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Reflections on Persecution

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Editorial: Thinking about the New Covenant and Persecution

Stephen J. Wellum

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When we compare and contrast life under the old covenant versus life under the new covenant there are a number of differences which immediately come to mind. Obviously the greatest difference is what the old covenant typified and anticipated has now come to pass in Christ. So, for example, and certainly not limited to these points, circumcision has given way to its fulfillment, namely the coming of Christ, his glorious cross work, and the reality that the entire community of Christ's people is now a regenerate people, born of the Spirit, in contrast to the mixed nature of Israel. Or, the sacrificial system tied to the entire priestly work has now given way to the work of our great High Priest, who by the offering of himself has brought to fulfillment what the old system pointed forward to, namely the full atonement of our Lord and the accomplishment of our justification before God. In many, many ways the old covenant in all of its structures, types, and patterns has reached its *telos*, terminus, and fulfillment in Christ.

However, there is also another way in which the old is different than the new covenant. When one thinks of the words, "suffering" and "persecution," it is important to think through how these concepts differ depending upon which covenant we live under. Generally speaking, under the old covenant,

one of the great blessings of that covenant was that the people of God were *not* to suffer and experience persecution if they remained faithful to the Lord. So, for example, when one reads Deuteronomy 27-28, one is struck by the fact that if the people obeyed God, they would have received not only physical and material wealth but also victory over their enemies. Yet, conversely, if they disobeyed God, they would experience the curses of the covenant, namely, various forms of suffering and persecution. Now it is important to quickly note that this is generally speaking. Even old covenant believers lived in light of Adam's sin and thus experienced the reality of death. In fact, this is one of the reasons why the book of Job is so important in the OT canon. Without it, one could get the false impression that the blessings of God are always material and physical and that it is only due to sin that we experience God's curse. Obviously, given Adam's sin, this is not the case and Job clearly reminds us that there is such a thing as a righteous sufferer even in the OT era. Yet, with that said, under the old covenant, more often than not, suffering and persecution is identified with disobedience and disregard for God's covenantal demands.

Under the new covenant, however, this is certainly *not* the case. Given that our Lord Jesus Christ has experienced suffering to glory in order to accomplish our salvation, we too, yet not for exactly the same reasons, are called to suffer and experience persecution for his name's sake. In fact, under the new covenant, generally speaking, suffering and persecution is not primarily due to our disobedience (except in the case of our sin), but it is the result of our faithfulness and obedience to the Lord. As Paul reminds us, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (1 Tim 3:12, ESV). Or, as our Lord himself teaches about who the truly blessed person is and what kingdom life is all about: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt 5:10-12, ESV).

This staggering change of covenantal emphasis is not something the Western church has taken seriously or done justice to, especially in the last century where we have lived in relative peace and calm. Among us has grown up all kinds of health and wealth gospels which have distorted the teaching of Scripture, led Christians to have false expectations, and which have failed to account for kingdom life as lived under the new covenant. No doubt, throughout the history of the church and even in our own day, a majority of

the church has experienced and known what it means to suffer and be persecuted for Christ's sake as new covenant believers. Even as I write this editorial, we hear of an increase of persecution against Christians in many parts of the world. What has been fairly common throughout church history (and even today outside first world countries), is now coming to the West, but are we ready for it? One of the main reasons why our last issue of *SBJT* and this current issue have focused on the themes of suffering and persecution in Scripture and Church history is to prepare Christians, especially in the West, for what we will certainly experience and, in truth, what we should expect to experience as faithful new covenant believers. Before the difficult times arise, we need to think anew about what Scripture teaches on these important subjects, as well as learn lessons from Christians throughout the ages, in order to stand strong and faithful to our Lord today.

It is for this reason that we offer this issue of *SBJT* on the theme of persecution. Starting with the biblical data of how we should think about true persecution, and then turning to the lessons of Church history, our aim is to prepare the Western church to live out our calling as new covenant believers, living between the times, as we await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is our goal that as we think through these important matters our attitude towards suffering and persecution will be brought more in line with Scripture. And, as a result, when we experience true persecution for Christ's sake, we will rejoice that we are found worthy to be identified with our great and glorious Lord who has gone before us and won the victory on our behalf.

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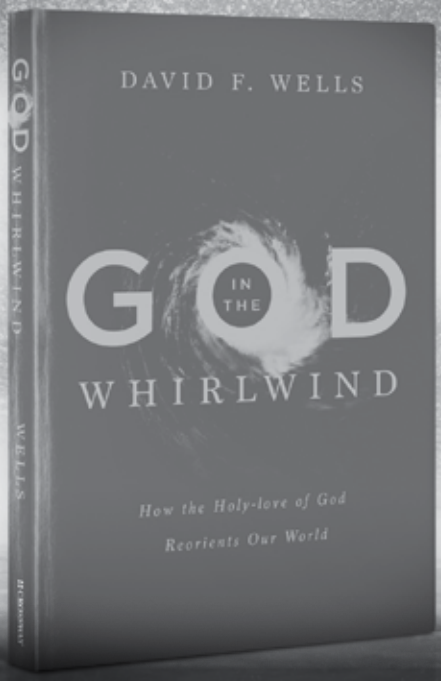

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Christian Persecution as Explained by Jesus (Matthew 5:10-12)

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About ten years ago, an occasional paper titled "The Persecuted Church" was presented at the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization. That paper reminded its hearers that the original Lausanne Conference in 1974 had asked for scholars to study "the relationship between human suffering in general, suffering for Christ's sake, and Christ's own suffering."[1] Three decades after the original call, the Lausanne Conference again asked for scholars to address the crisis of Christian persecution, saying, "There is clearly a need for deeper theological reflection on the issues pertaining to suffering, persecution, martyrdom, religious freedom and human rights, and an appropriate Christian response."[2] What Lausanne is requesting is nothing less than what the Christian church has attempted to provide throughout her history: an explanation for why the righteous suffer on account of Christ.

About 1,800 years ago, the church father Tertullian was compelled to offer a defense of Christians in the face of the persecution they were suffering. Keeping his keen wit, Tertullian both defended Christians and mocked their persecutors, saying,

> If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls, if the Nile does not send its waters up over the fields, if the heavens give no rain, if there is an earthquake, if there is famine or pestilence, straightway the cry is, "Away with the Christians to the lion!" What! shall you give such multitudes to a single beast? Pray, tell me how many calamities befell the world and particular cities before Tiberius reigned—before the coming, that is, of Christ?[3]

Like Tertullian before him, Augustine, the famous Bishop of Hippo, was compelled in his own day to offer a similar defense of the faithful. The major purpose of Augustine's *City of God* was to defend the Christian faith in the Roman Empire after the sacking of Rome by barbarians in the early fifth century. Rome was again blaming Christians for every calamity and justifying persecution against them on that account. So Augustine wrote, "With what effrontery, then, with what assurance, with what impudence, with what folly, or rather insanity, do they refuse to impute these disasters to their own gods, and impute the present to our Christ!"[4]

Another thousand years after Augustine, in the time of the Reformation, John Calvin was also compelled to defend Christians against the charges brought against them (and the persecution those charges fueled). In the preface to his *Institutes*, Calvin implored King Francis to realize that the doctrines being taught by the Reformers were biblical doctrines. Calvin pleaded with the king to recognize the injustice of the persecution and to put it to an end. Sounding much like Augustine and Tertullian before him, Calvin said,

> …how great is the malice that would ascribe to the very word of God itself the odium either of seditions, which wicked and rebellious men stir up against it, or of sects, which impostors excite, both of them in opposition to its teaching! Yet this is no new example. Elijah was asked if it was not he who was troubling Israel (1 Kings 18:17). To the Jews, Christ was seditious (Luke 23:5; John 19:7ff.). The charge of stirring up the people was laid against the apostles (Acts 24:5ff.). What else are they doing who blame us today for all the disturbances, tumults, and contentions that boil up against us? Elijah taught us what we ought to reply to such charges: it is not we who either spread errors abroad or incite tumults; but it is they who contend against God's power (1 Kings 18:18).[5]

As Calvin so poignantly notes, defending Christians against persecution is no new thing. From Christ to Stephen to the Apostles, the early church

fathers, the Reformers, or the Baptists in "the new world," Christians have always been at the root of controversy and have repeatedly re-learned the lesson Paul and Barnabas taught Christ's followers at Lystra: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."[6]

Tertullian, Augustine, and Calvin demonstrate through history what Jesus, John, and Paul experienced personally: Persecution is not an anomaly for Christians; it is rather the norm. The apostle Paul offered his pastoral protégé Timothy this sure promise: "Indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."[7] Paul could not have made the point more plainly: Christians will always be persecuted.

Now that the church has extended its witness of Christ for 2,000 years past Paul, we can affirm this same reality throughout history. Christians have been (and remain today) a persecuted people. In November 2012, German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, absorbed a modicum of ridicule from European leaders for her statement that Christians today are the most widely persecuted minority in the world. Since that time, reports have surfaced corroborating her claim that Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world.[8] Christians today—just as in times past—are still being blamed for societal ills and still face the wrath of men, men who unjustly charge Christians with sedition, while they themselves contend against God's power.

This essay explores biblically the dynamic of Christian persecution. The article is an attempt to define persecution from Christ's instructions to his disciples in Matthew 5:10-12. I intend to demonstrate that persecution is, as Calvin said, a contention against God's power. Specifically, persecution is a retaliatory action against the righteousness of God in Christ, who is proclaimed and represented by his followers. The reasons Christians have always faced persecution and the reason they will suffer until Christ's return is simple: Jesus Christ is the Son of God who has established the kingdom of God and now reigns in righteousness over heaven and earth. Jesus is at root the ultimate provocateur of Christian persecution. The world despised and rejected Jesus when he first walked the earth, and the world (as the Lausanne Conference notes) remains hostile to him still.

The New Testament portrays Jesus as preparing his disciples for the reality of persecution from the very early parts of his ministry. Consider what he taught, for example, in Matthew 5:10-12:

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of

me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (NASB)."

Jesus instructed his followers from the beginning of his ministry to understand their suffering persecution as a blessing, even to rejoice and be glad on these occasions of suffering. Is there any doubt that Jesus expected his followers to suffer persecution? A further study of Matthew 5:10-12 explains why—from the beginning—there has always been this on-going expectation of persecution for the follower of Christ.

Formally, Matthew 5:10-12 may contain a ninth Beatitude.[9] Notice that within this passage, there is a change of address. At first, Jesus is speaking in a general third person form: *Those who have been persecuted … theirs is the kingdom.* But, in Matthew 5:11, Jesus changes to the second person: *Blessed are* you *when…* . This change from third person plural to second person plural shifts the conversation to direct address by the speaker. In other words, Jesus lets his followers know he is not telling them something that will be happening "out there" to some group of future Christians in some generic sense. He is telling them that this persecution will be happening "to you." Jesus turns the conversation from general realities to specific application for the *you all* who are being addressed. Matthew 5:10-12, then, is the first place in the New Testament which offers an explanation of why followers of Christ will suffer persecution. Thus, a substantial analysis of that passage is necessary for any who would wish to understand more fully the dynamic of Christian persecution.

Analysis of Matthew 5:10-12

The fact of a relationship between kingdom people and persecution is visible in Matthew 5:10-12. In verse 10, the kingdom is said to belong to those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Matthew 5:10-12, in fact, offers three aspects which abide at the core of a biblical definition of persecution. The three aspects of Christian persecution are (1) Christ; (2) Christ's kingdom; and (3) his righteousness. This triumvirate of Christian terminology explains what will be referred to as *the regnal-righteousness* dynamic of Christian persecution. This regnal righteousness dynamic asserts that persecution is always rooted in the presence of Christ who has begun his reign as king over heaven and earth (Matt 28:18-20). This king (and kingdom) has come "in the salvation through judgment accomplished by the messiah for the glory of God."[10]

As king, Christ establishes the righteousness of God on the earth, which

is to say, he asserts divine authority and demands complete allegiance, as any good and godly sovereign should (2 Sam 8:15). Christ commands allegiance to God. Discipleship begins with teaching would-be followers to obey everything Jesus taught (Matt 28:20). And discipleship includes the promise that the king will never pass away. Christ remains present with his people. Christ's presence is manifested in and through his people who walk in his righteousness, having learned obedience to him. He remains present with his followers through time (28:20). Therefore, any definition of Christian persecution derived from Christ's instruction in the Sermon on the Mount will need to take account of the reigning righteousness of Christ.

"Because of Me"

The followers of Christ are persecuted because of Christ. One can see the seamless merging of Christ, kingdom, and righteousness, in Matthew 5:10-11. In verse 10, the persecution is on account of righteousness (*heneken dikaiosunēs*), and in verse 11 it happens because of Christ (*heneken emou,* ["because of me"]), "for following Jesus is the path of righteousness."[11] Continuing with this notion that Christ, kingdom, and righteousness remain inseparable in Matthew, Christ speaks in chapter 6 with authority on behalf of the kingdom of heaven and promises rewards from the Father in heaven. He teaches the disciples to pray to the Father, "Thy kingdom come" (6:10). They are considered already to be members of the kingdom and children of the Father when they are instructed thus to pray. Christ teaches his followers to avoid anxiety by seeking his kingdom and righteousness (6:33), of which, again, they are already partakers (hence, the use of the present *este* in 5:11). Matthew 7 includes more allusions to the Law, the Prophets, and the kingdom and concludes with Christ's teaching the disciples how to make sure they are participating in and manifesting kingdom life even though rain, wind, and floods may come. These meteorological metaphors picture the trouble to come, at least partially referring to persecution. If those hearing Christ are citizens of his kingdom, they are the ones building their lives upon the rock which will stand (even through persecution).[12] Following the narrow way prescribed by Christ and building one's life upon the rock may, in fact, bring the rains and flood of persecution on account of Christ.

The translation of *heneken emou*, "because of me" or "on account of me," in Matthew 5:11 demonstrates the regnal righteousness dynamic of persecution in three ways. First, and most noticeably, the use of the personal pronoun *emou* links the persecution of the kingdom people (v 10) direct-

ly to a personal source. The person to whom the persecution is ultimately linked is neither the persecutor nor the one being persecuted. Rather, the root provocateur of persecution is Christ. The exact cause of persecution is not the presence of obedient disciples. The precise cause is Christ himself. If persecution depended upon the obedience of Christ's disciples, there may never be a blessing given, considering that all of the disciples failed to demonstrate allegiance consistently, whether it were Peter rebuking the Lord (16:22) or all of the disciples faltering in faith (17:20). The promise of persecution does not rest so much with the certainty of faithful disciples as it rests with the certainty of Christ abiding with his followers (18:20; 25:31-46; 28:20). Christ's presence—regnal and righteous—will continue to offend individuals and authorities, thus ensuring the continued persecution of his followers. Here is displayed the full weight of the "on account of me." The disciples will need to continue to learn the way of righteousness (6:33). They will need to continue to seek forgiveness where they have fallen short of faithfulness (6:12, 15). Indeed, they will need to continue the practice of the Lord's Supper (26:26-30). So, the persecution of the disciples is assured not on the faithfulness of Christ's followers, but on the personal basis of Jesus Christ himself.

Second, the "on account of me" in verse 11 emphasizes that Christ is not to be considered separately from his authority. The fact that the particular person implied in the pronoun is the Christ who teaches with authority (7:28-29) links the persecution to that authority with which this Christ teaches. The authority with which he speaks is authority bound up with the nature of who he is. The authority possessed by Christ is regnal authority. According to Matthew, he is a reigning king. In other words, the "of me" referred to in the genitive preposition *emou* is "of" the Son of David, Immanuel, the King of the Jews—all references of Christ made in the gospel prior to Matthew 5:11, references which continue through to the end of the gospel which pictures Christ as having all authority over heaven and earth, as Jesus himself proclaims in 28:18—"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me" (NIV). Such a conclusion to the gospel is significant considering that the first chapter (even the first verse) offered allusions to the final king.[13] The later chapters of Matthew picture Christ as being mocked for his claims to kingship (27:27-31; 27:37-44).

In the end, Matthew affirms that indeed the kingdom is not one belonging merely to the Jews or even to the world. All authority in heaven and earth belongs to this Jesus. So, if the persecution which the disciples suffer refers back to the person of Christ, then it refers back to the Christ who is

the ever-present, sovereign king of heaven and earth. While it is likely the case that Christ's original audience may not have understood all the implications of his claims to kingship, it is also true that the original recipients of Matthew's gospel had the notion of the kingship authority of Christ spelled out for them from the beginning of the gospel to its post-resurrection end. Christ's abiding authority is central to Matthew's gospel.

Third, the phrase "on account of me" in verse eleven works in conjunction with verse ten to indicate that the persecution of the disciples happens *because of* their authoritative teacher and king, Jesus Christ. The improper preposition *heneken* is most commonly translated in Matthew as "for the sake of."[14] The slightly varying senses in which the preposition is rendered either "for the sake of" or "because of" can be seen in the difference between its usage in verses ten and eleven. In verse ten, those are to be congratulated who have been persecuted *for the sake of* righteousness, while in verse eleven those are to be congratulated who are persecuted *because of* Christ. The rendering *for the sake of* in verse ten is the outward expression (the fruit) of pursuing—or putting on display—righteousness through obedience to Christ. It is more occasional than causal. One might understand this as faith in action. Matthew loads the gospel with illustrations of such faith in action.[15]

In verse eleven, the *because of* refers to the origin or the root cause of persecution; namely, the authoritative Christ. The distinction in view is necessary to see both sides of the persecution equation. On the one hand, the outlook of pursuing righteousness provides the occasion for drawing attention to the manner in which Christ's authority is represented in the life and actions of his followers. On the other hand, the persecution that arises against Christ's followers proves to have its origins of offense in the presence of the authoritative Christ himself. The distinction between the two is helpful, but even more helpful is the relation between the two. The righteousness is tantamount to the person at root in the causal offense of persecution.

In addition, such clarifications concerning Christ and his righteousness will prove to be significant determinants of whether a particular instance is classified properly as persecution. From Matthew 5:10-12, we see that the righteousness of Christ is on display through the actions of those who by faith obey him, having truly become disciples. Having been delivered from their allegiances to other powers, the followers of Christ are now allied with him. Or, better, the people of the kingdom "are engaged and commanded by Jesus to do what they ought to do. As salt and light they *represent* and *proclaim* the righteousness fulfilled by Jesus ... , but they do not create it them-

selves."[16] The kingdom is his. The righteousness is his. In Matthew 5:13-16, the followers are first called light, then commanded to shine. They are not told to shine in order to become light. The disciples are first called to Christ (4:19) then given instructions for obedience. The nature of the obedience demonstrates the righteous authority of Christ, not the authority or righteousness of his followers. In this view of Matthew 5:10-12, persecution exists as a retaliatory action against the Christ of regnal righteousness. Christ, his kingdom, and his righteousness prove ultimate in explaining why there exists this perpetual propensity for Christians to face persecution.

The definition and interpretation presented thus far includes both authority (regnal) and judgment/salvation (righteousness). Both terms, *regnal* and *righteousness*, are necessary and inseparable. Some may suspect such an emphasis on the *regnal* authority of Christ makes too much of Christ's authority and not enough of his righteousness, particularly in light of the emphasis on *righteousness* in 5:10; yet the regnal emphasis must not be minimized because it reflects the overall emphasis of Matthew's gospel, as has been shown. While righteousness forms a significant framing structure within the gospel (3:15; 21:32), the entire gospel is itself framed by the authority of Christ (1:1; 28:18-20). Structurally, the righteousness which abides in the kingdom abides first in the person of the king. The king/kingdom come first, then the righteousness—though the two are integral and cannot be divided, again explaining 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God *and* his righteousness."

Tertullian, Augustine, and Calvin each recognized in their own ways that there was inherent friction between God and lesser authorities who contend against him. The significance of maintaining the ultimacy of an authoritative Christ can be demonstrated by the manner in which some Christians have sought (unlike Augustine or Calvin) to accommodate to hostile cultures around them by adopting a dualistic interpretation of authority, viewing Christ as the authority over the spiritual realm (salvation) and "Caesar" the authority over the temporal (service). Stassen and Gushee chronicle the history of Christianity in this negative regard,[17] tracing the phenomenon back to Justin Martyr's bifurcated view of Matthew 22:17-21, from which Justin argued before Emperor Antoninus Pius that worship was due to God but service due to Caesar, who was the king and ruler of men.[18] By now, the preceding engagement with Matthew 5:10-12 should have dispelled any notion of dualism in the matter of being persecuted on account of Christ. The short summary of what has been shown thus far is that Christ (and regnal

righteousness) is the cause of the persecution, while the obedient display of Christ's righteousness provides the occasion for it.

The distinction is only being pressed here to understand the persecution dynamic better. Both the righteousness and the authority in consideration belong to Christ, the righteous king, and, thus, are ultimately inseparable. However, Christians will surely remember that it is the followers of Christ who are mistreated, flogged, cast out from the synagogues, and persecuted by those hostile to Christ. And so, the persecution comes against those who trust Christ and therefore are seeking his kingdom and his righteousness. Such seeking displays light, and—to borrow a Johannine phrase—the darkness hates the light (John 3:19). The presence of Christ abides with his people, and persecution still flares up against Christ, even if the suffering is inflicted upon those who obey him.

Whereas some may question the emphasis being placed on kingship authority, others, no doubt, will question the emphasis being placed on righteousness in this definition of Christian persecution. Such questioning of the prominence of righteousness is particularly apropos in this instance, given the general consensus that Matthew uses *righteousness* in a radically different way from Paul and other New Testament writers. Therefore, this regnal righteousness definition of Christian persecution must be able to account for itself in the larger debate concerning *righteousness* in Matthew. Because of the prominent role righteousness plays in explaining Christian persecution, a further (albeit brief) consideration of righteousness in Matthew is in order.

Righteousness and Kingship Authority

Extensive study concerning *righteousness* in Matthew has been undertaken by Benno Przybylski.[19] Przybylski argues for a provisional, functional concept of righteousness in the gospel of Matthew. By provisional, he means that "the concept of righteousness is used as a teaching principle leading from the known (contemporary Jewish teaching) to the unknown (the teaching of Jesus)."[20] By functional, he means that righteousness provides a particular function, namely, bridging a knowledge gap from a Jewish understanding to Jesus's understanding. According to Przybylski, *righteousness* was a borrowed Jewish term which could be employed by Matthew until the fuller realization of discipleship might take root and be employed by Christ's followers. In this view, *righteousness* in Matthew is framed not so much by the literature of the Old Testament—and certainly not by post-Reformation, Pauline interpretations of the term; rather, the framework for righteousness

is found in the inter-testamental Dead Sea Scrolls and Tannaitic literature, which reflect significant development from the Old Testament. So, Przybylski argues that there are distinct ways the gospel of Matthew demonstrates this development, a development which ends up leading to what he describes as the provisional function of righteousness in Matthew.

Przybylski argues from the seven occurrences of *dikaiosunē* in Matthew that each of these seven occurrences takes place in a polemical context and/or a context in which there are non-disciples; thus, he holds that there is no situation in the seven in which the context is didactic, uniquely comprised of disciples. Of course, five of the seven are in the Sermon on the Mount, and the other two occurrences concern the fulfillment of righteousness in relation to John the Baptist. Przybylski's point in arguing from these contextual clues is that they are indicators of the anachronistic nature of *dikaiosunē*, the term being one which Matthew viewed no longer apropos for disciples. According to Przbylyski, Matthew (in its final redaction) was, in a sense, phasing out the Jewish concept of *righteousness* and replacing it with the Jesus concept of *disciple*. However, this assertion relies upon a supposed de-emphasizing of the Jewish concept of *righteousness* throughout the gospel of Matthew.[21] That claim is dubious.

While Przbylyski notes that Matthew's gospel employs *dikaiosunē* only seven times, he downplays the rather significant fact that Matthew's gospel employs the adjectival form *dikaios* seventeen times,[22] which is more often than any other New Testament book, a fact that leads Seebass to conclude to the contrary that the "doctrine of righteousness is central to [Matthew's] message."[23] It does not seem appropriate to say there is a de-emphasis of righteousness in Matthew. Instead, one might say there is a "re-emphasis" of the subject. Roland Deines makes this assertion and says that this re-emphasis of righteousness hearkens back to the claim that Jesus is coming to save his people from their sins (1:21).[24] Agreeing with Carter that the name *Jesus* is to be connected to *Joshua*, Deines insists that Matthew is re-emphasizing righteousness in light of the coming of the Messiah: "The name is programmatic, and the question is to be raised: Why do the people of Israel need a 'new' forgiveness for their sins? Is this not right from the beginning of the Gospel at least an indirect hint as to how Matthew understood the Torah and the Messiah's main task?"[25] According to Deines, Matthew fleshes out the need for forgiveness and demonstrates that the forgiveness is not to come from the Torah but from Christ. Righteousness, then, is central to Matthew's message, as it is to be found not in the Law but in the Messiah himself. Deines understands (as has been asserted throughout this paper)

that the righteousness in question relates inextricably back to Jesus himself.

Further, Pryzybylski denies that righteousness is related to the gift of God and believes, instead, it must refer to the demand of God upon man.[26] But Deines' point concerning John the Baptist and righteousness should not to be overlooked here:[27] The way of righteousness proclaimed by the Baptist is clearly the way of God's righteousness. Christ, too, calls followers into it. Matthew 3:15 is much better understood as the opening part of an inclusio with 21:32, thus identifying the first and last uses of the noun *dikaiosunē* in Matthew with John the Baptist.[28] Significantly, the original occurrence of *dikaiosunē* in Matthew (3:15) takes place for Christ (*plērōsai pasan dikaiosunē*). For Przybylski to be correct, the concept of *fulfillment* would have to be reconciled with a de-emphasis. Deines appears on stronger ground asserting that Matthew offers a re-emphasis of righteousness in light of the coming of the Messiah—not a de-emphasis.

Beyond the counter-questioning of particular texts, another question arises for Przybylski's assertion of a de-emphasizing of righteousness. Is Przybylski correct in asserting that the absence of *dikaiosunē* in didactic, disciple-only contexts proves that Matthew's gospel hopes to transition from *dikaiosunē* to *disciple*? Perhaps not. Consider, for instance, the contextual work of Dennis Hamm, who has written specifically on the context of Jesus's offering of the Beatitudes.[29] According to his analysis of the Beatitudes presented in Matthew and Luke, Hamm concludes that Jesus speaks to the disciples (a group including the inner twelve) in the presence of a larger group gathered around. As he says, "The *immediate* audience is the many followers implied by the word 'disciples,' including the subset of the recently chosen twelve apostles; but Jesus addresses as well the less committed members of this ingathering of the people of Israel, in whose hearing the words are spoken."[30] If Hamm is correct, then more pressure is put on Przybylski's thesis, as the context of the Sermon on the Mount (in which are five of his seven key texts) may, in fact, be one of addressing the disciples didactically, even though other people are included in a larger crowd. Hamm likens the situation to that of Luke 20:45, "And in the hearing of all the people, he said *to his disciples*" (ESV). Even common practice today affirms the reality of such a teaching context. Preachers understand they are addressing Christians and teaching them doctrine, even though—in all likelihood—unbelievers are in the audience as well, thus indicating that a didactic message might also prove to be a polemical one as well. The aim is still didactic.

In addition, the Sermon on the Mount includes five significant references to righteousness by Christ, and Christ is pictured later in the Gospel as

judging all humankind (Matt 25) and having all authority in heaven and earth. Significantly, the judgment will include whether or not a given individual is partaker of a righteousness which exceeds that of the Pharisees (5:20). Given such contexts, one may see the tendentious nature of Przybylski's thesis. Along this line of inquisition, the reader may notice, too, that Przybylski does not explain the shift from third person to second person in Matthew 5:11. Clearly, in Matthew 5:11, Jesus is not alerting non-disciples to the threat of persecution against them on his account. This warning of 5:11 must be addressed to disciples—disciples to whom he speaks much about righteousness. Both disciples and non-disciples may be addressed in the Sermon on the Mount, but the disciples are specifically instructed in how that righteousness relates to their persecution. Would it make sense for Jesus to forewarn them about persecution for the sake of righteousness if righteousness were passing away? The Beatitudes assume an enduring significance for righteousness.

Przybylski's thesis appears overburdened by its desire to demonstrate dissimilarity with regard to Pauline interpretations of righteousness. In the beginning of his work, Przybylski states, "In comparison to the Pauline literature, the concept of righteousness has an entirely different function in the Gospel of Matthew."[31] By the end of his work, Przybylski states that Matthew and Paul agree on the nature of salvation as a gift of God, but he disagrees that the dual nature of righteousness—as gift and demand—is apropos for Matthew in the manner it is found in Paul.[32] A strong case can be made against Przybylski's claims. Roland Deines has made such a case for understanding righteousness as passive in Matthew and not related exclusively to demand.[33] Deines argues, "Starting from verse 5:17, righteousness, which is at the same time demanded and presupposed in verse 20, means a new reality that is possible through Jesus and—because it is available from now on—also necessary for entering the kingdom of God."[34] While Deines still understands a role for demand, his demand is quite unlike Przybylski's. Deines is clear to point out that righteousness in Matthew is a gift which circumscribes the demand. As he says, "What is demanded is a different quality of life according to the kingdom of God that is about to appear. It is the eschatological, overflowingly rich righteousness that Jesus fulfilled and made available to his disciples that from now on alone opens the way into the kingdom of God."[35] Otherwise, one might expect the Pharisees to applaud the righteousness of the followers of Christ. The Pharisees, of course, do not applaud the righteousness of Christ or his followers. Instead, they persecute it (5:10; 10:17). Scaer points out that if the disciples are expected

to meet certain demands of righteousness quantitatively in 5:20, then "their new allegiance required stricter moral observance than the Pharisee-dominated synagogues. If they were expected to excel where the Pharisees failed and suffer persecution, shouldn't their moral adherence engender admiration from the Pharisees?"[36] Deines asserts instead that the notion of Jesus calling for a "better" ethic is to be rejected in favor of "Jesus-righteousness," a righteousness impossible apart from the person Jesus Christ.[37]

Allison and Davies draw upon Przybylski's work in their interpretation of righteousness in Matthew. They find our primary text (Matt 5:10) "particularly weighty" in maintaining a non-Pauline posture with regard to righteousness, saying, "Righteousness cannot, in this verse, have anything to do with divine vindication, nor can it mean justification or be God's gift. It is, rather, something disciples have, and they are persecuted because of it. Hence, it is recognizable behavior of some sort."[38] Even Donald Hagner, who takes issue with Przybylski on at least three of the seven interpretations of the noun *dikaiosunē* in Matthew, argues for an ethical understanding of righteousness in 5:10, believing that the ethical righteousness of the persecuted is the issue, though he acknowledges that the "righteousness is associated with relationship to Jesus."[39] However, what is clear from the study of persecution thus far is that this relationship to Jesus is not a side note to the main issue of ethical righteousness. With Deines, we affirm that Jesus-righteousness is the main issue. Because Jesus-righteousness is the main issue, the persecution of his followers can be called persecution for the sake of righteousness or persecution on account of him. Rather than saying the persecuted disciples are so treated because of their ethical righteousness, Matthew appears to be saying of these disciples that "they *represent* and *proclaim* the righteousness fulfilled by Jesus (5:10; 3:15), but they do not create it themselves."[40]

Also, is it not possible that those who believe in the gift of justification—those who have heard the message of God's salvation—would have actions which follow such beliefs? If so, then the actions are representations of the righteousness behind them, which is Christ's. Even more, is it possible that the king and his kingdom are not passing away but are actually still present with the kingdom people (Matt 28:20)? If so, then the persecution for the sake of righteousness is persecution on account of Jesus—on account of his kingdom and his righteousness. The conclusion of Allison and Davies seems to be derived from their *a priori* conclusion that righteousness in 5:10 *must be* a reference to a demand for right conduct required by God. However, this conclusion is not warranted if our earlier assessment of the regnal righteous-

ness dynamic is taken into account. In the regnal dynamic, the persecution of 5:10 *for righteousness' sake* is inseparably related to the persecution of 5:11 *on account of* Christ. The question comes back to the relationship between the persecution of 5:10 and that of 5:11. The significance of this relationship to righteousness—very important for understanding persecution—is also not irrelevant in the present debate concerning the Pauline perspective on justification.

Righteousness as New Testament Nexus

Such a brief consideration of the immense debate surrounding the Pauline doctrine of justification is obviously insufficient in terms of moving that particular debate forward. The subject is broached here only because of the strong relationship Matthew's gospel sees between Christ, righteousness, and persecution. Such a relationship between the king and righteousness has recently been propounded by Peter Stuhlmacher, who argues that "the Pauline doctrine of justification is the doctrine about the implementation of God's righteousness through Christ for the entire creation."[41] The hint of regnal overtones is unmistakable in this definition. It would be difficult also to miss the regnal character of the Christ in Matthew. Such a regnal-righteousness nexus is found both in Paul and in Matthew. With regard to righteousness in the present debate, Stuhlmacher argues that "since the time of Second Isaiah, the end-time hopes of Israel were concentrated upon the expectation that God would soon do a new thing (cf. Is 43:19; 51:6; 65:17)."[42] Paul undoubtedly knew such expectation, but his understanding of it was altered significantly by his encounter with Christ and his subsequent call to be the apostle to the Gentiles, preaching to them the kingdom of God. Paul's missionary service in the cause of preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the Gentiles is evidence enough for Stuhlmacher that the justification question exists in affinity with the in-breaking of the kingdom. Quoting Käsemann approvingly, Stuhlmacher concludes that "the issue in justification is none other than the kingdom of God that Jesus preached."[43] Again, Stuhlmacher concludes, "For the apostle, the righteousness of God, the Christ of God, the people of God and the kingdom of God all belong inseparably together."[44]

In a very similar way, Matthew 5:10-12 also asserts that the Christ of God, the people of God, and the righteousness of God all belong inseparably together. Obedience to Christ is a sign of their relationship to Christ, but it explains neither the origin nor the outcome of righteousness. Obedience may in fact occasion persecution, but it does not cause it.

Stuhlmacher at least demonstrates the viability of viewing righteousness in affinity with the regnal Christ in the Pauline corpus of the New Testament. If righteousness, then, is related to the regnal Christ in Paul, then why would it be out of the question for it to be so related in Matthew? The Christ of Matthew came preaching the kingdom, too (Matt 4:17). As Carter has shown, there are definite hints of Christ in relation to the kingdom beginning in the very first verse of the Gospel.[45] Mark Seifrid—working in this instance from Stuhlmacher—asserts this very proposition. He says that Jesus's "announcement of the kingdom of God parallels Paul's declaration of the revelation of the 'righteousness of God.' In fact, the terms criss-cross one another: Paul speaks of the kingdom of God as the presence of righteousness (Rom. 14:17), just as Matthew testifies to Jesus' witness to the coming 'righteousness of God' (Matt. 6:33)."[46] Biblically, this nexus would obviate the need to disconnect the Pauline doctrine of Justification from that found in Matthew. From a consideration of the extant biblical data, there appears to be at least similarities between righteousness in Paul and righteousness in Matthew, particularly with reference to the kingdom.

Righteousness and the kingdom go together—as Stuhlmacher notes—with Christ and his followers. When the regnal dynamic thus far exposed is allowed to speak with regard to righteousness, then the righteousness of the persecution in Matthew 5:10 can be viewed as directly linked to the persecution on account of Christ in Matthew 5:11. Those acting in allegiance to Christ display both the righteousness and the kingship authority of Christ. In this way, those persecuted can be said to be persecuted either for righteousness' sake or on account of Christ. Utilizing the relationship proffered by Deines, we may say that the manner in which the followers of Christ display this righteousness is both by representing and proclaiming Christ before the world. Their allegiance to Christ is not one of earning or even maintaining righteousness. It is a matter of hungering and thirsting for his righteousness. Such hungering and thirsting, such representing and proclaiming, leads Christ's followers to be persecuted just as he was persecuted (10:16-25)—not so much for their actions as for their identification with him. In their persecutions on account of him, the followers of Christ are promised blessings. This dynamic is called here the regnal righteousness dynamic because the righteousness belongs to Christ, and the authority against which the persecutors react is the reigning authority of Christ. From this dynamic, it begins to appear more clearly that persecution is a hostile action—violence or slander—undertaken in response to the revelation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Those who "live and

walk in the light of the Lord"[47] reflect his regnal righteousness and, so, are persecuted on account of Him. Here is the heart of the matter.

Objections and Further Clarification

Of course, not all commentators will agree concerning this regnal righteousness serving as a nexus between verses 10 and 11. Robert Gundry states, "We have no reason to distinguish between righteousness as the occasion of persecution and righteousness as the cause of persecution."[48] A strictly anthropological interpretation of *righteousness* in 5:10 would obviate any need to distinguish the occasion of persecution from its cause. Yet, the expectation of persecution in verse 10, *heneken* dikaiosunē, followed by the expectation in verse 11 that the persecution is "on account or because of me" calls for an explanation. It seems too simplistic to conflate Christ and righteousness into an anthropological construct. Are the two strictly parallel? In what way is Christ parallel to righteousness? What is the relationship between the persecution of Christ's followers and righteousness? Is the blessing for kingdom people related to ethical righteousness, to Christ, or to both? The significance of understanding this point can be seen in Boice's comments: "There is no promise of happiness for those who are persecuted for being a nuisance, for Christians who have shown themselves to be objectionable, difficult, foolish, and insulting to their non-Christian friends. This is not the thing about which Christ was speaking."[49] To make such a statement, one must have an understanding of what Christ is saying in setting up such a relationship between himself and righteousness with regard to persecution. Understanding precisely what is meant by the varying uses of "on account of" is important. The blessing and kingdom belong only to those whose persecution is related to Christ or to righteousness. What is the relation between the two? Gundry does not answer these questions.

As we have seen concerning *righteousness*, the primary answer is that Christ (his regnal righteousness) proves to be the origin of the persecution, while those called by him (Matt 11:27-30) act in accordance with his authority, thereby becoming objects of persecution on his account. The two uses of *heneken*, then, rather than contradicting or competing against one another, actually interpret one another. Being brought under the umbrella of Christ's righteousness, on the one hand, leads to concrete confessions and actions which are manifest openly before the world, and, on the other hand, exposes the followers of Christ to persecution. Luz corroborates such an interpretation when he notes that the two uses of the preposition *heneken* in verses 10 and 11 "interpret each other mutually: the confession

of Christ manifests itself in deeds."[50] Disciples will "do" the commands of Christ: "The community of followers of Jesus have the vocation to be instruments of the kingdom of God in the world in association with their Lord and under his leadership (in the post-Easter period that is assumed to be under the guidance and through the power of the Spirit of Jesus)."[51] Their doing, however, is not the root cause of their persecution. The root cause is their king, Christ himself.

Again, one may object to this distinction between the occasion and the origin of the persecution in question on the grounds that in the Sermon on the Mount (6:1) Christ specifically warns against practicing *dikaiosunē* before men. How can Christ expect persecution to erupt against his followers on account of righteousness and, yet, also forbid them from displaying righteousness? When understood correctly, the warning in 6:1 supports all that has been said thus far. The warning is clarified by the phrase, *pros to theathēvai autois* ("in order to be seen by them"). The danger here is the motive, not necessarily the outward action. Christ warns that the kind of *dikaiosunē* which is practiced merely from an anthropological outlook is the *dikaiosunē* of hypocrites, sounding trumpets to be noticed anthropologically, rather than the *dikaiosunē* which belongs to the authoritative king of heaven in Matthew 5:20. Thus, Matthew 6:33 records Christ instructing his followers to seek first[52] the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness accompanying it.[53] In other words, the point of righteousness is that it belongs to the sovereign Christ and is manifested in word and deed by the followers of Christ, as in Matthew 5:10-11.

Morris captures the sense of the *dikaiosunē* in question in 6:1, as he says the word "refers to any good deed that a person may do as part of his service of God ... The believer must always keep in mind that the act is righteous only if it is what it purports to be—the service of God."[54] By *service*, Morris has in mind the same basic idea as Beasley-Murray, who equates service with ministry to both physical and spiritual needs.[55] Such service must be in Christ's name or for Christ's sake. The *dikaiosunē* in view, then, as was the case with Matthew 5:10, is righteousness that belongs to the kingdom of heaven, according to the will of the regnal king. Little wonder, then, that those who practice and thus are persecuted for righteousness in Matthew 5:10 are promised that they have the kingdom of heaven. The *dikaiosunē* of Matthew 5:10, like the *dikaiosunē* of 6:1, is a *dikaiosunē* which pursues the kingdom of God first and his *dikaiosunē* which accompanies it. Its origin and goal is not separated from Christ. On the basis of this righteousness,

Jesus will administer the justice of the kingdom (Matt 7:21-23; 25:31ff.). In other words, the *dikaiosunē* in view in Matthew 5:10 is the same *dikaiosunē* in view throughout the Sermon on the Mount. It is the *dikaiosunē* of God at work in the kingdom of God which is gifted to the people of God seeking to serve the commands of Christ because they believe that it is Christ who is accomplishing the kingdom purposes of God, including that which Jesus taught them to pray for in Matthew 6:10, "Let your kingdom come, your will be done, as it is in heaven so also on the earth."

When Przybylski and others[56] insist that the righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount is only ethical, that is, actively received, they deny the very sense of the word *righteousness.* Righteousness appears to be much better explained in Matthew by relating it to Jesus Christ and the in-breaking of the kingdom of heaven rather than explicitly to moral conduct. Again, Matthew 5:20 is exceedingly important in this regard (and for understanding persecution). The righteousness that enters the kingdom is not simply a quantitatively superior (or ethically supreme) righteousness. It is righteousness of a different kind altogether from Pharisaical righteousness. Otherwise, "If 'the blessed' are persecuted for their righteousness (5:10), then quite logically the Pharisees, or at least those who strictly adhere to the rules of moral conduct, also would qualify for persecution."[57] Instead, the Pharisees act as persecutors instead of persecuted. The persecuted will be those who because of Christ have an appetite and thirst for the righteousness of God. When one believes what Christ has taught in the Sermon on the Mount and so acts in the outworking of such faith, then that one is manifesting the reality of Christ, serving him and saying—through actions—that the regnal claims of Christ are true. Here in this regnal dynamic is the display of righteousness which makes one a target of persecution. Actions in obedience to the regnal Christ become a threat to other dominions and powers aligned against the righteous, reigning Christ. Hence, their actions provide occasions upon which persecutions tend to ignite.

Further Defense of The Regnal Righteousness Dynamic

Again, not all scholars agree that this regnal framework is what is being taught in Matthew. Some scholars—in light of Matthew 5:12 [cf. QL 6:23]—argue that the persecution is not regnal in nature. Instead, they build on the statement, "for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you," maintaining that the persecution is not related primarily to Christ, his kingdom, or his righteousness. Rather, they claim persecution is related to identification with the prophets. The argument is maintained that the

Old Testament framework of Israelite rebellion and prophetic rejection is still being played out in the saga of first-century persecution. Following the categories of critical scholarship in Old Testament studies, the framework in view is not precisely Old Testament, but Deuteronomistic, and "in Deuteronomistic theology the prophets are represented primarily as preachers of repentance and, generally speaking, as rejected preachers."[58] Thus, this view seeks to show that "the Q community responded to the onset of persecution by interpreting it in accordance with Israel's rejected prophets"[59] in the Deuteronomistic theological perspective. On these grounds, then, the statement of identification with the prophets as found in Matthew 5:12 would be expected, and persecution would thus be explained as a continuation of Israel's rejection of the prophets.

In response, Jervis rightly notes that for the case to hold that persecution is paradigmatic of Israel and the prophets, then three conditions must obtain: (1) Jesus' followers should be described as prophets; (2) Jesus' followers should call Israel to repent; and (3) the rejection of the call to repent should be the reason for the persecution. After a full consideration of these conditions, Jervis finds they do not obtain. First, as for whether the sayings indicate that the followers of Christ are to be considered prophets, Jervis notes that most often the word *prophet* does not refer to a follower of Christ; that, when it does, it does not indicate that the followers of Christ are themselves to be considered prophets in the Old Testament sense of the word; and, finally, that the prophets are distinguished from the followers of Christ in several Q sayings (Q 10:24; 11:47; and 16:16 for example).

However, one must admit that Matthew 5:12 (cf. Q 6:23) could be taken to refer to the followers of Christ as prophets. The original *houtōs gar ediōxsan tous prophētas tous pro humōn* may be read appositively, "For thus they persecuted the prophets, *the ones before you,*" although the text does not mandate such a reading. The text may just as well be translated, as the NASB translates it, "the prophets who were before you," a more generic, chronological reading. Either way, the text could, in fact, be saying that in the instance of persecution the followers of Christ are acknowledged to be in some way akin to the prophets. Yet, as Jervis notes, "It is unclear ... whether this logion means that Jesus' hearers, when persecuted, are themselves prophets, or that in being rejected they share a fate similar to that of the faithful ones before them, namely, the prophets. If Q 6:23 is read as comparing but not equating Jesus' followers with the prophets its value as evidence for a Deuteronomistic interpretation of persecution is somewhat limited."[60]

Significantly, the followers of Christ are never said to be in the line of the

prophets in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ's followers are referred to as "disciples" (5:1); as "the salt of the earth" (5:13); and as "the light of the world" (5:14), but never are they called *prophets*. The outstanding feature of Matthew 23:29-36 is not the on-going nature of the office of prophet, but the on-going persecution of righteousness, whether it be the persecution of Abel, Zechariah, the prophets of old, or the present followers of Christ. The line of continuity is drawn from one generation of the righteous to the next—not from one line of prophets to another. The inclusion of Abel in the list is clearly an indication that prophets as such are not as important to the author as is the righteousness they represent. Abel is not known as a prophet but as the first righteous man killed (the first *martyr* for righteousness' sake). If the question is whether *prophet* is the characteristic identification of the followers of Christ in relation to persecution in Matthew, then the answer appears to be, "No, it is not." The better case to make is that the followers of Christ are identified with his righteousness and thus are persecuted, not that they are identified with the prophets and so persecuted.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the persecution of righteousness is not persecution based on the identification of the prophets. Rather, as our consideration of Matthew 5:10-12 has shown, the persecution of righteousness is identified specifically with Christ, who is not pictured *primarily* as a prophet but, rather, as a king who teaches with authority. Christ is surely referred to as a prophet throughout the gospel of Matthew (13:53-58; 14:5; 16:14; 21:11; 21:46).[61] Nevertheless, as Repschinski has said, "The confession of Peter (16:16) makes it clear that the crowd's appraisal of Jesus as prophet is inadequate."[62] Though one may rightly argue in a minimalist sense that Christ is pictured as a prophet throughout Matthew, he would have to agree that Christ is also pictured as something more than a prophet. As Matthew 12:45 says, "something greater than Jonah is here." Even if Jesus were pictured as being a prophet like the prophet Jonah, still, his status is viewed as surpassing Jonah in its greatness. Matthew's gospel is clear on this point. The birth of this one who is greater than Jonah happened " "in order to fulfill" the prophecy of Isaiah (1:22-23); the fleeing with this child to Egypt also *fulfilled* what had been spoken by Hosea according to Matthew 2:15; the slaughter of the innocent children in 2:16-18 *fulfilled* what was spoken by Jeremiah; this child's growing up in Nazareth *fulfilled* what had been spoken by prophets, according to 2:23.[63] This one greater than the prophet Jonah *fulfilled* the prophets (cf. 5:17). Jesus fulfilled the prophets and the Law in the righteousness of God. This Jesus Christ of Matthew is, indeed, more than a prophet. As Jervis says, "Jesus' distinguishing characteristic is that he

is intimately connected to the reign of God. Rather than his identity being tied to the prophets of the past, it is linked to God's current work of bringing in God's reign."[64] If the disciples are affiliated with one such as this, why would they prefer to be affiliated instead with Israel's prophets of old?

The concern of Matthew is the righteousness of God. Matthew is concerned about a settling of accounts for *pan haima dikaion* ("all *the* righteous blood" [Matt 23:35]). The mention of the prophets in Matthew 5:10-12 and Matthew 23:34-36 serves not so much to make the statement that the followers of Christ are in the line of prophets officially. Rather, this mention serves to establish the followers of Christ in a long line (dating back to Abel) of those whose righteousness has not been silent, thus occasioning persecution. After the arrival of Christ preaching the kingdom of heaven, those yielding to the authority claims of Christ would suffer persecution as their actions demonstrate both his authority over them and his loyalty to them. Thus, the persecution against them is against him and, ultimately, against the righteousness of God.

Conclusion Concerning Persecution in Matthew

Matthew's gospel presents a clear statement that the persecution of Christians happens on account of Christ. Christ was despised, rejected, condemned, and executed by sinful men when he took on flesh and made his claim to be king. In Tertullian's day, Christians were beaten, tortured, and killed by local rulers under the authority of the emperor, Septimius Severus. In Augustine's day, following the sack of Rome, there was a growing hostility toward Christians in the Roman Empire. And the recovery of the gospel during the Protestant Reformation brought both unparalleled freedoms to believers and new experiences of persecution, as Calvin tried to explain to King Francis. Persecution is a continuous stream coursing through the history of Christianity and the reason is plain: Jesus Christ has established his kingdom, vindicating the righteousness of God. The world hated Jesus when he first made righteous claims of divine authority, and the world hates him still. His demand for righteousness is still unbearable to the unbelieving heart.

