

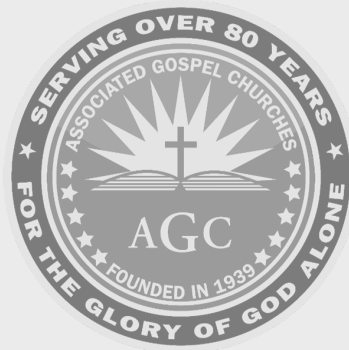
— The AGC —

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Rooted in the Great Commandment (*Matthew 22:36-40*) and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*), and recognized by the federal government as an official ecclesiastical endorsing agency, the Associated Gospel Churches (AGC) exists to represent Biblically Christ-centered churches, for the purpose of recruiting, endorsing, educating and supporting ordained men to serve as chaplains—pastors in uniform—in publicly-restricted access institutions.

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FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY

*υποφέρουν από δυσκολίες μαζί μου, ως καλός
στρατιώτης του Ιησού Χριστού*

– II Tim 2:3

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

If this is your first adventure into the world of chaplain ministry, welcome to the AGCJournal. It is our most sincere hope that the articles in this periodical will not only bless you, but help equip you for the challenges of the Gospel message in the context of military ministry, as well as other professional and industrial evangelistic outreaches for the Lord Jesus Christ. This Journal is here for you and is a provided service of the Association of Gospel Churches (AGC). It is meant as a toolbox and a resource to help you become more knowledgeable about different aspects of ministry. Whether how to apply a biblical truth to a modern problem or gaining some insight into a Scripture passage, this is written by Chaplains, for Chaplains and covers many different genres and topics. The following are items of interest which hopefully will help you be all you can be before the Lord.

PROFESSIONAL CHAPLAIN ITEMS OF INTEREST

Historical Chaplaincy: “Christian Patriotism”

“Christian Patriotism” is an early American essay written by Chaplain Andrew Fuller. In this insightful article, which was edited by Ken Lawson, many practical observations of a military chaplain are presented. Questions such as the relationship of the Gospel of Christ and the State are not new. As Chaplain Fuller writes about being a Christian and working for the state, he discusses questions about the righteousness of a nation which publicly supports the evil of slavery. He also brings up the duty of those Christians who are good and how they should resist evil every chance they get. Lastly, he discusses the conflict of being a servant of the Prince of Peace and following the dictates of Caesar. All topics which are still faced by us as Christ loving Chaplains today.

Practical Ministry in Chaplaincy: “Suicide and the Sufficiency of Scripture”

This article was written by a former Navy Chaplain who is now a missionary in an openly Muslim country. His name has been left out for obvious reasons, but he tackles a sensitive problem: Does the Gospel preaching Chaplain who believes the Bible is sufficient for every aspect of life have the knowledge, training and understanding to actively help by offering counseling to those who are suicidal in the military? By offering not only Scriptural insights, but actual lifetime experience to answer this question, the reader will gain more confidence in trusting the veracity of God’s Word when the need arises.

Apologetical Ministry in Chaplaincy: “Dawkins, you Magnificent Atheist, I Read Your Book!”

The article takes its title from a by-line in a classic war movie and gives some insight and shows logical fallacies of the “new atheism” promoted by secular academia. Armando Torralva has experience as a pastor, military Chaplaincy and as a Christian scholar in dealing with those who embrace a secular perspective. Armando has been on the front lines and has fought the fight of faith versus an ungodly world view fueled by atheism. This is great insight indeed for any future conflict a Chaplain may encounter with humanistic philosophy.

Biblical Scholarship in Chaplaincy: “The Quest for Early Church Historiography”

This work should be required reading for all Christian seminaries. In this summary of his book on doing Christian history correctly, Jeremiah Mutie writes in his book “The Quest for Early Church Historiography” on how theological and historical liberals are just plain wrong when it comes to doing Church history. By using careful scholarship on who said what and when, he tears apart the veneer and emptiness of how modern church historians like Bart Ehrman have distorted the historical record of God’s church. This book is currently the number one historical book seller for Wipf and Stock and is worth having in your library.

BOOK REVIEWS

In our attempt to help you find Biblical resources for certain current issues, here are some books which cover some of today's most relevant topics:

“God, Technology and the Christian Life”

Book review by D. R. Hutchcraft. We all are affected by technology, but how does that work on our lives as believers? This review summarizes all chapters and lays out what the author thinks is still the most important thing in the world for the believer in the 21st century. The summary of the book is interesting and brings the reader back to the sovereignty of God over His Creation.

May the Lord bless you as you serve Him and this great nation of ours!

For God's Glory,

Bob Freiberg, editor

CDR, CHC, USN-ret, M.Div, Th.M, D.D., D. Min.

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CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM
An 1803 Sermon by Andrew Fuller

Edited by Kenneth Lawson

After 34-plus years of enlisted and officer military service, Dr. Ken Lawson is a retired army chaplain with the rank of colonel. He is now an adjunct college professor and serves as the historian for the Associated Gospel Churches.

Andrew Fuller is not a household name today.¹ The famous British preacher Charles H. Spurgeon once described Andrew Fuller as “the greatest theologian” of his century.² The sermon *On Christian Patriotism* by Andrew Fuller addresses the duty of Christian citizens to their country during times

¹ Andrew Fuller was born in Soham, Cambridgeshire, England, where in 1775 he was ordained pastor of the Baptist church. In his day, evangelism was underemphasized by the hyper-Calvinist idea that God would save whomever He pleased, therefore human responsibility for evangelism was minimized. In 1785 he famously published *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, which did much to prepare his denomination for accepting its evangelistic and missionary obligations. The strengthening missionary vision of this group bore fruit on October 2, 1792, when the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen (later known as the Baptist Missionary Society) was formed. Fuller was appointed secretary. William Carey, lifelong missionary to India, was the most famous product of the BMS. Until his death in 1815, Fuller combined the demands of a busy pastorate with managing the affairs of the BMS. He traveled extensively promoting evangelism and missions, and raising funds for the society. Fuller was recognized by his contemporaries as a preeminent Baptist theologian of their day, and was awarded honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees by both Princeton (1798) and Yale (1805). The collected works of Andrew Fuller are still in print. See his *Collected Works*, (1845: reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, Hinton, VA: 1988). Brian Stanley, “Fuller, Andrew,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998), 230-231.

² “Andrew Fuller,” *Banner of Truth*, <https://banneroftruth.org/us/about/banner-authors/andrew-fuller/>.

of war.³ When Fuller preached this sermon at the Baptist Church in Soham in 1803, Great Britain was bracing for a possible invasion by the triumphant armies of France under Napoleon. Fuller's message is relevant for Christians today whether they are soldiers defending their nation or civilians seeking to be good citizens of their home country.

"If we seek the good of our country, we shall do every thing in our power to promote its welfare. We shall not think it sufficient that we do it no harm, or that we stand still as neutrals, in its difficulties." – Andrew Fuller

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

*"And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."
Jeremiah 29:7*

In the course of human events, cases may be expected to occur in which a serious mind may be at a loss with respect to the path of duty. Presuming, my brethren, that such may be the situation of some of you, at this momentous crisis, a crisis in which your country, menaced by an unprincipled, powerful, and malignant foe, calls upon you to arm in its defense. I take the liberty of freely imparting to you my sentiments on the subject.

When a part of the Jewish people were carried captives to Babylon, ten years, or thereabouts, before the entire ruin of the city and temple, they must have felt much at a loss in determining upon what was duty. Though Jeconiah, their king, was carried captive with them, yet the government was still continued under Zedekiah; and there were not wanting prophets, such as they were, who encouraged in them the hopes of a speedy return.⁴ To settle their minds on this subject, Jeremiah, the prophet, addressed the following letter to them, in the name of the Lord: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to

³ In response to French military aggression throughout Europe and other places, on May 18, 1803, Great Britain declared war on France.

⁴ II Kings 24:1-25:30; Habakkuk 1:1-11; Jeremiah 39:1-18; Zechariah 5:9-6:15; Ezra 1:1-11.

husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished: and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."⁵

I do not suppose that the case of these people corresponds exactly with ours; but the difference is of such a nature as to heighten our obligations. They were in a foreign land; a land where there was nothing to excite their attachment, but everything to provoke their dislike. They had enjoyed all the advantages of freedom and independence, but were now reduced to a state of slavery. Nor were they enslaved only: to injury was added insult. They that led them captive required of them mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"⁶ Revenge, in such circumstances, must have seemed natural; and if a foreign invader, like Cyrus, had placed an army before their walls, it had been excusable, one would have thought, not only to have wished him success, but if an opportunity had offered, to have joined an insurrection in aid of him, yet nothing like this is allowed. When Cyrus took this great city, it does not appear that the Jews did anything to assist him. Their duty was to seek the welfare of the city, and to pray to the Lord for it, leaving it to the great Disposer of all events to deliver them in his own time; and this not merely as being right, but wise: "In their peace ye shall have peace."

Now if such was the duty of men in their circumstances, can there be any doubt with respect to ours? Ought we not to seek the good of our native land; the land of our fathers' sepulchers; a land where we are protected by mild and wholesome laws⁷, administered under a paternal prince⁸; a land where civil and religious freedom are enjoyed in a higher degree than in any other country in Europe; a land where God has been known for many centuries as a refuge; a land, in fine, where there are greater opportunities for propagating the gospel, both at home and abroad, than in any other nation under heaven? Need I add to this that the invader was to them a deliverer; but to us, beyond all doubt, would be a destroyer?⁹

⁵ Jeremiah 29:4-7.

⁶ Psalm 137:1-6 describes the scene of despairing Jews in captivity in Babylon, taunted by their captors to sing songs of their homeland. The Jews were too depressed to comply.

⁷ He is referring to the British Parliament.

⁸ The King of England in 1803 was King George III, who reigned from 1760 to 1820.

⁹ Napoleon of France invaded many countries as a pretended deliverer, but the British view was that Napoleon was a destroyer. After seizing political power in France in a 1799 coup d'état, Napoleon crowned himself emperor in 1804.

Our object, this evening, will be partly to inquire into the duty of religious people towards their country, and partly to consider the motive by which it is enforced.

I. INQUIRE INTO THE DUTY OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR COUNTRY.

Though, as Christians, we are not of the world¹⁰, and ought not to be conformed to it¹¹; yet, being in it, we are under various obligations to those about us. As husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, &c., we cannot be insensible that others have a claim upon us, as well as we upon them¹²; and it is the same as members of a community united under one civil government.¹³ If we were rulers, our country would have a serious claim upon us as rulers; and, as we are subjects, it has a serious claim upon us as subjects. The manner in which we discharge these relative duties contributes not a little to the formation of our character, both in the sight of God and man.

The directions given to the Jewish captives were comprised in two things; "seeking the peace of the city," and "praying to the Lord for it." These directions are very comprehensive; and apply to us, as we have seen, much more forcibly than they did to the people to whom they were immediately addressed. Let us inquire, more particularly, what is included in them.

Seek the peace of the city. The term here rendered peace signifies not merely an exemption from wars and insurrections, but prosperity in general. It amounts, therefore, to saying, Seek the good or welfare of the city. Such, brethren, is the conduct required of us, as men and as Christians. We ought to be patriots, or lovers of our country.

To prevent mistakes, however, it is proper to observe that the patriotism required of us is not that love of our country which clashes with universal benevolence, or which seeks its prosperity at the expense of the general happiness of mankind. Such was the patriotism of Greece and Rome; and such is that of all others where Christian principle is not allowed to direct it. Such, I am ashamed to say, is that with which some have advocated the cause

¹⁰ John 17:14-16.

¹¹ Romans 12:1-2.

¹² Ephesians 6:1-9.

¹³ Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17; I Timothy 2:1-2.

of negro slavery. It is necessary, forsooth, to the wealth of this country! No; if my country cannot prosper but at the expense of justice, humanity, and the happiness of mankind, let it be unprosperous!¹⁴ But this is not the case. Righteousness will be found to exalt a nation, and so to be true wisdom. The prosperity which we are directed to seek on behalf of our country involves no ill to any one, except to those who shall attempt its overthrow. Let those who fear not God, nor regard man, engage in schemes of aggrandizement, and let sordid parasites pray for their success. Our concern is to cultivate that patriotism which harmonizes with good-will to men. O my country, I will lament thy faults! Yet, with all thy faults, I will seek thy good; not only as a Briton, but as a Christian: "for my brethren and companion's sakes, I will say, Peace be within thee: because of the house of the Lord my God, I will seek thy good!"¹⁵

If we seek the good of our country, we shall certainly do nothing, and join in nothing, that tends to disturb its peace, or hinder its welfare. Whoever engages in plots and conspiracies to overturn its constitution, we shall not. Whoever deals in inflammatory speeches, or in any manner sows the seeds of discontent and disaffection, we shall not. Whoever labors to depreciate its governors, supreme or subordinate, in a manner tending to bring government itself into contempt, we shall not. Even in cases wherein we may be compelled to disapprove of measures, we shall either be silent, or express our disapprobation with respect and with regret. A dutiful son may see a fault in a father; but he will not take pleasure in exposing him. He that can employ his wit in degrading magistrates is not their friend, but their enemy; and he that is an enemy to magistrates is not far from being an enemy to magistracy, and, of course, to his country.¹⁶ A good man may be aggrieved; and being so, may complain. Paul did so at Philippi.¹⁷ But the character of a complainer belongs only to those who walk after their own lusts.¹⁸

¹⁴ Slavery was outlawed in Great Britain on May 1, 1807. Andrew Fuller was friends with leading British abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce.

¹⁵ Psalm 122:9.

¹⁶ "When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish, there is glad shouting. By the blessing of the righteous a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down," (Proverbs 11:10-11).

¹⁷ Acts 16:25-40.

¹⁸ "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage," Jude 16.

If we seek the good of our country, we shall do everything in our power to promote its welfare. We shall not think it sufficient that we do it no harm, or that we stand still as neutrals, in its difficulties. If, indeed, our spirits be tainted with disaffection, we shall be apt to think we do great things by standing aloof from conspiracies, and refraining from inflammatory speeches; but this is no more than may be accomplished by the greatest traitor in the land, merely as a matter of prudence. It becomes Christians to bear positive good-will to their country, and to its government, considered as government, irrespective of the political party which may have the ascendancy.¹⁹ We may have our preferences, and that without blame; but they ought never to prevent a cheerful obedience to the laws, a respectful demeanor towards those who frame and those who execute them, or a ready co-operation in every measure which the being or well-being of the nation may require. The civil power, whatever political party is uppermost, while it maintains the great ends of government, ought, at all times, to be able to reckon upon religious people as its cordial friends;²⁰ and if such we be, we shall be willing, in times of difficulty, to sacrifice private interest to public good; shall contribute of our substance without murmuring; and, in cases of imminent danger, shall be willing to expose even our lives in its defense.

As the last of these particulars is a subject which deeply interests us at the present juncture, I shall be excused if I endeavor to establish the grounds on which I conceive its obligation to rest.

We know that the father of the faithful, who was only a sojourner in the land of Canaan, when his kinsman Lot with his family were taken captives by a body of plunderers, armed his trained servants, pursued the victors, and bravely recovered the spoil. It was on this occasion that Melchizedek blessed him, saying, "Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand!"²¹

¹⁹ "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," I Timothy 2:1-4.

²⁰ "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king," I Peter 2:13-17.

²¹ Genesis 14:19-20.

