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LETTERS

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BOOK REVIEWS

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The *Birmingham Theological Journal* (*BTJ*) is the open access, annual, peer-reviewed journal published by Birmingham Theological Seminary (BTS). The journal provides a venue for BTS students, faculty, and alumni to publish articles and book reviews in the following fields of study: biblical theology, Old and New Testament studies, church history, systematic theology, and related disciplines. The journal seeks to further scholarship by focusing on areas of academic study related to the Bible and its application primarily within the Reformed tradition and a broadly historic Reformed community.

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From the Editors

Dear Readers,

The *Birmingham Theological Journal* is just one of many exciting initiatives at BTS. The seminary continues to experience significant growth across our advanced academic programs, highlighted by the recent launch of both the Master of Theology (ThM) and the DMin in Chaplaincy degrees. In addition, our prison initiative has expanded through a new partnership with Ligonier Ministries, enabling us to train students within the Bibb Correctional Facility using Ligonier's discipleship resources. Within the facility, BTS prison initiative graduates lead the Ligonier certificate training program, the only one of its kind in over 800 prisons served by Ligonier.

In this issue of the *BTJ*, an article and a book review—both related to C.S. Lewis—serve as bookends for the 2025 issue. The opening article explores Lewis's wartime concern over fundamentalism versus "mere" Christianity. Other articles engage the Christ-Faith, Torah-Works debate and the ethics surrounding assisted reproductive technology. Following the articles, we are pleased to offer a guest book review from Ms. Lauren Lockhart, a PhD student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary whose dissertation will examine intertextuality between Paul and the OT. She evaluates a book that offers an alternative view of intertextuality called recontextualization. Concluding the issue is another book review that returns to the C.S. Lewis theme by focusing on Lewis's prophetic insights on Christian living, as depicted in the Ransom Trilogy.

Finally, we want to announce our best article award from the 2024 issue of the *BTJ*. The 2024 faculty review board voted for the article "Division of the Divine: A Brief Study on Divine Objects in the Ancient Near East" by R.R. Lord, who is now our newest editor for the *BTJ*. Congratulations! The recommended citation for this award-winning article follows:

R. R. Lord. "Division of the Divine: A Brief Study on Divine Objects in the Ancient Near East." *Birmingham Theological Journal* 2, no. 1 (Dec. 2024): 19–50.

We appreciate the continued support and interest of our readers. Many collaborators contribute to this journal's success, from authors who share their scholarship to reviewers who evaluate the many contributions, and editors, who steward the process. Thank you for your partnership!

Sincerely,
The *BTJ* Editors

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‘The Great Joke’: C. S. Lewis, World War II and Fundamentalism

W. Harrison Taylor

Abstract: Eighty years after World War II's end, its influence persists in modern society, including the enduring legacy of C. S. Lewis. The war afforded Lewis the platform not only to draw people to faith and edify believers, but also to address a danger he saw growing within the larger Christian community, that of fundamentalism. While the scholarship on British fundamentalism and that on C. S. Lewis has taken important strides in the twenty-first century, their intersection has been relatively overlooked. To that end, this article hopes to encourage further research in this lacuna by exploring the wartime work of Lewis to reveal both the depths of his concern over fundamentalism as well as his counterpoint, “mere” Christianity.

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C. S. Lewis was no stranger to war. From his service in the British army in the First World War to living as a civilian through the Second World War to the driving themes of his favorite Greek and Norse narrative poems, to a persistent motif in his own writings, war permeated the life of C. S. Lewis. It was in part this familiarity which afforded him opportunities, largely during WWII, to address audiences across Great Britain in churches, over the radio, and in print. Yet, Lewis's primary purpose through those efforts was not to raise morale in the midst of a great crisis, but rather to shed light on the unperceived dangers of war for Christians. For Lewis, war was a tool for Satan and, as such, its primary function was misdirection. He saw no coincidence in the fact that, for many, the Second World War became something larger and different than "normal" life or that it was often thought proper that the war should demand the complete attention of all those involved. Satan would only benefit from a fear-driven and war-consumed life as it was a life drawn away from proper Christian living and, in the end, away from God.[1] For Lewis, however, war was not limited to fields of battle. The danger of war was also found for British Christians (although applicable to all) in the divisiveness of fundamentalism.

While British fundamentalists have been relatively overlooked—generally in favor of their more flamboyant American counterparts—recent efforts by scholars such as David Bebbington, Andrew Atherstone, and David Ceri Jones, have provided much-needed correctives to the historiography.[2] Accordingly, while British fundamentalists did not simply adopt

[1] C. S. Lewis, "Learning in War Time," in Walter Hooper, ed., *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), 47–63.

[2] Much of this recent scholarship was a result of the impressive research project led by David Bebbington between 2008–2009 which led to the following: David Bebbington and David Ceri Jones, eds., *Evangelicalism and*

American fundamentalism wholesale, they did incorporate many of its tenets. As historians such as Frank Costigliola have noted, in the midst and wake of the First World War, American culture, including fundamentalism, found a receptive home in a Europe that was grappling with the horrors of war and the systems that had led to it.[3] The fundamentalism that developed at the start of the twentieth century in Britain shared much in common with that popular in America including an opposition to higher criticism, beliefs in the inerrancy of Scripture and premillennialism, as well as a penchant for separatism and militant attitude toward "modernism."[4] British fundamentalists then, while distinct in many ways, were not removed from the modernist/fundamentalist crisis.[5]

Similarly, C. S. Lewis was neither unaware nor indifferent. Traditionally, scholars have viewed Lewis from several perspectives: as a literary scholar, as a novelist, as one of the

Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Some other examples of this growing effort: Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Christian Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024); Andrew Atherstone and John Maiden, eds., *Evangelicalism and the Church of England in the Twentieth Century: Reform, Resistance and Renewal* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2014); Andrew Holmes and Stuart Mathieson, "Evangelical 'Others' in Ulster, 1859–1912: Social Profile, Unionist Politics, and 'Fundamentalism,'" *Church History* 90, no. 4 (2021): 847–72; and Markku Mikael Ruotsila, "The Last Embers of British Fundamentalism," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 74, no. 2 (2022): 1–21.

[3] Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919–1933* (London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 168.

[4] Bebbington and Jones, *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism,* 8–12.

[5] Because the modernists and fundamentalists set the terms for the debates that raged within twentieth-century western Christianity, they have been thoroughly analyzed by scholars and have rightfully dominated the historical discussion of the period. See: Michael J. Utzinger, *Yet Saints Their Watch Are Keeping: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and the Development of Evangelical Ecclesiology, 1887–1937* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006); Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989); and Mark Noll, David Bebbington and George Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1770–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

twentieth century's most renowned Christian apologists, and even as one of traditional Christianity's greatest defenders against modernism.[6] While the growing literature on Lewis is invaluable to understanding him and his significance, these studies have largely overlooked his regard for those who warred within the faith, such as the fundamentalists. In contrast to what Lewis saw as the threat of modernism, which was chiefly ideological, the danger he saw in fundamentalists was not primarily in their beliefs, but rather how they approached Christians who did not agree with them. For Lewis, it was the militant attitude and separatism that not only rankled, but threatened the faith. To be sure, his concern with fundamentalism was not limited to the Second World War. However, as this article contends, Lewis's wartime writings consistently countered the divisiveness of British fundamentalism by proffering a unifying, non-sectarian vision of "mere" Christianity, which he viewed as an antidote to the spiritual dangers posed by war.

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The evening of October 22, 1939, C. S. Lewis addressed a crowd of Oxford undergraduates at the university's Church of St. Mary the Virgin, with the sermon "None Other Gods: Culture in War Time."[7] According to Canon T. R. Milford, who invited him to speak,

[6] For a good indication of the current scholarship concerning C. S. Lewis, see: Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis, A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013); McGrath, *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Mark Noll, *C. S. Lewis in America: Readings and Reception, 1935–1947* (Lisle, IL: IVP Academic, 2023); Stephanie L. Derrick, *The Fame of C. S. Lewis: A Controversialist's Reception in Britain and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005); Wesley Kort, C. S. *Lewis Then and Now* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); John A Sims, *Missionaries to the Skeptics: Christian Apologists for the Twentieth Century: C. S. Lewis, Edward John Carnell, and Reinhold Niebuhr* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995); and Angus Menuge, ed., C. S. *Lewis: Lightbearer in the Shadowlands: The Evangelistic Vision of C. S. Lewis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997).

[7] This talk is also called "Learning in War-Time" and is published as one of the essays in the collection, *The Weight of Glory.* For more on the sermon, see McGrath, *C. S. Lewis,* 191.

Lewis was the perfect person to calm the general unrest among the students prompted by the British declaration of war the previous month.[8] While his national and international fame were still on the horizon, by October 1939, he was increasingly well-known as a Christian writer following the publications of his works, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933) and *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938). His suitability was also aided by the fact that he was an Oxford don who had served on the frontlines during World War I.[9]

For that fall evening, Lewis chose to address a well-worn question: "Why should we—indeed how can we—continue to take an interest in these placid occupations [attending university] when the lives of friends and the liberties of Europe are in the balance? Is it not like fiddling while Rome burns?"[10] That this question was pressing is partly seen through the precedent set by British universities during the First World War when classes were suspended and facilities repurposed for the war effort. Should, in a similar manner, all energy and attention be devoted to the war? As Lewis explored this prevalent idea, he called his audience to consider a parallel point: "To a Christian," he exhorted, "the true tragedy of Nero must not be that he fiddled while the city was on fire but that he fiddled on the brink of hell."[11] If so, he noted, "How can you be so frivolous and selfish as to think about anything but the salvation of human souls?"[12] Lewis claimed that the answer to that question and the question of "How can you be so

[8] Milford was the vicar of St. Mary's, which was the university church at Oxford. For more see: Oliver Tomkins, "Milford, (Theodore) Richard (1895–1987), Church of England Clergyman and Philanthropist," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/40000.

[9] Walter Hooper, "Introduction," in *The Weight of Glory*, 17–18.

[10] Lewis, "Learning in War Time," 47.

[11] Ibid., 48.

[12] Ibid., 50.

frivolous and selfish as to think of anything but the war?" had much in common.[13]

He assured his audience that "neither conversion nor enlistment in the army . . . will simply cancel or remove from the slate the merely human life which we were leading before we entered them."[14] The war, he contended, "will fail to absorb our whole attention because it is a finite object and, therefore, intrinsically unfitted to support the whole attention of a human soul."[15] Yet, despite this impossibility and the fact that Lewis believed the war "cause to be, as human causes go, very righteous," he made it clear that attempts to completely devote one's life to the war were potentially damning.[16] Further addressing this point, he stated, "A man may have to die for our country, but no man must, in any exclusive sense, live for his country. He who surrenders himself without reservations to the temporal claims of a nation, or a party, or a class is rendering to Caesar that which, of all things, most emphatically belongs to God: himself."[17]

With regard to Christianity, Lewis added, "It is clear that [it] does not exclude any of the ordinary human activities. St. Paul tells people to get on with their jobs. He even assumes that Christians may go to dinner parties, and, what is more, dinner parties given by pagans."[18] For Lewis, "even the humblest" of activities "will be accepted, if they are offered to God."[19] Clarifying this point, he added: "A mole must dig to the glory of God and a cock must crow. We

[13] Ibid., 50 and 51.

[14] Ibid., 52.

[15] Ibid., 52.

[16] Ibid., 53.

[17] Ibid., 53.

[18] Ibid., 54.

[19] Ibid., 56.

are members of one body, but differentiated members, each with his own vocation."[20] As for pursuing the academic life in particular, Lewis claimed that it was "not the only road to God, nor the safest, but we find it to be a road, and it may be the appointed road for us." Still, with that commendation of academic pursuits echoing in the hall, Lewis reminded his audience that there were limits, just as there were with supporting the war cause, and they would know that "the time for plucking out the right eye has arrived" if they came "to love knowledge—*our* knowing—more than the thing known."[21]

For Lewis, nothing temporal, whether it was patriotism or fear or profession, was to take priority or distract from what was truly important, the eternal, which was comprised of a person's relationships with God and other people. A glimpse of this idea is found in another talk that Lewis gave in St. Mary's church on June 8, 1941 called "The Weight of Glory." To this audience he exhorted, "There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilisations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours."[22]

This emphasis on the eternal over the temporal is also found throughout Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* which were initially published that same year in a church magazine called the *Guardian.*[23] Within these letters, Screwtape, a demon of some importance, offers sage advice to

[20] Ibid., 56.

[21] Ibid., 57.

[22] C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," in Walter Hooper, ed., *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), 46. For more on this idea, see Jacobs, *The Narnian*, 230–31.

[23] McGrath, C. S. *Lewis*, 216. The individual articles would be collectively published in book form in February, 1942.

his upstart nephew Wormwood on how to ensnare human souls for their "Father below." Throughout, Screwtape stresses the importance of the temporal for successful entrapments. In one letter Screwtape demanded "a full account of the patient's reaction to the war, so that we can consider whether you are likely to do more good by making him an extreme patriot or an ardent pacifist."[24] With the war in effect, he added, "There are all sorts of possibilities."[25] Picking up the point in a later correspondence, Screwtape writes, "I had not forgotten my promise to consider whether we should make the patient an extreme patriot or an extreme pacifist. All extremes, except devotion to the Enemy, are to be encouraged."[26] He added, "Any small coterie, bound together by some interest which other men dislike or ignore, tends to develop inside itself a hothouse mutual admiration, and towards the outer world, a great deal of pride and hatred."[27]

Yet this could and did extend beyond patriotism and pacifism to include the Church. For Screwtape, and Lewis, extremist and factious Christians were often a boon for diabolical objectives. Screwtape informed his nephew that "even when the little group exists originally for the Enemy's own purposes, this remains true."[28] He added, "We want the Church to be small not only that fewer men may know the Enemy but also that those who do may acquire the uneasy intensity and the defensive self-righteousness of a secret society or a clique."[29] Ideally, the elderly demon instructed, these temptations—separatist-minded Christians and

[24] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters with Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1961), 30.

[25] Ibid., 30.

[26] Ibid., 40.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

Patriotism/Pacificism—could be combined. To that end, Screwtape continued, "Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the 'cause,' in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of the British war-effort or of Pacifism."[30] Screwtape continued, "Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing."[31]

As is evident through this demonic exchange, C. S. Lewis saw the aforementioned dangers resulting from war as diabolical in origin. Yes, for Lewis, it was Satan who was the source of these problems. Still, war was the tool of the moment, and Lewis makes clear that the party spirit within the church was another dangerous temporal distraction prompted by a warring mind. Screwtape reinforces this point when he reminds Wormwood that if he cannot keep his human floating from one church to another "looking for the church that 'suits' him," the demon should prompt the man "to at least be violently attached to some party within it."[32] Although Lewis never specifically mentions the growing fundamentalist movement by name, the demon excitedly described characteristics that are easily associated with the group. In the nineteenth letter, Screwtape writes, "You complain that my last letter does not make it clear whether I regard *being in love* as a desirable state for a human or not. But really, Wormwood, that is the sort of question one expects *them* to ask! Leave them to discuss whether 'Love', or patriotism, or

[30] Ibid., 42.