Consequently, persecution persists against Christ. Thus, Christians have a constant need for more men like Augustine, Calvin, and Tertullian standing tall to defend the plight of the righteous suffering, but—despite an abundance of persecution taking place—there is presently a dearth of scholarship in this area. [65] The absence of such scholarship must not delude Christians into assuming the absence of such suffering. Persecution is hap-

pening to horrific degrees in countries all across the earth.[66] Christians need to answer Lausanne's call to give more attention, more study, to the topic of persecution. More advocacy needs to take place on behalf of the persecuted bride of Christ. "However counterintuitive it may seem in light of popular stereotypes of Christianity as a powerful and sometimes oppressive social force, Christians today indisputably are the most persecuted religious body on the planet, and too often their new martyrs suffer in silence."[67] As long as Christ remains present with his people and true to himself, there will remain persecution on account of him. This article has attempted to explain why. Hopefully, the article will also stir others to continue the long Christian heritage of defending the righteous against the persecutions they suffer.

Further Application of the Definition

Further study of Christian persecution is needed both from a biblical/theological perspective and from an ethical/applied theology vantage point. Most of the study which has been done has been done more from the perspective of martyrdom than from the logically prior perspective of persecution. For instance, G. W. Bowersock has tried to demonstrate that the Christian ideal of martyrdom has been adopted largely from the Roman-Imperial context out of which it originally arose.[68] Likewise, A. J. Droge and J. D. Tabor have sought to define the Christian martyrdom tradition contextually, utilizing the Roman "Noble Death" concept to explain the Christian's willingness to die.[69] Robin Darling Young sought to demonstrate that contextualization resulted in the formation of martyrdom as public liturgy,[70] while Daniel Boyarin has sought to prove the derivation of Christian martyrdom from a somewhat synergistic struggle for identity with ancient Judaism.[71] Candida Moss has argued that the entire martyrdom history is actually a myth.[72] Each of these studies is indicative of the literature extant related to persecution. By and large, the literature focuses on martyrdom rather than on persecution itself, with little concern for the actual instructions Christ gave to his followers. The result of such a focus is to move the conversation too quickly to the question of whether the dead Christian was a martyr. One can easily see through church history how this martyrological perspective developed; however, the New Testament emphasis, as reflected in this study from Matthew 5:10-12, is to aid the Christian in knowing whether his or her particular suffering is persecution. The question of whether or not someone died as a martyr ought to be preceded by the prior question of whether he or she was persecuted—and whether it was persecution on account of Christ which led to death. Most scholarship focuses on martyrdom with-

out first addressing persecution. Persecution study should come first and should form the structure and framework out of which martyrology is then discussed. But studies in martyrdom far outdistance studies in persecution.

To his credit, Josef Ton has sought to develop an actual theology of persecution.[73] The conclusions of this paper differ significantly from Ton's assertion that the New Testament portrays persecution as suffering intended to prove leadership characteristics in believers who will then be rewarded with various levels of leadership in Christ's eternal reign. Ton's thesis is burdened by questions of how the faithfulness of the suffering disciples proves worth or value in the kingdom. Ton's view of kingdom rewards ends with a turning of attention away from the work of Christ toward the work of his followers—none of whom proved completely trustworthy along the way.[74] Nevertheless, Ton's work is similar to the conclusions of this study in two significant ways. First, he emphasizes the importance of the in-breaking of Christ's kingdom for understanding persecution. Second, he focuses attention on persecution itself rather than subsuming that topic within the subject of martyrdom. Further, his work shows that there are pertinent questions relating to suffering and rewards. So, again, more work needs to be done in biblical and theological studies relating to persecution.

Along with more study of the biblical, theological theme of persecution, Christians need to work quickly and diligently to fulfill Lausanne's original cry for help. The world is not friendlier to Christ and Christianity now than it was in 1974 when Lausanne made its original plea. In fact, The Pew Research Center recently published its latest index of global religious hostilities, claiming that 76% of the world's population now lives in countries with high or very high restrictions on religious freedom.[75] Christians, as noted earlier, are the number one group against whom these hostilities are aimed. More study and more action is needed on behalf of the global body of Christ which suffers daily. More study is needed to define precisely what constitutes Christian persecution. As this article has demonstrated, Christians are promised blessings only when their persecution happens as a result of Christ and his righteousness. But what precisely does this mean in hostile contexts? The apostle Peter wrestled with this question in his own day (1 Pet 4:14ff.). And Peter concluded that the activity for which Christians suffer must not be evil, must not be criminal. Peter offered no blessing for Christians who proved to be "troublesome meddlers." But surely a great deal more attention is needed on this subject today, as laws are often passed which make either Christian belief or Christian "proselytizing" a criminal activity. Is it persecution, for instance, when a Christian is assaulted after

stating the belief that homosexuality is immoral?

Harry Hammond preached regularly in the town square in Bournemouth. On the occasion of his arrest, he simply held a sign which stated his belief that homosexuality is a sin and called the readers of the sign to turn to Jesus. A group of thirty-forty young people surrounded and assaulted Hammond, even though the record shows that Hammond was temperate in his language. None of the crowd was arrested. Hammond was arrested, convicted, and fined under the Public Order Act of 1986. His case was appealed, although he died before it was decided. In the case of Harry Hammond, the High Court in London upheld Hammond's conviction (posthumously), ruling that he ultimately incited the violence against himself and, therefore, was guilty of a crime against the public order. Was Hammond blessed, guilty of a crime, or both? Was Hammond a troublesome meddler or a faithful disciple? Countless questions such as this can be answered better with more study on the precise nature of Christian persecution.

One can imagine the immense array of instruction needed with regard to persecution by simply considering the work of preachers, pastors, and evangelists. More and more, pastors need to provide counsel to people working in places where rules forbid them from praying, reading Scripture, or voicing concerns on moral issues of significance. Evangelists all around the world are easy targets for those who feel threatened by their proclaiming Jesus's original sermon, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Pastors uphold the righteousness of Christ through the preaching of His word and, thus, are early targets of the ire of unbelievers. In short, persecution is present and on the increase. And the Church needs help from scholars and leaders about what this means and how to respond.

My own prayer, and the spirit in which this essay is submitted, is that God might raise up a new generation of scholars like Augustine and Calvin, men who see their academic role as a service to the church and, in service to the church, that such scholars might focus a great deal more attention on serving the suffering bride of Christ.

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[1] David Claydon, "The Persecuted Church" (paper presented at the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization, October 2004). Online: http://www.lausanne.org/docs/2004forum/LOP32_IG3.pdf; accessed January 14, 2014.

[2] Ibid., sec. 1.1.

[3] Tertullian, Apology, 40.2. Online: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian01.html; accessed December 10, 2013.

[4] Augustine, *City of God* (NPNF, vol. 2; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997 reprint), 61.

[5] John Calvin, Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (John T. McNeill, ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press,

1960), 28-29.

[6] Acts 14:22, NASB. Scott Cunningham takes this verse as the title for his exploration of the persecution theme in Luke-Acts. Scott Cunningham, *'Through Many Tribulations': The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup; Sheffield Academic, 1997).

[7] 2 Timothy 3:12, NASB.

[8] See, for example, *Rising Restrictions on Religion*, published by The Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, August 2011. This report documents 130 countries in which Christians are officially targeted for harassment or other forms of persecution. This was the highest number of countries for any religion.

[9] Warren S. Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press and American Theological Library Association, 1975), 242-75, with an extensive bibliography on the Beatitudes, including numerous titles referring to the number of Beatitudes. The trend, according to Kissinger, tends toward nine Beatitudes rather than eight. So, more recent commentaries such as Grant Osborne, Matthew (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), view Matthew 5:11 as a ninth beatitude.

[10] James Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 380. Hamilton is quoted favorably here in the sense that he establishes the necessity of the kingdom including the salvific work of its king, Jesus, the Messiah.

[11] Osborne, *Matthew*, 170.

[12] The perfect passive participle dediōgmenoi in v. 10 (who have been persecuted) may well be an indication that at the time of Matthew's writing this persecution was already a reality for some in the community of faith. Of course, the gospel makes plain that Jesus's own followers were accused of lawbreaking (9:14); were rejected (10:14); and were persecuted (10:16-25).

[13] Warren Carter, "Matthean Christology in Roman Imperial Key: Matthew 1:1," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context* (eds., John Riches and David Sim; JSNTSup 276; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 143-165, argues from Matthew 1:1 that Christ is pictured from the beginning as king.

[14] Matthew uses the improper preposition in 7 verses: Matt 5:10, 5:11, 10:18, 10:39, 16:25, 19:5, 19:29.

[15] Matthew 8:10, 13; 9:2, 22, 28-29; 15:28; 17:20; 21:21-22, 32.

[16] Roland Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew—An Ongoing Debate," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (eds., Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 74.

[17] Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 127-45.

[18] Ibid., 128.

[19] Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[20] Ibid., 116.

[21] Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 245-63, offers an introductory commentary on each of the occurrences of the noun dikaiosunē in Matthew.

[22] Including Matt 13:17, 13:43, 49; 23:29; 25:37, 46, in which cases those saints displaying righteousness such as that spoken of in 5:10-11 are clearly in view.

[23] Horst Seebass, *Dikaiosunē*, in *NIDNTT* (ed. Colin Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:360.

[24] Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 71.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew*, 94-96.

[27] Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 53-84, argues for an *inclusio* utilizing John the Baptist and righteousness in 3:15 and 21:32.

[28] Ibid., 80.

[29] Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context*.

[30] Ibid., 40, emphasis original.

[31] Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew*, 3.

[32] Ibid., 107.

[33] Roland Deines, *Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora im Reich des Messias: Mt 5,13–20 als Schlüsseltext der matthäischen Theologie* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 177; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004). Deines also publishes in English as referenced above.

[34] Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 80.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew,* 250.

[37] Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 80-81.

[38] Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 453.

[39] Donald Hagner, "Holiness and Ecclesiology: The Church in Matthew," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (eds. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 175.

[40] Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 74, emphasis original.

[41] Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL:

InterVarsity Press, 2001), 73.
[42] Ibid., 45.
[43] Ibid., 52.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Warren Carter, "Matthean Christology in Roman Imperial Key: Matthew 1:1," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context* (eds., John Riches and David Sim; JSNTSup 276; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 143-65.
[46] Mark Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 177.
[47] Deines, Not the Law but the Messiah, 83, utilizes this description of Christ's followers.
[48] Gundry, *Matthew*, 73.
[49] James Montgomery Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 58.
[50] Luz, *Matthew* 1-7, 242.
[51] G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Matthew 6:33: The Kingdom of God and the Ethics of Jesus," in *Neues Testament und Ethik* (ed., Rudolf Schnackenburg; Freiburger: Herder, 1989), 96.
[52] Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 161, notes the first (prōton) in view here is first in importance, not time.
[53] Matthew 6:33 has textual variants which omit reference to God and potentially alter the use of the pronoun. Clearly, the kingdom and the righteousness still refer to God, whether the gospel originally stated it pronominally or not.
[54] Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 136.
[55] Beasley-Murray, "Matthew 6:33," 96.
[56] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 167.
[57] Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 252.
[58] J. S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 121. This citation is no endorsement of Deuteronomistic claims or conclusions.
[59] This quote is taken from Jervis, "Suffering for the Reign of God, 315. Jervis is presenting the position of Arland Jacobson, "The Literary Unity of Q," *Journal of Biblical Literature 101*(1982): 388. This citation is not made in approbation of Jervis, Jacobson, or Q scholars' conclusions. It is presented merely as an indication of how others read this significant text relating to Christian persecution.
[60] Jervis, "Suffering for the Reign of God," 318.
[61] Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 460, argue that Jesus is pictured in Matthew as the true prophet. One could add countless references to Christ as prophet, priest, and king. The point here is that Matthew does not prove Christ primarily as prophet. Persecution is related to Christ, not Christ as prophet.
[62] Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000), 151.*
[63] There is no certain Old Testament reference to this prophecy, although some have suggested a reference to the Hebrew nezer, thus indicating a reference to Isa 11:1.
[64] Jervis is speaking more broadly of all the Q logia, not simply that about which we are speaking here in Matthew. See Jervis, "Suffering for the Reign of God," 329.
[65] A recent database survey at a prominent, evangelical seminary library yielded 4,466 entries with the term psychology in the title, while only yielding 118 titles using the term *persecution. Socialism, Bultmann,* and Q were each found in more title entries than persecution (162, 120, and 193 respectively).
[66] See the companion article in this Journal issue for an overview of persecution around the world.
[67] John L. Allen, *The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution* (New York: Image, 2013), 1.
[68] G.W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[69] A. J. Droge and J. D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Franciso: Harper, 1992).
[70] Robin Darling Young, *In Procession Before the World: Martyrdom as Public Liturgy in Early Christianity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001).
[71] Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
[72] Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented the Story of Martyrdom* (New York: HarperOne, 2013).
[73] Josef Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (Wheaton: The Romanian Missionary Society, 1997; reprint, 2000).
[74] Gregory C. Cochran, "New Testament Persecution and the Inception of *Diokology* through the Application of the Regnal Righteousness Dynamic," Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010, 195-213 offer a full critique of Ton's work.
[75] The Pew Center, Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, "Religious Hostilities Reach Six-Year High," January 2014.

What Kind of Persecution Is Happening to Christians Around the World?

Gregory C. Cochran

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Philosopher Regis Debray, a French revolutionary who went to prison decades ago for fighting alongside Che Guevara in Bolivia, has spent the last ten years of his life decrying the maltreatment of Christians throughout the Middle East. Debray has not converted to Christianity. Politically, he still votes to the left of the left in France. But he remains very concerned that Christians—and with them their Christian histories—are being exterminated. Debray is frustrated that Westerners are not paying attention to what is happening to Christians around the world. According to Debray, "Anti-Christian persecution falls squarely into the political blind spot of the West."[1] The aim of this article is to help evangelicals adjust the mirrors of our faith to eliminate whatever blind spots we have inherited from our culture concerning Christian persecution.

According to a study recently released by the Pew Research Center, about three fourths of the population of the world lives under a government which has highly restricted religious freedoms.[2] Of those restrictions, the vast majority are aimed at Christians.[3] Some international humanitarian agencies have estimated that 80% of all religious persecution in the world today is

aimed at Christians. The Catholic Bishops Conference estimates that number to be only slightly lower, around 75%. Whatever the actual percentage, the reality is undeniable: "Christians are the single most widely persecuted religious group in the world today. This is confirmed in studies by sources as diverse as the Vatican, Open Doors, the Pew Research Center, *Commentary*, *Newsweek*, and the *Economist*."[4] The problem of Christian persecution is vast, involving more than 135 countries.

The Difficulties of Persecution Research

Yet before exploring the scope of the problem further, readers should be aware of some facts regarding the nature of persecution research. Accurate research is not always easy to obtain for several reasons.

Obtaining Eyewitness Accounts

First, those committing persecution are, obviously, not interested in reporting it, and those who suffer oftentimes have neither the means nor the time to report what has happened to them. Consider, for instance, this testimony from North Korea:

> *Interviewee 37*: … A person caught carrying the Bible is doomed. When a person is caught [worshipping], he will be sent to *kwanliso* [prison camp] … and the whole family may disappear.[5]

Disappearing people are notoriously difficult to count. So, the nature of the persecution dynamic agitates against accurate reporting.

The Problem of Definition

Accurate research is also difficult to obtain because of a general confusion of categories. So, second, category confusion leads to skewed numbers relating to persecution statistics. What counts as persecution, and what is political oppression? When the Muslim Sudanese government in the North attacks and razes Christian and animist villages in the South, is the government guilty of persecuting Christians? True, hundreds of thousands of Christians were slaughtered in the Sudanese Civil War. However, thousands of animists and other non-Christians were killed at the same time. Their villages were targeted, too. In what category do the dead Christians of Sudan fit—victims of political oppression or victims of persecution?

There are many other such questions related to categories of suffering. What is legitimate criminal punishment and what is an abuse of the law for the purpose of persecuting an evangelist? Stories abound which describe successful evangelists being arrested and charged with gun smuggling,

spying, or stealing—often evidence is planted in their homes or in their vehicles to substantiate the charges. Even more to the point, what happens when Christians actually defy the law and proselytize their neighbors or smuggle Bibles into forbidden places? When is the arrest an act of justice, and when is it systemic persecution?

The apostle Peter warns against suffering as a criminal or an evildoer. Peter makes plain that Christ's blessing is for those who suffer on account of Christ—not those who suffer for being criminals. Where exactly is that line drawn? One may be imprisoned, tortured, or killed for a principle or a cause, but that suffering may not necessarily be the suffering of a *martyr*. There are countless examples of people suffering and dying on principle (think about the Civil Rights movement or the actions of Dietrich Bonheoffer). Such suffering may or may not have been the result of Christian persecution. Clear-cut categories are definitely needed in order to guarantee accurate figures concerning the size and scope of the Christian persecution problem. So, the numbers are affected by the lack of reporting and by the confusion of categories.

Lack of Attention

Third, the numbers are also affected by the lack of attention in general toward persecution. Relatively speaking, very few outlets are paying attention to Christian persecution. One need not be overly critical to notice the barrenness of reporting by secular media on behalf of Christians. John Allen explains that there is "a reflexive hostility to institutional religion, especially Christianity, in some sectors of secular opinion. People conditioned by such views are inclined to see Christianity as the agent of repression, not its victim."[6] Secular media, it seems, have a hard time tracking what they don't believe can exist.

While Allen notes the easily explained absence of reporting on Christian persecution by secular outlets, he has a harder time explaining the absence of reporting by Christian sources. Allen offers four reasons Christians aren't tracking the suffering of brothers and sisters around the world.

(1) Christians in America and in the West simply do not identify with the persecuted church. How can an American Christian relate to someone like Christianah Oluwatoyin Oluwasesin, who was beaten and burned to death because she was a Christian teacher in a Muslim school in Nigeria? We have a very difficult time relating to what seems so fantastic and so unreal; thus we aren't sure what to do with the information once we find it. More important, we don't go looking for it in the first place.

(2) Another reason Christians are silent about investigating, reporting, and researching Christian persecution is that the topic itself is disconcerting. By nature, persecution challenges shallow faith and comfortable Christianity. From my own experience as an advocate for the persecuted church over the past fifteen years, I can affirm that many Christians—including pastors—are not comfortable hearing about persecution. While from a doctrinal perspective, we decry health-and-wealth, prosperity preaching, we, too often, actually prefer a Christian experience that is comfortable and safe for the whole family. Why confront a problem if it makes us so uncomfortable? It is easier to leave the matter alone.

(3) Christian persecution is a neglected topic of study and research because it requires hard work and serious resources to investigate and ferret out the details of the incidents, and, often, incidents happen in places difficult to reach. Christian entities in the West tend to use their resources in other ways and cannot fathom expending exorbitant amounts of cash to study persecution on the islands of Indonesia or in the sub-Saharan countries of Africa. Christian resources are limited.

(4) Christians also suffer the malady of "good cause" fatigue. Because no one is talking much about persecution, it gets displaced by other, more celebrated Christian causes: evangelism, missions, unreached people groups, church planting, church growth, pro-life issues, and other political concerns. In short, persecution is not really on the American Christian radar as a church priority.

So, for all these reasons—and probably others which have not been mentioned—Christian persecution research is lacking. Persecutors (and even the persecuted) cannot be relied upon to report on occurrences. Our categories concerning persecution are often confused. And the topic is one which has proven difficult for Christians and secularists alike to focus upon for a host of reasons. Nevertheless, the news is not all bad. There are a growing number of both Christian and secular groups paying closer attention to the suffering of Christ's body.

Organizations and Resources

Among those paying attention to Christian persecution, a few organizations stand out. First, there are ministries dedicated to serving the persecuted church. Three of the more popular ministries are Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com); Open Doors (www.opendoors.org); and Barnabas Fund (www.barnabasfund.org), the latter of which operates out

of the United Kingdom. These three organizations have long track records of ministry to the persecuted.

Second, there are research agencies dedicated (at least partially) to discovering the extent Christians are being persecuted around the world. Among the largest and most respected of these is the Pew Research Center, particularly the Center's Religion and Public Life Project, which publishes an annual report each January detailing religious hostilities around the world (www.pewforum.org). In addition to the Pew Research Center's work, other entities provide global documentation of Christian persecution:

- The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), chaired by Dr. Robert P. George, is a bipartisan commission which produces an annual report to the Congress of the United States detailing issues germane to religious freedom around the world (www.uscirf.gov).
- WorldWatch Monitor is a news agency which focuses on the persecution of Christians around the world (www.worldwatchmonitor.org).
- Forum 18 is a Norwegian human rights organization which covers religious freedom all over the world, but focuses primary attention on the former Soviet countries (www.forum18.org). The name is derived from Article 18 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which promises freedom of religion.
- The Hudson Institute Center for Religious Freedom provides publications, Op-eds, and information related to religious freedom in the U.S. and around the world (http://crf.hudson.org/).
- China Aid is a human rights organization focused on religious liberty issues in China. Founder Bob Fu was instrumental in negotiating the escape and eventual release of the blind legal activist Chen Guangcheng in 2012 (www.chinaaid.org).
- The Center for the Global Study of Christianity is a research institution which works diligently to uncover accurate demographic data "to the ends of the earth." This center is an outgrowth of work begun by David Barrett and his World Christian Encyclopedia research. This center resides on the campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/Center-for-the-Study-of-Global-Christianity.cfm).
- The Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission provides information about and raises awareness of religious liberty issues in the U.S. and around the world (www.erlc.com).

In addition to the ministries and research entities mentioned above,

two recent books provide excellent information regarding the global crisis of Christian persecution. The first book covering the global crisis of Christian persecution is John L. Allen's, *The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution*. Allen, the senior Vatican analyst for CNN, writes his book from personal experience, detailing individual accounts of suffering he has seen firsthand as a reporter in situations of intense persecution.

The other book was written by Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, and Nina Shea—each of whom has affiliation with the Hudson Institute referenced above.7 In addition to producing a riveting book detailing the global persecution of Christians, these three authors—under the auspices of the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom—operate the website Persecution Report (www.persecutionreport.org) to keep Christians up to date concerning persecution throughout the various regions of the world. As the citations will show, much of the following information has been adapted from these two books.

Unprecedented Persecution

So what kind of persecution is happening to Christians around the world? In short, Christians are suffering in numbers exceeding historic proportions. For reasons outlined above, the numbers are often difficult to discover. So the estimates of annual martyrdom vary widely from a low of 7,300 per year to a high exceeding 100,000 annually. Allen asserts that half of all martyrdoms in Christian history occurred in the 20th century: "Full half, or forty-five million, went to their deaths in the twentieth century, most of them falling victim to either Communism or National Socialism. More Christians were killed because of their faith in the twentieth century than in all previous centuries combined.[8]

Again, the numbers are not as precise as one might hope, but there is no doubt that Christians are suffering torture, imprisonment, and death in unparalleled numbers:

> Christians today are, by some order of magnitude, the most persecuted religious body on the planet, suffering not just martyrdom but all the forms of intimidation and oppression mentioned above in record numbers. That's not a hunch, or a theory, or an anecdotal impression, but an undisputed empirical fact of life. Confirmation comes from multiple sources, all respected observers of either the human rights scene or the global religious landscape."[9]

In several "hotspots," Christians are literally in danger of becoming extinct. "Over the past one hundred years, according to a range of estimates, the Christian presence has declined in Iraq from 35 percent to 1.5 percent; in Iran from 15 percent to 2 percent; in Syria from 40 percent to 10 percent; in Turkey from 32 percent to 0.15 percent. Among the most significant factors explaining this decline is religious persecution."[10]

Nigeria

However bad the situations above may be, the situation in Nigeria could be worse. Nigeria—especially northern Nigeria—is the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. At a panel discussion sponsored by the Hudson Institute in November (2013), Ann Buwalda, Executive Director for the Jubilee Campaign (www.jubileecampaign.org), declared that according to Jubilee Campaign's research, Nigeria produced sixty percent of all martyrs in 2012—more than the number of martyrs in Pakistan, Syria, Kenya, and Egypt combined.

In Nigeria, the problem is particularly acute, as Muslims in the North have been fighting with Christians in the South for decades. The problem has intensified of late because of "the increased influence of radical Islam, manifested especially in two trends. One has been the overt attempt to apply Islamic law nationwide; the other, which is overlapping, is the growth of Islamic militias."[11]

One Islamic militia in particular has been devastatingly deadly in Nigeria: *Boko Haram*, a group recently named an official terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State. In October 2012, an armed militia—believed by experts to be *Boko Haram*—attacked the Federal Polytechnic College in the town of Mubi, in the state of Adamawa, Nigeria. In fact, three different schools were attacked that weekend, with a death toll estimated by the news agency AllAfrica to exceed 46 students.

At the Federal Polytechnic school alone, more than two dozen students were killed. Particularly harrowing in this incident is how the murders took place. The attack was by night, when students were either studying or sleeping. Students were brought out of their apartments and separated. The Christians—who were called out by name—were then executed, either by having their throats slit or by a bullet to their heads. According to a spokesman from Open Doors, this area of Nigeria has suffered violence every day since 2011. With such ongoing violence, Nigeria may be, as the Hudson Institute has said, the most dangerous place on earth to be a Christian.

Eritrea

Unfortunately, Nigeria is but one of several places in stiff competition for such a dishonorable designation. Consider the small, desert country of Eritrea, located in the Horn of Africa along the Red Sea. One of the worst human rights atrocities of our day is taking place in the Me'eter Prison in Eritrea, with the full knowledge of the watching world.

Me'eter Prison was opened in 2009, basically, to serve as "a concentration camp for Christians."[12] The atrocities described there have been documented by WikiLeaks since 2011. Inmates are forced to live in cargo containers so crowded they are never able to lie down. They have no protection from the searing heat during the day (often exceeding 110 degrees Fahrenheit) and no recourse from the cold at night. Arid desert climates can experience 50 degree temperature changes from day to night. Inmates may die from starvation, dehydration, heatstroke, cholera, diphtheria, or other infectious diseases. The inmates who survive the deplorable conditions are subjected to other forms of torture and abuse. Stories abound of sexual abuse and physical beatings. Even the work and exercise prescribed are forms of torture—such as counting the grains of sand in a certain area during the noonday heat or squatting to move rocks from one side of one's body to the other, repeated endlessly.

Again, affirming Regis Debray's depressing point, such abuse falls into the blind spot of Western academics and media elites. The atrocities at Me'eter are documented in books, on WikiLeaks, via internet sources, and through activists like gospel singer Helen Berhane, herself an inmate at a prison in Eritrea from 2004-2006, because of her faith in Christ. The information is available for those adequately concerned, but who is concerned about persecuted Christians? Certainly not the UK Border Agency. Helen Berhane was scheduled to speak to a Release International gathering in the UK on behalf of other persecuted Christians, but she was denied entry by the UK Border Agency. Parliament passed unanimously Early Day Motion 1531 in support of Berhane (and condemning the Border Agency decision), but Berhane was not allowed entry to tell her story in person. And Christians still languish in putrid prison conditions in Eritrea on account of Christ.

North Korea

Another nation vying for worst place on earth to be a Christian is North Korea. "North Korea is the most militantly atheistic country in the world."[13] For the past 50 years, North Korea has sought (somewhat successfully) to eradicate Christianity from the country. "Nearly all outward vestiges of religion

have been wiped out, and what exists is under tight government control."[14]

The USCIRF has produced the most extensive research to date on the status of Christians and Christianity in North Korea. The organization's latest report is titled, "A Prison Without Bars," obviously alluding to the fact that the entire country is a giant prison cell for its inhabitants. Quite a humanitarian aid industry has cropped up along the border lands of China and North Korea, hoping to help North Korean refugees escape their oppression and find Jesus Christ. As a result, the North Korean government has been training officials to pose as Christians and as pastors in order to infiltrate these Christian and humanitarian groups and uncover the identities of North Korean Christians.

Often, refugees will flee North Korea and find help in China. Christians, especially, work very hard to provide food, shelter, and aid to these refugees. A number of the refugees find Christ, but the Chinese government deports North Koreans back to their country. If North Korean officials discover the identities of these refugees, they will arrest them and their families. Interviewee 20 in the USCIRF report tells of such an incident:

> *Interviewee 20*: "There was even a case of a child (16 years old). That kid was the same age as my kid. They made that kid stand on the platform, in front of gathered parents. They declared that it is a big problem how teenagers cross the river too often and how they spread rumors about God. There, the kid's entire family was arrested in order to show an example. It happened in 2003 at Yuseon boys' middle school. According to the rumor, that kid had learnt whole Bible scriptures by heart and that was the reason he was arrested. He stayed in China for eight months and got caught. And because of religion, he and his family were all arrested."[15]

Such stories abound—some even more heinous. According to one soldier interviewed by a human rights organization about the persecution he witnessed, his unit "rounded up the church's pastor, two assistant pastors, and two elders. The five bound men were placed in front of the bulldozer and given a final opportunity to renounce their Christian faith. When they refused, they were crushed to death in front of other members of the church."[16] Not all stories from North Korea are so gruesome, of course, but the situation there is bad enough that the country has been at the top of Open Doors' World Watch List for eleven years in a row.

As terrible as the situation has become in North Korea, the end result is not defeat for Christ or His kingdom. Sketchy reports pieced together indi-

cate that even in North Korea, the Church of Jesus Christ is growing. "There is emerging evidence that, at great risk, there are small Christian gatherings in private homes that may collectively encompass hundreds of thousands of people."[17] But one USCIRF interviewee thinks an underground church would be impossible in North Korea:

> Underground *believers* would be a more appropriate term than underground *church*. Church would be something like a place where people can gather and listen to a sermon, but it's impossible to exist for long. Instead, underground believers can exist. There is a chance that two people pair up and hold their hands together to pray. However, a gathering of three or more is dangerous.[18]

Egregious violations of basic human rights abound in North Korea, Nigeria, Eritrea. These violations target Christians inordinately, and these countries are not alone in their severe maltreatment of the bride of Christ. The Middle East, too, abounds with horrendous mistreatment of Christians on account of Christ.

The Middle East

Earlier, statistics were quoted to demonstrate the demise of Christianity throughout the Middle East. Perhaps the only aspect of Christian suffering throughout the Middle East which is more stunning than its magnitude is the magnitude of the silence on behalf of world leaders in the face of it. This is not to say that no one is speaking out. Many folks are sounding the alarms, as noted throughout this article. But the scope of suffering is startling. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, not exactly a Christian apologist, said in a 2012 *Newsweek* article, "From one end of the Muslim world to the other, Christians are being murdered for their faith."[19]

Hirsi Ali, like John Allen and others who study Muslim violence against Christians in the Middle East, has offered possible explanations for the relative silence of Westerners on behalf of Christians. One of her primary reasons for the lack of support Christians receive from the media is fear, stating the perception that reporting negatively on Islamic violence might beget further violence. Yet Hirsi Ali forcefully concludes, "The conspiracy of silence surrounding this violent expression of religious intolerance has to stop. Nothing less than the fate of Christianity—and ultimately of all religious minorities—in the Islamic world is at stake."[20]

Silence is certainly a problem, but so, too, is the confusion of categories.

Islamic violence in the Middle East is not targeted solely against Christians. In Bahrain, for example, the large increase in religious hostility (noted by the Pew Research Center) had more to do with Sunni Muslims discriminating against Shia Muslims. According to Pew, "Shia Muslims were vilified in the state-run media, and thousands were dismissed from public- and private-sector jobs. The government also destroyed Shia mosques and other places of worship."[21]

The important point for Christians to remember when discussing the Middle East (and North Africa) is that the matter is more complicated than a simple hatred of Christianity. With that said, however, the demise of Christianity is both drastic and devastating for religious freedom. Christians, as noted in the title of an article in *The Telegraph*, are close to extinction in the Middle East: "Christianity faces being wiped out of the 'biblical heartlands' in the Middle East because of mounting persecution of worshippers…."[22]

In the Middle East (and the northern tier of Africa), Arab Christians made up twenty percent of the population at the turn of the twentieth century. "Today, however, that vibrant Arab Christianity feels like a dying species. Christianity now represents just 5 percent of the population, no more than twelve million people, and current projections show that number dropping to six million people by the middle of the century."[23]

In Egypt, the situation continues spiraling toward a crisis. In February 2011, when the U.S. called for an orderly transition away from Hosni Mubarak's reign in Egypt, there was hope of what many were then calling an Arab Spring. Now, more than a few editorials have referred to the aftermath as an Arab Winter, or, more accurately, a Christian Winter. The reason is that religious freedom—particularly freedom of the Christian religion—has suffered great loss in Egypt. By the end of April 2011, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that Egypt be classified as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). The main reason for this recommendation is the dramatic increase in violations of religious freedom—most against Christians.

In Iran, there is both severe persecution and a measure of hope. There are indications of a healthy underground church in Iran. In addition, 2013 brought an election in which a moderate president, Hassan Rowhani, was elected, promising protection for all minority religions. But the country itself is actually run by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who in the past has referred to Christians as the enemies of Islam and has warned the Iranian people of the threat of Christianity's spread in the country. The government severely restricts Christian freedom, does not allow the Bible to be printed

in Farsi, limits college to those who declare Islamic orthodoxy, and does not protect Muslims who convert to Christianity. Converts can be killed with no legal ramifications.

In Iraq, the situation is bleak. Since the ouster of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraq has seen two-thirds of its Christian population flee to other countries. Legend has it that the apostle Thomas founded a church in what is now Iraq, indicating the very long history of gospel faith in that region of the world. Yet, "the one-two punch of Sunni and Shia extremism, combined with deep governmental discrimination and indifference, now threatens the very existence of Iraq's ancient Christian churches. Some of these still pray in Aramaic, the language of Jesus of Nazareth."[24]

Undoubtedly, the situation in Iraq was very bad after 2003, and it grew much worse in October 2010. On October 31, 2010, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church—a Syrian Catholic church in Baghdad—was attacked during a worship service. Nearly 60 parishioners and priests were killed; scores of others were injured, including children as young as three. By the end of that year, Joseph Kassab, the executive director of the Chaldean Federation of America, wrote, "Things are deteriorating very fast in Iraq; our people are left with no choice but to flee because they are losing hope and there is no serious action taken to protect them as of today."[25]

Iraq is not the only Middle Eastern country in which Christians are losing hope. Allen explains, "Today there's tremendous fear among Christian leaders that Syria will be the next Iraq, meaning the next Middle Eastern nation where a police state falls and Christians become the primary victims of the ensuing chaos."[26] Hundreds of thousands—if not more than a million—Christians have fled their homes and villages in Syria. One of the hardest hit areas is Homs, where ninety percent of the Christian population has been killed or expelled. Homes and property have been confiscated, and, according to many reports, the Christians become targets if they head to one of the refugee centers set up by the U.N. So, these Christians are, literally, homeless and desperate. Attacks against Christians have become fairly common over the past eight years.

In Saudi Arabia, the situation is less violent, but even more oppressive. Saudi Arabia is a total Muslim state. No other churches are allowed. No open manifestations of Christianity are tolerated. Even private prayer meetings will be shut down and participants punished by beatings or possibly even killed. According to Saudi law, all citizens must be Muslim. "In March 2012, Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Abdulaziz ibn Abdullah Al al-Sheikh … issued a religious fatwa declaring it 'necessary to destroy all the churches' in

the region, including those outside of Saudi Arabia itself."[27] Suffice it to say, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to squelch any reference to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Stopping the conversation here seems something like stopping a trans-American road trip in Salinas, Kansas—there is so much more left to see. In Afghanistan, for example, Christians are a negligible portion of the overall population, but they seem to be a constant focus of attention for the Taliban and some governing authorities there. Christians can be arrested and killed for converting from Islam. The Taliban has vowed to eliminate the tiny population of Christians (maybe 2,500) and also eradicate any influence Christianity has in the country, including targeting humanitarian agencies with ties to Christianity.

This essay has yet to address other parts of the Muslim world where violence against Christians is intense: Pakistan, Indonesia, Morocco, Somalia, and Sudan. And there has been no sustained discussion of the continued efforts of Communist governments in Vietnam, Laos, and Cuba, to eradicate faith. By sheer numbers, more persecution is happening in China than in any nation on earth. There are more Christians in prison in China than in any other place.

In South Asia, Christians are persecuted heavily in Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In 2008, Orissa State in India became a violent hotspot in which Christians of all denominations living in the area had to run for their lives:

> [Hindu] mobs killed at least forty people and burned thousands of houses, hundreds of churches, and thirteen educational institutions. During the attacks, a large number of women and girls were victims of sexual violence. Nearly two years later, about sixty of the area's women were found in Delhi. They had been sold into sexual slavery. The attacks led to ten thousand fleeing from their homes.[28]

There is violence against Christians all over the world. This brief overview is intended to portray only the magnitude of the problem. Obviously, this article focuses only on the persecution of Christians. Muslims are the persecuted, too. In fact, Islam is the second-most persecuted religious group in the world—often the persecution is carried out by other Muslim groups in the name of "true Islam." But Muslims suffer. And by proportion of population, ethnic Jews are persecuted perhaps more than any other group. The world has an awful problem establishing religious freedom.

But for Christians, there are unique expectations. Nearly every New Testament writer speaks of persecution, Jude being the lone example to the contrary. Persecution, because it is tied to the presence of Christ, is endemic to the gospel. Persecution is expected—even promised—for all believers (2 Tim 3:12). As a result it is a topic on which all Christians should be informed.

The writer of Hebrews, in fact, commands his readers to remember their brothers and sisters who are being persecuted. Hebrews 13:3 commands Christians to remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them, to remember those suffering ill treatment on account of Christ. The reason Christians are commanded to remember brothers and sisters suffering is "since you yourselves are in the body."

Whatever the reason has been for Christians to neglect this important subject, let us take from this article a hunger and an appetite to eliminate our own blind spots and take up the biblical command to remember our brothers and sisters suffering for Christ. We are connected in Christ to those who suffer for righteousness. We, too, stand in the way of righteousness with them when we remember.

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[1] John L. Allen, *The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution* (New York: Image, 2013), 16.
[2] Pew Religious Hostility.
[3] Estimate from Lessenthin, in Pew Religious Hostility, 33.
[4] Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, and Nina Shea, *Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 4.
[5] Ibid., 54.
[6] Allen, *The Global War*, 15.
[7] Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea, *Persecuted*.
[8] Allen, *The Global War*, 33.
[9] Ibid., 33.
[10] Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea, *Persecuted*, 6.
[11] Ibid., 239.
[12] Quote and following Me'eter description from Allen, *The Global War*, 1-4.
[13] Marshall, Gilbert, Shea, *Persecuted*, 52. The description of North Korea is taken largely from Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea, *Persecuted*, 52-62, with supplementation from other sources.
[14] Ibid., 52.
[15] Michael Cromartie, Chair, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, "Prison Without Bars: Refugee and Defector Testimonies of Severe Violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief in North Korea," (2008), 27.
[16] Allen, *The Global War*, 84.
[17] Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea, *Persecuted*, 59.
[18] As quoted in ibid. from Interviewee 34 of the USCIRF report.
[19] Ayaan Hirsi Ali, "The Global War on Christians in the Muslim World," *Newsweek*, February 6, 2012.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Pew Research Center, "Arab Spring Restrictions on Religion Findings." Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/20/arab-spring-restrictions-on-religion-findings/#harassment-of-specific-groups; accessed January 31, 2014.
[22] Edward Malnick, "Christianity 'close to extinction' in Middle East," in *The Telegraph*, December 23, 2012.
[23] Allen, *The Global War*, 117.

[24] Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea, *Persecuted*, 229.
[25] Ibid., 237.
[26] Allen, *The Global War*, 142.
[27] As quoted in Marshall, Gilbert, and Shea, *Persecuted*, 156.
[28] Ibid., 91.

The Maltreatment of Early Christians: Refinement and Response

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Many individuals have a simplistic view of the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. As Laurie Guy laments, "Despite mountains of contrary evidence, many myths are so deeply embedded in consciousness that they are almost impossible to dislodge. Such is the case with the mountains of myths surrounding the topic of the persecution of the early church."[1] For example, many individuals retain thoughts of Christians being hunted down until they take refuge in catacombs, popular lore abandoned by historians.[2] Joseph Lynch declares, "Countless modern books, films, and sermons have found a theme in the Roman persecution of the Christians. But the history of persecution is more complicated than it might seem."[3] In reality, neither the situation of early churches nor the approach of the Roman government nor the social-cultural milieu remained static.

A year ago, Professor Candida Moss of the University of Notre Dame amplified the conversation with her book *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom*.[4] The tenor of her provocative volume is directed by a desire for a specific modern application (254–56), summarized in a recent interview: "As I say in my book, the myth of perse-

cution gives Christians that use it the rhetorical high ground, and using the myth makes dialogue impossible. The view that the history of Christianity is a history of unrelenting persecution endures in contemporary religious and political debate about what it means to be Christian. We must get history right, and if we can eliminate the rhetoric of persecution, we can have productive dialogue without the apocalyptic rhetoric of good and evil."[5]

This present essay will use the publication of Moss' news-catching work as an opportunity to re-examine the "persecution" of early Christianity. It will not interact with all facets of her book, but it will conclude with an alternative "moral to the story." The essay will initially refine the image of "persecution" by reviewing the maltreatment of early Christians, drawing important distinctions, and investigating reasons and motivations. Based upon this nuanced understanding of the generally sporadic, largely local, and normally decentralized maltreatment of early Christians, this essay will conclude with an alternative "responsible reading" for the present. Rather than inciting a "martyr complex" leading to retaliation, the limited but real maltreatment of early Christians can, if the conversation is reoriented, actually lead to insights and renewed interest in a universal concept of religious liberty.

Local and Sporadic

Moss decries the "Sunday School myth" that contemporary American Christians have swallowed "hook, line and sinker," which proposes that the early Christians were constantly harassed and continually persecuted by Roman authorities, from the time of Jesus through the Emperor Constantine (186, 217). But this caricature (perhaps even "strawman") of constant, targeted oppression in the Roman Empire is indeed a "myth."[6] Scholars recognize that persecution in the Roman Empire was generally "local and sporadic."[7] As Everett Ferguson acknowledges, "Christianity was occasionally repressed in sporadic persecutions, but there was no general effort to root it out."[8]

The phrase "age of the martyrs" can be misleading, as if the pre-Constantinian period was an era of continuous, sustained, imperially-coordinated martyrdom. Historians, who study the complexities of the past, tend to focus upon contextualizing particularities, including the specificities of time and place.[9] In fact, early Christianity spread outside the confines of the Roman Empire, taking root in such locations as Edessa, Parthia, Armenia, and Gutthiuda (and sometimes faced mistreatment in such hinterlands).[10] For the most part, maltreatment of Christians broke out in specific locales or regions. Moreover, these outbreaks were not strung together in a con-

tinuous line of unbroken persecution. The suppression of Christianity was irregularly enforced, and the severity of opposition largely depended upon the specific attitudes of local officials.

To this nuanced portrayal of the "local" and "sporadic" nature of the mistreatment of early Christians, one could add a corollary: the hostilities tended to be neither imperially coordinated nor systematic. Joseph Lynch notes that "persecutions were sporadic in time and place, depending in some instances on the attitudes of local Roman officials, who varied in their willingness to prosecute, and in other instances on the attitudes of the local people, who had varying degrees of antipathy to Christians."[11]

Moss argues that contemporary American Christians cry "persecution" at the hint of disagreement, and the commonly accepted picture of early Christianity as a martyr religion plays into this martyr complex. It should be acknowledged that American Christians regularly toss out the terms "persecution" and "persecuted" when they are rebuffed with a cutting remark or derisive scowl. Many Christians do find it increasingly difficult to support their views and values in the public square, whether in the media, education, or politics. But such marginalization is not persecution. Overuse of the emotionally charged term "persecution" tends to cheapen the term, and thereby relativizes the experience of global Christians who truly face persecution.

But Moss argues further. This sense of being persecuted causes contemporary Christians to retaliate in word and deed. And because Christians root this martyr mindset in a narrative that begins with earliest Christianity, as one discounts the Roman persecution of Christians one consequently reduces the modern martyr-complex and thus disarms retaliation.[12]

Nevertheless, retribution neither has to be nor should be the inexorable response to real persecution in the past. Some early Christians themselves provide alternative and supplemental discourses. Rather than inciting a "martyr complex" leading to retaliation, a refined understanding of the mistreatment of early Christians can actually lead to a renewed interest in a universal concept of religious liberty.

Overview

Moss asserts that the early Christians were not persecuted in the first decades of the Jesus movement, because this would be logically impossible, as they were not yet a distinct group called "Christians."[13] One does wonder if the splicing between term and concept has been employed too acutely,[14] and one considers the possibility of hostility between a religion's sects.[15] Juda-

ism did include various competing sects (cf. Acts 24:14). From the outsider "pagan" perspective, Jews and "Christians" were commonly conflated, at least through the first century. Around the year 49, according to Suetonius, the Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome because of agitation over "Chrestus," which some think was a confused reference to Christ.[16]

Historians debate the role of the Jews in the maltreatment of early Christians.[17] The Jewish role was definitely exaggerated at times, as when Justin Martyr claimed that the Jews "kill and punish us whenever they have the power."[18] Various scholars believe the Jewish role in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is exaggerated.[19] Scholars caution against such over-generalizations and exaggerations, but the "parting of the ways" did lead to bitter disputes, and Jews at times mistreated members of the new Jesus movement. The Apostle Paul declares, "five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one" (2 Cor 11:24). He acknowledged that he himself had persecuted the church of God (Gal 1:13; 1 Cor 15:9), and that his own ministry led to tensions with Jews (1 Thess 2:14–16).

Historians also debate the exact nature of the role of the Roman authorities. John Foxe, the seventeenth-century English author, passed on a traditional framework of ten persecuting Roman emperors.[20] Modern scholars have moved beyond this simplistic construct.[21] First, one should distinguish between persecution *by* an emperor and persecution *under* an emperor. One should also distinguish between mistreatment *promoted* by the imperial office and mistreatment *permitted* by them. Furthermore, one should distinguish between an intentional plan that targeted Christianity and an improvised reaction that affected Christians.

Classical historians disagree about how Nero came to be blamed for a fire in Rome.[22] But the gist of Tacitus' tale of Nero's blame-shifting and then suppressing Christians is generally accepted among Roman historians, while acknowledging that his retelling may be influenced by sentiments of his own time (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44).[23] Tacitus portrays the Christians in a negative light, although his narrative also disapproves of Nero's actions. "Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed."[24] Tacitus depicts Christians as anti-social residents filled with "hatred of the human race (*odio humani generis*)," capable of various "abominable vices" or "atrocities" (*flagitia*). According to Tacitus, "Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames."[25] This mal-

treatment, which seems to have been localized in Rome, may be reflected in Suetonius and perhaps *1 Clement* 5–6. Suetonius notes that, under Nero, "Punishments were inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and depraved superstition (*superstitio nova ac malefica*)."[26]

According to Dio Cassius, Domitian lashed out against certain high-ranking officials who observed "Jewish customs" and "atheism."[27] Some believe that these officials were actually practicing Christians. The question and nature of anti-Christian hostility in Domitian's reign, especially in Asia Minor, is frequently tied to the dating and interpretation of Revelation.[28] Tertullian thought of the Emperor Domitian as a second Nero.[29] Some materials in *1 Clement* are compatible with a Domitianic opposition to Christianity, although they do not prove it.[30] Although Domitian is remembered in Christian texts as a persecuting emperor, little external evidence explicitly confirms this.

