philosophers of the nineteenth-century, Marx, or Hegel, or Comte would be among those who come to mind. If asked to identify some of the social philosophers of the nineteenth-century who offered an appraisal of mass society, or what might be called the herd society, others might be included such as Nietzsche. And their views would be fairly recognizable regardless of whether one had studied or had even read these authors. Hegel thought that the herd society was the consequence of an “unhappy consciousness” and pondered whether in the slave/master mentality, the master was actually enslaved to the slaves. Religion, in his view, did not help much with unhappy consciousness. Marx, of course, thought that herd society was the result of a false consciousness imposed on the masses by those who were in power through, in the main, financial influences and a capitalistic economic system. Religion fostered this false consciousness, tranquilizing the masses enroute to its offer of false hopes. Comte thought, following Hegel, that world history had finally arrived at the age of progress due to the advance of reason over religion and myth. Nietzsche contended that Christianity created the categories of virtue and morality due to the resentment (*ressentiment*) it had against those who were superior, and established a system of morality that took revenge of those who were superior. Religion fosters the conformity embedded in each of these approaches, and should, if humankind is to

advance, be left out of the realms of significance in culture.¹ And Kierkegaard would, for the most part, not be considered among the number of social philosophers who spoke into the issue of mass society. I want to contend that to exclude him from the number of those who wrote sophisticated social philosophical treatises in the nineteenth-century on the issue of mass/herd society is wrong headed.

The received tradition on Kierkegaard has considered him a philosopher for the individual with little regard for the problems of social existence. Marjorie Grene in her *Introduction to Existentialism* accuses Kierkegaard of the “simple disjunction of self and society” which produced an “antisocial temper” in his thought.² Fletcher cites a variety of philosophers who, when considering Kierkegaard, viewed him as an “extreme individualist” in the words of S.U. Zuidema. According to Fletcher, Zuidema contended that “Kierkegaard’s attitude toward fellowship and society is one of outright rejection, and the Kierkegaardian view takes exception to all social reform movements in its conservative individualism.”³ Together they see Kierkegaard as a “self-absorbed philosopher (peculiar in light of the notion of infinite resignation in Kierkegaard) in active opposition to any positive role for the interpersonal social and political aspects of human experience.”⁴ Even among those who have a perspectival affinity with Kierkegaard’s existentialism, this antisocial Kierkegaardian position is advocated. Take Martin Buber for example. In his work *Between Man and Man*, Buber discusses what he calls Kierkegaard’s idea of the single one. He does so against the backdrop of Kierkegaard’s break with Regina Olsen. Buber avers that Kierkegaard’s act is antipolitical and functions as a kind of retreat to monastic life where one can live solely in relation to God without concern for other relationships.⁵ He calls this a kind of schizophrenic attitude. In light of these comments, it is rather hard to conceive that Kierkegaard would receive a hearing as a social philosopher when the received tradition of understanding his ideas of individuality, inwardness, and subjectivity as anti-social prevails.

¹ There are many places in the works of the philosophers/social theorists listed above in which these ideas are expressed. In Nietzsche, one might turn to *The Genealogy of Morals*, or *Thus Spake Zarathustra* to see these themes pursued in light of *ressentiment*.

² Marjorie Grene, *Introduction to Existentialism* quoted in David Fletcher’s *Social and Political Perspectives in the Thought of Soren Kierkegaard* (New York:University Press of America, 1982), p. 2.

³ Fletcher, p. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁵ Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1947),p. 52ff.

Herbert Marcuse in *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* takes particular aim at Kierkegaard's alleged hyperindividualistic anti-social philosophy. Marcuse contends that Hegel brought an end to the disjunction that prevailed in post-Cartesian philosophy between reason, society, and history. He did so by making reason a part of history; *logos* (reason) has an internal historical development realized through its dialectic. He writes, "Hegel had demonstrated that the material and intellectual powers of mankind had developed far enough to call upon man's social and political practice to realize reason. Philosophy itself thus made direct application to social theory and practice, not as to some external force but as to its legitimate heir. If there was to be any progress beyond this philosophy, it had to be an advance beyond philosophy itself and, at the same time, beyond the social and political order to which philosophy had tied itself."⁶ There needed to be a revolution in philosophy that accounted for the challenge posed by Hegel. Marcuse, in light of this contention of the need for philosophical work that is socially theoretical in nature, examines philosophical/social theoretical trends that provide a lens through which Hegel's insight might be developed within the nineteenth-century. Marx, in his view, seems the most fertile in this regard. But when examining Kierkegaard, Marcuse finds him wanting; his hyper-individualism gets in the way of speaking as a social critic cognizant of the moment afforded by Hegel. Marcuse wrote, "Hegel had demonstrated that the fullest existence of the individual is consummated in his social life," but Kierkegaard could not "get beyond" earlier approaches to philosophical and religious solutions to the problem of self and society. For Kierkegaard "every individual, in his innermost individuality, is isolated from all others . . . there is no union, no community, no universality to contest his dominion."⁷ This kind of individualism "turns into the most emphatic absolutism," unable to resolve the historical situation occasioned by Hegel's work. Ironically, he claims that Kierkegaard promoted a strictly negative philosophy the very thing one sees Kierkegaard advancing as characteristic of Hegelianism. Marcuse's view leaves us with an impotent Kierkegaard unable to negotiate his own age given his religious individuality.

In this article, I argue a different narrative, one rooted in the view that Kierkegaard provides a fertile social philosophical/theoretical perspective in response to the events of his day and his critics. I seek to do this by entertaining a particular part of Kierkegaard's *Two Ages*

⁶ Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), p. 257.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

written in 1846. The section I have in mind is called “The Present Age.” This work examines the state of, the *zeitgeist* of the present milieu in light of the dominance of Hegel’s thought in Europe, particularly, in Denmark. It challenges the Hegelian devotion to reason’s preeminence, while not being anti-reason. Kierkegaard offers, or so I contend, a compelling analysis of the social, cultural, and historical situation of Denmark and does so as a sophisticated socially critical philosopher. Over against the Hegelian and Marxist notion of false consciousness as the herd’s failure to engage rationality and its assessment or pervasiveness of life, Kierkegaard proffers a view that asserts that the herd’s conformity is the result of deception, principally social deception and this deception is promoted tacitly by all members of society. He sees this as a failure of action, passionate action, perpetuated in society as a result of Hegelians dominance, not as a failure of one’s epistemic vantage point. I will explore Kierkegaard’s view that there is no reason for optimistic confidence in history’s progress applied to the public realm characteristic of the Hegelians or the Marxists for that matter. No, the public realm, as a consequence of the hegemony of Hegelianism and its allies in Marx and others, its antipassionate inaction, is actually a “phantom public;” it gives the appearance of conviviality, but, in the end, it is all smoke and deception. Further, I will do this by exploring Kierkegaard’s notion of *ressentiment* as the motivating ingredient in the socially deceptive environment about which he writes. This is the task I take up in this article.

**The Present Age as an age of social deception:
The Evasion and Suppression of the Truth.**

Kierkegaard offers a position on the state of society that differs from the false consciousness notions of Hegel and Marx, which they contend, produces the herd. I am suggesting that what Kierkegaard sees as the framework of the problem in the present age and its docility is social deception. Often when Kierkegaard is discussed, his view of self-deception is examined without considering the insights one might derive from the notion of social deception found in numerous of his writings. I suggest a different view. And so let me define social deception in a way that captures Kierkegaard’s use of it in the present age. Social deception shares the major features of self-deception only applied to the social order as a whole. In a Kierkegaardian sense, we might consider deception to be the motivated evasion or suppression of reality resulting in the failure of persons to choose actions. In this case, deception pacifies actors so that they do not act. The phantom public is the result of the existence of social deception in a given society hindering choice

and proper deliberation. Social deception uses certain strategies of engagement within the culture in the present age to solidify its influence.

Kierkegaard treats social deception in his writings in two ways: first as an overt, palpable, “hot,” to use Jon Elster’s language, engagement in social relationships, and secondly as a covert, less palpable, or “cold,” more subtle, mechanism in society. To illustrate the difference one might consider the section out of *Either/Or* called “The Diary of the Seducer.” In this tale, a man named Johannes concocts a plan, a rather elegant plan, although devious, to seduce a young, beautiful woman named Cordelia. Johannes sets out, knowing what he is doing, to deceive this young woman and does so by flattery, intrigue, and lies. In the social context of the day, Johannes learns everything he might about Cordelia so that his plan of seduction might be achieved. Cordelia is unaware of the ruse, and eventually falls in love with Johannes who, upon bedding her, the goal of the ruse, breaks off the relationship. He believes that he has created, through deception, the means through which Cordelia finds freedom; not in a person, but in choosing to participate in the plan, albeit deceptively, of the other. In this case the deception is overt and palpable, hot one might say, because, in this social setting, the deceiver is well aware of the “seducing,” deceiving the other. In the “Present Age,” deception functions much more covertly, but still with the same ingredients of motivation, evasion, and suppression of the truth.

The deceptiveness of the present age in the latter, less overt sense, is the motif investigated over and over again in the “Present Age.” Kierkegaard writes about this age that it “forms around him a negative intellectual opposition, which juggles for a moment with a deceptive prospect, only to deceive him in the end.”⁸ Also, the age uses a “deceitful escape” through outbursts of enthusiasm and humor to evade facing reality. This escape avoids the necessity of making a choice so that one might perform action in life. The present age is an age without passion and takes no action. These are evaded, misrepresented as unimportant, and suppressed in the present age. Why has this come about?

The present age is an age of reflection according to Kierkegaard, the primary culprit in establishing the conditions for social deception. By reflective age he means that people engage, *ad nauseum*, in thinking, rational engagement one might say as history, about issues without these engagements culminating in some kind of action. In reality, the goal of reflecting and deliberating in the dialectic of what it means to be human requires a termination, a point at which one makes a choice to act in

⁸ Soren Kierkegaard, Soren, *The Present Age* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), p. 34.

some specific personally committed way. It is a part of being human. But the current age is one of inaction, an age in which “nothing really happens.”⁹ This failure to take action, to engage in deliberative choice, creates a culture of indolence and complacency, the stuff of the herd. He writes of this age that it is “wearied by its chimerical efforts, relapses into complete indolence. Its condition is that of a man who has only fallen asleep towards morning: first of all come great dreams, then a feeling of laziness, and finally a witty or clever excuse for remaining in bed.”¹⁰ The age’s quasi-commitment to inactivity is due to its infatuation with and inculcation of Hegel’s dialectical reflectiveness, and this provokes its soporific attitude. Action, a necessary component of being human, is masked, evaded, escaped in the present age given its complacency. Reflectiveness encourages the indolence that characterizes the herd. It does so because, in the sense Kierkegaard uses it in his appraisal, people engage in reflection to avoid action.¹¹ Persons, or better ages, currently are in the perpetual state of reflection because action is too definitive. It is stressed over whether some decision or course of action will fit into the system; hence it promotes a neurosis. In an age where speculative rationality is viewed as the chiefly characteristic thing about humans, the place of action in defining humanness is vacated. In reality according to Kierkegaard, choosing to act is definitive in authentic living and is required in an association of persons, like a public. All must choose to take action for the society to flourish. Conformity, sameness, and the failure to commit are contrary to humanness. Social deception is the context of this loss.

The evasion associated with deception in the present is fostered as well by the passionlessness of the age. Kierkegaard writes of the age that it is “essentially one of understanding and reflection, without passion, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm, and shrewdly relapsing into repose.”¹² This present situation encourages the apathy and indolence characteristic of the present. Further, Kierkegaard claims that “our age is essentially one of understanding, and on the average more knowledgeable than any former generation, but it is without passion. Everyone knows a great deal, we all know which way we ought to go, but nobody is willing to move.”¹³ In a culture, a life without passion

⁹ Ibid., 35

¹⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹¹ Robert C. Roberts, “Some Remarks on the Concept of Passion, in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Two Ages* (ed. Robert Perkins: Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), p. 92.

¹² Ibid., 33.