Perhaps it will be said, this was antecedent to the times of the New Testament; Jesus taught his disciples not to resist evil;²² and when Peter drew his sword, he ordered him to put it up again; saying, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."²³

You know, my brethren, I have always deprecated war, as one of the greatest calamities; but it does not follow, hence, that I must consider it in all cases unlawful.²⁴

Christianity, I allow, is a religion of peace; and whenever it universally prevails, in the spirit and power of it, wars will be unknown. But so will every other species of injustice; yet, while the world is as it is, some kind of resistance to injustice is necessary, though it may at some future time become unnecessary. If our Savior's command that we resist not evil be taken literally and universally, it must have been wrong for Paul to have remonstrated against the magistrates at Philippi; and he himself would not have reprov'd the person who smote him at the judgment-seat.²⁵

I allow that the sword is the last weapon to which we should have recourse. As individuals, it may be lawful, by this instrument, to defend ourselves or our families against the attacks of an assassin; but, perhaps, this is the only case in which it is so; and even there, if it were possible to disarm and confine the party, it were much rather to be chosen than in that manner to take away his life. Christianity does not allow us, in any case, to retaliate from a principle of revenge.²⁶ In ordinary injuries it teaches patience and forbearance. If an adversary "smite us on the one cheek," we had better "turn to him the other also," than go about to avenge our own wrongs.²⁷ The laws

²² Matthew 5:39.

²³ Matthew 26:52.

²⁴ Andrew Fuller disliked war, but he thought there were times war was necessary. To him, all war is not unjust or unlawful. In this sermon he describes his version of the Just War Theory. Church leaders like Augustine (354-430) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) wrote detailed philosophies of Just War that are still widely accepted today. See Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Alexander F.C. Webster, *The Virtue of War: Reclaiming the Classical Christian Traditions East and West*, (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2004); Paul Ramsey, *The Just War: Force and Political Responsibility*, (Savage, MD: Littlefield Adams Publishers, 1983).

²⁵ Acts 16:35-40; 23:1-5.

²⁶ The various nuances of Christianity and resistance to evil or fighting in a war are delineated in Robert G. Clouse, *War: Four Christian Views*, (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1986).

²⁷ Matthew 5:38-45.

of honor, as acted upon in high life, are certainly in direct opposition to the laws of Christ; and various retaliating maxims, ordinarily practiced among men, will no doubt be found among the works of the flesh.²⁸

And if, as nations, we were to act on Christian principles, we should never engage in war but for our own defense; nor for that, till every method of avoiding it had been tried in vain.

Once more, It is allowed that Christians, as such, are not permitted to have recourse to the sword, for the purpose of defending themselves against persecution for the gospel's sake.²⁹ No weapon is admissible in this warfare but truth, whatever be the consequence.³⁰ We may remonstrate, as Paul did at Philippi, and our Lord himself, when unjustly smitten;³¹ but it appears to me that this is all. When Peter drew his sword, it was with a desire to rescue his Master from the persecuting hands of his enemies, in the same spirit as when he opposed his going up to Jerusalem; in both which instances he was in the wrong: and the saying of our Savior, that "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," has commonly been verified, in this sense of it.³²

I believe it will be found, that when Christians have resorted to the sword in order to resist persecution for the gospel's sake, as did the Albigenses, the Bohemians, the French protestants, and some others, within the last six hundred years, the issue has commonly been, that they have perished by it;

²⁸ The so-called "Laws of Honor" were based on retaliation, vengeance, selfishness, and revenge. This unofficial male European code of conduct was practiced by those in high society as well as the common folk. The concept was retribution and often violence against those with whom there was disagreement. People were easily offended and sought retaliation for even slight offenses. Using swords or pistols in duels to settle disagreements or offenses was a symptom of the Laws of Honor. Andrew Fuller denounced this behavior as "opposite to the laws of Christ," and based on "the works of the Flesh," from Galatians 5:19-21.

²⁹ "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls," I Peter 2:20-25.

³⁰ One wonders how Andrew Fuller would explain Esther 9:1-5. In this text, the Jews were designated for slaughter by Persian authorities. The Jews defended themselves with weapons and killed their persecutors. The Jews had the truth but also killed their enemies to prevent their extermination.

³¹ Matthew 26:57.

³² Matthew 26:52.

that is, they have been overcome by their enemies, and exterminated: whereas, in cases where their only weapons have been "the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, loving not their lives unto death," they have overcome.³³ Like Israel in Egypt, the more they have been afflicted, the more they have increased.

But none of these things prove it unlawful to take up arms as members of civil society, when called upon to do so for the defense of our country.³⁴ The ground on which our Savior refused to let his servants fight for him, that he should not be delivered into the hands of the Jews, was, that his was a kingdom "not of this world;" plainly intimating that if his kingdom had been of this world, a contrary line of conduct had been proper.³⁵ Now this is what every other kingdom is: it is right, therefore, according to our Lord's reasoning, that the subjects of all civil states should, as such, when required, fight in defense of them.

Has not Christianity, I ask, in the most decided manner recognized civil government, by requiring Christians to be subject to it? Has it not expressly authorized the legal use of the sword? Christians are warned that the magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain;" and that he is "the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."³⁶ But if it be right for the magistrate to bear the sword, and to use it upon evil-doers within the realm, it cannot be wrong to use it in repelling invaders from without; and if it be right on the part of the magistrate, it is right that the subject should assist him in it; for otherwise, his power would be merely nominal, and he would indeed "bear the sword in vain."

³³ This quote is from Revelation 12:11. Fuller uses this verse to promote the idea that even though the Devil may oppose and even kill Christians, those killed have still "overcome" evil with eternal salvation and did not resort to temporal physical violence to defend their faith. Heaven rejoices in their faithfulness.

³⁴ Thus, the previous example from Esther 9:1-15. Also, when David killed Goliath on a battlefield, he was not criticized by the Lord, but was commended (I Samuel 17:48-58; I Chronicles 20:4-8; Acts 13:22). In Nehemiah's day, the Jews rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem while being armed and prepared to fight against enemy agitators (Nehemiah 4:1-14).

³⁵ In Luke 3:14, John the Baptist is approached by Roman soldiers. They ask him what they should do to prepare for the Messiah. John responds by saying, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." These soldiers were simply doing their duty in this world, and they were told to be honest in their vocation, not to cease being soldiers. Andrew Fuller elaborates on this text later in his sermon.

³⁶ Romans 13:1-4.

We have not been used, in things of a civil and moral nature, to consider one law as made for the religious part of a nation, and another for the irreligious. Whatever is the duty of one, allowing for different talents and situations in life, is the duty of all. If, therefore, it be not binding upon the former to unite in every necessary measure for the support of civil government, neither is it upon the latter; and if it be binding upon neither, it must follow that civil government itself ought not to be supported, and that the whole world should be left to become a prey to anarchy or despotism.³⁷

Further, If the use of arms were, of itself, and in all cases, inconsistent with Christianity, it were a sin to be a soldier: but nothing like this is held out to us in the New Testament. On the contrary, we there read of two believing centurions; and neither of them was reprov'd on account of his office, or required to relinquish it.³⁸ We also read of publicans and soldiers who came to John to be baptized, each asking, "What shall we do?" The answer to both proceeds on the same principle: they are warn'd against the abuses of their respective employments; but the employments themselves are tacitly allowed to be lawful. To the one he said, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you;" to the other, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." If either of these occupations had been in itself sinful, or inconsistent with that kingdom which it was John's grand object to announce, and into the faith of which his disciples were baptized, he ought, on this occasion, to have said so, or, at least, not to have said that which implies the contrary.³⁹

If it be objected that the sinfulness of war would not be so much at the door of the centurions and soldiers as of the government by whose authority it was proclaimed and executed, I allow there is considerable force in this; but yet, if the thing itself were necessarily, and in all cases, sinful, every party

³⁷ Jesus established the fact that government authorities should be submitted to and obeyed by its citizens. After supporting the idea that taxes should be paid to run the government, Jesus said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God," (Luke 20:25).

³⁸ The accounts of the two believing centurions are found in Matthew 8:5-13, when the servant of the centurion is healed; and in Matthew 27:54, when a centurion professes his faith in Christ while Jesus hung on the cross.

³⁹ The extended narrative by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:10-18 describes how a Christian is prepared to fight the Devil as a Roman soldier is prepared to fight his enemies. The "whole armor of God" in this text is placed in a positive, necessary image, as is the favorable perception of soldiering.

voluntarily concerned in it must have been a partaker of the guilt, though it were in different degrees.⁴⁰

But granting, it may be said, that war is not, in itself, necessarily sinful; yet it becomes so by the injustice with which it is commonly undertaken and conducted. It is no part of my design to become the apologist of injustice, on whatever scale it may be practiced. But if wars be allowed to be generally undertaken and conducted without a regard to justice, it does not follow that they are always so; and still less that war itself is sinful. In ascertaining the justice or injustice of war, we have nothing to do with the motives of those who engage in it. The question is, whether it be in itself unjust? If it appeared so to me, I should think it my duty to stand aloof from it as far as possible.⁴¹

There is one thing, however, that requires to be noticed. Before we condemn any measure as unjust, we ought to be in possession of the means of forming a just judgment concerning it.

If a difference arise only between five families, or two individuals, though every person in the neighborhood may be talking and giving his opinion upon it; yet it is easy to perceive that no one of them is competent to pronounce upon the justice or injustice of either side, till he has acquainted himself with all the circumstances of the case, by patiently hearing it on both sides. How much less, then, are we able to judge of the differences of nations, which are generally not a little complex, both in their origin and bearings; and of which we know but little, but through the channel of newspapers and vague reports! It is disgusting to hear people, whom no one would think of employing to decide upon a common difference between two neighbors, take upon them to pronounce, with the utmost freedom, upon the justice or injustice of national differences. Where those who are constitutionally appointed to judge in such matters have decided in favor of war, however painful it may be to my feelings, as a friend of mankind, I consider it my duty to submit, and to think well of their decision, till, by a careful and impartial examination of the grounds of the contest, I am compelled to think otherwise.

After all, there may be cases in which injustice may wear so prominent a feature, that every thinking and impartial mind shall be capable of perceiving

⁴⁰ Andrew Fuller is here making the distinction between the just cause of a war (*Jus ad Bellum*) compared to the just conduct within a war (*Jus in Bello*).

⁴¹ Andrew Fuller lived in a time when, according to his own principles, his native Great Britain was engaged in unjust and just wars. For Fuller, unjust wars were fought by British troops in Africa in support of the slave trade. Fuller saw a just war for England in fighting against the despotic French Emperor Napoleon.

it; and where it does so, the public sense of it will and ought to be expressed. In the present instance, however, there seems to be no ground of hesitation. In arming to resist a threatened invasion, we merely act on the defensive; and not to resist an enemy, whose ambition, under the pretense of liberating mankind, has carried desolation wherever he has gone, were to prove ourselves unworthy of the blessings we enjoy. Without taking upon me to decide on the original grounds of the difference, the question at issue with us is, is it right that any one nation should seek absolutely to ruin another, and that other not be warranted, and even obliged, to resist it?⁴² That such is the object of the enemy, at this time, cannot be reasonably doubted. If my country were engaged in an attempt to ruin France, as a nation, it would be a wicked undertaking; and if I were fully convinced of it, I should both hope and pray that they might be disappointed. Surely, then, I may be equally interested in behalf of my native land!

But there is another duty which we owe to our country, which is, That we pray to the Lord for it.⁴³ It is supposed that religious people are a praying people. The godly Israelites, when carried into Babylon, were banished from temple-worship; but they still had access to their God. The devotional practice of Daniel was well known among the great men of that city, and proved the occasion of a conspiracy against his life.⁴⁴ King Darius and his successors knew so much of the character of the Jews as to request an interest in their prayers, in behalf of himself and his sons.⁴⁵ My brethren, your country claims an interest in yours; and I trust that, if no such claim were preferred, you would, of your own accord, remember it.

You are aware that all our dependence, as a nation, is upon God; and, therefore, should importune his assistance. After all the struggles for power, you know that in his sight all the inhabitants of the world are reputed as nothing: he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the

⁴² The French under Napoleon hoped to defeat the British by invading England. The British knew that to defeat the French they had to fight Napoleon in continental Europe. In 1803, Napoleon gathered an invasion force to attack Great Britain with two thousand ships and about 180,000 troops. This attacking force was deterred by the logistical challenges of crossing the English Channel.

⁴³ II Chronicles 7:14-18 states that when the Jewish people seek God in prayer and repentance, the nation will be blessed, and the king will be established by God. Jeremiah 29:5-10 instructed the Jewish people to pray for the success and prosperity of the foreign city and its rulers to which they were deported. In the New Testament, Christians are instructed to pray for “kings, and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life,” (I Timothy 2:2).

⁴⁴ Daniel 6:1-5.

⁴⁵ Ezra 7:13-23.

inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?⁴⁶ Indeed this has been acknowledged, and at times sensibly felt, by irreligious characters; but in general the great body of a nation, it is to be feared, think but little about it. Their dependence is upon an arm of flesh.⁴⁷ It may be said, without uncharitableness, of many of our commanders, both by sea and land, as was said of Cyrus, God hath girded them, though they have not known him.⁴⁸ But by how much you perceive a want of prayer and dependence on God in your countrymen, by so much more should you be concerned, as much as in you lies, to supply the defect. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much."⁴⁹

You are also aware, in some measure, of the load of guilt that lies upon your country; and should therefore supplicate mercy on its behalf.⁵⁰ I acknowledge myself to have much greater fear from this quarter than from the boasting menaces of a vain man. If our iniquities provoke not the Lord to deliver us into his hand, his schemes and devices will come to nothing. When I think, among other things, of the detestable traffic before alluded to, in which we have taken so conspicuous a part, and have shed so much innocent blood, I tremble!⁵¹ When we have fasted and prayed, I have seemed to hear the voice of God, saying unto us, "Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke!"⁵² Yet, peradventure, for his own name's sake, or from a regard to his own cause, which is here singularly protected, the Lord may hearken to our prayers, and save us from deserved ruin. We know that Sodom itself would have been spared if ten righteous men could have been found fit her. I proceed to consider,

⁴⁶ Daniel 4:35.

⁴⁷ In II Chronicles 32:7-8, King Hezekiah is threatened by an overwhelming invading army from Assyria. Hezekiah ridiculed the invading forces as an "arm of flesh," meaning they were only human. In contrast, Hezekiah stated, "but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles."

⁴⁸ The Cyrus mentioned here ruled as king of Persia from 559-530 B.C. He was a pagan ruler who, under the providence of God, was used to help the captive Jews in many ways (Isaiah 44:28-45:7). Andrew Fuller is here stating that, just as Cyrus did not know the God of the Bible, but was useful in God's overall plan, so the military commanders of Great Britain, who may not be Christians, were still instruments in the providence of God in preserving the English people.

⁴⁹ James 5:16.

⁵⁰ Andrew Fuller saw Great Britain as guilty before God because of the slave trade.

⁵¹ The "detestable traffic" and the "innocent blood" refer to trafficking in slaves and all its cruelties.

⁵² Isaiah 58:6.

II. THE MOTIVE BY WHICH THESE DUTIES ARE ENFORCED: "IN THE PEACE THEREOF SHALL YE HAVE PEACE."

The Lord hath so wisely and mercifully interwoven the interests of mankind as to furnish motives to innumerable acts of justice and kindness. We cannot injure others, nor even refrain from doing them good, without injuring ourselves.