[31] Ibid., 42.

[32] Ibid., 81 and 84.

celibacy, or candles or altars, or teetotalism, or education, are 'good' or 'bad.' Can't you see there's no answer? Nothing matters at all except the tendency of a given state of mind, in given circumstances, to move a particular patient at a particular moment nearer to the Enemy or nearer to us."[33] In the subsequent publication, *Screwtape Proposes a Toast,* Lewis presents the old demon relishing a wine made from the blending of contentious "Pharisees." Screwtape instructs his audience that these Christians were the "types that were most antagonistic to one another on Earth. Some were all rules and relics and rosaries; others were all drab clothes, long faces, and petty traditional abstinences from wine or cards or the theatre."[34] But, he added, "both had in common their self-righteousness and the almost infinite distance between their actual outlook and anything the Enemy really is or commands."[35] Screwtape triumphantly concluded: "The fine flower of unholiness can grow only in the close neighbourhood of the Holy. Nowhere do we tempt so successfully as on the very steps of the altar."[36] As is seen here, for Lewis, many of the diabolical stumbling blocks that endangered Christianity were unwittingly embraced by separatist-minded Christians, such as the fundamentalists, who put a stringent ideology before the welfare of Christendom.

While the publication of *The Screwtape Letters* captivated American audiences and saw Lewis's fame spread beyond Great Britain, it was his wartime talks on the BBC that captured the attention of his fellow Britons.[37] As Alister McGrath has noted, the BBC wanted a "voice of

[33] Ibid., 98–99.

[34] Ibid., 185.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] McGrath, *C. S. Lewis*, 205. For more in-depth studies on the reception of Lewis's work in the United States and Great Britain, see Mark Noll's *C. S. Lewis in America* and Stephanie L. Derrick's *The Fame of C. S. Lewis*.

faith" to offer "a transdenominational vision of Christianity" that might benefit the entire nation in their time of crisis.[38] This vision matched Lewis's well, and between 1941 and 1944 he wrote and presented four series of talks that would be initially published individually across three volumes: *The Case for Christianity* (1942); *Christian Behaviour* (1943); and *Beyond Personality* (1944). He continued to hone this material until it finally appeared in 1952 as *Mere Christianity*.[39]

The purpose of his work was twofold: "Ever since I became a Christian I have thought that the best, perhaps the only, service I could do for my unbelieving neighbours was to explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times."[40] He added that he hoped to help "the cause of reunion," and if he was unsuccessful in that attempt, he hoped he had "made it clear why we ought to be reunited."[41] Simply put, Lewis countered modernism and fundamentalism with evangelism and Christian unity, rooted in 'mere' Christianity.[42] In this work, prompted by the Second World War, the idea of war within the faith was on his mind, and Lewis compared "mere" Christianity to a hall and the various denominations and sects to the rooms on the hall. He stated that Christians should be primarily interested in getting people in the

[38] Ibid., 206 and 207. McGrath notes that Lewis first presents "an image of nondenominational Christianity" in his publications in his novel, *The Pilgrim's Regress,* when he addresses "Mother Kirk." It was in the "Mother Kirk" that Lewis, McGrath argues, saw reconciliation between reason and imagination. For more, see McGrath, *C. S. Lewis*, 172.

[39] Ibid., 218–19.

[40] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1982), 7.

[41] Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 12.

[42] Any survey of Christian history reveals this idea was not original to Lewis, but Lewis himself points to inspiration by the Puritan Richard Baxter who wrote, in his *Church History of the Government of Bishops and Their Councils*, that he strove to be simply a "meer Christian." For more see McGrath, *C. S. Lewis,* 219–20, and Baxter, *Church History of the Government of Bishops and Their Councils* (London, 1681), xv.

hall, not forcing them into any one room.[43] To do so could hurt the welfare of Christianity.

That welfare was better served, Lewis stated, if the specifics of doctrinal and creedal differences between Christians were not common topics of discussions. If it were necessary for the issues to be addressed, they should only be handled by "real experts," from which he excluded even himself.[44] Again, Lewis was taking aim at those within the Christian faith who focused solely on what made them different from other Christians. He referred to such groups as the "borderline . . . men not exactly obedient to any communion," and they would not be found at the center of the universal Church "where her truest children dwell."[45] Although Lewis chastised the divisive within the faith, he refrained from using their tactics—for example, challenging their salvation—as he proceeded. His most severe criticism was not included in his book, but rather in an unguarded letter to the Italian priest, and future Catholic saint, Don Giovanni Calabria, when he wrote that sectarianism was "one of the Devil's keenest weapons."[46] Within his talks/book, however, he settled for the implication that they were not the Church's "truest children." Lewis does not mention the fundamentalists by name, but rather relies on their well-known position on the doctrine of Atonement to draw his readers' attention to them.[47] He wrote:

> You can say that Christ died for our sins. You may say that the Father has forgiven us because Christ has done for us what we ought to have done. You may say that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. You may say that Christ has defeated death. They are all true. If any of them do not appeal to you, leave it alone and get on with the formula that does. And, whatever you do, do not

[43] Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 17–18.

[44] Ibid., 7.

[45] Ibid., 12.

[46] C. S. Lewis, quoted in Reed Jolley, "Apostle to Generation X: C. S. Lewis and the Future of Evangelism," in Angus Menuge, ed., C. S. *Lewis: Lightbearer in the Shadowlands: The Evangelistic Vision of C. S. Lewis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 93.

[47] For more on the fundamentalist view of the doctrine of atonement see: Bebbington and Jones, *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism.*

start quarrelling with other people because they use a different formula from yours.[48]

For Lewis, Christ as God and savior was the key; pushing beyond that might prove personally edifying, but it should not be used as a weapon. As scholars have noted, *Mere Christianity* can be seen as a substitute for the modernist vision of Christianity; however, it should also be recognized as an alternative to the combative fundamentalist vision as well. Through the work, Lewis was attempting to reshape the contemporary discussion of the central tenets of Christianity. By focusing on the beliefs "common to nearly all Christians at all times" Lewis contended, and hoped, that the Christian community would largely sidestep internal conflict and the snare laid out by Satan.[49]

For Lewis, *Mere Christianity* was only part of a larger plan, and he confided as much in a letter to the American poet Mary Willis Shelburne: "I have always in my books been concerned simply to put forward 'mere' Christianity."[50] In this way each publication allowed Lewis to counteract the destructive interpretations like that of the modernists and fundamentalists. This included *The Great Divorce* which was first published in the Anglican newspaper, *The Guardian,* from 1944–1945 and then as a standalone book in 1946. The story is presented as a dream, and in the dream, the main character, presumably Lewis, found himself in a place called Grey Town. Unaware that he, along with everyone that he meets, is a ghost, he joins a bus trip to what turns out to be Heaven. Once in Heaven, each specter on the journey is met by a guide. Usually, these guides were a friend or relation who tried to convince the ghostly travelers to stay despite the initial pain of enduring Heaven as a shadow. The exchanges between the main

[48] Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 284–85.

[49] Ibid., 7.

[50] C. S. Lewis to a Lady, 16th March 1955, in W. H. Lewis, ed., *Letters of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1966), 262.

character and his own guide—Scottish author George MacDonald—reveal how Lewis used the work to introduce "mere" Christianity. For instance, MacDonald revealed to the protagonist that the controversies which so easily distracted Christians on earth were insignificant in Heaven. As he struggled to accept the idea, MacDonald joyfully explains: "That's what we all find when we reach this country. We've all been wrong! That's the great joke. There's no need to go on pretending one was right! After that we begin living."[51] Again Lewis emphasized the idea that Christians should focus on the commonalities of their beliefs instead of the differences because, as the guide noted, despite mankind's best efforts those beliefs were riddled with error and were, therefore, unsuitable as the sole foundations for the faith. Driving the point home, MacDonald tells the ghost that despite the many doctrinal disagreements that plagued the church, "Never fear. There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says in the end, 'Thy will be done.'"[52]

As the Second World War drew to a close, Lewis raised these issues again with the publication of the novel, *That Hideous Strength.* This was the concluding novel to what has been termed his "space trilogy" or his "Ransom trilogy" (named for the central character, Dr. Elwin Ransom), that had started with the 1938 publication of *Out of the Silent Planet* and continued in 1943 with *Perelandra.*[53] The dangers associated with war are subtly woven throughout the series. For example, *Perelandra,* while largely set on another planet, takes place during WWII which affords Lewis, through Ransom, an opportunity to echo his previous warnings about war

[51] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce: A Dream* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 102.

[52] Ibid., 75.

[53] For what is still one of the best studies on the "space trilogy," see Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,1974), 162–81. For a more recent study see Rhys Laverty, ed., *Life on the Silent Planet: Essays on Christian Living from C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy* (Landrum, SC: Davenant Press, 2024).

found in his sermons and *Screwtape Letters*, while prompting his readers to consider their contemporary situation, and if they were Christian, the broader context of their faith. In *That Hideous Strength,* Lewis asked his wartime readers to imagine an alternative England shortly following the war. While the threat of Nazi Germany for his alternate England had passed, Lewis presented the crystallization of a danger that had been found throughout all the novels—"scientism."[54] "Scientism" for Lewis was the idea promoted by individuals such as J. B. S. Haldane, Bertrand Russell, and H. G. Wells, which contended that science alone was the remedy for the ailing modern world.[55] *That Hideous Strength* provided him a vehicle to challenge manifestations of scientism at the same time that the extents of Nazi Germany's experiments in eugenics were coming to light. In this fictional world, Lewis posited a united Christian faith as a powerful counteragent to the threat of scientism. Unfortunately, and reflecting the realities of mid-twentieth century British Christianity, there was no such broad community. As Ransom explained to a newly awoken Merlin, the whole of Christendom could not be called on to fight this evil, because "the Faith itself is torn in pieces since your day and speaks with a divided voice."[56] Internal warring had crippled the potentially powerful Christian church, and the groups responsible would be ineffective against the threat, but Lewis made it quite clear that the small group of united Christians that Ransom mustered at that time was superior to the factious remainder of Christendom. In the end, these "mere" Christians were enough, and alternate England was saved; however, after the dust settled, a question still lingered: what might a united, or even largely united, faith accomplish?

[54] For more see McGrath, *C. S. Lewis,* 233–37.

[55] Ibid.

[56] C. S. Lewis, *The Space Trilogy: Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, That Hideous Strength* (New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1997), 633–34.

In part, this question motivated C. S. Lewis's work during (and after) the Second World War regarding an issue he saw hindering Christianity—the subjugation of the eternal by temporal concerns. The immediacy of the war meant that Lewis could more easily draw his audience's attention to the temptation of focusing exclusively on the war, a temporal reality, while their eternal relationships with God primarily, and others secondarily, suffered, perhaps irreparably. Of course, in this sense war was not entirely unique in that any temporal devotion would yield the same result; however, the feelings inspired by the war were hard to overlook, which made Lewis's arguments all the more compelling. The war also afforded Lewis the opportunity to address the danger of warring and separatist parties within Christianity, such as fundamentalism. The nature of that British fundamentalist movement meant that it could be both a temporal distraction for those within the faith and off-putting for those outside. When differences between Christians held sway in the public arena, he wrote, "We are much more likely to deter him from entering any Christian communion than to draw him into our own."[57] Although he shared with the fundamentalists an intense dislike of modernist Christianity, his wartime talks and writings reveal his concerted effort to counteract both movements by redirecting the general Christian conversation through his proposed "mere" Christianity.

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Beyond podiums, sound booths and the printed page, a final and necessary revelation is found in C. S. Lewis's daily life. Confiding to a friend he wrote, "I feel that whenever two members of different communions succeed in sharing the spiritual life so far as they can now share it, and are thus forced to regard each other as Christians, they are really helping on re-

[57] Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 7.

union by producing the conditions without which official re-union would be quite barren."[58] His friend was Dom Bede Griffiths, the British-born Catholic missionary to India. "Mere" Christianity then was not something he simply recommended to others. He was able to gather around him a circle of intimate "mere" Christian friends that included Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians. In this group Lewis mixed with popular British Christian authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Dorothy Sayers. He even developed a close friendship with the eventual Roman Catholic saint, Don Giovanni Calabria.[59] Yet, for Lewis there was more to these relationships than serving as a practical component for an ideology. Certainly, he believed that without them there was little chance for "mere" Christianity to prevail over divisive groups that tore at the fabric of the Christian faith, but more than this, it was edifying for "mere" Christians to dwell in the center with each other, highlighting "that at the centre of each there is something, or a Someone, who against all divergences of belief, all differences of temperament, all memories of mutual persecution, speaks with the same voice."[60]

[58] C. S. Lewis to Dom Bede Griffiths, 29th April 1938, in Walter Hooper, ed., *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis Volume II: Books, Broadcasts, and the War, 1931–1949* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 226.

[59] For more on these friendships see the three volumes of C. S. Lewis's letters edited by Walter Hooper that were published by HarperSanFrancisco between 2000 and 2009.

[60] Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 8.

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Christ-Faith and Torah-Works:

Instruments in the Hands

of the Justifying God

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Abstract: The contrast Paul draws between "Christ-faith" (πίστις Χριστοῦ) and "Torah-works" (ἔργα νόμου), along with their relationship to justification, has been the subject of much debate among Paul's interpreters. Many have suggested the juxtaposition distinguishes two different forms of human activity: doing versus believing. Others have understood Paul to distinguish between some form of divine activity, on the one hand, and human activity, on the other. Neither of these approaches have fully apprehended Paul's meaning. Careful consideration of Paul's argument concerning justification—in particular the fact that God is the subject and agent of the act of justifying—suggests that Paul contrasts neither divine and human activity nor two human acts. Rather, he contrasts Christ-faith and Torah-works as two *divine* acts. His question is not vaguely, "How are God's people justified?" but more precisely, "In what way has God, in history, actually justified his people?" These two—Christ-faith and Torah-works—function in Paul's argument as the terms of the argument, as alternative alleged instruments by which a person might think that God justifies his people. The latter represents the position of Paul's opponents, which he patently rejects; the former is the very gospel for which Paul so vehemently contends.