¹³ Ibid., 76

wrecks destruction on the whole of an era. It undercuts the moral fabric that undergirds a society or an age. He writes, "For, being without passion, it has lost all felling for the values of eros, for enthusiasm and sincerity in politics and religion, or for piety, admiration and domesticity in everyday life."¹⁴ Further, "an age without passion has no values, and everything is transformed into representational ideas."¹⁵ Without passion, everything is a representation of something else without the commitment that accompanies its presence. Humans without passion are herds, conformists to an age.

Passion, in Kierkegaard's view, is essential to humanness. At times this leads some to emphasized Kierkegaard's alleged commitment to irrationality. But, as Roberts' points out in his essay on envy, Kierkegaard has a rather sophisticated conception of passion. Passions may, on the one hand, be passive as when a small child feels fear upon hearing thunder. But, according to Roberts, Kierkegaard's conception of passion entails much more. Passions are connected with longings and desires, with aims and goals. A passion for union with God as the fulfillment of what humans are as *status viatoris* fosters one to perform actions that actualize the desired state. Passions are "motivations to actions." When they accord with reality, they function as complementary aspects of humanness in deliberative choice culminating in action. But without passion, there will be no actions, and consequently, no depth of character. Reflection does not serve its proper function in this scenario.

When reflection is divorced from its proper role of culminating in action with passion, superficial, deceptive forms of thinking prevail. Kierkegaard develops numerous examples of this sort of thing, but let me suggest two. One is the problem of rationalization, and the other is the issue of posturing. Kierkegaard uses publicity/advertising to illustrate how rationalization functions in the present, socially deceptive age. He writes,

Nothing ever happens but there is an immediate publicity everywhere. An expression of strength would seem ridiculous to the calculating intelligence of our times. A political virtuoso might bring off a feat almost as remarkable. He might write a manifesto suggesting a general assembly at which people should decide upon a rebellion, and it would be so carefully worded that even the censor would let it pass. At the meeting itself he would be able to create the impression that his audience had rebelled,

¹⁴ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵ Ibid., 40.

after which they would all go quietly home- having spent a very pleasant evening together.”¹⁶

Publicists write away the actual state of affairs through rationalized agreement with the present indolent age. Even the scholarly engage in deceptive rationalizations about intellectual matters. He writes that “the age of the encyclopaedists, when men wrote gigantic folios with unremitting pains, is gone. Now is the turn of those light-weight encyclopaedists who, en passant, deal with all the sciences and the whole of existence.” These scholars have “made a solemn resolution that the next generation should set to work seriously, and in order to avoid disturbing or delaying the next generation, the present attends to banquets.”¹⁷ At such events, the scholar gives the air of “seriousness,” without the least intention of committing passionately to an action.

Further, in a deceptive age, society poses in ways to give the impression that something significant has happened. He gives an illustration of the contrast between an age of inwardness where a crowd watches a person, in the face of death, go out onto some ice to retrieve a very special jewel. In this case the crowd would passionately applaud the person for his courage. Over against this is a passionless age in which folks would all “agree that it was unreasonable and not even worthwhile to venture out” far enough to retrieve the jewel. And so they might transform a feat of courage into a feat of skill.” He describes this in what is a rather humorous portrayal of the age posturing as if brave, yet not at all. He writes, “the crowds would go out to watch from a safe place, and with the eyes of connoisseurs appraise the accomplished skater who could skate almost to the edge (i.e. as far as the ice was still safe) and then turn back. The most accomplished skater would manage to go out to the furthestmost point and then perform a still more dangerous-looking run, so as to make the spectators hold their breath. His skill allows him to turn back while the ice is perfectly safe. For intelligence has got the upper hand to such an extent that it transforms the real task into an unreal trick and reality into a play.”¹⁸ A pose has been struck, cleverness wins the day and the crowd is pleased by all the excitement of the moment while it drowns in its complacency.

The age without passion and no action denies the individual of standing among other individuals. It is an age that not only rationalizes and poses, but is one that manifests a kind of dialectical deceit as well.

¹⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹⁷ Ibid., 36

¹⁸ Ibid., 38.

He writes that an age that is passionless turns every “expression of strength into a feat of dialectics: it leaves everything standing but cunningly empties it of significance. Instead of culminating in a rebellion it reduces the inward reality of all relationships to a reflective tension which leaves everything standing but makes the whole of life ambiguous: so that everything continues to exist factually whilst by a dialectical deceit it supplies a secret interpretation- that it does not exist.”¹⁹ One is enamored with the skill of the dialectician; but the challenge of making a decision to act is lost in the infatuation with the artistry of the dialectician. It is a negative dialectic because it diminishes important distinctions such as good and evil, encourages indifference, and treats persons as un-engaged, “third parties” to events and relationships that they are a part of by the fact of who they are. In the end, “money is the only thing people will desire;” there is not enough of a self to want ethically for more and, in the end will view money as his means of salvation.²⁰

The present age of social deception is, in the end, characterized as virtue-less and so the “springs of life”²¹ are cut off from individuals living in association with other individuals. In this virtue-less, socially deceptive age there are no more heroes to emulate, no more models to imitate, no more knights of resignation to follow; in the end, the present age is morally bankrupt without the reserves to question the deceptive ploys it imposes on itself. This age is “negative; it is an escape, a distraction, and an illusion. Dialectically the position is this: the principle of association is ethically weakening. It is only after the individual has acquired an ethical outlook that there is any suggestion of really joining together.”²² The present age, morally vacuous, hinders genuine social maturation.

The Present Age as Social Deception: Its motivation.

Earlier I claimed that deception is the motivated evasion or suppression of truth, and we have explored the strategies and evasions of deception implicit in Kierkegaard’s present age. In this section, I explore the motivation behind such evasive strategies like rationalization, dialectics, and posing. Throughout, the reality that has been masked in the social deception of the present age is the nature of the self, of the individual, who develops in association with other individuals in ways

¹⁹ Ibid., 42.

²⁰ Ibid., 40.

²¹ Ibid., 43.

²² Ibid., 70.

conducive to human flourishing. These relationships, along with one's life lived transparently before God, are necessary for human existence. Relating to the relation that one is is necessary to achieve freedom and genuine consciousness. The higher forms of the good life like unconditional love of neighbor require the development of virtue come about through inwardness, subjective commitment in choosing the truth culminating in action. But an age of inaction which is passionless produces empty characters, whose existence is ambiguous. There are no things in this indolent age that clarify what it means to be virtuous. When virtue is not promoted through inwardness, humans are hollow, superficial creatures who are charged by the immediate bursts of enthusiasm so characteristic of the age. This age does not appear to be at all desirable, so why would anyone in a right mind wish for such a thing? So, what motivates folks in the present age to evade and misrepresent reality?

Kierkegaard enters this question by positing that although "the established order of things continues to exist, it is its ambiguity which satisfies our reflective and passionless age. No one wishes to do away with the power of a king, but if little by little it could be transformed into something purely fictitious everyone would be quite prepared to cheer."²³ This suggests an attitude embedded in the present age that directs its life; it likes the images present in its current estate, but does not like the differentiations and distinctiveness entailed by these images. It likes to have a king or president or authority figure, but the age itself has a pejorative, negative mindset regarding what significant roles actually entail. The reason for this is that in an age bereft of virtue, certain vices come to dominate its character, to fill the void vacated by the good. In deception there is a masking of reality as I have contended, but in the masking of the present age, there is, what one might call, a flipping, an exchanging of virtue with vice. Virtue is necessary for society to function as individuals in relationships promoting the good. But in societies that have lost virtue, vice appears, (it is a phantom), as its replacement, and the society confuses one for the other. At one point Kierkegaard claims that this age of reflection without action makes "virtues into splendid vices."²⁴

Kierkegaard avers that the vice that has brought about this state of affairs is the deadly vice of envy. He writes that the reflective tension (i.e. the inability to act) "constitutes itself as a principle," and that "envy is the negative unifying principle" of the present age. In ethics, of course, a principle is a guide, a directive to action. In Kierkegaard's

²³ *Ibid.*,47.

²⁴ *Ibid.*,53.

analysis, envy functions as such a principle in the present age because its actions are “selfish within the individual and it results in the selfishness of the society around him, which thus works against him.”²⁵ Kierkegaard claims that envy is present in reflection and, as such, in the present age “prevents one from making a decision passionately.”²⁶ He warns that envy in this era “springs from reflection that imprisons man’s will and his strength.”²⁷ Envy renders one incapable of acting in any way other than the selfish orientation engendered by envy. Kierkegaard continues that one has to become liberated from “the bonds of his own reflection” to address the severity of envy as task master. And yet even if there is an initial recognition of the need to break free, the person is still not free in the present age. Kierkegaard writes “instead he finds himself in the vast prison formed by the reflection of those around him, for because of his relation to his own reflection he also has a certain relation to the reflection around him.”²⁸ He calls this a second imprisonment that can only be overcome by the “inwardness of religion.” This inwardness includes passionate action committed to the truth and manifested in virtue. The social order, the herd society rooted in envy, prevents, masks, evades the implications of what it would take to be delivered from its own bondage.

There is an insidiousness to envy that pervades and prevents a society to encounter the means necessary for its freedom. Kierkegaard avers that “with every means in its power reflection prevents people from realizing that both the individual and the age are thus imprisoned, not imprisoned by tyrants or priests or nobles or the secret police, but by reflection itself, and it does so by maintaining the flattering and conceited notion that the possibility of reflection is far superior to mere decision. A selfish envy makes such demands upon the individual that by asking too much, it prevents him from doing anything. It spoils him like an indulgent mother, for the envy within him prevents the individual from devoting himself to others.”²⁹ The presence and pervasiveness of envy creates the environment of hostility toward others that diminishes society and the public realm. In place of devotion to others, loving them as ends and not as means to one’s gratification, “envy surrounds (the age) and the person participates by envying others.” This envy is negative and critical; it is the principle that drives the age.

²⁵ Ibid. 48.

²⁶ Ibid., 48.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

The normative principle of envy in the present age becomes inculcated in the attitudes of society and produces a more profound, more subtle kind of envy which sets in dominating persons. This deeper kind of envy manifests itself in two levels, the second of the two being the more insidious. He writes that the “further it is carried (i.e. envy) the more clearly does the envy of reflection become a moral *ressentiment*. Just as air in a sealed space becomes poisonous, so the imprisonment of reflection develops a culpable *ressentiment* if it is not ventilated by action.”³⁰ *Ressentiment* is poisonous because it infiltrates all of society, neutralizing “all higher powers.” Culpable or moral *ressentiment* is the first level of envy’s hegemony in neutralizing the excellence of the morally good in the present age. Without the acknowledged presence of moral excellence realized in the genuine hero in society, all “that is low and despicable comes to the fore, its very impudence giving the spurious effect of strength, while protected by its very baseness.”³¹ As this baseness becomes dominate in society, it masks its own presence, it appears normal, customary, and conventional to live attitudinally in this manner.

To understand this first dimension of *ressentiment*, the deepening entrenchment of envy in society, Kierkegaard compares it with *ressentiment* from the ancient world. Envy or *ressentiment* is the attitude that disdains the fact that others might excel oneself or one’s society. It is fundamentally comparative; it recognizes some excellence present in something or someone outside one’s self and detests the thing or the other as a result. It wishes to be the one who excelled over the other. In ancient Greece, moral envy or *ressentiment* functioned through ostracizing those who were superior through death or exile. One can only think of Socrates, a hero of the ethical life to Kierkegaard, in this regard. Ostracizing the morally excellent was a “self-defensive effort on the part of the masses to preserve their equilibrium in the face of the outstanding qualities of the eminent.”³² He writes, “ostracism was the mark of distinction.”³³ Kierkegaard contends that even though the outstanding person was exiled, the culture still understood, dialectically, the moral superiority of that person. It was an act that acknowledged the morally good, albeit it detested it in *ressentiment*. Kierkegaard offers this explanation: “the ancient person admitted that his relation to distinction was the unhappy love of envy, instead of the happy love of

³⁰ Ibid.,49.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

admiration, but he did not try to belittle that distinction.”³⁴ Consequently, the motivation to mask the reality of the truth of the moral order is *ressentiment*.