The interests of individuals and families are closely connected with those of a country. If the latter prosper, generally speaking, so do the former; and if the one be ruined, so must the other. It is impossible to describe, or to conceive beforehand, with any degree of accuracy, the miseries which the success of a foreign enemy, such as we have to deal with, must occasion to private families. To say nothing of the loss of property among the higher and middle classes of people, (which must be severely felt, as plunder will, undoubtedly, be the grand stimulus of an invading army,) who can calculate the loss of lives? Who can contemplate, without horror, the indecent excesses of a victorious, unprincipled, and brutal soldiery? Let not the poorest man say, I have nothing to lose. Yes, if men of opulence lose their property, you will lose your employment. You have also a cottage, and perhaps a wife and family, with whom, amidst all your hardships, you live in love; and would it be nothing to you to see your wife and daughters abused, and you yourself unable to protect them, or even to remonstrate, but at the hazard of being thrust through with the bayonet? If no other considerations will induce us to protect our country, and pray to the Lord for it, our own individual and domestic comfort might suffice.

To this may be added, our interests as Christians, no less than as men and as families, are interwoven with the well-being of our country. If Christians, while they are in the world, are, as has been already noticed, under various relative obligations, it is not without their receiving, in return, various relative advantages. What those advantages are we should know to our grief, were we once to lose them. So long have we enjoyed religious liberty in this country, that I fear we are become too insensible of its value. At present we worship God without interruption.⁵³ What we might be permitted to do under a government which manifestly hates Christianity, and tolerates it even at home

⁵³ In Great Britain there was relative harmony between religious groups. The Church of England was supreme, but other groups were tolerated such as Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Quakers, and others. The Roman Catholic Church had little influence.

only as a matter of policy, we know not.⁵⁴ This, however, is well known, that a large proportion of those unprincipled men, in our own country, who have been laboring to overturn its constitution, have a deep-rooted enmity to the religion of Jesus. May the Lord preserve us, and every part of the United Kingdom, from their machinations!

Some among us, to whatever extremities we may be reduced, will be incapable of bearing arms; but they may assist by their property, and in various other ways: even the hands of the aged poor, like those of Moses, may be lifted up in prayer; while their countrymen, and it may be their own children, are occupying the post of danger. I know it is the intention of several whom I now address freely to offer their services at this important period. Should you, dear young people, be called forth in the arduous contest, you will expect an interest in our prayers. Yes, and you will have it. Every one of us, every parent, wife, or Christian friend, if they can pray for anything, will importune the Lord of hosts to cover your heads in the day of battle!

Finally, It affords satisfaction to my mind to be persuaded that you will avail yourselves of the liberty granted to you of declining to learn your exercise on the Lord's day.⁵⁵ Were you called to resist the landing of the enemy on that day, or any other work of necessity, you would not object to it; but, in other cases, I trust, you will. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

⁵⁴ Andrew Fuller is here alluding to the atheistic and humanistic philosophies that dominated French society. Protestant Christianity in France was persecuted by Roman Catholics as well as by the secular enlightenment thinkers of that time.

⁵⁵ Except attending church services, it was customary at that time in England for all non-essential activities to cease on Sundays. Andrew Fuller was advocating for the observation of the Sunday sabbath by the military to honor the Lord's Day. This military pause for the Sunday sabbath was often done.

SUICIDE AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

J. R. F

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Senarios involving suicidality are the most difficult, yet most common, counseling occurrences that a military chaplain will face. Many chaplains feel ill-equipped to deal with the challenge. This article contends that the Christian chaplain often feels insufficient for the challenging task of counseling those at risk of suicide because of a lack of reliance upon the revelation of God in Holy Scripture. The aim of this paper is to bolster the chaplain's confidence in the power and sufficiency of the Word of God, highlight the important Gospel opportunities that suicide care provides, and suggest ways in which a faithful chaplain can take advantage of the many resources that may exist within their commands.

INTRODUCTION

Early in my time as a Navy chaplain, I observed a conversation that would illustrate a theme that I would encounter all too often in subsequent years. During a "Q&A" session at an annual training course, a senior

chaplain raised his hand and stated something along the lines of, “I keep seeing on AFN advertisements telling Servicemembers who are experiencing suicidal ideations and behaviors to go talk to a Chaplain. Who is putting these ads out? I wouldn’t know what to say to someone who is struggling like that. I’m not qualified to help them!” I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to laugh, cry or break something. What was even more disappointing was that this chaplain was endorsed not by some liberal, Gospel-compromising denomination but by one that upheld a high view of Scripture and theological orthodoxy.

Any chaplain who has had the duty watch phone for the week knows the sinking feeling one feels when that call from the CDO comes in the middle of the night. Many chaplains believe that the murky waters of suicidal ideations and attempts are just too dark, complex, and painful for his own level of expertise. These sentiments while understandable, are inexcusable. All Christians, and Christian ministers specifically, must be those who run towards pain and darkness because our Savior has given us the means for us to overcome. A chaplain who is filled with the Holy Spirit, ministering out of the power of Christ, and confidently rooted in the sufficiency of the Word of God will be equipped to confront the darkness of suicide.

THE CHAPLAIN AS COUNSELOR

All chaplains are counselors. The only question is: are they delivering competent biblical counsel? One merely has to be reminded of the numerous commands to the church found in the New Testament (specifically found in the phrase “one another”) to realize that the New Testament norm is to be regularly involved in counseling activities.¹ Biblical counseling is not only the mandate, but it is also the birthright of all disciples of Christ. If this is the biblical expectation of the church family as a whole, how much more should chaplains who have been endorsed and sent out by the church be engaged and proficient in this kind of one-on-one counseling?

There often seems to be a sort of intimidating mystique to the task of counseling. Speaking to this, the late David Powlison wrote: “‘psychotherapy’ or ‘counseling’ needs not be as esoteric and intimidating as it sounds – it essentially means a loving, purposeful, probing, attentive, thoughtful, collaborative, candid, patient, constructive, practical, nourishing

¹ “Admonishing” (Col 3:16), “confessing sins” (James 5:16), “encouraging” (I Thess 5:11), and “instructing one another” (Rom 15:14) to name a few.

conversation.”² When that definition is combined with the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of the Word, there is no need for intimidation.

Perhaps the hesitancy to trust in a chaplain’s ability to counsel stems from the fact that in the Western world, psychology and psychiatry have claimed the authoritative high ground. The philosophies of secular “saints” like Freud, Skinner, Kinsey, and the like are seen as more valid and helpful than what are perceived as being the primitive writings of an ancient, superstitious people. Instead of the unchanging Word of God, the modern world looks to the ever changing Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM) for definitive direction. God’s people have largely surrendered this battle ground, and at times, even celebrated its loss!

At best, one can expect the world to see biblical counseling as a benign and impotent collection of nice “Jesusy” sounding phrases like, “don’t judge each other” or “God loves you just the way you are”, that will help religious people be better versions of themselves but doesn’t really have answers for real people with real problems. At worst, and increasingly more common, is the secular sentiment that faithful Biblical counseling is abusive and detrimental to mental health and human progress.

Unfortunately, since psychology and psychiatry are fundamentally founded on a materialistic worldview, they neglect the soul and have little to say about the most profound part of who we are as people. When God warns, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life”,³ He is not promoting a healthy diet or more cardio. Throughout Scripture the heart is presented as the context for the spiritual rebellion, deadness, and brokenness from which the pain of life flow from, as well as the arena in which spiritual repentance, renewal, and regeneration happen.⁴ *The biblical counselor’s task is not only to get to the heart of the problem, but to get to the heart of the person.*

The primary instrument that God has given His people for this task is His Word, which is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”⁵ The confidence of a

² David Powlison, “Counsel and Counseling: Christ’s Message and Ministry Practice Go Together,” n.d., 4

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Pr 4:23). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

⁴ Ps 51; Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27; Jer 17:9; Matt 15:18; Jam 4:1-12, etc.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Heb 4:12). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

chaplain must flow from his trust in the authority, veracity, and sufficiency of the Word of God in giving counsel to others.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

Throughout the history of the church, particularly since the time of the Protestant Reformation, faithful theologians have upheld the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. To define what this doctrine is, it is best to let the Bible speak for itself. God’s Word has much to say about its purpose, scope, and sufficiency. The following is a brief look at two key passages that speak to this doctrine.

Psalm 19:7-14

John MacArthur labels this passage as “the most comprehensive statement regarding the sufficiency of Scripture.”⁶ In it, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David identifies the written Word of God as right, sure, true, eternal, and more valuable than gold among other qualities. Each of the characteristics of Scripture listed in Psalm 19 produces an effect. For instance, the surety of the testimony of the Lord makes wise the simple (:7) and the purity of the Lord’s commands enlighten the eyes (:8). While every single quality of Scripture is pertinent to the task of counseling, perhaps the description of God’s Word as “perfect” is immediately helpful to the counseling task.

The Hebrew term translated as “perfect” carries the meaning “whole,” “complete,” or “sufficient.” It speaks to the comprehensive nature of something. According to Albert Barnes, the perfection of God’s word signifies that:

It is complete as a revelation of Divine truth; it is complete as a rule of conduct. ...It is absolutely true; it is adapted with consummate wisdom to the [needs] of man; it is an unerring guide of conduct. There is nothing there which would lead men into error or sin; there is nothing essential for man to know which may not be found there.⁷

The proper application of this perfect Law revives the soul (:7). The Hebrew word *מְשִׁיבָה* translated in the ESV as “reviving” could also be

⁶ John MacArthur, “THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE” TMSJ (Fall 2004) 165.

⁷ Albert Barnes, Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974) 171.

translated “to restore liveliness, vitality; to refresh⁸,” and even “transforming.”⁹ The object of this transforming vitality is the soul (נַפְשׁ), the Bible’s term for the inner person, the core of our being. The counselor must seek to meaningfully point the despairing counselee to the precepts of the Lord which are able to “rejoice the heart.”

II Timothy 3:15-17

Another foundational passage in any discussion of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is II Timothy 3:15-17. Paul proclaims to Timothy that God’s Word is not only able to make us “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”¹⁰ but also is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” David Powlison, speaking of this passages’ relevancy to counseling declared that it “this is a comprehensive description of transforming human life from all that ails us.”¹¹ Redemptively confronting suicidal thoughts and behaviors is necessarily included in the comprehensive completeness and equipping described in this passage.

It is true that the sufficiency asserted in II Timothy 3:16-17 are directed at the “man of God.” Some have argued from this that the use of the Bible in counseling is only appropriate and effective when dealing with believers. This, however, ignores the preceding verse 15 which points out that Scripture is not only sufficient for the sanctification of the believer but it is also the very thing that makes us, “wise for salvation.” The very word that is sufficient for living is also the very word that is sufficient for teaching the unbeliever the Good News of eternal Life. To withhold that from a counselee is the ultimate malpractice.

Theological Articulations of the Sufficiency of Scripture

Having sampled a few of the relevant Scriptures themselves, we can now be helped by some theological articulations of these truths. Pastor John Piper summarizes the doctrine by stating:

⁸ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000). In *The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 1433). E.J. Brill.

⁹ MacArthur, 168.

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the specific Scriptures Paul is referring to here is the Old Testament.

¹¹ Powlison, JBC Spring 2005, 3

The sufficiency of Scripture means we don't need any more special revelation. We don't need any more inspired, inerrant words. In the Bible God has given us, we have the perfect standard for judging all other knowledge. All other knowledge stands under the judgment of the Bible.¹²

The framers of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, following the earlier Westminster Confession, encapsulated the doctrine of sufficiency:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.¹³

The reality is that most, if not all, conservative, evangelical chaplains would affirm all the above statements concerning the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. Yet those affirmations mean very little if when faced with the hard issues of life and ministry, evangelical chaplains punt to the “professionals” out of fear, ignorance, or doubt.

So where is the disconnect? Why do chaplains who profess a high view of the sufficiency of Scripture still struggle to put it into practice in a confident and meaningful way? The disconnect flows at least in part from a misunderstanding and therefore misapplication of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. The next section will look at some different ways that this important theological tenant has been underutilized or misappropriated and the resulting effects on counseling.

MISAPPLICATIONS OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

The authority and substance of ministry rests on the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. Yet, it is in answering questions such as, “what exactly is Scripture sufficient for?” and “in what ways is Scripture sufficient for an “X” issue?” where the difficulty lies in practical ministry. Many have offered more nuanced summaries of the doctrine which are helpful. It is true that God's Word is not a detailed “how to” manual for answering all of life's

¹² John Piper, “Thoughts on the Sufficiency of Scripture: What It Does and Doesn't Mean,” last modified February 9, 2005, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/thoughts-on-the-sufficiency-of-scripture>.

¹³ London Baptist of Faith, 1689, chapter 1, par 6.

decisions. Yet, a proper understanding of the redemptive-historical narrative of the Bible, rooted in a proper historical-grammatical exegetical method, will provide the believer with a lens with which to rightly navigate all the issues of life.

David Powlison helpfully illustrates how the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture impacts the field of counseling:

To recover the centrality of Scripture for the cure of souls demands two things: conviction backed up with content. The conviction? Scripture is about understanding and helping people. The scope of Scripture's sufficiency includes those face-to-face relationships that our culture labels "counseling" or "psychotherapy." The content? The problems, needs, and struggles of real people—right down to the details—must be rationally explained by the categories with which the Bible teaches us to understand human life.¹⁴

Conviction about the sufficiency of Scripture is meaningless unless it is then backed up with the content of Scripture. But many times, this is moment where things break down.

There are at least three ways that the sufficiency of Scripture can be mishandled when it comes to counseling: under-application, over-application, and Gospel-deficient application.

Error 1: Under Application

The lack of consistent, expository Bible teaching in many of today's churches and even seminaries has resulted in generations of ministers facing the many questions of the human condition ill-equipped to apply the mind of Christ to those issues. Instead, they are taught to look for answers in other places. As a result, many have a deficient anthropology and hamartiology informed more by secular philosophy than by Scripture.

The under application of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is nothing less than a simple lack of confidence in God's Word to do what it says it is meant to do. God's word is either "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (II Tim 3:16) or it is not. Distrust in the sufficiency of Scripture is the same as a distrust in the sufficiency of the God whose "divine power has granted to us all things that

¹⁴ David Powlison, "The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls," 2005, 13.

pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (II Pet 1:3).

If as popular thought would promote, people are basically good but broken to some degree or victims of a repressed libido, then something supernatural is not needed to repair them. However, if people are fundamentally spiritually dead (Eph 2:1), children of wrath (Eph 2:3), blinded by the god of this World (II Cor 4:4), at enmity with God and hostile to him (James 4:4; Rom 8:7), slaves to their sin (John 8:34) and without hope in the world (Eph 2:12) - nothing short of the supernatural intervention of God will suffice to rescue.

The materialist approach is dead on arrival as it begins with a flawed understanding of who are as people, what drives us, and what our fundamental problem is. Again, Powlison is helpful here when he points out that “the Bible’s view of what is disordered in human motivation sharply challenges all secular pretenders to explanatory wisdom about why we do what we do.”¹⁵

Secular anthropology has no category for the reality of the noetic effects of sin which prevent both unbelieving counselees and counselors to understand and apply ultimate truth appropriately. Only the Sword of the Spirit, properly applied by the Spirit in the life of a believer can address the deepest pains and trials of life. Secular therapists may be able to offer coping techniques and help manage certain symptoms in a person’s life, but Biblical counseling offers a cure. Why settle for the vapid mantras of materialistic therapy when you can have the eternal wisdom of the mind of Christ?

Humanistic counseling cannot offer lasting hope because it cannot properly diagnose the core disease. Often, while counseling, I would see the defenses of the counselee drop away and a look of relief come across their face as the Spirit of God used the Word of God to expose the reality of the pain and despair that their own sin and the sin of others had brought into their lives. Secular psychology does not recognize or even have these categories and therefore cannot speak meaningfully and redemptively into these realities. Author John Mark Comer observes this phenomenon:

Despite the humanistic atmosphere all around us constantly telling us we’re good, we all know we have these desires we don’t know what to do with. Because they don’t match the cultural messaging, we hear all the time, we often feel terrified the truth will come out or we feel shame over our inner lives or even a kind of self-hate. But the New Testament is

¹⁵ Powlison, JBC Spring 2005, 3.

incredibly open about the dark underbelly of the human heart, and we're invited to explore it under the loving gaze of God's compassion.¹⁶

Confident hope for healing can only come when it has been preceded by a diagnosis based in reality and there is no greater basis for reality than the revealed Word of the Creator.