Pliny the Younger, who corresponded with the Emperor Trajan in the early second century, called Christianity a "depraved and excessive superstition (*superstitio prava et immodica*)." Pliny described three classes of individuals accused of being Christians: those who denied they had ever been Christians, those who recanted their Christian confession, and those who remained steadfast in their faith. Only the latter were executed or were sent to Rome (if Roman citizens). The Emperor Trajan counseled that Christians were not to be sought out, anonymous accusations were not to be accepted, and those who recanted the faith were to be pardoned. "The correspondence does not create a policy but rather clarifies a preexisting practice. Whether it had the force of imperial law would have mattered little to the Christians whom Pliny executed."[31]

Ignatius of Antioch's correspondence has traditionally been dated to Trajan's reign, although some push the date into Hadrian's rule (or beyond).[32] Ignatius' feisty letters speak with verve and confidence: "Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts, let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones, let cutting off of members; let shattering of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me gain Jesus Christ."[33]

Historians discuss (and debate) a source called "Hadrian's rescript."[34] As found in Eusebius' later *Ecclesiastical History* 4.9, the edict states, "If then the provincials can make out a clear case on these lines against the Christians so as to plead it in open court, let them be influenced by this alone and not by opinions or mere outcries. … If then anyone accuses them, and shows that they are acting illegally, decide the point according to the nature of the of-

fense, but by Hercules, if any one brings the matter forward for the purpose of blackmail, investigate strenuously and be careful to inflict penalties adequate to the crime."[35] Hadrian's rescript describes the necessity of an illegality being committed, and the possibility of a false accuser being cross-charged.[36]

Irenaeus mentions Telephorus of Rome, "who was gloriously martyred," probably around 137.[37] Polycarp's martyrdom is notoriously difficult to date as well, but most scholars prefer 155/156 (even though Eusebius places it in the reign of Marcus Aurelius).[38] The composition of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* has been strung across an even wider spectrum.[39] Justin was beheaded in Rome in 165 (during Marcus Aurelius' reign), and some Christians were martyred in Lyons in 176/177.[40]

The early third century was relatively calm. In 202, according to historical reconstructions, Septimius Severus forbade conversion to Judaism and Christianity, perhaps provoked by Jewish disloyalty.[41] In North Africa, the brunt seems to have fallen upon catechumens.[42] The *passio* of Perpetua narrates the execution of a young woman of some rank (Perpetua) and her servant (Felicitas).[43] Perpetua's father was beaten in her presence, her newborn baby was torn away from her, and she was sent to the arena and the wild beasts.[44]

Brief hostilities arose under Maximinus in 235/236,[45] but Christians enjoyed a favorable climate under Alexander Severus (222–235) and Philip the Arab (244–249). During the Decian persecution of 249–251, residents had to obtain a *libellum* (certificate), stating that they had offered incense, poured a libation, and tasted sacrificial meat.[46] Forty-four *libelli* are extant, including this example: "It was always our practice to sacrifice to the gods and now in your presence, in accordance with the regulations, we have sacrificed, have made libations, and have tasted the offerings, and we request you certify this."[47]

Even this Decian policy was an attempt to strengthen traditional Roman religion rather than a focused targeting of Christians.[48] Official policies could be intertwined with an imperial desire to rally morale, the greed of local authorities, and popular malice and hostility.[49] "When such 'general sacrifices' were ordered, Christians stuck out like a sore thumb because many would not worship the gods. Refusal to sacrifice was a serious crime because the person was thought to be purposely endangering the already fragile welfare of the empire by angering the gods."[50]

In 257, in the midst of military skirmishes and economic inflation, hostility returned as the Emperor Valerian sought to stabilize the empire and *pax deorum*.[51] Within two years, Valerian issued two edicts. He forbade Chris-

tian assemblies, seized property, and exiled Christian leaders (and eventually executed some). Cyprian of Carthage wrote, "Valerian had sent a prescript to the Senate, to the effect that bishops and presbyters and deacons should immediately be punished [executed]; but that senators, and men of importance, and Roman knights should lose their dignity and moreover be deprived of their property."[52] Cyprian himself died in this persecution, as did Sixtus of Rome.[53]

After Valerian came several decades of general peace, during which Christians rose in government ranks and many churches were built.[54] Gallienus, the subsequent emperor, already restored Christian places of worship by 261.[55] In 284, Diocletian came to the throne. An able leader, he overhauled the structure of the empire by forming a *tetrarchia* ("rule of four") and by dividing the empire into a dozen dioceses and numerous provinces. Diocletian also reorganized the military and secured borders. In 302, a Christian deacon named Romanus interrupted the imperial court, and Diocletian had his tongue cut out and had him imprisoned (and eventually executed).[56] Around the year 303, a period of suppression commenced waves of hostilities, now known as the "Great Persecution."[57] Diocletian does not seem to have harbored long-term resentment against Christians, as he had come to power seventeen years earlier (and he had previously allowed Christians to build a large church across from his palace).[58] Nevertheless, throughout the rest of his reign, Diocletian did "preside over many trials and tortures in person."[59]

After an official ceremony, the claim arose that soothsayers could not "read" the animal entrails because Christians had made the sign of the cross.[60] This only confirmed the sentiment that Christians were disloyal, and palace residents and soldiers were ordered to participate in traditional pagan sacrifices. Further hostility commenced with the razing of the church near the royal residence in Nicomedia.[61] Diocletian banned Christians from the courts and high office, and he decreed that church meetings should cease, churches should be destroyed, and the Christian scriptures should be confiscated and burned.[62] As the intensity of the persecution grew, Christian bishops were arrested and imprisoned (unless they offered pagan sacrifice). Diocletian ultimately insisted that all the empire's residents sacrifice to the gods. Refusal eventually led to torture, maiming, enslavement, and sometimes execution. Extant materials relating these events mostly focus upon Nicomedia-Bithynia, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa.[63] The "Great Persecution" left areas like Britain, Gaul, and Spain relatively untouched.[64] W. H. C. Frend estimated that a total of 3,000 to 3,500 Christians were killed in the period between 303 and 305.[65]

Diocletian's successor, Galerius, continued the persecution until he himself fell ill. With his impending death, Galerius ended the persecution. A second mandate entreated Christians to pray to the Christian God on his behalf.[66] Nevertheless, Maximinus Gaius, a new Augustus, continued the persecution in the East.[67] But the tides of fortune were shifting. By the time of the "Great Persecution," Christians perhaps totaled about ten percent of the empire's population, and "the church was so deeply entrenched that it could not be removed."[68] A few years after the death of Constantine, Julian "the Apostate" tried to turn the empire away from Christianity and back to paganism, but his attempt was short-lived. Julian did complete *Against the Galileans*, written in opposition to Christians.

Distinctions and Debates

Moss rightly contextualizes mistreatment by noting that life in antiquity was often brutal, and capital punishment was meted out broadly.[69] Roman society was accustomed to cruel and degrading public punishments and entertainment included public spectacles of violent suffering. Furthermore, Christians were not the only group to face suppression, which also fell upon Druids and Bacchants, for instance. Diocletian ordered that Manichees be burned. Of course, Rome's simmering tensions with its Jewish population erupted from time to time. And various Christian sub-groups, including Montanists and Donatists, suffered along with the others.

Were early Christians targeted by the Roman authorities? Moss draws a sharp distinction between *persecution* and *prosecution* (151). Christians were not harpooned for their specific beliefs but were caught in a net designed to enforce more general laws ("ancient justice" rather than "religious persecution," 164). Moss argues that true persecution must include execution directly resulting from the confession of Christian faith. Moreover, "persecution implies that a certain group is being unfairly targeted for attack and condemnation, usually because of blind hatred" (164). Again, persecution is "about an irrational and unjustified hatred" (254). Historians agree that Roman rulers had their reasons, and that they felt personally justified in their responses, but this emphasis upon irrational persecution to the downplaying of "rational" persecution is a different turn. Furthermore, it leaves open questions, as when seemingly "irrational" mob actions unfold, and a local ruler rationally decides it's not worth siding with the oppressed minority.

With this framework in mind, Moss argues that the suppression of Christianity by Diocletian's laws was "the first and only period of persecution that fits with popularly held notions about persecution in the early church"

(154). For example, Decius was not targeting Christians *qua* Christians so much as he was aiming for political solidarity through a return to traditional religious mores. Decius may have feared Christianity as a "state within a state."[70] Moss argues, "That Christians experienced and interpreted Decius's actions as persecution does not mean that Decius himself intended to persecute them. If we are going to condemn the Romans for persecuting the Christians, then surely they need to have done it deliberately or at least have been *aware* they were doing it" (150). Anne Thayer responds, "Awareness is a far stricter criterion than is used in much social and historical analysis where unintended impact is often understood to have important consequences."[71]

Although the consequent was not the original intent of the imperial mandates, it was a natural result of imperial initiatives. Rather than stating that Christians were being prosecuted but not persecuted, one could implement a different distinction, one between intended persecution and experienced persecution. Although the authorities were not necessarily targeting Christians in particular, one might understand how they felt like targeted victims. Moreover, while Moss emphasizes that imperial policies were politically rather than religiously motivated, she also acknowledges that a dichotomy of politics and religion was unheard of in antiquity (174).

Another distinction might be helpful as well: the difference between the reality of persecution and the threat of persecution.[72] Moss emphasizes that, in reality, imperial initiatives led to the execution of Christians for fewer than ten years *in toto* out of the three centuries from Jesus to Constantine (129). The periods making up these ten years landed in Nero's hostilities of 64, the Decian opposition around 250, the Valerian persecution of 257–258, and the "Great Persecution" of 303–305 and 311–313. Yet could not a general fear of the *threat* of persecution naturally arise in a context in which the reality of persecution only intermittently or rarely surfaced? Greg Carey counsels, "Let us concede that just a few instances of repression and only a very few martyrdoms are necessary to create a culture of fear and resentment."[73]

As with many aspects of the maltreatment of Christians in the Roman Empire, scholars continue to debate the legal backdrop of persecution.[74] Some have argued for a specific legal precedent in Neronic legislation, but this seems unlikely.[75] As an upstart movement breaking away from Judaism and founded by a seditious leader, Christianity did not enjoy a right to protection. Although some scholars have distinguished between lawful (*licita*) and unlawful (*illicita*) religions,[76] partially based upon Tertullian's description of Judaism as lawful, most do not accept such a clean distinction.[77] A.

N. Sherwin White has argued that no laws formally opposed Christianity, and authorities simply acted upon their broad right to preserve order (*coercitio*) and suppress shameful actions (*flagitia*).[78]

Moss rightly notes, "Not every Roman administrator was interested in Christians; many just wanted to see them go away" (144). The Roman authorities thought of themselves as reasonable, temperate, and even lenient.[79] Authorities often gave multiple (often three in the retelling) opportunities for recantation.[80] Tertullian tells of a governor who put forth a carefully worded formula that was vague enough to be acceptable to both Christians and pagans.[81] While the early Christian literature portrays persecuting authorities as irrational agents of Satan, they had their political and personal reasons for their opposition.

Local Roman magistrates practiced great flexibility in their treatment of Christians (cf. Acts 18:12–17; 19:23–41). A wide latitude was permitted to provincial governors to act on their own initiative (*cognitio extra ordinem*). And the function of *delatores* (informants) in the Roman legal system increased the variability, as did the vagaries of public sentiment.[82] Celsus even complained that Christians provoked the wrath of rulers, thus bringing upon themselves suffering and even death.[83]

Moss declares, "Very few Christians died, and when they did die, it was often because they were seen as politically subversive" (255). Historians debate how many Christians were actually killed.[84] By modern standards of genocide, "the number of martyrs was modest."[85] The number probably totaled in the thousands (rather than hundreds), but likely would not have reached into multiple tens of thousands. With reasonable certainty, one may conclude that the total "while significant, was not massive."[86] Nevertheless, as Jonathan Hill reasons, "For a community that represented a small minority of society at large, these deaths—even coming only occasionally—were of major significance to the whole group."[87] Paul Holloway cautions against downplaying maltreatment on statistical grounds alone, "as if tallying actual deaths allows one to somehow quantify the lived experience of lethal prejudice."[88]

Moss rightly insists, for the vast majority of Christians of the pre-Constantinian period, "the climate was hostile, but there was no active persecution" (145). Tertullian noted that Christians could be found in all occupations and classes and ranks, and some came from the intellectual elite and upper echelons of aristocratic nobility.[89] Victor, the bishop of Rome in the 190s, convinced Marcia, the Emperor Commodus' mistress, to release Christians sent to the Sardinian mines.[90] According to Eusebius, Alexander Severus placed a statue of Jesus in his palace shrine, and Severus' mother

Julia Mammea tried to summon Origen, a church theologian, in order to discuss philosophy and doctrine.[91] Another Christian leader, Julius Africanus, seems to have acted as Julia Mammea's spiritual advisor. Eusebius maintained that Philip the Arab (emperor from 244–249) was a Christian, although the claim is doubted by scholars.[92] The Emperor Aurelian attempted to arbitrate in a dispute over the bishop's residence in Antioch. There were even whole villages of Christians in Asia Minor and Egypt. But none of this should downplay the real suffering of those who were indeed maltreated, or the pain of the families and faith communities of the executed.[93]

Causes and Motivations

Why did early Christians sporadically face hostility and even persecution?[94] 1 Peter already hints that some Christians claimed they were being mistreated but were really being opposed for their own faults.[95] 1 Peter also hints at what Justin makes explicit, a sense of being opposed for the *nomen christianum* ("Christian name").[96] Even the earliest recension of the *Acts of Justin and Companions* includes a relevant confession of Christ.[97] Notwithstanding, the background of maltreatment was a complicated blend of social, political, personal, and religious reasons.

The impetus for maltreatment most often was not an imperial action but a localized grass-roots reaction, such as uncontrollable popular hostility.[98] The *Letter of Lyons* describes the local Christians being attacked with "abuse, blows, dragging, despoiling, stoning, imprisonment, and all that an enraged mob is likely to inflict on their most hated enemies."[99][100] In 248, Christians in Alexandria faced a series of mob attacks, even though the reigning emperor lacked any anti-Christian streak.[101]

Christians were generally looked down upon for their unsocial or antisocial behavior. As Celsus charged, "They wall themselves off and break away from the rest of mankind."[102] Christians were also disdained for their stubbornness. Pliny opposed Christians for their "pertinacity and unbending obstinacy (*pertinacia et inflexibilis obstinatio*)." Christians could appear to be impudent in court, and A. N. Sherwin-White suggests they could be accused of contempt (*contumacia*).[103]

Furthermore, churches were viewed with suspicion because they seemed secretive, and Christianity was perceived to be a recent contagion or upstart *superstitio* (rather than *religio*). According to Celsus, Christianity was "the cult of Christ," "a secret society whose members huddle together in corners."[104] Celsus depicted Jesus as a magician who learned sorcery in Egypt.[105] Caecilius, the pagan figure in Minucius Felix's *Octavius*, queried, "Why do

they have no altars, no temples, no publicly-known images? Why do they never speak in the open, why do they always assemble in stealth? It must be that whatever it is they worship—and suppress—is deserving either of punishment or of shame."[106]

"Too often," warns Rodney Stark, "historians have ignored the sincerity of pagans, misreading their casual forms of worship for indifference," yet "large numbers of Romans, especially those making up the political elite, sincerely believed that the gods had made Rome the great empire that it had become."[107] In the average Roman mind, the traditional religious rituals were of the essence of being a good Roman, and "the whole of the empire was sustained and nourished by a system of delicate social structures and religious practices."[108] Thus Christians endangered the *pax deorum* by not honoring the Roman gods. Roman citizens feared the growth of Christianity, as they watched traditional ways being abandoned in favor of the contagious *superstitio*. The Christian abandonment of the gods imperiled all, by risking divine wrath. Neglected gods would neglect the empire, so pagans naturally blamed Christians for misfortunes.[109] Tertullian wrote, "They think the Christians the cause of every public disaster, of every affliction with which the people are visited."[110]

In Roman society, religion and politics were entangled, and Christians were caught in the middle of the fray.[111] Roman officials, as protectors of the state, tended toward religious conservatism, and emperors would label themselves as *conservatores patriae* ("preservers of the fatherland") or *reparatores* ("restorers").[112] Roman culture prized *pietas*, including a proper respect for the traditional gods and rituals, and Christians were perceived to be a threat to public piety.[113] The phrase "the piety of the emperor" appeared on coins, and the emperor was perceived to be the ultimate example of the virtue of *pietas*.[114] Romans came to worship the "genius" or divine spirit of emperors, so Christian refusal to worship the gods or emperor had political overtones. Many pagans would not have found distinctions, such as honoring the emperor but not worshiping him, to be convincing.[115]

Religion was intertwined with family life, social activity, and public order.[116] The father, as the *paterfamilias*, acted as the chief priest for his family and household. The rise of Christianity was a disruptive force within nuclear and extended family relationships. "Many a pagan first heard of Christianity as the disintegrating force that had wrecked a neighbor's home."[117] In the *Passion of Perpetua*, her father exhorts her, "Behold your brothers; behold your mother and your aunt; look at your son who cannot live without you."[118] The conversion of pagan wives especially confounded their hus-

bands.[119]

Early Christians often faced popular opposition.[120] Christians remained aloof from much of social life "because almost all aspects—athletics, entertainment, political affairs, and many commercial transactions—were permeated with idolatry."[121] Many Christians refused to participate in public festivals, social clubs or trade guilds, and the army (which, apart from questions of violence, was intertwined with popular religion).[122] Christian leaders exhorted their congregations to stay away from gladiatorial fights and the theatre.[123] Early Christian literature reflects the internal debates about eating meat sacrificed to idols.[124] The growth of the Christian movement in a specific locale could impact the economy and adversely affect revenues tied to pagan worship.[125]

Christians were accused of the specific faults of atheism, cannibalism, and incest.[126] Marcus Fronto, a civic leader in Rome, apparently tossed out such charges.[127] As those who had apostasized from the *mos maiorum* ("customs of the elders"), Christians were labeled as "atheists."[128] Everett Ferguson explains, "Atheism in the ancient world was practical, not theoretical. An atheist was someone who did not observe the traditional religious practices, regardless of what faith he professed."[129] The accusation of cannibalism was a common form of ancient slander, and its application was perhaps rooted in misunderstandings of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper).[130] The charge was framed in the language of participating in "Thyestean feasts" (a label rooted in a story of Greek mythology, in which Thyestes unknowingly ate his own children when they were served to him).[131] The charge of incest or engaging in sexual orgies was framed as engaging in "Oedipean intercourse" (a label rooted in another fable, that of Oedipus who killed his own father and slept with his own mother). The accusation may have arisen because Christians called one another "brother" or "sister," spoke of their love for one another, and exchanged a "holy kiss" (kiss of peace) with fellow believers.[132] Tertullian mocked the accusations brought against Christians: "Monsters of wickedness, we are accused of observing a holy rite in which we kill a little child and then eat it; in which, after the feast, we practice incest, the dogs—our pimps, no doubt—overturning the lights and providing us with the shamelessness of darkness for our impious lusts."[133]

Christians faced intellectual and philosophical, as well as popular, opposition.[134] "To philosophers and ordinary people alike, Christianity was not simply antisocial, ludicrous, immoral, and unpatriotic; it threatened the very stability of the world."[135] Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher, was dismayed by the "madness (*mania*)" of the "Galileans" (Christians) in the face

of death.[136] Celsus argued that Christians could only convince the gullible, uncultured, and unintelligent: children, slaves, women, and the uneducated.[137] He treated Christians with intellectual scorn, protesting that they appealed to mere belief without rational demonstration. Celsus considered Christian martyrdom to be futile.[138] Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* critiques Christian "sheer opposition" and "histrionic display" in the face of death.[139] Lucian of Samosata, a second-century literary wit, satirized the Christian approach to imprisonment and martyrdom. Galen, the second-century physician, admired "the contempt of death" found among Christians, but he criticized their dependence upon "undemonstrated laws" and mere faith.[140] Aelius Aristides referred to "those impious people of Palestine" who have "defected from the Greek race," perhaps a reference to Christians.[141] Porphyry, the late third-century philosopher, wrote against Christianity ("an irrational and unexamined faith"), including specific critiques of biblical materials.[142] Porphyry's *Against the Christians* was "the largest, most learned and most dangerous of all the ancient literary attacks on Christianity."[143]

Such critical literature was not "persecution," of course, although it sometimes motivated others to adopt a hostile stance.[144] The governor Sossianus Hierocles, "one of the most zealous of persecutors,"[145] drew from Porphyry's intellectual critiques and attacked "the easy credulity of Christians" in his own work.[146] In any case, several of these pagan critics mentioned Christian contempt of death (or otherwise implied their own awareness of Christian martyrdom).

Resultant Martyr Literature

Perhaps historians should wield a larger glossary of words, such as "persecution," "violent aggression," "oppression," "hostility," "slander," "injustice," "coercion," "restriction," "prejudice," and "social marginalization."[147] Perhaps a term broader than "persecution," such as "maltreatment" or "mistreatment" casts a more realistic net. Christians who were tortured or imprisoned were maltreated, and even confiscation of property is a form of hostility or oppression. On the other hand, although early Christians felt uneasy about intellectual or popular critiques, such opposition should not be termed "persecution" or even "maltreatment," but engagement expected in the public forum of ideas.

The persecution of Christians (whether intended, experienced, or perceived) led to literary output.[148] A direct result would be martyrdom stories, stylized narratives that idealized the martyrs and their sacrifice.[149] Early Christian martyrdom literature emphasized the perseverance and faithful confes-

sions of the martyrs.[150] Some martyrdom texts have been called *passiones* or *martyria* (narrating the last days of suffering), and some have been called *acta* or *gesta* (portraying judicial proceedings), although the boundaries between these "are at best fragile."[151] Historians agree that martyr texts are "highly stylized rewritings of earlier traditions"[152] of constructed rhetorical strategy[153] that blend theology and history with communal lore,[154] as well as biblical materials and previous hagiographical traditions and typologies.[155]

Scholarly evaluations of this mix of hagiography and history fall upon a spectrum.[156] Moss assesses the martyrdom literature to be filled with "forgeries," "fabrications," and "pious fictions."[157] She believes that only six "authentic" martyrdom accounts exist among all the "pious chaff" and "forged weeds" ("these six accounts are as good as it is going to get"):[158] the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the *Acts of Ptolemy and Lucius*, the *Acts of Justin and Companions*, the *Letter of Lyons*, the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, and the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*.[159] Scholarship generally agrees with Moss that "no early Christian account has been preserved without emendation," whether expanding or editing or otherwise transforming the materials and traditions (124).

Nevertheless, as Moss' knife whittles away on these six texts, one seems left with little meat beyond the datum that dozens of Christians were executed. For instance, because we do not know with certainty what was said, "using modern standards of history—we cannot be sure that they were truly martyrs" (117). In Moss' view, historians would have to know the missing "key element" of "whether at any point they were given the opportunity to deny Christ and live" (137). David Neff differs in his assessment: "Surely we can strip away some pious embroidery without employing a steely skepticism that reduces our certainty to the bare fact that some people were executed."[160] For example, although legends accumulated around the death of Socrates, historians speak of facets of his demise.

Early martyrdom stories were often influenced by the images and deaths of Jesus and Stephen, the "proto-martyr." The narratives of Daniel and his friends and of the Maccabee martyrs also influenced early Christian martyr literature,[161] as did the figure of Socrates.[162] Thus pre-Christian ways of narrating a "noble death" helped shape the early Christian narratives.[163] Although Christians were the first to use the Greek word *martus* of individuals who were killed for their faith, churches do not have a monopoly on martyrs, and the notion of martyrdom is not peculiar to Christianity.[164] Other religions and ideologies have their own martyrs who serve as motivating examples of personal commitment.[165]

In addition to martyr accounts with their mix of fact and fiction, however, other early Christian texts also reflect experiences and concerns of maltreatment. One resulting literary genre was the *exhortation to martyrdom*, including examples written by Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian.[166] The spectrum of opposition faced by Christians, ranging from violent suppression to intellectual critique, also motivated Christian apologetic writing. Justin Martyr, the most famous second-century apologist, earned his title through dying for his Christian faith.[167] Athenagoras wrote a *Plea for Christians* which responded to the accusations of atheism, cannibalism, and incest.[168] Minucius Felix's *Octavius*, written in Latin, responded to similar charges, and Tertullian also wrote a Latin *Apology*. The anonymous *Epistle to Diognetus* refers to the hostile mistreatment of Christians. Other early apologists included Quadratus, Aristides, Melito, Tatian, and Theophilus. The apologists argued for the superiority of monotheism over polytheism, responded to the "novelty" of Christians by rooting it in the antiquity of the Hebrew Scriptures, identified Jesus with the eternal *Logos*, and explained the supernatural wonders of paganism through attribution to demonic power.

Pagan opposition and even maltreatment is reflected in pagan literature as well. Moss interacts with the likes of Suetonius, Tacitus, Pliny, Trajan, Marcus Cornelius Fronto, Celsus, Porphyry, and Diocletian. Relevant materials from Epictetus, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian of Samosata, Galen, and others are also extant (see the discussion above).

Varied Effects

Moss righty emphasizes that not all martyrs passively awaited and then accepted death.[169] Some actively sought out martyrdom, leading to "an astonishingly large number of volunteers."[170] These "volunteers" took the initiative by handing themselves over to authorities or even provoking them.[171] According to Laurie Guy, "One analysis of martyrdoms in early fourth-century Palestine under Maximin indicates that of the 47 of Eusebius's list of 91 martyrs who could be classified, at least 13 were volunteers; at least 18 more drew attention to themselves without going so far as to demand martyrdom; thus only 16 at most were sought out by the local authorities."[172] Tertullian narrated a case in which Christians voluntarily appeared before Arrius Antoninus, proconsul of the Roman province of Asia, desiring to be martyred. The proconsul executed some but brushed off the others, telling them if they really wanted to die they should simply jump off a cliff or go hang themselves.[173] According to Prudentius, during the "Great Persecution," a twelve-year-old girl named Eulalia spat in the face of the governor

and kicked over a pagan altar, and was consequently condemned to death. [174] Suicide often had noble connotations in the Greco-Roman world (cf. Socrates and Seneca), yet labeling "voluntary martyrdom" as "suicide" could belittle the role of the executor as willful agent in the execution.[175] "Voluntary martyrdom" only "works" when both the executed and the executor serve their respective, willing roles.

Another debated early Christian practice was flight in persecution. In particular, the flight of bishops during oppression led to ecclesiastical debates and strife. The church also had to deal with those who abandoned the faith during persecution. While some church members were executed during periods of persecution, others hid or fled, bribed officials, worked with sympathetic administrators, obtained or forged false *libelli*, or recanted their Christian faith.[176] The *stantes* never faced a situation of having to make a public choice.[177] *Traditores* were those who handed Scriptures over to authorities. The *lapsi* were those who denied the faith and then came back to the church, seeking reconciliation.[178] Large numbers of church members lapsed during the Decian persecution, for instance.[179] Various schisms, such as the Meletian, Novatianist, and Donatist schisms, centered upon the proper response to the lapsed (especially church leaders who had fallen away and then repented). A complex penitential system developed to address specific situations.

Other church members simply turned away from the faith (and became known as "apostates"). For example, the *Letter of Lyons* mentions about ten individuals who were "untrained, unprepared, and weak, unable to bear the strain of a great conflict."[180] Cyprian complained of mass apostasy in Carthage in 250.[181] Of the Diocletian era, Eusebius acknowledges that "some indeed, from excessive dread, broken down and overpowered by their terrors, sunk and gave way."[182]

Martyrdom affected the early Christian interpretation of biblical texts.[183] The maltreatment and persecution of Christians played a role in the development of doctrine, and Christian leaders used the heroic images of martyrs in the defense of their theologies.[184] Of course, the most direct result was the development of a theology of martyrdom,[185] and shifting emphases in the nature of Christian "witness," or *martyria*.[186] Moreover, within early Christianity, suffering and martyrdom were intertwined with discussions of discipleship.[187]

Martyrs were described in heroic terms, and martyrdom was portrayed as public spectacle, athletic event, or gladiatorial combat, but also as a cosmic struggle.[188] Many martyrdom texts draw from an apocalyptic worldview, fram-

ing personal events as battles between the forces of the Devil and the followers of Christ. Martyrs were described as *militi Christi* ("soldiers of Christ"), and "Christian authors utilized a rhetoric of paradox to declare this apparent defeat of Christians a victory for Christ."[189] Yet for all their talk of cosmic conflict, battling the diabolic forces, and triumphing over the enemies, the earliest Christians also passed on a tradition of peace-mongering.[190]

Martyrdom literature was meant to be didactic.[191] Persecution and maltreatment, and the associated literature, caused Christian communities and individuals to re-consider their values. According to Eusebius, the martyrs "accounted a horrible death more precious than a fleeting life, and won all the garlands of victorious virtue."[192] Rodney Stark explains, "Martyrs are the most credible exponents of the value of a religion, and this is especially true if there is a voluntary aspect to their martyrdoms. By voluntarily accepting torture and death rather than defecting, a person sets the highest imaginable value upon a religion and communicates that value to others."[193] Suffering could thus cause a re-evaluation of the nature of freedom. "In order to be free, the Christian had to be willing to lose physical freedom and life itself. After all, true liberty, true life, was manifested in its highest degree in 'confession,' and in martyrdom."[194] Therefore, martyrdom literature became interlaced with ascetic discussions concerning the body, suffering, sacrifice, and pleasure.[195] "The monastic life was a daily martyrdom of asceticism, a heroic substitute for the heroism of the martyr."[196]

The death of martyrs was also described with eucharistic imagery, or referred to as a "second baptism" (cf. Mark 10:39; Luke 12:50).[197] Hippolytus referred to martyrdom as being baptized in one's own blood, and Tertullian termed it "a second font."[198] Martyrdom was also described as a "birth" into new life, and communities commemorated the "birthdays" (*natalicia*) of martyrs (the anniversaries of their deaths, their birthdays into immortality).[199] As those who shared in the suffering and victory of Jesus, martyrs were thought to be divinely elected to this role.[200] As the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* states, the Lord "chooses his elect from among his own servants."[201] Martyrdom was a way of imitating Christ (*imitatio Christi*), an evidence of personal identification and union with him.[202] The martyrs were proof that "the salvation drama was not confined to the biblical past, but continued to play out in the lives of Christians in the present world."[203]

Early Christians also believed that the Holy Spirit was at work in the martyrs in a unique manner, allowing scholars to study the interface of martyrdom and pneumatology.[204] Early Christians believed that the Holy Spirit testified through those who made a faithful confession before hostile

authorities (Matt 10:18–20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12). Confessors and martyrs sometimes claimed special visions or prophetic insights.[205] "What mattered now was charism—a godly life and the evident presence of the Holy Spirit."[206] For example, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* highlights the Spirit's work and visionary experiences, and some scholars have argued for a Montanist influence upon the text.[207]

Martyrs were fast-tracked to heavenly reward.[208] Cyprian wrote, "In persecutions … death is brought in, but immortality follows; the world is taken away from the slain, but paradise is revealed to the redeemed."[209] Martyrs received a "crown" of reward.[210] Moss calls the view that martyrs died simply out of love for Jesus "overly simplistic," maintaining "even if this is generally true it is not *universally* true" (212).[211] Anne Thayer writes, "Some also had a vengeful streak, and saw themselves contributing to the defeat of Satan in a cosmic battle. Nor were martyrs free of self-interest."[212] Martyrdom literature often does speak of the eternal punishment of opponents.[213] And the assimilation of self-interest within religious motivation (and all motivation) is a complicated topic. One should not, however, necessarily pit statements about personal reward and the judgment of opponents against dying for one's religious beliefs. Such doctrines, like leaving actual vengeance in God's hands alone, were themselves religious convictions.[214]

According to Tertullian, "the death of martyrs is praised in song."[215] The celebration of martyrs led to hymnography and homiletic encomia and panegyrics.[216] Moss notes, "Martyrs were seductive figures because their willingness to suffer and die made them unimpeachable witnesses and persuasive representations of the church."[217] Overall, perseverance in the face of hostility led to an alternate form of personal authority outside the parameters of office or ordination, as noted by Hippolytus.[218] "Confessors" (a term often applied to those who were imprisoned or tortured but not executed) carried clout in and among the churches.[219] Already in Tertullian's day, confessors were thought to possess special powers of intercession. "No sooner has anyone put on bonds than adulterers beset him, fornicators gain access, prayers echo around him, pools of tears from sinners soak him."[220]

Because many martyrs were women, persecution and martyrdom affected the role of women in the church, as texts elevated and idealized female martyrs, such as Blandina, Perpetua, and Felicitas. [221] The *Letter of Lyons* says of the young Blandina, "Then she too was sacrificed, and even the heathen themselves acknowledged that never in their experience had a woman endured so many and terrible sufferings."[222] Scholars have explored the discussion of the "body" in martyr literature,[223] the descriptions of female mar-

tyrs in masculinized ways[224] and the phenomenon of the "modest" martyr.[225]

Many Christians believed that confessors and especially martyrs possessed a holy power.[226] As Peter Brown has quipped, the martyrs were seen as "miracles in themselves."[227] According to Eusebius, martyrs demonstrated that "the power of God is always present to the aid of those who are obliged to bear any hardship for the sake of religion, to lighten their labours, and to strengthen their ardor."[228] Their bodies were seen as conduits of such power, and church members began to gather bodily relics and eventually to venerate them.[229] "The race for bones and skin began early."[230] Christian texts sometimes cautioned (directly or indirectly) against a veneration of the martyrs that might compete with a focus upon Jesus Christ himself.[231]

Both opposition and martyrdom played roles in the self-identity of Christians.[232] "The bitter disputes with the synagogues and the persecution at the hands of the Roman state did not simply change the exterior circumstances of the church. They also changed its internal characteristics: they influenced how Christians thought of themselves and of God's plan for the world."[233] The telling and re-telling of martyr narratives helped form communities, through the role of collective memory.[234] Many believed that persecution purified the church or formed a more faithful church.[235] Maltreatment discouraged conversions of convenience and made churches reticent to accept members without due caution.[236]

Early Christian texts claim that persecution ultimately led to church growth, both in numbers and geographical dissemination.[237] The Book of Acts declares, "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word."[238] Tertullian exaggerated, "For all who witness the noble patience of its martyrs, … are inflamed with desire to examine the matter in question; and as soon as they come to know the truth, they straightway enroll themselves its disciples."[239] He famously declared, "Nor does your cruelty, however exquisite, get you anything. … The oftener we are mowed down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed."[240] The martyrs testified to the faith in a way that some pagans found convincing,[241] although pagan reactions to Christian martyrdom greatly varied, and many were less than impressed.[242]

Response

Martyrdom shaped the early church, and its memory continues to shape the church today. "Even when martyrdom ceased, it remained significant—in memory, in miracle, in inspiring self-sacrificing commitment in the service of Christ. In shaping the ongoing life of the church, the blood of the martyrs

was indeed seed."[243]

Candida Moss' provocative work engagingly continues this conversation. "*The Myth of Persecution* raises the consequential question of how we use historical scholarship in the construction of contemporary meaning and guidance."[244] The language of "persecution" can be emotionally charged, and the rhetorical "persecution" card has been overplayed in America, so that marginalization and even critique becomes "persecution."[245] In consequence, one senses a tenor of restricting persecution in the ancient world in order to disarm the rhetoric of "persecution" in the modern world.[246] Moss fears that "the myth of persecution" leads inexorably to a combative stance, further conflict, and even the legitimization of retributive violence (3). She insists, "The use of this language of persecution is discursive napalm. It obliterates any sense of scale or moderation. This stymieing, dialogue-ending language is disastrous for public discourse, disastrous for politics, and results in a more deeply poisoned well for everyone." The inflated rhetoric of victimization (of insiders) and demonization (of outsiders) works against mutual understanding, dialogue, and cooperation.

But is this the inevitable response to maltreatment, whether historical or contemporary?[247] Can there be a responsible "constructive use" of the early Christian response to oppression? Ann Thayer responds, "It is not enough to recognize how the past has been, and continues to be, dangerously used. A more faithful narrative needs to replace it. How might the martyrological tradition become a gift within the body of Christ today, encouraging such virtues as costly discipleship, spiritual discernment, mutual recognition, and support?"[248] Moss herself states, "We can choose to embrace the virtues that martyrs embody without embracing the false history of persecution and polemic that has grown up around them" (250). She specifically highlights such virtues as courage and endurance (260).

But I wish to underscore another lesson from early Christian literature: calls for religious liberty rooted in universal principles and motivated by mistreatment. Moss herself notes that Justin Martyr and Tertullian used "the rhetoric and ideals of the Roman Empire to make their case that Christians should be tolerated" (258). She adds, "Perhaps if we are to appeal to the history of persecution in the early church, this should be our model" (259).

As a keen example, Tertullian wrote in his *To Scapula*: "It is the law of mankind and the natural right of each individual to worship what he thinks proper, nor does the religion of one man either harm or help another. But, it is not proper for religion to compel men to religion, which should be ac-

cepted of one's own accord, not by force, since sacrifices also are required of a willing mind. So, even if you compel us to sacrifice, you will render no service to your gods."[249] Other early Christian authors, such as Lactantius, also appealed to a universal principle of religious liberty.[250] But Tertullian was the first author to coin the phrase "religious liberty (*libertas religionis*)," [251] and his discussion of religious liberty is rightly noted by some historians of religious tolerance.[252] Nevertheless, the mere notation of his thought does not do justice to his influence. My full telling of the story must appear elsewhere, but here is a brief plotline.[253] Tertullian's plea was picked up by key defenders of religious liberty, including Sebastian Castellio (who opposed religious intolerance in sixteenth-century Geneva), Pieter Twisck (a Dutch Anabaptist), John Robinson (pastor of the Pilgrims), Leonard Busher (seventeenth-century author of *A Plea for Liberty of Conscience*), John Murton (another early Baptist proponent of religious freedom), Roger Williams (founder of Rhode Island), and William Penn (founder of Pennsylvania). Tertullian's discussion was also personally appreciated by Thomas Jefferson, the American founder.[254]

While Greg Carey fears that "the martyrdom myth encourages true believers to dismiss their opponents and their opponents' humanity," could not a humane appreciation of the reality of past persecution use such maltreatment as an argument for universal religious liberty (and not just freedom for one's own "in-group")? Even as the Hebrew Scriptures called upon Jews to remember the sojourner in their midst because they themselves had been sojourners in Egypt,[255] could not Christians be called upon to remember maltreated religious minorities, because they themselves were a maltreated religious minority?

This is not, of course, to say that early Christians were themselves "innocent" in the matter of religious liberty in Late Antiquity. Tolerance is the "the loser's creed," the slogan of the underdog.[256] Unfortunately, as Christians garnered power they themselves became persecutors.[257] The Christianized empire of Late Antiquity turned on heretics, Jews, and pagans.[258] But this merely underscores the importance of our discussion. If later Christianized emperors were motivated by their own concerns for political unity, could their policies be considered more political than religious? If they passed general laws that opposed pagan religiosity but also Jews and heretics, could their maltreatment of pagans be called prosecution rather than persecution? Should one narrow "persecution" to the actual execution of pagans, and then seek to assess the rhetoric of persecution by the exact number of pagans executed?

A plea for universal religious liberty can be informed by the local, sporadic, and real persecution of early Christians. Perhaps what humanity needs most is a sense of reciprocity or reversibility (as embodied in the "Golden Rule") that applies to religious liberty, and that transcends the particularities of one's contemporary socio-cultural context. Perhaps one may even speak of a response to maltreatment grounded in the teachings of the Gospels (Matt 5:38–48) and reiterated in the Epistles (Rom 12:14–21). Historians are called to a difficult but important task: to reexamine the past unflinchingly even if it challenges popular assumptions and traditions, while also considering an ethically responsible application of the reconstructed past.

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[1] Laurie Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 50.

[2] See http://www.rome-guide.it/english/monuments/monuments_catacombs.html.

[3] Joseph Lynch, *Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 79.

[4] Candida Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2013). For a *Forschungsberichte* and "first read" entry into the field of martyrdom studies, see Candida Moss, "Current Trends in the Study of Early Christian Martyrdom," *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 41.3 (2012): 22–29. For a representation of her own scholarship on early Christian martyrdom, see Candida Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

[5] Henry Carrigan, "Were Early Christians Really Persecuted?," *Publishers Weekly* (April 23, 2013). Available at: http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/religion/article/56939-were-early-christians-really-persecuted-pw-talks-with-candida-moss.html. Cf. Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 20.

[6] For some representative introductions to early Christian martyrdom and persecution, see Arthur Mason, *The Historic Martyrs of the Primitive Church* (London: Longmans Green, 1905); Paul Allard, *Histoire des persecutions pendant les deux premiers siècles* (Paris: Gabalda, 1911); Leon Canfield, *The Early Persecutions of the Christians* (New York: AMS, 1913); Herbert Workman, *The Martyrs of the Early Church* (London: Kelly, 1913); Henri Grégoire, *Les persecutions dans l'empire romain* (2d ed.; Brussells: Palais des Académies, 1964); W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965); Élie Griffe, *Les persecutions contre les chrétiens aux I^er^ et II^e^ siècles* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967); Jacques Moreau, *La persecution du christianisme dans l'Empire romain* (Paris: Presses universitaires des France, 1956); Hans Dieter Stöver, *Christenverfolgung in römischen Reich: ihre Hintergründe und Folgen* (Düsseldorf, Econ, 1982); Herbert Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (trans. Annabel Bedini; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986). Pierre Maraval, *Les persecutions durant les quatre premiers siècles du christianisme* (Paris: Desclée, 1992); G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Anne Bernet, *Les chrétiens dans l'Empire romain* (Paris: Perrin, 2003); G. E. M. De Ste Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy* (eds., Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[7] G. E. M. De Ste Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," *Past and Present* 26 (1963), 7; cf. Moss. *Myth of Persecution*, 159.

[8] Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, vol. 1: *From Christ to the Pre-Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 160.

[9] On the contextualization of martyrdom, see Anders Klostergaard Petersen and Jakob Engberg, "Finding Relevant Contexts for Early Christian Martyrdom," in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (eds., Jakob Engberg, et al.; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 7–13.

[10] See Gernot Wiessner, *Zur Märtyrerüberlieferungs aus der Christenverfolgung Schapurs II* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); Peter Heather, "Goths and Huns, *c.* 320–425," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 13 (eds., Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 496–97.

[11] Lynch, *Early Christianity*, 88.

[12] Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 254–60.

[13] Ibid., 133–34.

[14] I.e., Europeans could maltreat "Native Americans" in the closing years of the fifteenth century (even before the

appearance of the root term "America"). Cf. Moss' argument that Christians coined the term "martyr" but the conceptual reality already existed (Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 52).

[15] Cf. Acts 9:1–2. Consider the 2010 Lutheran World Federation statement entitled "Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of 'Anabaptists.'"

[16] Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4. See Dixon Slingerland, "Chrestus: Christus?," in *The Literature of Early Rabbinic Judaism* (ed., Alan Avery-Peck; Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), 133–44.

[17] See Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[18] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue* 31.5.

[19] Paul Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 226–31.

[20] Cf. George Townsend, *Ecclesiastical and Civil History* (London: Rivington, 1847), 128; Lactantius, *On the Deaths of Persecutors*.

[21] For a chart merging martyrs (and purported martyrs) with imperial reigns, see Joyce Salisbury, *The Blood of the Martyrs: Unintended Consequences of Ancient Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 205–208.

[22] E. Theodor Klette, *Die Christenkatastrophe unter Nero* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1907).

[23] Ivor Davidson, *The Birth of the Church: From Jesus to Constantine, A.D. 30–312* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 192–93. Moss doubts the historicity of the Tacitan report (Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 138–39; 263 n. 4).

[24] Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; in James Stevenson, *A New Eusebius* [London: SPCK, 1987], 3.

[25] Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; in Stevenson, *New Eusebius*, 2.

[26] Suetonius, "Life of Nero" 16.2; in *Suetonius*, vol. 1, *The Lives of the Caesars* (trans. J. C. Rolfe; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), 111.

[27] Dio Cassius, *Epitome* 67.14; in Stevenson, *New Eusebius*, 7.

[28] Roland Schütz, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes und Kaiser Domitian* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933).

[29] Tertullian, *Apology* 5.4; cf. Melito of Sardis in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.26.9.

[30] *1 Clement* 1.1; 7.1.

[31] N. Clayton Croy, Review of *The Myth of Persecution*, *Review of Biblical Literature* 10 (Oct. 3, 2013).

[32] For a summary, see Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 170.

[33] Ignatius, *Romans* 4–5; in ANF 1:76. See Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "Leben und/oder Sterben für Gott bei Ignatius und Polykarp," in *Martyriumsvorstellungen in Antike und Mittelalter* (eds., Sebastian Fuhrmann and Regina Grundmann; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 191–202.

[34] Paul Keresztes, "The Emperor Hadrian's Rescript to Minucius Fundanus," *Phoenix* 21 (1967): 120–29. For a summary of "the critical consensus" in favor of the authenticity of "Hadrian's rescript," see John Granger Cook, *Roman Attitudes toward the Christians* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2010), 252–80.

[35] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.9; in Ralph Martin Novak, *Christianity and the Roman Empire: Background Texts* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2011), 55

[36] Rudolf Freudenberger, *Das Verhalten der römischen Behörden gegen die Christen im 2. Jahrhundert* (Münich: Beck, 1969).

[37] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III.3.3; in *ANF* 1:416.

[38] See Gerd Buschmann, *Das Martyrium des Polycarp* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Paul Keresztes, "The Emperor Antoninus Pius and the Christians," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971): 1–18.

[39] Candida Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 104; Candida Moss, "On the Dating of Polycarp: Rethinking the Place of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* in the History of Christianity," *Early Christianity* 1 (2010): 539–74; Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 171–86.

[40] Paul Keresztes, "Marcus Aurelius a Persecutor?," *Harvard Theological Review* 61 (1968): 321–41.

[41] See Joyce Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 81–83; Davidson, *Birth of the Church*, 210–11.

[42] Anthony Birley, "Persecutors and Martyrs in Tertullian's Africa," in *The Later Roman Empire Today* (ed., Dido Clark; London: Institute of Archaeology, 1993), 37–86; Ronald Burris, *Where is the Church? Martyrdom, Persecution, and Baptism in North Africa from the Second to the Fifth Century* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2012).

[43] Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion*; William Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage: Portrait of a Third Century Martyr* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2009).

[44] See also Mary Lefkowitz, "Motivations for St Perpetua's Martyrdom," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44 (1976): 417–21.

[45] Paul Keresztes, "The Emperor Maximinus' Decree of 235 A.D.: Between Septimius and Decius," *Latomus* 28 (1969): 601–18.

[46] Paul Meyer, *Die Libelli aus der decianischen Christenverfolgung* (Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1910); Graeme Clarke, "Persecution of Decius," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 12 (ed., Alan Bowman, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 625–34; Andreas Alföldi, "Zu den Christenverfolgungen in der

Mitte des 3. Jahrhunderts," *Klio* 31 (1938): 323–48.

[47] Arthur Boak and William Sinnigen, *A History of Rome to A.D. 565* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 415. Cf. J. R. Knipfing, "The Libelli of The Decian Persecution," *Harvard Theological Review* 16 (1923): 363.

[48] See Reinhard Selinger, *Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Decius: Anatomie einer Christenverfolgung* (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1994); James Rives, "The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999): 135–54; Reinhard Selinger, *The Mid-Third Century Persecutions of Decius and Valerian* (rev. ed.; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004).

[49] J. W. Hargis, *Against the Christians: The Rise of Early Anti-Christian Polemic* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

[50] Lynch, *Early Christianity*, 88.

[51] Patrick Healy, *The Valerian Persecution: A Study of the Relations between Church and State in the Third Century A.D.* (New York: Franklin, 1905).

[52] Cyprian, *Epistle* 80; in ANF 5:408.

[53] See Geoffrey Dunn, "The Reception of the Martyrdom of Cyprian of Carthage in Early Christian Literature," in *Martyrdom and Persecution in Late Antique Christianity* (ed., Johan Leemans; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 65–86.

[54] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 8.1.

[55] Gallienus' wife, the empress Salonia, may have been a Christian. See Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 144.

[56] Eusebius, *Martyrs of Palestine*, 100.2.

[57] Giuseppe Ricciotti, *The Age of Martyrs: Christianity from Diocletian to Constantine* (trans. Anthony Bull; Milwaukee: Bruce, 1959); Adalbert-Gautier Hamman, *Les Martyrs de la grande persecution, 304–311* (Paris: Descleé de Brouwer, 1979); G. E. M. De Ste Croix, "Aspects of the 'Great' Persecution," in *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy* (ed., Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 35–78.

[58] Stark, *Triumph of Christianity*, 145.

[59] Timothy Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 24.

[60] Lactantius, *On the Deaths of Persecutors*, 10.

[61] Ibid., 11–13.

[62] See Stevenson, *New Eusebius*, 309–310; Vincent Twomey, *The Great Persecution* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2009). For material evidence, see W. M. Calder, *Some Monuments of the Great Persecution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1924); Annemarie Luijendijk, "Papyri from the Great Persecution: Roman and Christian Perspectives," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008): 341–69.

[63] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 494–505.

[64] Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity*, 52.

[65] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 537.

[66] Galerius may have died before the second mandate was published (Novak, *Christianity and the Roman Empire*, 154).

[67] Eusebius relates an account of ninety-seven maimed Christians, including children, being taken to the mines at Maximinus Daia's command (see White, *Emergence of Christianity*, 26).

[68] Charles Freeman, *A New History of Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 213; Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 85, estimates that there were about five million Christians in A.D. 300; cf. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 7; Stark, *Triumph of Christianity*, 147.

[69] Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 164–66.

[70] Allen Brent, *A Political History of Early Christianity* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 251–76.

[71] Anne Thayer, Review of *The Myth of Persecution*, *Interpretation* 68 (2014): 82.

[72] Croy, Review of *The Myth of Persecution*.

[73] Greg Carey, Review of *The Myth of Persecution*, *Christian Century* 130 (2013): 40.

[74] Léonce Cezard, *Histoire juridique des persecutions contre les Chétiens des Néron a Septime-Sévère (64 à 202)* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1967); Timothy Barnes, "Legislation against the Christians," *Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968): 32–50.

[75] See De Ste Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," 6–38; G. E. M. De Ste Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted? A Rejoinder," *Past and Present* 27 (1964): 28–33.

[76] Davidson, *Birth of the Church*, 193.

[77] See Tertullian, *Apology* 21.2.

[78] A. N. Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions and Roman Law Again," *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1952): 199–213; A. N. Sherwin White, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?—An Amendment," *Past and Present* 27 (1964), 23–27.

[79] Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, chapter 5; Freeman, *New History of Early Christianity*, 208.

[80] Pliny, *Letters* 10.96; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9–12.

[81] Jonathan Hill, *Christianity: How a Despised Sect from a Minority Religion Came to Dominate the Roman Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 138–39.