But there is a second dimension of *ressentiment* that engulfs society as it is more pervasively reflects Hegelianism. He writes, “the more reflection gets the upper hand and thus makes people indolent, the more dangerous *ressentiment* becomes, because it no longer has sufficient character to make it conscious of its significance.”³⁵ Remember our earlier discussion of the absence of virtue and character that is the prominent feature of the present age. It gives credence to vice; it establishes the context for this more insidious *ressentiment* to settle into society culminating in the production of mass society. *Ressentiment* at this level turns everything into levity, a joke, cleverness, and banal, buffoonish humor. It does not wish to insult because to insult implies difference; to acknowledge difference suggests that something might be superior which might make one consider ethical categories anew. There is a cowardliness to this level of *ressentiment* that ensures a kind of vacillation in interpreting situations and issues. If insult is present, it is always self-referential; the other has offended one’s superiority. In our own day by way of illustration, how many times have we heard by commentators and pundits that such and such a politician is insulting our intelligence. If these strategies fail, the society dismisses any distinction as “nothing at all.”³⁶ Or it might turn to “witticisms” that obscure the possibility of moral satire as one sees in Kierkegaard own experience in the Corsair affair.

This profound, subtle dimension of *ressentiment* carries the principle of envy as the governing directive in the present age to an even deeper level. Kierkegaard claims that this “*ressentiment* becomes the constituent principle of want of character (virtue), which from utter wretchedness tries to sneak itself a position, all the time safeguarding itself by conceding that it is less than nothing.”³⁷ As its constituent principle, it encourages and promotes vice. This want of character in *ressentiment* fails to recognize the distinctiveness of moral excellence; in fact, it is blind to it. As such, it cannot see that “eminent distinction really is distinction.”³⁸ Further, it fosters a hostility toward distinction in moral excellence and the orders of society that symbolize excellence. Kierkegaard writes that it does not understand itself “by recognizing

³⁴ Ibid., 50.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 51.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

distinction negatively” as we saw in moral *ressentiment*. More so, it wants to “drag it (distinction and excellence) down, wants to belittle it so that it really ceases to be distinguished.”³⁹ All distinctiveness is devalued through *ressentiment* in a way that reminds professors of grade inflation or lawsuits against them when inferior work is identified as such. The social order is left with a kind of hyper-egalitarianism: the coach is the same as the athlete, the teacher the same as the student, the parent the same as the child. It is impossible to define honor because the pervasive presence of this level of *ressentiment* hinders its recognition.

The result of this vice dominating, placating the present age or the public square is devastating to humanity. As Aquinas contended, humans are constituted to be *status viatoris*, people on the way. To be on the way to the fulfillment of what it means to be human as God’s image bearers requires hope, that confident expectation that something promised by a reliable agent will come to pass. Built into humans is the capacity for hope; it gives us a vision for seeing what might be in the midst of what is because it recognizes the structure of the substance we are as *imago dei* in light of God’s promise. Hope is a part of life socially as well as individually. In Kierkegaard’s view, however, the dominate presence of *ressentiment* castrates the possibility of hope. How ironic in light of the Hegelian enlightenment position that progress is inevitable through rationality. It gives a false hope; or, in Kierkegaard’s view, offers no hope because it sets the condition under which this lowest level of envy, *ressentiment*, can and will prevail. Listen to Kierkegaard on this point: “*Ressentiment* not only defends itself against all existing forms of distinction, but against that which is still to come.”⁴⁰ Humans, without the hallmarks of moral excellence and virtue, are barren of hope in a hopeless world. It is tantamount to the destruction of society.

Ressentiment as the central motivation behind the social deception of the present age establishes itself through “the process of leveling.” Leveling is called an “abstract power,” one that makes an individual a mere abstraction. Leveling “hinders action,” stifles, and shuns any “upheavals” to the status quo. Leveling mistakes the essential feature of equality. Proper equality, in Kierkegaard’s view, renders individuals capable of achieving inwardness in an individuality that promotes moral excellence by extending its requirements to all. In other words, one must be inward, subjectively committed to truth and all can participate in this process because our existence is transparency before God. But leveling provokes a “negative unity of the negative reciprocity of all

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

individuals.”⁴¹ Leveling makes everything and everyone the same and it works through the institutions and negative values of society to ensure that the mediocre reigns, distinctiveness having already been compromised and lost. Because it is an abstract power, it engulfs all associations in society that might promote the true equality of individuals acting passionately and committedly in truth. Because it is abstract and reinforced by all manners of relationships and roles in society, it is near impossible to hold something or someone accountable for its exercise. Kierkegaard mourns that “the desolate abstraction of the leveling process will always be continued by its servants, lest I should end with a return to the old order. The servants of the leveling process are the servants of the powers of evil, for leveling itself does not come from divinity.”⁴² It functions like a modern bureaucracy; who in the end really knows who makes decisions that frame the outcomes of life in a bureaucracy.

Kierkegaard claims that the “abstract principle of leveling like the biting of east wind, has no personal relation to any individual but has only an abstract relationship which is the same for everyone.” Kierkegaard seems to be standing in the ancient tradition of political philosophy that claims that genuine friendships of virtue are necessary for a society to be sustained. In the present age given that vice reigns and virtue is lost, there are no relationships that, in friendship, promote, with good will, the excellence of the other. Relationships are abstract, maybe even utilitarian in encouraging mediocrity and not excellence. He continues that in the present age there is “no hero who suffers for another.” In religion, a person learns “to be content with himself, and learns instead of dominating others” to be comfortable in one’s status without considering someone else. Everyone’s contentment with oneself with no distinctions of excellence to challenge oneself demonstrates the equality of all persons before God. There is no challenge to be more. Society is left with “negative associations” that promote a notion of equality stripped of its content. The Press, education, and the church collaborate to promote the leveling process generated by the presence of *ressentiment*. Culture is left barren and hollow; excellent artifacts where ever they might be found are devalued as a result of envy and its manifestation in the two levels of *ressentiment*. The public is a phantom indeed.

I have suggested in this article that the received tradition’s conception of Kierkegaard as a conservative individualist just does not meet up with the Kierkegaard we see in *Two Ages*. I have contended that the herd mentality discussed in the nineteenth-century is illuminated

⁴¹ Ibid., 52

⁴² Ibid., 42.

through his examination of the present age, and gives us an image of the ways in which social deception function to create the phantom public about which he wrote. I argue that in the place of virtue, the vice of envy in its various iterations dominates and promotes the mass/herd/ish/conformist society that worried nineteenth-century philosophers and social theorists. I offer Kierkegaard as an alternative account of the demise of the public realm through the presence of social deception in the present age.

Lacking, Ludicrous, or Logical? The Validity of Lewis's "Trilemma"



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No philosophical argument that C. S. Lewis ever made is more well known—or more controversial—than his famous “Trilemma” (not his word), or “Lord/Liar/Lunatic” (not his phrase) argument for the deity of Christ. N. T. Wright observes accurately that “This argument has worn well in some circles and extremely badly in others.”¹ And some of the sharpest critiques have come from within the believing community.

It is curious that an argument that has become a staple of Christian apologetics should be rejected as fallacious by many who presumably accept its conclusion. With not only the validity of a much used argument but also the competence of the greatest apologist of the Twentieth Century at stake, it is time to take a fresh look at Lewis's argument and its critics. Can we still use the Trilemma? If so, how should we approach it? At the end of the day, how does Lewis come off as an apologist and an example to other apologists? We will try to shed some light on such questions before we are done.

First, let's remind ourselves of the argument itself as it is presented in *Mere Christianity*. Lewis is addressing a person who says, “I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.” We note first of all that the Trilemma is presented not so much as an argument for the deity of Christ as a refutation, a heading off at the

¹ N. T. Wright, “Simply Lewis: Reflections on a Master Apologist after 60 Years,” *Touchstone* 20:2 (March 2007): 33.

pass, of one popular way of evading the claims of Christ. This, Lewis argues, is the one thing we cannot say.

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.²

The basic problem Lewis's critics have had with this argument is their contention that it commits the fallacy of False Dilemma, the premature closure of options. Marvin D. Hinten uses it as an example of one of Lewis's alleged weaknesses: he "overlimits choices."³ If it can be shown that there are other legitimate possibilities for how to understand the claims of Christ, it is urged, the argument fails.

The other possibilities suggested fall into basically two categories: first, the possibility that Jesus did not actually make the claims attributed to him, or that if he did, he did not mean them as the bald claims to deity for which conservative Christians have taken them; and, second, the possibility that someone could indeed be sincerely mistaken about his identity without being truly insane in a way that would necessarily compromise his views of ethics or his status and authority as a moral teacher. We will examine each of these categories in turn.

THE CRITIQUE: BIBLICAL CRITICISM

First, it is argued, modern biblical criticism does not allow us to make the naïve assumption either that Jesus said everything that the New Testament attributes to him or that what he did say has the meaning conservative Christians have attached to it. Few believers are ready to sign up for the Jesus Seminar and question wholesale whether the words of Jesus as reported in the canonical Gospels are authentic. But believers do need to concern themselves with the fact that many secular people today will not begin with a presumption of their authenticity. Thus,

² C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1943), 56.

³ Marvin D. Hinten, "Approaches to Teaching Mere Christianity," *The Lamp-Post of the Southern California C. S. Lewis Society* 30:2 (Summer 2006, pub. April 2008): 8.

Wright thinks that Lewis's argument "backfires dangerously when historical critics question his reading of the Gospels."⁴

It is more common to question whether Jesus' statements really add up to a clear and unequivocal claim to deity. All that is needed to deprive Lewis's argument of its logical force is the probability that Jesus' words should be taken in some other sense. For some, Lewis's failure to consider such a possibility robs him of all credibility. "Lewis' view that Jesus' claims were so clear as to admit of one and only one interpretation reveals that he is a textually careless and theologically unreliable guide."⁵

What are these other possible readings? Here things get a bit murky. It is apparently easier to suggest that a greater knowledge of, say, First-Century Jewish background would make such readings possible than it is to come up with specific examples. Thus, Beversluis: "Lewis's discussion suggests that all individuals of all times and places who say the kinds of things Jesus said must be dismissed as lunatics. But this overlooks the theological and historical background that alone makes the idea of a messianic claim intelligible in the first place."⁶ How exactly a knowledge of that background would alter the nature of Jesus' claims is not made clear. The best Beversluis can manage is, "When they did dispose of him, it was not on the ground that he was a lunatic but on the ground that he was an imposter."⁷

N. T. Wright takes a different tack, appealing to the "strong incarnational principle" which was the Jewish Temple, the sign of God's presence among his people.⁸ Lewis doesn't so much get Jesus' deity wrong as "drastically short circuits" the original Jewish way of getting there: "When Jesus says, 'Your sins are forgiven,' he is not claiming straightforwardly to be God, but to give the people, out on the street, what they would normally get *by going to the Temple*."⁹ By not taking us deeply enough into First-Century Jewish culture (at least as understood by Wright), Lewis fails to give us "sufficient grounding in who Jesus really was."¹⁰

⁴ Wright, "Simply Lewis," 33.

⁵ John Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 54.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Wright, "Simply Lewis," 32.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 33 (emphasis original).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

BIBLICAL CRITICISM: A RESPONSE

The first thing to see in response to these criticisms is that they are more a practical than a logical critique of Lewis's argument. The argument itself simply presupposes that Jesus said and meant the things he is traditionally taken to have said and meant: It treats "a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said." The argument is presented in the form, "If Jesus said and meant these things, this is what follows." To note that the initial premise is controversial in some circles is not a refutation; a refutation would require establishing that the initial premise is false, or at least probably not true. And this has simply not been done.