God's Word is the primary source of our knowledge about God and ourselves, and it is the authority by which we must measure any truth claims. Knowledge about God can be seen in His creation (Ps 19:1) and can be pondered by His creatures, but those secondary knowledge sources must be submitted to and corrected by the primary source of God's special revelation in His special revelation. If one fails to let Scriptures define the nature of the counselee (anthropology), the root of their problem (hamartiology), the solution (soteriology), and the end goal (ecclesiology), then, one has failed to properly apply the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. Worse, it is giving stones and snakes to starving beggars when we have access to Living Bread and Water.

Error 2: Over Application

A more complex error takes place when Scripture is applied to areas or in ways in which the Bible never claims to be sufficient. Much of the criticisms of Biblical counseling come from anecdotes of abuses of the text and unwise pastoral applications that fall into this category of over application of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture.

Claiming that the Scripture is sufficient for something for which it never claims to be is a misuse of Scripture. The Word of God never claims to be a calculus textbook or encyclopedia of medical information. Scripture is not sufficient for learning Swahili or building a computer. The Bible is not an exhaustive collection of everything we might want to know or that there is to know. As such there is an appropriate place for incorporating extra-Biblical knowledge with the aim of helping hurting people. But this must be done in a way that still holds the inspired Scriptures as the authoritative lens and paradigm for the theory and practice of counseling.

The Bible's clear teaching is that humans are made up of both the physical and spiritual. To disregard either is unbiblical and dangerous. Those counselors who ignore the physical reality run the risk of misdiagnosing a

¹⁶ Comer, John Mark. *Live No Lies* (p. 111). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

problem as spiritual that may in fact be medical. Biblical counselor Heath Lambert's stance regarding the importance of the relationship between legitimate medical treatment and Biblical counseling is appropriate when he says that "because human beings have a body as well as a soul, and because the Bible is not sufficient for medical knowledge, physicians are a crucial adjunct to biblical counselors. Our counseling is far inferior when we cannot pair our work with the medical competencies of physicians."¹⁷

When chaplains ignore or minimize real medical issues in their counseling, they are not only disregarding Biblical anthropology, they could be bordering on abuse. Such extreme cases as these give fuel to the world's narrative that counseling from the Bible is harmful to one's health and motivate anti-biblical counseling legislation. The ideal situation would be when a biblical counselor and a medical doctor operating from a biblical worldview can work together to help the counselee.

The Bible is not a medical textbook. Nor is it a "how to" manual for every single one of life's situations. The reality is that many of the surface issues that people seek counsel for can be dealt with apart from the insight of special revelation. The reality is that people have gained some degree of victory over addictions, unhealthy behavior and even suicidal thoughts and behaviors for millennia without any biblical counsel or experiencing new life in Christ. This fact indicates that whatever God's Word is sufficient for, it is not mere behavior modification. It is true that the Scripture alone can give a sufficient and consistent epistemological foundation for why certain behaviors and practices "work" and others don't. But understanding and assenting to that foundation is not required to experience the benefits of those practices. Special revelation is not needed to beat an addiction or change a behavior or achieve a healthy lifestyle. But it is needed to do those things for the right reasons, in the right way, and with the right end in mind.

The chaplain, specifically when dealing with the issue of suicide, cannot be afraid to take advantage of the existing, "secular" resources at their disposal if and when they serve to support the care of an at-risk service-member. Often the counselee will already have been plugged into the command's suicide intervention response plan, while only coming to the chaplain after having been seen by other entities in the support service network. It is the chaplain's role to help the servicemember sift through the direction and advice (often contradictory) given by others in that network through a

¹⁷ Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* 79.

Biblical lens, ultimately deciding if that advice supports not only their physical and mental health, but their eternal soul.

Sola Scriptura does not mean Solo Scriptura.¹⁸ The Reformation doctrine was principally a statement about the primacy of the authority of Scripture, not the isolation of Scripture. It is the lens in which we see light to properly interpret and interact with the created world.

Another sub-category of the over application of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture that must be briefly addressed is the use of Bible verses as if the individual words themselves had inherent power, disconnected to the truth that they communicate. Cherry picking Bible verses or phrases out of their Biblical context and using them as if they are magic spells or formulas for fixing our problems is a perversion of Scripture and a violation of Paul's exhortation to "rightly divide the word of truth" (II Tim 2:15). Both Satan and Jesus used Scripture to battle in the wilderness, yet it was the properly interpreted and applied Scriptures used by our Lord that serve as our example.

Error 3: Applying Scripture without the Gospel

Mishandling Scripture in counseling happens not only when the immediate context of a particular chapter or even book of the Bible is ignored, but also when Biblical principles or commands are divorced from the over-arching context of the historical redemptive narrative of God's Word. What this often looks like in practice is when the law of God is given without ever getting to the Good News of God.

Giving counsel that is focused only on the imperative commands (what we should do, how we should live) without showing how forgiveness for failing to obey those commands and that the power for present and future obedience is only made possible through the Gospel indicatives (Who God is, what He has done, and who we are in Christ) is a failure to present the whole counsel of God. Loading up a despairing person with yet more things to try to do to fix themselves is not only the antithesis of the Gospel, but will inevitably lead to either legalism (if they succeed) or license (if they give up trying). Both are forms of idolatry.

This indicative/imperative dynamic can be clearly seen in many places in Scripture. Perhaps one of the better examples is in Ephesians where Paul's

¹⁸ For further study on Sola Scriptura see Phil Johnson, "Sola Scriptura is not Solo Scriptura" <https://reformedontheweb.wordpress.com/tag/phil-johnson/> and Michael Kruger, "Understanding Sola Scriptura." <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/understanding-sola-scriptura>

basis for urging the Ephesians “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called”¹⁹ hinges on the “therefore” of 4:1. The “therefore” indicates that what came before is the source of the imperatives that follow. Those familiar with Ephesians chapters 1-3 will know that these chapters are almost entirely made up of indicative statements about who God is, what He has done, and what has been done for those who are united to Christ through faith. It is only after those truths have been clearly proclaimed that the commands to live in light of them are given.

Gospel behavior must flow out of Gospel identity. Failing to apply the gospel rightly is a failure to counsel faithfully. As noted earlier II Timothy teaches that Scripture makes us “wise to salvation” and teaches and trains us to be “equipped for every good work.” It is interesting to note that the Gospel itself is described in those very same terms elsewhere in Scripture. No one would seriously argue that the Gospel isn’t about salvation. Scripture is very clear that it is the good news of Jesus that is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”²⁰ But what is often missed by many is that the Gospel is also about sanctification. Titus declares that “...the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”²¹ The Gospel applies not only to our justification but also to our sanctification. This means that it has relevance to our daily lives and struggles. Any counsel that demands behavioral change that is divorced from the Gospel is not counsel that is in line with the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture.

Ultimately the written Word of God, and the Good News that it proclaims is a revelation about the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ. He is the true “Wonderful Counselor” that our people need. Any counsel that is disconnected to Him and His purposes, however helpful in the short term, will ultimately be lacking. As author and counselor Michael Emlet expresses:

Any attempts at ministering God’s Word that do not fundamentally connect the good news of the redeemer, Jesus Christ, with the details, themes, and plotlines of people’s lives will miss the mark (or land off the target altogether!) ...Understanding both the Story of God and the stories

¹⁹ Followed by detailed commands fleshing out that calling in chapters 4-6.

²⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Ro 1:16). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

²¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Tt 2:11-12). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

of the people we serve is necessary to help others embrace the transformation the Bible envisions for God's people.²²

The Scriptures show us Christ and a clear vision of Christ is more massive and compelling than any counseling issue, including suicide.

The aim of Biblical counseling is to make people new in Christ. This requires an encounter with the person and work of Jesus Christ. To try to convince an unbeliever to "walk in manner worthy of the Gospel" is futile. To expect a person who is dead in sin to obey God's commands is nonsensical.

To assure an unrepentant enemy of God that they have a claim to all of God's promises to His people is outrageous.

This is not to say that we should not be willing to counsel those who are clearly unbelievers. What it means is that when it becomes clear that the counselee is not regenerate the conversation needs to shift from counseling to evangelism. The unbelieving counselee may be presenting with a serious and obvious struggle or sin, but if they have not yet been born again any problem, they have is merely a symptom of their ultimate problem, being alienated from and at war with God. As Lambert rightly states:

The need to confess our sins to God and the truth that he will forgive only those who believe and whose sin is covered by Christ demonstrate the importance of conversion in counseling. The only way for our counsees to deal with issues of their personal sinfulness is to confess that sin to God. Biblical counselors understand that the only people who confess their sins are those whose hearts have been changed by the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that we cannot have counseling conversations with people who are not converted. It means that such counseling will always be decidedly evangelistic²³

That said, there are instances in which a counsees' presenting symptom is so enslaving and immediate that it must be dealt with first. For instance, a severe drug addict or person who is currently intoxicated may not be able to hear the Gospel in a meaningful way until he or she sobers up. Immediate safety should be the imminent concern in a suicide or abuse intervention. But the goal for the Biblical counselor should be to always get to the Gospel with his or her counselee.

²² Emler, Michael R. *CrossTalk: Where Life & Scripture Meet* (p. 7). New Growth Press. Kindle Edition.

²³ Lambert, 230

BRIDGING THE GAP

If it is true that the counselee at risk of suicide is either in need of salvation or sanctification, how is the chaplain to utilize Scripture in a way that is fitting for the moment? Should the chaplain hide in the background unless there is a clear opportunity and invitation to share a complete Gospel message? Do they immediately refer to the experts and then hope to circle back later? Do they only have something to offer the counselee who identifies as Christian?

The sufficiency of Scripture does not imply that there is no skill or wisdom needed in the proper application of God truth. This is particularly true when it comes to caring for those at risk of suicide. Dealing with suicide is complicated. But as Sironi and Emlet point out:

God does not leave us in fearful paralysis or ignorance with one another, for “...one who has insight draws them out” (Pro 20:5). An understanding and wise person is skillfully able to draw out the hidden thoughts and intentions of the heart. Suicidal thoughts, desires, and motives often lie concealed beneath the surface of what a person is able and willing to verbalize...“However, these purposes are accessible as we grow in our ability to speak with people in constructive and intentional ways—and always with good, saving purposes.”²⁴

Counseling Servicemembers who are having suicide related thoughts or behaviors opens an invitation into the deepest issues and parts of the soul. The sphere of suicidal thoughts and behaviors opens a unique pathway to get to heart issues more swiftly than other counseling situations. Wisdom and skill are required to rightly apply the Word of Truth throughout the different phases of suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. As proverbs instructs, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” (Prov 25:11).

Every situation will be unique. Every counseling case will require wisdom and humility. Yet the Biblical counselor has a road map which shows where their counselee has come from or still is (sinful rebellion and enslaving despair) and where they need to go (repentant, Christ-centered trust and joy). The discerning chaplain will learn to recognize on ramps onto this road as they walk with the hurting and broken.

²⁴ Aaron Sironi and Michael R Emlet, “Evaluating a Person with Suicidal Desires” 26, no. 2 (n.d.): 33.

For 3 years, I was the suicide prevention program director for two Naval Air Wings. This was a role that I was assigned. I initially was hesitant to lean into the role and had doubts that my implemented changes did any good but over time they proved to make a difference both in breadth and depth. While suicide related counseling went up, deaths went down. This was significant given that there were more suicides in the aviation community than others. Even more notable was the Gospel fruit that continues to this day.

The following is an amalgamation of a few real-life case studies of sailors at risk of suicide who experienced Gospel healing through the application of the Word of God during their despair. One case study is given to illustrate a possible way (by no means the only way) to offer meaningful help in the military context that flows from a confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture and is driven by the power of the Gospel. The three phases of the sailor's experiences are hereafter named: suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

Prevention

Although Joan (not her real name) was a high performing sailor and had quickly rose through the ranks, her professional exterior hid her intense inner turmoil. Due to her natural leadership abilities, she was appointed as the suicide prevention coordinator by her command. As part of her training for that role she attended a suicide prevention and intervention training that I had designed and led. In that training, which borrowed much from existing resources and protocols, much emphasis and time was given to the exploration and discussion of worldview, culture, and beliefs and their relationship to the topic of suicide. Not only were these sessions helpful in preparing sailors to be suicide prevention assets in their command but more importantly they opened the door to talk about morality, sin, and epistemology. Many times, this led to a direct Gospel presentation in the session itself. Even more often, this led to individual Gospel conversations after the class. Depending on the context, Scripture was openly incorporated in this training, mainly used to demonstrate the "inside out" nature of lasting change as well as an example of a consistent epistemology.

When Joan attended this training, she found many of her presuppositions challenged. She kept most of those questions to herself and excelled in the training. When she returned to her unit she applied the training immediately, helping with several suicide interventions. From time to time, she would ask for resources to share with her sailors and ask clarifying questions that hinted at the storm growing inside her.

Intervention

About 6 months later, Joan came to the office, and it was clear she had been crying. She could no longer keep her military bearing. I welcomed her in and sat her down and began to try and unravel what was going on. The chief's exam results had come out and I suspected this had something to do with it. Sure enough, that is the first thing she went to. This was the first time she had been up for promotion and had not made the cut. To compound things, in her frustration at her failure she had lashed out at her superior and was most likely going to be getting a NJP.²⁵

I asked her if I could open the Scripture up with her and let God speak to her through His Word. She wasn't too excited about the idea and told me very plainly that she didn't believe in God but was willing to listen. Building on the biblical model of how people change that had been planted in the suicide prevention training, we began to peel back the layers of why she was responding to this disappointment in such a drastic way.

I took her to James 4:1-10. Starting with verse 1- "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?" we began to unpack the truth that when we explode in anger it is not primarily an outside circumstance that is to blame but it is our "passions" – our disordered and sinful desires of our hearts – that drive our actions and words.

I asked her if she could identify some heart motivations that perhaps control her actions and decision making. What was most important to her? What was it that she could not imagine living without? She wasn't completely open, but we were able to discuss how her drive to succeed and define herself by her success and reputation, had become crippling. Especially when she did not achieve the success she sought.

I introduced the concept of heart idolatry. Using Biblical categories I explained that we were created to worship God. She bristled at this idea, but I asked her to hear me out and she did. I explained that when we choose not to worship God, we still worship something, and that something becomes an enslaving idol in our lives.

Things seemed to be clicking for her, but when I shared verses with her about the trustworthiness of God verses the trustworthiness of man, such as Psalm 118:8, "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man," she visibly reacted with anger at the idea. Although she did not want to talk about trusting God, the concept of heart idolatry was compelling to her, and

²⁵ Non-Judicial Punishment.

she said she wanted to think about that and then schedule another meeting. I gave her a list of heart “X-ray Questions” from David Powlison²⁶ to work through and we planned to meet again after I returned from a TDY later that month.

During the intervening time, Joan also went to the doctor and was put on depression medication. Instead of helping, these medications proved to exacerbate her depression. After a few weeks she decided, without consulting with her physician or anyone else, to stop taking her prescribed medication. This only intensified her despair. During a discussion with a fellow sailor (who had ironically been trained in suicide prevention by Joan) Joan admitted that she had been thinking about taking her own life. The sailor reported this to the command, and she was escorted to medical.