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Introduction

In the introduction to his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Martin Luther infamously described faith as "a divine work in us."[1] Likewise, John Calvin designates faith as the "principal work" of God by the Spirit.[2] While the Reformers have often been critiqued—with or without justification—for their lack of attention to many of the precise historical, cultural, and theological issues at work in the apostle's discourse, they seem correct on at least this point: Christ-faith (πίστις Χριστοῦ) comes from God. Christ-faith is not simply the means by which God's people are justified; it is, more precisely, the means by which God Himself justifies His people. Yet, additionally, it is the contention of this essay that "Torah-works" (ἔργα νόμου) must be read in Paul's argument as the alternative, contrasting viewpoint that functions in parallel to Christ-faith, though of course with the key difference that Paul rejects it. That is, rather than emphasizing human doing of the law *per se*, Paul's argument assumes a view of Torah-works—the view of his opponents—that suggests Israel's Torah is the *God-given means* for justification.[3] Though this would inevitably involve human doing of the law—hence his criticism that despite having the law Israel has *not* performed actions in accordance with the Torah (Gal. 6:13; Rom. 2:17–29)—his emphasis lies on divine agency in justification and the means through which God has in fact, in history, justified his people.

[1] Martin Luther, introduction to *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), xiv.

[2] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.1.4, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 351. See also Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.33–35, trans. Beveridge, 377–79.

[3] By "parallel" in the previous sentence, both Christ-faith and Torah-works are not meant as equally legitimate means of justification for Paul, only that they function in Paul's argument in parallel as two alternative, mutually exclusive means by which God might be thought to justify.

The contrast between Christ-faith and Torah-works is one of the central features of Paul's argument concerning justification, appearing in both Galatians and Romans, as well as in the brief treatment of the topic in Philippians 3:9. Paul asks whether a person is justified through Christ-faith or through Torah-works, arguing for the former over the latter. He begins his entire positive argument in Galatians by posing this single, seemingly all-important question to his "foolish" and "bewitched" audience: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of law or the hearing of faith?"[4] Indeed, in his charged rhetoric he avows this is the *only* thing he wants to know from them (Gal. 3:2). His tone suggests that this one question is enough to solve the debate. However, in contemporary Pauline scholarship, the precise nature of this contrast between (Christ-)faith and Torah-works has been the subject of much debate. Many understand Paul's dichotomy as a contrast between two human actions: on the one hand, *doing* the works prescribed in the law of Moses; on the other hand, *believing* the gospel.[5] Others have understood Paul's contrast to lie between human and divine activity—Torah-works denoting the former, Christ-faith the latter.[6] Somewhat ironically, this group would include those who, like the Reformers, understand "faith in Christ" to be a gift from God as well as those among

[4] Unless otherwise noted, translations of the Bible are the author's own. On the relationship of the Spirit to justification, see Heung-Sik Choi, "The Law and the Spirit in Galatians: Antithetical Basis of Justification," *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* 42 (2005): 75–96.

[5] J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 134–35; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 154; Sam K. Williams, "The Hearing of Faith: ΑΚΟΗ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ in Galatians 3," *New Testament Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 1989): 86; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 212.

[6] J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 286–89; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 176–77; Richard B. Hays, "The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in vol. 9 of *New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 1081–82; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 130.

contemporary scholars who interpret Christ-faith as a reference to the "faithfulness of Christ." For present purposes, the precise meaning of either "Christ-faith" or "Torah-works"—subjects of their own lengthy debates—is unimportant, as the chosen, relatively neutral translation reflects.[7] The concern of the present essay lies wholly with the *function* of these two in relation to justification, regardless of their specific content.

In contrast to both aforementioned approaches, this essay proposes that with his juxtaposition of Christ-faith and Torah-works Paul intends to contrast neither two human actions nor divine and human activity, but rather two alleged *divine* actions: God's provision in history of eschatological faith, on the one hand, and the Mosaic Torah, on the other. More specifically, Paul intends for these two—Christ-faith and Torah-works—to function as the terms of the argument, as alternative alleged instruments by which a person might think that God justifies his people. The latter represents the position of Paul's opponents, which he patently rejects; the former is the very gospel for which Paul so vehemently contends. The argument is simple. First, justification is an act of God; He is the subject and agent of the activity called "justifying." Second, the prepositions "through" (διά) and "by/from" (ἐκ), which govern Christ-faith and Torah-works, denote means—the instrument by which God will justify—rather than basis. Finally, a reflection on Paul's use of these and related terms corroborates Paul's meaning and provide fruit for further reflection on Paul's theology.

[7] For a discussion of these phrases, see Johnathan F. Harris, *Christ-faith and Abraham in Galatians 3–4: Paul's Tale of Two Siblings*, Biblical Interpretation Series 214 (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 9–18, 33–43, 47–60. The debate on the meaning of πίστις Χριστοῦ has been particularly fierce over the last couple of decades. As the dust has settled, two main positions have emerged: the objective genitive reading ("faith in Christ") and the subjective genitive reading ("faith/faithfulness of Christ"). More recently, several scholars have advocated versions of a "third view," some of which boast considerable advantages. See Benjamin Schliesser, "'Christ-Faith' as an Eschatological Event (Galatians 3.23–26): A 'Third View' on Πίστις Χριστοῦ," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38, no. 3 (March 2016): 277–300; Kevin Grasso, "A Linguistic Analysis of πίστις Χριστοῦ: The Case for the Third View," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 43, no. 1 (September 2020): 108–44.

Justification Is an Act of God

The verb δικαιόω ("to justify") occurs 27 times in Paul's letters.[8] Twenty of these occur in the passive voice, all of which have humans in view as object of the verb with the exception of two: Romans 3:4 (where God is the object) and 1 Timothy 3:16 (where Christ is the object).[9] Out of his seven uses of δικαιόω in the active voice, Paul denotes God explicitly as the agent of the justifying act in all cases but one (Rom. 4:5).[10] Yet even in this one case, where God's agency is not technically made explicit, it is nevertheless unquestionable. For Paul the matter is clear: "God is the one who justifies" (Rom. 8:33). He justifies the one who is ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ (Rom. 3:26), whether circumcised or uncircumcised, Jew or Gentile (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 3:8). Justification is not something that simply happens to believers "in the presence of God" (cf. Gal. 3:11; Rom. 2:13; 3:20). It is an intentional, voluntary *act* of God in the fullest sense of the term, and it has humans as its object.

The above may seem to belabor the obvious, but when the reality that justification is an act of God has its full effect, it becomes obvious that Paul's eighteen uses of δικαιόω in the passive voice with humans as the object must be read as examples of divine passives. The context in several of these instances makes this exceedingly clear. For example, if taken in isolation, Paul's reckoning that "a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Rom. 3:28) may not seem to imply that God is the justifying agent. However, this statement follows directly upon his designation of God as Him who "justifies the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom.

[8] The precise content of the activity named by the verb "to justify" is of little importance for our present purposes. See Harris, *Christ-faith and Abraham*, 65–108.

[9] The 18 occurrences in which a human or humans generally are in view are Gal. 2:16 [3x], 17; 3:11, 24; 5:4; 1 Cor. 4:4; 6:11; Rom. 2:13; 3:20, 24, 28; 4:2; 5:1, 9; 6:7; Titus 3:7.

[10] Gal. 3:8; Rom. 3:26, 30; 4:5; 8:30 [2x]; 8:33.

3:26) and directly precedes his further denotation of God as the one who justifies both the circumcised and uncircumcised through the same faith (Rom. 3:30). Therefore, the passive verb in Romans 3:28 must be read as a divine passive. Other verses, though not decisive on their own, can be read in light of the above to further buttress the fact that Paul consistently understands God as the agent in justification. So, for example, to be righteous or justified "before God" (Gal. 3:11; Rom. 2:13; 3:20) can now be seen to mean not simply *in God's presence* but also, and most emphatically, *by God*, the one who justifies. Paul, therefore, quite consistently denotes God as the agent in the act of justifying.[11]

The Prepositions Ἐκ and Διά Denote Means

Paul relates God's act of justifying to the juxtaposed pair of Christ-faith and Torah-works via two prepositions: ἐκ and διά. The former may be translated "by," "from," or even "out of," while the latter is best read "through" or "by means of." However, in his justification discourses, Paul uses both ἐκ and διά to signify means.[12] In Galatians 2:16, Romans 3:30, and Philippians 3:9, he effortlessly shifts from speaking of justification διὰ πίστεως ("through faith") to speaking of justification ἐκ πίστεως ("from faith"). Likewise, in Galatians 2:16 and 2:21 he rejects, respectively, the possibility of justification ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ("from works of law") and righteousness διὰ νόμου ("through law").

[11] Even in 1 Tim. 3:16, where Jesus Himself is justified, the verb δικαιόω should be read as a divine passive. For if δικαιόω there refers, as many have argued, to Christ's resurrection, then God Himself is rightly viewed as the one who through the Spirit effects Jesus's resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Rom. 6:4; 8:11; Eph. 1:20). See, for example, Peter J. Leithart, *Delivered from the Elements of the World: Atonement, Justification, Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 183–86.

[12] Douglas A. Campbell, "The Meaning of Πίστις and Νόμος in Paul: A Linguistic and Structural Perspective," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 100–103. See Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 70, 104; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 369, 371.

If we recall that God alone is, for Paul, the agent in the act of justification, then when he uses the prepositions ἐκ and διά to signify the means by which God justifies, the prepositions take on the further connotation of instrument. For, as Louw and Nida put it, "the category of *Means* … involves a relation between two events while the category of *Instrument* includes objects which are employed in some activity or event."[13] In the relevant prepositional phrases, Christ-faith and Torah-works are the means by which a person is justified. With these phrases, Paul is not simply creating a vague relationship of means between a person and justification. More precisely, Paul envisions Christ-faith and Torah-works as the means by which *God* justifies a person. They become almost a sort of metaphorical object or instrument through which God successfully performs the action of justifying. They are, in effect, alleged instruments in the hands of the justifying God—always keeping in mind the qualification that, though that is how Paul frames the contrast, i.e., as alternative alleged instruments, only Christ-faith represents Paul's own position.

The prepositions' instrumental force can be illustrated from Paul's own discourses. For example, the parallel use of ἐκ πίστεως and διὰ τῆς πίστεως in Romans 3:30 follows right after the instrumental dative πίστει (Rom. 3:28), all three of which are related in context to the act of justifying. In Galatians 3:2, Paul frames the contrast of faith and Torah-works within the question of how the Galatians received the Spirit. Here Paul's concern is not simply how a

[13] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Introduction and Domains*, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 798n2. In the same note, they mention the difficulty sometimes in distinguishing the two. See the similar explanation from Rachel and Michael Aubrey: "The difference between means and intermediary or instrument is primarily based on manipulation. An agent manipulates an intermediary or instrument to achieve a certain state of affairs. But with expressions of means, the landmark is not manipulated by an agent. The landmark means, by its presence, provides the path for achieving an end result." Rachel Aubrey and Michael Aubrey, *Greek Prepositions in the New Testament: A Cognitive-Functional Description*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020–2021), s.v. "διά," 5. Credit goes to this article's reviewers for this insight.

person receives the Spirit but specifically by what means *God* has supplied the Spirit (Gal. 3:5). The Galatian agitators believe that Torah is the means by which God will justify His people and bring them into the age to come. Paul, by contrast, argues that it is Christ-faith alone through which God has decisively acted to bring His people from the present evil age into resurrection life.

The use of these prepositions to denote means or instrument should be sharply distinguished from basis, which is signified in Greek by other prepositions. The distinction is subtle but important, for it is all too often lacking when scholars unquestioningly deploy "basis" language in English when discussing Paul.[14] Paul says that God justifies His people *through*, or *by means of*, Christ-faith not Torah-works. He does not argue that God justifies His people *on the basis of* Christ-faith not Torah-works.[15] Charles H. Cosgrove has written a clarifying article on the difference between prepositions of means and basis used with the verb "to justify" (δικαιόω). He demonstrates that when Paul uses the prepositions ἐκ and διά with δικαιόω, he "expresses the relationship between justification and works or faith in terms of means or instrumentality, never in terms of juridical or evidential basis," for which Greek speakers would have used other

[14] See, e.g., Choi, "The Law and the Spirit in Galatians," 76; James B. Prothro, *Both Judge and Justifier: Biblical Legal Language and the Act of Justifying in Paul*, WUNT 2:461 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 127; R. Michael Allen, *Justification and the Gospel: Understanding the Contexts and Controversies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 15; Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 59; de Boer, *Galatians*, 142; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 88; Kevin W. McFadden, *Judgment According to Works in Romans: The Meaning and Function of Divine Judgment in Paul's Most Important Letter*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 152; Joseph B. Tyson, "'Works of Law' in Galatians," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92, no. 3 (September 1973): 430; Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 274; Sam K. Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 2 (June 1980): 269; N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 224.

[15] This is why translating the prepositions as "by" is less helpful and ambiguous at best.

prepositions, such as ἐπί or κατά.[16] In fact, Paul's consistent use of ἐκ and διά to denote means/instrument rather than those prepositions that would signify basis leads Cosgrove to suspect "an *avoidance* of the latter and a special interest in the idea of *instrumentality* in justification."[17] Precisely speaking, Paul is concerned in these passages with *how* (i.e., in what way, through what means) not *why* (i.e., on what basis) a person is justified.[18] Rather than juxtaposing human believing and human doing, or even divine and human action, Christ-faith and Torah-works are presented as two alternative means by which God might be thought to justify His people. Torah-works are the means proposed by Paul's opponents, which Paul himself rejects; Christ-faith, Paul argues, is the means that God, according to His gospel, has used to justify His people.

Christ-faith and Torah-works as "Spheres of Instrumentality"

How can Christ-faith and Torah-works be conceived as instruments in the hands of the God who justifies? Surely this is an odd Pauline concept! It may indeed be, and the confusion among Paul's interpreters is understandable. Still, an explanation lies close at hand.

Though both prepositions denote means, ἐκ and διά carry distinct nuances.[19] Διά is the more precisely instrumental preposition and thus draws out the instrumental nuance of ἐκ when

[16] Charles H. Cosgrove, "Justification in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Reflection," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (December 1987): 659.

[17] Cosgrove, "Justification," 658, italics his.

[18] The *basis* of justification, as traditionally conceived in Reformed theology, is Christ Himself.

[19] As in English, one might say a person is justified *by* faith or *through* faith. Though these conceivably denote the same instrumentality, "through," presents itself as the more "purely" instrumental preposition, whereas "by" could carry other nuances, e.g., agency.

the two are used together.[20] It may be, in fact, that Paul uses διά for just this reason since his use of ἐκ πίστεως, which is likely derived from Habakkuk 2:4, would be less clear.[21] Still, as we will now see, Paul may have good reason for retaining the scripturally provided preposition ἐκ.