Why does Lewis, though, make an initial assumption that does not appear to be one that we can actually afford safely to make? It was not because he was unaware of biblical criticism. It seems to me that most critics of Lewis have simply ignored the original audience for the Broadcast Talks that eventually became *Mere Christianity*: not college educated people but simple British laypersons during World War II. To bring up the technical issues of biblical criticism with that audience would have been a foolish introduction of questions they were not asking, unnecessary complications they did not need to deal with. With a more sophisticated audience, one would of course have to be prepared to make a case for the authenticity of the Gospel accounts and deal with alternative interpretations. That Lewis knew of this challenge and was prepared to meet it when appropriate is proved by essays such as "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism."¹¹

Beverluis in 1985 rejected this defense: "When Lewis . . . justifies the popular approach on the ground that 'if you are allowed to talk for only ten minutes, pretty well everything else has to be sacrificed to brevity,' he presents not a justification but an excuse. . . . Why not write a longer book in which 'everything else' *can* be fully and fairly discussed?"¹² But here Beverluis falls prey to that regrettable tendency of reviewers to criticize the book they would have preferred the author to have written rather than the book he actually wrote. Would Beverluis have an audience of simple laypersons remain unaddressed? Does he really think it makes sense to confuse them with technicalities that do not concern them? As for the "longer book," one could say that it exists in *Miracles* or can be reconstructed from various essays that do address

¹¹ C. S. Lewis, "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," Paper given at Westcott House, Cambridge, 11 May 1959; in *Christian Reflections* (ed. Walter Hooper Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 52–66.

¹² Beverluis, *C. S. Lewis*, 57

different, more sophisticated audiences. In *C. S. Lewis's Case for the Christian Faith*, Richard L. Purtill has a fine discussion of that larger argument gleaned from a more generous sampling of the Lewis corpus.¹³ Most of Lewis's critics simply ignore that context.

In his second edition of *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*, Beversluis tries to respond to the arguments of Lewis and others that support a traditional reading of the Gospels as giving an accurate and reliable report of Jesus' claims. He says that all such arguments "uncritically assume that the synoptic Gospels are historically reliable sources."¹⁴ Instead of scholarship, apologists like Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli offer "a flurry of unscholarly pseudo-questions," such as why the apostles would be willing to die for what they knew was a lie.¹⁵ Real New Testament scholars don't ask such questions because they "know" that none of the original apostles had anything to do with the Gospels. "All mainstream New Testament Scholars agree that the synoptic Gospels are fragmentary, episodic, internally inconsistent, and written by people who were not eyewitnesses."¹⁶

For someone who claims to find fallacious motes in the eyes of others, Beversluis has a curious blindness to the beams in his own eyes. His whole argument here depends on the fallacies of *Ad Verecundiam* and *Dicto Simpliciter*. Even if all serious biblical scholars did agree with Beversluis, that fact in itself would not make them right. But they can only be said to agree by the sleight of hand of simply (and arbitrarily) defining a "mainstream" scholar as a skeptical one. Beversluis's unqualified generalization—*all?*—has never in fact been true, and is less true now than it has been at any time in the modern age. Richard Bauckham's magisterial *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* is just one recent counter-example. A basic source like Stephen Neil's classic *The Interpretation of the New Testament* could have provided Beversluis with many more.¹⁷

Beversluis in his revised edition also responds specifically to Lewis's own arguments in "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism." He simply dismisses Lewis's point that people who claim to find myths and legends in the Gospels need to know something about myths and legends and his observation that source criticism when applied to modern authors where

¹³ Richard L. Purtill, *C. S. Lewis's Case for the Christian Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981), 45–71.

¹⁴ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* (rev. & updated; Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2007), 116.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁷ Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1961* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

it can be checked is almost always wrong. Beversluis patronizes these concerns as “The Argument from Personal Incredulity.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, Lewis’s incredulity is not just a rhetorical ploy but has very good and specific grounds in his claim that the whole enterprise of skeptical criticism is methodologically flawed—an issue that Beversluis just fails to address. We have to conclude that the authenticity of the sources simply has not been overturned.

The alternative interpretations of Jesus’ claims are not impressive either. How is “When they did dispose of him, it was not on the ground that he was a lunatic but on the ground that he was an imposter” a problem?¹⁹ “Liar” is one of the implied horns of the Trilemma. Isn’t an imposter just one form of liar? Isn’t Liar at least as incompatible with Great Moral Teacher as Lunatic? And N. T. Wright seems to expect of his readers a sophistication in modern interpretations of Jewish culture that even the Pharisees of Jesus’ day did not manifest. After Jesus’ declaration that the sins of the paralytic were forgiven prior to his healing, they were not saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Where can sins be forgiven but *in the Temple* alone?” but “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but *God* alone?” (Luke 5:21; emphasis added). In other words, Lewis’s argument deals with the reactions Jesus’ contemporaries actually made to him—not the one Wright thinks they should have made! Wright thus tempts one to apply to him Lewis’s verdict from “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”: These critics are so adept in reading between the lines that they have forgotten how to read the lines themselves.

Beversluis fares no better when he claims that all that is needed is to suppose that Jesus had been “*authorized* to forgive sins by God.”²⁰ This again simply ignores the actual reaction by Jesus’ contemporaries. *They* took Jesus’ words as a claim to deity, and he did nothing to allay their concerns. In order to understand their reaction, as well as the significance of Jesus’ allowing it to take place, modern readers might be helped by imagining the reaction of a radical Muslim Fundamentalist to a mere human being who claimed to be Allah. It is ironic that Lewis is accused of ignoring the cultural context of the Gospels’ claims for Jesus by people who have obviously failed to make the effort to imagine the fierce monotheism of First-Century Judaism—a basic and essential prerequisite to any audience analysis of the words of Jesus! Far from Lewis’s views of the Gospels revealing him as “a textually careless and theologically

¹⁸ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis* (rev.), 123.

¹⁹ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis*, 56.

²⁰ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis* (rev.), 124.

unreliable guide" to them, it would seem that the accusation would better fit Lewis's critics.

In summary, Lewis's Trilemma did not, in fact, "backfire" with the audience for whom it was intended, even if it doesn't work with negative historical critics, a "failure" that Lewis himself would have expected. Even a more sophisticated audience that objectively examined the data would have to admit that the complications raised by modern biblical criticism do not overturn the initial premise of the Trilemma. Jesus in fact claimed deity: he made the statements, and he meant what he said. Anyone using the argument today should be prepared to make the case that he did so whenever it is needed. The wise apologist will not simply repeat Lewis's paragraph from *Mere Christianity*, but rather adapt it to his own audience. This will involve notations such as "Here be prepared to insert 'Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism,' along with further updated arguments." Unlike his critics, we should look to Lewis's other books and essays as evidence for how he himself would have used the argument from *Mere Christianity* in different contexts, and then follow suit ourselves.

THE CRITIQUE: MISTAKEN IDENTITIES?

The second major attempt to show that Lewis failed to cover his bases involves, amazingly, the denial that only an insane person could sincerely but mistakenly believe himself to be God, or that such a mistake would automatically disqualify him as a moral teacher. Beversluis originally asserted that "We could simply suppose that although [Jesus] sincerely believed he was God, he was mistaken": not lying or insane, just mistaken.²¹ He elaborates, "If we deny that Jesus was God, we are not logically compelled to say that he was a lunatic; all we have to say is that his claim to be God was false. The term lunatic simply clouds the issue with emotional rhetoric."²² In his second edition, he adds documentation from psychological studies of insanity to the effect that "delusional people are deluded about something . . . but they are rarely, if ever, deluded about everything."²³ Just because a person is deluded about who he is does not necessarily mean that he is deluded about the content of his moral teachings. Beversluis concludes, "The sober answer to the question is No, this is not the kind of blunder that only a lunatic would make."²⁴

²¹ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis*, 55.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis* (rev.), 126.

²⁴ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis*, 55.

Well, this assertion is generally correct; but surely its application to the specific case of Jesus would take some supporting. No doubt people may be sincerely mistaken about a lot of things, even having to do with their own identity, without being necessarily insane; and they can be insane without being wrong about morals. But make no mistake: We are being asked here to believe that a person could be mistaken about the claim that “Before Abraham was, *I Am*,” a person who was in a position to be familiar with the standard translation of the Tetragrammaton, the Old Testament name of God, and still be considered a sound thinker about morals. Is this really credible? Marvin D. Hinton shows how such support might look. When he teaches *Mere Christianity*, he asks his class

if they believe angels really did appear to Joan of Arc to say she was God’s chosen instrument to save France. Half the class shake their heads no; the other (quicker-thinking) half simply sit and think it over, because they already see where it is going. None of them see Joan as insane or demonic, so if they apply Lewis’s line of reasoning they will have to admit God really did send angels to Joan, which they have no intention of admitting. I then bring Mohammed into the mix, a man who genuinely seems to have felt Gabriel appeared to him with teaching from God. We discuss ways in which a goodhearted person could be genuinely mistaken about their [*sic*] role in life: an *idée fixe*, a hallucination, etc.²⁵

Okay, so the argument goes, you can be mistaken about your identity without being insane. Likewise, you can be mistaken about your identity without undermining your views of ethics. Lewis “apparently thought that if certain factual claims Jesus made about himself were false, a disastrous conclusion would follow about the truth, sanity, and reliability of his moral teachings. But why say that?”²⁶ Beversluis goes on to ask, “Did Lewis think that if Jesus were not God, there would no longer be any reason for believing that love is preferable to hate, humility to arrogance, charity to vindictiveness, meekness to oppressiveness, fidelity to adultery, or truthfulness to deception?”²⁷ So the Trilemma fails at every point by this view. You can in theory be mistaken about your identity without being insane *and* without having false views of ethics; therefore, Lewis has failed to eliminate the “Great Moral Teacher but not God” view of Jesus and hung his apologetic on a fallacious hook.

²⁵ Hinton, “Approaches,” 8.

²⁶ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis*, 55.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

“Contrary to what Lewis claims, we *can* deny that Jesus was God and say that he was a great moral teacher.”²⁸

MISTAKEN IDENTITIES? A RESPONSE

Lewis's critics succeed in undermining his argument only by use of a clever sleight of hand known as the fallacy of Equivocation. The argument they are critiquing is simply not the one that Lewis made. The criticisms all deal with the *general concept* of mistaken identity, whereas Lewis is dealing with a very *specific case* of it, the false claim *to be God*. As Horner rightly puts it, Beversluis's representation of the case (if “certain factual claims Jesus made about himself were false”) is hardly adequate. “The factual claims in question are of cosmic, as well as supremely personal and existential, consequence.”²⁹ Treating such vastly different cases of mistaken identity as equivalent is illogical at best and dishonest at worst. But Lewis's critics have to do it in order to make their criticisms sound plausible.

This weakness becomes very clear when we examine the examples Hinten uses to support the claim that mistaken identity does not entail insanity. Joan of Arc and Mohammed thought they had seen angels and had a special role in history as a result. One can just imagine that they could have been victims of some kind of hallucination or had some kind of experience that they misinterpreted, and that this could all have happened without compromising their general soundness of mind, or their views of ethics. But the problem is that such examples are simply not relevant to Lewis's argument. Joan and Mohammed did not claim to be *God*. That is, they did not claim to have existed from eternity in a special relationship with God the Father that made them Lord and gave them the authority to command the elements and forgive sins. They did not claim that they had a prior existence that was omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent—all of which is implied in and entailed by the specific nature of Jesus' claims. They did not claim that he who had seen them had seen the Father. *They did not claim to be the Yahweh of the Patriarchs and Moses incarnate in human flesh!*

How is it possible to miss the profound difference between all other mistakes about one's own identity and this one? One who wrongly believes that he is Napoleon has only confused himself with another

²⁸ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis* (rev.), 135

²⁹ David A. Horner, “*Aut Deus aut Malus Homo: A Defense of C. S. Lewis's 'Shocking Alternative'*,” in *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty* (ed. David Baggett, Gary Habermas and Jerry L. Walls; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 77.

finite human being. (Even this would present problems for the claim to be a great moral teacher. As Horner correctly observes, having correct views on ethics is a necessary, but hardly a sufficient condition for being a great moral teacher.)³⁰ But to believe that one is Yahweh differs from all other such mistaken claims by an order of magnitude that is . . . well, infinite. It compounds a mistake of fact (“I am this finite created being, not that one”) with an error in metaphysics (“I am not *a* finite being at all, but the Ground of all Being”). This is not, as Lewis’s critics want to believe, merely a matter of degree. The gap between any creature and the Creator is a difference of kind.