When I arrived back from TDY, Joan was in a 72-hour mandatory hold in the psych ward. Psych holds aren’t always the answer, but they can be a useful tool for keeping someone safe in the short term. As Biblical counselors Sironi and Emlett admit:

While it is true that hospitalization will not provide your counselee with a biblical framework, it does provide time to stabilize the person emotionally and ensure safety. You will continue the hard work of bringing the gospel to bear during and following hospitalization. Your goal in this moment is to preserve life so that you can have those discussions in the future.²⁷

Ministry of presence is not everything. It isn’t even the main thing. But it is something. So, I as soon as I could I went to the hospital to see if I could meet with her.

Thankfully at this point Joan was open to sharing. As I heard stories of childhood trauma, family tragedy, and abusive relationships it became clear that Joan believed that she was the only person that she could trust. Although she had grown up religious, admiring her mother’s strong faith in God, she had begun to distrust that God when her father had abused her and her mother, and finally rejected Him outright when her mother died. Believing that she could only trust herself, she had become her own functional savior. Deep down she had always known that she did not have what it took to be her own redeemer. Her life’s problems had continued to snowball. This turmoil stemmed from sinful decisions and lifestyles she had embraced, as

²⁶ The Journal of Biblical Counseling • Volume 18 • Number 1 • Fall 1999

²⁷ Sironi and Emlett, 40.

well as sinful actions done against her. But she had always been able to manage the damage. Not making promotion had suddenly made her aware of the truth she had been suppressing for years, that she could not trust even herself, she could not control her life, and now she was left with no one to put her hope in.

I started by pointing out that the very fact that we were having this conversation was an expression of God's love for her. I pointed her to the truth that God is the ultimate refuge, and he pursues and rescues those he loves (Ezek 34:12). I was able to walk through the Gospel with her, showing her how not only that she should trust God, but that He had demonstrated His trustworthy nature by loving her in her helpless sinful state, even going to the cross on her behalf. He had paid for all her prideful failure to trust Him. Who better to trust than the God who knew her faults, weaknesses and rebellion better than anyone and yet has chosen to love her more than anyone else ever could or would?! Not only that, but I also walked through how a trusting relationship with God changes our identity from being a slave to sin to being a cherished adopted child of God, who will inherit everything with Christ (Gal 4). It was this being reconciled to God through Christ that would change everything about her life. This was identity driven behavior, not behavior driven identity. There in that psych ward she repented of her idolatry and placed her trust in her true, loving, trustworthy heavenly Father.

Postvention

Suicidal people have had their foundations shaken, or rather exposed for how flimsy they always were. A Biblical worldview can provide the only framework that will comprehensively make sense of reality, both internally and externally, cosmically, and personally. As Powlison states: "this cosmic battleground is something none of the secular psychologists have seen or can see, because they can't see that deeply into why we do what we do."²⁸

Over time I was able to meet with Joan to help her start to build a Biblical and Gospel centered framework for understanding her world, her struggles and how they fit into God's story. Even more helpful was connecting her to the community God, the church. She got connected to a local church as well as some on base bible studies. It was in the context of the community of Christ, sitting under the Word of God, and being reminded regularly in Word and deed of the truth and love of Christ, that true Gospel

²⁸ Powlison, JBC Spring 2005, 4.

healing began to take place in Joan's life. She is now a thriving Christian (and she made chief!).

Stories don't always end up this way. There were many times where I was not sure I had shared the right passage at the right time in the right way, or I should have done this or that differently. There were many times where the sailor rejected my recommendation to plug into a Christian community and as a result, I had to rely more heavily on the command's support structure and safety nets to ensure the sailor's safety. Biblical counseling requires humility and trust in God who alone is sovereign. Sironi and Emlett rightly observe:

A suicidal person starkly reminds you of your desperate need for God's power and wisdom in the moment. Although we have stressed particular tools and approaches to equip you to assess someone for suicidality, this planning requires wisdom and direction from the Spirit. So call out to him. A spiritual battle is in progress."²⁹

The counselor must ultimately rest in the sovereignty of God. This is true at all stages, but especially as your time with the counselee becomes less and less, the chaplain must trust that God is working and will use your meager contribution and faithfulness for His good purposes in the life of your counselee.

As Joan's case illustrates, those armed with the Word of God and prepared to properly apply it have much to offer the hurting soul. Sufficiency of Scripture does not mean throwing prooftexts at a person, nor does it mean burdening sinners with more law without sharing the Gospel. But when presented within a hermeneutically and contextually appropriate way, the power of God's Word can bring order out of chaos, healing to the broken, and redemption to the sinner. What does the chaplain have to offer a Servicemember at risk of suicide? Life itself! The most precious gift of all – to be known and reconciled to the Creator, Redeemer, and King of all! What a privilege and sacred duty!

²⁹ Sironi and Emlett, 39.

DAWKINS, YOU MAGNIFICENT ATHEIST, I READ YOUR BOOK!

Armando Torralva

Armando Torrelva served as the command chaplain for a foreign homeported ship, and the unit chaplain for the Marine detachment which served the President of the United States. After ministering as a Navy Chaplain, he served as a head pastor for more than 10 years. He is now retired and lives with his wife in Texas.

In the 1970 movie, *Patton*, there is a scene where an epic tank battle takes place in Tunisia, North Africa between George S. Patton, the brilliant but hot-tempered U.S. Army General and his nemesis, Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, the great German tactician known as the “Desert Fox”. In 1937 Rommel wrote the book, *Infantry Attacks* (*Infanterie Greift An*) revealing his understanding of terrain, deception and surprise including armor support that led to his spectacular success as an infantry commander during WWI. In the movie, it shows Patton reading a book, *The Tank in Battle*, supposedly written by Erwin Rommel. The filmmakers of *Patton* chose to use the title, *The Tank in Battle*, instead of *Infantry Attacks*, so as not to confuse the audience.¹ Sometime prior to the Battle of El Guettar in March 1943, Patton read Rommel’s book and used Rommel’s tactics against him. As the battle rages Patton looks through his binoculars from his command post and realizes his army is winning. He then growls, “Rommel, you magnificent bastard, I read your book!”

¹ <https://www.historynet.com/did-rommel-really-write-the-tank-in-battle.htm>

To know the tactics of today's most prominent atheists, I read the books of the "Four Horsemen:"² *The End of Faith* (2004) by Sam Harris, *The God Delusion* (2006) by Richard Dawkins, *Breaking the Spell* (2006) by Daniel Dennett and *God Is Not Great* (2007) by Christopher Hitchens. All four of them are international best-selling authors, something unheard of for atheistic literature in the past. These early 21st Century authors are the leaders of a radical group of intellectuals known as the "New Atheists."

SO, WHAT'S NEW ABOUT "NEW ATHEISM"?

1. New Atheism aggressively attacks all forms of religion. "New atheism maintains that religion is not simply wrong, but irrational, pathological and uniquely dangerous."³
2. They are dedicated "to upholding the separation of church and state, campaigning to ensure legal and civic equality for atheists, changing adverse public perceptions and securing mainstream acceptance of atheist views."⁴
3. Building community with conferences, conventions, and social media while encouraging atheists to "come out" and identify themselves to raise public visibility.⁵

SEVEN TYPES OF ATHEISTS

British philosopher and former professor of European Thought, John Gray, a prominent atheist, "suggest that an atheist is anyone with no use for the idea of a divine mind that has fashioned the world. In this sense atheism

² The Four Horsemen of the non-Apocalypse is a collective reference to Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris. A more appropriate reference would be "The Four Fools" considering Psalm 14: 1 - "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."

³ Kettell S. (2016) *What's Really New About New Atheism?* Palgrave Communications. 2:16099 doi: 10.1057/palcomms.2016.99.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://www.atheistalliance.org>

does not amount to very much. It is simply the absence of the idea of a creator-god.⁶ He then goes on to describe the seven types of Atheists:

The first of them – the so-called ‘new atheism’ – contains little that is novel or interesting. After the first chapter, I will not refer to it again. The second type is secular humanism, a hollowed-out version of the Christian belief in salvation in history. Third, there is the kind of atheism that makes a religion from science, a category that includes evolutionary humanism, Mesmerism, dialectical materialism, and contemporary trans humanism. Fourth, there are modern political religions, from Jacobinism through communism and Nazism to contemporary evangelical liberalism. Fifth, there is the atheism of God-haters such as the Marquis de Sade, Dostoevsky’s fictional character Ivan Karamazov and William Empson himself. Sixth, I will consider the atheisms of George Santayana and Joseph Conrad, which reject the idea of a creator-god without having any piety towards ‘humanity’. Seventh and last, there are the mystical atheism of Arthur Schopenhauer and the negative theologies of Benedict Spinoza and the early twentieth-century Russian-Jewish fideist Leo Shestov, all of which in different ways point to a God that transcends any human conception.⁷

In an interview with *Publishers Weekly*, Gray stated that many forms of atheism simply replace traditional religion with a worship of the human being. Gray asserts the following:

“...that the only difference between traditional atheism and religion is that instead of the worship of a monotheistic God, atheists find faith in humanity and its ability to improve as a species and uses uprisings of the working class and technology as examples.”⁸ According to Gray, “Modern atheists are constantly trying to find surrogates for the god they reject—science for example, political surrogates, belief in human progress, or whatever. I think to be a true atheist, you would dispense with those, and live in a world that was truly godless... an atheism without any belief in the human progress of civilization, and an atheism of silence.”⁹

⁶ Gray, John. *Seven Types of Atheism* (p. 2). Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Kindle Edition.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁸ <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/religion/article/77860-what-makes-a-true-atheist-pw-talks-to-john-gray.html>

⁹ *Ibid*.

Although not all atheists agree on all issues and ideas regarding atheism, just as not all religions agree about religious matters, what they do agree on is their lack of belief in gods. Another common denominator among most atheists is their claim that a God of love would not allow certain things to happen that are detrimental to the well-being of humanity. In other words, atheists judge God (in whom they claim they do not believe in) by their idea of how a deity should behave or not behave. Take Richard Dawkins for example. He describes God in the following manner:

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.¹⁰

I find it most illogical that atheist like Dawkins would attempt to insinuate or proclaim a presupposition on how God should behave. On what bases does mortal, sinful man try to impose a code of behavior or ethic on Sovereign God who is described in the Bible as holy, righteous, wise, and loving, among other things, and especially since atheism is devoid of any preordained meaning, rules, or justice? Furthermore, as Paul stated: “Who has known the Lord’s mind, that he may instruct Him?” (2nd Corinthians 2:16). Thus, to claim a standard for good and bad, atheists have to borrow from a biblical worldview to define what is good and bad. As Vox Day points out:

Most atheists abide by the morality of the culture that they inhabit, not because they have taken the effort to reason from first principles and miraculously reached conclusions that bear a remarkable similarity to the moral system of those around them, but because lacking any moral system of their own, they parasitically latch on to the system of their societal host.¹¹

With the above considerations, let’s now turn to Dawkins’ “spectrum of probabilities” or seven milestones to unbelief about the existence of God and see where Dawkins himself stands:

¹⁰ Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. HMH Books. Kindle Edition

¹¹ Day, Vox. *The Irrational Atheist*. BenBella Books. Kindle Edition

1. **Strong theist.** 100 percent probability of God. In the words of C. G. Jung, ‘I do not believe, I know.’
2. **Very high probability but short of 100 percent.** De facto theist. ‘I cannot know for certain, but I strongly believe in God and live my life on the assumption that he is there.’
3. **Higher than 50 percent** but not very high. Technically agnostic but leaning towards theism. ‘I am very uncertain, but I am inclined to believe in God.’
4. **Exactly 50 percent.** Completely impartial agnostic. ‘God’s existence and non-existence are exactly equiprobable.’
5. **Lower than 50 percent** but not very low. Technically agnostic but leaning towards atheism. ‘I don’t know whether God exists, but I’m inclined to be skeptical.’
6. **Very low probability, but short of zero.** De facto atheist. ‘I cannot know for certain, but I think God is very improbable, and I live my life on the assumption that he is not there.’
7. **Strong atheist.** ‘I know there is no God, with the same conviction as Jung “knows” there is one.’¹²

It surprises me greatly that the world’s most renowned atheist and author of *The God Delusion*, does not classify himself as a “strong atheist” – number 7 on the list above.

Instead he says “I count myself in category 6, but leaning towards 7—I am agnostic only to the extent that I am agnostic about fairies at the bottom of the garden.”¹³ Dawkins himself states “I’d be surprised to meet many people in category 7, but I include it for symmetry with category 1, which is well populated.”¹⁴

¹² Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. HMH Books. Kindle Edition

¹³ Ibid. “fairies at the bottom of the garden” is part of a quote from Douglas Adams, author of *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*: “Isn’t it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too?” Adams described himself as a “radical atheist” in order not to be confused with an agnostic. Richard Dawkins dedicated his book, *The God Delusion*, to him (HM Books, Kindle Edition).

¹⁴ Ibid.

In the 2012 debate with Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams at Oxford University, Dawkins shocked the audience by describing himself as an agnostic and admitting that he cannot disprove the existence of God. Dawkins said that he was “6.9 out of seven” sure of his beliefs: “I think the probability of a supernatural creator existing is very, very low,” he explained.¹⁵

THE STRANGE PERSISTENCE OF GUILT

Wilfred McClay wrote an article in the *Hedgehog Review* published by The University of Virginia, describing what he calls “the strange persistence of guilt” in modern secular society. He writes:

I use the words strange persistence to suggest that the modern drama of guilt has not followed the script that was written for it. Prophets such as Friedrich Nietzsche were confident that once the modern Western world finally threw off the metaphysical straitjacket that had confined the possibilities of all previous generations, the moral reflexes that had accompanied that framework would disappear along with them. With God dead, all would indeed be permitted. Chief among the outmoded reflexes would be the experience of guilt, an obvious vestige of irrational fear promulgated by oppressive, life-denying institutions erected in the name and image of a punitive deity.¹⁶

Friedrich Nietzsche, the 19th century German philosopher, declared, “God is dead.” (Gott ist tot). According to Nietzsche, God was a concept contrived by our primordial ancestors to cope with what they feared and could not understand or explain. This was especially true of the Hebrew God with all of His commandments against sin that negatively affected the human psyche with guilt. Nietzsche argued that since there was no God, there was no such thing as sin, and thus no need for guilt. Guilt was a mere atavistic feeling passed on by our ancestors and would become a thing of the past.

Of course, declaring that God is dead is one thing; eliminating guilt is another. As Paul points out, “For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them.” Romans 1:18-19 (HCSB). This was a frustrating realization for Nietzsche:

¹⁵ <https://www.theweek.co.uk/religion/religion/45552/outspoken-atheist-dawkins-admits-he-agnostic>

¹⁶ <https://hedgehogreview.com/issues/the-post-modern-self/articles/the-strange-persistence-of-guilt>

After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too... But when shall we ever be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds?¹⁷

“The shadows of God,” as Nietzsche phrased it, never dissipated and his utopian dream of a world free from guilt, of course, never materialized. Nietzsche believed that all morals and values determined by a transcendent God, such as truth, immortality, love, pity, and forgiveness are “idols” that people cling to. However, those “idols” would die with the death of God. “The strange persistence of guilt,” is strange indeed because guilt was supposed to go away. Instead, the world is plagued with guilt that seems to be compounding, not diminishing. And why is that? Jeremy Stangroom provides us a clue:

But in reading Nietzsche, we want more than just sense; what we’re after is truth. If what Nietzsche is proposing is a new conception of morality, then it should have some advice in it, shouldn’t it? It should give us some thoughts on how to live, some idea of what we ought to value, some conception of rightness and wrongness in action. It’s all very well to say that some return to the Greeks is required, that we must find our own value, but without further advice, isn’t this just empty bad air?¹⁸

HOW SHALL WE COMFORT OURSELVES?