[82] Paul Hartog, "Greco-Roman Understanding of Christianity," in *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought*

(ed., D. Jeffrey Bingham; London: Routledge, 2010), 52.
[83] Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.65; in *ANF* 4:664.
[84] Origen claimed that the martyrs in his day were "easily numbered," although one must take his apologetic purpose into consideration (Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.8).
[85] Lynch, *Early Christianity*, 124; cf. 88.
[86] Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity*, 78.
[87] Hill, *Christianity*, 125. See also Moss, *Myth of Persecutions*, 160.
[88] Paul Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice: 1 Peter in Social-Psychological Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2009), 36.
[89] Tertullian, *To Scapula* 5.
[90] Peter Lampe, *Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (London: Continuum, 2003), 336.
[91] White, *Emergence of Christianity*, 24.
[92] Euesbius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.34; 7.10.3. See John York, "The Image of Philip the Arab," *Historia* 21 (1972): 320–32; Crouzel, "Le christianisme de l'empereur Philippe l'arabe," *Gregorianum* 56 (1975): 545–50; Hans Pohlsander, "Philip the Arab and Christianity," *Historia* 29 (1980): 463–73. The fact that Eusebius includes this demonstrates that Eusebius himself did not believe or push a "Sunday School myth" of three hundred years of continuous persecution.
[93] Hill, *Christianity*, 125.
[94] See G. E. M. De Ste Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," 6–38.
[95] 1 Pet 4:14–16.
[96] Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 4.4. David Horrell, "The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007): 361–81.
[97] Unfortunately, the references to the *Acts of Justin and Companions* in Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp* do not differentiate the various recensions.
[98] See W. H. C. Frend, "Martyrdom and Political Oppression," in *The Early Christian World*, vol. 2 (ed., Philip Esler; London: Routledge, 2000).
[99] *Letter of Lyons and Vienne* 5.1; in Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 63.
[100] See W. H. C. Frend, "Martyrdom and Political Oppression," in *The Early Christian World*, vol. 2 (ed., Philip Esler; London: Routledge, 2000), 826.
[101] Guy, *Introducing Christianity*, 51.
[102] Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.2; in Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984), 155.
[103] Sherwin-White, "Early Persecutions."
[104] In *On the True Doctrine* 1, in R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Celsus: On the True Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 53.
[105] Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.52–53; 8.9.
[106] Minucius Felix, *Octavian* 10; in Hill, *Christianity*, 111.
[107] Stark, *Triumph of Christianity* 140–41.
[108] Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 171.
[109] Stark, *Triumph of Christianity*, 142.
[110] Tertullian, *Apology* 40.2; in ANF 3:47.
[111] Grant, *Early Christianity and Society*.
[112] See Claude Lepelley, *L'empire romain et le christianisme* (Paris: Flammarion, 1969); Joachim Molthagen, *Der römische Staat und die Christen im zweiten und dritten Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970); Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Der römische Staat und die Frühe Kirche* (2d. ed.; Gütersloh, Mohn, 1977); Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Everett Ferguson (ed.), *Church and State in the Early Church* (New York: Garland, 1993); Paul Keresztes, *Imperial Rome and the Christians*, 2 vols. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989).
[113] Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).
[114] James Rives, "Piety of a Persecutor," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 (1996): 1–25.
[115] Cf. 1 Pet 2:17.
[116] Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[117] Ernest Colwell, "Popular Reactions against Christianity in the Roman Empire," in *Environmental Factors in Church History* (ed., J. T. McNeill; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 62.
[118] *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* 1.2; in *ANF* 3:700. See Jan Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary: Authenticity, Family and Visions," in *Märtyrer und Märtyrer-akten* (ed.,Walter Ameling; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2002), 77–120.
[119] See 1 Pet 3:1–2; Justin Martyr, *Second Apology* 2; cf. 1 Cor 7:12–16.
[120] See Robert Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Stephen Benko, "Pagan Criticism of Christianity during the First Two Centuries," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.32.2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1055–1118; Craig de Vos, "Popular Graeco-Roman Responses to

Christianity," in *The Early Christian World*, vol. 2 (ed., Philip Esler; London: Routledge, 2000), 869–99. For the wider context, see Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987); E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Amaldo Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1987).

[121] Ferguson, *Church History*, 67.

[122] George Kalantzis, *Caesar and the Lamb: Early Christian Attitudes on War and Military Service* (Eugene: Cascade, 2012).

[123] See Tertullian, *On the Shows*; Novatian, *On the Shows*.

[124] 1 Cor 8–10, Acts 15:28–29, Rev 2:14, 20.

[125] See Acts 19; Pliny, *Letters* 10.96.

[126] Responses to the charges appear in the *Letter of Lyons*, Athenagoras, Minucius Felix.

[127] Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.6; Benko, "Pagan Criticism of Christianity," 1081–89; T. D. Barnes, "Pagan Perceptions of Christianity," in *Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to A.D. 400* (eds., Ian Hazlett and and W. H. C. Frend; London: SPCK, 1991), 233–34.

[128] Adolf von Harnack, *et al.*, *Der Vorwurf des Atheismus in den drei ersten Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905).

[129] Ferguson, *Church History*, 67. For example, Epicureans, who believed that the gods existed but did not interfere with human affairs, often evaded the traditional rituals and were therefore called "atheists."

[130] Andrew McGowan, "Eating People: Accusations of Cannibalism against Christians in the Second Century," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994): 413–42.

[131] Agnès Nagy, *Les repas de Thyeste: l'accusation d'anthropologie contre les chrétiens au 2^e siècle* (Debrecen: University of Debrecen, 2000).

[132] The rhetoric of such accusations is difficult to entangle. A few scholars believe that charges of immorality arose because outsiders failed to distinguish between the "Great Church" and libertine Gnostics (see Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*, 67–73).

[133] Tertullian, *Apology* 7; in *ANF* 3:23, modernized.

[134] See Hartog, "Greco-Roman Understanding of Christianity," 51–67; Michael Simmons, "Graeco-Roman Philosophical Opposition," in *The Early Christian World*, vol. 2 (ed., Philip Esler; London: Routledge, 2000), 840–68.

[135] Hill, *Christianity*, 114.

[136] Epictetus, *Discourses* 4.1.3. See George Long and John Lancaster Spalding, *Discourses of Epictetus* (New York: Appleton, 1904), xiii.

[137] See Hartog, "Greco-Roman Understanding of Christianity, 57–59; cf. Tatian, *Oration* 33.

[138] See Henry Chadwick, *Studies on Ancient Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 242–43.

[139] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 11.3. Some have maintained that the passage is an interpolation.

[140] Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*, 141; Richard Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 14.

[141] Aelius Aristides, *Orations* 3.671; in Charles Allison Behr, *Aelius Aristides: The Complete Works*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 275. See Benko, "Pagan Criticism of Christianity," 1098.

[142] See Jeremy Schott, "Porphyry on Greeks, Christians, and Others," in *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion in Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 52–87.

[143] Barnes, "Pagan Perceptions of Christianity," 238.

[144] Digeser, *Threat to Public Piety*.

[145] Alan Bowman, "Diocletian and the First Tetrarchy, A.D. 284–305," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 12 (ed., Alan Bowman, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 86.

[146] Eusebius, *Against Hierocles* 2; in Simmons, "Graeco-Roman Philosophical Opposition," 849; cf. Timothy Barnes, "Sossianus Hierocles and the Antecedents of the Great Persecution," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 80 (1976): 239–52.

[147] Jakob Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto: Opposition to Christianity in the Roman Empire c. 50–250 AD* (trans. Gregory Carter; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007).

[148] Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "Hagiographie et histoire: À propos des actes et passions des martyrs," in *Polycarpiana: Studies on Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 113–20; Timothy Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2010).

[149] For a collection see Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972). See also Oscar von Gebhardt, *Acta martyrum selecta* (Berlin: Duncker, 1902); Daniel Ruiz Bueno, *Acta de los martires* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1962); A. A. R. Bastiaensen, et al., *Atti e passioni dei martiri* (4th ed.; Rome: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1998); Mark Water (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

[150] On depictions of suffering, see Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[151] Moss, "Current Trends in the Study of Early Christian Martyrdom," 22. On *acta*, see Gary Bisbee, *Pre-Decian Acts of Martyrs and Commentarii* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

[152] See Lucy Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2004). Cf. the apocryphal acts of the apostles; Helen Rhee, *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2005).

[153] Erin Ronsse, "Rhetoric of Martyrs: Listening to Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006): 283–327.

[154] André Jean Festugière, "Lieux communs littéraires et themes de folk-lore dans l'hagiographie primitive," *Wiener Studien* 73 (1960): 123–52; Felice Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre: Hagiographical Texts as Historical Narrative," *Viator* 25 (1994): 95–113; Claudia Rapp, "Storytelling as Spiritual Communication in Early Greek Hagiography: The Use of *Diegesis*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 431–48.

[155] Victor Saxer, *Bible et Hagiographie* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1986); Victor Saxer, "Aspects de la typologie martyriale: Récits, portrait et personnages," in *Les fonctions des saints dans le monde occidental (III^e–IV^e siècle)* (ed., Jean-Yves Tilliette; Rome: École française de Rome, 1991), 321–31; Marc Van Uytfanghe, "L'hagiographie: un 'genre' chrétien ou antique tardif?," *Analecta Bollandiana* 111 (1993), 135–88; Guy Philippart, "L'hagiographie comme littérature: concept recent et nouveaux programmes?" *Revue des sciences humaines* 251 (1998): 11–39; Jonathan Yates, "The Use of the Bible in the North African Martyrological Polemics of Late Antiquity," in *Martyrdom and Persecution in Late Antique Christianity* (ed., Johan Leemans; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 393–419.

[156] Hippolytus Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography* (trans. Virginia Crawford; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961). Cf. the series of articles titled "Notiunculae Martyrologicae" that have periodically appeared in *Vigiliae Christianae*, authored by Jan den Boeft and Jan Bremmer.

[157] For example, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is a "pious fraud" (Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 104).

[158] Cf. E. C. E. Owen, *Some Authentic Acts of the Early Martyrs* (London: SPCK, 1933); Klaus Gamber, *Sie gaben Zeugnis: Authentische Berichte über Märtyrer der Frühkirche* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1982).

[159] Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 92.

[160] David Neff, "Real Martyrs Don't Murder," *Christianity Today* 57.6 (Aug. 29, 2013): 80.

[161] Othmar Perler, "Das vierte Makkabäerbuch, Ignatius von Antiochien und der ältesten Martyrerberichte," *Rivista di archeologia Cristiana* 25 (1949): 47–72; Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories of the Maccabean Martyrs* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[162] Geert Roskam, "The Figure of Socrates in the Early Christian *Acta Martyrum*," in *Martyrdom and Persecution in Late Antique Christianity* (ed., Johan Leemans; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 241–56; Johannes Geffcken, "Die christlichen Martyrien," *Hermes* 45 (1910), 500–501. Moss also references the figures of Lucretia, Achilles, and Iphigeneia.

[163] See David Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990); Arthur Droge and James Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992); Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002); Jan Willem van Henten, "Noble Death and Martyrdom in Antiquity," in *Martyriumsvorstellungen in Antike und Mittelalter* (eds., Sebastian Fuhrmann and Regina Grundmann; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 85–110.

[164] Marie-Françoise Baslez, *Les persécutions dans l'antiquité* (Paris: Fayard, 2007).

[165] Cf. Herbert Musurillo, "The Pagan Acts of the Martyrs," *Theological Studies* 10 (1949): 555–64; Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Pagan Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954).

[166] See also Annewies van den Hoek, "Clement of Alexandria on Martyrdom," *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993): 324–41.

[167] Cf. Paul Parvis, "Justin, Philosopher, and Martyr," in *Justin Martyr and his Worlds* (eds., Sara Parvis and Paul Parvis; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 22–37; Paul Keresztes, "Law and Arbitrariness in the Persecution of the Christians and Justin's First Apology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 18 (1964): 204–214.

[168] Athenagoras, *Plea for the Christians* 21.

[169] Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 191–96; see also Candida Moss, "The Discourse of Voluntary Martyrdom: Ancient and Modern," *Church History* 81 (2012): 531–51.

[170] G. E. M. De Ste Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," 22.

[171] See William Tabbernee, "Early Montanism and Voluntary Martyrdom," *Colloquium* 17 (1985): 33–44; G. E. M. De Ste Croix, "Voluntary Martyrdom in the Early Church," in *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy* (eds., Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 153–200.

[172] Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity*, 53, borrowing from De Ste Croix, "Aspects of the Great Persecution," 65.

[173] Tertullian, *To Scapula* 5.

[174] Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 3.

[175] On suicide and martyrdom, see Nils Arne Pedersen, "'A Prohibition So Divine': The Origins of the Christian Ban on Suicide," in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (eds., Jakob Engberg, et al.; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 139–203.

[176] The *sacrificati* were those who sacrificed and the *libellatici* were those who had purchased a certificate (*libellum*).

[177] Cyprian, *On the Lapsed*, 3.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.41.

[180] *Letter of Lyons* 5.1.11; in Musurillo, *Early Christian Martyrs*, 65.
[181] Cyprian, *On the Lapsed* 8–9.
[182] Eusebius, *Martyrs of Palestine* 1; in Stark, *Triumph of Christianity*, 147.
[183] W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).
[184] See Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 222; Albert Ehrhard, *Die Kirche der Märtyre* (Münich: Kösel & Pustet, 1932).
[185] Hans von Campenhausen, *Die Idee des Martyriums in der alten Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936); Theofried Baumeister, *Die Anfänge der Theologie des Martyriums* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1980); Theofried Baumeister, *Genese und Entfaltung der altikirchlichen Theologie des Martyriums* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991); Christel Butterweck, *"Martyriumssucht" in der alten Kirche?: Studien zur Darstellung und Deutung frühchristlicher Martyrien* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995); Paul Middleton, "The Theology of Martyrdom in Early Christianity," in *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 57–83. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.4–5; in *ANF* 2:412.
[186] Norbert Brox, *Zeuge und Märtyrer: Untersuchungen zur frühchristlichen Zeugnis-Terminologie* (Münich: Kösel, 1961); Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "Martyr—Martyrium: Quelques observations à propos d'un christianisme sémantique," in *Polycarpiana: Studies on Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 105–111.
[187] Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; John 20:18–19. See Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "Example and Discipleship: Some Comments on the Biblical Background of the Early Christian Theology of Martyrdom," in *Polycarpiana: Studies on Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 221–27.
[188] Paul Middleton, *Martyrdom*, 57–76. Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (London: T & T Clark, 2006).
[189] Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Martyr Passions and Hagiography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (eds., Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 606.
[190] See Michael Long (ed.), *Christian Peace and Nonviolence* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 15–38.
[191] Harvey, "Martyr Passions and Hagiography," 616.
[192] Eusebius, *Martyrs of Palestine*; in Stark, *Triumph of Christianity*, 152.
[193] Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 174.
[194] Ivo Lesbaupin, *Blessed Are the Persecuted: Christian Life in the Roman Empire, A.D. 64–313* (trans. Robert R. Barr; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987).
[195] Aideen M. Hartney, *Gruesome Deaths and Celibate Lives: Christian Martyrs and Ascetics* (Bristol: Phoenix, 2004).
[196] Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers* (New York: Paulist, 1985), 133; cf. Jerome, *On the Persecution of Christians*; Sulpicius Severus, *Epistles* 2.
[197] See Tripp York, "Early Church Martyrdom: Witnessing For or Against the Empire?" in Michael Budde and Karen Scott, *Witness of the Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 29–34.
[198] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 19.2; Tertullian, *On Baptism* 16; Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 6.
[199] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 18–19; Tertullian, *The Chaplet* 3; Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 15; *Martyrdom of Pionius* 2; see A. Stuiber, "Geburtstag," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 9 (1973), 217–43.
[200] Cf. Phil 1:29. See Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "Martyrdom as a Gift in Early Christianity," in *Polycarpiana: Studies on Martyrdom and Persecution in Early Christianity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 229–35.
[201] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 20.1. See also *Acts of Cyprian* 2.1; Pseudo-Cyprian, *Glory to Martyrdom* 23; Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel* 3.26.
[202] Candida Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[203] Harvey, "Martyr Passions and Hagiography," 614.
[204] William Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981).
[205] Marc Lods, *Confesseurs et martyrs: successeurs des prophètes dans l'Église des trois premiers siècles* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1958).
[206] Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity*, 68.
[207] Rex Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions": Evidence for Montanism in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).
[208] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14.2; *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* 15; Josef Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997), 325–78.
[209] Cyprian, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 13; in *ANF* 5:507.
[210] See Rev 2:10; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17.1; 19.2; Arthur Droge, "The Crown of Immortality: Toward a Redescription of Christian Martyrdom," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (ed., John Collins and Michael Fishbane [Albany: SUNY Press, 1995], 155–70).
[211] On the "rational" nature of the motivations toward martyrdom, see Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 163–89.
[212] Thayer, Review of *The Myth of Persecution*, 82.
[213] Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 11.
[214] Rom 12:14–21; L. Arik Greenberg, *"My Share of God's Reward": Exploring the Roles and Formulations of the After-*

life in Early Christian Martyrdom (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).
[215] Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 7; in ANF 3:639.
[216] Harvey, "Martyr Passions and Hagiography," 607.
[217] Candida Moss, "The Myths Behind the Age of the Martyrs," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (March 1, 2013): B12.
[218] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 10.1; in Burton Scott Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934).
[219] The distinction between confessors and martyrs is not air-tight in early Christian literature. See York, "Early Church Martyrdom," 24–29.
[220] Tertullian, *On Modesty* 22; in *ANF* 4:100.
[221] See Friedrich Augar, *Die Frau im römischen Christenprocess* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905); Frederick Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution in Developing the Priestly Authority of Women in Early Christianity: A Case Study of Montanism," *Church History* 49 (1980): 251–62; W. H. C. Frend, "Blandina and Perpetua: Two Early Christian Heroines," in *Women in Early Christianity* (ed., David Scholer; New York: Garland, 1993), 87–97; Francine Cardman, "Acts of the Women Martyrs," in *Women in Early Christianity* (ed., David Scholer; New York: Garland, 1993), 98–104;Christine Trevett, *Montanism, Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Arthur Frederick Ide, *Martyrdom of Women* (Las Colinas: Tangelwüld, 1998); Gail Streete, "Buying the Stairway to Heaven: Perpetua and Thecla as Early Christian Heroines," in *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha* (eds., Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 186–205; Gail Streete, *Redeemed Bodies: Women Martyrs in Early Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).
[222] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.56; in Stark, *Triumph of Christianity*, 140.
[223] Rowan Williams, "Troubled Breasts: The Holy Body in Hagiography," in *Portraits of Spiritual Authority* (eds., Jan Willem Drijvers and John Watt; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 63–78; Brent Shaw, "Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 533–63; Patricia Cox Miller, "Visceral Seeing: The Holy Body in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (2004): 391–411.
[224] See Gail Streete, "Of Martyrs and Men: Perpetua, Thecla, and the Ambiguity of Female Heroism in Early Christianity," in *The Subjective Eye: Essays in in Culture, Religion, and Gender* (ed., Richard Valantasis; Eugene: Pickwick, 2006), 254–64; Judith Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the Passion of Perpetua," in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (eds., Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 313–32; L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "Gender-bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Texts," in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (eds., Jakob Engberg, et al.; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 225–56.
[225] See Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Objects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
[226] See Gail Streete, "The Power of Bodies," in *Redeemed Bodies: Women Martyrs in Early Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 1–24.
[227] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (London: SCM, 1981), 182.
[228] Eusebius, *The Martyrs of Palestine* 2; in Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 165.
[229] Brown, *Cult of the Saints*; Stephen Wilson, *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Vasiliki Limberis, *Architects of Piety: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Cult of the Martyrs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[230] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 446; cf. Nicola Denzey-Lewis, *The Bone Gatherers* (Boston: Beacon, 2008).
[231] Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 8.6.7.
[232] See Helen Rhee, "Persecution, Martyrdom, and Christian Self-Definition in the Early Church," in *The Suffering Body: Responding to the Persecution of Christians* (ed., Harold Hunter and Cecil Robeck; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006); Michael Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity* (London: T & T Clark, 2010); cf. Donald Riddle, *The Martyrs: A Study in Social Control* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931).
[233] Hill, *Christianity*, 75.
[234] Kate Cooper, *The Roman Martyrs and the Politics of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Elizabeth Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Johan Leemans, *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006).
[235] See Gerald Bonner, "Martyrdom: Its Place in the Church," *Sobornist* 5 (1983): 6–21.
[236] *Testament of Our Lord* 1.36.
[237] Henri-François Secrétan, *La propagande chrétienne et les persécutions* (Paris: Payot, 1914).
[238] Acts 8–4; HCSB.
[239] Tertullian, *To Scapula* 5; in *ANF* 3:107–108.
[240] Tertullian, *Apology* 50.13; in *ANF* 3:55.
[241] Justin Martyr, *Second Apology* 12.
[242] Jakob Engberg, "Martyrdom and Persecution—Pagan Perspectives on the Prosecution and Execution of Christians

c. 110–210 AD," in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (eds., Jakob Engberg, et al.; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 93–117.

[243] Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity*, 81.

[244] Thayer, Review of *The Myth of Persecution*, 83.

[245] Moss, "Myths behind the Age of the Martyrs."

[246] Some reviewers have been severe in this critique: "While conservative Christian rhetoric is sometimes guilty of excesses, this book swings hard in the opposite direction, revising history and denying much of the evidence for early Christian persecution" (Croy, Review of The Myth of Persecution).

[247] Consider the cautions against an "us-vs-them" mentality, resentment, bitterness, and lack of self-critique, as found in a recent discussion of the maltreatment of Christians in contemporary India (K. V. Georgekutty and R. H. Lesser, *A Grain of Wheat* [Delhi: ISPCK, 2006], 77).

[248] Thayer, Review of *The Myth of Persecution*, 83.

[249] Tertullian, *To Scapula* 2; in Rudolph Arbesmann, *et al*., *Tertullian: Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix: Octavius* (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1950); see also Tertullian, *Apology* 28.

[250] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 5.13–20; see Paul Hartog, "Religious Liberty and the Early Church," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 17 (2012): 63–78.

[251] Tertullian, *Apology* 24.

[252] For the sake of the present article, one example will do: E. Gregory Wallace, "Justifying Religious Freedom: The Western Tradition," *Penn State Law Review* 114 (2009): 502–504.

[253] I wish to express thanks for a Lynn E. Mays research grant to investigate the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Tertullian's discussions of religious liberty, especially among early Baptists.

[254] Robert Wilken, "Christianity and Freedom: Historical Perspectives," presentation at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs, Georgetown University, December 14, 2012. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RLzlW4llu8.

[255] Ex 22:21; 23:9; Deut 10:19

[256] As quoted in Wilken, "Christianity and Freedom."

[257] See Moss, *Myth of Persecution*, 244; H. A. Drake, "Lambs into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance," *Past and Present* 153 (1996), 3–36; Michael Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[258] Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100–400)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2008); H. A. Drake, "Intolerance, Religious Violence and Political Legitimacy in Late Antiquity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79 (2011), 193–235.

"Patiently to Suffer for Christ's Sake": Hercules Collins as an Exemplar of Baptists During the Great Persecution (1660-1688)[1]

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In 1682, in a work provocatively titled, *Some Reasons for Separation From the Communion of the Church of England*, London Baptist pastor Hercules Collins declared to the state church, "If you do persecute us for our Conscience, I hope God will give us that Grace which may inable us patiently to suffer for Christ's sake."[2] Apparently God granted this desire for John Piggott, in his funeral sermon for Collins, affirmed that he "continued faithful to the last. He was not shock'd by the Fury of Persecutors, tho he suffer'd Imprisonment for the Name of Christ."[3] In fact, Collins was imprisoned at

least twice for his principled commitment to the idea of a believer's church during the period labeled in a recent work by Raymond Brown as a "Period of Repression" for English nonconformity.[4] During this period all Dissenters, including the Baptists, were persecuted.[5] As a result a rich body of literature was produced that reflects a vibrant spirituality of persecution and suffering for the sake of the gospel. As Brown has observed, new forms of communication were opened up to those imprisoned for the gospel: "The writing of books, pamphlets, and collections of letters for distribution in printed form extended the ministry of those who had preached earlier at the cost of their freedom but were now 'silenced' prisoners."[6] One such prisoner who made use of his time in prison to expand his ministry was Hercules Collins.[7] His prison writings are characterized by confidence in the sovereign providence of God, thankfulness for both physical and spiritual blessings, reflection upon the sufficiency of Christ, and a certain expectation of a future deliverance and reward.

Historical Background

Although Charles II had promised religious toleration when he returned to the throne following the Commonwealth Protectorate of the Cromwells, hopes for such were short-lived among the dissenters. One thing is certain, as Richard L. Greaves has observed in his treatment of dissent in the years 1660–1663: "The return of the monarch in 1660 brought no cessation of revolutionary thinking or acting."[8] It is unknown for certain whether Charles II actually had any intention of keeping his promise of religious liberty. Tim Harris, in a recent study of Charles II, argues that the king was caught in the middle of a "no-win situation" where he was forced "to rule over a divided people"—some of whom desired more toleration and some of whom desired less.[9] Michael R. Watts believes that Charles II had a "real desire for religious toleration."[10] His subsequent actions would seem to call this assessment into question. Between 1661 and 1665 Parliament passed a series of laws known as the Clarendon Code which were designed to enforce conformity to the worship of the Church of England. The Corporation Act of 1661 required that a person had to have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the Church of England within the past year to be eligible for election to any government office. Eligible persons were also required to take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to the king of England. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 resulted in the ejection of approximately two thousand Puritan ministers from their pulpits since it required complete subscription to *The Book of Common Prayer*. Most Puritan ministers resigned rather than conform to

these demands. The Conventicle Act of 1664 forbade the assembling of five or more persons for religious worship other than in the Church of England. This, in essence, outlawed dissenting churches. The Five-Mile Act of 1665 forbade any nonconforming preacher or teacher to come within five miles of a city where he had previously served as a minister or any incorporated town. Each of these acts were aimed at stamping out both dissenters and Catholics. Baptists were particularly hit hard by these laws since they made their conscientious worship of God illegal.[11]

In May of 1670 a second Conventicle Act was enacted by Parliament to replace the recently expired Act of 1664. In this version of the law fines were reduced for worshippers to five shillings for the first offense and ten shillings for each subsequent offense. The fines for the preachers and owners of the meeting places, however, were increased to twenty pounds for the first offense and forty pounds for subsequent offences. To secure these funds the personal property of the guilty parties could be seized and sold, and if that did not satisfy the debt the attenders of the conventicle could be forced to pay the fines.[12] Motivation was provided to ensure that the Act would be enforced. Informers would be paid a full one-third of the fines collected and magistrates who failed to enforce the law could be fined one hundred pounds.[13] Initially, nonconformists continued to meet in large numbers in London.[14] Soon, however, the Lord Mayor began to crack down by calling out trained bands to search out and suppress the illegal meetings. Sir Samuel Stirling, Lord Mayor of London in 1670, defended his use of force before Parliament in a case heard on November 21, 1671.[15] Stirling argued that his action was necessary to secure the peace in a time of great danger since on one Sunday in London there were "at least 12,000 people assembled at the several meeting places contrary to the act."[16] Ironically, this crackdown by the government during this period resulted in driving more people to meeting in secret. This, in turn, had the effect of increasing suspicion by the government.[17] In response, the government widely employed its system of espionage developed during the British Civil Wars.[18] Several well-known London Puritan ministers were arrested in the weeks following the passage of the second Conventicle Act including Thomas Manton, Richard Baxter, John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, along with Particular Baptists such as William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys and Edward Harrison.[19] Hercules Collins was also among those arrested at this time.

Collins' First Imprisonment

Collins was arrested with thirteen others, including Tobias Wells[20] and

Richard Blunt[21] in June of 1670, for assembling unlawfully "at a conventicle & other misdemeanours."[22] This was apparently a Baptist meeting, given that out of the fourteen total names, three of the four names that remain legible on the document are the names of known Baptists. Collins was sent to the Nova Prisona,[23] but apparently was held for less than two months since there is no record of him at the next court date on August 29, 1670.[24] During this brief experience with persecution, however, Collins would learn many valuable lessons. Nearly three decades later, Collins would declare that "Believers are taught in the School of Affliction, that something is to be learned there, which is not ordinarily learned by other ways."[25] During these times of trials, truths read in books or heard in sermons are learned more thoroughly because "they have learned that by the Rod which they never learn'd before."[26] In his funeral sermon for Collins, Piggott reminded his auditors of how exemplary their pastor had submitted to his trials, which would have included this first imprisonment, and how he "was always learning from the Discipline of the Rod."[27] Collins was clearly undaunted by the early challenges which he experienced as a young man. His ministry over the next two decades would be marked by his faithful endurance of persecution.

Collins' Second Imprisonment

In October of 1677, John Owen voiced his own expectation of a coming period of persecution in a sermon on Psalm 90:11: "I am persuaded, Brethren, the day is coming, the day is nowe at hand, wherein you will stand in need of all the Experiences that ever you had of the Presence of God with you, and his Protection of you."[28] Indeed, in 1677 the Lord Mayor of London had received instructions to crackdown on illegal conventicles.[29] By 1681 this effort to suppress the illegal religious gatherings of dissenters intensified.[30] Spies and informers were regularly employed by the government and given large sums of money for the discovery of dissenting congregations.[31] A group of thugs known as the "Hilton Gang" repeatedly "harassed ... the Baptists in Gravel Lane."[32] During this period, which encompassed the larger part of the first half of Collins' ministry in Wapping, the congregation had to meet in secret for fear of persecution. Thomas Crosby recorded that during this period "*seven* justices, (among whom were Sir *William Smith*, and justice *Bury* and *Brown*) came in their coaches, with a *posse* of people to break up the meeting, pulpit, pews and windows" of Collins' meeting house.[33] Around this same time, on November 8, 1682, Collins' own home was apparently broken into and his possessions seized to pay some alleged fine.[34] Four months later, on March 10, 1683, Collins was indicted for his

failure to attend the local parish church.[35] The court record indicates that Collins failed to appear in court on that day to answer for the charges. Just over two months later, however, Roger Morrice, the Puritan chronicler of London happenings in the late-seventeenth century, recorded that a "Mr. Collins Jun*ior* the Anabaptist" was taken during a Lord's Day meeting and committed to prison.[36] The official charges filed against Collins were for his violation of the Five Mile Act (1665), or Oxford Act.[37] He would remain imprisoned for over a year in the Newgate Prison.[38]

Ironically, it might have been the 1682 volume, in which Collins argued for separatism from the Church of England and in which he expressed his willingness to suffer for his convictions, which may have made Collins a target for persecution in 1683. In this work, which was framed in terms of a hypothetical conversation between a Conformist and a Non-Conformist, Collins asserted the historic Baptist distinctive of religious liberty by stating that "none should be compelled to worship God by a temporal Sword, but such as come willingly, and none can worship God to acceptance but such."[39] For this principle, which preserves the idea of freedom of worship, Baptists like Hercules Collins were willing to risk their health, safety, and freedom.

Within a year of having published *Some Reasons for Separation*, Collins was arrested and by the next year imprisoned for exercising his stand for religious liberty. The official charge against him was "for not going to church, chapel, or any other usual place of common prayer."[40] In other words, he was arrested for not attending the parish church. According to Tim Harris, during the 1680s nearly 4,000 different dissenters were arrested for attending conventicles in and around London, including several leading Baptists such as Thomas Plant, Hanserd Knollys, and Vavasor Powell.[41] To illustrate how pervasive the persecution of dissenters was in this period, even the publisher George Larkin, who published Collins' *A Voice from Prison* and a man known for his publication of dissenting literature,[42] was arrested in April of 1684 "for Printing a seditious Paper, called, *Shall I, Shall I, No, No*." For his crime, Larkin was "sentenced to pay a Fine of 20 l. stand in the Pillory, and find Sureties for his Good Behaviour a Twelve Month."[43] Likewise, the Irish Baptist Thomas Delaune was imprisoned for his publication of *A Plea for the Nonconformists* in November of 1683.[44] According to a handwritten note in the margin of the first page of his *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, Delaune, along with his wife and two young children, died in the Newgate Prison fifteen months later, probably in February of 1685.[45]

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the challenges of the period, this time

bore rich fruit for it was while Collins was in the infamous Newgate Prison that he penned two of the most devotional of his twelve writings: *A Voice from the Prison* and *Counsel for the Living, Occasioned from the Dead*.[46]

Counsel for the Living

Though there is no indication of which was published first, the first work to be considered in this essay is *Counsel for the Living, Occasioned from the Dead*. This work, whose primary audience was Collins' fellow prisoners, was a discourse on Job 3:17-18. This discourse was written as a response to the deaths of two of Collins' fellow prisoners at Newgate: Francis Bampfield[47] and Zachariah Ralphson.[48] Both apparently died in early 1684 while Collins was also imprisoned.[49] The scriptural text that formed the basis for the address states regarding the eternal state, "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor" (AV). Collins summarized these verses as consisting of three components: "first the Subjects; which are *Oppressors and Oppressed*: Secondly, The Predicate, *They shall Rest*: Thirdly, the *Receptacle*, or place of Rest, that's the *Grave*."[50] Collins focused on two aspects of "counsel" from Job 3:17-18, namely the future judgment of the persecutors and the corresponding relief of the persecuted. Collins believed that both of the ideas present in these verses were pertinent for his times. First, the persecuted needed to be encouraged by the fact that one day the persecutors would be stopped and they would experience relief, if not in this life, then in the life to come. Second, persecutors needed to realize that they would one day be judged for their mistreatment of the people of God. Collins' primary purpose in this discourse, however, was to provide comfort to persecuted Christians. This is seen in that at the end of the book he exhorts his readers to follow the apostle Paul's advice at the close of his discourse on the resurrection of saints in 1 Thessalonians 4 to "Comfort one another with these words." Collins concluded his *Counsel for the Living* by exhorting his readers with these words: "While Sin, Satan, and an Unkind World is Discomforting you, do you in a lively Hope of the Resurrection of the Body, the coming of Christ, your Meeting of him, and continuing with him, cheer up and Comfort one another with these things."[51]

Before turning to offer comfort for the persecuted, Collins first indicted their persecutors as godless men. Collins characterized the persecutors of Christians as wicked men who "are troublers of the *Church*." As such they are "Strangers to Gospel Principles, to a Gospel Spirit, and Gospel Teachings."[52] Collins concluded that "a persecuting spirit is not of a Gospel-com-

plexion."[53] Judgment is coming for these evil-doers who "shall be made to confess their wickedness in not setting Gods People at liberty to Worship him; they shall fall into mischief, and be silent in darkness, and turned into Hell, with Nations which forget *God*."[54] Note that the "liberty to Worship him" seems to be the main issue at stake for Collins. Further, Collins excoriated the persecutors elsewhere for arresting elderly men, "Men of threescore, fourscore Years of Age, hurried to Prison for nothing else but for worshipping their *God*."[55] This seems to have especially raised the ire of Collins since Bampfield, one of the men whose death occasioned this sermon, was almost seventy when arrested for what would prove to be the final time.[56]

Saints, however, would be given rest. "The time is coming," Collins asserted, when "God hath promised we shall no more hear the voice of the Oppressor."[57] The saints "shall know no more Apprehendings . . . nor hear no more of, Take him Jaylor, keep him until he be cleared by due course of Law; we shall have no more Bolts nor Bars then on us, no more looking for the Keeper then, nor speaking to Friends through Iron-grates."[58] The "rest" referred to in Job 3:17-18 was a "Rest in Sleep, being then out of all sense of care, trouble, pain, and all manner of distraction, so in like manner shall we be in the Grave."[59] This was the rest that Bampfield and Ralphson had attained. However, this was not the only relief from persecution that Collins anticipated. His belief in the sovereign providence of God caused him to declare, "We shall none of us stay a night beyond God's determination."[60] Therefore, prisoners could be content with their circumstances "though limited to one Room, which was our Kitchin, our Cellar, our Lodging-Room, our Parlour."[61] Like the apostle Paul, these persecuted believers had learned to be content in "every State."[62] These prisoners believed "that place is best" where their Father had willed them to be.[63] Having their daily bread they confessed that "God is as good in Prison as out."[64] Collins therefore exhorted his readers that God's promises were not just to be read, but their truths trusted and experienced. "Beloved, it is one thing to Read the Promises, another thing to trust upon God by them, and experience the truth of them."[65] These prisoners had experienced the promised presence and blessing of God in the prison cell and Collins wanted to exhort other persecuted Christians to trust in the promises of their loving Father. Collins reminded his readers that,

> God's Providential Dealings with his people in this world, is like Chequerwork, there is the dark, as well as the light side of Providence, the most Refin'd and best State and Condition of the best Saints are mixed here; if

> we have some peace, we have some trouble; if we have large Comforts one day, we may expect a great degree of trouble another; least we should be exalted above measure, we must have a thorn in the flesh now and then.[66]

Trusting God's providence, Collins could confidently declare, "let men and Devils do their worst, God will in his own time loose the Prisoners."[67]

Not only were Collins and his fellow-persecuted brothers content with their situation because of God's providence, they were also deeply thankful for God's physical and spiritual blessings while jailed. Collins called these blessings "Prison-comforts."[68] They blessed God for his grace that enabled them to have "as much peace and satisfaction" in their one-room prison cell as when they had complete liberty to stroll through their houses, gardens, and the homes of friends.[69] They were also thankful for God's daily physical provision for them. "Blessed be God we have bread for the day; as the day so our strength has been."[70] These prisoners, however, were most grateful for their spiritual blessings. Chief among these blessings was the presence of Christ. Of his persecuted brothers Collins could write, "How much of the Presence of Christ have they had to inable them to bear the Cross quietly, patiently, contentedly."[71] These saints also rejoiced that though they were bound by physical shackles, they had been set free from the bondage of sin and death. "Again, let us bless God, though we are in the Prison of man, yet that we are delivered from the Spiritual prison of Sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the Children of God, and out of the Kingdom of darkness into the glorious light of the Gospel."[72] They realized that "the darkness of a Material Prison is nothing to the darkness of a Spiritual one." In this spiritual freedom believers "may have Liberty in Bonds, light in Darkness, Peace in Trouble."[73] It was the spiritual blessings that enabled the suffering servants of Christ to endure their trials. Collins explained how he and his fellow prisoners had personally experienced the soul-strengthening power of spiritual fellowship with God the Father. "Communion with God by the Spirit is a good Cordial to keep up the heart from fainting in this valley of tears, until we come to our Mount of Joy, where there is no limits of Joy and Blessedness."[74]

A Voice from the Prison

A second work that Hercules Collins published from his prison cell was *A Voice from the Prison*. This work was an extended meditation on Revelation 3:11, where Christ admonishes the church of Philadelphia with the words, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (KJV). Collins addressed this sermon "To the Church of God, for-

merly Meeting in Old-Gravel-Lane Wapping, and all who were Strangers and Foreigners, but now Fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God." Collins drew from at least 213 passages of Scripture in his sermon, to encourage his congregation to stand firm in the face of persecution.[75] Collins urged his besieged flock to not abandon the cause of Christ. "*Hold fast what thou hast*, when Satan would pull thy souls good from thee; when Relations, Husband, Wife, Children call upon you, and perswade you because of danger to cease from the work of the Lord, then hold fast."[76] Collins offered as a motivation for holding fast to Christ and his work that the one who stood fast would hear Christ profess to the Father on the day of judgment the words,

> These are they which have continued with me in my Temptation; therefore I appoint unto you a Kingdom; therefore, because you owned me in an Evil Day.
>
> These are the Men, Woman, People, which spoke of my Testimonies before Kings, and was not ashamed when many Cried, Crucify him and his Cause; these are the souls which came forth and declared they were on the Lords Side: These are they, Father, whose Love to me many Waters nor Floods could not quench nor drown; these are they that chose me on my own termes, with the Cross as well as the Crown; these have made Choice of me with Reproaches, Imprisonments, with Fines, Confiscation of Goods, Banishment, loss of Limbs, Life, and all, they have born all, indured all for my sake, in the greatest affliction, they kept from wavering, and the more they endured and lost for my sake, the more they loved me.[77]

Just as Collins had encouraged persecuted believers in his *Counsel for the Living* not to give in because of the future rest which awaited them, so too in *A Voice from the Prison* he exhorted them to live in view of their future appearance before God's judgment seat.

Collins also drew comfort from God's sovereign providence during his imprisonment. He began his written address to his "Dearly Beloved" church by expressing his confidence that God was providentially at work in his suffering for the advancement of the gospel.

> Forasmuch as I am present depriv'd by my Bonds, of the Liberty of Preaching; I bless God I have the Advantage of Printing, being ready to serve the Interest of Christ in all Conditions to my poor Ability; and doubt not, but God and Interest are Served by my Confinement, as by Liberty: and am not without hopes that I shall preach as loudly, and as

> effectually by Imprisonment for Christ, as ever I did at Liberty; that all those who observe Gods Providential Dealings, will be able to say with me hereafter, as Holy *Paul* once said in his Bonds at *Rome*; What hath befallen me, hath tended to the furtherance of the Gospel.[78]

Like the apostle Paul in Philippians 1, Collins' belief in the providence of God caused him to have confidence that God would bring good out of his imprisonment. One of the goods that Collins believed could come out of the sufferings of the Baptists was that some of their adversaries might be convinced of the truth when they saw by how the Baptists patiently endured when persecuted. He argued that since "Actions are more Influential then words, and more Demonstrative of the Truth and Reality of a Person or Cause" and "as a man shall be better believed for his good works, then good words," suffering patiently would convince their persecutors.[79] Collins therefore encouraged his congregation,

> so if we would Manifest our Integrity under a Profession, nothing will do it better then your Suffering, . . . if by God called unto it; for, as a Tree is known by his fruit, so is a Christian by a Patient Wearing Christs Cross, this will and hath Convinced an Adversary, when a bare Profession will not.[80]

In a similar manner, in *Counsel for the Living*, Collins had maintained that God could "make people grow so much the more as their afflictions abound" for "thinking people will conclude they must be the Lords, that suffer patiently under such apparent wrong."[81] Therefore, Collins encouraged his fellow believers to "see how our Churches fill, come let us go on, we have good success, we shall bring them all home at last."[82] This proved to be true for Collins and his congregation: by the time of his death in 1702, as Michael Haykin has observed, Collins "was probably preaching to a congregation of roughly 700 people, which would have made his congregation one of the largest Calvinistic Baptist works in the city."[83]

Collins also exhorted his readers to persevere for God has promised to reward the overcomers. He then draws on all the promises made by Christ in Revelation 2 and 3 to those who persevere through persecution. The overcomers shall "eat of the Tree in the midst of the Paradice of God"; they shall "not be hurt of the Second Death" and shall "have the hidden Manna"; "the white Stone, and a New name" will be theirs; they shall "have power over the nations, and rule them with a Rod of Iron"; and they shall be "clothed in white Rayment." Their "name shall not be blotted out of the Book of Life,

but made a Pillar in the Temple of God, and he shall go out no more." Finally, those who overcome "shall sit with Christ on his Throne, as he overcame and sat down with the Father on his Throne."[84] These shall receive "a Crown not of Gold, but Glory, not fading but eternal."[85]

Collins knew that his readers would be able to "hold fast" if they were fully satisfied with Christ. As he put it in typical pithy Puritan fashion: "It is the Christ-finding Soul which is the Life-finding Soul."[86] Collins explained that when it is said in Scripture, "Christ is all, and in all," this means that, for the believer, "he is all, because all good is Comprehended in him, he is all in all; all in the Fullness of all, for if we have all Earthly Injoyments, and have not him, we have nothing comparatively."[87] However to have Christ was to "have all Equivalently and comprehensively."[88] Therefore, Collins warned that it was important to "hold fast this Christ." The world, he declared, would try to sink believer if he or she held it too closely to his or her heart. So then, he urged his readers: "Cast away all, shake off all, rather then lose a Christ."[89] Thus, "will a Believing Soul suffer the Loss of all, so he may win Christ; none but Christ, saith an illuminated Believer."[90] Collins seemed to speak on behalf of the "illuminated Believer" as he thus extolled how this view of the sufficiency of Christ enabled the Christian to endure hardships in this life:

> There are many good Objects in Heaven and Earth besides thee, there are Angels in Heaven, and Saints on Earth: But, what are these to thee? Heaven without thy Presence, would be no Heaven to me; a Pallace with thee, a Crown without thee, cannot satisfie me; but with thee I can be content, though in a poor Cottage with thee I am at Liberty in Bonds; Peace and Trouble; if I have thy Smiles, I can bear the worlds frowns; if I have Spiritual Liberty in my Soul, that I can ascend to thee by Faith, and have Communion with thee, thou shalt chuse my Portion for me in this World.[91]

Some, however, were apparently being tempted to abandon the all-sufficient Christ for a respite from persecution. Collins warned that "without enduring to the End, all your Profession, your many years Prayers, all your Tears will be lost."[92] Those who turned aside "mayst never more be called to be a witness for Christ." In fact, "some have thought God hath not Lov'd them, because he hath not Exercised them this way."[93] Elsewhere in this prison epistle, Collins soberly charged those who had been enabled by God's grace to persevere not to boast in their state: "To all such as have not fallen in the Storm, who have kept their garments from Defiling, let God have the glory; thou standest by

Faith, which God is Author of, be not High-minded but fear; glory not secretly, Rejoice not in thy Brothers fall."[94] For those who had fallen, Collins offers a word of hope. "The Lord hath promised he will not let his Anger fall upon you, ... therefore, Return, Return, ... that we may look upon thee with Joy and Delight, as the Angels in Heaven do rejoice at the Returning of a Soul to God.[95] Collins further exhorted his readers who had gone back on their profession to return to the arms of a merciful God: "Return to thy God from whom thou hast revolted, who stands with open Arms to receive you; return to the Church again, whom thou hast made sad by thy departing from the Truth, and humble thy self to God and them, and they will cheerfully receive thee into their fellowship."[96]

Collins was sure that only those believers who had been mortifying sin daily in their lives would be enabled to endure persecution. "Let not that Man think to wear the Cross of Persecution, that doth not first wear the Cross of Mortification."[97] Collins further developed this concept.

> We should inure our selves to wear the Publick Cross, by wearing it first more privately in our Houses, in our Families, in our Shops and Trades: For let not that Person think he will ever be able to part with his Houses, Lands, Liberties, for the Lord Jesus Christ, that cannot first part with a secret lust: But if we have Grace enough, to wear daily the Cross of Mortification of the old Man; you need not fear but he that giveth Grace to do the greater, will give Grace to doe the lesser; for I look upon the subduing of Corruption, a greater thing then enduring Persecution; though neither can be done as it ought, without help from Heaven.[98]

Those who, by the grace of God, were regularly putting to death their sins would experience an easier path in enduring physical persecution. Thus, Collins was encouraging personal holiness as the best means to prepare for persecution for the cause of Christ. Without this spiritual practice, professing believers would not be able to withstand the temptation to deny Christ in the face of persecution.

Ever the true pastor, Collins closed what amounted to a sermon from prison with a series of prayers to God. First, Collins prayed that God would purge the church of its impurities which he saw as a cause for their persecution. "God is contending with us: Let us all Banish and Expel the Achan out of our Hearts, out of our Churches, and shew our selves Zealous against Sin."[99] Then, Collins asked God that his dear Son's kingdom might come. "We should be willing to be Footstools, so Christ thereby might get upon

his Throne."[100]

Third, Collins prayed for "a universal spreading of the Gospel" in order that "a greater degree of Knowledge and Holiness will be in the World then ever."[101] This is a fascinating request, as it is often said that the seventeenth-century Puritans and Baptists were not missions-minded. For example, David Bebbington, the preeminent historian of Evangelicalism, argues that the emphasis on evangelism and missions is a post-Enlightenment development. He claims, "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was rare to find a Protestant divine commending the spread of the gospel beyond the bounds of Christendom."[102] Although Bebbington acknowledges some "unusual" exceptions,[103] he believes that because the seventeenth-century Calvinists lacked assurance they were paralyzed by self-introspection that hindered an evangelistic focus.[104] Michael Haykin, in an article in a book interacting with Bebbington's influential work, has questioned whether missionary zeal was as rare in the seventeenth century as Bebbington had indicated.[105] Clearly, Collins was not devoid of a missionary passion, but was he merely an isolated exception? One example will suffice to demonstrate that Collins' prayer for a spread of the gospel was not unique. In a hymn composed by a contemporary of Collins, the seventeenth-century London Baptist pastor Benjamin Keach, one finds a remarkable plea for the nations.[106] Keach voices a desire for the gospel to shine to France, "dark *Spain*," Italy, Asia, Africa, Egypt, Assyria, China, East India, those "Who live in wild *America*," and "poor *Israel*."[107] This prayer, which was published over one hundred years prior to the launch of the modern missionary movement, demonstrates that there is more continuity between Puritanism and Evangelicalism than is acknowledged by Bebbington.