One might object that while the difference between the Creator and the creature is a difference of kind, the *claim* itself does not so differ from other claims, since all delusions are ontologically false to the same degree, that is, completely. But even if we accept this analysis and agree that all false claims are equally incorrect, it does not follow that all such errors are equally serious, much less morally equivalent. Claiming to be Napoleon, for example, does not make one guilty of blasphemy. Mistaking one creature for another is an error, conceivably innocent; mistaking a creature for the Creator is idolatry. The error attributed to Jesus would be of the latter variety, and surely not irrelevant to his status as a Great Moral Teacher!

To put it bluntly, therefore, Lewis’s critics’ ability to rebut his argument depends on their ability to substitute a different and inferior argument while no one is looking and get away with it. When, like Lewis, we remember the radical nature of what Jesus actually claimed, and compare it with the ridiculously inadequate examples urged against the Trilemma, the attempts to evade its force become laughably absurd.

An equal lack of attention to what Lewis actually said appears in the attempt to evade his claims about the implications of the relationship between Christ’s person and his teaching. Beversluis asks, “Did Lewis think that if Jesus were not God, there would no longer be any reason for believing that love is preferable to hate, humility to arrogance, charity to vindictiveness, meekness to oppressiveness, fidelity to adultery, or truthfulness to deception?”³¹ But Lewis was not evaluating the moral truth of Jesus’ teaching; he was examining the claims of the *Teacher*. His whole argument presupposes the self-evident truth of the teachings which is part of the evidence to be considered in evaluating the sanity of the Teacher.³² What is under scrutiny is the claims of the Teacher. Lewis is not saying that, if he were insane enough to wrongly think he was the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis*, 55.

³² Cf. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 137.

omnipotent God, Jesus' moral teaching would be refuted. He is saying that the self-evident truth of those teachings and their widely acknowledged superiority to all other attempts to state the same ideals refutes, i.e., is incompatible with, the notion that their source was a blatant liar or a megalomaniac. Nothing that his critics have said makes those propositions any more consistent than they ever were before. Beversluis's question is simply beside the point.

In summary, the attempts considered here to show that the Trilemma omits valid but unconsidered options all fail. In order to reject Lewis's argument, you have to be prepared to affirm that a person in his right mind can sincerely but mistakenly believe, not simply that he has been visited by an angel, but that he is Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe, and still retain any credibility on anything else he might say. Since very few people in their right minds are prepared to accept that conclusion, Lewis's critics are forced to try to undermine his argument by sneakily substituting a straw man for it. Refuting that weak substitution, they then pretend to have refuted the Trilemma. But no reader who is actually paying attention should fall for this shell game—for that is what it essentially is.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Lewis's Trilemma is still a strong argument and can be used with confidence, especially if we allow it to be nuanced and strengthened by its context in Lewis's body of writings as a whole. It is unfair to take a paragraph aimed at a lay audience and complain that it is inadequate to deal with people who have a more sophisticated set of issues. Of course the classic passage from *Mere Christianity* needs to be supplemented when used with more sophisticated audiences, by Lewis's other writings and by information and arguments that have come to light since he wrote. But the basic argument is sound. It is one thing to claim that it commits the fallacy of False Dilemma; it is quite another to show that other credible and valid options actually exist. Lewis's critics have simply failed to do that.

Second, Lewis's position as the dean of Christian apologists remains unchallenged. He was not infallible, but neither was he guilty of writing something in the Trilemma that was "not top-flight thinking."³³ His unique combination of wide learning, no-nonsense clarity, elegant language, and apt analogy remains as the standard to which we should all aspire and the example we should seek to emulate. When examined

³³ Hinton, "Approaches," 8.

carefully, the Trilemma supports that conclusion; it is not an exception to it.

Liar, Lunatic, or Lord? Lacking, Ludicrous, or Logical? Plunk for Liar or Lunatic if you must. But let's not come with any patronizing nonsense about how Lewis gave us a fallacious argument. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

What Does Mitt Romney Really Believe About Abortion?

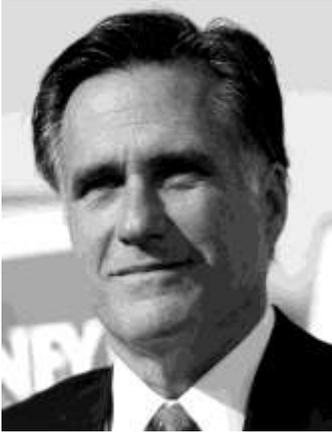


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Mitt Romney: “I separate quite distinctly matters of personal faith from the leadership that one has in a political sense.”

Piers Morgan: “Can you do that?”

Romney: “Absolutely”

Morgan: “Seriously?”

Romney: “You don’t begin to apply the doctrines of a religion to responsibility for guiding a nation or for guiding a state.”¹

During his 1994 run for the Senate against Ted Kennedy, Mitt Romney revealed his allegedly deeply personal reasons for being “pro-choice”:

Many, many years ago, I had a dear, close family relative that was very close to me who passed away from an illegal abortion. It is since that time that my mother and my family have been committed to the belief that we can believe as we want, but we

¹ Mitt Romney on *Piers Morgan Tonight* (7 June 2007).

will not force our beliefs on others on that matter. And you will not see me wavering on that.²

Unlike the other claim about watching his father march with Martin Luther King,³ this sad incident apparently really happened. The victim of the tragedy was his brother-in-law Loren Keenan's sister, Ann, who died on Oct 7, 1963. Ann's death certificate lists "Subarachnoid hemorrhage following septic criminal recent abortion." She was twenty one. Mitt's description of Ann as "a dear, close family relative that was very close to me," naturally lent credibility to his then very vocal "pro-choice" position. Less clear, however, is how, in light of the ostensibly personal character of his former stand, he now just as firmly declares himself "pro-life," and affirms that "abortion should be limited to only instances of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother," and supportive of the "reversal of *Roe v. Wade*."⁴ But whichever position on abortion one might think represents Mitt's real position on the issue, if he has one, the main thing to remember is that *neither* his former, uncompromising "pro-choice" stance, nor his current, strongly stated, but so-far-untested, pro-life stance, in any way affected his standing as a fully active faithful member and leader in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This fact alone should give us pause as to whether the Mormon Church means the same thing as the historic, biblical Christian Church when it expresses disapproval of abortion. And in fact it does not. From the point of view of Mormon theology the act of abortion is far less grave than it is from the Christian perspective. The purpose of this brief note is not to discuss the fitness of Mitt Romney as a candidate for political office. It is, rather, to inform Christians that there is a significant difference between the historic Christian position and the Mormon Church's position on abortion, a difference Christians need to be aware of when listening to Mitt Romney articulate his position on abortion.

Mormonism itself has a somewhat ambiguous record in relation to abortion dating all the way back to its founding Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. Early historical accounts indicate that Smith's sexual exploits

² Ben Johnson, "Romney Used Polls to Determine His 1994 Abortion Position," (Jan 13, 2012) (LifeSiteNews.com).

³ Michael Levenson, "Romney Never Saw Father on King March: Defends Figurative Words; Evidence Contradicts Story," *Boston Globe* (Dec 21, 2007).

⁴ Mitt Romney, "My Pro-Life Pledge," *National Review* "The Corner," blog (June 18, 2011). (<http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/269984/my-pro-life-pledge-mitt-romney>). See further, Justin Elliot, "The Abortion that Mitt Doesn't Talk About Any More" (Aug 8, 2011) (http://www.salon.com/2011/08/08/mitt_romney_abortion_ann_keenan/).

transgressed all bounds of legitimacy set at any time by official statements or prophesies of the LDS Church. Sarah Pratt, wife of early LDS Apostle Orson Pratt, who herself had occasion to rebuff the prophet's adulterous advances, remarks that "the prophet Joseph used to frequent houses of ill-fame," naming two in particular that she herself was aware of.⁵ In addition to this Joseph also engaged in sexual relations with many women both married and unmarried, resulting in occasional pregnancies, which, again according Sarah Pratt, were regularly aborted:

You hear often that Joseph had no polygamous offspring. The reason of this is very simple. *Abortion was practiced on a large scale in Nauvoo.* Dr. John C. Bennett, the evil genius of Joseph, brought this abomination into a scientific system. He showed to my husband and me the instruments with which he used to 'operate for Joseph.'⁶

Mrs. Pratt also reports telling Joseph Smith III: "Your father had mostly intercourse with married women, and as to single ones, Dr. Bennet was always on hand, when anything happened."⁷ It is certainly true that many of the women Joseph had sexual liaisons with were married,⁸ which as we said put him outside the bounds even of his own polygamy revelation (now *Doctrine & Covenant* 132), which made no provision for such behavior.⁹

In sharp contrast to the behavior of Mormonism's founding prophet, we find early Mormon leaders strongly repudiating abortion, even equated abortion with murder. Joseph F. Smith, for example, the son of the Prophet's brother, Hyrum, and the sixth president of the LDS Church said in 1916: "It is just as much murder to destroy life before as it is after birth."¹⁰ This position was eventually abandoned in favor of agnosticism with regard to abortion. In 1934, Mormon Apostle David O. McKay expressed the view that the Church had given no authoritative statement as to whether abortion was murder or not.¹¹ Later, in 1973, McKay, now

⁵ W. Wyl [Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal], *Mormon Portraits* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing & Pub., 1886), 60.

⁶ Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 59.

⁷ Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 61.

⁸ See, for example, the list in H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816-1844* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 561.

⁹ See *Doctrine & Covenants* 132:61.

¹⁰ *The Relief Society Magazine* 3.7 (July 1916): 368 (In a selection of statements from Mormon leaders under the heading "Birth Control.")

¹¹ Lester E. Bush, "Ethical Issues in Reproductive Medicine: A Mormon Perspective" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18:2 (1985): 51.

Church president, issued a statement along with the two other members of the First Presidency indicating that:

As the matter stands today, no definite statement has been made by the Lord one way or another regarding the crime of abortion, so far as is known, he has not listed it alongside the crime of the unpardonable sin and shedding of innocent human blood. That he has not done so would suggest that it is not in that class of crime.¹²

Addressing the subject of Abortion in the 1998 General Conference the late LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley (d. 2008) stated his opposition to it, describing it first of all as “an ugly thing, a debasing thing, a thing which inevitably brings remorse and sorrow and regret.”¹³ He goes on:

While we denounce it, we make allowance in such circumstances as when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have serious defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

Hinckley further urges those considering abortion under such circumstances to “pray in great earnestness, receiving a confirmation through prayer before proceeding.” Hinckley’s statement represents the current Mormon position. He stops short of calling it murder and allows

¹² Quoted in Lester E. Bush, “Ethical Issues,” 51.