After declaring, “God is dead,” Nietzsche asked a profound question: “How shall we comfort ourselves?”¹⁹ This begs the question, is there any comfort in atheism?

Consider the following from an atheist experiencing fear over the thought that hell might be real and that she might be wrong about being an atheist. Her anxiety causes her to reach out to other atheists to see how they deal with such thoughts:

¹⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science* (pp. 189-190). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition

¹⁸ Stangroom, Jeremy. *The Great Philosophers*, Eagle Editions Limited, Hertfordshire, 2006, p. 119.

¹⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*, p. 202. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

I have been an atheist for about a year and a half. I wasn't heavily indoctrinated or raised religious but I did believe in god for the first 16 years of my life. I always believed in a hell but I thought that only murders and people like that went there. It wasn't until I went through this like 6-month religious phase that I learned all the rules and that a lot more things can get you sent to hell than I thought. During this time my anxiety got really bad. Now I am an atheist but I still suffer from a fear in hell. I get negative thoughts about Satan and hell and I don't believe in god but I worry "what if I'm wrong?" **It's really frustrating because I feel like a hypocrite that I don't believe in god but I keep getting worried and anxiety about what if I'm wrong** (Emphasis added). I was just wondering if any of you feel the same thing I do or any tips on how to get over it.²⁰

Race Hochdorf, a "New Atheist" who describes himself as "a Jewish-American writer from Texas (raised Christian), a veteran, atheist, stoic, and proud member of the anti-"woke" populist left,"²¹ augments Nietzsche's question with another profound question:

How do we fully create and contemplate meaning, beauty, truth, morality, life, and death in a world where "above us is only sky", when our understanding of all of these subjects for millennia has centered around interpretations of divine will?²²

Hochdorf goes on to admit that "religion for a lot of people continues to be the only perceived outlet that provides transcendent experience and a comprehensive philosophy for living, while secular humanism offers very little in the way of alternative comfort and majesty".²³

The "Old Atheist" philosopher, Bertrand Russell, had an utterly dishearten and hopeless outlook for what happens to individuals beyond the grave:

... man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves

²⁰ <http://kidswithoutgod.com/teens/ask/how-do-atheist-handle-the-fear-of-death/>

²¹ <https://www.racehochdorf.com>

²² Hochdorf, Race. *Embrace The Void Bravely: & Other Secular Sermons*. Purple Poppy Publishing. Kindle Edition.

²³ Ibid.

and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins.²⁴

The “New Atheist” Dawkins provides a similar meaningless outlook on life as Russell:

In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe precisely has the properties we should expect if there is, at the bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, and no other good. Nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.²⁵

The picture painted by atheist like Dawkins and Russell on man's origin and life is very bleak, nihilistic, and cold. Indeed, it is without joy and without hope (“we grieve not as others who have no hope” – I Thessalonians 4:13). So we conclude this article with Nietzsche's question in context of his statement:

“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?”

How shall we comfort ourselves? This is the central, existential angst of all atheists. How can atheism give humans the meaning, significance, peace, hope and assurance of eternal life that only God offers through His Son, Jesus Christ?

²⁴ Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not A Christian* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 107.

²⁵ Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 133.

Book Summary:

**THE QUEST FOR EARLY CHURCH
HISTORIOGRAPHY: FROM FERDINAND C.
BAUR TO BART EHRMAN AND BEYOND**

Jeremiah Mutie

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The impetus of this book was a great debate that took place at the McFarlin Memorial Auditorium on the campus of Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX on October 1st, 2011. This was between Drs. Daniel B. Wallace, Director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts (CSNTM) and Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary and Bart D. Ehrman, the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the author of many books including his bestseller, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. The debate was on this question: “Can we trust the text of the New Testament?” I am forever grateful to have been part of the more than fifteen hundred people who were lucky enough to attend this event.

Both scholars did an excellent job defending their views on the subject. However, as I note, “As I keenly followed the debate, it became clear that the issue they were haggling over was more *historiographical* than *textual* in

nature. In other words, how does one read the documents in question?”¹ This is because, in many of his writings and debates, Ehrman propagates what I have designated “extreme historicism,” a form of historiography that treats documents of antiquity (especially the Christian ones) with unbridled skepticism. This question, naturally arises: how did Ehrman arrive at his conclusions? Asked in a different way, how did we get a Bart Ehrman?

The answer to this question forms the gist of *The Quest*. It seeks to trace the historiographical trajectories that have led us to this point. In other words, the thesis of this book is that “rather than having suddenly appeared, the extremely skeptical historicism of such scholars as Bart Ehrman is instead the fruition of a long process that started with the Hegelian early church historiography of Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) of Tübingen University.”² In order to make the case, the work starts with a definition of historiography. Historiography is the study of the interpretation of history. It is the “the study of how historians think and write about history.”³ However, the book argues that although historiography was almost always taken for granted, this can no longer be the case especially as historians attempt to function in the postmodern climate. Alan Munslow captures this well by contending that “It is now commonplace for historians, philosophers of history and others interested in narrative to claim we live in a postmodern age wherein the old modernist certainties of historical truth and methodological objectivity, as applied by disinterested historians, are challenged principles.”⁴ Carl R. Trueman expresses the same sentiment, writing; “there has been a trend over recent decades toward a kind of epistemological nihilism that has so relativized everything that access to the past in any meaningful way is virtually denied.”⁵ This book aims to trace how these developments took place from Ferdinand C. Baur (1792–1860) to Bart D. Ehrman Bart D. Ehrman (1955–) in the crucial study of early Christianity. But why start with Baur? The answer becomes evident as the work progresses and the chapter layout is presented.

¹ Jeremiah Mutie, *The Quest for Early Church Historiography: From Ferdinand C. Baur to Bart D. Ehrman and Beyond* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022), xi.

² *Ibid.*, xii.

³ Mark Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 1.

⁴ Alan Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 19.

⁵ Carl R. Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 18.

To lay the ground for tracing this trajectory, chapter one, entitled “Competing Early Church Historiographies,” traces the “classical view” of the history of the early church. This phrase was first coined by H. E. W. Turner to describe his view that the early church was “neither uncritically conservative nor uncompromisingly liberal.”⁶ Thus, according to this theory, “the Church originally kept unsullied and undefiled the teaching of our Lord and the tradition of the Apostles.”⁷ As Turner further clarifies, in the early church, orthodoxy was temporally prior to heresy. Heresy “was a crooked deviation from orthodoxy, a heretic [is] the one who departed from the truth.”⁸ This was the historiography of the church fathers who saw the heretics as being “motivated by a spirit of faction, or a restless quest for novelty.”⁹ But, as I note, “while the classical view had been the standard historiography of the early church for the most part, some fissures began to be noticed especially with the rise of modern historical and critical methods of reading both Scripture and early church history, a development that has been most observable in the last five hundred years.”¹⁰ The rest of the book seeks to demonstrate how this development took place.

The second chapter entitled “Christian Ferdinand Baur and his Contemporaries: ‘Hegelian’ Historiography,” documents the beginning the major historiographical fissures that began to emerge posing serious challenges to the “classical view” of the history of the early church. As I argue, the most notable figure in this emergence, is the German critic, Christian Baur. Indeed, “although Baur is primarily known for his biblical scholarship (on the New Testament canon), he actually came up with one of the oldest alternatives to the classical theory of early church historiography.”¹¹ Known as the “Tübingen hypothesis,” this was the view that sees a “Hegelian” conflict between Jewish and Hellenistic believers in the early church, with the resulting synthesis being the “early catholic” church. In other words, “using Hegelian dialect philosophy of history, Baur ‘interpreted both the

⁶ H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study of the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1954), ix.

⁷ Turner, *The Pattern*, 3.

⁸ D. Jeffrey Bingham, “Development and Diversity in Early Christianity,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 1 (2006): 48.

⁹ Turner, *The Pattern*, 5.

¹⁰ Mutie, *The Quest*, 21.

¹¹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 25.

development of early Catholicism—as the synthesis of Jewish and Gentile Christianity in the primitive Christian community—and the great doctrinal controversies of the early centuries in terms of such a dialectical process of opposing tendencies.”¹² The “Baur hypothesis” became very influential in the study of early Christianity. As I further explain:

Baur is clearly recognized as the founder of the ‘Tübingen school,’ a specific group focused on a critical approach to the study of the New Testament as well as early church history. Horton Harris explains that the Tübingen school was comprised of eight members: F. C. Baur, Eduard Zeller, Albert Schweigler, Karl Christian Planck, Karl Reinhold Köstlin, Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf Hilgenfeld, and Gustav Volkmar.¹³

And, while there some who think that Baur’s influence waned over time, I argue that this is not the case.

This is especially the case as his ideas were picked up by one of his most influential students, David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874). In his highly entitled *Die christliche Glaubenslehre in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Kampfe mit der Wissenschaft dargestellt (Christian Doctrine, Presented in Its Development and Conflict with Modern Science)*, Strauss “tried to demonstrate that traditional Christian faith is untenable through a critical analysis of the history of theology.”¹⁴ Further, Strauss introduced the concept of the “kernel” and “husk” in the study of the New Testament an early Christianity. According to Strauss, “the New Testament scholar and historian of doctrine must be able to separate the ‘kernel’ of the gospel message from the ‘husk’ of mythical accretions.”¹⁵ Thus, in so doing, Strauss continued the highly critical approach started by his teacher, Baur. As I note, although both of their historiographies were plagued by methodological issues, “both Baur and Strauss initiated a novel historiography whose trajectory extends to the

¹² Mutie, *The Quest*, 34.

¹³ Mutie, *The Quest*, 36.

¹⁴ Leif Svensson, “A Theology for the Bildungsbürgertum: Ritschl in Context” (PhD Diss., Umeå University, 2018), 45.

¹⁵ Mutie, *The Quest*, 45.

present.”¹⁶ Indeed, as I further note, “it seems fair, in my opinion, to state that while Baur sneaked in through the historiographical door that Hegel opened, Strauss sprang both doors open for his posterity to walk through.”¹⁷ This becomes more evident as the trajectory continues.

Chapter 3, entitled “Adolf Harnack and His Posterity: ‘Hellenistic’ Historiography surveys the early church historiography of the great historian of doctrine, Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) and his successors. In terms of definition, “by ‘Hellenistic’ historiography, I am referring to the approach to the understanding of early church history that was offered and defended by the Berlin Ritschlian scholar Harnack.”¹⁸ Further, “In an attempt to offer an alternative to the ‘classical theory’ ... Harnack, in conformity with his liberal tradition, ‘found the true link between experience and reality in the realm of moral and spiritual values rather than in the formal categories of an idealistic mystic.’”¹⁹ Especially known for his affinity with the Ritschlian school of theological liberalism (which reduced theology to morality), Harnack understood the essence of Christianity to “lay in its spiritual message, and attempts to translate its Gospel into metaphysical terms were little short of a betrayal of trust.”²⁰ However, it is his historiography that is primarily of concern to me in this chapter.

Consistent with his view that the gospel is “the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men,”²¹ Harnack saw early church history as a “record

¹⁶ Mutie, *The Quest*, 46. Concerning these methodological issues (especially as they apply to Strauss), Harvey correctly comments: “Strauss’s failure . . . is that he does not properly grasp the nature of the historian’s task. This is visible in his radical separation of two related obligations: to reconstruct the past and to make it intelligible to the present. It is at this point that the relationship between his Hegelian presuppositions and his historical work can best be seen and criticized. Such a criticism, in turn, may serve to illumine the more general problem of New Testament interpretation... It is at precisely this point that Strauss’s work is disappointing. He fails to discern the question to which the New Testament documents were intended as an answer. Rather, he comes to the New Testament with a different and alien question, with the result that the most crucial materials are dismissed as irrelevant for historical purposes and the positive meaning of the text” (Van A. Harvey, “D. F. Strauss’s Life of Jesus Revisited,” *Church History* 30 (1961): 205).

¹⁷ Mutie, *The Quest*, 46.

¹⁸ Mutie, *The Quest*, 47.

¹⁹ Mutie, *The Quest*. See Turner, *The Pattern*, 126.

²⁰ Turner, 16–17.

²¹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 54. See Adolf Harnack, *Das Wesen Des Christentums* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902).

of the deterioration and regress in terms of doctrinal development.”²² That is, while the gospel entered the world as a “entered into the world not as a doctrine, but as a joyful message and as a power of the Spirit of God,”²³ this soon changed when it interacted with Greek ideas. Interestingly, he sees the Gnostics as the ones who took the first step towards the “Hellenization” of the gospel. He writes concerning them; “*They [the Gnostics] were, in short, the Theologians of the first century.* They were the first to transform Christianity into a system of doctrines (dogmas).”²⁴ For him, “Doctrinal development in early Christianity . . . meant change in the gospel, its misdirection, its impairment.”²⁵ He argued that “the gospel lost its original joyousness, only to be recovered later by Martin Luther during the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.”²⁶ In other words, his historiography emphasizes his adversity to any form of concretization of the gospel in the name of “Dogma” or “creed.”²⁷ This is Harnack’s historiography in a nutshell, which, according to Heick and Neve, “became normative in wide circles.”²⁸ As the chapter continues, its highlights a number of individuals who form this “wide circles.”

While many of Harnack’s contemporaries and later students can be discussed, I limit my discussion to those that I think are most influential. First, Albert Schweitzer’s student, Martin Werner (1887–1964), argued that early church history is a record of the church’s de-emphasis of Jesus’ purely

²² Mutie, *The Quest*, 55.

²³ Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, 7 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1894–1899), 272.

²⁴ Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 1.228.

²⁵ Bingham, “Development and Diversity,” 49.

²⁶ Mutie, *The Quest*, 55.

²⁷ Harnack records his understanding of this regress this way: “That dogma which, in its conception and construction, was a work of the Hellenic spirit on the soil of the Gospel . . . continued to exist; in thinking of dogma one thought of a supernatural world and history, a knowledge that was revealed by God, that was embodied in unalterable articles of doctrine, and that conditioned all Christian life; but into its structure there were interwoven by Augustine in a marvelous way the principles of Christian life-experience, of the experience which he had passed through as a son of the Catholic Church and as a disciple of Paul and the Platonists, while the Roman Church thereafter gave to dogma the force of a great divine system of law for the individual and for Christian society” (Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 7.3).

²⁸ O. W. Heick and J. L. Neve, *A History of Christian Thought Vol. 2: History of Protestant Theology* (Philedelphia, PA: The Muhlenberg, 1946), 154.

eschatological message. He held that the “inner presuppositions of primitive Christianity which served as impulses for early doctrine.”²⁹ However, as Turner notes, according to Werner, “as ‘the hope of proximate Parousia waned, the Church was forced to undertake a complete re-orientation of her life and thought which Werner describes as *Enteschatologisierug* or ‘De-eschatologizing.’”³⁰ And, while Harnack and Werner start at different points, they results are conceptually the same: “doctrinal development in the early church evidences a regress from its pristine nature to something more corrupt, the contributing factors notwithstanding.”³¹ This tendency continues with Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976).

Bultmann’s name is a household name in New Testament studies. As far as his early historiography is concerned, he “embraces the evolutionary view advocated by F. C. Baur.”³² However, “contrary to Baur, who saw this process as beginning in the differing gospel understandings of Peter and Paul, Bultmann ‘finds the beginning of the evolution within the New Testament itself.’”³³ Additionally, “Similar to Harnack, Bultmann ‘recognizes the impact of the thought-forms of the Hellenistic [gnostic] age upon the nascent Church.’”³⁴ However, contrary to Harnack, Bultmann does not see this as a negative development. But Bultmann saw both the New Testament and the early church as full of “myths,” which needed to be reinterpreted if the message of the New Testament was to be properly understood. As I argue, Bultmann’s historiography “is centered on an ongoing process of separating the kernel from the husk.”³⁵ And, as a way of transitioning to the next chapter, it should be noted that, according to Bultmann, Gnosticism antedates Christianity (he pushed the beginning point of the Hellenization of Christianity a step back). This paves the way for what has come to be known as the “Bauer thesis,” the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4 entitled “Walter Bauer and the ‘Priority of Heresy’ Historiography: The Emergence of the “Bauer Thesis,” takes the reader into

²⁹ Bingham, “Development and Diversity,” 50.