Finally, Collins prayed for deliverance from the persecution. "We have no might, but our Eyes are upon thee. ... Appear in thy strength, that the Kingdoms of the World may know that thou art God; and that there is none besides thee."[108] But till then, Collins concluded, "let our Faith and Patience be lengthned out, to the coming of the Lord; till Time swallowed up in Eternity; Finite, in Infinite, Hope, in Vision; and Faith in Fruition; when God shall be the matter of our Happiness; when Fulness shall be the measure of our Happiness, and Eternity the Duration."[109]

The Rise of Toleration

Richard L. Greaves notes that the rate of persecution began to decline in 1686, with the number of Quakers prosecuted dropping from 209 in 1685 to eighty-three in 1686.[110] Although there were exceptions to this general trend, by the end of 1686 nonconformists could conduct public meetings after having ap-

plied for licenses.[111] In April of 1687, James II issued a Declaration of Indulgence which suspended both the penal laws and the Test Acts.[112] Certainly the Wapping congregation felt more secure around this time since by June of 1687 they were attempting to raise one hundred pounds to complete an already begun "new meeting house."[113] By the next month they had agreed to add a seven-by eight-foot brick porch on the north side of the meeting house that was still under construction.[114] Two weeks later the church scheduled their first meeting in the new building to be held on August 7, 1687.[115] The novelty of the new building coupled with the lessened risk of persecution must have resulted in much larger crowds than initially anticipated when the building was built. Less than two months after the church began meeting in their new facility an effort was made to raise additional funds "towards the building of Gallerys & a withdrawinge roome."[116] The building must have eventually proven to be sufficient as the later pastor and author of the church's three-hundred anniversary history Ernest Kevan observed that the church "worshipped in this sanctuary for forty-three years."[117] It is important to note that all this activity came before official toleration was granted.

Official toleration, however, would come only with the so-called Glorious Revolution that is linked with the accession of William of Orange (r. 1688–1702) and his wife Mary II (r. 1688–1692) to the throne of England in 1688 and the subsequent Act of Toleration passed by Parliament in 1689. This act would officially end religious persecution by the state.[118] After the Act of Toleration, dissenters began to exercise their new-found freedom to assemble publicly to great avail. In 1689, the Baptists gathered in London for their first national assembly. This group of "divers Pastors, Messengers and Ministring Brethren of the Baptized Churches" met in London from September 3-12, 1689, and claimed to represent "more than one hundred Congregations of the same Faith with Themselves." [119] The common faith which distinguished this group of churches is specified on the cover page as "the Doctrine of Personal Election, and final Perseverance."[120] This group would further identify themselves in their first meeting by adopting what would become known as the Second London Confession of Faith. Collins' name was included among the signatures of thirty-seven ministers and messengers of the Assembly who had allowed their names to be affixed "In the name and behalf of the whole Assembly."[121] Collins would remain at the Wapping Church until his death on October 4, 1702. As Piggott said in his funeral sermon five days later, Collins was "faithful to the last."[122]

[1] Portions of this article have appeared in "Baptists and 1662: The Persecution of John Norcott and Hercules Collins," which was published in *Founders Journal* 89 (Summer 2012): 34-43; and *The Andrew Fuller Center Review* 3 (Summer 2012): 17-26. Used with permission.

[2] Hercules Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation from the Communion of the Church of England, and the Unreasonableness of Persecution upon that Account* (London: John How, 1682), 20.

[3] John Piggott, *Eleven Sermons Preach'd Upon Special Occasions* (London: John Darby, 1714), 235.

[4] Raymond Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity: English Nonconformity in a Period of Repression, 1660–1689* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2012). In his chapter on the period in *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, B. R. White declared the same years to be the "Era of the Great Persecution" for Baptists. B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 95-133.

[5] In addition to Brown's more recent study, see Gerald R. Cragg, *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution 1660–1688* (Cambridge: University Press, 1957); and Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. 1, *From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 221-262.

[6] Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 335.

[7] Collins served as the third pastor of the Wapping Church first pastored by John Spilsbury. Collins' ministry in the church began in 1677. For more information on the significance of Collins, see Garry Stephen Weaver, Jr., "Hercules Collins: Orthodox, Puritan, Baptist" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013).

[8] Richard L. Greaves, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Radical Underground in Britain, 1660–1663* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3.

[9] Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 55-56.

[10] Watts, *The Dissenters*, 221-222.

[11] For a fuller description of these Acts and their impact upon Baptists, see Ernest A. Payne and Norman S. Moon, *Baptists and 1662* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1962). A more recent study is Paul S. Fiddes, "Baptists and 1662: the Effect of the Act of Uniformity on Baptists and its Ecumenical Significance for Baptists today," *Ecclesiology* 9, no. 2 (2013): 183-204. Also, see Harris, *Restoration*, 52-53.

[12] Watts, *The Dissenters*, 226-227.

[13] Ibid., 227.

[14] Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 268.

[15] *The Parliamentary Diary of Sir Edward Dering 1670–1673* (ed. Basil Duke Henning; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 4-7.

[16] Ibid., 6. For a discussion of the disputed number of conventicles in London in 1676, see Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 314-315.

[17] For a brief discussion of this development, see Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10-11.

[18] Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, 18.

[19] Austin Walker, *The Excellent Benjamin Keach* (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2004), 119.

[20] Tobias Wells, or Toby Willes, was the pastor of the Bridgewater Church in Somerset, England. He was active in the Western Association of Particular Baptists and signed the 1653 Somerset Confession of Faith. He would attend both the 1689 and 1692 meetings of the General Assembly of Baptists in London, signing the Second London Confession of Faith in 1689.

[21] Richard Blunt is an enigmatic figure in Baptist history. He figures prominently in the so-called Kiffin Manuscript that provides much of the details of the beginnings of Particular Baptists in England in the 1640s. For a detailed analysis of the evidence, see Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649* (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2006), 75-110. Blunt's presence at this conventicle nearly thirty years after his historic involvement in the re-introduction of immersion in England is significant in demonstrating the young Collins' connections with the previous generation of Baptist leaders.

[22] Sessions of the Peace Rolls for 27 June 1670 – MJ/SR/1389.

[23] New Prison. This prison, which was often used to prevent overcrowding at the Newgate Prison, was definitely in use in 1670 while the Newgate Prison was being rebuilt after the London fire of 1665. The new Newgate Prison was opened in 1672. Tim Hitchcock, Sharon Howard, and Robert Shoemaker, "Prisons and Lockups," *London Lives, 1690–1800*, http://www.londonlives.org, version, 1.1 (accessed May 30, 2012).

[24] Sessions of the Peace Book for 27 June 1670 – MJ SB/B/0026.

[25] Collins, *Three Books* (London, 1696), 37.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 237.

[28] Cited in Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 347.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 406.

[31] Ernest F. Kevan, *London's Oldest Baptist Church: Wapping 1633—Walthamstow 1933* (London: Kingsgate Press,

1933), 43.

[32] Mark Goldie, "The Hilton Gang: Terrorising Dissent in 1680s London," *History Today* 47 (1998), 28. This gang of over 40, including at least 15 women, were responsible for breaking up more than forty meeting houses. See also, John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education, 2000), 173.

[33] Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (London, 1740), 3:103. Also see Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London, 1814), 2:448-449.

[34] Roger Morrice wrote in his journal on November 16, 1682 that "Mr. Collins an Annabaptists goods were distrained on on Wednesday last They broke his doore and entred in at it." *The Entring Book of Roger Morrice 1677–1691*, vol. 2, *The Reign of Charles II 1677–1685* (ed., John Spurr; Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2007), 332. In his recent study on the persecution of dissenters, Raymond Brown identifies this Collins as Hercules. Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 57n73.

[35] *Middlesex County Records,* vol. 4, *Indictments, Recognizances, Coroners' Inquisitions-Post-Mortem, Orders, Memoranda and Certificates of Convictions of Conventiclers,* temp. *19 Charles II. to 4 James II* (London: Middlesex County Records Society, 1892), 208-209.

[36] *The Entring Book of Roger Morrice*, 369. This would have occurred on May 27, 1683. John Spurr, the volume editor, indicates in a footnote that this was William Collins, pastor of the Petty France Church. *The Entring Book of Roger Morrice*, 369 n. 3. No rationale is given. It is known that the Petty France congregation was disturbed in their worship on March 18, 1683. *Petty France Church Minute Book*, 20. However, there is an entry in the *Petty France Church Minute Book* for May 27, 1683 indicating that they had by this date already been deprived of their meeting place in Petty France with no mention of their pastor being arrested. *Petty France Church Minute Book*, 21. On the other hand, the Wapping Church's last entry for 1683 in their minute book is on May 23rd (the Wednesday before the alleged incident) and there is not another entry until August 26, 1684 shortly after Hercules Collins would have been released from prison. *WCB*, 23 May 1683 and 26 August 1684. Given the above data, it is the assumption of this author that the Collins referred to by Morrice was Hercules, not William.

[37] Referred to as such in *Wapping Church Book*, September 14, 1684.

[38] For a description of the horrors of the Newgate Prison during the seventeenth century, see Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Piety of Hercules Collins (1646/7–1702)," in *Devoted to the Service of the Temple: Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins* (eds., Michael A. G. Haykin and Steve Weaver; Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 14. For a fuller history of the prison, see Kelly Grovier, *The Gaol: The Story of Newgate—London's Most Notorious Prison* (London: John Murray, 2008).

[39] Collins, *Some Reasons for Separation*, 20.

[40] *Middlesex County Records*, 4:208-209.

[41] Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 66.

[42] For example, Larkin published the first edition of John Bunyan's autobiographical *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* in 1666. He would go on to publish six other works by Bunyan in 1688 and 1689.

[43] April 1684, trial of George Larkin (t16840409–37), *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, http://www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0 (accessed July 20, 2012).

[44] Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (London, 1739), 2:366-379.

[45] Thomas Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune, For Writing, Printing and Publishing a late Book, Called, A Plea for the Nonconformists, With some modest Reflections thereon* (London, 1684), 1. See also Watts, *The Dissenters*, 254.

[46] Hercules Collins, *A Voice from the Prison. Or, Meditations on Revelations III.XI. Tending To the Establishment of Gods Little Flock, In an Hour of Temptation* (London, 1684); and Hercules Collins, *Counsel for the Living, Occasioned from the Dead: Or, A Discourse on Job III. 17,18. Arising from the Deaths of Mr. Fran. Bampfield and Mr. Zach. Ralphson* (London: George Larkin, 1684).

[47] For biographical details on Bampfield, see Richard L. Greaves, "Making the Laws of Christ His Only Rule': Francis Bampfield, Sabbatarian Reformer," in *Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 179-210.

[48] Ralphson was the alias of Jeremiah Mardsen. For biographical details on Ralphson, see R. L. Greaves, "Marsden, (alias Ralphson), Jeremiah (1624–1684)," in *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals* (eds., Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller; Brighton, England: Harvester Press, 1984), 2:214-215.

[49] Keith Durso dates the death of Bampfield as February 16, 1684. See Keith Durso, *No Armor for the Back: Baptist Prison Writings, 1600s–1700s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 105. For a transcript of the proceedings of the trials of Ralphson and Bampfield, see *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* http://www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0 (accessed May 20, 2010), January 1684, trials of Zachariah Ralphson (t16840116–18) and Francis Bampfield (t16840116–20).

[50] Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 1-2.

[51] Ibid., 33-34.

[52] Ibid., 6-7.
[53] Ibid., 8.
[54] Ibid., 9.
[55] Ibid., 15.
[56] Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Piety of Hercules Collins," 15.
[57] Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 21.
[58] Ibid., 23.
[59] Ibid., 23.
[60] Ibid., 26.
[61] Ibid., 25.
[62] Ibid., 26. Collins is citing Philippians 4:11.
[63] Ibid., 25.
[64] Ibid., 25.
[65] Ibid., 26
[66] Ibid., 28.
[67] Ibid., 26.
[68] Ibid., 25.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 26-27.
[73] Ibid., 27-28.
[74] Ibid., 28.
[75] Durso, *No Armor for the Back*, 169.
[76] Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 4.
[77] Ibid., 5.
[78] Ibid., 1.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Collins, *Counsel for the Living*, 26.
[82] Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 23.
[83] Haykin, "The Piety of Hercules Collins," 22.
[84] Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 6.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 8.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 18.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 18-19.
[92] Ibid., 3.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., 28.
[95] Ibid., 26.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., 30.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 32.
[100] Ibid., 33.
[101] Ibid.
[102] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2005), 40.
[103] Bebbington cites Richard Baxter as "unusual among the Puritans in expressing an eagerness for the conversion of the nations." Ibid.
[104] See Ibid., 42-50.
[105] Haykin cites multiple examples demonstrating that Bebbington's case is overstated. Michael A. G. Haykin, "Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment: A Reassessment," in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (eds., Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 52-53.
[106] Benjamin Keach, *War with the Devil: Or the Young Man's Conflict with the Powers of Darkness*, 3rd ed. (London: Benjamin Harris, 1675), 124-128.

[107] Ibid., 126-128.
[108] Collins, *A Voice from the Prison*, 34.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 549.
[111] Ibid., 549-550.
[112] Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England*, 188.
[113] *Wapping Church Book*, 14 June 1687. According to Murdina MacDonald, the new meeting house was registered with the Chancellor of London on February 8, 1690. Murdina MacDonald, "London Calvinistic Baptists 1689–1727: Tensions Within a Dissenting Community Under Toleration" (D.Phil. thesis, Regent's Park College, Oxford University, 1982), 316.
[114] *Wapping Church Book*, 11 July 1687.
[115] Ibid., 26 July 1687.
[116] Ibid., 29 September 1687.
[117] Kevan, *London's Oldest Baptist Church*, 48.
[118] For a brief summary of the impact of the Act of Toleration, see James E. Bradley, "Toleration, Nonconformity, and the Unity of the Spirit: Popular Religion in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Church, Word, and Spirit: Historical and Theological Essays in Honor of Geoffrey W. Bromiley* (eds., James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 183-185.
[119] *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly Of divers Pastors, Messengers and Ministring Brethren of the Baptized Churches, met together in London, from Septemb. 3. To 12. 1689, from divers parts of England and Wales: Owning the Doctrine of Personal Election, and final Perseverance* (London, 1689), 1.
[120] Ibid.
[121] *A Confession of Faith, Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (Baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Countrey* (3rd ed.; London: S. Bridge, 1699), back cover; Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 239.
[122] Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 235.

Persecution and the New "Normal" World: "When persecuted, we endure." (1 Cor 4:12)

Benjamin Lee Hegeman

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No one saw this coming so soon or so fast. From mid-December 2013 to January 2014, various Western media outlets ran headlines and articles reporting an alarming rise in religious persecution. WSJ[1], Reuters[2], AP[3], BBC[4], Fox News[5], and CNN[6], among others, reported that Christians now rank as the most persecuted believers, the world's largest minority faith, and a religion in danger of becoming extinct in the Middle East. Minority persecution has become the "new normal" of the globalized world.

No one predicted this in 1989 when the oppressive communist regimes collapsed at the fall of the Berlin Wall. The global leaders of that era heralded a new golden era of freedom and capitalistic globalization; not of persecution. Twenty-three years later we hear an entirely different message from German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who stated openly: "Christianity is the most persecuted religion worldwide." The same was said by French President Sarkozy, lamenting that Christians face a "particularly wicked program of cleansing in the Middle East; religious cleansing."[7] Not even in 1979,

when the Iranian Shah was overthrown by the Shiite mullacracy, and when, in the same year, the Sunni mujahedeen fighters rose up to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan—and then the *Jahiliyyah*-West, i.e., the whole corrupted, rebellious world[8]–did anyone predict the scale of the coming oppression against vulnerable Christian minorities everywhere. As far as I have seen, no authoritative media or author predicted that militant Muslims would become the fiercest religious persecutors in the 21st century. Arguably the first person to warn us was Harvard political scientist, Samuel Huntington (1927–2008) whose highly controversial work, *Clash of Civilizations,* (1993) has not yet been successfully refuted.

Today this reality is beyond dispute. Persecution, and in particular Islamic persecution of Christians, is one of the most pressing issues facing the global church.[9] What Christian leaders now ask each other is, first, "Why did we not see this coming so quickly upon us?" Second, "Are there clearly known causes for this?" And finally, "Is this temporary?" These opening questions promise to take us, if we are willing to go there, into a very steep learning curve, and it is to Islamic history that we must first turn.

The Origin of Muslim Persecution of Christians

Muslim persecution of Christians today has its deepest roots in the premature death of Islam's prophet, Abdul Qasim Muhammad in A.D. 632. At the age of 62, Islam's "final prophet" unexpectedly died following a brief illness. This had a profound theological impact that reverberates to this very day. Muhammad had long taught his followers that any new "revelation" he gave which contradicted any previous revelations took precedence because it was Allah's desire to abrogate and replace the older one with the new and better one.[10] So, whatever Muhammad revealed last from Allah always eclipsed anything contrary which he may have revealed before. It was exactly while he was on war-footing with—well, frankly everyone—that Muhammad suddenly died. His forces were in the heat of a peninsular battle with all pagan Arabs, Jews, and even distant Christians. His final Surahs, *Bara'ah* (9) and *Al Maidah* (5) are therefore not only his concluding divine discourses but also the most militant revelations. He died with his sword unsheathed. Thereby inadvertently, and possibly unintentionally, Muhammad locked and enshrined all of Islamic theology in a militant posture, tragically abrogating all prior reasonable, tolerant, and peaceful revelations.[11] That nothing has been found by Muslim theologians decisively to abrogate this final confrontational posture is, in my opinion, the greatest crisis within Islam.

The consequences for devout Muslims and all non-Muslims alike (Jews,

Christians and pagans) are immeasurable, both historically and currently. First, Muhammad's final theology, correctly understood, sealed the Muslim's worldview into an eternal cosmic struggle (*jihad*) with all other "corrupted" religions. In every century the world waits to see how obedient or disobedient Muslims will be to the Qur'an's final confrontational mandate. This is the very stuff that continues to make daily headlines, especially since 9-11. Second, since no other religion on earth reached its final state of authoritative scripture on the battlefield, Islam alone engenders endless generations of zealots desirous of martyrdom in defensive or offensive militant contexts. Third, Islamic devotion will invariably be measured by an eternal call to arms and repeated jihads to pacify the perceived hostile forces arraigned against Muhammad's reputation and final revelations. Fourth, Surah 9[12] and 5 are as authoritative when you read these words today as they were on the eve of Muhammad's death. Even as you read this article, it is possible that one or more Muslims are dying somewhere in obedience to these very revelations. What was true for Muhammad's final weeks on earth is true forever until *Isa al-Masih* (i.e., Jesus the Messiah) returns. This makes Islamic persecution of others morbidly pietistic. Finally, we should note that this militant struggle is as much against unbelieving non-Muslims (*kaffir*) as against Muslim hypocrites (*munafiqun*). Listen to one of Allah's final commands to Muhammad: "O Prophet, strive hard [*jihad*] against the unbelievers [*kaffir*] and the hypocrites [*munafiqun*], and be firm against them. Their abode is hell."[13] We need look no further to explain why the allegedly heretical "hypocritical Muslim" Ahmadiyyas are as persecuted as Christians are today, in, say, Pakistan or Indonesia. For them too, "Their abode is hell."

For this reason, and seen from the scope of all of Christian history, no religious tradition has persecuted Christians so universally, so consistently, so relentlessly, so piously, and so successfully as devout Islam.[14] This is the subject at hand: the astounding success of Muslim persecutors in the new "normal" world, and the new role for the persecuted Christians, who are called to pray and to bless their oppressors. Persecution for our faith in the Lordship of Christ is scripturally guaranteed and it ought not to strike us "as though something strange were happening" to us.[15] Indeed, it is our calling, writes Paul: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have."[16]

Yet the sheer, staggering rise in persecution from the hands of Muslims in the 21st century alone merits our fervent prayers and attention. Persecuted Christians deserve a heart-felt remembrance in our circles. To do the

persecuted church justice in the new "normal" world, I propose that we do well to consider five crucial questions. First, what is the known scale of the rise in persecution? Second, why is it counterproductive to promote fear of Islam? Third, what has caused the unpredicted rebirth of global jihadism since 1960? Fourth, what causes certain writers to question Muslim global persecution of Christians? And finally, what are the noblest Christian responses to persecution today?

1. The Staggering Rise in Persecution.

We have modern communication to thank for giving today's oppressed minorities their growing global voices. Formerly, when there were outbreaks of persecution (say the Assyrian[17] or Armenian[18] genocides), it would take months or years to communicate and verify these reports; now such news can be reported globally within days. In 1960, newly invented portable cell phones freed callers from government-controlled landline-only calls. In 1971, individualized electronic emails freed letter writers from State-controlled postal services. Two years later, portable computers freed users from institutional fixed computerized sites. In 1990, the Internet freed readers from relying entirely on paper journalism and hard-copy reporting. In 2001, digital satellite radio and TV broadcasting freed consumers from regional services. Among the many beneficiaries of this globalization are the persecuted, oppressed and bereaved Christians whose cases are being digitally reported by a wide variety of church denominations, missions, NGOs and concerned web sites. This accounts for why the news of the significant rise in persecution is reaching so many people so quickly. We have never known more about global persecution than we do today. (My inbox fills daily with global persecution reports.) This information only promises to increase, unless - God forbid - multinational or international treaties begin to curtail the freedom to report, or inhibit open access to global news, or reverse the present access for surfing the Web.

The rise in persecution is indeed factual and measurable. Since 1980, Christian minorities in Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Pakistan and Indonesia, have morphed from being passively tolerated to being aggressively attacked. The rise in numbers is real. So is the voice of the persecutors in global reporting and broadcasting. The same globalized media that passionately advocates for the persecuted is also the same worldwide media which promotes the "in-your-face" message of West-hating, Christian-loathing oppressors, who scream that they–not Christians–are the real victims of oppressive, crusading, "Christian," Western powers. Again, the same digital media that broadcast the pleading

voices of suffering Christians also floods the TV and millions of computer screens in Muslim lands with the depravity, greed, and arrogance that flows out of the "Christian" West, as they perceive it. The media's amplified messages are truly everyone's medium: persecutor and persecuted.

How then do we summarize this in numbers? The highly cited *Open Doors* website begins with this announcement: "100 million Christians are persecuted worldwide; in 60 countries the church is being persecuted."[19] Further in the site we read: "An average of 180 Christians around the world are killed each month for their faith." These claims, in turn, are supported by a research team of five full-time workers, annual audits[20] and a rigorous methodology that was upgraded in 2012 to offer "credibility, transparency, objectivity and scientific quality."[21]

The opening paragraph of the webpage of *Persecution International Christian Concern*[22] begins with this claim: "200 million Christians across the world suffer some form of persecution because of their faith."[23] That is twice the number offered by Open Doors. We are not told how persecution is defined, although PICC seeks to be the "source for news on Christian persecution around the world … constantly monitoring more than 35 countries to report on the persecution of Christians and fill the gap that the mainstream Western media leaves wide open."[24] Its stated purpose is to be a Washington, DC based NGO watchdog for the human rights concern of Christians worldwide. Even the recent masterwork from the Egyptian-American Raymond Ibrahim, *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians*,[25] repeats the same the sources as mentioned above and below.

Similar massive numbers of persecuted also appear from Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Vatican ambassador to the United Nations who stated on 27 May, 2013:

> Credible research has reached the shocking conclusion that an estimate of more than 100,000 Christians are violently killed because of some relation to their faith every year. Other Christians and other believers are subjected to forced displacement, to the destruction of their places of worship, to rape and to the abduction of their leaders -as it recently happened in the case of Bishops Yohanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yaziji, in Aleppo (Syria).[26]

We are not told on this or any other official news site how this "credible research" has been conducted.

The most extensive known research on all forms of persecution of all faiths is done by the American think tank, the Pew Research Center in

Washington, DC.[27] Their methodology includes coding and surveying twenty-one sources of government restrictions and social hostilities to religions. For them, however, the public banning of burqahs in France is as much persecution as the violent attacks of Boko Haram on Nigerian villages.[28] Clearly, all media agencies rely heavily upon each other for trustworthy reporting and analysis of a highly complex issue.

Other reporting agencies have focused on regional narratives. The ministry of *Voice of the Martyrs,* a ministry to the persecuted in forty-six nations and founded in 1967 by persecuted Jewish-Romanian clergyman, Rev. Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001), focuses on monthly statistic for a specific region being narrated.[29] Such reports, as with other websites, are now sent out weekly.

Barnabas Fund, founded in 1993 in the UK for supporting Christians who suffer discrimination or persecution, also focuses its weekly newsletters/website on narrative accounts and articles which inform readers of recent reports of persecution. On their "global map overview" they list the following categories of persecution: 1) threats/attacks against people; 2) attacks on property; 3) legal issues/legislation; 4) religious freedom; 5) humanitarian crises/needs; 6) political change/unrest; and, 7) actions by the authorities.[30] This permits a broad definition, which is necessary since persecution can take so many forms.

Some non-Christian organizations list human right abuses perpetuated by Muslims against minorities, and use film media to expose this reality. Foremost in this sphere is the *Clarion Project* founded by Canadian-Israeli film producer Raphael Shore. The Coptic American researcher, Raymond Ibrahim, a global expert on Christian persecution, is a regular feature writer for the *Middle East Forum*, and his book, *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians*, is rich with cited documentation but has few hard numbers. A far more polemic and vilifying approach is used by the Maronite Lebanese-American scholar, Robert Spencer whose widely-read daily-blog called *Jihad Watch* routinely reports persecution against minorities, and chiefly Christians.[31]

Open Doors's data-gathering organization made American headlines in early January 2014 by publishing their *World Watch List* of registered martyrs.[32] According to their findings, 2,123 Christians were intentionally martyred in 2013 due to their faith, compared to 1,201 in 2012. More than half of those reported killings (1,213) occurred in Syria, followed by Nigeria (612) and Pakistan (88). The worst persecuting government, however, remains North Korea, where an estimated 300,000 Christians live in the

most extreme, insufferable conditions with 2013 being the twelfth consecutive year of such conditions. The following nine most persecuting nations, listed in order, are: Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Pakistan, Iran and Yemen.[33] For a seasoned reader, the Islamic variable stands out. Even when the top twenty-five are noted, twenty-one are Muslim-majority nations.

Another, powerful political and Christian voice is *Christian Solidarity International* (CSI) an international Swiss-founded Christian human rights organization. CSI campaigns for religious liberty and human dignity, and assists victims of religious persecution, victimized children and victims of catastrophe.[34] In particular, CSI has highlighted the crisis of the flight of Christians from the Middle East by compiling a list of quotes from religious and political leaders and then circulating them to the media. The following small treasury of recent quotes illustrates the point:

> "Massacres are taking place for no reason and without any justification against Christians. It is only because they are Christians. What is happening to Christians is a genocide." Former Lebanese President Amine Gemayal, January 3, 2011.

> "The next genocide in the world will likely be against the Alawites in Syria." Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith, November 2012.

> "Growing numbers of foreign Sunni extremist fighters are battling not just to rid Syria of Mr. Assad, but to religiously cleanse it." Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, November 15, 2012.

> "The future of Christians in the Middle East is very bleak. What has happened in Iraq and Syria is de facto ethnic cleansing of Christians." Neil Hicks, Human Rights First, April 2, 2013.

> "Wherever they are, the Christians of the East are not only threatened, but hunted down and liquidated." Laurent Fabius, French Foreign Minister, October 1, 2013.

> "Christian populations are plummeting and the religion is being driven out of some of its historic heartlands. In some places, there is a real danger that Christianity will become extinct." Baroness Sayeedi Warsi, United

Kingdom Minister for Faith, November 15, 2013.

"We will not resign ourselves to imagining a Middle East without Christians." Pope Francis I, November 21, 2013.

"It seems to me that we cannot ignore the fact that Christians in the Middle East are increasingly being deliberately targeted by fundamentalist Islamist militants." Charles, Prince of Wales, December 17, 2013.

"We see the Middle East emptying of its historic Christian populations." Robert P. George, chairman, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, January 6, 2014.

The unity of alarmed voices gives credibility where the gathering of hard numbers is complex and disputed.[35] Syria illustrates this point. While it was reported during the failed Geneva II Peace Talks (February 10-15, 2014) that 140,000 people are now estimated killed in the Syrian Civil War, no one knows how to break down and verify that staggering number into religious classification. That may take years. The point stands: while numbers are estimates, all credible Western sources agree that something akin to a massive religious-genocide against Christians is happening in the most violent corners of the Middle East and beyond: Syria, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, Saudi Arabia[36] and the Maldives –namely the majority of the top persecuting nations in the world.

2. Why is it Counterproductive to Promote Fear of Islam.

Islamic missiologist and missionary statesman Dr. Don McCurry has repeatedly remarked that the greatest enemy and the greatest danger is not Islam itself but the fear of Islam. His discernment combines two seminal truths: first, fear is the Achilles' heel of both global and historic Christianity; secondly, Christlike fearlessness is the ideal "confessional" life of the Holy Spirit in us.

Fear was the first Christian-Jewish response to Islam. The first recorded extra-Qur'anic observations on the "Saracens" (i.e., Muslims) in *Doctrina Jacobi* (dated A.D. 634), has a Greek Jew writing with alarm: " there is no truth to be found in the so-called prophet, only the shedding of men's blood."[37] From the outset, the militant die had been cast and almost all Jewish and Christian observations about the Muslims in the centuries to follow would chronicle fear-saturated accounts of persecution and oppression. Reading Robert Hoyland's exhaustive anthology in *Seeing Islam as Others*

Saw It makes for very sober, disquieting reading; it is the voice of the untold thousands of suffering oriental Christians writing to each other, spanning many centuries. Even as Philip Jenkins records, Islamic persecutions of oriental Christians–and that over a thousand years–were not systematic but periodic, causing a "ratchet effect;" meaning Muslim powers repeatedly and violently bore down on the Christian enclaves until the remnant fled, converted, or were martyred.[38] How could they not live in constant, unrelenting dread? Fear has been the overwhelming universal and historic "Christian" response to Islam, up until the decisive defeat of maritime slave-raiding "jihadism" by the Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean Sea, thanks to the second American naval intervention in 1815.

Fear of Islam has rebounded with a vengeance since September 2001, following the infamous and strategic 9-11 attack on the heartland of America's economic empire. Militant-minded Muslims succeeded in gaining what had eluded them since their first suicide attacks against Americans in Beirut, Lebanon on 18 April, 1983: creating a climate of terror of "Islam" in the West. That the misnomer "Islamophobia" owes its wide media circulation to the post-9-11 period is a testimony to the jihadists' triumph. Islamophobia is one of their most cherished outcomes. Islamic expert, Daniel Pipes in 2005 wrote:

> The word literally means "undue fear of Islam" but it is used to mean "prejudice against Muslims" and joins over 500 other phobias spanning virtually every aspect of life. The term has achieved a degree of linguistic and political acceptance, to the point that the secretary-general of the United Nations presided over a December 2004 conference titled "Confronting Islamophobia" and in May [2005] a Council of Europe summit condemned "Islamophobia."[39]

That "fear of Islam" has succeeded as much among Christians as among other Westerners is deeply troublesome for two reasons: first, Christians are forced to revisit the dreadful and dark historic epoch of past persecution (632–1815); second, true Christianity has no legitimate mandate to remain fearful. Indeed, fear is as much an enemy of faith as is doubt. Fear of Islam, if left untreated, turns to hatred of Muslims. Hatred, in turn, is an utterly untenable position to defend from Scripture, especially given such commands as: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head" (Rom 12:20). Yet post-9-11 anglophone evangelical and conservative literature on

Islam is profoundly alarmist, which again, if left untreated, turns to loathing of Muslims.[40] While most works on Islam, especially from a Christian view, provide a generous disclaimer of needing to pray for, befriend, and reach out to Muslims in compassion, the greater deposit left with readers is a deep angst of all things "Muslim." That 57,614 Americans alone have been killed or wounded in wars since 2011 resulting from the post–9–11 alleged "War on Terror" is evidence enough that death, destruction, and fear have become the daily staple news items of the Western coverage of the multiple wars with Islamic militants, who, by the latest media protocol,[41] may only be identified as "terrorists."[42]

McCurry, in his wisdom, navigates Christians towards a posture of a divine and a fearless profession of the Lord Jesus Christ in the face of all religion-manufactured fear. There are more scriptural commands to "not fear" or to "not be anxious" than there are days in a year. The "fear not" mandate is inescapable and ubiquitous in Scripture. Indeed, a fearless "testimony" or "witness" is translated as *martus* in Biblical Greek and *martyr* in Latin, and which, in turn, has been adopted by all Western languages. We are left in no doubt as to what our fearless testimony might merit: persecution or death. And yet, the spiritual virtue that is most resistant, most conquering of fear is open, courageous fearlessness. Nothing negates terror's power more than fearlessness. As Jesus said, "do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28). This command, if obeyed, is an antidote to terrorism. It is to this bold horizon that Christ points the contemporary suffering Bride of Christ. (More on this subject below.)

3. The Unexpected Rebirth of Persecuting Jihadism Since 1960.
The modern rise in Muslim persecution of Christians has a distinct and recent theological rebirth. Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), an Egyptian literary critic turned political leader of the emerging Islamic Brotherhood (*Ikhwan*), made himself into a household name in the Sunni Islamic world by becoming the spiritual "father" of innovative small group jihads.[43] Qutb grew up in British-occupied Egypt, was imprisoned for his treasonous calls for a jihad to overthrow the republic, and was then executed in 1966 in President Nasser's independent Egypt. The genius of Qutb's theocratic and militant theology was his success at resurrecting a duplicate of the original "companion" generation, that is, those who were Muhammad's immediate jihad-disciples (called the *sahabah*) and who took the prophet's militant mandate and conquered the then-known world in their lifetime. Qutb calls his re-born mil-

itant generation "the vanguard," a term and strategy borrowed from both Marxist and fascist ideologues.[44]

To justify small-group jihad, he concluded in his last two works[45] that Muhammad's original and authentic Islam was now extinct in his own lifetime, and that the whole Islamic world of the 20th century, together with the "Christian" West, had sunk into a depraved state of godless *Jahiliyyah* (ignorance). This was the exact term Muhammad had used to describe his godless, rebellious world and that he used to justify its conquest. So doing, Qutb bypassed the need to seek permission for any jihad from the reigning Islamic authorities, and he replaced it with an individual interpretation of the Qur'an, mandating singular jihad from selected verses. He turned jihad into a private obligation, a collective duty for all Muslims, and even into one of the pillars of Islam. After centuries of slumbering Islamic traditionalism, Qutb had let a violent jihad genie out of the Oriental Islamic bottle.

Qutb's teaching deeply impacted the emerging "who's who" of post–9-11 violent Islamism: Ayman al-Zawahiri, Sheikh Omar 'Abd al-Rahman, Osama Bin Laden, Sheikh Fateh Krekar, Dr 'Abdullah 'Azzam and the groups Shabab, Jama'at al-Muslimin, Al-Jihad, Al-Gama'ah al-Islamiyyah, Al-Qaeda and Ansar al-Islam.[46] In short, all the contemporary militant interpretations of the majority Sunni world drew their inspirations—directly or indirectly—from Qutb. The initial targets of Qutbism did not include the vulnerable Christian minorities in Islamic nations but the corrupted "Muslim" dictators and the greater, pernicious Western "Christian" patronage over the Muslim world. However, the post–9-11 "Western" invasion into Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) changed the scope: defenseless Christians in Muslim lands became legitimate "fifth column" targets. Qutb's jihadism declared open season on all Christians in much of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC),[47] the international Islamic organization consisting of 57 member "Muslim" states.[48]

Two decades later, Shiite militancy had its own rebirth in Tehran, Iran, when, on February 1, 1979, the supreme Shiite imam, the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini (1902–1989) returned from exile and founded the first "Twelver Shiite" imamate in 250 years, that is, since the defeat of the Persian Shiite Safavid Dynasty (1501–1736). Foundational to Khomeini's theocracy were the powerful *fatwas*[49] in his *Little Green Book* (1979)[50] which inspired jihadism, martyrdom, and justification for killing not only infidel Sunni enemies, but also the "Great Satan" (USA) and the "Little Satan" (Israel). He wrote:

> If one permits an infidel to continue in his role as a corrupter of the earth,

> the infidel's moral suffering will be all the worse. If one kills the infidel, and this stops him from perpetrating his misdeeds, his death will be a blessing to him.[51]

In Khomeini's 1978 interviews with western journalists in Paris, he assured them that all minorities would be respected,[52] that women would be free in the Islamic Republic in the selection of their activities and their future and their clothing,[53] and that he would not "personally have a role in running the country after the fall of the current system."[54] Upon coming to power, he reversed his promises in every respect and founded a Twelver theocracy which was in every way as militant as Qutbism. Unlike Qutb, Khomeini retained the imam's exclusive role in declaring a jihad, something which he did unceasingly as he waged war on the entire world: Sunni and Western. As he said in his own words:

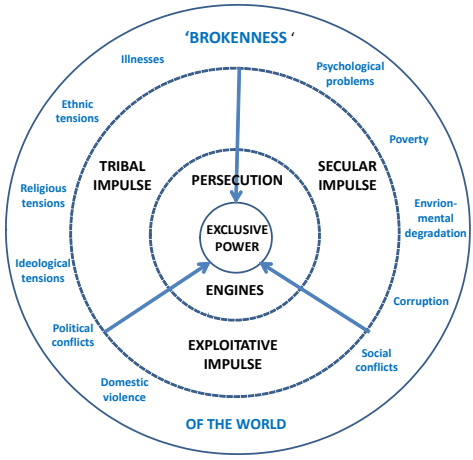
> Those who study Islamic holy war will understand why Islam wants to conquer the whole world ... Those who know nothing of Islam pretend that Islam counsels against war. … Islam says: Kill in the service of Allah those who may want to kill you!" Does this mean that we should surrender [to the enemy]? Islam says: 'Whatever good there is exists thanks to the sword and in the shadow of the sword!' People cannot be made obedient except with the sword! The sword is the key to Paradise, which can be opened only for the holy warriors! There are hundreds of other [Qur'anic] verses and Hadiths urging Muslims to value war and to fight. Does all this mean that Islam is a religion that prevents men from waging war? I spit upon those foolish souls who make such a claim.[55]

The conquest-focused ayatollahs not only led their Shiite faithful into the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran War (1,250,000 estimated causalities––making it the bloodiest war since WW II) but also to the violent persecution of all dissidents: political, Baha'i, Ahmadiyyas, and, increasingly, Christians. The utterly unexpected miraculous birth of the underground church in Iran has inspired an augmented and ruthless state persecution and martyrdom amongst all new Christian believers. As Matthew Clark argues in his 2013 article for The American Center for Law and Justice, the Iranian Imamate refuses to recognize the possibility of any Muslim converting to Christianity, hence new Christians do not qualify for constitutional protection. While "apostasy" is not a codified crime, writes Clark, all legal judgments are made on Sharia law and *fatwas*, essentially criminalizing

conversion. As a result, "prosecutors often bring charges against Christians, asserting that their Christian activities amount to crimes such as 'propaganda against the Regime' and 'acting against national security.' The reality is, although Iran acknowledges constitutional protections, it fails to uphold them for its Christian community" (Clark, 2013).

Increasingly since 2005, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have openly instructed their governors to arrest, interrogate, detain and prosecute Christians in violation of their fundamental human rights. Since then, the Christian world has been awash with unceasing accounts of persecutions in Iran, chiefly the attacks on key underground pastors, among them Saaed Abedini,[56] Avanessian,[57] and dozens more. As reported by the 2013 U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, "Since becoming president, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for an end to the development of Christianity in Iran" (Weinthal, 2013).

Both Sunni and Shiite have had a robust renaissance of classical jihadism, whether through Qutbism or imamate theology.[58] Both sides use their militant interpretation to attack both the "Satan outside" (the West and Israel) but also the "Satan within" (Christians, Muslim apostates, minorities). Given the staggering financing of their militant ideologies through OPEC[59] resources, there is nothing to suggest that either of these competing movements have exhausted themselves—as is clear from the present proxy war in Syria.



World Watch List
Brokenness of the World

4. The Disputed Nature of Muslim Global Persecution of Christians.

Among contemporary Islamic missiologists a debate exists as to what constitutes "belief persecution" in that political, cultural, ethnic, and psychological factors may strongly contribute to the violence experienced by suffering Christians. Surely, not all that is called "persecution" is "persecution," Should martyrdom and discrimination even belong on the same list? Or again, can hostility against Christians stem

from something non-religious, like racism, tribalism, political grievances, or pro-democracy loyalties? Open Doors ministry limits the word "persecution" to intentional suffering inflicted upon Christians and has established the following model.[60]

Persecution is when Christians and their communities experience specific pressure and/or violence in a situation of "brokenness" that are related to persecution dynamics prevalent in their environments and are forcing them to comply with the drivers of these dynamics. The WWL methodology regroups these dynamics in three different impulses, fuelling eight different persecution engines and being driven by specific actors or drivers of persecution. The diagram shows the relation between "brokenness," impulses, persecution engines and the related drive for exclusive power. [61]

Consider the example of the violent Muslim persecution of Christians in sub-Saharan Africa in 2013-2014. The horrific televised scenes of violence in which Christians are targeted in Kenya, Sudan, Central African Republic, and Nigeria, and to a lesser degree in Mali, all suggest, to Western journalists, that "religion" is used as a justification for collective violence but is not the original cause for persecution.[62] Secular reporters routinely point to a tell-tale chronology of grievances, beginning with historic tribal tensions—often over resources. These are exacerbated by accrued political abuses, compounded by growing economic cultural discriminations, and finally triggered by a tinder-box style provocation from one side, which is then fuelled by war-mongering sermons from both religious quarters, finally leading to "religious" vigilantes fighting "religious" troops or "religious" rebels.[63] The result is a sudden reciprocal and horrific blood bath, into which the international community tardily sends peacekeeping troops in order to stop the gross violation of human rights committed by both warring "religious" factions. Invariably, once the fighting abates, all Western voices quickly join together to play down the crisis by delegitimizing the actual role of religion in the violence. "Religion" say such experts, "was not the real but the blamed cause."

This form of "not-real-but-blamed" reporting harms the truly persecuted victims in three respects. First, Western reporters of "religious wars" assume mutual guilt prematurely. The "both sides are guilty" script compensates the first persecutors as being as much a victim as their persecuted prey. So doing, the Western media treats the warring "religious" factions much like no-fault car insurance policies treat their clients: regardless of who is really responsible for the accident, the amount compensated is never based on who really caused it. When both sides are "now persecuting, now persecuted',

then everyone is guilty (read, "no one'). Justice is no longer the arbitrator.

For example, for over two decades, the BBC has faithfully reported that the northern Nigerian Muslim-Christian violence is fundamentally political and tribal in nature. "Religion has been hijacked as just one of the major instruments used and abused by politicians," the BBC reported in their recent interview of Nigerian Imam Ashafa.[64] The imam says, and the BBC fully agrees, that "something other than religion causes violence" and all peace-loving BBC readers know this. It also means that persecuting "religious" leaders expect immunity instead of the prospect of being tried for violent crimes. They know that they will rarely be brought to trial for violent faith persecutions. Were they not hijacked by politicians?[65]

The second reason this form of "not-real-but-blamed" reporting harms the persecuted victims is that the journalist's logic is built on a deeply flawed premise that "religion" is a mere smoke screen for other real fires (as per Imam Ashafa above). But this beggars belief! How can tens of thousands of Muslims attack, kill and die with the triumphant cry "Allah U Akbar" in their mouth and the journalists say that this has nothing to do with religion? Does this form of reporting not rather expose an anti-religious bias of the journalist? Religion, it turns out, is the real combustible fuel added to the tribal/cultural/political hay. That "Christian" vigilantes quickly copy-cat their Muslim firebrand counterparts merely adds more fuel to the existing "religious conflagration." But the original victims of persecution get quickly forgotten in this form of reporting. If, as the Western narrative goes, Muslims rarely kill Christians for their faith—but for a host of other local factors— then why report the slaughter as "religious"?

Thirdly, this form of Western reporting robs the persecuted victim of coverage because it assumes that the causes for violence can be surgically dissected and separated, ranking them on a list of most-to-least deserving facts for coverage. Here lies a blind spot. It is a distinct feature of the Western-trained mind to individually compartmentalize one's mental life in categories: my economics, my politics, my culture, my ethnicity, my sexuality, my ideological beliefs, my amusements, etc. Those who do so assume the whole global adult population does likewise. Yet the very persecuting-victimized communities about which they are reporting are not made up of western thinkers, but of people who see themselves collectively ("I am who we are") and who think in holistic, non-categorical ways. For devout Muslim thinkers, Islamic beliefs and economics and politics and culture and ethnicity are all inseparably one. Islam does not exist for them as an independent mental compartment; it is all of life.

Drivers of persecution	
Government	Government officials at any level from local to national
Society	Ethnic group leaders
	Non-Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national
	Religious leaders of other churches at any level from local to national
	Fanatical movements
	Normal citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs
	Extended family
	Political parties at any level from local to national
	Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups
	Organized crime cartels or networks
	Multilateral organizations

For this reason, Open Doors WWL methodology distinguishes various "drivers" of persecution (chart below), acknowledging that often more than one driver is active in and around one or more persecution engines.[66] Persecution is highly complex and one aggressive driver easily feeds another.

A second debate among missiologists concerns the marketing of persecution. How much of Western reporting is being converted into publicity, fund-raising, marketing material, and in short, capitalistic advocacy drives? Is there a danger that the sheer scale of information of persecution could become a "business"?

We are left with the urgent need to respond to horrific daily reports of persecution and suffering on all fronts; all of which requires the wise mobilization of our resources. The requests for help come with sterling Biblical support: "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18).

Appeals for prayer and money are therefore legitimate even if they appear hyperbolic at times. This requires an exceptionally high level of trust in these emergency relief organizations, as is already the case for Compassion International, Food for the Hungry, World Vision, and Samaritan Purse. Outside of many denominational and historic mission agencies, the most frequent request for financial aid to the persecuted church come from (in alphabetic order) the Barnabas Fund, Christian Aid Ministry, Christian

Freedom International, Open Doors, Persecution International Christian Concern, and Voice of the Martyrs. These charities, in turn, are watched by charity transparency agencies such as Charity Navigator,[67] the International Institute of Religious Freedom (IIRF), and each American agency is a member of ECFA, the Evangelical Council of Financial Accountability. All this is worthy of our confidence and endorsement.

5. The Noblest Christian Responses to Persecution Today.
In China, when a man of integrity faces a severe character test, others will encourage him and say, "True gold fears no fire." Persecuted Christians, however, do not seek to prove their sterling character when they suffer but rather they long to prove their faith and to glorify Christ: "You have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:6-7).

This is the noblest of responses to all forms of discrimination and persecution. Christians throughout the world suffer remarkably well because they do it to honor God, not to gain a reputation or salvation. They suffer joyfully as the Lord Jesus told them to: "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad" (Matt 5:11). They suffer in obedience to Christ, not to prove their worth. As Raymond Ibrahim notes:

> Christianity is the quintessential religion of martyrdom. From its inception—beginning with Jesus followed by his disciples and the early Church—many Christians have accepted martyrdom rather than recant their faith, in ancient times at the hands of Romans, in Medieval and modern times at the hands of pious Muslims and others. Few other religions encourage their adherents to embrace death rather than recant, as captured by Christ's own words: "But whoever denies me before men, I will deny him before my Father in heaven."[68]

In the eyes of all nations, Christians seem to suffer more frequently and more nobly than others who are suffering for their career, ideology, nation, family, or religion-of-birth. Thousands of accounts per years, disseminated in many web sites, testify to Christians suffering like gold in the fire, blessing and forgiving their persecutors, as Paul instructed the Romans: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them."[69] The following account illustrates it fully:

On May 27, 2010, an Afghan TV show called *Sarzamin-e-man* (my Homeland) broadcast a two-year-old-video of indigenous Afghan Christians holding a worship service. Two days later, some twenty-five Christians were arrested, and many others fled. One, who had converted to Christianity eight years previously, Said Musa, was arrested when he sought asylum at the German embassy. Having lost his leg after stepping on a landmine while serving in the Afghan army, he now wears a prosthetic limb. He is the father of six young children, the oldest -then eight- and another who is disabled. He worked for the Red Cross/Red Crescent as an orthopedic therapist, giving advice to other amputees and fitting patients for prosthetic limbs.

In early June, the deputy secretary of the Afghan parliament, Abdul Sattar Khawasi, said, "[T]hose Afghans that appeared on this video film should be executed in public." The authorities forced Musa to renounce Christianity on television, but he continued to say he was a Christian.

His wife only learned his whereabouts from a released inmate who had shared his jail cell, and she first saw her husband on July 27. He was forced to appear before the court without a lawyer and without knowing the charges against him. "When I said 'I am a Christian man,' he [a potential defense lawyer] immediately spat on me and abused me and mocked me ... I am alone between 400 people with terrible values in the jail, like a sheep." No Afghan lawyer would defend him, and authorities denied him access to a foreign lawyer.

In a letter smuggled to the West, he described the first months of his detention: "The authority and prisoners in jail did many bad behaviour with me about my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, they did sexual things with me, beat me by wood, by hands, by legs, put some things on my head. [T]hey mocked me 'He's Jesus Christ,' spat on me, nobody let me for sleep night and day." He added that he would be willing to sacrifice his life so "other believers will take courage and be strong in their faith. Please my English writing is not good enough. If I did some mistake please forgive me!" (from Kabul Provincial jail).

Said Musa was eventually smuggled out of Afghanistan thanks to personal intervention from US commander General David Petraeus.[70] These are the daily fearless testimonies of pure gold faith tried in the fire of perse-

cution. In this respect, the church of Christ has truly returned to the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Listen to how brilliantly Paul captures the glory of martyrdom for both his generation and now ours: "As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:36-37).