Though in Romans the evidence is mixed, in Galatians Paul exhibits a clear preference for ἐκ, which he uses not only adverbially but also adjectivally.[22] He refers to οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς (Gal. 2:12), οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (Gal. 3:7, 9), ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (Gal. 3:10), and ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί (Gal. 2:15).[23] Paul uses ἐκ adjectivally to denote a group in terms of its key identifying marker: "the circumcision people," "the faith people," and "the Torah-works people."[24] The question then becomes: what is the relation of the group to its key identifying marker? Are they "faith people" and "Torah-works people" because they exhibit faith or keep Torah, or because they are marked out socially by the badges of faith and Torah? Alternatively, might the relation be best described in other terms?

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[20] Douglas A. Campbell, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Romans 3:22," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 59.

[21] Roy E. Ciampa, "Habakkuk 2:4 in Galatians: Rewritings and Snippet Quotations," in *Scripture, Texts, and Tracings in Galatians and 1 Thessalonians*, ed. A. Andrew Das and B. J. Oropeza, Scripture, Texts, and Tracings in Paul's Letters (Lanham: Lexington/Fortress, 2023), 77–94; Campbell, "Meaning," 100–102. Campbell has argued convincingly that Paul's use of ἐκ πίστεως is derived from Hab. 2:4. The phrase appears only in Romans and Galatians—his only epistles that cite Hab. 2:4 explicitly as a significant pillar of his discourse.

[22] For example, Galatians 3:8 contains an adverbial use of the phrase (ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ) signaling instrumentality sandwiched between two adjectival, partitive uses of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (Gal. 3:7, 9). One must exhibit care to establish each use of the preposition without foisting a univocal sense on every occurrence and risking falling prey to the dreaded "denial of double entendre" (Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, 41–43).

[23] Some have even argued that Paul's reference to ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (Gal. 2:16) should be included among the adjectival uses. See, e.g., Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 106n42; Ardel B. Caneday, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ as a Theme in Paul's Theology in Galatians," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 194–95.

[24] Hays, "Galatians," 1085; Sam K. Williams, *Galatians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 86–87.

Unlike διά, the preposition ἐκ can convey the sense of source or origin.[25] However, Don Garlington has argued that this nuance of source or origin "can entail the notion of *position within* or *participation*; that is, to be 'from' (ἐκ) a realm means to 'belong' to it," so that "ἐκ is not so far removed from ἐν in its locative sense."[26] Garlington can even say that partitive phrases such as ἐκ πίστεως (Ἰησοῦ) Χριστοῦ and οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are virtually synonymous with the all-important Pauline phrase ἐν Χριστῷ ("in Christ").[27] With his adjectival "partisan ἐκ," Paul denotes those who belong to the realms of Christ-faith (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως) and Torah-works (ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου).[28]

Though Garlington's "partisan ἐκ" is insightful for Paul's adjectival uses of ἐκ, he errs slightly when he imposes the nuance of source/origin on Paul's adverbial uses of ἐκ *to the exclusion* of the preposition's instrumental nuance.[29] For example, he believes the adverbial use in the clause "so that we might be justified from Christ-faith [ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ]" (Gal. 2:16) specifies origin *and not* instrument.[30] This, however, cannot be correct, as the parallel phrase διὰ

[25] Harris, *Prepositions*, 103; Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 371–72.

[26] Don Garlington, "Paul's 'Partisan ἐκ' and the Question of Justification in Galatians," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 567, italics his.

[27] Garlington, "Paul's Partisan ἐκ," 589.

[28] Garlington suggests Paul's "partisan ἐκ" is influenced by the Hebrew partitive use of מִן ("Paul's Partisan ἐκ," 568–70). Benjamin Schliesser critiques Garlington on this point, positing that, since Paul's use of ἐκ πίστεως is derived from Habakkuk 2:4, it is the local or spherical connotations of the preposition בְּ rather than מִן that stand behind Paul's use. See Schliesser, "'Christ-Faith' as an Eschatological Event," 288, especially 288n23. These spherical connotations were carried into the translations of Habakkuk 2:4 in Aquila and the early fragments found in Nahal Hever (8HevXIIgr 17.29–30), both of which read ἐν πίστει ("Christ-faith," 288), though it should be noted that in both of these πίστει is followed by the pronoun αὐτοῦ. Symmachus, similarly, has τῇ ἑαυτοῦ πίστει.

[29] Garlington writes, "Rather than a variation on the theme of instrumentality, ἐκ so often in Galatians serves to articulate the notions of source and belonging" ("Paul's Partisan ἐκ," 587).

[30] Garlington, "Paul's Partisan ἐκ," 573.

πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ makes clear.[31] Garlington is right that Paul "uses prepositions carefully."[32] However, he implies that a difference in preposition must mean a difference in meaning and ends up pressing a univocal sense onto every occurrence of ἐκ, neither move of which is advisable or necessary.[33]

Nevertheless, he errs only *slightly* because there remains a sense in which ἐκ maintains its nuance of source even in Paul's adverbial uses. Here Paul's interpreters face the ever-present challenge of navigating the underdetermined nature of language and a word's potential for multivalence when read from different contexts. Jan Lambrecht exhibits the struggle in his own attempt to preserve both the instrumental force of ἐκ and its nuance of source/origin. He writes, "The fourfold repetition of ἐκ [in Gal. 2:16] certainly preserves somewhat the inherent sense of source and origin, but the context shows that both faith and works are considered to be the means of justification."[34] Certainly, it would be unnecessary to read Paul's adverbial uses of ἐκ in any way other than instrument except that in Galatians, as Garlington has shown, Paul himself develops his ἐκ-theology in partisan terms. That is, Galatians itself creates a relation between the adverbial and adjectival uses of ἐκ. It is precisely "those from the realm of faith" (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως) who are justified "from/out of faith" (ἐκ πίστεως). This relationship compels the reader to hear the nuance of source and participation echoing even in the instrumental uses of ἐκ. Paul has, indeed, chosen his prepositions carefully, or more likely, Paul finds a preposition thrust upon

[31] Jan Lambrecht, "Critical Reflections on Paul's 'Partisan ἐκ' as Recently Presented by Don Garlington," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 85, no. 1 (April 2009): 138.

[32] Garlington, "Paul's Partisan ἐκ," 573.

[33] See Harris, *Prepositions*, 40–43.

[34] Lambrecht, "Critical Reflections," 138.

him from Habakkuk 2:4—"the righteous one shall live from faith [ἐκ πίστεως]"—that he squeezes for all its theological worth.

How, then, may Paul's claim that God justifies ἐκ πίστεως be related to his description of faith-people as οἱ ἐκ πίστεως? Paul's partisan ἐκ does not exclude, as Garlington seems to imply, a strong instrumental reading of both διά and ἐκ, nor is an instrumental reading of those prepositions at odds with the quasi-spatial, participatory understanding of Paul's partisan ἐκ. Instrumental and spatial interpretations cohere well because it is precisely by being found *in* Christ, in Christ-faith, that one is justified *through* Christ-faith. The relation between Paul's adjectival and adverbial uses of ἐκ suggests what might be called *spheres of instrumentality*. That is, God's means of justifying is a sphere—the sphere of the crucified and risen Christ—in which He causes one to participate through Christ-faith. As Schliesser suggests, even though it is "certainly correct" that ἐκ and διά retain a notion of instrumentality, the instrument that is faith "can be said to be incorporated into the 'spatial-dynamic' and thus participatory paradigm of Paul's thinking."[35] Cosgrove, too, concludes that Paul "views the law or Christ as a soteriological reality or sphere in which justification may be produced. The question never becomes whether one can be justified *on the basis of* the law or works but remains always whether one can be justified in the sphere of the law."[36]

Conclusion

The present study has focused on the function of Christ-faith and Torah-works in relation to the divine subject and human objects in justification. Yet there remains much work to be done,

[35] Schliesser, "'Christ-Faith' as an Eschatological Event," 288.

[36] Cosgrove, "Justification," 662, italics his.

to which this essay will hopefully contribute. The precise content of Christ-faith and Torah-works continues to be debated, and the nature of participation in Paul's theology leaves much room in contemporary scholarship for development. An interesting study, considering Paul's quasi-spatial language as articulated in the present essay, could explore the significance and effect of this spatial language in light of recent work on the role of metaphor, especially spatiality, in human cognition.[37]

In summary, for Paul, God is the one who justifies, and He does so precisely through Christ-faith, not Torah-works. These two—Christ-faith and Torah-works—are two mutually exclusive spheres of instrumentality, two realms that represent contested instruments in the hands of the justifying God. For Paul, one is justified *from* or *by participating in the realm of* Christ-faith (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ) and therefore *through* Christ-faith (διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ). This is the place where God, in history, has justified His people. Contrary to the claims of Paul's opponents, there is no justification to be found within the realm of, and thus through, the law. Torah simply is not the instrument by which God justifies.

[37] For example, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic, 1999).

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Ethical Response to the Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) of In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) and Surrogacy

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Abstract: Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), which include procedures such as In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), present complicated ethical challenges. ART includes various means to grow one's family through fertility treatments and other medical procedures. While ethical concerns about ART affect individuals across diverse worldviews, Christians need to grasp the ethical ramifications surrounding the use of ART to create a child. Believers must understand the nature and implications of these technologies in order to respond in a biblically faithful manner.

This paper provides an overview of both the history of IVF and the closely related ethical issue of surrogacy. This examination also includes relevant data on costs, success rates, and possible legal issues, with a clear distinction between IVF and surrogacy practices. Lastly, a concise biblical response is offered, addressing the ethical issues surrounding ART and proposing how believers can face this topic. Given the rapid advancements in reproductive technologies and evolving legal definitions of life and personhood, this subject requires ongoing ethical reflection and theological engagement.

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Introduction

In recent years, the increasing use of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), particularly In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) and gestational surrogacy, has garnered widespread attention in popular media. High-profile celebrities have publicly shared their experiences with ART, contributing to its normalization as a means to grow their families. Beyond celebrity culture, social media influencers, including professing Christians such as Dan and Sam Mathews, have openly documented their experiences with gestational surrogacy, further expanding the public discourse around these technologies.[1] ART encompasses various means to grow one's family, but this paper will focus primarily on IVF and secondarily on the use of a gestational surrogate via egg collection from the IVF process. While some individuals pursue ART in response to medical infertility, others are using IVF and surrogacy to avoid complications associated with advanced maternal age or as a way to ensure a healthy mom and baby. Regardless of the motivation, the media's attention surrounding ART has created a more mainstream conversation around the ethics of creating a child.

Ethical concerns surround ART, particularly regarding the creation and destruction of embryos, the moral implications of surrogacy, the rights and dignity of surrogate carriers, and the legalities associated with conceiving a child through the use of ART. These issues have come to the forefront in the United States with the recent Supreme Court of Alabama ruling on the personhood of created embryos. In this case, three couples sued the Center for Reproductive Medicine and Mobile Infirmary Association in Mobile, Alabama, after a tragic incident in

[1] See their YouTube channel: Dan Mathews and Samantha Mathews, "We Are Dan and Sam," YouTube, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcJ0xWWzTn-q3EFd16gkO_Q.

December 2020, caused the loss of the couples' frozen embryos.[2] According to court filings, a patient at the clinic gained unauthorized access to the cryogenic storage facility shared with the fertility clinic.[3] The record states,

> A patient at the Hospital managed to wander into the Center's fertility clinic through an unsecured doorway. The patient then entered the cryogenic nursery and removed several embryos. The subzero temperatures at which the embryos had been stored freeze-burned the patient's hand, causing the patient to drop the embryos on the floor, killing them.[4]

Each couple held the fertility clinic responsible for the loss, citing negligence on the part of the clinic.[5]

This Alabama Supreme Court ruling has intensified the cultural and legal debates about what constitutes personhood. The broader culture defends reproductive rights at the potential expense of human life. These conversations have created the urgent need for a biblically faithful response that pastors, theologians, and biblical counselors can offer to those considering using ART to create a family. Central theological questions arise: Can IVF be done in a manner that is consistent with biblical ethics regarding the sanctity of life, and if so, how? Should surrogacy be considered an option for couples unable to carry a pregnancy, but possessing biological embryos created through IVF? These questions demand careful moral discernment informed by Scripture and Christian tradition. This paper, therefore, examines the historical development and financial costs of IVF and surrogacy while also engaging the ethical issues that arise from the use of ART

[2] Supreme Court of Alabama, "James LePage and Emily LePage, Individually and as Parents and Next Friends of Two Deceased LePage Embryos, Embryo A and Embryo B; and William Tripp Fonde and Caroline Fonde, Individually and as Parents and Next Friends of Two Deceased Fonde Embryos, Embryo C and Embryo D v. The Center for Reproductive Medicine, P.C., and Mobile Infirmary Association d/b/a Mobile Infirmary Medical Center," Justia: U.S. Law, February 16, 2024, https://law.justia.com/cases/alabama/supreme-court/2024/sc-2022-0579.html.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

from the Protestant Christian perspective. In doing so, it seeks to provide a biblically faithful framework that can aid those in ministry in counseling couples who are wrestling with infertility and discerning whether to employ ART to grow their families.

Literature Review

This study engages sources from scientific research, legal documentation, and Christian theological reflection in order to address the complex questions raised by ART. By drawing from these diverse perspectives, the literature review will attempt to situate the discussion within both contemporary ethical discourse and the distinct commitments of Protestant theology.[6] Although ART has been practiced for several decades, many Evangelical communities have only recently begun to reckon with its moral and theological implications.[7]

One significant voice in Evangelical ethics is Wayne Grudem, professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary. In his book, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical*

[6] The nature of Christian sources will only be in relation to Protestant Christianity. For the Roman Catholic stance on the use of ART please see: John Haas, "Begotten Not Made: A Catholic View of Reproductive Technology," United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Conference Inc., Washington, D.C., 1998, https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/reproductive-technology/begotten-not-made-a-catholic-view-of-reproductive-technology.

Haas notes that the 1987 church teaching known as *"Donum Vitae* teaches that if a given medical intervention *helps or assists* the marriage act to achieve pregnancy, it may be considered moral; if the intervention *replaces* the marriage act in order to engender life, it is not moral." For the text of the *Donum Vitae*, see https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html.

While affirming the *Donum Vitae*, the implementation of new biomedical technologies prompted the 2008 development of *Dignitas Personae* on the dignity of human life; for its text, see https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html.

Finally, for an updated guideline for Catholic couples from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, see "Reproductive Technology Evaluation and Treatment of Infertility: Guidelines for Catholic Couples," United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020, https://www.usccb.org/resources/Reproductive%20Technology%20Guidelines%20for%20Catholic%20Couples%20updated_0.pdf.