¹³ Gordon B. Hinckley, “What Are People Asking about Us?” *Ensign* (Nov 1998): 71. Hinckley’s statement here simply repeats the LDS position as it had been in place for some time, as is seen, for example, in a formal statement issued by the LDS Church on 11 January 1991: “The Church recognizes that there may be rare cases in which abortion may be justified—cases involving pregnancy by incest or rape; when the life or health of the woman is adjudged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy; or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth. But these are not automatic reasons for abortion. Even in these cases, the couple should consider abortion only after consulting with each other, and their bishop, and receiving divine confirmation through prayer” (“Church Issues Statement on Abortion,” *Ensign* [March 1991]: Online edition at lds.org). In other words it must not be supposed that Hinckley was stating something new and unknown that might have influenced Romney to revise his position on abortion in a more conservative direction.

for exceptions for rape incest and the life or health of the mother. The same position is stated in the LDS Church published *Handbook 2: Administering the Church 2010*, except that there one additional exception is mentioned, i.e., where a “competent physician determines that the fetus has severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.”¹⁴

The reason the present LDS Church does not regard abortion as murder, or more precisely, does not take a clear position on whether it is murder or not, is that it’s official position is that it does not have an official position. This, in turn, has led the LDS Church to adopt a default position in which it is taken for granted as a safe assumption that abortion is not murder. We find abortion explicitly distinguished from murder in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, a reference work featuring faithful Mormon scholars but not published by the Church itself. In his entry on “Murder,” W. Cole Durham states that the LDS Church “distinguishes ABORTION from murder but holds it an extremely grave action.”¹⁵

The reason that abortion is generally assumed not to be murder by Mormons is the traditional belief and commonly held assumption that the child only becomes fully human at birth, or, more precisely, when the child’s spirit and body bond at the moment of first breath. This issue comes into clearer focus when the topic of stillborns is addressed. Lester E. Bush explains:

In practice, Mormon ritual has always distinguished between miscarriages or stillborn deliveries, and neonatal deaths. The former are not formally recorded in Church records; the latter are. Vicarious ordinance work, deemed essential for all humankind in Mormon theology, is never performed in the case of a miscarriage or stillborn delivery. It always is for a deceased infant. In essence, then, whatever the doctrinal uncertainties, Church practice treats birth as though it were the time when an important spirit-body bond takes place.¹⁶

In its section on the treatment of stillborns, the LDS *Handbook 2: Administering the Church 2010* states that “It is a fact that a child has life

¹⁴ *Handbook 2: Administering the Church 2010* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 195 (21.4.1).

¹⁵ W. Cole Durham, “Murder,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 2:971.

¹⁶ Lester E. Bush, “Ethical Issues in Reproductive Medicine: A Mormon Perspective” *Dialogue* 18:2 (1985): 51.

before birth. However, there is no direct revelation on when the spirit enters the body.”¹⁷

The Sept 1987 “I Have a Question” section of the official LDS Church magazine *Ensign* featured a query about the status of miscarriages and stillborns in the eyes of the LDS Church. It was responded to by Val D. Greenwood, at the time manager of special services, Temple Department. He explained that:

It is not clear exactly at what point of development that “certain stage” of quickening—when the spirit makes eternal claim to the body—occurs. Even though quickening occurs before birth, we still do not know definitely when a living soul comes into existence. In fact, some Church leaders have suggested that a living soul does not exist until three essential elements—the body, the spirit, and the breath of life—are all present.¹⁸

Despite frequent assertions of agnosticism regarding the moment the spirit bonds with the body, LDS Church policies and practices, take for granted that abortion is not murder. This is seen, for example, in assurances given in authoritative literature that abortion does not represent the unpardonable sin of shedding innocent blood. We see this, for example, in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church 2010*, which concludes its entry on abortion by saying that “As far as has been revealed, a person may repent and be forgiven for the sin of abortion.”¹⁹ If in fact the LDS leadership thought there was any real possibility that abortion *might* represent the shedding of innocent blood, one would surely expect that they would avoid offering such assurances.

A second and very unusual reason why abortion is not murder is the strongly dualistic idea of the human person in Mormonism. In Mormonism the bonding of the body and spirit represents the entry of a wholly independent, already pre-existing spirit person, into a newly formed physical body. “Man, as a spirit,” wrote Joseph F. Smith, “was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal [physical] body.”²⁰ This has led in popular Mormonism to the

¹⁷ *Handbook 2: Administering the Church 2010* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 194 (21.3.10).

¹⁸ Online Edition at lds.org

¹⁹ *Handbook 2*, 195 (21.4.1).

²⁰ Quoted in *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009), 9. Brackets in *Gospel Principles*'s quotation.

concept that if a child dies before taking a breath the spirit intended for that body will simply get back in line and enter another body later on. I learned of this view anecdotally while living in Utah. The former Mormon who is my informant, relates how her oldest sibling came to full term, but was stillborn, and, never having taken its first breath, was not named. Further, no funeral was performed for him. Later, another sibling, a girl, went to full term, did take a breath and died shortly after. The latter child was named, and given a funeral. My informant tells me that as far as the stillborn was concerned, the family understood by this that the male spirit that was intended for the body of the stillborn, would instead enter another body later on, either in the informant's own family or someone else's. As for the child that did take a breath, given the fact that the Mormons view this life as a time of testing, it was assumed that the little girl had been so righteous and worthy in the pre-existence that she only had to take a single breath in order to get the body necessary to go on to eventual glorification.

How widespread this idea of the first breath being the dividing line between ensouled human and non-ensouled human is in Mormonism is, I cannot tell, but it does flow nicely from Mormon theology as well as the way in which the policies of the LDS church basically treat the stillborn as a non-entity. Still the LDS Church occasionally comforts parents that their stillborns *might* be resurrected with the rest of their celestial families. We see this, for example, in a sidebar to a 2006 *Ensign* article in which Joseph Fielding Smith is quoted under the heading "Reason to Hope":

There is no information given by revelation in regard to the status of stillborn children. However, I will express my personal opinion that we should have hope that these little ones will receive a resurrection and then belong to us. I cannot help feeling that this will be the case.²¹

Such sentiments are expressed to give comfort to Mormon women who have lost pre-born children, but are at the same time assumed not to be true in all matters of policy in relation to the church's relation to those

²¹ See, Melinda E. Jennings, "Our Stillborn Baby," *Ensign* (Feb. 2006): 9-10: "As Jody and I sat in the celestial room, my emotions ran over. We hoped McKay would be sealed to us even though he was stillborn, and that if we were worthy, we would be able to raise him during the Millennium. However, I wanted to know it for certain. I knew that at the present time there is no revealed answer to these concerns, and I also knew that temple ordinances are not currently performed for stillborn children. This bothered me, for my faith at times was weak."

children, as is most significantly illustrated by the fact that Temple ordinances are not performed for them.

The upshot of all this for discerning what Mitt Romney really thinks about abortion is that in addition to the relatively straight forward problem raised by the issue of his credibility in making his pro-life claim—he was just as earnest remember about presenting himself as a pro-choice supporter of *Roe v. Wade*, when he wanted to become Governor of Massachusetts, as he now is in presenting himself as a pro-life supporter of its repeal (fig. 1)—we must also be ready to cope with potential differences in the definitions of the words Romney uses in articulating his pro-life claims. Consider for example the following statement he made back on February 18, 2007:

Abortion is taking a human life. There is no question but that human life begins when all the DNA is there necessary for cells to divide and become a human being. Is it alive? Yes. Is it human? Yes. And, therefore, when we abort a fetus we are taking a life at its infancy, at its very, very beginning roots, and a civilized society, I believe, respects the sanctity of human life.²²

Contrast this with a similar statement made by the Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

Destruction of the embryo in the mother's womb is a violation of the right to live which God has bestowed on this nascent life. To raise the question whether we are here concerned already with a human being or not is merely to confuse the issue. The simple fact is that God certainly intended to create a human being and that this nascent human being has been deliberately deprived of his life. And that is nothing but murder.²³

So what's the difference between the two statements? As we read Romney's remark we need to keep in mind as something relevant the line from the LDS *Handbook 2: Administering the Church 2010*, stating: "It is a fact that a child has life before birth. However, there is no direct

²² *Mitt Romney in His Own Words* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2012), 13-14.

²³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (ed. Eberhard Bethge; trans. Neville Horton Smith; New York: Macmillan, 1962), 130-31.

revelation on when the spirit enters the body.”²⁴ Bonhoeffer calls abortion murder, Romney does not.

Given the Mormon unofficial/official assumption that the soul does not enter, or perhaps more precisely does not become permanently bonded to the body prior to birth, it is not enough to take for granted that when Romney identifies the developing fetus as human that he means by that an ensouled human, with the corollary that actively killing it would amount to murder, or at least the taking of real ensouled human life. Given his own background and convictions as a Mormon we cannot simply take for granted that he means what Christians, or anyone else in the society means, when he says that the fetus is human. We must press him for further clarification with further questions like:

- (1) When, in your view, does the soul of a forming child enter the body?
- (2) At what stage, if any, during pregnancy are you willing to describe abortion as murder?

Romney 1994	Romney 2011.
<p>I believe that abortion should be safe and legal in this country; I have since the time that my mom took that position when she ran in 1970 as a U.S. Senate candidate...I believe that since <i>Roe v. Wade</i> has been the law for 20 years, that we should sustain and support it and I sustain and support that law and the right of a woman to make that choice...And you will not see me wavering on that.²⁵</p>	<p>I am pro-life and I believe that abortion should be limited to only instances of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother. I support the reversal of <i>Roe v. Wade</i>, because it is bad law and bad medicine. <i>Roe</i> was a misguided ruling that was a result of a small group of activists federal judges legislating from the bench.²⁶</p>
<p>Figure 1</p>	

²⁴ *Handbook 2: Administering the Church 2010* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 194 (21.3.10).

²⁵ Massachusetts Senatorial Debate (10/25/94). Does this statement contradict Romney’s earlier cited claim that he became pro-choice when his brother-in-law Loren Keenan’s sister, Ann, died? That took place on 7 October 1963. Seven years before the date he gives here. In fairness, he may simply be speaking in terms of active political support.

²⁶ *Romney in His Own Words*, 15. Notice that here Romney’s description of his position is that of the LDS Church.

When entering into political relationships with Mormons, even conservative ones, in the cause of life it is essential to remember that, quite apart from the credibility of any particular Mormon candidate, the Mormon position on abortion is itself morally evasive: There is no way to know if the soul is there, therefore we may safely assume that it is not. Let me illustrate this with a parable. Suppose you fall heir to the estate of a wealthy relative and while you are going through his stuff, you find a handsome little chest with several remarkable stones that look very much like diamonds. In order not to become too hopeful you remind yourself that there *is* a possibility that the stones are not real, that they are, say, cut glass or paste. As you start to plan how to find out which they are, it occurs to you that the discovery of something as potentially valuable as the stones might significantly complicate the settlement of the estate, in terms of taxes and so on. So you reason with yourself, “Well, since I don’t know for *certain* that these stones are real diamonds, I may safely assume they are not, lay them aside until the estate is settled, give it a couple of years, and then make some discreet inquiries into the their real value.”

***The Metaphysics of the Incarnation.* Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 253 pages, \$125.00. ISBN 978-0-19-958316-4.**

The doctrine of the Incarnation has always puzzled Christian theologians. How can it be that a divine person, the second Person of the Trinity, could become a human being? How can the same person possess all of the attributes of divinity and, at the same time, all of the limitations of humanity? Can one person be both omniscient and ignorant, both omnipresent and spatially located, both omnipotent and vulnerable to suffering and death? *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, provides something of a “state of the art” response when it comes to answering these crucial questions. Paying special attention to recent developments in the philosophy of mind and in cognitive science, this collection of essays provides a helpful map of the metaphysical options open to those who still wish to defend the coherence of the Incarnation.

The book emerged from a year-long collaboration by the two editors in the philosophy department at Oxford University, and features several of the most prominent analytic philosophers and theologians who have engaged these important issues. In the introductory chapter, Jonathan Hill provides some useful distinctions that help categorize the various approaches taken in the book and in scholarship more generally. Perhaps the most significant of these is the distinction between transformational/abstractist approaches, on the one hand, and relational/concretist approaches on the other. According to the former, the Incarnation involves the Son becoming transformed into a human being by acquiring the abstract properties common to human nature, viewed as a universal. According to the latter, the Incarnation involves the Son acquiring a certain relation to a specific human nature, viewed as a concrete particular. One of the most common ways of articulating the concretist view of the Incarnation is to espouse some form of compositionism—the view that the Incarnate Christ is composed of various parts: the divine Son, the divine nature, and the human body and soul (or body/soul composite).

The next three contributors all adopt the compositionalist approach. First, Brian Leftow considers how God the Son can be identified with the composite Christ (the Divine Son plus a human body and soul) by utilizing an extended thought experiment involving an exact human “Double” in an alternate universe (chapter 2). Next, Oliver Crisp examines the “habitus model” of the Incarnation, common in medieval and several contemporary accounts, and seeks to show that it does not fall prey to the Nestorian heresy (chapter 3). Thomas Flint then considers

the strengths and weaknesses of several mereological models of the Incarnation—models that see the relation between the Son and his human nature in terms of parts and wholes (chapter 4).