This is the new "normal" world, and yet never has the Body of Christ prayed more for Muslims, shown them more compassion, designated more missionaries towards Muslim needs, loved them more as neighbors and embraced them more as refugees. The most notable post–WW II example of this compassion for Muslim refugees comes from Indonesia during the 1965–1971 slaughter of "Muslim" communists by General Suharto. As a result of Christian compassion in protecting and caring for these refugees, 1,870,512 Indonesian Muslims were eventually baptized as Protestants and 938,786 as Roman Catholics.[71] This is the largest known case of Christian compassionate love.

The new "normal world" is fast becoming the world in which courageous love, sacrificial love, dying love, fearless love, and compassionate love are not required of a few but of the majority of Christians; who are now the largest minority religion in most nations. Even in formerly historic "Christian" nations, Christians are becoming the new minority. The increased marginalization—if not vilification—of devout Christians in the secular-West suggests that global advocacy coming from the "free" West may be significantly curtailed in the future. If Canada is any indication, Christian charities and mission agencies face repeated challenges of their legal status and whether they comply with prevailing political sentiments. Their Canadian role as Christian advocates of global causes and ministries is not without repeated legal attacks. Yet Christians remain the foremost advocates for all persecuted religious minorities, not just Christians.

During March 15-18, 2013, the International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) met with Christian researchers from three universities and forty scholars to analyze the struggle for religious freedom and the growth of belief persecution. Sociologist and WEA ambassador for human rights, Thomas Schirrmacher pointed out that there are today roughly 300 million Christians in Muslim majority countries.[72] Given that Christianity is the greatest minority religion on earth, it stands to reason that they are targeted everywhere. As Raymond Ibrahim notes,

> Christianity is the largest religion in the world. There are Christians practically everywhere around the globe, including in much of the Muslim world. Moreover, because much of the land that Islam seized was originally Christian—including the Middle East and North Africa, the region that is today known as the "Arab world"—Muslims everywhere are still confronted with vestiges of Christianity.[73]

Under the leadership of Schirrmacher, the WEA consultation developed a policy of "seven pillars' of Christian response to persecution:

1. Prayer ranks as the first pillar, and since the earliest days prayer for the persecuted has been a part of Christian worship; today this is expressed in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.
2. The second pillar is explicit solidarity with those affected by offering assistance and training.
3. The third pillar is media work, since honest, accurate reporting is essential to document the problems.
4. Fourth, there is the legal defense of those affected before courts, as well as other forms of advocacy. At this time Advocacy International has its own network of thousands of lawyers, though more legal advocacy is urgently needed. Much religious persecution is contrary to the laws of the country in which it occurs and should be addressed in the courts.
5. The fifth pillar is political activity. Since Christians are against violent self-defense and advocate the separation of church and state through the state monopoly on the use of force, they should not use violence to protect themselves. Rather, they have to call upon states to defend their human rights. Where one's own state does not intervene, Christians turn towards other states and global organizations with their plea to apply pressure to other states. Prayer, humanitarian aid, legal defense, media activities, and political involvement are all only possible where there is sound information.
6. For this reason the sixth pillar is the WEA's investment in global research, represented at the Istanbul Consultation.
7. Seventh, and finally, the WEA has a "Peace Building Track" in order to actualize a space for local, political peace between adherents of different religions, for whom nothing is more important than to get to know each other.[74]

Prayer for the persecuted church and believers has indeed soared worldwide. In all denominations and in all media outlets, the intensity of prayer—

and of giving—has increased exponentially. Global prayer and compassion for global persecution has united Christians in a manner unprecedented in church history, with Protestant-Evangelicals, Roman Catholics and Orthodox communities praying everywhere for other Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Oriental and Evangelical Christians in persecuted lands. The primary reason why prayer for the persecuted is uniting Christians is that for the first time since the era of Constantine (A.D. 325), Christian denominations are not persecuting other denominations or other faiths.[75] Christianity has finally come full circle to her primitive pacifist past.

For that reason, the most debated of these seven pillars will be the phrase in the fifth pillar: "Christians … should not use violence to protect themselves." In nations where the right to self-defense includes bearing arms, the theological case for Amish-styled unconditional pacifism will be strongly disputed, especially in regions that have become "failed states" and where the police are the primary persecutors. The WEA may choose to advocate pacifism as the best but not exclusive response for all Christians in all contexts. As the old adage goes, "It takes one sword to keep another in the sheath." Fear is a wonderful God-ordained deterrent against violent persecutors.[76] A far more likely compromise is that the secular West will become the destination for fleeing Christians, a destination whose longing is inscribed in the Statue of Liberty.

> Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

Whether post-Christian secular nations will continue be to a haven for Christian minorities is uncertain. Indeed, the world's most secular nations, China and Japan,[77] are not even candidates for receiving religious refugees of any kind. What is clear is that all post-Christian Western nations are seeing a rapid decline in religious beliefs.[78] The torch of the "Statue of Liberty" may well pass, in the future, to highly religious nations, such as Ghana, Brazil, Peru, and Poland.

Conclusion

North American Christians remain amongst the best informed in the world concerning persecution, thanks in large part to a vast network of Christian radio and TV stations, Christian magazines and blog sites. This places a significant responsibility on their shoulders. In particular, the leading 21st

century cable network, neo-conservative Fox News[79] has strongly covered Christian persecution in Muslim lands, educating their 1.097 million prime-time viewers of the nature and scope of persecution.[80] Reporter Timothy Samuel Shah, in particular, is shaping the issue by exposing the myths concerning global Christian persecution.[81] A growing number of North Americans are becoming very discerning observers and responders to the persecuted church. What remains utterly uncertain, in human terms, is whether the alarm, reported by the media in late 2013 and early 2014, will prevail. There is nothing to suggest that Islamic theology is any closer to finding a mechanism to abrogate the final militant message of the Qur'an. Persecution seems certain to remain or rise in the new "normal" world. We do well to remember: if no one predicted this global church crisis twenty-five years ago, are-we wise to proceed cautiously in optimistic predictions?

The most cherished news, however, is not that certain governments are indeed improving their records of religious freedoms—as good as that is—but rather that unprecedented numbers of Muslims are coming to Christ. This is happening especially among those who encounter courageous Christians in persecuted regions, or those who receive a dream in which Christ's person and/or voice establishes beyond dispute that Jesus is Lord of all, the Son of God and that Christians follow the truth. This is truly an unprecedented visitation by God and we ponder the exciting implications. Indeed, when the persecuting "Sauls" become the persecuted "Pauls," the church grows in her suffering, and that is perhaps a prayer greater than for global peace, and, in the spirit of Tertullian (d. A.D. 220), we do well to pray "Thy kingdom come" and may the blood of the martyrs be once again the seed of the church.[82]

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[1] Ben Otto, "In Indonesia, Trying Times for Minority Faiths: Intimidation Is Rising as Hard-Line Muslim Groups Grow Increasingly Vocal," WSJ, Dec. 23, 2013. online.wsj.com.

[2] Tom Heneghan, "Reported Christian "martyr" deaths double in 2013," London, Jan 8, 2014, reuters.com. Also published in the Huffington Post, Jan 09, 2014.

[3] AP: "Pope Francis Slams Christian Persecution, Urges People To Speak Out Against Injustice," December 26, 2013, Associated Press.

[4] John McManus, "Christians persecuted by Islamists," says Prince Charles', BBC News, 18 December, 2013. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25426155.

[5] Christopher Snyder, "Report: North Korea worst for Christian persecution," January 08, 2014, foxnews.com.

[6] Richard Allen Greene, "Christians face rising persecution, experts say," CNN. CNN news.

[7] http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/04/02/middle-east-christians-need-our-protection-column/2047473/.

[8] *Jahiliyyah* means the whole corrupted, rebellious "world," both inside and outside of the *ummah*, which is resisting submission to Allah and the final Qur'an message.

[9] In that the majority of persecution comes from Muslim-majority nations this article will not survey the equally tragic rise of persecution against Christians from Hindu-majority, Buddhist-majority, Communist-governed, and

extreme secular regimes. Indeed, the worst persecuting nation in presently North Korea, yet in terms of sheer global numbers, Christians suffer more from Muslim persecutors than any other religion or ideology.

[10] Called the doctrine of *an-nasikh wa'l mansukh*. See Surahs 2.106, 13.39, 16.103.

[11] Surah 9.5 is called since the 19th century "the Verse of the Sword." It alone abrogates 124 tolerant and peaceful verses according to Muslim theologians Jalal ad-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mahalli (1389-1459), Jalal al-Suyuti (1445-1505), Isma'il al Dimashqi (1301-1372), and Ibn Juzayy (d. 1340). See also Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and Osama bin Laden (d. 2011). See also Robert Spencer, *Guide to Islam* (2005), 25.

[12] Especially 9.5 and 9.29 where Muhammad commands believers to fight all non-Muslims till they either convert, or at least submit, to Islam.

[13] Surah 9.73. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Noble Qur'an*.

[14] This text will recognize the monopolizing theological dominance of both Sunni and Shi'a clergy (the *ulema, imams*, or *ayatollahs*) over Islam's doctrines and practices and I will refer to them and their followers as "devout" Muslims. That the majority of global Muslims do no obey the strident calls of fundamental imams is a providential mercy for Christians Jews and atheists. Muslims worldwide, however, are not governed by majority convictions. We also note here that Christendom behaved at its worst when militant "Christians" sought to reserves Muslim gains by imitating jihadism and launching martial crusades.

[15] 1 Peter 4:12. All verses in this article will be ESV.

[16] Phil 1:29-30.

[17] This was carried out by the Ottoman Empire during the 1890s, 1914–1918, 1922–1925, targeting Assyrian civilians through deportation and mass murder, leading to 275,000-300,000 premature deaths.

[18] This was carried out in 1915 by the Young Turk government against the entire Armenian population through death marches and mass murder, resulting in an estimated 1.5 million premature deaths.

[19] http://lp.opendoorsusa.org/general/google/persecution-c/christian-persecution.html?gclid=CPeGo5CtvbwCFY1AMgodVD8Ajg . Namely, the organization is focused on research in 60 out of the 192 UN-listed countries.

[20] See "Press release from the International Institute for Religious Freedom" (IIRF) on the WWL audit. Approved, level 3 version. December 17, 2013. Available from Open Doors, a ministry focused on the persecuted since its founding by "Brother Andrew" in 1956.

[21] Open Doors World Watch List, "2014 World Watch List Methodology," published December 2013. Available from Open Doors.

[22] ICC was founded in 1995 by Steve Snyder, former president of the USA Division of Christian Solidarity International. In 2002, Snyder was succeeded as ICC President by Jeff King, who had served 11 years with Campus Crusade for Christ.

[23] http://www.persecution.org/awareness/

[24] http://www.persecution.org/awareness/

[25] Raymond Ibrahim, *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians* (Regnery, 2013) is a Middle East and Islam specialist, and a Shillman Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center and an Associate Fellow at the Middle East Forum.

[26] Vatican Radio, "Vatican to UN: 100 thousand Christians killed for the faith each year," 2013-05-28, http://www.news.va/en/news/vatican-to-un-100-thousand-christians-killed-for-t?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=catholiclisa . See also Frances d'Emilio, "Pope Calls Christians the Most Persecuted" Associated Press, December 16, 2010. http://cnsnews.com/news/article/pope-calls-christians-most-persecuted.

[27] The Pew Forum provides information on social issues, public opinion, and demographic trends shaping the United States and the world. See http://www.pewresearch.org/

[28] See Pew Forum methodology. For Canada see Olivia Ward Foreign Affairs Reporter, "Meet Canada's defender of the faiths," The Toronto Star , Feb 14, 2014.

[29] For example, "26 Christians Killed in Boko Haram Attacks" VOM Sources, BBC News (Jan 26, 2014) VOM contacts in Nigeria said as many as 200 Christians have been killed by Boko Haram since the Jan. 26 attacks. http://www.salememail.com/specialoffers/VOM_Persecution/VOM_persecution_watch_full.aspx?id=1&archive=true

[30] http://www.barnabasfund.org/

[31] http://www.jihadwatch.org. Jihad Watch is a blog affiliated with the David Horowitz Freedom Center and was founded in 2003.

[32] Open Doors. World Watch List: "WWL 2014 Violent incidents article FINAL." Reporting period November 2012-October 2013. Including killings and physical violence, based on the violent incidents media research. Approved, level 3 version. December 17, 2013. Used with permission.

[33] Joshua Rhett Miller "Christians killed for faith nearly doubled in 2013, group finds," January 10, 2014, FoxNews.com http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/01/10/christians-killed-for-faith-nearly-doubled-in-2013-group-finds/.

[34] CSI was founded in 1977 in Switzerland by Rev. Hans Stückelberger, following peaceful demonstrations in support of persecuted Christians. See more at: http://csi-usa.org/about.html#sthash.toyd3WdE.dpuf http://csi-usa.org/about.html.

[35] Concerning confirmation of data, Iranian Pastor Sasan Tavassoli wrote to me in a personal letter (14 Dec 2014), in

reply to the accuracy of data reporting: "By the very nature of the topic this is not the kind of info you can find on a website." See also Pew Forum methodology.

[36] The persecution against Christians is focused exclusively on foreign domestic workers, not indigenous Christians.

[37] *Doctrina Jacobi* (V. 16, 209) as cited in (Hoyland, 1997, 57).

[38] Philip Jenkins. *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia--and How It Died*, (2009).

[39] Daniel Pipes, "Islamophobia?," *New York Sun*, October 25, 2005, http://www.danielpipes.org/3075/islamophobia. For alternative views on Islamophobia see Amir Saeed, "Islamophobia and Capitalism," THINKING THRU ISLAMOPHOBIA Symposium Papers for the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, organized by S. Sayyid Abdoolkarim Vakil May 2008, www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk; and John L. Esposito, "Islamophobia: A Threat to American Values?" Huffington Post, August 10, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-l-esposito/islamophobia-a-threat-to_b_676765.html, and again, Karen Armstrong, "Islamophobia: We need to accept the "other,"" *The Globe and Mail*, March 26, 2012, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/islamophobia-we-need-to-accept-the-other/article534337/.

[40] For example, consider the following authors and their titles: Randal Price. *Unholy War: America, Israel and Radical Islam* (2001); Mark A. Gabriel, *Islam and Terrorism: What the Quran Really Teaches About Christianity, Violence and the Goals of the Islamic Jihad* (2002), and *Culture Clash: Islam's War on America* (2007); Abd El Schafi, *Behind the Veil: Unmasking Islam* (2002); R. C. Sproul, *The Dark Side of Islam* (2002); Grant R. Jeffery, *War on Terror: Unfolding Bible Prophesy* (2002); Christopher Catherwood, *Christians, Muslims and Islamic Rage* (2003); Robert Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)* (2005); Gregory M. Davis, *Religion of Peace? Islam's War against the World* (2006); Joel Rosenberg's eschatological novels: *The Last Jihad* (2006), *The Last Days* (2006), *The Ezekiel Option* (2006), *The Copper Scroll* (2006), *Dead Heat* (2008), *The Twelfth Imam* (2011), *The Tehran Initiative* (2012) and his non-fiction *Epicenter* (2006); Raymond Ibrahim, *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians* (2013).

[41] See Society of Professional Journalists, "Guidelines for Countering Racial, Ethnic and Religious Profiling," https://www.spj.org/divguidelines.asp.

[42] This is taken from a January 02, 2014 site from Wikipedia entitled "United States military casualties of war:" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_military_casualties_of_war. The death toll of the "war on terror" (5,281) is soon approaching the combat death toll of the Revolutionary War (est. 8000).

[43] Classical Islamic jurisprudence only granted a caliph, a mufti or a spiritual sheikh the authority to declare a jihad for the entire Islamic community. No individual Muslim or group of Muslims had that sovereignty. Qutb's writings dismantled this exclusive privilege, allowing even a handful of "purist" Muslims to declare jihad.

[44] See Adnan Musallam, chapter 8, "Martyrdom, Posthumous Impact, and Global Jihad, 1965-Present," From *Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (2005). This new "vanguard" generation goes under many names: jihadists, the Taliban, the Sahabah, Al Qaeda, the *mujahedeen/mujahidin/ muwahhidun*, Salafists, and Wahhabis. However, they are castigated by their enemies as Islamo-fascists or Islamists, or by more descriptive names constructed from hostile adjectives: terrorists, extremists, radicals, fundamentalists, and fanatics. That all the former Islamic names are used by devout proponents and all the later constructs coined by shocked opponents suggests strongly that Western analysts are failing Sun Tzu's fundamental "rule of war:" "*if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperilled in every single battle*" (*The Art of War*, chapter 3).

[45] *Ma'alim fi-l-Tariq* (Milestones: 1964) and Qutb's 30-volumn Qur'anic commentary *Fi zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Quran: completed in 1965).

[46] Musallam, *ibid*.

[47] Founded in 1969, following the crisis of the Arab defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War; in 2011 it changed its name from Organization of Islamic Conference to its present name.

[48] It is noteworthy that Qutbism and/or Shiite imamate influences have sought to plant operational militant bases in all of the original 25-founding members (1969), namely: Afghanistan, Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen. Most of these original OIC member nations belong to the top 25 most-Christian persecuting states in the world.

[49] A *fatwa* is a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority.

[50] Translated from Persian by Clive Irving, *Sayings of the Ayatollah Khomeini: Political, Philosophical, Social and Religious*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1980). See also Daniel Deleanu, *The Little Green Book of Ayatollah Khomeini*, (2011).

[51] Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, *Speech on the day of Mohammed's birth* (1984), cited by Marina Nemat, *Prisoner of Tehran: One Woman's Story of Survival inside an Iranian Prison*, (2008), 40.

[52] Interview for Austrian television, Paris, (November 6, 1978), as quoted by Dr. Jalal Matini, and Farhad Mafie, *'Democracy? I meant theocracy — The most truthful individual in recent history'*, The Iranian (August 5, 2003).

[53] Interview for *The Guardian* in Paris (November 6, 1978).

[54] *Associated Press* interview in Paris (November 7, 1978).

[55] Ruhollah Khomeini. As quoted in Amir Taheri, *Holy Terror: Inside the World of Islamic Terrorism* (1987), 241-43.
[56] http://www.persecution.org/2013/12/03/american-pastor-saeed-abedini-threatened-at-knifepoint-health-deteriorating-in-deadly-iranian-prison/.
[57] http://www.persecution.org/2013/12/12/iranian-pastor-avanessian-sentenced-to-3-%c2%bd-years-prison-by-the-revolutionary-court/.
[58] See also Patrick Sookhdeo. *Global Jihad: The Future in the Face of Militant Islam* (Isaac Publishing, 2007).
[59] OPEC: Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries, formed in 1961 to administer a common policy for the sale of petroleum. Its members are Algeria, Angola, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela. Ecuador and Gabon were members but withdrew in 1992 and 1995 respectively.
[60] Open Doors. 2014 World Watch List Methodology. Op cit., 1. Used with permission.
[61] Ibid. *Developed by World Watch Research.*
[62] For Central African Republic see http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/24/world/africa/archbishop-and-imam-are-united-across-battle-lines-in-central-african-republic.html?pagewanted=1&_r=0&emc=eta1.
[63] As illustrated in a report for members and committees of Congress, written by Alexis Arieff, "Crisis in Central Africa Republic," Congressional Research Service, January 27, 2014, 8-9.
[64] Cited by Dan Isaac of the BBC news in Abuja, Nigeria, (2011) "Nigeria: Anxious days for Christian and Muslim leaders" http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13136318.
[65] What is not asked is: "How does jihadism hijack Islam?" or "How can you hijack a religion?" One cannot hijack something that is inseparable. No one hijacks a human arm. Jihadism or a faith cannot be taken hostage for a ransom, like a family member. It's never a hostage, a prisoner, or a captive.
[66] Open Doors. 2014 World Watch List Methodology. Op cit., 2, used with permission.
[67] See Charity Navigator.
[68] Raymond Ibrahim, "Why Are Christians the World's Most Persecuted Group?" FrontPageMagazine.com, February 28, 2014, http://www.meforum.org/3779/christians-persecuted. (Matt 10:33; see also Luke 14:33).
[69] Rom 12:14.
[70] Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert and Nina Shea, *Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013).
[71] See Avery Willis, *Indonesian Revival, Why Two Million Came to Christ* (Pasedena; William Carey Library, 1977), 9-10.
[72] Bonner Querschnitte, "Cutting Edge Research on Religious Persecution;" *The International Consultation on Religious Freedom Research*, BQ 283b – No. 47b/2013, 3.
[73] Raymond Ibrahim, "Why Are Christians the World's Most Persecuted Group?" FrontPageMagazine.com, February 28, 2014, http://www.meforum.org/3779/christians-persecuted.
[74] Thomas K. Johnson, "A commentary by Thomas K. Johnson," *The International Consultation on Religious Freedom Research*, BQ 283b – No. 47b/2013, p. 3. Notes Johnson, "although only one of these pillars is research, all of these pillars need serious research and publications to become more effective."
[75] The rare exceptions most commonly cited are the exhausted Northern Ireland conflicts, and the current tribal wars in Southern Sudan.
[76] Cf. Rom 13:3-4.
[77] Japan has settled 11,319 Indo-Chinese boat refugees, from 1978 to 2005. http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/refugee/japan.html, but as the Japan Association for Refugees (*Nanmin Shien Kyokai*) admits, "very few people are recognized as refugees in Japan". http://www.refugee.or.jp/en/.
[78] WIN-Gallup International, "Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism: Press Release," WIN-Gallup, 2012. http://redcresearch.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/RED-C-press-release-Religion-and-Atheism-25-7-12.pdf
[79] In particular, reporters Cristina Corbin, Andrea Tantaros, Juan Williams, and Timothy Samuel Shah.
[80] Merrill Knox, "2013 Ratings: Fox News, #1 For 12 Straight Years, Sheds Viewers Too," January 2, 2014, TVNEWSER, http://www.mediabistro.com/tvnewser/2013-ratings-fox-news-1-for-12-straight-years-sheds-viewers-too_b208937.
[81] Timothy Samuel Shah, "Five myths about global Christian persecution," December 10, 2013 FoxNews.com; http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2013/12/10/five-myths-about-global-christian-persecution/.
[82] From Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullian's *Apologeticus* (A.D. 197), chapter 50, s. 13. "We multiply whenever we are mown down by you; the blood of Christians is seed." *Plures efficimur, quoties metumur a vobis; semen est sanguis christianorum.*

Heaven for Persecuted Saints[1]

Ajith Fernando

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Seven of the eight Beatitudes that begin the Sermon on the Mount are about the character and behavior of blessed persons. Only the eighth is about what is done to blessed persons by others: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:10). This must have been particularly significant, as it is the only beatitude given a subsequent explanatory expansion (vv. 11–12).

Clearly, the topic of heaven for persecuted saints was important in the thinking of Jesus. His basic call to discipleship was to a cross (Mark 8:34), which included losing one's "life for [Christ's] sake and the gospel's" (v. 35) and of not being "ashamed of [Christ] and of [his] words in this adulterous and sinful generation" (v. 38). These both imply persecution. Included in this discourse is the promise of final reward for those who take up the cross, which is described as saving one's life as opposed to losing it (v. 35); as not forfeiting one's soul (v. 36); and as acceptance by Christ when he comes with his holy angels (v. 38). Paul's statement that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12) adds to the conviction that the Bible considers persecution to be a basic aspect of discipleship. The gospel is so radical in what it teaches that anyone living anywhere who seeks to obey it should expect opposition.

Persecution, then, is basic to the Christian life and intimately connected in the Bible with the expectation of final reward. It is one aspect of the fundamental Christian principle presented in different ways: a grain of wheat must die before it bears fruit (John 12:24); one must hate one's life in this world to keep it for eternal life (v. 25); one must follow and serve the crucified, glorified Lord in order to receive the Father's honor (v. 26); and one must enter through the narrow gate and follow the hard road along the path to real life (Matt 7:13–14).

The Neglect of the Topic in Protestant Christianity

Protestant theologians, unlike Roman Catholic theologians, generally have not given the connection between heaven and persecution and martyrdom much attention. Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in persecution, given the new wave of persecution against Christians worldwide. But this has not focused much on the connection between persecution and heaven.

Romanian Christian leader Josef Ton's published doctoral dissertation, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven*, deals with this topic. He gives two reasons Protestant theology has generally avoided this topic. The first reason has historical roots. Around the third century, martyrs were so highly esteemed that they were raised to the rank of saints. "Eventually, the death of these saints was considered to have some atoning value, as the death of Christ. They were said to have the same power to forgive sins and to mediate between individuals and God. The veneration of the martyrs, transformed into the adoration of the saints, began in earnest in the fourth century AD."[2] Ton shows that from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries pagan accretions were annexed to martyrology. Thus, even though the Reformers valued martyrdom, when faced with the difficult task of purging martyrdom from these accretions they chose not to give the subject much prominence.

The second reason mentioned by Ton is that the discussion of persecution and its rewards seems to assume the idea of earning rewards, which gives persecution meritorious value and contradicts the doctrines of grace so fundamental to Protestant theology.[3] Ton sets out to reflect biblically on this theology of rewards in his book.

A more recent dissertation by Gregory Cochran helpfully argues for an emphasis on diokology rather than martyrology.[4] The term diokology comes from *diōkō*, the Greek verb meaning *persecution*. Though martyrs have a special place in heaven, especially in the book of Revelation, persecution in a more general sense is associated most often in the Bible with heavenly re-

ward and the cost of discipleship. As we said above, Paul viewed persecution as the lot of every Christian (2 Tim 3:12). Therefore the topic is important for all Christians. Martyrdom is the most prominent expression of persecution and, because it was a real possibility when Revelation was written, is highlighted there as a powerful representation of the cost of discipleship. So Revelation 6:11 says martyrs are given white robes, which were a sign of honor and which Jewish apocalyptic literature used to describe the glory of the heavenly reward.[5]

Does Persecution earn the Merit of Special Rewards?

There is a clear link between persecution and heavenly reward in the New Testament, as the eighth beatitude shows. Paul asserts, "We suffer with him *in order that* we may also be glorified with him," and "this light momentary affliction *is preparing for* us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 4:17; cf. 2 Tim 2:12). Yet the link here is that of a means to an end (instrumentation) and not of cause for an effect (causation). Our sufferings do not earn us the merit of an eternal reward; rather they are necessary experiences that those destined for glory experience. Those who reject the path of suffering for righteousness forfeit the blessedness of heaven by shunning the way of Christ, a way of suffering.

So, when talking of rewards in heaven, we must be careful to distance ourselves from the idea that the rewards are earned as a kind of merit by the person who is persecuted. At first glance we may be inclined to interpret some passages in this way. Jesus speaks of "those who are *considered worthy* to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead" (Luke 20:35). Paul says that the "persecutions" his readers "are enduring … is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be *considered worthy* of the kingdom of God" (2 Thess 1:4–5). On the other hand, Protestant theology explains, as A. W. Tozer puts it, that "the man who believes that he is worthy of heaven will certainly never enter that blessed place."[6] As the classic text goes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8–9).

We should see the word *worthy* in the two verses above as referring not to a worthiness earned through persecution but to the evidence that these are persons who will be *declared* worthy or *counted* worthy at the judgment.[7] The reward is something God graciously gives the persecuted and is not something earned. Even the twenty-four elders in Revelation "cast their crowns before the throne" as they "fall down before" God and exclaim, "Worthy

are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power" (Rev 4:10–11). In heaven God's greatness and honor are incomparable, eliminating any human claim to honor, so that the symbols of honor—crowns—are surrendered at God's feet! The greatest achievements of the faithful were achievements of grace, eliciting joyous thanksgiving to God for the privilege of participation in the work of his kingdom.

Yet there is the language of reward for faithfulness in the Bible.[8] A good balance is seen in the statement by English Reformer and martyr Hugh Latimer (1485–1555): "Every man shall be rewarded for his good works in everlasting life, but not with everlasting life: For it is written, *Vita aeterna donum Dei*, 'The everlasting life is a gift of God.' Therefore we should not esteem our works so perfect as though we should merit heaven by them: yet God hath such pleasure in such works which we do with a faithful heart, that he promiseth to reward them in everlasting life."[9] I would, of course, add (as Augustine emphasized[10]) that even our good works are performed through the strength of God's grace. The focus is on grace, not human achievement.

The Bible teaches that even the privilege of being persecuted is a gift from God. Paul says, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake" (Phil 1:29). The word translated "granted" (*charizomai*) as used here means "to give or grant graciously and generously, with the implication of good will on the part of the giver."[11] Peter adds, "For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly ... But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God" (1 Pet 2:19–20). While suffering does not act as a *cause* of earning rewards, the way to heaven includes suffering as a *means* to that end. Charles Spurgeon said, "He that has long been on the road to Heaven finds that there was good reason why it was promised that his shoes should be iron and brass, for the road is rough."[12] The Bible faithfully warns us of this.

We approach this issue from the perspective that the primary purpose of biblical eschatology is neither to pander to our inquisitiveness about what will happen in the last days nor to inflame our greed for treasures in heaven but to encourage the faithful to persevere along the costly path of obedience. This function of the promise of reward in encouraging faithfulness is well described in Hebrews 10:34–35: "You joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward." One of the hardest things about persecution is, as we shall see later, the shame that comes with it. Jesus, however, tells those who

are persecuted, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matt 5:12). Instead of being ashamed, they should rejoice! Those who suffer great shame and look like fools are encouraged to remain faithful, for this is the wisest path to take, given the prospect of eternal honor as the reward for faithfulness (see below). Paul asserts: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18).

We should mention here that there was a time in the history of the church when martyrdom was such a high honor that some believers sought it for its rewards and blessings. This trend is said to have been triggered with the events surrounding the martyrdom of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who died around A.D. 107. He "admonished Roman believers not to hinder his martyrdom, which they apparently could have done."[13] So, as Gerald Sittser explains, "Some rushed into martyrdom wanting the glory of it. They bore witness to themselves more than they bore witness to the gospel." Because of "this obsession with martyrdom," early Christian leaders had to "establish standards for martyrdom, so that only those who were called to it, against their natural wishes, were given the title 'martyr.'"[14]

Strength through the Heavenly Vision

It would be true to say that persecution triggered in people a fresh awareness of heaven, which gave them the strength to encounter the worst with bright hope. Joseph Ton says, "In times of persecution and martyrdom, men and women are forced to reconsider issues of ultimate concern, particularly with respect to the nature of God and the eternal destiny of man."[15]

In Philippians 1, Paul, writing from prison, mentions his hope of being released from prison (v. 19). Yet he knows he may be called to honor Christ in his body through martyrdom (v. 20). Because martyrdom would result in his going to heaven to be with Christ, he says martyrdom would be "far better" than release from prison (vv. 21–23). But, conceding that staying on would mean more opportunity to serve the people, he says release from prison is preferred (vv. 24–25). Later Paul describes the possibility of martyrdom by being "poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith" (2:17). This same expression is used in Paul's last letter, written from prison when he was sure martyrdom awaited him: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come" (2 Tim 4:6). Then, after proclaiming he has faithfully carried out his work (v. 7), he speaks of his hope of receiving "the crown of righteousness" from Christ (v. 8).

Jesus is even more explicit when he tells the persecuted, "Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:23). In a similar vein Peter says, "But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (1 Pet 4:13–14). At the moment of death, Stephen had a vision of heaven and "saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). At this time of painful rejection by the legal system of his own people, this patriotic Jew has a glimpse of acceptance by the greatest of all Jews, now reigning in heaven. This would have given him the confidence to act with Christ-like serenity, just as Jesus asked his followers to do in Luke 6:23. Once, when a martyr smiled in the flames, those who were putting him to death "asked him what he found to smile at there. 'I saw the glory of God,' he said, 'and was glad.'"[16]

There is a long list of texts in the New Testament that present the heavenly reward as a key motivator to faithfully embracing the cross that Christians encounter. It is a list stunning in its variety, comprehensiveness, and persuasive power. Included in this list are passages that present the alternative to the heavenly vision those who shun the way of the cross will inherit: the way leading to punishment at the judgment.

- At the start of this article we saw how Jesus's basic call to discipleship implies a call to endure persecution and the promise of eternal reward (Mark 8:34–38).
- When the Twelve are sent out on their preaching tour shortly after their selection, they are warned about rejection and persecution in the extended discourse recorded in Matthew 10. First, Jesus talks about the possibility of their message being rejected. He says it will be more bearable at the judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for the towns that reject his message (10:13–15). This is followed by a large section on persecution (vv. 16–28), and a key argument there is that we must "not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." Rather, we are to "fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (v. 28). Then there is a discussion aimed at encouraging them not to fear as they face various difficulties, such as rejection by their own family members (vv. 29–39). Here a key point in Jesus's argument includes heaven: "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (vv. 32–33).
- In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus warns of the prospect of being beaten

in synagogues, standing before governors and kings, being brought to trial, opposition from family members who may even have them put to death, and of being hated by all for the sake of the name of Jesus (Mark 13:9–13). This section of the discourse concludes with the statement, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (v. 13). The salvation talked about here is the heavenly destiny of the faithful.

- Paul, in his discussion on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, says, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor 15:19). Among the reasons why Paul could be pitied is the fact that he is "in danger every hour" and "die[s] every day" (vv. 30–31). But he will not give up this path of the cross. In fact, in view of the coming resurrection, he is able to urge his readers at the end of this discussion: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (v. 58).
- 2 Corinthians 4:9–12 contains one of many lists of Paul's sufferings: "We are afflicted in every way," "perplexed," "persecuted," "struck down," and "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus," for "we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake," so "death is at work in us." But Paul does not lose heart (v. 16). He gives three reasons for his perseverance amidst such hardship. First, he says that through his ministry people are coming to Christ and receiving salvation for the glory of God (v. 15). Second, "though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day" (v. 16). Third, he mentions his hope of heaven: "knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence" (v. 14). A few verses later he says, "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (4:17–5:1).
- In his last letter Paul describes how he is "suffering" for the sake of the gospel, "bound with chains as a criminal" (2 Tim 2:9). He says he "endures everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (v. 10). He wants them also to experience the glory of heaven. Then he says, "The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live

with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2:11–12).

- In Hebrews 10, after listing the persecutions the readers suffered (10:32–33), the writer says the readers endured such persecution because of their hope of heaven: "And you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one" (v. 34). Then he urges them to persevere, keeping the heavenly reward in mind: "Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised" (vv. 35–36).
- Hebrews 11:35 says, "Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life." This is followed by a stirring list of the sufferings of people of faith in the Old Testament era (vv. 36–38).
- Hebrews 13:13–14 urges: "Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."
- In Revelation 2:10 the angel urges the persecuted church in Smyrna, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." Again there is a promise: "The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death" (2:11).
- The church of Philadelphia, which had kept God's Word by exercising patient endurance (3:10), is urged, "Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown" (v. 11). This is followed by a promise related to the glories of heaven: "The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name" (v. 12).

The variety, comprehensiveness, and persuasive power of this list of texts, presenting the heavenly reward as a key motivator to embracing the cross, are stunning. Perhaps equally stunning is how rarely this emphasis figures in the proclamation of the church today. Perhaps this is a reaction to the pie-in-the-sky emphasis of an earlier generation that lulled people to acquiescence at times when they should have been acting to redress wrong.

But the biblical theology of persecution and heavenly reward does not lull us to inaction; rather, it drives us to a life of radical service for the kingdom.

Hebrews 10:34 mentions how the prospect of a heavenly reward helped even persecuted Christians to pursue a life of compassion for suffering people: "For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one." Similarly, Paul told the Colossian Christians of "the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven" (Col 1:4–5). Commenting on this verse, John Piper says, "Hope is the great power to love people in the face of great danger."[17]

In light of this neglect of such a major portion of God's revelation, we should not be surprised that many Christians make choices that tend to avoid the way of the cross. What they think of the church is influenced by a consumerist attitude ("What is the program like in this church?") rather than biblical commitment to the group of people called to be their body, which, of course, involves much discomfort and pain. We should not be surprised by the lack of a sharp moral edge among Christians, or by the church's inability to motivate people to costly commitment and service. In place of a message of radical obedience motivated by the hope of glorious future reward in heaven, we seem to have chosen to entertain our flock with pleasing programs that meet their perceived wants in the present. We seem to be letting marketing approaches used in the society ("Give them what they want now") to silence the voice of Scripture calling people to radical commitment with the promise of heavenly reward.

Strength through Christ's Presence

An important feature of the death of Stephen was his entering into what Paul described as the fellowship of Christ's suffering (Phil 3:10). At the point of death Stephen enjoyed an intimate relationship with Jesus by being filled with his Spirit, being given a glimpse of his glory and the glory of heaven (Acts 7:55–56), and acting as Jesus did when he died (vv. 59–60). The connection between sharing in Christ's sufferings and the heavenly hope is presented in 1 Peter 4:13: "But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."

The doctrine of fellowship in Christ's sufferings is a natural extension of the doctrine of our union with Christ. Christ is a suffering Savior, and if we are to be truly one with him, we too must suffer. There is a depth of union with Christ that comes to us only through suffering. But not only do we share in his sufferings; he also shares in our sufferings. The exalted Christ, sharing in the glory of God, is not deaf to our cries of pain as we suffer; he himself suffers with us when we suffer. Paul came to understand

this on the road to Damascus when he heard Jesus ask, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (9:4). He had been hitting the church, but Christ had been feeling the pain![18]

Matthew closes his Gospel with Jesus's giving the disciples the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18–20). Soon they would find that fulfilling this mission brings with it many challenges and much suffering. So, after giving the Great Commission, Jesus tells his disciples, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (v. 20). Strengthened by God's presence, they would be able to withstand whatever troubles came their way. In Hebrews 13:5, the writer reminds his readers of the promise that God "will never leave you nor forsake you." Then the writer proceeds to say, "So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" (v. 6). The presence of Christ helps us endure hardship that comes from people. David Livingstone often spoke of how the promise of Christ to be with him always encouraged him to persevere in his work amidst so much opposition, loneliness, sickness, and pain. He once wrote in his diary,

> Felt much turmoil in view of having all my plans for the welfare of this great region and teeming population knocked on the head by savages tomorrow. But I read that Jesus came and said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations—and lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world." It was the word of a gentleman of the most sacred and strictest honour, and there is an end on't.

Then, after describing what he hopes to do, even though it may be the last time he will do it, he writes, "I feel quite calm now, thank God."[19]

The primary pursuit in the lives of Christians is to be always deepening their tie with God. If that is intact, suffering becomes bearable. John and Betty Stam were missionaries in China who were martyred by the communists in the 1930s while still in their late twenties. John Stam once said, "Take away everything I have, but do not take away the sweetness of walking and talking with the king of glory!"[20]

This presence of Christ is mediated today through the Holy Spirit. Jesus gave him the name "Helper" (*paraklētos*), which would literally be translated "one who is called to someone's side"; that is, as the lexicon puts it, "one who is called to someone's aid."[21] It is literally translated into Latin as *advocatus*, which gives the English term *advocate*. Jesus says the Holy Spirit will play the part of a helping advocate when persecutors bring believers to trial:

"And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11).

The presence of Christ with us also serves as a foretaste of heaven. Paul describes his experience of the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of the heavenly hope of final redemption: "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23; cf. 2 Cor 5:2). One biblical response to suffering is to groan, but this is groaning as "in the pains of childbirth" (Rom 8:22). That is, it is tinged with the hope of heavenly redemption. The groaner, like the woman in labor, knows the pain will soon be gone. But how can we be so sure about this hope? We have "the firstfruits of the Spirit"—the daily experience of Christ's presence with us. As the familiar song by Fanny Crosby puts it, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!"

While there are many references in the Bible to experiencing the kingdom of God (or heaven) as a future hope, the kingdom is also described as a present reality. Jesus said his casting out demons was a sign the kingdom of God had come upon people (Matt 12:28). The Beatitudes say, of those who are "poor in spirit" and are "persecuted for righteousness' sake," that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:3, 10). Paul said of Christians, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13). As E. Stanley Jones says, "Jesus Christ means to me eternal life. I don't get it hereafter, I have it now in Him. I am sure of heaven, for I am sure of Him. To be in Him is to be in heaven wherever you are."[22]

The theology of groaning expounded in Romans 8 is a good antidote to quitting when the cost of obedience to God gets great. When we suffer for the gospel, we experience pain and feel bad about the way we are treated. Because of this we will be tempted to quit the way of the cross. But our theology tells us we should not be surprised about being frustrated and feeling bad, for that is a normal part of life in a fallen world (Rom 8:20). So, instead of escaping the pain by quitting, we have biblical permission to give expression to our pain in groaning (vv. 22–23).

Romans 8 gives three reasons to persevere in obedience while enduring the pain that accompanies such obedience. First, we have the firstfruits of the Spirit; that is, we experience the presence and provision of Christ (v. 23). Later, Paul waxes eloquent on how nothing, even persecution or other trials, can separate us from the love of Christ (vv. 35, 38–39). In verse 26 Paul says the nearness of the Spirit is so intense that he joins our groaning

by groaning with us. Second, we suffer in hope knowing that the pain is short-lived and will end permanently when we arrive at our eternal heavenly reward (vv. 18–19, 20–24). In fact, "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (v. 18). Third—and this is outside the scope of this paper—"We know that for those who love God all things work together for good" (v. 28), so that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (v. 37).

A Biblical Foursome

In the middle of the section in the Olivet Discourse where Jesus predicts persecution for the faithful is an interjection: "And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations" (Mark 13:10). Matthew's version adds, "and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14). The progression of history towards its heavenly destiny is closely connected with the progression of the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the world. And the proclamation of the gospel is closely connected with persecution. The commonest trigger of persecution, in the Bible and in church history, has been evangelism. Sometimes persecution triggers evangelism, as in the case of the witness of the people who were scattered after the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1–4; 11:19). We have already spoken of the close connection between persecution, the presence of Christ, and the hope of heaven.

So we see a foursome of inseparably connected features of Christian truth: (1) *Evangelism* triggers (2) *persecution*. (3) The *presence of Christ* helps us bear the persecution and gives a foretaste of heaven. (4) The *heavenly vision* helps us be faithful amidst persecution. And evangelism plays a role in bringing the historical progression of the heavenly vision to its climax.

My father, giving a report on persecution in Sri Lanka at a workshop of an international conference on evangelism said the question to ask regarding Sri Lanka was not, "Why are we being persecuted?", but "Why are we not being persecuted?"[23] That was in the 1960s, when the church was experiencing what may be called "post-colonial blues." Embarrassment over the association of Christianity with the British (from whom we got independence in 1948), plus the influence of debilitating liberal theologies, resulted in a largely nominal church that did almost no evangelism among those of other faiths. Thankfully, that scenario changed and evangelistic fervor became a feature of a large segment of the church from the early 1990s. But with that came wave after wave of persecution that is a reality even to the present. When Christians take evangelism seriously, they will call people to a sal-

vation that includes radical conversion. That inevitably invites opposition.

Gracious Martyrs versus Suicide Bombers

Courage in the face of persecution for a cause and for the anticipation of a heavenly reward is sometimes found outside the Christian tradition. What has characterized the Christian response to persecution has been its perpetuation of the tradition of gracious suffering, exemplified by the first martyr, Stephen. This, as we have argued, comes out of a confidence born from an experience of Christ's love and a vision of the glory of heaven. The comparison of Christian and non-Christian martyrdom has become crucial today because of the prominence given to "suicide bombers" in recent times. During the recently concluded civil war in Sri Lanka, this was developed into an art; many prominent people were assassinated by militants willing to sacrifice their lives for their cause.

The Muslim martyrs are especially significant to this article because the promise of special blessings for martyrs in paradise remains one of the primary motivations for dying for the cause. There are *fatwas*, or legal opinions, given by jurists or religious leaders that are appealed to and promise paradise for those who sacrifice their lives as martyrs. Frequently cited in these is a verse from the Qur'an: "Allah has bought from the believers their lives and their wealth in return for Paradise; they fight in the way of Allah, kill and are killed … Rejoice then at the bargain you have made with Him; for that is the great triumph. (9:110)."[24] Recent radical Islamic leaders have, in their pronouncements, promised heaven as one of the rewards of dying for the cause.[25]

While both Christian martyrs and suicide bombers claim to die for the cause of God and are encouraged by a heavenly vision, there are huge differences between the two. Christian martyrs die involuntarily as they are killed by the opponents of Christianity, whereas suicide bombers trigger the bombs themselves. Their aim is to destroy as many enemy targets and people as possible even as they die. Jesus, on the other hand, commands his followers, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44; cf. Luke 6:27, 35). Paul explains further: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink" (Rom 12:20). The last words to come from the mouth of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, are, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60). In fact, Paul says, "If I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:3).

Graciousness, then, distinguishes Christian martyrdom. James, the brother of Jesus, who died for his faith around A.D. 62, is reported to have said, "I beg you Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they are unaware of

what they are doing."[26] In 1913 five tribe members in Toradya in Southern Celebes, Indonesia, killed a missionary but permitted him to pray first. He prayed aloud that they would be saved. Three of the murderers were converted in prison and returned to Toradya, where they founded a church that became one of the largest churches in Indonesia.[27]

Sadly, in the heat of conflict suicide bombers could be regarded as heroes by others. Suicide bombings have been known to encourage others to join the militant movements they represent. Gracious Christian martyrdom also serves to attract people to the gospel of Christ. In the post-New Testament period, witness became so closely linked with persecution that the biblical word for witness, *marturia*, gave rise to the word used for one who dies for his faith—*martyr*. The second-century theologian and apologist Justin Martyr "became a Christian after he had watched the brutal execution of several Christians in Rome." Gerald Sittser explains: "He was moved by their courage and serenity, and he was intrigued by a faith that could engender such uncompromising conviction."[28] Justin said, "The more we are persecuted and martyred, the more do others in ever increasing numbers become believers."[29]

The Cry for Justice

While most martyrs are radiant in death, all feel the sting of the injustice carried out against them. The Bible is alert to the injustice of martyrdom. And the faithful, endowed with God's attitude of repulsion toward injustice, are also troubled by the apparent dishonor to God in the triumph of the wicked. The Bible often records the righteous' crying out for justice via punishment upon the wicked who persecute and hurt them (1 Sam 24:12; Ps 79:10; Isa 6:11; Jer 18:21; cf. Luke 18:7). Usually these cries and prayers are those of people who are still living on earth. Revelation, however, records martyrs in heaven doing so (6:9–10) during the intermediate state, before the final triumph of Christ. Paul's injunction to show kindness to enemies is given in the background of God's enacting vengeance upon the wicked (Rom 12:19–20). The answer the martyrs receive to their cry in Revelation 6 is to wait a little longer until the number of the martyrs is complete (v. 11). Following this, the tables are turned and the wicked rulers cry out in despair, in terror under the hand of God's judgment (vv. 12–17).

It is from the background of commitment to the justice of God that we should interpret the praise to God for the fall of Babylon, the great prostitute, who wreaked havoc in the world. The description ends with the words, "And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who

have been slain on earth" (18:24). Revelation gives the response to this: "After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants" (19:1–2). This is followed by more praise and three more exclamations of "Hallelujah!" (vv. 3, 4, 6).

If heaven is alert to the issue of the injustice of persecution, it is inevitable that the persecuted on earth also would be alert to it. The book of Acts shows that Paul appealed to justice in the face of persecution and did all he could to ensure he was treated justly. He even protested, when he could, about unjust treatment (see 16:37). Clearly he was alert to the fact that condoning injustice and letting it pass unchallenged is damaging to the cause of the gospel.

Similarly, today the church must do all it can to highlight and contend against persecution and work toward achieving justice for the persecuted. It must also work to ensure recognition for Christians as a legitimate unit of society, with the legal right to practice and proclaim their faith. Some believe that gaining such legal recognition was one of Luke's main aims behind the writing of the Acts of the Apostles.[30] Yet even when the persecuted do not get justice on earth, the assurance that justice will prevail in the end helps keep them from being bitter over the injustices they face.

The Shame of Persecution and Anticipating the Honor of Heaven

The above description serves as a warning against romanticizing persecution and presenting it in a sanitized form, which neglects the pain and focuses primarily on the heroism of the persecuted. Persecution is terrible to go through, and this is why it makes the persecuted long so fervently for heaven. Even as I write, I have friends and students in Sri Lanka who live with great fear and uncertainty and have children especially terrified at what is happening around them. Glimpses of this pain are found in Paul's lists of his sufferings, which are presented as real and painful suffering. See, for example, 2 Corinthians 11:23–27:

> Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift

> at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Paul would have had such persecutions in mind when he talked about the frustrations that affected him so deeply: "We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23). Elsewhere he says, "For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling" (2 Cor 5:2). Heaven is presented as a place where these sufferings do not exist anymore: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4; cf. 7:14–17). So heaven is a place of great relief to suffering people, and sufferers longingly live with the hope of an end in heaven to their suffering.