[7] Ericka Andersen, "How IVF Made Its Way into Evangelical Pro-Life Debates," *Christianity Today*, January 8, 2024, https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/01/ivf-pro-life-ethics-christian-fertility-treatments-embryos/.

Moral Reasoning, Grudem devotes an entire chapter to infertility and reproductive technology. He first examines the recurring theme of infertility throughout the Old Testament, addressing the grief and sorrow that can come from the inability to conceive a child. From this biblical foundation, he assesses the moral acceptability of reproductive technologies. The principles he uses to determine what forms of ART are morally acceptable include: "1. Modern medicine in general is morally good. 2. We should treat the unborn child as a human person from the moment of conception. 3. God intends that a child should be conceived by and born to a man and woman who are married to each other."[8]

Concerning IVF, Grudem argues that its use can be morally permissible if it is pursued in a manner where the traditionally married couple is committed to ensuring all embryos will be given the opportunity to develop and be born, specifically not creating any embryos that would be discarded.[9] This entails either implanting all embryos themselves or, if this is not possible, ensuring that unused embryos are adopted by another couple rather than destroyed. Because each embryo created is understood to be a human life from the moment of conception, discarding or infinitely freezing embryos is, in Grudem's view, morally unacceptable.[10]

On this basis, Grudem concludes that IVF may be a legitimate moral option for Christian couples experiencing infertility, provided these criteria are met.[11] God desires couples to "be

[8] Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 534.

[9] Ibid., 535.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28), and in the scriptural narratives, God graciously opened the wombs of previously barren women.[12] Grudem contends,

> Sarah (Sarai) was unable to bear children to Abraham (Gen. 11:30; 16:1) for most of her life, until she miraculously bore Isaac in her old age (see Gen. 21:1–7). Jacob's wife, Rachel, was unable to bear children for a long time after her marriage to Jacob (Gen. 29:31), as was Samson's mother, the wife of Manoah (Judg. 13:2). Hannah, the mother of Samuel, cried out to the Lord in deep sorrow because of her infertility (1 Sam. 1:2–18). In the New Testament, Zechariah and Elizabeth "had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years" (Luke 1:7), but, again through God's miraculous intervention, Elizabeth eventually gave birth to John the Baptist (vv. 57–66). These narrative examples portray overcoming infertility as something that pleases God, and it is often a manifestation of his special blessing on a couple.[13]

While these biblical examples do not reference modern medical interventions such as IVF, Grudem interprets them as evidence of God's favorable regard toward the overcoming of infertility and the blessing of children, arguing modern medicine "can be used to overcome many diseases and disabilities today. We should view this as a good thing, and as something for which we can thank God."[14]

Grudem's views on IVF represent a minority view within Protestant evangelicalism. In a response published by *The Gospel Coalition*, Matthew Lee Anderson and Andrew T. Walker offer a pointed critique of Grudem's ethical framework. While Grudem permits IVF as long as strict guidelines are followed, Anderson and Walker contend that the use of IVF separates the God-designed role of sex and procreation within a marriage.[15] They argue that seeking children apart from the marital act of sexual union alters the very meaning of procreation, noting that

[12] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced employ the English Standard Version. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

[13] Wayne Grudem, "How IVF Can Be Morally Right," The Gospel Coalition, April 25, 2019, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/ivf-morally-right/.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Matthew Lee Anderson and Andrew T. Walker, "Breaking Evangelicalism's Silence on IVF," The Gospel Coalition, April 25, 2019, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/evangelicalisms-silence-ivf/.

"aiming for children without sex changes the character of the latter, and with it the rest of our bodily life as well. IVF enshrines in the Christian moral imagination an attitude that, if applied consistently, would radically reconfigure not only our sexual ethics, but medical ethics as well."[16] More important than the separation of sex and procreation, Anderson and Walker raise concerns that IVF changes cultural conceptions of what constitutes a human life.[17] Fertility clinics typically encourage the creation of multiple embryos, selectively implanting only those deemed "healthy" or genetically preferable to ensure a successful result. Anderson and Walker caution that "when humans become comfortable *making* other humans, we will doubtlessly begin to construct them in the image of our own preferences and desires."[18] In their view, IVF opens the door to undermining the dignity of the person.

The biggest difference between Grudem's argument and that of Anderson and Walker is how they each view the role of medical advances. Grudem sees the advance of medicine as something that can be used to follow the biblical command of being fruitful and multiplying.[19] Anderson and Walker, by contrast, warn that using medical technology to create life places human beings in a role reserved for God alone, displacing divine sovereignty with human autonomy.[20] While Grudem offers a way for couples experiencing infertility to grow their family in a way that can be done ethically, his framework requires absolute adherence to stringent

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Wayne Grudem, "How IVF Can Be Morally Right," The Gospel Coalition, April 25, 2019, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/ivf-morally-right/.

[20] Matthew Lee Anderson and Andrew T. Walker, "Breaking Evangelicalism's Silence on IVF," The Gospel Coalition, April 25, 2019, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/evangelicalisms-silence-ivf/.

guidelines in order to maintain moral coherence— a standard that may be difficult to achieve within the realities of clinical practice.

The legal complexities surrounding IVF and surrogacy have been brought to the forefront by the recent case *LePage v. The Center for Reproductive Medicine* before the Alabama Supreme Court.[21] This ruling, decided 8-1 on February 16, 2024, has received national attention for its determination that embryos created through IVF may be regarded as children under Alabama state law.[22] The decision arose in connection with wrongful death lawsuits after the Mobile Infirmary Medical Center failed to adequately secure cryogenic storage facilities, resulting in the destruction of several embryos.[23] By classifying embryos as legal persons, the court extended the protections of Alabama's Wrongful Death Act to embryos created through ART.[24]

The justices who voted to classify embryos as persons used the reasoning that unborn children are still children. Justice Tom Parker grounded his reasoning in explicitly Christian theological convictions. Drawing heavily on Genesis, Parker asserted that "even before birth, all human beings bear the image of God, and their lives cannot be destroyed without effacing glory."[25] The lone dissenting judge, Justice Greg Cook, criticized the ruling as an overreach of

[21] See Supreme Court of Alabama, "James LePage and Emily LePage, Individually and As Parents and Next Friends of Two Deceased LePage Embryos, Embryo A and Embryo B; and William Tripp Fonde and Caroline Fonde, Individually and As Parents and Next Friends of Two Deceased Fonde Embryos, Embryo C and Embryo D v. The Center for Reproductive Medicine, P.C., and Mobile Infirmary Association d/b/a Mobile Infirmary Medical Center," Justia: U.S. Law, February 16, 2024, https://law.justia.com/cases/alabama/supreme-court/2024/sc-2022-0579.html.

[22] Sierra Seabra, "The Supreme Court of Alabama's IVF Ruling: The Redefining of Personhood," *Juris Mentem Law Review*, March 3, 2024, https://doi.org/10.57912/25814611, 1.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 2.

judicial power, observing that "no court--anywhere in the country--has reached the conclusion the main opinion reaches."[26] The case has intensified debates concerning personhood, reproductive rights, and the sanctity of life, with implications for people pursuing IVF and surrogacy.

IVF has become so commonplace that it typically overshadows the use of gestational surrogates in conjunction with IVF.[27] As demand for surrogacy grows, more literature is focusing not only on the bioethical ramifications of surrogacy but also the legal issues that arise for the intended parents and gestational carriers. A 2021 article in *Gynecological and Reproductive Endocrinology and Metabolism* (GREM), entitled "Surrogacy—A Worldwide Demand: Implementation and Ethical Considerations," authored by Adrian Ellenbogen, Dov Feldberg, and Vyacheslav Lokshin, examines surrogacy practices in select countries.[28] The authors survey the surrogacy process, including contractual agreements, the treatment of surrogate carriers, the influence of religious views, and the legislation of surrogacy around the world. They adopt the definition of surrogacy articulated by the 2005 European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) Task Force on Ethics and Law, which defines a surrogate as:

> a woman who becomes pregnant, carries and delivers a child on behalf of another couple (intended or commissioning parents). The term surrogacy covers several situations. In the first situation (full surrogacy), the gestating woman has no genetic link to the child. In that case, (i) the gametes of both commissioning parents are used; (ii) both gametes come from donors (donation

[26] Supreme Court of Alabama.

[27] See the "History of Surrogacy" section for detailed definitions on each type of surrogacy. See also "US IVF Usage Increases in 2023, Leads to over 95,000 Babies Born," American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM), April 23, 2025, https://www.asrm.org/news-and-events/asrm-news/press-releasesbulletins/us-ivf-usage-increases-in-2023-leads-to-over-95000-babies-born/.

[28] Adrian Ellenbogen, Dov Feldberg, and Vyacheslav Lokshin, "Surrogacy—A Worldwide Demand. Implementation and Ethical Considerations," *Gynecological and Reproductive Endocrinology and Metabolism* 2, no. 2 (June 14, 2021): 66–73, https://gremjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/01.pdf.

> of either supernumerary or de novo-created embryos); or (iii) one of the commissioning parents provides the gametes and a gamete donor the other. In the second situation (partial surrogacy), the surrogate mother has a genetic link by providing the oocyte. In either case, the gestating woman intends to relinquish the child to the commissioning parents, who want to assume parental responsibility.[29]

Within their comparative analysis of how surrogacy is legislated in different countries, Ellenbogen, Feldberg, and Lokshin give particular attention to the legal landscape of surrogacy in the United States. The authors highlight the uneven application of surrogacy laws despite the 2000 Uniform Parentage Act, which sought to provide a standardized framework.[30] California has specific laws in place surrounding surrogacy, while other states present a fragmented approach. The authors note that other states "have legislation dealing with surrogacy agreements; these laws vary as to the legality of such agreements, their enforceability, and whether compensation is permitted, or they make surrogacy agreements unenforceable, and rely on common law where custody is disputed."[31] The authors conclude that "surrogacy is an issue that raises deep ethical and religious problems and considerations."[32] This recognition underscores the need for further theological reflection on the moral dimensions of surrogacy, particularly at the intersection of procreation, marriage, parenthood, and the commodification of human life.

History of In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

ART is the all-encompassing term used to describe "all fertility treatments in which either eggs or embryos are handled outside of the body. In general, ART procedures involve

[29] F. Shenfield et al., "ESHRE Task Force on Ethics and Law 10: Surrogacy," *Human Reproduction* 20, no. 10 (June 24, 2005): 2705–7, https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dei147.

[30] See National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, "Uniform Parentage Act (2000)," https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/dcl_00_93a.pdf.

[31] Ellenbogen, Feldberg, and Lokshin, 69–70.

[32] Ibid., 72.

removing mature eggs from a woman's ovaries using a needle, combining the eggs with sperm in the laboratory, and returning the embryos to the woman's body or donating them to another woman."[33] The most widely recognized and practiced ART procedure is IVF. The IVF process involves different stages, beginning with ovulation stimulation, then egg retrieval, followed by insemination, and finally embryo implantation.[34]

IVF began under historical circumstances marked by scientific ambition and moral controversy. Early experimentation began with the work of Gregory Pincus, who would eventually be a member of the scientific team that created the birth control pill.[35] In 1931, Pincus experimented using the eggs of rabbits to determine that the eggs in these rabbits could be fertilized at any time, without ovulation needed, by using Thyroxin to mimic the ovulation process at any time in a female's cycle.[36] Building upon such preliminary work, significant progress came through the collaborative efforts of Robert Edwards, Patrick Steptoe, and Jean Purdy, culminating in the birth of Louise Brown in 1978, the world's first "Test Tube Baby."[37]

The media storm surrounding Brown's birth created both excitement and apprehension. For some, it represented a remarkable triumph over infertility, hailed as "a glorious day for

[33] Centers for Disease Control, "Infertility: Frequently Asked Questions."

[34] "In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)," Yale Medicine, accessed August 23, 2023, https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/ivf.

[35] Drew Pendergrass and Michelle Raji, "The Bitter Pill: Harvard and the Dark History of Birth Control," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 28, 2017, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2017/9/28/the-bitter-pill/.

[36] Gregory Pincus and E. V. Enzmann, "The Comparative Behavior of Mammalian Eggs in Vivo and in Vitro," *Journal of Experimental Medicine* 62, no. 5 (November 1, 1935): 673–74, https://doi.org/10.1084/jem.62.5.665.

[37] Katharine Dow, "Looking into the Test Tube: The Birth of IVF on British Television," *Medical History* 63, no. 2 (March 26, 2019): 189–208, https://doi.org/10.1017/mdh.2019.6.

women afflicted with this type of sterility Mrs. Brown has overcome."[38] For others, it signaled an ominous shift in the relationship between sexuality, procreation, and family. British geneticist Robert J. Berry, for instance, cautioned, "We're on a slippery slope. Western society is built around the family; once you divorce sex from procreation, what happens to the family?"[39] These divergent responses—celebratory and cautious—highlight the ongoing tension surrounding IVF. From its inception, IVF has raised not only medical and scientific questions but also ethical and theological concerns about the boundaries of human intervention in the processes of life.

IVF: Demographics and Cost

Since the birth of Louise Brown in 1978, it is estimated that over nine million babies have been born as a result of ART procedures.[40] In the United States alone, roughly one-third of people have some connection to fertility treatments, either personally or via friends and family.[41] According to 2021 data published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

> 238,126 patients had 413,776 ART cycles performed at 453 reporting clinics in the United States during 2021, resulting in 91,906 live births (deliveries of one or more living infants) and 97,128 live born infants. Of the 413,776 ART cycles performed in 2021, 167,689 were egg or embryo banking cycles in which all resulting eggs or embryos were frozen for future use. Although the use of ART is still relatively rare as compared to the potential demand, its use has more than doubled over the past decade. Approximately 2.3% of all infants born in the United States every year are conceived using ART.[42]

[38] Stuart Kunkler, letter to the editor, "Huxleian World." *Time*, August 21, 1978, https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,919790,00.html.

[39] "Medicine: To Fool (or Not) with Mother Nature," *Time*, July 31, 1978, https://time.com/archive/6880041/medicine-to-fool-or-not-with-mother-nature/.

[40] Anne-Kristin Kuhnt and Jasmin Passet-Wittig, "Families Formed through Assisted Reproductive Technology: Causes, Experiences, and Consequences in an International Context," *Reproductive Biomedicine & Society Online* 14, Special Issue (March 14, 2022): 289–96, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rbms.2022.01.001.

[41] Gretchen Livingston, "A Third of U.S. Adults Say They Have Used Fertility Treatments or Know Someone Who Has," Pew Research Center, July 17, 2018, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/07/17/a-third-of-u-s-adults-say-they-have-used-fertility-treatments-or-know-someone-who-has/.

[42] "Art Success Rates," CDC: Assisted Reproductive Technology, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 31, 2023, https://www.cdc.gov/art/artdata/index.html.