³⁰ Turner, *The Pattern*, 20.

³¹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 61.

³² Mutie, *The Quest*, 64.

³³ Mutie, *The Quest*, 64.

³⁴ Mutie, *The Quest*, 65.

³⁵ Mutie, *The Quest*, 69.

one of the most crucial phases of the study of the history of the early church. It focuses on the historiography of Walter Bauer (1877–1960). As Köstenberger and Kruger note, “people who have never heard the name ‘Walter Bauer’ have been impacted by this scholar’s view of Jesus and the nature of early Christian beliefs.”³⁶ This is how impactful the “Bauer thesis” has been. But what is it?

The “Bauer thesis” refers to Bauer’s thesis argued in *his Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, which was first published under the German title, *Rechtgläubigkeit Und Ketzerei Im Ältesten Christentum Beiträge* in 1934, and translated into English in 1971.³⁷ In this work, Bauer simply reversed the classical view of the history of the early church. As Köstenberger and Kruger note, “Bauer reversed this notion [the classical theory] by proposing that heresy—that is, a variety of beliefs each of which would legitimately claim to be authentically ‘Christian’—preceded the notion of orthodoxy as a standard set of Christian doctrinal beliefs.”³⁸ As I explain, in order to sustain his thesis, “Bauer goes through the process of reading especially the works of the second-century church father Ignatius of Antioch, as well as other pieces of evidence concerning the working out of heresy and orthodoxy in earliest Christianity, in a highly reconstructed manner.”³⁹ He does this by looking at several key centers of early Christianity such as Edessa, Antioch, and Alexandria. Because of the nature of the “Bauer thesis,” as I note, “virtually all scholars of early church historiography agree that Bauer’s thesis was epoch-making.”⁴⁰ Indeed, the comments of Bart D. Ehrman are representative of other early church historians. He writes, “*Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (1934) was arguably the most important book in the history of

³⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 23.

³⁷ Walter Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit Und Ketzerei Im Ältesten Christentum Beiträge Zur Historischen Theologie* 10 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1934). See also Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 2nd German ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

³⁸ Köstenberger and Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, 24.

³⁹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 79.

⁴⁰ Mutie, *The Quest*, 82.

early Christianity to appear in the twentieth century.”⁴¹ While there were some early notices of the “Bauer thesis,” it is only in the recent times that the thesis has had a major impact in the study of early Christianity. Some of these earlier proponents of the thesis in one form or another include such scholars as Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), Hans Conzelmann (1915–89), Ernst Käsemann (1906–98), and Arnold Ehrhardt (1903–63).

While the chapter goes into great detail as far as the contribution of the above-named scholars to the “Bauer thesis” is concerned, for our purpose here, two of Bultmann’s students who imported the thesis to the United States, are of utmost concern. These are Helmut Koester (1926–2016) and James M. Robinson (1924–2016). Both saw themselves as being “involved in the current indigenization of the Bultmann tradition on American soil.”⁴² And, while they both “take a cue from Bauer via Bultmann,”⁴³ as Bingham argues, their early church historiography “differs somewhat from that of their teacher.”⁴⁴ Setting their New Testament and early church historiographies against what they perceive as “static,” these scholars seek to present these histories as trajectories, rather than concrete categories. As Köstenberger and Kruger note, ““In this influential appropriation of Bauer’s thesis, Koester and Robinson argued that ‘obsolete’ categories within categories within New Testament scholarship, such as ‘canonical’ or ‘non-canonical,’ ‘orthodox’ or ‘heretical,’ were inadequate.”⁴⁵ Intending to move past the “Bauer thesis,” which they saw as still steeped in the static categories of “orthodoxy” and “heresy,” they propose seeing the early church as a “trajectory” of turns and twists. To them, “events, persons, and texts can only be understood ‘in terms of the trajectories in which they are caught up,’ and these trajectories involve ‘a plurality of spinning worlds, with conflicting gravitational fields.”⁴⁶ Their approach needs some refining. I contend:

⁴¹ Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173. See also Jeroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Volume 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600) The Christian Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 365; A. J. Hultgren, *The Rise of Normative Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 9.

⁴² James M. Robinson, “Introduction: The Dismantling and Resembling of the Categories of New Testament Scholarship,” in *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1971), 1.

⁴³ Mutie, *The Quest*, 105.

⁴⁴ Bingham, “Development and Diversity,” 53.

⁴⁵ Mutie, *The Quest*, 105.

⁴⁶ Bingham, “Development and Diversity,” 54.

However, more than any other proponent of the “Bauer thesis,” Robinson and Koester are careful not to be understood as posting random trajectories that have no control whatsoever. For example, Robinson attempts this correction: “To be sure, the term trajectory may suggest too much determinative control at the point of departure, the angle at which the movement was launched, the torque of the initial thrust.” However, they see the control as the reality, speaking of many Christianities, but only of one reality. According to them, therefore, “this singular reality is the ultimate cause or essence which determines all that becomes visible in history.”⁴⁷

For these authors, early church historiography is actually an application of classic historicism based on the “history of religions school” (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*). Bingham further clarifies concerning this historicism; “here one finds the cosmological metaphor of Robinson: development in early Christianity must be understood as a dynamic taking place amidst ‘spinning worlds’ and ‘conflicting gravitational fields.’”⁴⁸ And, as I argue, however it is conceived, therefore, Robinson and Koester’s early church historiography is averse to any category that they consider ‘static.’” In this case, not only do Koester and Robinson serve as an important link in bringing Bultmann to America, but, most significantly, they serve as the propagators of what can legitimately be referred to as the “Baur-Bauer” thesis. I agree with Harrisville and Sundberg in their conclusion concerning the legacy of F. C. Baur:

the prevailing opinion that from the outset of the Christian community was beset by conflicts over theology and practice—a view developed more by Walter Bauer (1904–60) than anyone else in the twentieth century, a study that still later gave stimulus to Robinson’s and Koester’s argument for the cultural and religious pluralism of the Hellenistic and Roman era—that opinion had Ferdinand Christian Baur for its father.⁴⁹

This sums up this chapter, emphasizing its contribution to the thesis of the book. And, while the chapter is not intended to offer a criticism of the “Bauer thesis” *per se*, the scathing critical review of Bauer’s work that came

⁴⁷ Mutie, *The Quest*, 107.

⁴⁸ Bingham, “Development and Diversity,” 58.

⁴⁹ Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 115–16.

from the pen of Walther Völker in an essay review published in the *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* in 1935, still stands. He wrote:

Consequently, on occasion he himself considerably limits his conclusions, as when he points out that this book “is forced to rely heavily on conjectures” (224), or when he invokes a “perhaps,” or a “probably” (105, 90, 45, 47: “I indulge in conjectures with reluctance”). He finds himself to strict standards whenever it is necessary to refute the views of other researchers. He points to the “extremely fragmentary nature of our knowledge” (221), he forswears claims of certainty, he demands evidence (51, A. 1)—however, all this does not prevent Bauer from recording the following sentence: “in order to acquire a true-to-life picture from indications in the sources, some degree of imagination should be necessary” (115).⁵⁰

As I argue, however, Völker was mistaken in his prophecy that Bauer’s reconstruction of early church history was a passing fad. As I note, “his concluding prophesy would, obviously, not come to pass.”⁵¹ This is based on his comments in which he stated, “I cannot believe that such a reconstruction of history has any prospect of becoming accepted in the Protestant approach to church history (to say nothing of the Catholic). It is only the most extreme swing of the pendulum of a view that ultimately traces back to G. Arnold’s estimation of the heretics.”⁵² In other words, the “Bauer thesis” continues to have immense influence in the study of early Christianity. This becomes evident as the reader transitions to the next chapter of the book.

Chapter 5, entitled “The Historiography of Bart Ehrman and his Contemporaries: Extreme Historicism,” focuses on the dominant current climate of early church historiography. The chapter poignantly, begins by restating the thesis of the book. “The argument of this work,” I contend, “is

⁵⁰ Walther Völker, “Walter Bauer’s *Rechtgläubigkeit Und Ketzerei Im Ältesten Christentum*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 4 (2006): 400.

⁵¹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 110.

⁵² Völker, 404–05. For more criticisms of the “Bauer thesis,” see J. McCue, “Bauer’s *Rechtgläubigkeit Und Ketzerei*,” in *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*, ed. Johann-Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987); I. Howard Marshall, “Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earlier Christianity,” *Themelios* 2, no. 1 (1976); Jerry Rees Flora, “A Critical Analysis of Walter Bauer’s Theory of Early Christian Orthodoxy and Heresy” (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972); Paul Trebilco, “Christian Communities in Western Asia Minor into the Early Second Century: Ignatius and Others as Witnesses against Bauer,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 1 (2006); Frederick W. Norris, “Ignatius, Polycarp, and 1 Clement: Walter Bauer Reconsidered,” *Vigiliae christianae* 30 (1976).

that the early church historiographical ‘tree’ whose ‘roots’ are found in the thought and work of C. F. Baur, eventually, had its greatest ‘fruit’ in the thought and work of B. Ehrman [1955–].”⁵³ And, as already noted, Ehrman’s name is synonymous with critical approach to both the New Testament and early Christianity. I further summarize his place in these areas of scholarship this way:

While scholarship is still grappling with the place of Ehrman, to say that he is influential is almost an understatement. Through his many books and journal articles (as well as his popular debates with other scholars, both conservative and mainline evangelical), Ehrman has widely managed to carve a place for himself by popularizing his views. His influence came to light once again, when, in the Evangelical Theological Society’s 69th Annual Conference held in Providence, Rhode Island, in November 2017, a session was entitled “Growing Up in the Ehrman Era: Retrospect & Prospect on Our Text-Critical Apologetic.” Therefore, he is by far the most eloquent and effective popularizer of the Bauer thesis.⁵⁴

After discussing the interesting religious pilgrimage of Ehrman from his theologically conservative years through his “conversion” to his present state of having left Christianity altogether, the chapter proceeds to deal with his early church historiography.⁵⁵

After dealing with other aspects of Ehrman’s worldview (such as his cosmology, bibliology and anthropology), the chapter proceeds to deal with his early church historiography. As I explain, “Ehrman’s early church historiography, though decipherable from various places, comes out clearly in

⁵³ Mutie, *The Quest*, 121.

⁵⁴ Mutie, *The Quest*, 122.

⁵⁵ For this “pilgrimage,” see Bart Ehrman, *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question— Why We Suffer* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 3. Bart. D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don’t Know About Them)* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009), xi. For criticisms of Ehrman’s scholarship, see Rodney J. Decker, “The Rehabilitation of Heresy: ‘Misquoting’ Earliest Christianity” (Paper Presented at the Bible Faculty Summit, Central Baptist Seminary, Minneapolis, July 2007). However, as I note, “Concerning Ehrman’s demeanor, I certainly agree with Randy Alcorn, who has perceptively observed: ‘While I will criticize Ehrman, I should clarify that sometimes I find him likable. He can be overconfident, yet occasionally admits his uncertainties. He avoids the bombastic approach that some atheist—and some Christian—authors Display’” (Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Multnomah, 2009), 95. Alcorn further helpfully comments; “Unfortunately, Ehrman’s Christian-to-non-theist testimony gives apparent credibility to his claims, so he functions as a winsome evangelist for atheism. While he says he doesn’t intend to cause believers to lose their faith, it’s easy to wonder why else he would write such a book” (ibid).

his *Lost Christianities*. As the title suggests, in this work, Ehrman purports to present to the reader versions of early Christianities that were lost in history.⁵⁶ According to Ehrman, there was a diversity of beliefs in the early church. As examples of these, he argues that in the second and third centuries, the “wide diversity of early Christianity may be seen above all in the theological beliefs embraced by people who understood themselves to be followers of Jesus.”⁵⁷ According to him, “there were, of course, Christians who believed in one God. But there were others who insisted that there were two. Some said there were thirty. Others claimed there were 365.”⁵⁸ His historiography, however, needs further elucidation, itself the content of most of the remainder of the chapter.

Included in these groups of lost *Christianities* are those that wrote a majority of the documents discovered in Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt, in 1945 (Gnostic treatises). In his interaction with these documents, he “reconfigures” the “Bauer thesis.” He argues that his thoughts are based on these past scholars: Hermann Reimarus (1694–1768), F. C. Baur (1792–1860), and Walter Bauer (1877–1960). However, according to him, it is Bauer who has been most impactful. As I explain, “Ehrman sees especially helpful Bauer’s objection to the use of the terms ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ as helpful debate terms in the study of early church history.”⁵⁹ He further writes concerning Bauer; “for him, historians cannot use the words *orthodoxy* to mean right belief and heresy to mean wrong belief.”⁶⁰ But he sees Bauer as not having gone far enough!

Ehrman recasts the “Bauer thesis” by going historically further beyond Bauer’s starting point, casting suspicion on the Gospel accounts themselves. He, in other words, regurgitated the suspicions of Reimarus, writing:

Some of the differences are much larger, involving the purpose of Jesus’ mission and the understanding of his character. What all the differences show, great and small, is that each Gospel writer has an agenda—a point of view he wants to get across, an understanding of Jesus he wants his

⁵⁶ Mutie, *The Quest*, 124.

⁵⁷ Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 2.

⁵⁸ Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 2.

⁵⁹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 128.

⁶⁰ Mutie, *The Quest*, 128.

readers to share. And he has told his stories in such a way as to convey that agenda.⁶¹

In other words, as he appropriates the “Bauer thesis,” Ehrman pushes it even further to include the Gospels. According to him, “if anything, early Christianity was even less tidy and more diversified than he [Bauer] realized.”⁶² Thus, as I surmise:

stated, therefore, Ehrman’s historiography goes something like this: “Development in early Christianity is a movement away from an originally broad variety of Christianities, ideologically in conflict with proto-orthodoxy, to a later, but strategically superior, ‘orthodoxy.’” However, instead of seeing this process as taking place naturally through the “thesis-synthesis-antithesis” cycle, as F. C. Baur conceived it, for Ehrman, “this victory came about through conflicts that are attested in polemical treatises, personal slurs, forgeries, and falsifications.” For him, the “final victors were proto-orthodox who got the ‘last laugh’ by sealing the victory, finalizing the New Testament, and choosing the documents that best suited their purpose and theology.”⁴⁶ Finally, for him, “posterity is aware of these ‘losers’ (i.e., ‘heretics’) only by their sparsely available written remains that the ‘winners’ excluded from the Bible.” Thus, in Ehrman, we have the fullest flowering and complete fruition of the Bauer thesis.⁶³

Thus, while, as noted above, scholarship is still grappling with the place of Ehrman, his popularization of the “Bauer thesis” in current scholarship has been unparalleled.

Before mentioning a few scholars who have attempted to move “beyond” Ehrman, the chapter highlights a few key criticisms that have been legitimately leveled against Ehrman’s early church historiography. One such

⁶¹ Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 170. As Ehrman further explains, “The basis evidence for this point of view [the view by Reimarus, that the disciples began a religion contrary to what Jesus intended] involves some of the major points that Reimarus himself made: There are differences among the Gospel accounts that cannot be reconciled: Did Jesus die the afternoon before the Passover meal was eaten, as in John (see 19:14), or the morning afterwards, as in Mark (see 14:12, 22; 15:25)? Did Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt after Jesus’ birth as in Matthew (12:13–23), or did they return to Nazareth (2:39)? Was Jairus’s daughter sick and dying when he came to ask Jesus for help as in Mark (6:23, 35), or had she already died, as in Matthew (9:18)? After Jesus’ resurrection, did the disciples stay in Jerusalem until he had ascended into heaven, as in Luke (24:1–52), or did they straightaway go to Galilee, as in Matthew (28:1–20)” (ibid, 169–70).