The longing for escape from suffering in heaven is reflected in the prayers of many martyrs in history. Simeon, a bishop of Seleucia martyred in the fourth century, said,

> Lord, grant me this crown for which I have longed; for I have loved you with all my heart and with all my soul. I long to see you, to be filled with joy, and to find rest. Then I will no longer have to witness the suffering of my congregation, the destruction of your churches, the overthrow of your altars, the persecution of your priests, the abuse of the defenseless, the departure from truth, and the large flock I watched over diminished by this time of trial.[31]

Perhaps the hardest aspect of persecution is the shame that comes with it. This is particularly true in our more communally-oriented, so-called shame and honor cultures, where doing things that go against community values (like embracing another religion) are considered a shameful act and an attack on the honor of the whole community. The North African senator and martyr Dativus prayed before his death: "Lord Christ, let me not be put to shame. Christ, I beseech you, let me not be put to shame. Christ come to my aid, have pity on me, let me not be put to shame. Christ, I beseech you, give me the strength to suffer what I must for you."[32]

The humiliation of persecution is most painful because it makes the per-

secuted look like failures and fools and their faith look powerless. But the Bible is keen to remind the faithful that taking on hardship for Christ is a wise investment, the benefits of which are of eternal duration. On the other hand, the rich farmer who had much honor on earth is called a "fool" because "the one who lays up treasure for himself . . . is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20–21). Being called a "fool," of course, is the ultimate expression of shame, and in this case it extends to eternity.

The awareness of the shame factor that comes with discipleship is often seen in the Bible. Peter and John "left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" (Acts 5:41). What the world saw as shame had become a badge of honor. But the greatest honor for those who experience the cost of discipleship is in the future, especially in heaven. After describing how the grain of wheat, which falls into the ground and dies, bears fruit, Jesus promises that the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternity. Then he says that those who serve him will need to follow him (to death). Then he states, "If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him" (John 12:24–26). In Romans 5 Paul talks about rejoicing in the hope of glory and then proceeds to talk about suffering and how God uses it to refine us. The final character that emerges from suffering is hope. "And hope," says Paul says "does not put us to shame" (Rom 5:5).

Jesus warns believers: "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38; cf. 2 Tim 2:12). In the millennium those who were martyred and persecuted "came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev 20:4). The honor of reigning is the complete opposite of the shame of being hounded by those who reigned while they lived on earth. To this we can add the many passages that talk about the shameful judgment that awaits those who reject Christ and his people (e.g., Matt 11:20–24; 12:41–42; Rev. 17–19). Luke 12:20 clearly presents the judgment of the unjust in terms depicting shame. There Jesus called the rich man, who was not rich toward God, a "fool."

I live in a culture where corruption is rampant and where those who refuse to bow down to it but, instead, stick to biblical principles often have to struggle with the shame of failure to get what they need done. They have to work much harder than others if they are to succeed, and even after that they are not guaranteed success. In this environment the prospect of shame for the unrighteous and honor for the righteous at the judgment could be a strong factor in encouraging faithfulness to biblical principles. The doctrine

of judgment was a major motivating factor for resisting corruption and pursuing righteousness in the Old Testament (see Deut 27:25; Ezek 22:12–13; Amos 2:6–16). It could be so today too.

Hebrews 6:1–2 includes "the resurrection of the dead" and "eternal judgment" in a list of the "elementary doctrine" that provides the "foundation" for deeper teaching. The wise Christian leader today would teach these topics as basic to Christianity. We have seen that a major value of this teaching is that it encourages perseverance among those who are experiencing persecution, shame, and other forms of hardship because of evangelism and other forms of obedience to Christ. It reminds them that shame and loss resulting from obedience cannot be compared with the honor and blessing of heavenly reward for obedience. The prospect of heaven is, then, a great motivation to faithfulness in taking up the cross and following Christ.

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[1] This article will also be published in the forthcoming work edited by Robert A. Peterson and Christopher W. Morgan, *Heaven* (Theology in Community; Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), and it is used here by permission.

[2] Josef Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards in Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: Romanian Missionary Society, 2000), xiii–xiv.

[3] Ibid., 14.

[4] Gregory Charles Cochran, *New Testament Persecution and the Inception of Diokology through the Application of the Regnal Righteousness Dynamic* (Ph.D. Dissertation; The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 2010).

[5] Grant Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 288.

[6] A. W. Tozer, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1966), 15.

[7] See Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 118.

[8] For a contrary view that denies a doctrine of continuing rewards in heaven, see Craig Blomberg, "Degrees of Reward in the Kingdom of Heaven?" *JETS* 35 (1992): 159–72.

[9] Hugh Latimer, "The Second Sermon of Master Hugh Latimer on the Beatitudes," in *The Sermons of the Right Reverend Father in God, and Constant Martyr of Jesus Christ, Hugh Latimer, Sometime Bishop of Worcester* (London: Paternoster-Row, 1824), 156; cited in Cochran, *New Testament Persecution*, 203.

[10] P. F. Jensen, "Merit," in *New Dictionary of Theology* (eds., Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 422.

[11] J. P. Louw, and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 568.

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[13] Thomas Schirmacher, "Theses on a Theology of Martyrdom," in *Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom: Theological Reflections* (eds., Christof Sauer and Richard Howell; Bonn, Germany: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2010), 303.

[14] Gerald Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 319 n. 38.

[15] Ton, *Suffering, Martyrdom, and Rewards*, 57.

[16] William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter* (3rd ed.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 49.

[17] John Piper, *Risk is Right* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 23.

[18] This paragraph depends heavily on Ajith Fernando, Acts (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 264–69.

[19] William Blaikie, *David Livingstone: The Authorized Biography* (Dunbar, Scotland: Labarum, reprint, n.d.), 181.

[20] Cited in Sherwood Elliot Wirt and Kersten Beckstrom, *Living Quotations for Christians* (New York: Harper & Row,

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[21] W. Arndt, F. W. Danker, and W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian literature* (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 766.
[22] E. Stanley Jones, *The Word Became Flesh* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1963), 382.
[23] Benjamin E. Fernando. I believe this was at the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin, 1966.
[24] David Cook, "The Implications of "Martyrdom Operations" for Contemporary Islam" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32/1 (2004): 132.
[25] Ibid., 141.
[26] Dwayne W. H. Arnold, ed., *Prayers of the Martyrs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 71.
[27] Schirmacher, "Theses on a Theology of Martyrdom," 307.
[28] Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well*, 33.
[29] Ibid.
[30] John W. Mauck, *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001).
[31] *Prayers of the Martyrs*, 31.
[32] Ibid., 93.

Sermon: "Don't Be Surprised When You Suffer for Christ, But Rejoice!" (1 Peter 4:12-19)[1]

Jarvis J. Williams

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Introduction

I want to highlight four truths from this text. First, don't be surprised when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (v. 12). Second, rejoice, and glorify God when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 13-14). Third, don't be ashamed to suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 15-18). Fourth, trust God when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (v. 19). In order to understand vv. 12-19, I will first discuss two introductory points about the context of our text.

1. Context of 1 Peter 4:12-19.

First, in my view, Peter wrote this letter to exhort Christians who suffered for

their faith in Jesus Christ to be holy and to hope in God as they suffered for their faith in Christ. For example, in 1:6-7, Peter states that these Christians should rejoice although they suffer "various trials" so that their faith would be tested (i.e., refined) and proven to be real at the revelation of Jesus Christ. In 1:13, he exhorts them to hope in the saving grace of Jesus Christ, grace that will be offered to them when Jesus returns (see also 1:13-16). In 2:18-25, he exhorts Christian slaves to endure their suffering at the hands of both unjust masters and just masters in a manner that honors Christ. In 3:14, Peter exhorts these Christians not to fear their oppressors if they suffer for righteousness (i.e., if they suffer as a Christian). Finally, in 4:12-19, Peter exhorts these Christians to honor Christ even if they are insulted, reviled, and ridiculed for their Christian faith. Thus, in my view, Peter wrote this letter to exhort Christians who suffered for their faith in Jesus to be holy and to hope (i.e., trust/wait) for their salvation in Christ as they suffered for Christ.

Second, Peter grounds his exhortations to be holy and to hope in God and God's sovereign work of salvation in Christ. For example, in 1:1-2, Peter calls these Christians, scattered throughout Pontus, Cappadocia, Asia, Galatia, and Bithynia, elect (chosen by God) in accordance with his foreknowledge (i.e., in accordance with his covenantal love that he chose to place on them before the foundation of the world). In 1:2, Peter further states that these Christians are the people of God when he refers to their conversion with the words elect by the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience and for sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ.

In 1:3-5, Peter further explains to his audience that they are the people of God by emphasizing that God himself reached down from heaven and supernaturally invaded their lives by causing them to be born again to a living hope according to his great mercy by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead unto an incorruptible, unfading, and undefiled inheritance, which is being kept in heaven for them, who are being kept by the power of God for an eschatological salvation that has invaded this present evil age and that will be revealed on the last day. Then, Peter says, in verses 6-12, although they suffered various trials in this life, they should rejoice, because they would receive the goal of their faith, namely, the salvation of their souls. Their suffering was a means by which their future salvation would be realized. Based on Peter's brief doxology about God's sovereign work of salvation on behalf of his people in 1:3-12, Peter then exhorts these Christians in 1:13 until the end of the letter to be holy as they suffering for their faith in Christ. Therefore, before we consider 4:12-19, we must remind ourselves that Peter grounds his gospel imperatives to be holy and to hope in the gos-

pel indicatives of God's sovereign work of salvation in the lives of his people who were suffering for their faith in Christ. This reminder takes me to my first point from 4:12-19.

2. Exposition of 1 Peter 4:12-19.

First, don't be surprised when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (v. 12).
Don't be surprised by the fiery trial (12): Peter begins verse 12 by exhorting his audience not to be surprised/shocked by this fiery trial that has come upon them as though something strange/foreign has come upon them. The fiery trial refers to suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ. More specifically, it refers to suffering insults, revilements, and social ostracism from the society in which these Christians lived, because Peter states in verse 14 that these Christians are blessed if they are reviled/insulted for the name of Jesus. This latter point is supported elsewhere in 1 Peter (e.g. 1 Pet 2:12, 18-25; 3:14).

Peter calls this trial "fiery" because he associates it with God's chastening or judgment of his people for the sake of purifying their faith. In 1 Peter 1:7, Peter refers to the suffering of these Christians with an analogy of gold being refined through fire. He asserts in 1:7 that their tested faith, which (tested faith) is more precious than gold refined by fire, would be proven to be real when Jesus returns. Furthermore, in 4:17-18, Peter associates this fiery trial with God's judgment/chastening of his people when he states that judgment begins with God's people at God's house first and that the righteous will be saved by means of difficulty (i.e., by means of suffering). In 4:19, he declares that it is God's will for Christians to suffer. Consequently, if we read 1:7 beside of 4:12-19, we can infer that God brings the fiery trial of suffering for faith in Jesus Christ upon these Christians through evil antagonists of the Christian faith to be a means by which he keeps them in order to strengthen the faith of these Christians so that they will be saved from God's eschatological wrath when Jesus returns.

Second, rejoice when you suffer for your faith in Jesus (vv. 13-14).
The tension between suffering and joy (13): This verse introduces us to one of the many tensions of the Christian faith: namely, the tension of joy co-existing with suffering. Peter says if "you participate in the sufferings of Christ" (by which I think he mentions you suffer for righteousness as a Christian), "then rejoice."[2] I do not expect Peter to say "rejoice" when you suffer! Honestly, in light of verse 12, verse 13 comes as a shock to me since Christians who heard this exhortation and who have read this exhortation throughout history have suffered severely.

Nevertheless, Peter's exhortation to rejoice is not a contradiction, but it is an exhortation to hope in God's promise of eschatological salvation. That is, he is exhorting these Christians to look to the eschatological salvation for which they have been saved and which God will reveal to them on the last day when Jesus returns. In the midst of the certainty of their suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ, Peter reminds these Christians of the certainty of their future salvation, which has invaded this present evil age. This interpretation seems right for the following reasons. First, in the first half of verse 13, Peter says "but to the degree that you share/participate in the sufferings of Christ, you rejoice!" In the second half of verse 13, he gives the reason for the command: "so that at the revelation of his glory" (i.e., at the second coming) "you may rejoice with much exultation." Second, in 1:6-9, Peter exhorts these Christians to hope in their various trials in this life because their suffering is a means by which they will inherit future salvation. Finally, in 1:13, Peter exhorts these Christians to hope in their salvation that God will give to them when Jesus returns. Therefore, in 4:13, Peter exhorts these Christians to hope in the certainty of God's eschatological salvation in the midst of the shame and dishonor that their persecutors brought upon them for their faith. Instead of being ashamed of suffering for Jesus, they should rejoice because they will be saved from their suffering and from God's wrath when Jesus returns since they are the people of God.

The Spirit of God and of glory rests upon those who suffer (v. 14): I think that verse 14 further supports the preceding interpretation. The Spirit rests upon the people of God in 1 Peter. In 1:2, Peter states that these Christians have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit: i.e. they have been converted. Thus, Peter's point in 4:14 seems to be that when Christians suffer for their faith in Christ, this particular suffering proves that they have the Spirit, it proves that they are the people of God, and their suffering for Christ proves that they will be saved on the last day when Jesus returns. Therefore, Christians should rejoice (i.e., hope in Christ's salvation) when they suffer, because we are indeed blessed by God.

Third, don't be ashamed when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 15-18).

In verses 15-18, Peter further explains the argument that he's been making in verses 12-14. Namely, in verses 12-14, the argument is don't be shocked/surprised when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ as though this is a strange thing. But rejoice now when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ, so that you will rejoice on the last day when Jesus returns in his glory, be-

cause if you suffer for your faith in Christ, then such suffering proves that you are converted. In verse 15, Peter now says be ashamed to suffer for unrighteousness because that kind of suffering brings dishonor in God's eschatological law-court. There is no honor when one suffers as a murderer or as a thief or as a busy-body or as an evil-doer, for these acts bring shame in society and in God's eschatological law-court (v. 15). But Christians should not be ashamed to suffer as a Christian (i.e. for their faith in Jesus Christ) because suffering for Christ brings honor in God's eschatological law-court although it brings shame in this life. Christians should, nevertheless, glorify God by suffering for the name of Jesus Christ when non-Christians dishonor and shame them for their faith in Christ. In v. 16, the command to glorify God by the name of Christ is another way of talking about hoping in God (cf. 1:13) and trusting God (cf. v. 19).

In verse 17-18, with an appeal to Proverbs 11:31 from the Septuagint (LXX), Peter specifically offers a reason why Christians should not be ashamed to suffer for their faith in Christ. Namely, God judges his people in the current evil age by means of suffering via evil opponents of the Christian faith (v. 17). In v. 18, he confirms this interpretation by asserting that the righteous (i.e., Christians [v. 16]) will be saved by means of difficulty, whereas the ungodly and the sinner (i.e., the non-Christian) will experience God's eschatological wrath (vv. 17-18). Although vv. 17-18 do not explicitly state the latter point, the context supports it since Peter has emphasized throughout the letter up to 4:18 that Christians are the people of God and that they will be saved from God's future wrath. The implication of 4:17-18 is that non-Christians will not escape God's wrath since they reject Christ, which they demonstrate by persecuting Christians.

Fourth, trust God when you suffer for Christ (v. 19).
Peter concludes 4:12-19 with v. 19 by exhorting these Christians to trust God when they suffer in accordance with his will (i.e., when they suffer for righteousness as Christians) as they live righteously.

3. Nine Points of Application.

1. Don't be shocked when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ. For those of you training for pastoral or serving in pastoral ministry, don't be shocked when your deacons leave your church because they don't like your interpretation of a particular text or your leadership style. Don't be shocked when you receive opposition from those whom you serve. For those of you training to be missionaries or serving currently on the mission field, don't be shocked if you experience severe loneliness and

discouragement or maybe even very few converts throughout your ministry on the mission field. For those of you training to be scholars, don't be shocked if at some point in your academic ministries, you find yourselves in a massive theological controversy. And don't be shocked when the people whom you thought would stand with you and support you do not. Don't be shocked when you suffer precisely because of your faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

2. Trust God when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ, because your suffering for your faith in Jesus Christ proves that you are trusting in Jesus Christ, proves that you have the Spirit, and proves that you will be saved from God's eschatological wrath on the last day (1:6-10; 2:13; 4:17-19).
3. If you grow weak in your faith when you suffer for your faith, ask the Lord to use your suffering for his name's sake to serve as a means by which he keeps you in the faith until the end.
4. When you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ, ask the Lord to use your suffering to evangelize the lost. A powerful testimony to the Lord's faithfulness in suffering can serve as a means by which he converts his elect through your ministry.
5. Be willing to identify with and to help fellow Christians who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ, and be willing to look for ways to minister to the fellow sufferers in the gospel in your churches. There are people in our churches for whom every day that they follow Jesus is a difficult day, because they suffer severely in a marriage, at a job, at a school, or in a community because they have faith in Jesus. Minister with tenderness and with pastoral care to those who suffer in your churches. This is a good ministry, but it is hard for some of us to identify with, to suffer with, and to minister to Christians who suffer in our churches because too many of us only want to associate ourselves with rock star Christians. I would venture to guess that not one of us (including me) naturally thinks about how we can identify with, minister to, and help Christians who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ. Not one of us naturally wakes up thinking about how we can pray for and minister to Christians who suffer in our own churches! No matter how great or how small your ministries become, don't forget about Christians who suffer for their faith in Christ. Don't forget about brothers and sisters who continue to suffer many racial injustices in both church and society because of racism. Don't forget about those brothers and sisters in your churches who can't have kids. Don't forget about those brothers and sisters in your churches who are dying with cancer, who are widows or widowers, or whose kids are re-

bellious against the gospel. Don't forget about those for whom every day they follow Jesus is difficult. Don't forget about the millions of racially and socially marginalized people in our communities throughout the United States and throughout the world that need to hear of the saving power of the gospel.

6. Suffering for the gospel is an honor.
7. Ask God to give you the courage to be willing to suffer for your faith in Jesus if he calls you to do so.
8. Suffer for Jesus with godliness but not with silence. If you're suffering for your faith in Jesus today because of injustice, let your brothers and sisters who can help you know. Suffering righteously for Jesus doesn't necessarily mean suffering silently.
9. Pray for your enemies because God will judge them. The certainty of God's eschatological salvation of his people and the certainty of God's eschatological wrath for unbelievers should free us from hating our enemies and should move us to pray for them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, brothers and sisters: don't be surprised when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (v. 12). Rejoice when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 13-14). Don't be ashamed to suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 16-18). Trust God when you suffer for your faith in Jesus Christ (v. 19). Amen!

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[1] This sermon was originally preached during a chapel service on February 20, 2014 at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

[2] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from 1 Peter are mine.

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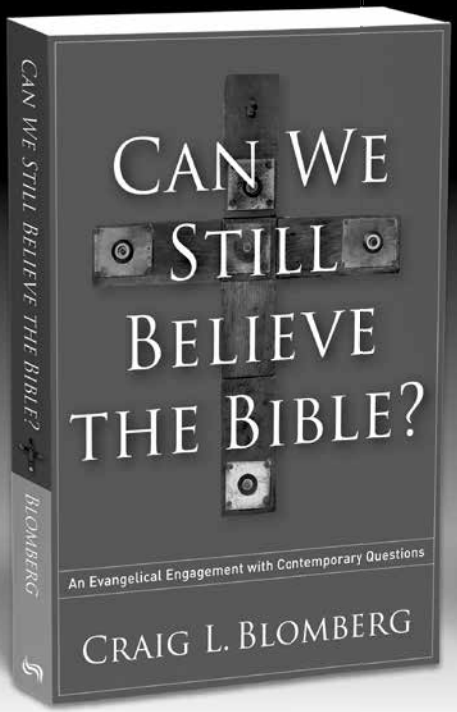

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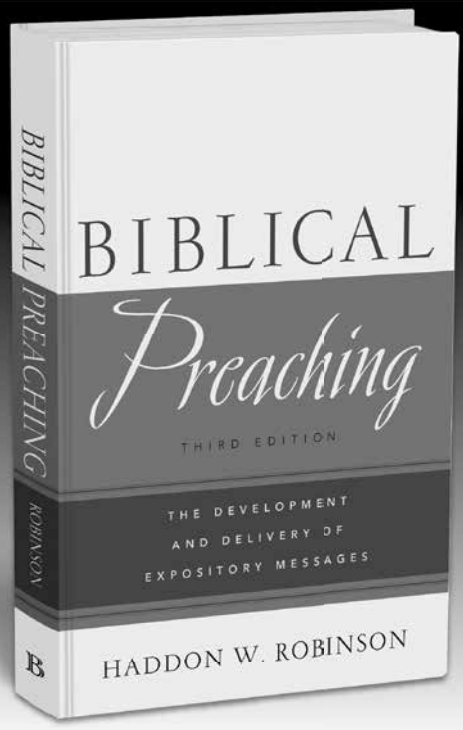

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The SBJT Forum

Thomas R. Schreiner is James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Associate Dean for Scripture and Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also serves as Preaching Pastor of Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

A widely respected New Testament scholar, Dr. Schreiner is the author of countless articles and many books, including *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Baker, 2008), *Galatians* in the Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series (Zondervan, 2010), and *The King and His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Baker, 2013).

SBJT: What does Revelation 12 teach us about the cross of Christ and persecution?

Thomas R. Schreiner: Revelation 12 teaches us that the church faces persecution because of our great adversary the devil. In v. 7 we read about a great war in heaven between Michael, the archangel, and Satan. Michael defeated Satan, and he was expelled from heaven. Verse 9 reminds us of how great that victory is: For our opponent is the devil—the one who slanders us before God. He is Satan (our adversary). He is the one who deceives the whole world. As 1 John says "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). Or, as the gospel of John says he is "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31). He is "the prince of the power of the air." Paul says that there are "spiritual forces of evil" (Eph 6:12) that oppose us.

Satan attempts to destroy the church through persecution or by false teaching. But he is a defeated enemy. John teaches that he is expelled from heaven and thrown to the earth (Rev 12:8-9). But when did this battle with Michael take place? John isn't talking here about the original fall of Satan when he first rebelled against God. Nor is John talking about Satan being evicted from heaven sometime in the future. The key to interpreting Michael's victory is found in vv. 10-11. "And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb.'" Michael didn't triumph over the devil in his own strength. He cast him out of heaven because of the death of Christ, because of the victory won at the cross.

This fits with what John says elsewhere. As Jesus contemplates going to the

cross in John 12:31 he says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out." John doesn't say anything different from what we find in his gospel. The devil has been cast down because he has been defeated at the cross. Michael wins the victory because of what Jesus has done at Calvary. And that means that the accuser of the brethren has now been expelled from heaven. That doesn't mean that Satan has quit accusing us, but his accusations have no basis.

Even though we are not perfect as Christians, we are marked by faithfulness, even when we are persecuted. Those who are saved are those who have not loved their lives unto death. The power of Satan has been broken in our lives if we freely give ourselves to the Lord, and are willing to die for the sake of the gospel. This is one evidence and sign that we have been truly redeemed by the blood of the lamb. We are not perfected but we have a new direction in our lives, so that we are willing to suffer for the Lord.

There is great joy in heaven, according to v. 12, for Satan has been expelled and defeated, but life on earth will be a challenge and difficult, for the devil has come to the earth, knowing that his time is short. The short time refers to the entire period from the resurrection of Christ to his second coming. The devil has been cast down the earth by the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and now he knows his time his short. He knows he is a defeated enemy.

When Satan saw that he had been defeated at the cross and no longer had access to heaven, he was enraged. He knows his time is short. He knows he is going to lose. But he fights anyway. After all, the devil is ultimately insane. He is self-destructive. And the one thing he wants to do is to destroy the woman—the people of God. And so with insane fury he attacks and persecutes the church. We may lose our lives or be discriminated against in employment or suffer financially because of our adherence to the gospel.

Still, the woman (the church of Jesus Christ) is protected by the Lord. She is given the two wings of an eagle and flees to the wilderness. We are reminded of Exodus 19:3, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." The church isn't in the garden of Eden or in the heavenly city but in the wilderness. She is there for a time, times, and half a time, and I would argue that this refers to the time from the resurrection of Christ to the second coming—to the time when Satan was expelled from heaven at the cross until Jesus comes again.

But even though the church is in the wilderness and life is tough, she is nourished and protected by God himself. The devil is enraged and water pours from his mouth to engulf the woman, but the earth opens its mouth, so that she is not drowned. I think it is quite obvious that John doesn't have in mind a literal flood

here. He would be quite surprised to find out that anyone would think that water coming out of a serpent's mouth was interpreted literally. The point is deeper than that. Satan tries to destroy the church with a flood of lies, persecution, and false teaching.

What Revelation teaches us is that it is God who protects the church from falling astray. The devil spews forth his filth and lies and hatred, but the church resists and resists and resists. And the glory of her triumph shines all the brighter because she resists the allurements of Satan.

The church's preservation in the wilderness redounds to the glory of God. For how can anyone stand in the midst of such difficulties? Only by the grace of God. Only through the power of the cross. It is no great virtue to stand when we are in the majority, but to stand when we are in the minority and when we are unpopular and when we are persecuted, that is a testimony to the grace of God. We can look around and get depressed as we see the state of the world. But John tells us: Be encouraged. Even though you are in the wilderness, you will triumph. You will make it to the heavenly city. As Jesus said, "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:19-20).

Life on earth is a battle, but we must not be pessimistic or defeatist. We are to be full of optimism, not because we are strong but because we have won the final victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not need to the fear the devil or demons or disease or death. We are more than conquerors through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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SBJT: We often don't think of Hell and final judgment as a comforting thought but how does Scripture speak of these realities to comfort persecuted Christians?

Christopher W. Morgan: For many evangelicals hell is anything but comforting. Instead the historic doctrine of hell carries baggage, filled with disconcerting questions related to God's love, justice,

and victory. It is as if hell magnifies all our questions of theodicy. Can God really be just to punish people this way? Would a loving God really send nice people to hell? Doesn't hell mar God's ultimate victory? In the eyes of many, hell is deemed an emotional, even moral problem.

There is a sense in which we sympathize with these concerns. In a very real sense, hell is tragic, because sin is tragic. We are rightly repulsed by people who angrily and gleefully wave banners such as "You're going to hell!" as weapons in their cultural wars. No, we do not want people to go to hell, we are grieved at the prospect, and we pray, minister, give, and witness in hopes that people will come to Christ for salvation, glorifying God as worshippers of Jesus. We find such a burden for unbelievers to be appropriate and requisite in light of Paul's own experience and teachings in Romans 9:1-5 and 10:1.

But what is striking is how rarely we contemplate what the Bible itself stresses about hell—that hell is *just*. For example, one well known evangelical wrote, "The ultimate horror of God's universe is hell." While hell is in one sense tragic, it is not the ultimate horror in God's universe—sin is. Hell is the just punishment; sin is the treasonous crime.

Far from displaying our current moral angst, the Bible routinely portrays hell as right, just, and an aspect of God's final victory. Even more, *the Bible regularly instructs about hell in order to comfort God's people, particularly those undergoing severe persecution*.

Hell is presented as a place where people suffer the just penalty for their crimes. Hell as just punishment is taught by every New Testament author: Mark (9:42-48); Matthew (5:20-30; 24-25); Luke (16:19-31); Paul (2 Thess. 1:5-10); the author of Hebrews (10:27-31); James (4:12; 5:1-5); Peter (2 Pet. 2:4-17); Jude (13-23); and John (Rev. 20:10-15). And hell often functions as a comfort God's persecuted people.

One clear example is 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. We may find it startling that Paul here encourages the persecuted saints with the doctrine of hell:

> All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on

the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

Paul comforts these believers by emphasizing the just judgment of God: "God's judgment is right" … "God is just: he will pay back trouble for those that trouble you." ... "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished." Thus, these persecuted Christians can find hope in God's retributive and vindicating judgment.

Another example is James 5:1-6. Like an Old Testament prophet, James castigates the rich landowners who have exploited God's people. James vividly declares that the rich oppressors should weep and wail because God's judgment is coming upon them. And it will be severe, marked by misery and suffering. The corrosion of the exploiters' wealth will serve as a witness against them, and the wages they failed to pay their workers will testify against them. By living in luxury and self-indulgence while their workers virtually starved, the oppressors increased their punishment at the last judgment. In light of this judgment, God's people, the righteous poor, find comfort, are to be patient, and are not to grumble against each other, knowing they too will be judged (5:7–11). James dramatically portrays the withheld wages' shrieking cry, followed by the cry of the harvesters themselves. But who hears these cries? Not the wicked landowners who are too self-indulgent to care (5:5). Not the corrupt justice system that curries the favor of the wealthy. Is anyone listening to these cries? Yes, God himself—the omnipotent Lord of armies—he hears these cries and will come to the rescue, avenging his people and bringing eschatological punishment. Just as Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, James points to God's eschatological judgment upon the wicked in order to comfort and give hope to the persecuted believers.

The doctrine of hell functions similarly in Revelation, which was written in a context of persecution. Revelation urges believers to worship God alone, persevere in the faith, and await God's ultimate victory, which includes his future judgment of the wicked and serves a source of hope and comfort. Revelation 6:10 depicts the cries of the persecuted, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge and avenge our blood ?" Far from finding divine judgment or hell disconcerting, the persecuted long for God's vengeance and pray for it. Their angst centers on questions related to God's patience, not his holy wrath. So Revelation likewise urges the worship of God, fosters perseverance, and offers comfort to the perse-

cuted church by pointing to God's temporal as well as eschatological judgment upon his enemies (see 11:15-18; 14:6-13; 16:5-7; 19:1-8; 20:10-15; 21:7-8; 22:10-15).

Such biblical texts unsettle us and disrupt our contemporary sensibilities, but they serve as important reminders of enduring biblical truths. In this present age, justice is hard to come by. But there is a day coming when justice will prevail. In the end, God's victory will be complete, his reign total, and his peace and justice firmly established. Everyone on God's side will share in his victory, everyone opposing him and his people will be brought down.

For these biblical writers, God's just judgment does not create moral problems but profoundly settles them. Hell reassures believers that evil loses, God wins, and that as God's people, they win, too. When believers are experiencing the all too real pain of oppression in the current evil age, these truths are not disconcerting but sources of comfort, signposts for hope. Such persecuted Christians can have confidence that though they suffer now, their pain does not have the last word. And their persecutors do not have the last word. The last word belongs to God—the God who is ever present with his people in the midst of the persecution, and the God who is coming to judge his enemies and vindicate his people.

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SBJT: Why is it important for Pastor's to preach on the topic of suffering and persecution?

Greg Gilbert: I remember hearing a preacher explain once that he preached so often about suffering from the pulpit so that he could sit quietly with his sheep as they lay in the ICU. What he meant was that he wanted to teach his people a theology of suffering before it actually came to them, so that when it did, they would already have the resources necessary to face it with solidity and faithfulness. Part of the way we as pastors teach the Christians under our care about suffering is in the very way we teach them to pray.

You've probably noticed that when the time comes for Christians to pray for those who are suffering, the most common prayer is simply that God would make the suffering stop. Heal the sickness, make the cancer disap-

pear, solve the problem, and take the hardship away. That's actually a really good place to start, I think. When we pray, it is good for us to come before God and make specific requests of him, yet always to do so with a heart that acknowledges his sovereignty and infinite goodness and wisdom. When I lead my church in prayer for people suffering, I'll often pray something like, "God, we know that you are perfectly good and powerful and wise, and so we trust you to do what is best in this situation. But you also invite us to come before your throne with confidence and to make our requests known to you, and so even recognizing our own finitude and smallness, what we want, O God, and what we ask of you, is that you heal this sickness. Do it so that this sister may be a witness to your greatness; do it so that your Son's name might be glorified. This is what we ask, O Lord, and yet we do so with hearts that are bowed before your throne, trusting that even if you determine *not* to do what we ask, whatever you do is right and best."

Praying specifically and boldly, I think, is a powerful statement of our trust in God even in the midst of the crushing circumstances we face in this fallen world. But is there more we can pray for those who are suffering than simply that their suffering will be taken away? Yes, and the answer to that question comes from recognizing God's purposes for us in our suffering, and then voicing those purposes back to him in prayer. For example, we know from Scripture that God intends our suffering to produce perseverance, so pray that a suffering person might know the power of the Holy Spirit to persevere with faithfulness. Pray that their perseverance might cause them to find joy in the hope of eternity, and pray that through their perseverance, they might grow in reliance on and love for Jesus. We know for a fact from Scripture that God does not allow suffering in our lives for no reason; he always has a purpose for it. Teach your people, even in prayer, about those purposes and ask God to do what he has already promised to do.

We also know from the Bible that God uses our suffering to bring glory to Jesus, because suffering tends to bring us to the end of our reliance on ourselves and our own abilities, and cast us bankrupt at the feet of Jesus. That's what happened to Paul when he prayed that God would remove his "thorn in the flesh." God declined to do so, and told Paul why: "My grace is sufficient for you." In other words, Paul, don't think that strength and comfort and joy will ultimately be found in the absence of suffering; they are found in Me, regardless of your circumstances. I am greater than your pain.

Recognizing that, pray that Jesus might be glorified as a suffering person learns more and more to rely on him, to find joy and comfort in him. As you do, your people will eventually understand that it is ultimately God's glory-

--not their own comfort---that ought to be their aim. And then, ironically but wonderfully, they will find that as their minds are transformed to seek his glory in all circumstances rather than their own comfort, they will find the greatest joy and deepest comfort of all, because they will find it in Him.

Our prayers---especially in the midst of suffering---are a both a powerful witness to our faith in God and a powerful teacher to us a Christians. Commit as a pastor or a church leader not to let your prayers for suffering people, or your church's prayers for them, be shallow and insignificant. When you pray, press into the deep things of God. Uncover his purposes, express faith, and lean into the hope our faith in Jesus Christ provides.

Peter J. Gentry is Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to this, he served on the faculty of Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College for fifteen years and taught at the University of Toronto, Heritage Theological Seminary, and Tyndale Theological Seminary.

The author of many articles, Dr. Gentry is currently editing *Ecclesiastes* and *Proverbs* for the GÖttingen Septuagint Series, is co-author of *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Crossway, 2012), and he provides leadership for the Hexapla Institute.

SBJT: Is there a difference between suffering under the Old Covenant versus under the New Covenant?

Peter J. Gentry: That question is an important one to ask so let's briefly consider it for a few moments as we consider and explore continuities and discontinuities between living under the Old Covenant versus the New.

Scripture clearly distinguishes at least three types of suffering: (1) all humans suffer because (a) we live in a fallen world and in addition (b) our own wrongdoings bring consequences in our lives and in our world; (2) innocent people may suffer because others mistreat them; (3) persons who are just or righteous (in the eyes of God) may suffer for doing what is right.

The covenants inaugurated by God between himself and human parties form the key to the plot-structure of the Bible as a single and unified text. We can briefly survey conditions established by each of the covenants and assess the kinds of suffering discussed or observed in these portions of the plot-structure.

Genesis 1:26-28 establishes a covenant between God and humans on the one hand and between humans and the creation on the other. Adam was called to be an obedient son in relation to God and a servant priest-king in relation to the earth and the creatures living there. When Adam and Eve violated the covenant relationship with God, relations between humans and

between humans and the earth broke down quickly. Cain in anger murdered his brother and Abel suffered. Certainly Abel suffered as an innocent person, and possibly on account of his righteousness. Seven generations later in the descendants of Cain, Lamech murders a boy for merely striking him.

Genesis 3:8-19 demonstrates that God subjected the creation to frustration on account of human sin (Rom 8:20). Corruption and social violence increased to a breaking point in the eyes of God (Gen 6:11-13) so that he brought further judgement in the form of a flood. Again we have suffering in the form of humans wronging other humans and humans subject to divine judgement.

The Covenant with Noah reaffirmed the original Covenant with Creation, but did not change the human heart (Gen 8:21) so that immediately afterwards suffering continues in the drunkenness of Noah and the uncovering of his nakedness by Ham—humans wronging other humans.

After divine judgement destroys human unity at Babel God focuses on one person, i.e., Abraham, and his descendants as a means of blessing or cursing in relation to all the nations (Gen 12:1-3). This introduces a new perspective on suffering: an individual or nation may suffer ill for the way they treat the family of Abraham. We can see this in relation to Pharaoh when Abram sojourns there and Pharaoh takes Sarah as his wife. Later we see something similar, only much more magnified, when the Egyptians mistreat Israel for a long period of time and Yahweh brings his people out by executing judgements upon the Egyptian gods and people. God is true to his promises to Abraham.

Under the administration of the Abrahamic Covenant, Joseph is an example of a person who suffers either for doing right or in spite of doing right. His commitment to purity motivates Potiphar's wife to prevaricate and have him cast into prison. Abel and Joseph appear to be isolated instances whose suffering is not brought about by the covenant situation that governs their lives.

The Covenant with Israel mediated by Moses enables the nation to live in the land given to them by God and experience blessing by showing them how to have a right relationship to God, how to treat each other in truly human ways, and how to be good stewards of the earth's resources. Therefore the Mosaic Covenant administers the outworking of the promises to Abraham in the Iron Age culture and period.

With the Mosaic Covenant suffering becomes more severe in that increased revelation brings greater responsibility. Stephen Dempster notes: "A closer look at the text shows that Israel is treated differently after Sinai. Murmuring is not only judged; it is judged severely. No sooner does Israel leave

Sinai than the complaining of the people results in the divine fire of wrath burning the outskirts of the camp. A conflagration (Taberah Num. 11:1-3) quickly becomes a graveyard (Qibroth Hattaavah 11:34) as many are struck down by the divine wrath for craving meat while being tired of manna. Whereas pre-Sinai Sabbath violation leads to reprimand (Exod. 16:27-30), post-Sinai trespass leads to death (Num. 15:32-36). Israel succeeds against the Amalekites before Sinai (Exod. 17:8-16) but miserably fails after Sinai (Num. 14:41-44). At pre-Sinai Meribah (Exod. 17:1-7) Israel is rebuked; at post-Sinai Meribah (Num. 20:1-13), Moses and Aaron themselves are condemned to exile. Within the overall structure of the text there is thus a hermeneutic that points to the failure of Israel to keep the Sinai covenant and to the virtual inevitability of exile on these terms. The kingdom of Priests mediating creation blessing to the nations does not seem possible for this firstborn son. The sentence of exile that is passed on the great Moses, the one whose face shone with the glory of God, seems to make this point in dramatic fashion (*Dominion and Dynasty* [InterVarsity, 2003], 113).

Under the Old Covenant, then, one might think that full obedience would bring eternal life. The people experienced blessings and cursing in an earthly way: obedience would bring bodily health and strength, good marriages, full families, crops and herds that were successful, and victory over enemies; disobedience brought the reverse (Deut 28).

As Paul points out in Romans 5:12-14, people who lived before the Mosaic Covenant died because all humans are involved in Adam's sin in some way. Even at the very moment that the Mosaic Covenant was being inaugurated and mediated, the people violated it and the text points to the failure of Israel to keep it. So, again, as Paul notes, the Mosaic Covenant revealed sin for what it is (Rom 7:13) and did not remove the death penalty either. At the same time, penalties for sin under the Old Covenant were overlooked as God awaited the full propitiation wrought by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross (Rom 3:21-26). So people did not suffer for sins as much as they might have suffered.

In the section of the Jewish canon known as the Writings, there are reflections on the question of suffering. In the book of Job, for example, Job suffers because of the attack of the Adversary upon him. This suffering, however, is limited by the wager between God and the Adversary. Job's "Comforters" argue from the standard theology of the time that Job is being punished for his wickedness. This is not the case, but the reason for the suffering is hidden from Job and his comforters. Yahweh, the Covenant Lord, answers Job in a storm. He does not explain the reason for Job's trials but

he does demonstrate from Behemoth and Leviathan, symbols of the power of the Adversary within the poetic sections, that his power over creation is much greater than that of the Adversary, however great the power of evil may seem. Not all English translations make this clear, but Psalm 103:26 states that Leviathan is a mere plaything before Yahweh. Thus, according to the Book of Job, a person can suffer for other reasons unknown to us, but known to the heavenly council where the rule of God is supreme.

According to Ecclesiastes, life is beautiful, but as ephemeral as soap bubbles. There are many aspects of life that frustrate logic and reason in attempts to understand them: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve (8:14 NIV). He also affirms that "there is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins" (7:20).

While Ecclesiastes and Job attempt to probe the problem of human suffering, the book of Proverbs is focused on the end results: rewards for the righteous and punishments for the wicked. Nonetheless, the book of Proverbs assumes that the righteous experience pain and poverty for a season. Reflect on these texts: (1) 13:23: "A poor man's field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away;" (2) 16:8: "Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice;" (3) 17:1: "Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife;" (4) 24:16: "for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity." These proverbs show that the book assumes suffering is experienced by the righteous for a season, but it is not the focus of its teaching. Note also that the wicked do lay traps for innocent people and commit acts of social injustice against them (Prov 1:11).

A new stage in God's dealings with Israel and the nations is reached in the Covenant made with David (2 Sam 7). First, a king of the line of David will have a kingdom and a throne forever. Second, this king will function as the covenant mediator in order to make sure the covenant is kept by the people, assuming he fulfills Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Third, the king stands as the covenant head of the nation. He will do for Israel as an individual what Israel has failed to do as a nation and be the instrument to bring the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant to the nations (2 Sam 7:19). Fourth, all nations must eventually receive instruction from this kingly line (Ps 2). This is what makes possible Isaiah's Servant Songs, which show God's solution for the problem of sin and suffering.

The prophecy in Daniel 7, enlarged upon in 8 and 10-12 has a bearing on our topic. Daniel 7 describes four human kingdoms followed by the king-

dom of God. The Son of Man in Daniel 7 represents the divine ruler, the human ruler, and the people of that kingdom. The depiction of this kingdom as a human (Aramaic, son of man), as opposed to an animal, symbolises the fact that only in this kingdom can one achieve what it means to be truly human. The main point in Daniel 7, however, is that the Son of Man, i.e., both leader and people, will enter this kingdom through suffering.

The important teaching in Daniel 7 is taken up by the apostles, the authorised agents of the New Covenant, promised by the prophets of the Old Testament and inaugurated via the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is both divine and human ruler of the Son of Man kingdom in Daniel 7. Although these texts may be familiar to us, they need to be cited to hear them afresh on this topic:

1 Peter 2:11-25: "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor. Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

1 Peter 4:1, 12-19: "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves

also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin … Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

2 Timothy 1:8-12: "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me."

2 Timothy 2:1-3: "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

2 Timothy 3:10-13: "You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse…"

Peter distinguishes between suffering for doing wrong and suffering for

doing what is right or even suffering simply "according to the will of God." If we suffer for doing what is right, we follow the model of Jesus, our Messiah. And in fact, we have been called to this model of suffering under administration of the New Covenant.

Paul supports this teaching in his instructions to Timothy. He is suffering as a messenger of the gospel and Timothy may expect exactly the same thing. Paul's life is a model for Timothy. Persecution and suffering for doing what is right is part of the calling of the believer in the New Covenant community.

There is no teaching like this under the Old Covenant. Apart from sporadic cases, it is not the norm under the Old Covenant. It seems that there is a discontinuity between the Old Covenant and the New in the matter of the question of suffering.

Book Reviews

Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction. By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 912 pp., $49.99.

Writing a systematic theology has to be among the more difficult scholarly tasks. The breadth of disciplinary competence needed is staggering. Add to that, especially in the case of a single volume text, the need to condense, summarize, emphasize, and omit, and inevitably, the result is not only a text that is understandably not exhaustive, but one that reflects the strengths and weaknesses attending those authorial and editorial decisions. This is one of the reasons that I believe the writing of systematic theologies will and ought to continue. For my part, having the ability to consult multiple systematic theologies affords benefits on par with the ability to consult multiple commentaries.

There are some unique, though certainly lesser, challenges that attend the attempt to provide a succinct review of a systematic theology as substantial as Michael Bird's *Evangelical Theology*, which, lack of exhaustiveness aside, still weighs in at over 900 pages! Clearly, such a book is too lengthy to summarize in any detail. So, rather than trying to focus on everything in it, I want to: 1) give a brief bit of background on the author, 2) point out a few of his conclusions to give a flavor for where he comes down theologically, 3) and then interact with Bird's primary premise for the book.

Bird is a lecturer in theology at Ridley Melbourne College of Mission and Ministry in Melbourne, Australia. He writes with great wit, often in a conversational tone that is easy to follow. His principal scholarly training has been in biblical studies, where he has already published several volumes. His application of redemptive history to the study of systematic theology is one Bird's recurring strong suits. Additionally, in *Evangelical Theology*, Bird demonstrates a strong historical grasp that can at times be underemphasized in single-volume systematic texts. Bird opens the book with some comments concerning his theological and denominational pilgrimage, which has left him at the point of being a "Reformed type" attracted to the evangelical catholicity of the Anglican tradition (23-24). His self-proclaimed intent in

this volume is to position his theology opposite the extreme left and right wings of the theological spectrum (22-23).

Noting the following features of *Evangelical Theology* will help to sharpen the reader's grasp of Bird's theological description. For starters, it is always encouraging to hear a biblical studies scholar say he believes that, with a sufficient self-criticalness, it is possible to do systematic theology (60-61). Bird's treatment of doctrines like the Trinity (2.2) and the incarnation (4.7) are thoughtful, historically informed, and orthodox. In the case of the latter, I was particularly pleased with his analysis of the Son's preexistence in relation to the kenosis theory of the incarnation (465-68). In the case of the former, he maintains the functional subordination of the Son to the Father, while rejecting the notion, contra 1 Corinthians 11:3, that this relationship translates into any kind of pattern for husbands and wives (119-120).

In his chapter on creation (2.4), Bird upholds the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Soteriologically, Bird is Calvinistic (514-37, 595-605) with an Amyraldian view of the extent of the atonement (420-34). In one of his more rhetorically charged sections, Bird strongly objects to the imputation of Christ's active obedience (562-64). When it comes to his view on modes of the atonement, Bird believes that the penal substitutionary model of the atonement has solid biblical footing, but he prefers the Christus Victor model as the "crucial integrative hub of the atonement" (414). Ecclesiologically, Bird foregoes a discussion of the relevance of gender as it pertains to ministry roles like that of elder in local congregations. He additionally contends for the practice of "dual baptism" (768-71) and a Reformed view of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper with an advocacy for open communion (787-801). Bird is very good on inaugurated eschatology (3.2). He further self-describes as preterist (3.3), an historic premillennialist, and a posttribulationist (3.4).

Finally, two observations concerning Bird's doctrine of scripture warrant mention as well. First, while Bird seeks to maintain a high view of scripture, he is not a fan of the word "inerrant" outside of the North American context, noting that he prefers to state "the truthfulness of the Christian Bible in positive terms as 'veracity'" (644). Secondly, he does not believe that scripture warrants its own locus in systematic theology (196, 638). So, what Bird does have to say about scripture, pops up in a few places, but mainly in a subsection of his treatment of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Bird proposes that a unique anchoring of theology in the gospel will be the primary distinguishing feature of his systematic text. His self-stated intent is to make "the evangel the beginning, center, boundary, and interpre-

tive theme" of all "the various loci of Christian theology" (21). In principle, this overarching emphasis on keeping the gospel at the center of theology is both valuable and correct. There is much to commend here, and overall, Bird does a good job of keeping the gospel integrated into the explicit center of his work throughout the loci of systematic theology.

And yet, my main observation about *Evangelical Theology* is that what Bird proposes to do here may not be quite as revolutionary (in contrast to previous evangelical systematic texts) as he suggests. At the outset of *Evangelical Theology*, Bird remarks that he did not believe that such a gospel-driven systematic textbook yet exists (11). Following such a claim, I was curious to see how Bird would write his theology. Was he of the opinion that the loci in their traditional form were insufficiently anchored in the gospel? What would be the ripple effects throughout his theology?

As it turns out, Bird's attempt to write from a self-conscious gospel-centered perspective, did not really lead him to profoundly reconceive the traditional loci, or even the sub-topics therein, of systematic theology. He did rearrange the traditional sequence in some places (e.g. writing on eschatology in the first third of the book rather than at the end, not treating scripture as its own locus, treating anthropology after Christology and soteriology, etc.). But it seems that in keeping with most of the traditional loci, Bird himself recognizes the inherent gospel structure already underlying traditional presentations of systematic theology. The gospel begins with the identity and work of God. So the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, then is very naturally not just an outworking of the gospel, but the foundation of it. So also with Christology, soteriology, kingdom, and so on.

I take it then that Bird himself understands the loci as expressions of the gospel in and of themselves, and that they do not need to be fundamentally repurposed to accommodate the gospel, but only that what is implicit in them in some cases can at times be made more explicit and perhaps better arranged in some instances. Again, insofar as his agenda was to keep the gospel explicitly front-and-center (as opposed to assumed and implicit) throughout his work, I believe he was largely successful. But I do not think that *Evangelical Theology* is a radical reorientation of systematics in that it supplies something that was lacking heretofore since there has been a gospel logic underlying systematics.

In further point of that fact, I am of the opinion that the places where Bird chose to rearrange the major loci actually served to diminish rather than enhance their natural gospel logic. I think this is especially pronounced in the case of treating anthropology and sin after Christology, soteriology, and

pneumatology. There is a basic gospel logic to understanding what humans were made for, and what we lost as a result of sin, that is the precondition to understanding why the good news is good news in the first place. I was also dissatisfied with the apparent conclusion that a gospel-centered theology displaces a doctrine of scripture from full theological consideration. Scripture is, after all, the covenant document of the gospel that recounts and applies the mighty acts of God in creation and redemption to the people of God in every generation. So, I do not agree that the doctrine of scripture should be marginally incorporated into a gospel-centered theology.