The likelihood that these numbers will increase in the years to come is high because the overall trend in women is to delay pregnancy into their thirties and beyond.[43]

While this demographic shift has driven the demand for ART, the costs associated with IVF remain a significant barrier. A single IVF cycle—defined as "any process in which (1) an ART procedure is performed, (2) a woman has undergone ovarian stimulation or monitoring with the intent of having an ART procedure, or (3) frozen embryos have been thawed with the intent of transferring them to a woman"—often does not guarantee success, meaning that multiple cycles are frequently necessary.[44] As a result, these procedures can be costly. Recent estimates for a single cycle of IVF place the cost between $15,000 and $20,000, with expenses sometimes exceeding $30,000.[45] These numbers greatly vary by state. Although a limited number of insurance companies have begun to include fertility treatments as part of their coverage, the majority do not, so most couples choosing to pursue IVF are required to pay out of pocket.[46] Beyond the emotional strain of infertility itself, the substantial financial demands of IVF compound the stress experienced by couples, who may face the difficult prospect of investing tens of thousands of dollars in an uncertain outcome.

[43] Katherine Tierney, "The Future of Assisted Reproductive Technology Live Births in the United States," *Population Research and Policy Review* 41, no. 5 (July 18, 2022): 2290, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11113-022-09731-5.

[44] "Fact Sheet: In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) Use across the United States," U.S. Department of Human Services, Page Freezer (HHS Archive), March 13, 2024, https://public3.pagefreezer.com/browse/HHS.gov/02-01-2025T05:49/https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2024/03/13/fact-sheet-in-vitro-fertilization-ivf-use-across-united-states.html.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

History of Surrogacy

Although surrogacy is most commonly used today in conjunction with IVF, the practice itself has a lengthy history, dating back to biblical times. The story of Abraham and Sarah, who turned to Sarah's maidservant Hagar to bear a child (Gen. 16), is the most cited biblical example of surrogacy. In the Ancient Near Eastern context, using a servant as a surrogate was a common custom among infertile women in order to provide an heir.[47] This practice is referred to as traditional surrogacy, in which the surrogate mother is inseminated, "with the intended father's sperm, making her a genetic parent along with the intended father."[48]

Traditional surrogacy is not as common today due to the advances made in ART, specifically IVF. The practice of surrogacy has shifted toward what is known as gestational surrogacy, defined as an arrangement "in which an embryo from the intended parents or from a donated oocyte or sperm is transferred to the surrogate uterus. In gestational surrogacy, the woman who carries the child has no genetic connection to the child."[49] In 1985, the first successful gestational surrogacy baby was born in the United States.[50] Gestational surrogacy is divided into two categories, commercial and altruistic.

Commercial surrogacy requires "payment to a woman or an agency for her to carry a child."[51] Altruistic surrogacy describes a situation in which "a woman volunteers to carry a child

[47] N. M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary Genesis* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 119.

[48] Nayana Hitesh Patel et al., "Insight into Different Aspects of Surrogacy Practices," *Journal of Human Reproductive Sciences* 11, no. 3 (2018): 212, https://doi.org/10.4103/jhrs.jhrs_138_17.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 213.

[51] Heather Zeiger, "When Baby-Making Takes Three: You, Me, and She," *Christian Research Institute*, last modified August 19, 2025, https://www.equip.org/articles/baby-making-takes-three/.

for the couple."[52] The ethical, legal, and theological debates surrounding surrogacy often pivot upon this distinction, raising questions not only about the commodification of reproduction but also about the meaning of parental responsibility.

Surrogacy: Legalities and Cost

Surrogacy, in all forms, is fraught with legal issues mainly due to a lack of clear governmental legislation in the United States and abroad. On an international level, countries such as France, Germany, Italy, and Spain have categorically banned surrogacy in all forms.[53] By contrast, nations including the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Belgium prohibit commercial surrogacy but permit altruistic surrogacy.[54] Ukraine and Russia have legalized commercial surrogacy, creating an international market for couples choosing the route of international surrogacy abroad.[55] In the United States, no federal laws govern surrogacy; instead, legislative measures differ by state.[56] Most states do not have specific legislation regarding surrogacy; however, "14 states (among which Texas and California) have targeted surrogacy legislation in place; 12 states have strict limitations in place (such as deeming contracts void and unenforceable); 3 states ban surrogacy altogether (Louisiana, Michigan and Nebraska)."[57] The financial dimensions of surrogacy in many cases exceed the costs associated with IVF. In the

[52] Ibid.

[53] Valeria Piersanti et al., "Surrogacy and 'Procreative Tourism'. What Does the Future Hold from the Ethical and Legal Perspectives?," *Medicina* 57, no. 1 (2021): 47, https://doi.org/10.3390/medicina57010047.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., 51.

United States, a surrogacy arrangement costs approximately $120,000- $150,000.[58] Of this amount, surrogates typically receive $25,000 - $35,000 as compensation for their role.[59] If an egg donor other than the surrogate is used, expenses may increase by an additional $10,000. Additional costs arise from agency fees, medical procedures, legal contracts, and insurance coverage.[60] The majority of health insurance companies exclude surrogacy from benefits, requiring intended parents to shoulder the financial burden directly.[61] Even in cases of altruistic surrogacy—where the surrogate volunteers with no expectation of payment—there are still required costs that the intended parents must cover. The surrogate's medical bills must be paid by the intended parents, including bills for any pregnancy complications that arise.

Invariably, surrogacy contains transactional elements, regardless of the nature of the surrogate agreement. This transactional nature raises moral and ethical issues surrounding not only the child but also the role of the surrogate. Thomas Frank, writing for the *Wall Street Journal*, critiques the commodifying tendencies inherent in surrogacy:

> When money is exchanged for pregnancy, some believe, surrogacy comes close to organ-selling, or even baby-selling. It threatens to commodify not only babies, but women as well, putting their biological functions up for sale like so many Jimmy Choos [expensive women's designer shoes]. If surrogacy ever becomes a widely practiced market transaction, it will probably make pregnancy into just another dirty task for the working class, with wages driven down and wealthy couples hiring the work out because it's such a hassle to be pregnant.[62]

[58] Marcin Smietana, "Affective De-Commodifying, Economic De-Kinning: Surrogates' and Gay Fathers' Narratives in U.S. Surrogacy," *Sociological Research Online* 22, no. 2 (May 2017), 3, https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.4312.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Beth Braverman, "How Much Surrogacy Costs and How to Pay for It," U.S. News and World Report, May 30, 2023, https://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/family-finance/articles/how-much-surrogacy-costs-and-how-to-pay-for-it.

[62] Thomas Frank, "Rent-a-Womb Is Where Market Logic Leads," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 10, 2008, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122887061388693229.

Comparing surrogacy to organ trafficking or the sale of children could be viewed as extreme, but Frank's critique highlights a pressing concern: surrogacy could push the physical and emotional burdens of pregnancy from the wealthy to economically vulnerable women. This reality underscores the need for theological and ethical reflection on the dignity of women and the dangers of commodifying the embodied processes of reproduction.

Biblical Response

An in-depth response on how the church and believers should respond to the use of ART must begin with recognition of the pain and loneliness that couples who experience infertility face. As one author has noted, "infertility is an unfortunate result of living in a fallen world where our mortal bodies do not cooperate with our God-given desires."[63] In the United States, infertility is a significant reality: among "married women aged 15-49 with no prior births," 19 percent report difficulty conceiving after one year of trying, and of this group, 26 percent of women are unable to conceive or struggle to carry a pregnancy to term.[64]

Within the church, couples navigating infertility may encounter "pitied glances, prodding questions, empty attempts to pacify, or judgmental opinions readily offered."[65] It is important that pastors and Christian leaders become well-versed in the ethical and moral issues surrounding the use of ART in order to shepherd well their congregants who seek biblical counsel on how

[63] Zeiger.

[64] "Infertility: Frequently Asked Questions," CDC: Assisted Reproductive Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 15, 2024, https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/infertility/index.htm.

[65] Mary Elizabeth Gresham, "Inconceivable: An Analysis of Assisted Reproductive Technology for the Church" (thesis, Liberty University, 2020), https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2068&context=honors, 5.

they should move forward amid the pain of infertility. The following analysis examines the principles that must be put in place in order to create an ethical response to the use of ART.

Marriage as the Context for Procreation

To develop an ethical response to the use of ART, the first principle is that it should align with the traditional view of marriage, which is defined by the National Association of Evangelicals as "a God-ordained, covenant relationship between a man and a woman."[66] From creation onward, God established marriage as the context in which His command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28) is to be fulfilled. The use of ART outside of a marriage relationship between one man and one woman is incompatible with a biblical worldview. Accordingly, the pursuit of ART by same-sex couples, transgender individuals, or those seeking single parenthood by choice falls outside the biblical vision of marriage and family.

While such applications of ART may be normalized in secular culture, they remain incompatible with the biblical understanding of marriage and procreation. Using ART to achieve single parenthood eliminates the God-ordained requirement of procreation with both a mother and father. If it is not acceptable for same sex couples to ethically use ART, this argument also goes to those who do not have both a man and a woman who will be involved in raising the child created.[67]

[66] "God Defined Marriage," National Association of Evangelicals, June 26, 2015, https://www.nae.org/god-defined-marriage/.

[67] This is only referring to the conception and birth of a child. Adoption does not factor into this conversation because adoption is not the creation of a child for the purpose of a couple, like IVF and surrogacy are.

Infertility and Suffering

Matthew Arbo, a research fellow in Christian Ethics at The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, has spoken extensively with infertile couples who have sought pastoral guidance. Arbo notes, "One particular wound is recurring: people, particularly pastors, failing to meet them in their pain and resorting instead to some modified wives' tale to relieve anxiety."[68] Yet through the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Hannah, and Zechariah and Elizabeth, Scripture demonstrates that God does not overlook such couples, and that He works even through their longing and lament. By contrast, the case of Hagar and Sarah provides a strong biblical polemic against surrogacy as a solution. Abraham ultimately agrees to the surrogacy arrangement proposed by Sarah in violation of God's promise to provide an heir for Abraham. The fallout from this surrogacy arrangement bears the same problematic hallmarks of surrogacy present in modern times.

IVF and the Dignity of Human Life

For married couples who experience infertility, certain applications of IVF may be consistent with biblical ethics, provided they honor the sanctity of human life. The creation of embryos is the greatest ethical concern involved with IVF. Because embryos are created with both the egg and sperm coming together, just as it would be with natural conception, each embryo must be regarded as a distinct human life, bearing the image of God. God makes it clear that all life is sacred, including those already born and those who can be born (Gen. 9:6, Ps. 139:13-16, and Jer. 1:5). God has commanded His image bearers to subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28).

[68] Matthew Arbo, "Pastoring Those Struggling with Infertility," *Credo Magazine*, July 25, 2018, https://credomag.com/2018/07/pastoring-those-struggling-with-infertility/.

In this light, the responsible use of medical advancements—including reproductive technologies—can be seen as a valid expression of that mandate, as long as such use respects the sanctity of human life and aligns with the biblical view of procreation within marriage.

The practical challenges of following these guidelines are considerable. Many fertility clinics prefer creating multiple embryos to increase the chances of a successful birth. The primary focus for these clinics is achieving positive outcomes. Couples who opt to limit embryo creation might face resistance from clinics due to lower success rates and fewer treatment options. Therefore, while IVF may be morally acceptable in these circumstances, couples choosing to pursue Grudem's ethical stance on IVF need to understand both the theological commitments and the medical realities involved in this decision. Thus, biblically faithful use of IVF requires practices that safeguard the dignity of every embryo. Fertilization should be limited to a small number of eggs, ideally one egg at a time, to avoid the need for cryopreservation.[69] When embryos are created, the number of embryos implanted should be limited; this is safer for the woman and avoids the possibility of selective reduction, which is not morally permissible.[70] No embryos, regardless of their genetic makeup, should be discarded.[71] In cases where surplus embryos remain, embryo adoption may provide a redemptive alternative, allowing other couples facing infertility to bear children. While not as ideal as the biological parents implanting all

[69] Matthew Arbo, *Walking through Infertility: Biblical, Theological, and Moral Counsel for Those Who Are Struggling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 93.

[70] Selective reduction refers to "a medical procedure used to reduce a multiple pregnancy, often a multiple pregnancy induced by in vitro fertilization or drug therapy. In such instances, healthy embryos are sacrificed in order to maximize the chances of survival of the remaining embryos or to allow the mother to choose the number of babies she wishes to deliver." Elizabeth Villiers Gemmette, "Selective Pregnancy Reduction: Medical Attitudes, Legal Implications, and a Viable Alternative," *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 16, no. 2 (1991): 383, https://doi.org/10.1215/03616878-16-2-383.

[71] Gresham, 23.

embryos, embryo adoption shows compassion to infertile couples longing for a child and simultaneously honors the dignity of human life.

Surrogacy and the Commodification of Life

While IVF may, under certain conditions, be practiced in a way that respects biblical principles, surrogacy presents deeper and more intractable concerns.[72] Unlike adoption, which responds to the existing needs of children and is oriented toward their well-being, surrogacy intentionally brings a child into existence to fulfill the desires of intended parents through a transactional arrangement. The aforementioned biblical example of traditional surrogacy demonstrates this point perfectly: Abraham desired an heir, Sarah desired to be a mother, and the maidservant Hagar bore the costs of bearing a child.

Surrogacy differs from the use of IVF alone for a couple to create embryos because the embryos created are intended for the biological parents to bear and raise. Surrogacy risks commodifying both the woman who carries the child and the child herself. Surrogacy arrangements "treat the creation of a person as the means to the gratification of the interests of others, rather than respect the child as an end in himself. The surrogate mother, 'by the very nature of the transaction,' cannot 'make a pretense to valuing the child in and for himself, since she would not otherwise be creating the child but for the monetary and other . . . considerations [that] she receives under the surrogate mother contract.'"[73]

[72] It should be noted that having to use ART is never the most ideal option for any couple. The reality is that the world and everything in it has been marred by sin. This includes infertility and adoption. Not all couples are called to adopt, so the use of ART can be a means for faithful couples to pursue biological parenthood while also ensuring that all life is valued.

[73] Bernard G. Prusak, "What Are Parents for?: Reproductive Ethics after the Nonidentity Problem," *Hastings Center Report* 40, no. 2 (2010): 40, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/376763.