⁶² Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 176.

⁶³ Mutie, *The Quest*, 131.

criticism is raised by Craig Blaising, who argues that the basis for Ehrman's historiography (his claim that the NT documents were *forged*), cannot stand upon close scrutiny.⁶⁴ According to him, "Ehrman seems to put a lot more trust in documents that are more likely to be forgeries, and, consequently, using them to judge those documents that are less likely to be forged!"⁶⁵ He blames this methodological issue with Ehrman's obsession with diversity, itself a characteristic of postmodernity.

The chapter proceeds with a discussion of some of the leading contemporaries of Ehrman who have adopted his historiography. These are Elaine Pagels (1943–) and Einar Thomassen (1951–). Pagels, especially in her 2003 work entitled *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*,⁶⁶ argues that Christians should go back to the state it was before belief was "prescribed" upon believers in the form of fourth century creedal formulations.⁶⁷ She, therefore, reconfiguring the "Bauer thesis," sees a lot more diversity before the canonization of the New Testament (which, according to her, was a *negative* development as it crystallized Christianity). On his part, Thomassen focuses on the second part of the "Bauer thesis"—that Rome was a centralized location of orthodoxy in the second century. As I explain, "Thomassen argues that the church of Rome was more diverse than Bauer conceived."⁶⁸ For him, there was early diversity in Rome. These groups included such groups as Valentinianism and Marcionism. According to him, rather than an early centralization of orthodoxy in Rome, there was "dynamic development" towards later centralization.

As the chapter concludes, interaction is made with some other scholars who have attempted to move beyond Ehrman. The most notable is Rebecca Lyman, emeritus professor of religious studies at San Diego State University. As Bingham explains, in her NAPS address in 2002, she "moved forcefully beyond Bauer and Ehrman and the classical historicism of Robinson and Koester."⁶⁹ As I further explain, "she argued for an early church historiography based on the 'hybridity' postcolonial approach based on the

⁶⁴ Craig A. Blaising, "Faithfulness: A Prescription for Theology," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 1 (2006): 8.

⁶⁵ Mutie, *The Quest*, 132.

⁶⁶ See Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003).

⁶⁷ Mutie, *The Quest*, 134.

⁶⁸ Mutie, *The Quest*, 137.

⁶⁹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 140.

work of Homi Bhabha entitled *The Location of Culture*.⁷⁰ Employing these postcolonial theories, she “argues that rather than seeing second Christianity as ‘defecting’ from the Roman Hellenistic culture, we should ‘conceive of Christians as participating in a cultural movement within Hellenism.’”⁷¹ In this “hybrid” scenario, “second-century apologists and polemicists such as Justin, Irenaeus, and Clement ‘should be understood as participants within a ‘larger cultural discussion on ancestral origins and the transcendent truth within a plurality of religions.’”⁷² This is her attempt to move beyond Ehrman and the other noted exponents of the “Bauer thesis.”

The final content chapter is entitled “Determination of Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christianity: The Quest for Criteria.” In this chapter, the book attempts to respond to the question of whether there were criteria for determining both orthodoxy and heresy in the early church. In an attempt to conceive of an early church historiography that accounts for all available data, the chapter seeks to answer this questions: “is it possible to establish the exact doctrinal situation both in the documents that were later to be recognized as the inspired books of the New Testament as well as in the life and thought of the early church fathers?”⁷³ In other words, “is there... criteria (albeit rudimentary) for determining ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ in earliest Christianity?”⁷⁴ The rest of the chapter is dedicated to dealing with these issues.

As the chapter unfolds, definitions for the terms “orthodoxy” and “heresy” are provided. According to J. I. Packer, “the term is the “English equivalent of Greek *orthodoxia* (from *orthos*, ‘right,’ and *doxa*, ‘opinion’) meaning right belief, as opposed to heresy or heterodoxy.”⁷⁵ Stanley Grenz and others note that the term *orthodoxy* refers to “‘right praise’ or ‘right belief’ (as opposed to *heresy).”⁷⁶ Finally, according to Köstenberger and Kruger, the term orthodoxy means the “correct teaching regarding the person and

⁷⁰ Mutie, *The Quest*, 140. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁷¹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 141.

⁷² Mutie, *The Quest*, 141.

⁷³ Mutie, *The Quest*, 152.

⁷⁴ Mutie, *The Quest*, 152.

⁷⁵ J. I. Packer, “Orthodoxy,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 875.

⁷⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 87.

work of Jesus Christ, including the way of salvation, in contrast to teaching regarding Jesus that deviates from standard norms of Christian doctrine.”⁷⁷ This is how the term *orthodoxy* is used in the chapter.

Conversely, the term *heresy* “is the transliteration of the Greek term *hairesis* (αἵρεσις) ‘which originally meant an action or belief chosen from among several options but in time came to mean an unorthodox opinion held by a group—sometimes even a majority—within the church.’”⁷⁸ Rick further elaborates; “The concept of ‘heresy’ is grounded in the conviction that there exists one revealed truth, and that other opinions are intentional distortions or denials of that truth.”⁷⁹ This is how the terms are used in the chapter.

The basic argument of the chapter is that there existed demonstrable criteria for determination of orthodoxy and heresy in the early church (albeit in a rudimentary manner). Indeed, as the chapter demonstrates, this criteria goes back to the NT documents themselves. The first line of evidence is what are known as “pre-creedal formulations” in the NT. These are noticeable statements in the NT that are introduced with such phrases as “I passed to you what I received/as I received.” A good example of this is Paul’s words in 1 Cor 11:23. As I further explain, “the other formula used to introduce these creedal statements in the New Testament (especially in the Pastoral Epistles), is this: ‘this is a trustworthy saying’ (πιστός ὁ λόγος), which appears in these texts: 1 Tim 1:15a; 3:1a; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11a; and Titus 3:8.”⁸⁰ Thus, as I argue in the first part of this chapter, these formulas point to the content of the faith (orthodoxy) that was held by these early believers. As I summarize:

In summary, the creedal formula quoted by Paul here in his defense of the resurrection of Christ constitutes one of the earliest expressions of the body of the Christian faith. Its presence and contents argue against those who see no criteria for the differentiation of truth and error (orthodoxy and heresy) in earliest Christianity. As Neufeld concludes concerning the function of this (and related formulae in the NT), it was “used to combat schismatics (Rom. 16:7), to convince or convict opponents (Tit. 1:9), and to distinguish *true believers and heretics* (II Jn. 9, 10).” This

⁷⁷ Köstenberger and Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, 70–71.

⁷⁸ Mutie, 155. See K. W. Rick, “Heresy,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 550.

⁷⁹ Rick, “Heresy,” 550.

⁸⁰ Mutie, *The Quest*, 159.

understanding of the function of this earliest creedal formula, goes against the continued argument that, during its primitive times, Christianity was so fluid such that it could not necessarily determine orthodoxy from heresy.⁸¹

And, as I argue in the succeeding pages, the same is true of the Pastoral Epistles as well.

The next set of evidence is based on liturgical material that predate the New Testament. These are especially *hymns* in the NT that point to the existence of core doctrinal beliefs in the early church. As I note, “for example, ‘many believe that Philippians 2:6–11 and Colossians 1:15–20 represent early Christians hymns that Paul incorporated into his letters for various purposes.’”⁸² While I cannot explore all of these “hymns,” what Larry Hurtado says about the Christology of Philippians 2:6–11, can be said of the others. He writes:

As to content, it is patently clear that Philippians 2:6–11 is concerned with “Christology” (that is, with affirmations about the significance of Jesus). The clear thrust of the passage is an affirmation of Jesus’ special significance. Indeed, virtually all of the earliest, sizeable, and significant Christological passages in the New Testament appear to be remnants of early Christian hymns, and it seems that such odes to and about Jesus may have been a crucial mode in which Jesus’ exalted significance was articulated in the earliest years of Christianity. Under the impact of the religious fervor characteristic of earliest Christian circles, which they understood as the manifestation of God’s Spirit, believers were moved to express their devotion to Jesus in composing and chanting odes that celebrated his deeds and high status.⁸³

And, therefore, as I note, “it is very clear that, from this and other early Christological hymns, the early church was very clear on the parameters that set orthodoxy from heresy in these key beliefs concerning the Person of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁴ We can now turn to the final piece of evidence for the existence of

⁸¹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 164.

⁸² Mutie, *The Quest*, 177.

⁸³ Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 86.

⁸⁴ Mutie, *The Quest*, 179.

early criteria for determination of orthodoxy and heresy in the early church: the *regula fidei*.

The phrase the *regula fidei*, refers to the ancient idea, the “Rule of Faith,” which was used to determine doctrinal standards. It became prevalent in the writings of such church fathers as Clement, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. Turner’s summary is helpful. He writes:

The phrase “The Rule of Truth” (*κανών της ἀληθείας, regula veritas*) occurs freely in the writings of St. Irenaeus. A single passage in the Armenian translation of the Epideixis [the Armenian version of Irenaeus’s *The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*] presupposes “the Rule of Faith” as its original, but this form is otherwise paralleled in St. Irenaeus. That the genitive is one of apposition is proved by a passage in which both elements in the phrase are set side by side as objects of a common verb. In close conjunction to the Rule of Truth stand words like faith, its content or subject matter (*ὑπόθεσις, argumentum, argumentation*), and proclamation or preaching (*κήρυγμα, praedicatio*). Perhaps with its original meaning in mind it is once described as fixed or unbending (*ἀκλινη, immobilem*).⁸⁵

After wrestling with the possible origins of the *regula fidei*, the chapter moves to deal with the crucial question of its actual content.

While there are those who, on the one hand, see the *regula fidei* as concretized early and the same as the written form of the baptismal formula (such as Adolf Harnack), there are others, on the other hand, see it as too broad to include beliefs of those who were considered as heretics. I argue that the *regula fidei* was neither too restrictive as to be equated with the baptismal formula nor was it too expansive to include groups that were considered heretical in the early church. Rather, “even though the phrasing of the formula showed flexibility and fixity, it was neither too fixed to be viewed as a concretized creed nor too broad as to include beliefs that were held by those groups that were considered heretical in their understanding of God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, as well as Jesus’ work on the cross and its continued application.”⁸⁶ And, therefore, as I argue, “even with its flexibility, the *regula fidei* clearly served as the demarcation between *orthodoxy* and *heresy*.”⁸⁷ Thus, the chapter answers this key question: was there a set criterion

⁸⁵ Turner, *The Pattern*, 349.

⁸⁶ Mutie, *The Quest*, 198.

⁸⁷ Mutie, *The Quest*, 198–99.

for determination of orthodoxy and heresy in the early church (in the affirmative).

The concluding brief chapter, entitled “Toward an Early Church Historiography,” proposes an early church historiography that attempts to account for the available data. I agree with Bingham who argues that any credible early church historiography “ought to reflect continuity with other theological commitments concerning diversity and development.”⁸⁸ After exploring the three models proposed by Carolyne Bynum (that is, that of “bodily resurrection, the progress from old economy to new, and the immensity of the Creator but the frailty of the creature”⁸⁹), I conclude by proposing that a sustainable early church historiography must exhibit these characteristics evident in the writings of the fathers: “a commitment to neither be too restrictive nor broad in ...[the] expression of the central beliefs of the church.”⁹⁰ Indeed, as I insist, “any adopted model for early church historiography must insist on a prior commitment to holding onto the truthfulness of the key doctrines being espoused in the employment of the models.”⁹¹ In other words, the model only works on the basis of the assumption that the reported events (as well as the doctrines derived from them) are truthful in what their historicity. This concludes *The Quest*.

⁸⁸ Bingham, “Development and Diversity,” 63.

⁸⁹ Ibid. See Carolyne Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 57–58. See also A. H. C. van Eijk, “‘Only That Can Rise Which Has Previously Fallen’: The History of a Formula,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 22, no. 2 (1971).

⁹⁰ Mutie, *The Quest*, 202–03.

⁹¹ Mutie, *The Quest*, 203.

Book Review:

**GOD, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE**

by Tony Reinke

Review by Dale R. Hutchcraft

Dr. Dale R. Hutchcraft (PhD) taught in the field of leadership at the University of Northwestern of St. Paul, and served as the vice president of academic affairs for Global Leadership University, a school dedicated to training entrepreneurs to work effectively overseas.

Whenever the topic of technology comes up in a discussion in Christian circles it elicits many different responses. In some discussions it will be praised for all the benefits that it has brought to human life. In other discussions there will be an obligatory nod that it is something we have to tolerate while there is a lingering for the slower gentler and simpler times. Yet another discussions technology will be cursed. It can and has been used for a great deal of evil on humankind. And sometimes all three views will be interwoven into the same singular discussion. With technology being such a part of the warp and woof of most everyone's everyday lives, it is important for Christians to get a grip on technology as it relates to the nature of God and their Christian life.

Tony Reinke, the author of the book *God, Technology, and the Christian Life*, assists the reader in doing just that. While some readers may not embrace all of his conclusions, there will be a definite appreciation of his exegesis and application of the Scriptures, and the challenges to think

through difficult issues that surround our modern technological advances. These two dynamics make it a must read for believers in our 21st century.

The first chapter of the book serves as an introduction. It gives clarity to the question what technology is. The application of our native powers through new techniques. That is to say that as humans we take what is found in the world God has created and re-create from what has been created. Then it delineates biblical examples of this concept. The chapter continues with a general overview of the rest of the book and the exploration of being a person of faith and technology. Finally, the chapter concludes with the dispelling of the more common myths concerning technology and offering ethical foundations.

Chapter two focuses on God's relationship to technology. The chapter moves through the chapters of Genesis after the flood giving a panoramic view of the beginning history of technology. It explains biblically the relationship of God's sovereignty over technology.

Chapter three brings clarity to the question, "Where do our technologies come from?" The chapter emphasizes that it is God that has created out of nothing. Humans create *nothing* out of nothing. We discover and copy and paste and rearrange. We operate within boundaries set by someone else. Genesis 11 tells us who created the sandbox. Humanity just gets to play in the sandbox.

In chapter four, Reinke delineates what technology can never accomplish. It cannot fill our spiritual void. It cannot save us. There is the discussion that we are always in danger of allowing technology to become our idol.

Chapter five explores the question, "When do our technologies end?" Here there is an acknowledgment of a final judgment. But until that final judgment arrives, there is the necessity to live circumspectly within the world. The chapter gives several examples of this from the Scripture. It contains the proposal that as the church awaits the final reckoning, it will need a uniquely balanced diet of stern spiritual warnings and radiant eternal promises.

Chapter six, the final chapter, contains instructions on how to use technology wisely in consideration of the ethics of technological use in the 21st century. A good summation of the chapter could be found on page 275:

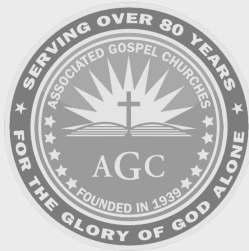
Contrary to our hallucinations of tech security, Ecclesiastes talks often of "striving after wind," or better translated, "shepherding wind." Our attempts to control this world are like shepherding a wind gust, the very definition of vanity. When we realize that we cannot control the world, we finally have a foundation for our joy rather than a drainage ditch for

our happiness. Why? Because while we cannot control everything, God does.”

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