Two final comments are needed in light of Bird's gospel-centric agenda. The first is that his commitment to being Gospel-centered sometimes leads him to truncate what he calls "secondary issues," such as baptism. The problem is that while these issues may be secondary in the sense of not being, in themselves, a basis for salvation, they are intimately connected to the gospel as expressions of and witnesses to it. So, while I understand and applaud Bird's desire for gospel unity, I do not believe that the practice of "dual baptism" according to preference is a valid way to pursue that goal. For that would serve to diminish the witness of the meaning of baptism to the gospel in the context of the new covenant. Finally, as much as there is to commend about the gospel-centeredness of *Evangelical Theology*, I do think that some of that gospel gain is undercut when Bird diminishes the category of Christ's active obedience, and even condemns it as Pelagian in orientation.

Clearly then, I disagree with some of Bird's conclusions, and sharply so in a few cases. But, on the whole, I am grateful for the way Bird has exerted himself to write a theology that keeps the gospel in explicit focus throughout. As a result, I find that *Evangelical Theology* does make a valuable contribution to the field of systematic texts. I remain of the opinion that systematic theologies (again like commentaries) are best read in the form of a conversation with multiple contributors. Of the contemporary evangelical theologies available, I find that I still primarily gravitate toward Grudem (accentuated nicely by Allison), Frame, and Erickson. *Evangelical Theology* will not displace these volumes as my preferred text to assign to students in my introductory courses in systematic theology, but it is definitely worth having on the shelf as one of several significant systematic theologies worthy of repeated consultation and conversation.

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Four Views on the Historical Adam. Edited by Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013, 288 pp., $19.99 paper.

We live in an era of multiview books, and frequently they help to introduce debates surrounding important issues. This book does just that, though the details can bewilder readers getting their first look at this controversy. At times complex theological and scientific particulars might obscure the big picture, but in the end this *Four Views* book achieves the goal of presenting "the primary views on Adam held by evangelicals" (back cover).

First up is the "No Historical Adam: Evolutionary Creation View" by Denis O. Lamoureux, associate professor of Science and Religion at St. Joseph's College in the University of Alberta. He describes his position as "evolutionary creation" through an "intelligent-design reflecting natural process" (37). "Evolution" for Lamoureux usually seems to mean universal common descent. But he describes the process as intelligently designed, not a product of "blind chance," and thus rejects the atheistic interpretation of evolution (43).

Just what Lamoureux means by an intelligently designed evolution is not quite clear. But he clearly distances himself from the intelligent design movement. He charges intelligent design theorists such as Phillip Johnson and Michael Behe with having "distorted the biblical notion of design" by utilizing a god-of-the-gaps strategy (40, fn.5). Lamoureux alleges that the intelligent design strategy wrongly pits evolution against design, but nowhere details what the Bible teaches on design. The closest he comes is a reference to "beauty, complexity, and functionality" in nature (40). He even distances himself from theistic evolutionists who "attempt to pin Adam on the tail end of evolution" (64). For Lamoureux, believing that God used common descent to bring about the first man mistakenly continues the traditional special creation of the historical Adam.

Belief in a special divine creation of Adam is due to misunderstanding the true nature of the Bible according to Lamoureux. He argues the Bible contains as its message inerrant spiritual truths, but also includes incidental scientific errors. An example of such an error would include the ancient belief that God directly created the first man as the fount of the human race. "To use technical terminology, *Adam is the retrojective conclusion of an ancient taxonomy.* And since ancient science does not align with physical reality, it follows that *Adam never existed"* (58). Moreover, Lamoureux contends that genuine "history in the Bible begins roughly around Genesis 12 with Abraham" (44).

Therefore, Lamoureux rejects concordism, the idea that "the facts of science align with the Bible" (45). The Bible itself, he says, reveals concordism to be false when it teaches geocentrism, a three-tiered universe, a solid firmament, the immutability of animals, and the special creation of Adam. Lamoureux asks: "Do you see the problem? God's *very words* . . . in the Book of God's Words do not align with physical reality in the Book of God's Works. To state this problem more incisively, *holy scripture makes statements about how God created the heavens that in fact never happened"* (54, emphasis his). Now this does not mean God lied, instead he accommodated his revelation to the scientific ignorance of that ancient culture. Even Jesus, according to Lamoureux, accommodated his hearers by utilizing ancient (i.e., erroneous) science in his teachings. Thus, doctrines about the historical Adam specially created by God are simply based on scientific error, but the error is only incidental to the Bible's spiritual message.

Lamoureux writes clearly, leaves no doubt as to his views, and takes great pains to present them irenically. His personal history records that he is a born-again Christian who once zealously advocated for young earth creationism. And though his journey through seminary and graduate science training led him to his current view, his doctrinal commitments are grounded in pastoral concern. Lamoureux desires those convinced of the evolution of the human race not miss what is central to Christian faith: the sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In response to this first essay, John Collins notes that although Lamoureux rejects scientific concordism, he nonetheless accepts a kind of historical concordism aligning biblical events with historical facts. Why then does Lamoureux not believe Genesis 1-11 historical? Moreover, Lamoureux often fails to distinguish what the biblical author says from what Lamoureux understands the author to be saying. According to Collins, Lamoureux never seems to entertain the notion that his understanding of "ancient science" in the biblical texts is mistaken. William Barrick's response to the essay is blunt: "Perhaps a born-again believer could deny Adam's historical existence without losing his or her saving relationship to Christ and everlasting forgiveness of sins. However, although it might not be a salvation issue, the matter is still a gospel issue" (80). Lamoureux's rejoinder to Barrick is equally direct: "I am disappointed by Barrick's thinly veiled questioning of my salvation" (88).

I wish Lamoureux had clarified what he means by an intelligently designed world. He chides intelligent design theorists for holding to a god-of-the-gaps view, seemingly indicating agreement with methodological naturalists' rejection of *any and all* scientific design inferences. But what then

separates Lamoureux from the "atheistic interpretation"? Does he believe the creation objectively reflects intelligent design? If not, it seems he is left with a subjective fideism. Adding to the criticism of Collins, I would add that Lamoureux uncritically pits scientific "facts" against the Bible. But both "books" require interpretation. Not only may he be misinterpreting the Bible (does the Bible really teach the immutability of animals, geocentrism, etc.). But he also makes it appear to his readers that science never gets its theories wrong, or oversteps its boundaries by parading metaphysical assumptions as scientific fact.

Lamoureux accepts the real history of Jesus but rejects the "ancient science" of the Bible. But if modern science is embedded in methodological naturalism, its philosophical kin in mainstream historiography rejects the supernaturalism of the historical Jesus, not to mention all other biblical reports of miracles. Classic theological liberals have also culled spiritual truths out of the Bible while rejecting its ancient and errant worldview. But they, perhaps more consistently than Lamoureux, reject not only the ancient "science" but also the inextricable ancient "history." For example, they say that Jesus's exorcisms reflect not actual historical accounts of the supernatural but an antiquated pre-scientific understanding of mental illness. Lamoureux's goal of removing unnecessary intellectual stumbling blocks to faith in Jesus is laudable. But his method in rejecting the historical Adam unwittingly aids rejection of the historical Jesus.

John H. Walton, professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School, provides the next essay, "A Historical Adam: Archetypal Creation View." Against Lamoureux, Walton believes Adam and Eve were historical persons, but the Bible is more interested in presenting them as archetypes for our instruction. Genesis 2, then, is not making claims about the material or biological origins of humanity. The Bible, therefore, is not competing with science on the issue and says nothing regarding Adam and Eve as the first humans or parents of the race.

On the other hand, since Adam is included in biblical genealogies, Walton believes Adam was genuinely historical. But again, the emphasis is archetypal because Adam's name means "humankind." Being formed from the dust indicates Adam's mortality, not a description of his biochemical makeup. Walton argues that the Bible's message is "Adam is all of us" rather than "All of us came from Adam." Walton does not deny that the latter is *possible*, just that the Bible does not *explicitly teach it*. Walton believes he is in line with the doctrine of inerrancy because, unlike the view of Lamoureux, the Bible is not making specific scientific or historical claims about the material origins of Adam and Eve (117).

Walton presents the novel possibility that Genesis 2 is not an elaboration of the sixth day creation of Adam and Eve. Perhaps it refers to a sequel of events that occurred much later. In this case it is possible many other humans were already living, but God chose Adam and Eve to be the representatives of the human race. Walton stresses this is only a possibility which allows humans to have pre-existed Adam and Eve. If this is true, "then the Bible will not stand opposed to any views that science might offer (e.g., evolutionary models or population genetics), as long as God is not eliminated from the picture" (112-13). Christians need not uncritically accept the scientific consensus, but if this view is correct, no biblical interpreter is in a position to say that the Bible is in conflict with that consensus. Walton concludes, "Godless people are going to choose evolution as their origins model, but evolution is not inherently godless" (116).

Lamoureux responds that Walton's archetypal emphasis resembles his stress upon the message rather the incidentals. But Lamoureux finds it indefensible to claim the Bible has nothing to say about Adam's material origins, even if the Bible is wrong on the issue. Collins argues that Walton's Adam-as-archetype emphasis is misplaced because "the paradigmatic get its power from the historical" (132). Moreover, Jesus understood Genesis 2 to refer to the sixth day by his combining Genesis 1.27 and 2.24 in Matthew 19:3-9 and Mark 10:2-9.

In the end, Walton retains the historical Adam while leaving open the possibility that God used common descent to produce the material from which Adam sprang. Walton avoids pitting the Bible against evolutionary anthropology as does Lamoureux. But Walton's hermeneutic doesn't enjoy the simpler thesis of Lamoureux. Sorting out how Genesis teaches the historicity of Adam but nothing about his origins is no easy feat. Moreover as documented by Collins and Barrick, the Bible seems throughout not only to teach that Adam existed, but also that he was the first man from whom all of us came.

"A Historical Adam: Old-Earth Creation View" by C. John Collins, Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary, is next in line. He argues that Adam and Eve serve as the necessary assumption for the entire biblical story and "were both real persons at the headwaters of humankind" (143). But he distinguishes his view from both young earth and evolutionary creationists whose hermeneutic insists historicity demands a literal reading. Collins takes the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy to be the wise evangelical approach to these matters. Unless the text demands it, historical material need not be written in prose, complete

in detail, or arranged in exact chronological order.

Collins also utilizes the approach of Francis Schaeffer when apparent conflicts between science and theology arise. The strategy enjoys the freedom to recognize reasonable alternatives which harmonize apparent conflicts. At the same time, there are limits to the alternatives drawn by "basic biblical concepts and good human judgment" (168). Applied to the debate at hand, Collins believes the biblical texts invite a historical reading "without getting bogged down in details" (169).

Thus pertaining to the historicity of Adam, Collins employs the three ideas of Schaeffer, and one of his own. First, the origin of the human race must be conceived as supernatural. Second, Adam and Eve are the headwaters of the human race. Third, the fall was both historical and moral. The fourth, the proposal of Collins, particularly concerns itself with population genetics. If anyone believes the current human genetic makeup necessitates more than two humans at the outset, then Adam could be considered the "chieftain" of a closely related tribe. "This tribe 'fell' under the leadership of Adam and Eve" (172). Collins makes clear that, with Schaeffer, he rejects universal common descent as inadequate both scientifically and theologically.

In response Lamoureux takes Collins to task for employing a god-of-the-gaps strategy in asserting God specially and supernaturally created Adam and Eve. Collins's rejoins that a god-of-the-gaps strategy employs the supernatural when one cannot find natural explanations. But that is quite different from recognizing something in principle remains naturalistically inexplicable. Walton notes that Collins holds on to the material discontinuity of Adam and Eve (that is, they were specially and supernaturally created), and that as the headwaters of the human race they have passed on their genetics to the human race. But Walton chides Collins for lack of specifics about the "Adam as head of tribe" possibility, seeming to leave open the door to a view like Walton's with the questions its raises. I wish Collins would have answered whether that theory means God created an entire tribe *de novo* with the requisite gene pool with Adam chosen as its head? If so, how then do Adam and Eve function as the "headwaters" of the human race as Collins insists? Readers might be forgiven for suspecting the solution has too many moving parts. But though the view will strike many readers odd, Collins rejects universal common descent unlike Walton. Barrick stresses his primary difference with Collins pertains to the dating of creation. He regards old earth creationism as yielding to the opinions of evolutionary scientists, whereas his "young-earth view does not accept reinterpreting the scrip-

tures to force it into the evolutionary mold (191)." Since the editors' treat the age of the earth in some detail, I will address Barrick's oft repeated charge in reviewing their introduction later.

The last essay is "A Historical Adam: Young-Earth Creation View," by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament at the Master's Seminary. Barrick contends that Adam's historicity is foundational to biblical inerrancy and authority. His argument can be summarized by several of his representative statements. Without "a historical first Adam there is no need for Jesus, the second Adam, to undo the first Adam's sin and its results" (197). "Arguments used to deny the historicity of the first Adam can be equally applied to the historicity of the second Adam" (204). "Denial of the historicity of Adam, like denial of the historicity of Christ's resurrection, destroys the foundations of the Christian faith" (223). Moreover, Barrick presents a case from the general sweep of the Bible that Adam must be construed as the historical head of the human race. And as he made clear in his responses to the other three contributors, Barrick rejects accommodation to evolutionary science. Barrick obviously has Lamoureux and Walton in mind here with their openness to universal common descent. But Collins also apparently accommodates "evolutionary science" with his old earth view. And just as Collins had primarily distinguished his view from Barrick by holding to an old earth, Barrick develops traditional arguments for understanding the days of Genesis as six, twenty-four hour consecutive days which then necessitates a recent creation.

In response, Lamoureux chides Barrick for including the historicity of Adam in the gospel. "The gospel is about Jesus Christ, not about Adam. The gospel is about the reality of sin, not how sin entered the world" (229). He goes on to accuse Barrick of discouraging respectful dialogue by utilizing emotional outburst instead of logical argument. Lamoureux complains Barrick is content with tradition rather than the Bible as sufficient for adopting a specific interpretation.

Walton criticizes Barrick's method and rhetoric, noting that often Barrick refutes authors not involved with this book. And when Barrick does interact with this book's contributors, Walton charges him with sometimes misrepresenting them and employing the slippery slope fallacy to reject views other than his own. At the same time Walton charges Barrick with inadequately presenting evidence for his own view. I think it fair to say that Barrick does provide far less detail than the others in discussing how his view intersects with the related science issues. Walton's upbraiding continues: "Academic debate should not resort to such scare tactics and defamation" (238). "This

is no way to construct an argument. . . . Pontification does not constitute successful argumentation" (240).

Collins notes how often Barrick cites agreement with him. But he regrets Barrick's failure to utilize the widely accepted *Chicago Statement* for his definition of inerrancy. Collins points out that the framers included old earth creationists, thus not tying inerrancy to the age of the earth. He urges Barrick to stop referring to all non-young-earth views as evolutionary, and notes that belief in inerrancy never circumvents interpretive issues. Finally, Collins finds Barrick's suggestion "astonishing" (250) that consulting ancient Near Eastern materials for help understanding biblical culture is tantamount to skepticism.

Early in his rejoinder Barrick asks forgiveness "for any unintentional misrepresentation of their viewpoints" (252). He next points out he will be equally forgiving for those who criticize his view with over-simplified caricature. Barrick draws a line in the sand between young and old earth views regarding the historicity of Adam. He contends the difference "appears in a variety of ways by which some biblical scholars choose to reduce or minimize the historical accuracy of the biblical text" (252). And he insists that even "if an old-earth proponent rejects evolutionary theory, he relies on human scientific authority to arrive at adherence to partial biblical inerrancy. That is our chief difference" (254).

In many ways, the "pastoral reflections" concluding the book traverse ground covered in the main essays. Greg Boyd, senior pastor at Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, MN, relays his experience coming to grips with these issues. His narrative and views are broadly similar to those of Lamoureux. Boyd does not see the historicity of Adam as central to biblical orthodoxy. Regrettably Boyd alludes to "the history of the western church's battles with science" (261). This depiction is simply false and carries on the Draper-White "conflict" thesis of the late nineteenth century. Historians of science have discredited this view for decades, but the narrative is still popular in portraying Christians as anti-science.

Philip G. Ryken, president of Wheaton College, concludes the book with his pastoral reflection. He writes that denial of the historical Adam is not tantamount to denying the Christian faith. But his final word strikes me as wise. "Since at many points denying Adam's existence appears to be inconsistent with Christian orthodoxy, those who hold this view have the burden to prove how it strengthens rather than weakens an evangelical commitment to the universality of sin and guilt, the possibility of justification, the hope of resurrection, and other necessary doctrines of the Christian faith" (279).

I now turn to the editors' introduction because my remarks regarding it are best served here. Editors Matthew Barrett, Assistant Professor of Christian Studies at California Baptist University, and Ardel B. Caneday, Professor of New Testament in Greek at Northwestern University, St. Paul, are to be applauded for putting together a quality lineup to address a critically important issue. Their introduction contains much that helpfully sets the stage for what follows. Unfortunately, a significant portion of their contribution can unintentionally mislead readers.

They commence their historical reflections by discussing Christian responses to Darwinism. But their analysis begins with the age of the earth, then turns to "evolution" by which they apparently mean universal common descent, and then returns to the age of the earth (15). The early impression left on the uninformed reader is that old earth views first arrive with Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859. The unaware might also justifiably conclude that old earth views are "evolutionary" in nature.

The confusing narrative continues. When discussing *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915), the editors allude to some of its contributors holding to "limited forms of evolution" (17). Their example of this is the old earth view of James Orr. But they note Orr strongly opposed an animals-to-Adam view, and that even his position on animal biological change was a "revolt against Darwinism" (18). Adding to the puzzlement, they point out that not only young earth proponents rejected "evolution," but that old earth creationism represented by the *Scofield Reference Bible,* William Jennings Bryan of Scopes Trial fame, and William B. Riley, the founder of the World Christian Fundamentals Association held strong anti-evolutionist views. They could have included the staunchly anti-Darwinian Charles Hodge, James P. Boyce, and Charles Spurgeon.

Indeed, the overwhelming majority of scholarly anti-Darwinist books written in the century following publication of *The Origin of Species* were written by old earth creationists. The reason was simple—most Christian leaders *were* old earth creationists because that view had largely been adopted *before* Darwinism. The editors seem to recognize this when writing that old earth creationism predated Darwin's book by fifty years, and "how revolutionary six-day-young-earth creationism was in the middle of the last century" among evangelicals and fundamentalists (19). Yet, the introduction continues discounting the similarities between old and young earth creationists while no doubt unintentionally depicting the young earth view as the solidly biblical alternative.

For example, the editors describe the old earth creationism of John

Collins as not precluding "some evolutionary processes or long intervals in the biblical days of creation," but at the same time he "remains critical of theistic evolution, at least in its strongest forms" (32). But the editors provide no examples of just what "evolutionary processes" Collins would endorse. They seem to suggest that holding an old earth view requires acceptance of some form of evolution. On the other hand, the editors portray William Barrick's young earth view as siding with scripture in its claim to contradict "theories of modern science (i.e., evolution)" (34). Again, how Barrick accomplishes all this is never spelled out, simply asserted. Further they declare that "how one understands the days of Genesis, evolutionary theory, and even the age of the earth to a certain extent will impact, in one way or another, what one believes about Adam and Eve" (25). Though clumping "evolutionary theory" with age of the earth issues, the editors never explain how the age of the earth affects beliefs about Adam. In fact, old earth creationists like those mentioned above have for more than a century and a half have held to both a recent special creation of Adam and firm rejection of universal common descent. Happily the editors do better in concluding their introduction by rightly noting that the central issue should be "human biological evolution" (36), seeming to mean what Darwin teaches in his 1871 book, *The Descent of Man*.

In closing this review, I have several recommendations for readers interested in the subject. Read this book, but recognize beforehand that the complex issues involved require more background knowledge than the book offers. The first priority should be to get the history of the relationship between theology and science right. Notice the distinction should be between science and theology as two *theory-laden* disciplines based upon the *facts* of creation and the Bible. Only God perfectly understands His creation and His written Word, and only God understands them perfectly in relation to one another.

Happily the history of their relationship has not been one of conflict but complexity. The church has endured only two major conflicts between theology and science, if by "major" we refer to length of time and breadth of influence. The first major conflict was, of course, the Copernican. Scientists and theologians alike believed in an earth-centered universe. *Theologians misinterpreted the Bible just as scientists misread the creation*. Several generations of scientific discovery from Copernicus to Kepler to Newton confirmed the truth of heliocentrism. Over time the church came to recognize its mistake in accepting the ancient geocentric interpretation of astronomy and the Bible. But this by no means entails that science always gets it right and theology wrong when they clash.

The second science versus theology battle, the Darwinian conflict, has not yet been resolved. Darwin brilliantly discovered how natural "selective" pressures played a role similar to that of trait selection in breeding domesticated species. But his extrapolation from natural selection to universal common descent including human beings continues to be largely rejected by conservative Christians more than a century and a half later. Moreover, when in the wake of Darwinism some contemporary scientists loudly proclaim that the natural world reveals no Creator, this says more about the philosophy of naturalism than the advance of scientific knowledge. *Naturalistic assumptions distort scientists' reading of creation.* Nonetheless, conservative Christians should not suspiciously pigeonhole every science/theology issue into Darwinian categories.

Second, let us strive for philosophical clarity. For instance, definitions determine whether debaters are even discussing the same issues. Terms such as "*evolutionary theory"* or "evolution" are oft used but rarely defined in this book. Darwin's *Origin* itself contains at least three major "evolutionary" notions. (a) Natural selection as the critical explanation for biological change; (b) common descent, the shared ancestry of virtually all living things including human beings; (c) metaphysical naturalism, the notion that Darwinian biology necessitates understanding life as bereft of God's design.

The book betrays no clear working definition of "evolution" for all contributors. On one extreme Lamoureux seems to view the concept as a straightforward scientific fact comprised of universal common descent ensconced in methodological naturalism, the dictate that scientific theories must never entertain supernatural explanations. On the opposite extreme, Barrick never defines "evolution," yet seems to include even those who reject common descent and methodological naturalism. In other words, "evolution" for Barrick seems as much about the age of the earth as anything else: "The old earth view yields to the opinions of evolutionary scientists about the age of the earth and about the process of evolution—just like the view of Lamoureux and Walton" (191). But Barrick's "young-earth view does not accept reinterpreting the scriptures to force it into the evolutionary mold (191)." Only Collins provides a clear multifaceted explanation of the ways the term is commonly used (172).

Another oft word used in the book that suffered from lack of definition is "inerrancy." Every contributor claims to be faithful not only to a high view of biblical inspiration, but to inerrancy. Lamoureux honestly admits that the Bible contains scientific errors but has as its message "inerrant, life-changing, spiritual truths" (41). Walton concludes that Genesis is not telling us

anything about the material origins of the historical Adam and Eve, and since inerrancy has to do only with what the Bible claims, then evolutionary anthropology in general provides no threat to biblical inerrancy (117). And, as we've seen, Collins and Barrick seem to disagree whether the *Chicago Statement* is adequate to define the concept. Unfortunately, the reader with little background knowledge of the historical inerrancy debate suffers a real disadvantage at this point. Even Jehovah's Witnesses claim ownership of the interpretation of the inerrant Bible. But doctrinal content is what matters, not claims of word ownership.

And on biblical interpretation, the reader also should approach this book with more than a little background in hermeneutics. The contributors argue for their respective interpretive principles, and the reader ultimately must discriminate between them with little help from the book. For example, claims to take the biblical text straightforwardly or literally may sound appealing. But apparently literal interpretation is not so straightforward when both Lamoureux and Barrick claim the same approach with such different results. And these strange bedfellows both criticize Collins for reading Genesis with the intent to appease science. Collins reproves them for assuming to know his private motives, when they are entitled to inspect only what he writes.

So, a book which helpfully puts the reader on track to understand a basic doctrinal issue is nonetheless surprisingly complex. Many readers will not realize their pathway to a theology of Adam wends through a frightening scientific, historical, and philosophical minefield. And though daunting issues lie beneath the surface, even much of the visible terrain will be unfamiliar to many. Talk of humans predating the "first" man, or Adam as tribal leader surely will appear odd to the uninitiated. And though the four contributors representatively cover a range of options, quite different versions of each could have been selected with a different set of intricacies and attitudes.

Notwithstanding the challenge, determining the borders of doctrinal orthodoxy on such a vital issue is necessary. This doctrine imbues and informs us regarding whence we came, what is wrong with us, and ultimately how we can be saved. I believe those borders need be clearly defined in the following way. Adam does represent "everyman" *because* he was the first man. His story illumines *because* it is history. Adam is unique *because* he was specially created *de novo*, not descended from animal forms. And most significantly, Adam's rebellion has brought to ruin the entire race which flows from him *because* he is the fountainhead creature made in God's image. And *because* of the first man, Adam, a fallen race unable to rescue itself finds deliverance

only in the last Adam, the second man from heaven.

In the end, the Lord is under no constraint to make every detail clear to us, but believers can and must stand firm on the matters he has revealed, including the nature of the race descended from Adam. Yet patience and humility regarding difficult particulars are perfectly consonant with resting in the assumption that his word and truth are in complete concord.

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Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures, vol. 1. Edited by Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013, 848 pp., $90 cloth.

In November 2013, Eerdmans officially released this new volume of supplementary Old Testament pseudepigraphical texts. The book contains thirty-nine English translations of ancient texts or collected fragments, with introductions and notes by specialists. This work is the first of a planned two-volume series that purports to finish the publishing in English of all significant Old Testament pseudepigrapha up to the beginning of the seventh century A.D.

Many persons reading this book review will hear in the title of this new volume an echo of James Charlesworth's standard two-volume *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Indeed, Charlesworth has written a very nice foreword for this new supplementary text. Let's remind ourselves that in the introduction to his own influential volumes, Charlesworth explained his criteria for including specific writings in the category of pseudepigrapha:

> The present description of the Pseudepigrapha is as follows: Those writings (1) that, with the exception of *Ahiqar*, are Jewish or Christian; (2) that are often attributed to ideal figures in Israel's past; (3) that customarily claim to contain God's word or message; (4) that frequently build upon ideas and narratives present in the OT; (5) and that almost always were composed either during the period 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 or, though late, apparently preserve, albeit in edited form, Jewish traditions that date from that period (*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1: xxv).

This present Eerdmans volume of Old Testament pseudepigrapha is designed to supplement Charlesworth's set of pseudepigraphical texts. It also expands the definition of Old Testament pseudepigrapha to include not only Jewish-rooted documents, but also Christian and pagan works, some with only tenuous connections with Old Testament biblical figures (the pronouncements of the Tiburtine Sibyl, for example). Also, as mentioned earlier, the featured works extend to the early seventh century. An additional forty ancient texts or collections of fragments are slated for a second volume with the caveat that the actual contents may change by time of publication. (The current volume with thirty-nine texts does cause one to wonder if some fortieth truant scholar failed to submit his or her work on time and was thus summarily booted from the project!)

In the introduction to the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, the editors fire a warning shot over the bow of foolhardy non-specialists like myself. They note, "Within New Testament Studies the Old Testament pseudepigrapha have sometimes been abused by scholars who have merely plundered them for parallels to the language and ideas of the New Testament writings." And a-plundering we shall go.

The New Testament faculty and New Testament doctoral students at Southern Seminary obtained a pre-publication copy of the new *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* and discussed it as a gathered colloquium weekly in the Spring of 2013. From these discussions emerged numerous insights to inform background studies, current trends in scholarship, and ongoing debates in biblical studies. Below, I will survey some of our observations.

Two preliminary observations are in order, however. First, I should note that students as a whole were a bit disappointed to discover how late many of the documents in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* were. Students had indeed hoped to plunder the documents for helpful parallels to the first century, but many of the works were too late for such roguish thievery. Second, in our weekly reading, it quickly became apparent that the various translators of the ancient texts were not uniform in their understanding and practice of translation theory. Some of the works were translated with a more functionally equivalent approach, and others with a more formally equivalent method. Likewise, in a few cases, the translations clearly lacked proper final editing by a competent native English speaker. (For example, in *The Syriac History of Joseph*, Potiphar's wife is referred to as Joseph's "mistress.") Our colloquium made extensive editorial suggestions for the portions that we read, but a quick check of the

published manuscript shows that not all of those changes made it into the final publication.

Each week, all colloquium participants read the same ancient text, along with any introductory or explanatory material provided in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*. We then went section by section through the text discussing ways that the document informed or intersected current debates in biblical scholarship or raised questions with biblical parallels. From my perspective (a biased perspective as I organized the colloquium), it was a very fruitful exercise—gathering as a community, seeing new texts, and seeing new things in new texts. We have some very established and knowledgeable New Testament scholars at our seminary. One week I asked if *anyone* had ever read the text we were discussing that day. No one had. In fact, I don't think anyone had even heard of the text, or maybe only one person had. This is one of the benefits of the present volume. Drawing from an obscure body of ancient texts of this sort levels the playing field between faculty and students, so that the joy and serendipity of new discovery does not always fall to the most experienced.

I will now discuss two reasons why I think it is worthwhile for a non-Old Testament pseudepigrapha specialist to acquire, read, and possibly include in class reading, texts from this new supplementary volume—especially in an upper level class.

1. The *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* is an example of the current flourishing interest in ancient literature produced alongside of and in reflection upon our canonical scriptures

This new Eerdmans volume illustrates the ongoing trend toward appreciating and re-appropriating ancient reflections. Every major publisher now seems to have their own ancient commentary or ancient text series. Historical-grammatical exegesis has been declared dead, and the superiority of precritical exegesis is asserted.

Nevertheless, historical-grammatical exegesis, personified, might borrow the words of Mark Twain: "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

Without giving up the good emphasis on the historical-grammatical, author-intended meaning of a text, we can hopefully shed the chronological snobbery of modern biblical scholarship. Eerdmans's new Old Testament pseudepigrapha volume is another step in the right direction of the democracy of the dead—not allowing current biblical discussion to be ruled simply by the majority of living voices.

It should be noted that overlapping closely with Eerdmans's *Old Testa-*

ment Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures is a three-volume joint publication of the University of Nebraska Press and the Jewish Publication Society entitled *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*. The work (published December, 2013) purports to bring together portions of the Septuagint, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Philo. The volumes are unique in emphasizing the common Jewish and scriptural roots of these diverse texts dating from the Babylonian exile to the completion of the Mishnah.

Rather than simply reading summaries of what people thought in ancient times, how wonderful it is for students to discover such information for themselves through the reading of actual ancient texts! I was recently reminded how important it is to know other ancient texts in responding to distortions of biblical Christianity. I was asked by a church member about a book by self-proclaimed biblical scholar Joseph Atwill, who asserts in his book *Caesar's Messiah* that Christianity is a fanciful story dreamed up by the Romans as part of a political machination. Knowing a few ancient Roman writers' treatments of Christianity (Tacitus, Pliny, and Suetonius, for example) exposes Atwill's thesis as complete nonsense.

2. This Old Testament pseudepigrapha supplement illustrates several issues that are very popular and sometimes debated in biblical studies.

We will now look at a few of these issues in a bit more detail.

(a) *Inerrancy*. A generation ago, Jack Rogers and Donald McKim argued that inerrancy was the creation of scholastic Protestantism. Though John Woodbridge answered this erroneous theory effectively, yet it persists. A reading of early Christian and Jewish reflection in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, however, shows that early Jews and Christians viewed the patriarchs and early historical narratives in the Bible as *both* theologically instructive *and* historically accurate. We see this, for example, in the treatment of Melchizedek in *The Story of Melchizedek*—one of the works in this volume. Ancient Christian authors did *not* believe the canonical scriptures contained error.

(b) *Questions of Genre and Hermeneutics*. It seems that the issue of genre and the rules for interpreting genres should be able to be discussed dispassionately. But, in fact, this area of scholarship can be quite controversial.

The issue of labeling particular portions of the gospels as apocalyptic in genre, for example, has recently stirred quite a bit of controversy. When the same issues are illustrated with noncanonical literature, however, it is easi-

er for scholars with diverse views to hear objectively the other side's arguments. Considering apocalyptic imagery in various pseudepigraphical texts for example, is neutral ground on which to build a taxonomy for evaluating the genre of debated canonical text.

(c) *Rewritten Bible*. "Rewritten scripture" or "Rewritten Bible" is a term apparently coined by Geza Vermes more than fifty years ago to describe an ancient writing which expansively retells stories from the Bible. In looking at noncanonical rewritten scripture, it does raise the question: How much of this phenomenon (if any) do we see in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11, for example? And, what interpretive freedom did the re-teller of the story have in his craft?

One text in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, the *Midrash Vayissa'u*, describes in expansive detail the wars fought by Jacob and his sons against the Ninevites, the Amorites, and Esau and his sons. Southern Seminary doctoral students Dan Maketansky and Michael Graham traced the rising prominence of Judah in these "rewritten" scriptures as the tribe of the Messiah's ancestry was exalted by later Jewish interpreters.

This trend is also seen in the *Syriac History of Joseph* (another text in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures), in which Joseph warns his servant, "Watch out and be careful of the hairy man Judah, because if he is provoked to anger and the separate hairs of his chest stand on end, all Egypt will be accounted as nothing in his eyes" (39:3).

About the rising prominence of Judah in ancient Jewish and Christian writings, Maketansky and Graham conclude:

> The theme of the prominence of Judah through specific statements and subtle allusions to key OT figures and narratives in the Pseudepigrapha is paralleled in the New Testament, specifically in the Gospels. Within the Gospels, the authors demonstrate this interpretive trend in order to elevate Jesus of Nazareth. This understanding of an interpretive trend, both in the Pseudepigrapha and the Gospels, comes alongside of recent scholarly discussion. That is, scholars are beginning to see that authors of scripture are not simply using specific citations from the OT to develop their arguments. Rather, they are using these references to draw upon a body of knowledge with which the community is familiar.

(d) *Reception History*. Tracing the way a text has been "received" or understood throughout church history has come to be known as "reception history." One of the doctoral students in our colloquium (Adam Smith) traced the interpretation of John 19:34 (the flow of blood and water from

Jesus' side) from early church fathers up through the sixteenth century. On this journey through reception history, a significant contribution was made by the sixth-century text, *Cave of Treasures* from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures.

(e) *Intertextuality*. Studying how later sacred text pick up and employ earlier sacred text is all the rage, if one can judge the movement by the appearance of the word "intertextuality" in the titles of articles, chapters, books, and professional society papers. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures provides some fresh, largely unplowed ground in which to explore the rich field of intertextuality. One of our doctoral students, Matthew McMains produced a nice study of intertextuality in 5 Ezra, showing how the author of the work was dependent linguistically and thematically on the canonical book of Revelation.

(f) *Background Issues*. Background issues get a bad rap these days, and there are dangers here. We can all point to resources that use the New Testament text as springboard to talk about ancient matters that do not materially affect our understanding of the biblical text. Many scholars now completely ignore important background issues, focusing entirely on literary and canonical readings. But, the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha supplement reminds us that the Bible did not come to us a *New York Times* bestseller (a modern book by one author), but as a series of ancient works in a variety of cultural, political, and linguistic contexts.

Knowing the cultural and historical background can, at the very least, bring the distinctive aspects of biblical teaching into sharper relief. One such example of this use of historical backgrounds is doctoral student Chris Byerly's comparison of the noncanonical *Exorcistic Psalms of David and Solomon* with the exorcism accounts in the New Testament. Byerly concludes:

> The picture of Jesus painted by the gospels, however, tells a much different story [from the Exorcistic Psalms]. Jesus's commands—devoid of any incantation or other common exorcistic technique—are powerful enough to cast out even a great host of demons (Mark 5), and his mere presence strikes fear into the hearts of the evil spirits. Not only does Jesus not require the typical exorcistic strategies, but his authority over the evil spirits is so great that they frequently attempt to utilize these strategies against Jesus. Just as early exorcists had to employ at times complicated formulae and techniques to gain control over a foe that clearly outmatched them, so the demons (and Satan himself!) in the gospels must resort to similar strategies, as they recognize they are no match for the one who stands before them. Therefore, it

is not surprising that Mark tells us that the fame of Jesus spread throughout the region, as witnesses cried out in wonder, "What is this? . . . He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." (Mark 1:27-28)

We make one final note on these noncanonical exorcistic pslams: It is commonly observed that in Jesus's temptation narrative (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), both Jesus and the devil quote Old Testament texts. What is not widely recognized is that the only text which the devil employs (Ps. 91) was frequently used in early Jewish exorcistic circles. The irony of the devil seeking to control Jesus with a common exorcistic formula would likely not have escaped Matthew's original Jewish audience.

Conclusion

Martin Luther recognized that many ancient writings outside of scripture had disappeared in his day. Of course, Luther was not thinking of the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, but the church fathers. In the preface to the Wittenberg edition of his German writings (1539), Luther says, "We need not regret that the books of many fathers and councils have, by God's grace, disappeared. If they had all remained in existence, no room would be left for anything but books; and yet all of them together would not have improved on what one finds in the holy scriptures." I agree with Luther that no improvement can be made on the holy scriptures, but I am grateful that the texts in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* have survived and are now available to us in this fine new volume.

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Preaching: A Biblical Theology. By Jason C. Meyer. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. 368pp., $22.99 paper.

Before becoming the Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Jason Meyer served as associate professor of New Testament at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, MN. His research arenas include homiletics, New Testament interpretation, and New Testament language. He earned his Ph.D. in New Testament from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Meyer's work, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology*, advocates a

Christ-centered homiletic informed by a biblical theology of the ministry of the word throughout redemptive history.

Concerned that many pastors "no longer tremble at the task of preaching" (11), Meyer calls readers of his work, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology*, "back to the Bible" as they labor to be faithful in their homiletical endeavors (13). He attempts, therefore, to employ a biblical theology of the ministry of the word with the hope that it will allow the entire Bible itself to provide a "*holistic answer to what is preaching*" (14, emphasis original). His aim, then, in making manifest this biblical theology of the ministry of the word throughout scripture is for the purpose of "making much of Christ in his word" (305). Thus, he centers his discussion of biblical theology in relation to preaching around three "big-picture categories that best sum up the ministry of the word in scripture: stewarding, heralding, and encountering" (21). He characterizes the ministry of the word in his book as "stewarding and heralding God's word in such a way that people encounter God through his word" (21).

Meyer's work is a complex analysis of homiletical methods and hermeneutical paradigms as they relate to this biblical theology for the faithful stewardship of the word that it may be heralded with compelling accuracy. Thus, his work seeks to ascertain from systematic theology which approach to preaching (i.e., expository or topical) best explicates truths affirmed by evangelicals and then seeks to offer reflections on the place of topical homiletical methods (283-297). To explain the thesis of his work, Meyer subdivides his work into five sections: 1) "The Big Picture: Biblical Theology of the Ministry of the Word," 2) "A Survey of Paradigm Shifts in the Ministry of the Word" 3) "Expository Preaching Today," 4) "Soundings from Systematic Theology," and 5) "Conclusions and Applications." This review will highlight salient points from each of the various sections the reviewer found to be particularly insightful or helpful throughout Meyer's work.

In part one (19-72) Meyer is concerned with what the Bible affirms about the ministry of the word throughout scripture. This section, according to Meyer, is vital to making sense of his work as a whole (14). Interestingly, in this section Meyer does not merely place the burden of homiletical stewardship on the preacher. Rather, he contends that faithful wielding of the sword of the Spirit shifts the burden from the preacher to the hearer (27, 258-259). For this to take place, though, the preacher must unleash the power of the word "in such a way that people encounter God through his word" by his faithfulness to the scripture (31). Faithfulness, for Meyer, includes both "fidelity" to the message revealed in the Bible by the man preaching as well as a man who is full of "faith" (32).

Further, in this section of his work, Meyer seeks to establish the fact that the Bible is not simply a textbook utilized for preaching; it is a story (36). As a story, the "main aim of preaching is not the transfer of information, but an encounter with the living God" (11). To establish that the Bible is one unified story, Meyer offers a "seven-step summary" of the scriptural narrative from Genesis to Revelation using biblical-theological categories (39-42). His summary of the biblical narrative utilizes the Hebrew ordering of the canon instead of the English ordering because he is convinced that "one can better follow the interplay between narrative and commentary sections" (38). Further, his summary of the biblical narrative seeks to make manifest the connection between "the structure of scripture and the story of scripture" (43). Using two vantage points—the view from above (44) and the view from below (45)—Meyer seeks to show that the view from above enables preachers to interpret the view from below as they look backward and forward in the biblical narrative while employing biblical theology in relation to the ministry of the word (53, 59). For Meyer, employing these interpretive vantages enables the preacher to emphasize that "God will bring resolution to the strained song of creation by bringing about a new creation through the coming of the promised King and seed of the woman" (68). God employs faithful heraldic-stewards in bringing about the work of redemption and new creation (68-70).

In part two (73-234) Meyer zooms in on the details of what he calls "steward paradigms" in relation to this biblical theology for interpreters and heralds (72). These paradigms manifest the various types of persons God raised up in particular epochs as heraldic-stewards for the ministry of the word (75). His paradigms cover ten eras in relation to the ministry of the word—creation, covenant, law, Joshua and the Judges and Samuel, kingship, prophets, psalmists and scribes, the Son, the Apostles, and the pastor. For Meyer, the homiletical shifts of "who" is delivering the message are kinetic (69), whereas the "what" of their content—the revelation of the Messiah—is static. Though, he acknowledges progressive revelation throughout redemptive history, the central message has always been the messiah's coming and the messianic crushing of the serpent.

Part three (235-279) is intimately connected with part 1 and focuses on today's context in which we preach from scripture. He notes that the scripture never explicitly defines "expository preaching" nor explicitly advocates it as a homiletical method (237, 272). He contends, however, that expository preaching expresses the homiletical connection between stewarding and heralding biblical convictions (239). Therefore, he argues that preaching to-

day has three "r's": "(1) re-present the word of God in such a way that the preacher (2) represents the God of the word (3) so that people respond to God" (240). The aim of "re-presenting" the scripture accurately so that God is "represented" is textually informed application that demands a response from those who hear the Word proclaimed (250). Expository preaching, then, is a concept that is thoroughly biblical for Meyer (272, 297).

Finally, part four is concerned with substantiating whether "expository preaching" or "topical preaching" best fits with the truths affirmed by evangelicals (283). For, it is by means of the scripture that we interact with God (284). He concludes that topical preaching does not manifest a close reading of the relevant text(s) to substantiate one's claims, nor does it model for auditors how to read well through their homiletical intake of God's word (295-296).

Meyer's work, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology*, is text-centered and biblically saturated. Each chapter is rich not only with homiletical theories, but also with textual examples in order to demonstrate his claims. Additionally, Meyer is both lucid and provocative throughout, even when laboring to articulate his argument. Readers unfamiliar with the development of the ministry of the word throughout the history of biblical revelation will profit from Meyer's thought-provoking work. Meyer's concern throughout his book is encountering God through faithful heraldic-stewardship (21, 238, 284, 310). The preached word has always been intended to elicit positive responses in either first time repentance and faith or deeper repentance and faith toward God. His emphasis on encountering God through his proclaimed word refreshingly accentuates that the preaching enterprise is not primarily about the conveyance of information from the herald to the hearer. Rather, it is about making the Bible come alive through the medium of application so that transformation can take place. Thus, this work will be helpful to disciplined pastors wanting to study more intensely how to make concrete applications.

I have reservations concerning two aspects of Meyer's work. First, in the course of substantiating both the usefulness and power of expositional preaching, he seems to compartmentalize preaching as either expositional or topical. Meyer acknowledges that topical preaching is not inherently anti-textual—it can be done in a way that models faithful heraldic-stewardship (292). It seems, then, that well rounded preachers might develop a variety of sermon styles so that they are able more competently and compellingly to deliver the whole counsel of God to their auditors. Exposition, though anchored to the text of scripture, will look different for the homiletician preaching a doctrinal

sermon versus a narrative sermon versus a biblical-theological thematic sermon versus the rigid logic of some epistolary literature. The foe is not topical preaching per se. Rather, it is preaching unanchored to the Bible, whether it has the form of expositional preaching or the form of topical preaching.

Second, related to this compartmentalization, Meyer contends that the apostles were allowed to preach "non-expositional" sermons because of their epochal context (278). Their preaching, according to Meyer, was primarily evangelistic since they were not pastors heralding to a congregation; since they were not in the era of "pastoral shepherds" in which contemporary preachers currently find themselves (278). This contention, then, leads to a rebuke of preaching which incorporates multiple passages, like the apostles (279). This bifurcation (i.e. evangelistic preaching is non-expositional preaching) communicates that the preaching event is either evangelistically driven for the salvation of auditors or expositionally driven for the building of auditors. Tim Keller, in his lecture "Preaching to Believers and Unbelievers," suggests helpfully that the homiletical event must simultaneously build the congregation and evangelistically address outsiders so that the former are equipped to fulfill the work of the Great Commission and the latter are urged to respond to the proclaimed gospel invitation. Moreover, it was the Good Shepherd, Jesus, who modeled homiletically for the disciples how to herald the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins since the Kingdom had dawned in his person (Matt 4:10; Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 10:11, 14). Jesus himself preached to both believers and unbelievers, though only those with "ears to hear" responded (Matt 12:46-13:58). Meyer rightly notes that preaching, then, must be moored to the scripture. Evangelistic or thematic or doctrinal or narratival sermons are not, it seems to me, inherently non-expositional.

Preachers will find Meyer's book extremely valuable. It's main contention is critical to faithful and effective preaching. It is thought-provoking and saturated with the biblical text. Indeed, his work not only has implications for understanding the biblical and theological revelation of the ministry of the word, but also for powerful expositional preaching as heraldic-stewards. Preachers will be challenged to proclaim the Bible more faithfully by studying this seminal work.

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Seeking the City: Wealth, Poverty, and Political Economy in Christian Perspective. By Tom Pratt Jr. and Chad Brand. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013, 912 pp., $54.99 cloth.

As one reads Chad Brand's and Tom Pratt's *Seeking the City*, he finds a mix of history, philosophy, theology, ethics, economics, and public policy. They write: "What we are engaging in here is a dialogue that has in recent years taken on the name of 'theo-politics' and 'theo-economics.' We are entering the field of dialogue known as "political economy," and we are dealing with it from the standpoint of the Christian Bible, the Christian theological heritage, and biblical Christian ethics" (14).

It appears that they wanted to cover everything in one book. This is a large book with over 800 pages of text. Their reason for writing this massive tome is as follows; "There is so much misinformation in our churches about the way the market works and about the nature of 'just generosity' (to use a phrase that is being bantered around a lot these days) that we believe there is a needed corrective" (14).

As they go about making their corrective, they pull no punches and make it crystal clear that the free market system is compatible with the Christian worldview. At the same time, they also make it crystal clear that Marxism in all of it forms (socialism, fascism, and communism) is not compatible with a Christian worldview. They explain that only neo-orthodox theologians like the Niebuhrs held to a view that Marxism is consistent with a Christian worldview. At the time of these theologians, there were many who believed that the communist system was the model that would succeed in the long run. History proved the Niebuhrs and Karl Marx wrong. Still their understanding of scripture, history, and economics was deficient.

This book is divided into three main parts. The first part, "The way to the city: a biblical journey," provides an analysis of the scriptures as they relate to political economy. This section is very helpful for those who might have honest questions about the legitimacy of the free market. The next part is "The struggle for the city: Rome, Geneva, and the City on the Hill." This part provides a history of the development of economic thought. It shows that the free market economic system has a firm foundation in Christian thought. The last part of the book, "How Should We Live Then," provides some ethical analysis of the free market economic system.

This book has many strengths and only a few weaknesses. The strengths include the fact that the writing is clear. Brand and Pratt do an excellent job of communicating their ideas to their readers. In addition, they do a

fantastic job of explaining the ideas so that the average seminary student can understand them. It cannot be missed that this book is well researched. The extensive use of footnotes throughout the work shows the great care and detail that Brand and Pratt employ in their attempt to be as accurate as possible. They are always careful to not imply too much from the facts and it is obvious that they took great pains to carefully nuance their assessments .

The first weakness of the book is also one of its strengths. In the attempt to be comprehensive, the length of this book is its greatest weakness. Because it is so large, they authors have ensured that only a few people will read this book. The writers were aware that this is a weakness and so they wrote the following: "We do not apologize for this apparent failure to recognize the short attention span of the generation now enamored with 'flash gatherings' generated by short tweets on the internet" (31-32). It is not entirely clear who their target audience is for this book, although one might assume that it is seminary students.

Finally, I also thought that the extensive use of the term "capitalist" was problematic. "Capitalist" is problematic because it is a communist term for free markets. While many people use this term, I do not think that it is appropriate to cede ground to Marxists by using their terms.

All in all, the weaknesses of *Seeking the City* are small when compared to the strengths of the book. Consequently, I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who has questions about a Christian view of political economy. This is especially true for seminary Ph.D. students. Hopefully, more works of this type and quality will be published so that the church can both understand and advocate the right positions as they relate to public policy.

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