This argument is easy to make for commercial surrogacy, but some in the Christian community have defended altruistic surrogacy as a means to bless those struggling with infertility. In a *Christianity Today* article, Christian women who have participated in altruistic surrogacy claimed that altruistic surrogacy is a calling. One woman phrased her desire to be a surrogate as a feeling of "deep compassion for families stung by infertility. She felt called to help, so much so that she offered up her womb to two little embryos from a fellow couple struggling to conceive."[74] Yet even when undertaken with sincere motives, the arrangement remains transactional in nature: a woman's body is used for the sake of another's desire. There is the very real "potential for abuse, and it does not change the fact that a woman's body is being used for instrumental purposes."[75] For all the stories of women volunteering to carry the child of a friend or family member that end in a beautiful baby where all involved are bonded together for life, there are stories of altruistic surrogacy gone wrong, where not only was a relationship marred beyond repair, but the health and well-being of the altruistic gestational carrier was permanently damaged.[76] One need look no further than the example of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to see the negative outcomes of surrogacy on human relationships. The value of human life is paramount to any biblical ethic. Surrogacy does not hold to a value of human life that is in line with Scripture because both the gestational carrier and the child are seen as a commodity, rather than human beings to be cherished as image bearers of God. The desire to have children

[74] Kate Shellnutt, "America's Surrogacy Bump: Is Fertility a Blessing to Be Shared?," *Christianity Today,* February 20, 2018, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/march/surrogacy-surge-us-christians-bioethics-ivf-reproduction.html.

[75] Zeiger.

[76] Jennifer Lahl has done extensive work on this topic, including the film *Breeders: A Subclass of Women?,* where interviews including the negatives of altruistic surrogacy are highlighted.

can be all-consuming, but when considering the ethical issues involved in the surrogacy process, "surrogacy, no matter how well intentioned, is a case of using inappropriate means to try to alleviate a very real loss."[77]

Upholding the Value of Human Life

The overarching principle is that all human life—whether embryos in the lab, children in the womb, or women carrying pregnancies—must be honored as sacred as they bear the image of God. The church must therefore approach ART with both compassion and conviction: compassion for those who grieve the pain of infertility and conviction that not every means of alleviating suffering is biblically faithful. Thus, while certain forms of IVF may be practiced in a way that aligns with Christian ethics, surrogacy cannot be reconciled with the biblical vision of life, marriage, and procreation.

Conclusion

Addressing infertility and the ethical use of ART is a complex and delicate topic. In many Evangelical Christian circles, marriage and family are considered a high priority and often viewed as sacred appointments ordained by God.[78] For couples who do not feel called to adopt, ART may appear to offer a path toward creating a family.[79] While the use of ART in any form is

[77] Zeiger.

[78] Stephanie Kramer, "White Evangelicals More Likely than Other Christians to Say People Should Prioritize Marriage, Procreation," Pew Research Center, December 16, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/12/16/white-evangelicals-more-likely-than-other-christians-to-say-people-should-prioritize-marriage-procreation/.

[79] Adoption truly is a calling; not all couples are called to adopt. Telling couples experiencing infertility to just pursue adoption, if they do not feel called to it, is not a helpful way to advise or counsel the couple.

outside the traditional biblical understanding of sex and procreation within marriage, there is a way in which IVF can be done that is still consistent with the biblical ethics of human life.

The most important criterion for Christians considering IVF is that the couple must not contradict the traditional biblical view of marriage. Beyond this foundational standard, couples must take great care in how embryos are created and commit to pursuing life for each created embryo. Under no circumstances should any embryos be discarded, regardless of their genetic grade or makeup, and couples must resist freezing embryos indefinitely. In a world marred by sin, this is not a perfect solution for couples experiencing infertility, but it is one that takes the biblical ethic of life into account. While this approach may not align with standard fertility clinic procedures, Christian couples must make their convictions clear to ensure that the sanctity of life is honored throughout the process.

The same cannot be said for surrogacy. While the surrogacy process does involve the use of IVF, the embryo creation and implantation process brings a third party, the surrogate, into the creation of a child. This process introduces moral and theological complications that violate the one-flesh covenant of marriage and the biblical view of procreation. Even in altruistic surrogacy agreements, there is still an understanding that there will be some form of payment for the surrogate's services. Both the surrogate and the child risk being reduced to commodities. The transactional nature of a surrogacy agreement, and the possible devaluing of not only the surrogate's body but also the child being created, do not offer a way to practice surrogacy that meets a biblically faithful ethic that views all human life as God's created image bearers.

The use of ART raises profound moral questions because it involves the creation and possible destruction of human life. Addressing these issues requires theological wisdom and pastoral sensitivity. Infertility can be a source of deep grief, often misunderstood by those who

have not experienced it. Churches and ministry leaders must become more informed about the ethical complexities of ART to guide couples toward choices that reflect compassion, but that never cross lines God has drawn. For Christian couples experiencing infertility, being directed towards IVF to grow their family is a means of being fruitful and multiplying. However, many couples are not well versed in the process of IVF or in how to pursue IVF in a manner that makes the creation of human life paramount. Having ministerial staff more informed about the processes involved in using ART can offer these couples biblical guidance on how to proceed. By grounding decisions in a robust biblical ethic that honors life, marriage, and God's sovereignty, Christian couples can pursue parenthood without compromising their faith or the sacredness of human life.

This is a topic that is ripe for further research. Areas of further research to explore in relation to the ethics of using ART are the parallels and differences between Catholic and Protestant views surrounding the sanctity of life. The position in this paper has been to uphold both the sanctity of life and the dignity of life, which are also notable Catholic positions. However, the application of these principles may differ. For example, the Catholic perspective takes further the idea that procreation must occur not only within the biblical understanding of marriage, but also only within the intimate marital union of husband and wife, though, as seen in the Anderson and Walker article, this position is held by some Protestants. The overarching concern is whether IVF violates the designs and sovereignty of God in creating human beings. By contrast, many parallels may be discovered, including prohibitions against (1) selecting and destroying embryos, (2) reviving the practice of eugenic selection through IVF by couples fully capable of reproduction, (3) freezing and ignoring embryos indefinitely, (4) violating God's design for families, which excludes gay couples and intentional single parents, and (5) using

ART for nefarious purposes such as human trafficking, organ trafficking, and child predators. Examining the moral complexities of ART in such a study could foster interfaith dialogue and greater unity of thought on this subject.

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Review of Erik Waaler. *The Use of the Old Testament in Matthew 1–4*

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Erik Waaler. *The Use of the Old Testament in Matthew 1–4*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023. 326 pages. Paperback. ISBN 978-3-16-162225-0. $124.00.

Erik Waaler received his doctorate from MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion, and Science, and he currently serves as a professor at NLA University College in Norway. He has written extensively on the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, giving particular attention to both the Gospels' and Paul's use of Deuteronomy and the Shema. His expertise in intertextuality comes to the forefront in numerous essays published in the Scriptures, Texts, and Tracings series, as well as monograph-length works such as *The Use of the Old Testament in Matthew 1–4*. In *The Use of the Old Testament in Matthew 1–4* in particular, Waaler "aims to reclaim the mode of recontextualization current in first-century Judah and Galilee as it is reflected in the Gospel of Matthew" (VII). More specifically, he critiques modern approaches to intertextuality that merely identify quotations, allusions, and echoes, arguing that these approaches are "far removed" from the approaches of those writing in the Second Temple Period (VII, 1). In contrast to these modern methods, he ultimately proposes "that we speak of recontextualization," which he defines as "the reuse of parts of one text in the body of another text," and "that we focus on describing the many different factors that are at work when a text is recontextualized" (1). Considering his two-fold aim of establishing and applying his method to Scripture, Waaler spends the first few chapters of the book on the philosophical and technical aspects of intertextuality and recontextualization, and then he applies these insights to specific passages in the Gospel of Matthew in the second half.

Beginning in chapter one, Waaler argues that the approaches to intertextuality espoused by Richard Hays and Brian Rosner, both of whom have popularized the study of intertextuality within New Testament studies by developing criteria for identifying allusions and echoes, are

insufficient since they only focus on identifying whether intertextual references occur in a text and the source from which a reference was taken (7). In contrast, Waaler urges readers to focus on how writers employed and interpreted a text in its new context for a particular purpose. He states, "We would like to ask: How is the text changed when it is recontextualized? The focus of our method should be on the identification of *how* exegetes of the Second Temple period employ Scripture and interpret Scripture" (7). This focus on how the writers of the Second Temple period employ and interpret Scripture points back to Waaler's overall aim "to reclaim the mode of recontextualization current in first-century Judah and Galilee" as discussed above (VII, 1). Before exploring recontextualization in detail, Waaler discusses synchrony, diachrony, subjectivity, dominant texts, and *sensus plenior,* all of which are key topics and debates within the field of intertextuality.

In chapter two, Waaler begins by distinguishing more clearly between citations, "reproduced word for word from a source" and accompanied by introductory formulas; quotations, "word-for-word reproductions of a text without introductory markers;" allusions, a reference that the author assumes the reader will recognize due to lexical parallels; and echoes, very faint references to a text (31). Yet, once again, Waaler does not believe these traditional terms and categories are helpful when they overlap in a text or when there is only one parallel lemma (30–35). Therefore, he reiterates that he prefers the term "recontextualization," and he begins to provide several key strategies or factors for identifying and interpreting the so-called recontextualizations. The first four factors address the literary reference, degree of verbal agreement, level of intent and awareness, and implicational change.

In chapter three, Waaler then provides twenty-four additional factors that "influence an interpretation of a pretext that is employed and manipulated when reused" (32). The first factor

he discusses in this chapter focuses on "continuity within change" (55). Waaler argues that the interpreter must first identify the continuity and discontinuity between texts, as well as the possible implications of why an author chose to retain or recontextualize certain aspects of a text in its new context (55–57). Another factor that Waaler discusses is metalepsis, which occurs when an author connects two texts in such a way that the reference in the phenotext (new text in which the reference is placed) is read in light of the entire, original context of the phrase in the archetext (original text from which the reference is drawn) (62). Besides metalepsis and "continuity within change," other factors include differences in the culture, language, grammar, genre, and focalization between the archetexts and phenotexts. Waaler also notes that large-scale patterns can be recontextualized in the organization of entire New Testament books (83).

After laying the foundation for recontextualization in the first section, Waaler applies his strategies to Matthew in the second half of the book. In chapter four, Waaler examines the explicit recontextualizations in Matthew, otherwise known as the "fulfillment quotations." He notes a pattern of unity in these quotations, many taken from Isaiah (90–91). Next, he spends chapter five examining Matthew 1:1, and he suggests that this verse is a form of paratext and serves as a title that applies not just to the genealogy but to all of Matthew (101, 120). Then, in chapter six, Waaler argues that the genealogy is a form of rewritten Scripture drawn from Ruth 4:18–22 and 1 Chronicles 3:5, 10–16. He believes that the intrusions and changes to the text, such as the phrase "and his brothers" in 1:2, 11, the inclusion of Abraham and David in both the title and genealogy, and the inclusion of women in the genealogy, reveal Matthew's unique emphases that develop throughout the rest of the Gospel (121). Ultimately, towards the end of chapter six, Waaler argues that the recontextualizations in the title and genealogy indicate that the entire book should be read in light of recontextualizations.

Next, in chapter seven, Waaler focuses on how Matthew recontextualizes the predominantly verbatim citations of Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:1, Hosea 11:1, and Jeremiah 38:15 throughout the infancy narrative. He also explores how Matthew interweaves additional Old Testament texts within these verbatim recontextualizations. Waaler's detailed analysis cannot be reproduced here, but a few examples will suffice. Regarding Matthew 1:23 ("Behold the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call his name 'Immanuel,' which translated means 'God with us'"), Waaler suggests that Matthew intertwined Isaiah 7:14 (LXX) with Genesis 16:11; 17:19; Judges 13:3–5; 13:7 (149–150). Waaler argues that Matthew interweaves these texts to connect typologically the birth narratives of Ishmael, Isaac, and Samson with Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus's birth, illuminating the meaning of Immanuel and emphasizing the theme of promise and fulfillment (149–150, 164). After discussing Matthew 1:23, he then examines the possible recontextualizations of Micah 5:1 and 2 Samuel 5:2 in Matthew 2:6 as it relates to Messianic prophecies. Next, Waaler argues that Matthew embeds the recontextualization of Hosea 11:1 in a "fourfold recontextualization of Exodus 4:20" in Matthew 2:15 for the dual purpose of highlighting the parallels between the lives of Jesus and Moses and revealing that Jesus takes "on the role of Israel in a representative way in Matthew" (197). Finally, Waaler explores Matthew's recontextualizations of Jeremiah 31:15, 38:15, and Genesis 37:35 in Matthew 2:18, all of which connect Jesus's experience of exile with that of Israel.

In contrast to the previous chapter where Waaler addresses numerous verbatim recontextualizations, in chapter eight, Waaler focuses on Matthew 2:23, which does not seem to recontextualize a particular prophecy but a variety of Old Testament texts containing "Nazarene" and "branch." Given the similar spellings and meanings of the Hebrew terms, as well as debates over their Greek translation and Matthew's original term, Waaler suggests that Matthew refers to

both a priestly and kingly figure (217–223). Then, in chapter nine, Waaler focuses on how Matthew presents John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus in Matthew 3 through his recontextualization of Isaiah 40:3, as well as passages related to Elijah, such as 2 Kings 1:7–8 and Malachi 4:5 (232–233). He also argues that Matthew characterizes Jesus as a royal, obedient, and sacrificial servant in Matthew 3 by recontextualizing Psalm 2, Isaiah 42, and Genesis 22 (240). He concludes that "the use of the Old Testament in Matthew chapter 3 is Christological" (240). Finally, in chapter ten, Waaler examines four "explicit verbatim recontextualizations" in the temptation narrative (Deuteronomy 6:13, 6:13, 8:3; Psalm 91:11–12), all of which present Jesus as the new Moses and faithful Son of God (270). Waaler then summarizes his main points in the conclusion and reiterates that Matthew's process of recontextualizing Old Testament texts includes elements of both continuity and change for the ultimate purpose of presenting Jesus as the Christ (271).

Overall, Waaler's monograph provides a unique and beneficial approach to intertextuality that deserves attention. Regardless of whether Waaler's terminology takes root in the field, his decision to move away from traditional terms in the field of intertextuality in favor of the term "recontextualization" causes him to stand out amid scholars such as Richard Hays, G. K. Beale, and James Hamilton, who typically employ the standard terminology. Furthermore, in contrast to scholars such as Hays, who are known for providing criteria for identifying whether an allusion or echo is present in a text, Waaler's factors do not really address the question of how to determine if an intertextual reference is present. Instead, his factors focus on why a recontextualization has been incorporated in the text, how it has been adjusted for its new context, and how to interpret its significance. Therefore, in comparison to more traditional approaches, Waaler's twenty-eight factors for interpreting recontextualizations likely allow for a

greater level of precision in identifying how an author incorporates an intertextual reference into their text, as well as the significance of any alterations an author might make to the text. Waaler's intentional focus on providing factors that align with the interpretive strategies of the Second Temple period rather than modern theories of intertextuality also provides a unique lens to his approach. However, scholars such as Beale and Hamilton have also explored the ways that New Testament authors employ and adjust Old Testament texts, and they often refer to similar criteria and topics as Waaler. Even Hays explores the ways that concepts such as metalepsis shape our interpretation of allusions. Therefore, although Waaler's approach is perhaps more detailed regarding the factors he proposes, it is not entirely new, even if his terminology and some of his factors are unique. Furthermore, considering the overlap between Waaler's approach and those espoused by Beale and Hamilton, Waaler's limited engagement with Beale and lack of engagement with Hamilton could be considered a weakness of his work.