The next two chapters consider the kenotic approach to the Incarnation: that is, the view that the Son willingly gave up certain divine attributes in order to become Incarnate. In chapter 5, Thomas Senor attempts to defend an “ecumenical kenotic christology” that combines the traditional kenotic perspective with the insights of other models, including the compositionalist account and Thomas Morris’s two-minds approach. Stephen Davis then considers the metaphysics of kenosis in chapter 6, arguing that the Son’s temporary kenosis (which, for Davis, lasted only during his period of humiliation) is metaphysically permissible and is mainly motivated by a consideration of the biblical presentation of Christ’s earthly ministry.

The next several chapters argue for what are basically transformational models of the Incarnation. In chapter 7, Micahel Rea offers an account of the Trinity and the Incarnation grounded in a specific form of hylomorphism (a form/matter approach to the “nature of natures”). In chapter 8, Richard Swinburne interprets the Incarnation in classic abstractist terms: “Christ’s human nature [is] merely a set of properties, a human way of thinking and acting substantiated in the second person of the Trinity and conjoined in a human body” (160). Utilizing recent philosophical work on consciousness, Joseph Jedwab’s chapter explores how the Son’s divine way of thinking and his human way of thinking relate to one another in a united consciousness (chapter 9).

Chapters 10 and 11 investigate vehicle externalism models of the Incarnation—models that view Christ’s human nature as an instrument of the Divine Son. Richard Cross examines the contributions of medieval theologians Duns Scotus and Hervaeus Natalis (chapter 10), while Anna Marmodoro explores how Clark and Chalmers’ Extended Mind theory—the theory that the mind extends into the world by use of external devices—might be utilized for understanding the Son’s relation to his human nature (chapter 11). In the book’s final chapter, Robin Le Poidevin considers the metaphysical possibility of multiple incarnations and concludes that there are no logical objections to multiple incarnations even if there may be epistemological, psychological, and theological objections.

Marmodoro and Hill’s edited volume might have been improved by offering some reflections of a more methodological nature. In other words, how do we adjudicate between these various approaches? What criteria would we use to do so? What role should Scripture, tradition, and reason play in our decision? Perhaps any one of these various approaches

can succeed in fending off the charge of incoherence with regard to Chalcedonian Christology, but how do we know which one, if any, is the correct way of conceptualizing the Incarnation?

This *desiridatum* notwithstanding, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* provides an excellent summary of the various philosophical approaches to the Incarnation on offer in contemporary analytic theology. The book's careful organization highlights the various families of approaches: compositionism, kenoticism, abstractism, and vehicle externalism. My own sympathies lie with the relational/ concretist/ compositional models, but all of the chapters provide stimulating defenses of the various approaches.

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***Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies: An Exercise in Christological Anthropology and its Significance for the Mind/Body Debate.* By Marc Cortez. T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology. John Webster, Ian A. McFarland, and Ivor Davidson (Eds.) London: T. & T. Clark International, 2008, 250 pp., \$130.00. hard cover. ISBN: 978-0-567-03368-0**

Recognizing the vast array of perspectives in the area of theological anthropology, specifically when it comes to the mind-body debate, Marc Cortez asks about the implications of Christology on these diverse views. In *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies*, Cortez presents a reworking of his doctoral dissertation. The purpose is to apply Karl Barth's Christocentric anthropology to current theories of philosophy of mind (12). The work can be divided into two main parts. The first encompasses a presentation of Barth's anthropology. The second houses Cortez's assessment of monism, dualism, and integrative models (106-8) as they are applied to Barth's criteria for the development of a Christological ontology.

The first half of the book contains Cortez's presentation of Barth's anthropology culminating in his criteria for a theoretical ontology: (1) selfhood, (2) consciousness, (3) continuous personal identity, (4) agency, (5) mental causation, (6) freedom, (7) embodiment, and (8) contingent personhood (100-6). Armed with these eight criteria Cortez is ready to evaluate whether various anthropologies are viable candidates for a "Christologically adequate anthropological ontology" (111).

Cortez first uses Barth's criteria to evaluate physicalist models. Upon listing three forms of physicalism--eliminative materialism, reductive (or conservative) physicalism, and nonreductive physicalism--he summarily dismisses the first two because they do not make good candidates for

developing a Christological anthropology. He writes, “It seems highly unlikely that either eliminative or reductive physicalism could be developed in a way that would prove adequate to a christological anthropology” (111). This leaves nonreductive physicalism as the only possible physicalist model. Over the course of the fifth chapter, Cortez examines the core philosophical commitments of nonreductive physicalism and concludes that it has difficulties with mental causation, phenomenal consciousness, and the continuity of personal identity. Despite these challenges, however, Cortez deems nonreductive physicalism to be “a viable candidate for use as a mind-body theory within a christologically adequate anthropology” (154).

In chapter six, Cortez does to dualism what he did to physicalism in the preceding chapter. Immediately upon reading this chapter, his readers will become aware that when he refers to dualism, he means Cartesian dualism, “Modern dualist systems thus include basically Cartesian approaches” (157), an oversimplification that is more than just a little distracting. Following the same pattern as the previous chapter, he briefly introduces the spectrum of dualistic theories but simply dismisses all but substance dualism. His goal is to see “whether it is possible to formulate a form of substance dualism that is compatible with Barth’s Christological framework despite Barth’s own disavowals” (157). From the plethora of substance dualisms, Cortez further eliminates all but holistic forms, settling on Cartesian holism, emergent dualism, and Thomistic dualism for close inspection (165-68). As with chapter five, he explicates the philosophical commitments and objections, and then considers it in light of Barth’s Christological framework. Cortez examines how these theories deal with the problems of mental causation, embodiment, and contingent personhood. And again, just like chapter five, while he finds that holistic dualism has some serious weaknesses, he chooses to accept it for “serious consideration. . . . Despite these weaknesses though, HD [holistic dualism] has proven itself sufficiently capable of responding to its critics to be considered a christologically viable candidate for developing an anthropological ontology” (187).

In the relatively short conclusion, Cortez summarizes his research and reinforces his methodological approach. He ends with a “wait and see” attitude as to “whether either approach is able to make progress toward clarity,” adding that his hope is not to cut back other views but to build toward those theories that “seem most promising” (195).

For being a revision of a dissertation, this book is what one might expect. Its research is well documented and the structure is pedantic. For the subject matter, though, its rigid layout seems appropriate. He is trying to build a case, and so he must lay out the evidence in a way that his readers can follow. Overall, I have high praise for Cortez’s efforts. The

thoroughness and depth of understanding that Cortez brings to the discussion is laudable.

Some criticisms need to be mentioned, however. First, the book series and title strongly imply that the work is an exercise in systematic theology. The material, however, primarily focuses on the field of philosophy of mind (12-15) rather than theology. Furthermore, the first 80 pages exclusively deal with Barth's view of human ontology. This foundational theology is not mentioned in the title. Such omissions are frustrating. A title should convey or reflect the essence of the book. So, why does the title not mention Barth and why is T. & T. Clark publishing a philosophy book in their series on systematic theology? A simple alteration of the title will make all the difference.

Another weakness of the book is the way Cortez ultimately deals with his material. The focus is on Barth's criteria and how they can be used to determine what current ontologies may be developed into Christological ontologies. After spending more than half of the book deriving these criteria, when he arrives at the application stage, he dismisses all views but nonreductive physicalism and holistic substance dualism as possible candidates. We then are not surprised that the preselected positions, even with their significant challenges, are considered good candidates. I am not criticizing the rigor against which the two types of ontologies are judged. Cortez does a thorough job and shows great skill and understanding of the material. The problem is that he pre-selects the particular views he will test and his methodology breaks down at this point. Cortez accepts Barth's claim that the two physicalist views are "highly unlikely" to support a Christological ontology (111), while he rejects "Barth's own disavowal" of pre-selected holistic dualism (157). So, we are left wondering, why are Barth's views accepted in one case and rejected in the other? Consequently, Cortez's work is only half done. He presents no evidence to support the claim that the other views do not satisfy the criteria to a similar degree to the one's tested. We do not know because Cortez did not evaluate them in the same way. Until that happens, the work is incomplete.

Over all, this book is well worth reading for those with some significant background in philosophy of mind. Cortez does a remarkable job of presenting complex material in an understandable way. Any reader, however, must bring a knowledge of philosophical terms to the reading or be ready to make frequent runs to the dictionary. I suspect this book will serve as a resource in my library for years to come.

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***The Production of Prophecy: Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud.* Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Eds.). London; Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2009, pp. x + 235, paperback, \$32.95. ISBN-10:1845535006**

This work is a collection of essays by biblical scholars located at prestigious universities in both Europe and North America. Each contribution is a revised version of a presentation given at the first two sessions (2006 and 2007) of a new research program entitled, "Production and Reception of Authoritative Books in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods." These sessions were held at annual meetings of the European Association of Biblical Studies.

The contributors share some basic assumptions and presuppositions. Across the board, they date all the prophetic material to the very late neo-Babylonian period or the Persian period. Also, they display minimal or no interest in individual prophets; rather, they focus on prophetic books as cultural productions that reflect the concerns of a small, powerful, educated group responsible for producing them. In fact, Ehud Ben Zvi argues in his article, "Towards an Integrative Study of the Production of Authoritative Books in Ancient Israel," that the same Persian era group responsible for the prophetic corpus is also responsible for the production of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic corpus. His reconstruction suggests that these three sets of material are interrelated. Any display of diversity in these works was intentional and added interpretive flexibility to the textually-oriented societies that produced them.

Readers will find that *The Production of Prophecy* is truly *niche* scholarship. That is not necessarily a negative characterization. I simply use the term to describe the extremely narrow perspective and homogenous quality of the book. For example, Diana Edelman argues in her two contributions that those responsible for the prophetic material were post-exilic, elite priests who archived prophetic oracles into compositions (i.e. books) that rhetorically characterize prophecy as an obsolete phenomenon of the past. These priests attempted to undermine prophets and prophecy for the sake of establishing community and cultural cohesion. They believed texts could provide a cohesion and uniformity that prophecy could not. Although Edelman skillfully articulates her own theory, there is no dialog with alternate theories. Also, there is no consideration of possible problems with a theory of priestly composition. Malachi, for instance, ends the entire prophetic corpus with a prolonged, intense, theological attack on Persian era priests. According to Malachi, priests rob God, make a mockery of the cult, fail as messengers of YHWH, and are so spiritually impotent and

inept that God must send a special messenger (Mal 3:1-4) to purify everything and everyone. How does Malachi, then, fit into a theory of priestly composition? Are readers expected to believe that a corpus whose last word (i.e. Malachi) completely undermines the priesthood is itself a product of priests? These are the tough questions that *The Production of Prophecy* routinely avoids.

As a side note, I find it odd that a work like Malachi—a consensus Persian era book—merits no investigation whatsoever in a study of prophetic books and the Persian era. Perhaps in the end it is simply too much of a monkey wrench and needed to be left out of the equation. This point is important because it illustrates my characterization of *The Production of Prophecy* as *niche* scholarship. The contributors share the same general presuppositions and met to make advances in a shared theory. As a result, one can come away from the work with an acute understanding of their theory of composition of prophetic books and no idea that there are competing theories or serious problems with this one.

So who should read *The Production of Prophecy*? I would say that there are two groups for whom it is a “must read”: scholars specializing in the Persian era, and scholars specializing in the Hebrew prophets. Although it is not a conversant work, it is a clear articulation of a theory of Persian origins for all prophetic books (and for some contributors, the bulk of Old Testament books). Anyone who does not give a hearing to this perspective cannot say that he or she is current or up to date in their scholarship. I say this even though I left the book unconvinced of its theory. Those looking for a general work on the prophetic books should look elsewhere—this one is simply too narrow and homogenous to provide a sound vantage point for surveying the field.

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Hays, Daniel J. *The Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010, 376 pp., \$44.99 hardcover, ISBN: 978-0-310-27152-9.