Additionally, even though the detailed examples that Waaler provides throughout Matthew 1–4, as well as his frequent engagement with textual criticism, Second Temple literature, translation theory, and biblical cultures exhibit the well-rounded nature of his work, some of Waaler's discussions are extremely technical, and some of his factors, such as the cultural, sociological, and worldview factors or the narrative pattern and pattern of association factors, greatly overlap with each other. As a result of his inclusion of so many technical and sometimes overlapping factors within discussions of a single verse, his work may be somewhat confusing to a reader unfamiliar with the field. The absence of translations for certain Greek, Hebrew, and German texts may also lessen the book's accessibility. Therefore, the book is likely intended primarily for a scholarly audience, but a pastor or lay-person with some prior understanding of the biblical languages and intertextuality would likely benefit from the work as well.

Finally, although Waaler does not explicitly provide his own stance on topics such as *sensus plenior* and divine inspiration, some of his statements may raise concerns for readers from more Reformed traditions. For example, although he acknowledges that both the archetext and phenotext can be inspired, thereby allowing for both "interpretation of inspired texts" and "inspired interpretation," in chapter three, he seems to distinguish between the inspired, prophetic interpretation of a pre-text and a form of scholarly exegesis based on rules and criteria as seen in the rabbis (58–60). Although not explicit, he seems to leave room for both forms in Matthew's use of the Old Testament (59–60). Likewise, although he is not straightforward regarding his stance on *sensus plenior*, his discussion of the topic in the introduction and in chapter one may leave room for multiple fulfillments and meanings of Scripture. Yet, in the second half of the book, he predominantly appeals to typological understandings of texts rather than entirely separate meanings. Even if readers disagree with his discussions of inspiration and *sensus plenior* in the first half of the book, these discussions do not always shape his later conclusions regarding Matthew 1–4. Therefore, those with a more Reformed view of inspiration and Scripture can still glean much from his discussions of recontextualizations in Matthew. Ultimately, even considering the possible weaknesses mentioned above, Waaler's research is extremely beneficial for the study of intertextuality in general and Matthew's use of the Old Testament in particular, and he rightly pushes scholars and exegetes to explore the questions of how and why the New Testament authors employ Old Testament texts.

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Review of Rhys Laverty et al., *Life on the Silent Planet: Essays on Christian Living from C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*

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Rhys Laverty, ed. *Life on the Silent Planet: Essays on Christian Living from C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*. Landrum, SC: Davenant Press, 2024. 356 pages. Softcover, $44.95.

C.S. Lewis, one of the most influential Christian thinkers and literary critics of the twentieth century, authored the *Ransom Trilogy*—a sequence of science fiction novels united by their central figure, Elwin Ransom, a philologist and professor whose kidnapping forces him to undertake interplanetary journeys packed with spiritual and moral challenges. The set, also referred to as the *Space Trilogy*, comprised of *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945), stands as Lewis's creative response to the prevailing worldview of modernism. For Lewis, modernism—with its reliance on materialism, scientism, and individual autonomy—represented a cultural drift away from the metaphysical and moral order that once undergirded Western thought. The essay collection *Life on the Silent Planet* gathers twelve Christian scholars, all deeply engaged with Lewis's work and worldview, to examine how Lewis's cosmic vision speaks to believers navigating an age unmoored from its metaphysical roots. The contributors seek to interpret the trilogy not solely as imaginative fiction but as a theological and moral commentary on modern civilization.

All in eyeshot of these words are native moderns in their patterns of thought, according to this collection and to Lewis himself (iv). To understand what being a modern thinker means, consider the geocentric model of the universe popular in the Middle Ages. It is often assumed today that placing the Earth at the center of the universe reflected human egotism, but this projection arises from a modern assumption that the center is a place of privilege. In medieval cosmology, however, height—rather than centrality—signified holiness. Glory belonged to the "highest," not the center—the ancient hymn "Gloria in Excelsis Deo [Glory to God in the highest]," derived from Luke 2:14, was a popular hymn of the Middle Ages (imagine a

congregation singing this hymn in Salisbury Cathedral, dazzled by the height and symmetry of the columns and awed by the saturation of multi-colored light beaming through the stained glass—it is upwards and outwards in a kind of cosmic cathedral that the worshipper focuses).[1] For medieval society, the cosmos was hierarchical: the pure rose; the impure sank.[2] The center was not exalted; it was the lowest point. Lewis described the medieval view of Earth in *The Discarded Image* as "in fact the 'offscourings of creation,' the cosmic dust-bin."[3] Dante's Lucifer dwells at the center of the Earth, the nadir of creation.

Tellingly, the term egocentric did not arise until around the year 1900, and "self" words like "self-centered" arose after the Middle Ages.[4] Modern people tend to impose their assumptions onto the past—what Lewis called "chronological snobbery," characterized by "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate of our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that count discredited."[5] Lewis understood that modern cosmology had superseded the medieval model in terms of scientific accuracy, but he insisted that how a culture imagines the universe reveals its moral framework (15). To modern secular people, the cosmos is a mechanical system devoid of intrinsic meaning. The medieval vision, by contrast, conveyed

[1] For an excellent introduction to Lewis' arguments about the contrasts between medieval and modern worldviews and imaginations, including his thoughts on the practical implications of cosmological models, see Jason M. Baxter's *The Medieval Mind of C.S. Lewis: How Great Books Shaped a Great Mind* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022).

[2] C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 62.

[3] Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 63.

[4] Oxford English Dictionary, "egocentric (adj. & n.)," December 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1208286259.

[5] C.S. Lewis, *The Beloved Works of C.S. Lewis: Surprised by Joy* (Edison, NJ: International Press, 2004), 114.

moral order and purpose: a "Great Chain of Being that stretches from God to the lowest form of inorganic life" (7).

The *Ransom Trilogy*, published at the height of wartime instability and fear of a dystopian future between 1938 and 1945, pulled Lewis's interest in cosmological models and worldviews together. These novels are lesser known to the average Christian, offering less "sound bite" or sermon-illustration kind of material than *The Screwtape Letters* or *Mere Christianity*. Heavy with references to Arthurian legend, philosophy ranging from Plato to Nietzsche, and other science fiction such as that written by H.G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon, the barrier to entry feels higher than Lewis's other fiction. Such a statement is ironic, points out Rhys Laverty, the editor of this volume of essays about the trilogy. The novels highlight the ills of modernity with unparalleled prescience; yet, Laverty argues, the barrier to entry is not intellectual difficulty but the modern reader's estrangement from the classical and theological scaffolding that once made such works approachable (xi). Reflecting on lacking the context that earlier readers may have taken for granted, Laverty observes, "The series may still have been relatively accessible in its day, but ironically it has become less so in ours precisely due to the modern ills about which it warns us. It is not so much that the barrier to entry has become higher over time; rather we, having received educations that were neither scientific nor classical . . . have sunk lower and lower" (xi). The volume's essays aim to restore that lost context.

The authors—academics, pastors, and cultural commentators—take up Lewis's challenge to confront the modern worldview with theological imagination. Each essay connects aspects of the trilogy to concrete realities of Christian life today. Joe Rigney, author of *Live Like a Narnian: Christian Discipleship in Lewis's Chronicles*, explains how *Out of the Silent Planet* critiques a "despairing and terrifying nightmare engendered by scientistic mythology and carried forward by

greed, lust for power, and technological mastery of man's environment and eventually man himself" (31). When the transcendent order is lost, what remains is nihilism, totalitarianism, and moral relativism. Lewis somehow saw that doing away with transcendence—and the requisite sources of traditional authority and morality—would result in "progress" characterized by a class of scientistic technocrats attempting to replace the Creator and become gods themselves.

Lewis saw what was coming for traditional concepts of gender, too. Colin Smothers, executive director of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, writing on masculinity in *Out of the Silent Planet*, argues that Elwin Ransom's transformation under the influence of Mars (named after the Roman god of war) from a man characterized by passivity to a man of action reflects not brute aggression but courageous, virtuous knighthood. Ransom's willingness to embrace danger and obey God in the face of the terror of his own potential annihilation reframes masculinity as fortitude. Smothers notes, "'Martianity,' mature masculinity, is the disciplined warrior enlisted in the cause of righteousness, who is fearless and courageous, even to the point of death on behalf of his beloved" (66–71).

The authors also take up one of modernity's central casualties: the natural body in its natural world. From transgenderism and transhumanism to virtual reality and AI, Laverty and others argue that the body is being reduced to an inconvenience or a raw material to be manipulated.[6] In his chapter on *Perelandra*, Laverty highlights how the temptations of the Green

[6] Keith Lowery gives an apt example of our modern push toward disembodiment when discussing "reality privilege." He writes about an interview with technologist Marc Andreessen in which "Andreessen was asked if he thought that technology perhaps made us too connected and virtualized in ways that were unhelpful to human psychology. He responded by suggesting that such a notion might itself be an artifact of 'reality privilege': 'Your question is a great example of what I call Reality Privilege. . . . A small percent of people live in a real-world environment that is rich, even overflowing, with glorious substance, beautiful settings, plentiful stimulation, and many fascinating people to talk to, and to work with, and to date. These are also all of the people who get to ask probing questions like yours. Everyone else, the vast majority of humanity, lacks Reality Privilege – their online world is, or will be, immeasurably richer and more fulfilling than most of the physical and social environment around them in the quote-unquote real world. . . . We should build – and we are building – online worlds that make life and work and love wonderful for everyone, no matter what level of reality deprivation they find themselves in.'

Lady on the unfallen Venus-like planet of Perelandra mirror the modern discontent with natural things. The Un-Man, a scientist so driven by megalomaniac visions of technological progress that he has lost his humanity, attempts to convince the Green Lady not to accept the good things God has given her in every moment but to always think of what else there might be. Rather than accepting the goodness of her embodied moment, she is urged to yearn for "other fruit"—a metaphor for constant dissatisfaction and restlessness (144). Laverty says that today "we can live in an alternate present in which our closest companions are not those in the same house or town as us but people on the other side of the world. . . . We can ignore the pleasures on offer in the same room for those offered in the digital ether. . . . This makes the real fruit given to us in our God-ordained time and place insipid with thoughts of other fruit" (144). Growth in sanctification, Lewis implies, consists in learning to embrace what God has given in the here and now (144). Laverty continues, "The tantalizing prospect of 'a better offer' constantly presents itself to us, but must be refused – it is the tool of the Enemy" (144).

This theme of embracing the will of God continues in *That Hideous Strength*, where the Arthurian image of Logres—a hidden faithful remnant—contrasts sharply with the modern conception of the global technocratic organization that seeks to dominate nature and human beings to quench its thirst for money and power. Holly Ordway observes that Lewis affirms the "irreducibly incarnational quality of Christianity" through this imagery (268). Salvation comes not through grand, centrally organized systems but through humble obedience by flawed individuals. She writes, "The entire planet and all of humanity is threatened by The Hideous Strength, but it is not saved by some supra-national organization. Rather, Tellus [Earth] is saved

Don't miss the essential point being made here: a disembodied, virtual existence is not only good; it is an actual matter of equality and justice." Keith Lowery, "The Gnostic Thread: The Anti-Christian Rush Toward Disembodiment," *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* 38, no. 3 (2025): 31.

by Logres" (268). Logres, the name for the kingdom of the legendary King Arthur, comprises the novel's odd assortment of regular individuals (and a couple of bears) who are simply living out their true callings by accepting their weaknesses, repenting, growing in self-knowledge, and embracing what God made them to be. Prosaic obedience saves the world.

Michael Ward, author of *Planet Narnia* and *After Humanity*, echoes this focus on the incarnational aspect of the individual living to please God. In his discussion of Mark and Jane, an estranged married couple who play pivotal roles in *That Hideous Strength*, Ward contends that the couple's rejection of "matrimony" (literally, "mother-making") stems from contraceptive self-will: a desire to control life rather than receive it. By using contraception to "subdue reality" and determine their own destinies, they resist God's design for them—to cultivate "moral character appropriate to their physiological natures" (157). Over time, each is transformed—Mark by facing the moral cost of his compromises and Jane through encounters with others who live faithfully. Ward argues that healing comes through repentance and a return to their God-given nature (157).

For Lewis, gender represented "ground zero" for civilization. Gender is not a cultural construct but a reflection of cosmic reality. In his analysis of *That Hideous Strength*, Joseph Minich notes that the dystopia Lewis envisions emerges when sexual distinction is erased, arguing, "At the root of Lewis's dystopian vision lies a world in which the tensions between the sexes have been obliterated by a sexless, posthuman regime. . . . The healing of the conflict is not portrayed as a frontal negotiation between Mark and Jane, but occurs in the individual engagement of each soul with God. . . . [Mark and Jane] are brought together having chosen to take on their manly and womanly vocation *whether or not the other does*" (208).

Christiana Hale concludes with a reflection on obedience as a decisive act grounded in the present. Drawing on *The Screwtape Letters*, she reminds readers that "true obedience . . . is found only in the present. It is not enough to be planning to be obedient at some distant point in the future, a future that may or may not come to exist. . . . The one who truly understands the nature of obedience is in fact the one who has been obedient in the trenches, despite all temptations to the contrary" (97). The Christian calling, according to Lewis and echoed throughout these essays, is not abstract idealism or utopian engineering, but grounded faithfulness—here and now, in one's body, vocation, and community.

Life on the Silent Planet offers both academic rigor and spiritual nourishment. Its contributors engage Lewis's imaginative theology to address contemporary issues of technology, personhood, gender, and morality. Whether for longtime admirers of the *Ransom Trilogy* or newcomers to Lewis's science fiction, the collection provides rich interpretive tools for understanding his vision of a divinely ordered cosmos. Ultimately, this book does more than interpret Lewis; it calls readers to embody the virtues his body of writing celebrates—humility, obedience, courage, and a reverent acceptance of God-created reality. In an era dominated by disembodied technologies and moral confusion, Laverty and his collaborators invite the modern Christian to recover the wisdom of a cosmos alive with divine meaning.