In his work *The Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament*, J. Daniel Hays offers undergraduate students and academically engaged church laity an excellent resource for studying the OT Prophets. The work represents what Hays calls “a ‘critical conservative,’ evangelical approach to the prophets,” (17) and strives for neutrality on issues surrounding the

millennial debate. Hays, who presently serves as dean of the Pruet School of Christian Ministries and professor of OT at Ouachita Baptist University, has demonstrated his ability to create helpful, learner-oriented resources for biblical interpretation with such works as *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (2nd ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005) and *The Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

The Message of the Prophets follows the English Canon and is divided into three major parts: introduction to prophetic literature, the Major Prophets (including Lamentations and Daniel), and the Minor Prophets. Part one is comprised of five chapters addressing introductory matters such as the nature of prophecy in the OT, ancient Near Eastern history that parallels the biblical prophets, features of poetic language, theological message, eschatology. Addressing the message of the prophets, Hays summarizes the “standard” prophetic message as threefold: “(1) You (Israel/Judah) have broken covenant; you had better repent! (2) No repentance? Then Judgment! Judgment will also come on the nations. (3) Yet there is hope beyond the judgment for a glorious future of restoration both for Israel/Judah and for the nations” (63). Hays’s discussion of eschatology presents a concise and helpful survey of the major interpretive systems regarding the millennial kingdom, along with a discussion of typology and an approach which he calls “the near view/far view” (80–81).

Following these introductory chapters, Hays designates 150 pages to the treatment of the Major Prophets in part two and 96 pages to the Minor Prophets in part three. Each book begins with a section on the historical setting of the book and the overall message. Hays then walks through each book, providing a basic commentary and presenting important topics in side-bar articles set apart from the text (e.g., “Swords and Plowshares” in his discussion of Isaiah 1 – 3, and “What Happened to the Ark of the Covenant” in his discussion of Jeremiah). Numerous photographs, illustrations, and maps fill out the pages of each chapter, making the book feel less technical and more multidimensional in its presentation of the material. A small bibliography for further study is included at the end of each chapter.

Hays’s comments on the biblical text are easily accessible for a wide readership, but reveal a solid familiarity with modern scholarship. While strongly recognizing the supernatural and futurist components of biblical prophecy, Hays focuses more of his attention on the meaning of the prophets’ words with regard to their ancient context. This is seen in his typological approach to the “seventy sevens” of Dan 9:24, where he writes: “Perhaps we should see this text with a near/far view

understanding and see Antiochus Epiphanes as the near view fulfillment, foreshadowing the future Antichrist (the far view)” (252). The “near view/far view” interpretation is employed for Immanuel in Isa 7:14 (111), messianism in Zech 9–14 (350), and the reconstruction of the temple in the postexilic prophets (347).

The Message of the Prophets excels in many areas as an introduction for the first-time student of the OT Prophets. Despite being a survey of the Prophets, Hays does not sidestep or gloss over difficult texts and concerns. Instead, he offers multiple perspectives, allowing the student/teacher to work through the interpretive issues at stake, often times referencing works in the text or footnotes for further study (e.g., authorship of Isaiah, 96–98). This is an important feature of the book, and will no doubt serve in making it more useful among varied theological traditions. For instructors who adopt The Message of the Prophets as a textbook, Zondervan Academic offers a host of excellent resources for enhancing the classroom (or virtual classroom) experience through their Textbook Plus program. Professors have access to an instructor’s manual, digital images used in the book, quizzes, map exercises, and exams. Having recently developed a course on OT prophetic literature using this book, the riches of the Textbook Plus program quickly became apparent and were appreciated.

Hays and Zondervan have succeeded in providing teachers and students with an engaging, accessible, and accurate guide to the OT Prophets. The material can easily be covered over one semester, but achieves a depth that surpasses a standard course in OT introduction. I highly recommend this work for undergraduate students and church laity seeking a reliable guide to the exciting—but sometimes challenging—study of biblical prophecy.

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***Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology.* By Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011, 896 pp., \$46.99, hardcover. ISBN-10: 082543047X.**

Köstenberger is Director of Ph.D. Studies and Senior Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Academic Editor for Broadman & Holman Publishers, and the author, editor, or translator for over twenty books. Richard D. Patterson is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Liberty University, where he formerly served as chairman of the Department of Biblical Studies and professor of Semitic Languages and Literatures, and has published several books. They wrote *Invitation to Biblical*

Interpretation in order to present “a simple method for interpreting the Bible . . . built around the hermeneutical triad, which consists of history, literature, and theology” (23).

The book actually presents a triad within a triad. The authors explain that a full-orbed interpretive process consists of preparation, interpretation, and application. While the lion’s share of the book discusses the “hermeneutical triad” of history, literature, and theology under the category of “Interpretation,” the authors devote the first and last chapters of the book to “Preparation” and “Application and Proclamation,” respectively. In the first chapter, the authors orient the reader to the interpretive process, covering introductory topics such as the importance of correct interpretation, character qualities of the biblical interpreter, and historical approaches to interpretation. In the last chapter, the authors explain the process of moving from exegesis to exposition--from Scripture to sermon--focusing a good portion of the chapter on principles of application. In addition to the major sections on preparation, interpretation, and application/proclamation, the authors include a useful appendix on building a personal biblical studies library.

The majority of the book is dedicated to exploring a triadic approach to the text, allowing readers to view the text in multiple dimensions by understanding its historical context, literary features, and theological significance. In part one, the interpreter is encouraged to situate the text within its historical-cultural context by using relevant archaeological and textual sources, such as Ancient Near Eastern literature, rabbinic literature, pseudepigrapha, early histories such as Philo and Josephus, and Greco-Roman sources. In part two, the interpreter learns the importance of understanding literary features of the text, telescopically zooming into the details of the text by approaching it first at a canonical level (so as not to “miss the forest for the trees”) then moving to issues of genre and language at the discourse level. In addition to noting important interpretive guidelines for each scriptural genre, the authors explain linguistic issues such as grammar, syntax, discourse analysis, and semantics. The authors also include a helpful discussion on common exegetical fallacies, as well as principles for interpreting figurative language. Part three of the book details how to discover the theological significance of the text. With a renewed interest in Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS), Köstenberger and Patterson make a unique contribution to the field by explaining how TIS works at an interpretive level.

Invitation to Biblical Interpretation has much to commend it. First, while the rubric of the triad is simple enough to be memorable, it has the necessary breadth and depth to cover each step in the interpretive process thoroughly. Beyond this, though the authors have treated the subject comprehensively, the material is accessible enough to be useful as an introductory or intermediate text in hermeneutics. It makes for convenient classroom use with study questions and assignments at the end of each chapter (and additional teaching materials such as PowerPoint slides on the publisher’s website). Second, the book includes some unique features such as the sections on canon, discourse analysis, and theological analysis that exceed the expectations of a typical hermeneutics textbook. Third, though Köstenberger and Patterson give readers the tools to

approach the text with a serious exegetical methodology, they do not lose sight of the practical concerns of readers who are interpreting the Bible with an eye toward teaching and preaching. The last chapter provides practical advice on Bible teaching – including warnings against common mistakes made while moving from text to sermon through the various genres of Scripture.

Köstenberger and Patterson have left little to critique within this text. Even so, criticism might be leveled in a couple of areas. First, it was surprising that there was not a substantive discussion on whether the meaning of the text is controlled by the author, text, or reader, a question considered foundational to the discipline by most scholars. Though they believe that “authorial intention is the locus of meaning” (118), it would have been helpful to see a more thorough justification for this approach, especially in light of current postmodern hermeneutical methodologies which advocate reader-controlled meaning. Second, it could be argued that approaching the scriptural text at a canonical level in the early stages of the interpretive process--going from canon to book instead of book to canon--could do harm to the concerns of each individual book and author, causing the interpreter to read the message, language, or concerns of one biblical author onto another without giving proper treatment to each text individually. However, the authors have done a very adequate job of defending their approach, noting that a canonical approach is an appropriate response to the fact that separate texts are often bound together in various ways and it is helpful to interpret one text in light of another since they are all part of the overarching storyline of Scripture (p. 151-162).

Criticism notwithstanding, Köstenberger and Patterson have done pastors, students, and professors a tremendous service in writing this book. Among other commendable works on hermeneutics, such as Grant Osborne’s *The Hermeneutical Spiral, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William W. Klein, Craig L Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., and *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moisés Silva, this work should be prioritized as a gold-standard textbook for colleges and seminaries. It brings the most recent scholarship to the task of interpretation and presents the material in a cogent and cohesive manner. While the book is extensive enough for graduate-level students, it is still accessible for college students or pastors and laypeople with little theological training. If the reader is looking for a robust guidebook for competent exegesis from two expert practitioners, look no further.

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***How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture.* By Michael Williams. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012, 267 pp., \$18.99, softcover. ISBN-10: 031033165X**

Michael Williams is a professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary. *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens* follows in the tradition of the other *How to Read the Bible* series published by Zondervan. Williams wrote this book to show that the entire Bible is a witness to Jesus Christ. He

notes that “reading the Bible through the Jesus lens is reading it the way that it was intended” (9). Williams’ goal in this book is to parallel what Jesus did with his disciples on the Emmaus road by showing them that all of the Scriptures are about him.

In the heart of the book Williams covers each book of the Bible in individual chapters. He does this in a relatively short amount of space (usually about four pages per biblical book). Each chapter has the same design. First, Williams explores the main theme of each book and gives a memory verse that exemplifies the main theme. Each of these themes is then discussed in light of Christ; in other words, Williams looks at the theme through the Jesus lens. Next, Williams looks at the contemporary implications of the main theme. The Old Testament books are connected to New Testament passages. The final section of each chapter is composed of hook questions that lead the reader into an application of the text to their lives.

How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens has several admirable features. First, the book is clear and concise and is able to cover large amount information in a small amount of space. This is particularly helpful for the layman and student. The book gives a very good overview of how the entire Bible, book by book, refers to Jesus.

Another good feature of this work is that it does not stop at content, but goes on to application. Williams notes that he did not want this work to be academically detached, but to be applicable to contemporary life and he largely accomplishes this. It is refreshing to read a book that understands that a knowledge of Christ leads to the conformity of our lives to that of Christ’s.

There are a few minor deficiencies of this book that deserve mention. First, the themes that are identified are limited and do not always depict the major thrust of the book. The most prominent example of this is the theme identified in Psalms, “God the Great King provides words of lament and praise that are appropriate responses to him” (74). While this statement is correct and it does capture much of what the Psalms are about, it would be hard to classify every Psalm in this manner. In the chapter on the Psalms it would have been beneficial to approach the theme with more hesitation with a qualifier such as, “It is particularly difficult to pin down a single theme, but the book can largely be summed up as...” The theme of the book of Judges also only partially covers the idea of the book. With this particular example the memory verse associated with the theme would more naturally be Judges 21:25, “In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes.” This appears in slightly different forms four times at the end of the book (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25) and serves as the hermeneutical key to the entire book.

A second minor point that deserves critique is that the application can at times seem forced. For example, the application that Williams draws out of Genesis is blessing, which he gets from Genesis 12:2-3. His application here (and a few other times) assumes a one to one correspondence of ideas from the Old Testament to the New. This particular application also does not take into account the direct context of the passage, where covenantal curses are just as much, if not more, a part of the context of the narrative as blessing is.

A final minor critique is that there are certain constraints to the format. While standardization is helpful, it gives rise to a certain inconsistency in presentation. The book of Obadiah, for instance, is given almost as much space as any other book, even though it is much shorter. Should shorter books like Obadiah or Ruth get just as much attention as larger books like Isaiah or Luke?

Despite these few negatives, *How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens* would be beneficial to the lay person, student, or pastor interested in understanding the centrality of Christ through the entirety of the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament. This work complements previous works like *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* by Edmund Clowney, *The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of the Messiah* by T. Desmond Alexander, and *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* by Christopher J.H. Wright. *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens* would serve as a good supplemental textbook at the college level or as a good resource for a Bible study in a church setting.

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