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THE ACTIVE OBEDIENCE OF JESUS CHRIST

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Micah John McCormick

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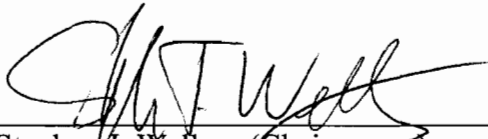
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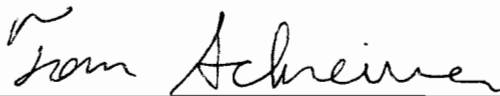
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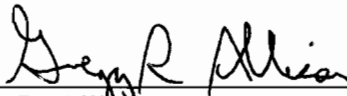
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Date March 31, 2010

To my parents,
Alexander and Karen McCormick

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> , Bauer et al.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CD</i>	<i>Church Dogmatics</i> , Karl Barth
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>EBC</i>	<i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>FC</i>	<i>Formula of Concord</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> , John Calvin
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LBCF	<i>London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
<i>NIB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
SD	<i>Savoy Declaration</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WCF	<i>Westminster Confession of Faith</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

PREFACE

Although this project bears my name, I owe a great debt of gratitude to a number of people who encouraged and assisted me along the way. Most importantly, I am thankful to God and his grace in my life. Without him, I surely never would have desired to study the Scriptures, much less the glorious gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. The energy I put into this study was not simply natural energy—my interest stems from the Holy Spirit’s convicting work. I am deeply aware of my own unrighteousness, and I long to grow in my knowledge and experience of what it means to be found righteous in Christ.

I am also very thankful for the parents God has given me. Along with raising me in the gospel, they have been very supportive in all of my graduate work. My supervisor, Dr. Stephen Wellum, has been enthusiastic about this topic from the outset. His advice remains invaluable; I am extremely thankful for his input—especially given the many obligations he has to fulfill. The other members of my committee, Dr. Thomas Schreiner and Dr. Gregg Allison, also provided important feedback, as well as my external reader, Robert Peterson. Wherever I have not followed their advice exactly, I am probably the worse for it.

Other readers who deserve many thanks for their input include Kevin McFadden, Brad Baugham, and (once again) my father. Kudos go to Timothy Mackey for his language prowess. Style experts Marsha Omanson and Toby Jennings sought to

point me on the straight and narrow—I take full blame for any remaining breaches of the SBTS style guide. Finally, I would be remiss not to thank Lee Tankersley, who will perhaps one day get around to reading my dissertation. Whenever I was immersed in study at my library carrel, Lee had the knack of rousing me from my dogmatic slumber with a necessary and provocative question: “Do you want to go to Chick-Fil-A for lunch today?”

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Louisville, Kentucky

May 2010

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1937, as J. Gresham Machen lay dying, he dictated one final telegram to his long time friend and colleague John Murray. In it, Machen wrote two simple sentences: “I’m so thankful for active obedience of Christ. No hope without it.”¹ This great Protestant leader, who had defended and articulated so many theological truths throughout his career, when pressed with the reality of his impending death, chose to single out one particular doctrine—the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. For Machen, this teaching was not simply a matter of doctrinaire speculation—it was the comfort of his heart. Although Machen once preached a sermon on this doctrine, he never wrote a major work on it. This work attempts to help fill that gap. Throughout, one simple question is in view: Is the active obedience of Christ a biblical teaching? This work concludes that the active obedience of Christ is indeed a biblical teaching. This opening chapter will (1) define and briefly explain the doctrine; (2) survey the previous literature on the subject; (3) offer warrant for the study of this subject; and (4) outline the procedure of the work. This structure could also be cast in terms of four questions. First, what is the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ? Second, what else has been written

¹Quoted in Ned Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 508.

on it? Third, why write about this topic? Fourth, how will the argument of this work proceed?

Defining and Explaining the Active Obedience of Christ

Wayne Grudem defines the active obedience of Christ in this way: “Christ had to live a life of perfect obedience to God in order to earn righteousness for us. He had to obey the law for his whole life on our behalf so that the positive merits of his perfect obedience would be counted for us.”² Christ’s whole work of reconciliation, from the cradle to the grave, was one act of obedience for sinners. Just as penal substitution focuses on Christ’s vicarious curse-bearing, active obedience addresses the positive prescription of God’s law, and asserts that Christ was also a substitute for sinners in perfectly obeying God throughout his life on earth. Thus Christ not only bore the curse of the law for his people (his “passive obedience”), he also obeyed God’s commands for them (his “active obedience”). The Bible summarizes God’s positive requirements in two great commands: love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.³ The

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 270. For similar descriptions of the active obedience of Christ, see John Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner, 1990), 5:240-74; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 2:445-55; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 3:394-95; James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (1867; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1997), 173-79; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 380, 515; J. Gresham Machen, “The Active Obedience of Christ,” in *God Transcendent and Other Sermons*, ed. Ned Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 187-96; Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 631; R. Scott Clark, “Do This and Live: Christ’s Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification,” in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 229-31; David VanDrunen, “To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice: A Defense of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Light of Recent Criticism,” in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy Prentiss Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 127.

³In Matt 22:35-39 a lawyer asks Jesus what the greatest commandment is, and Jesus responds, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is

doctrine of the active obedience affirms that Christ the mediator perfectly and vicariously loved God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself.

In many ways the terms “active” and “passive” obedience are unfortunate. As a result, Robert Reymond suggests using the terms “preceptive” and “penal” obedience instead.⁴ Reymond’s suggestion is sound; however, since the terms “active” and “passive” are so ingrained in church history, and since they are used so frequently in the literature, this work will not abandon them. Instead, sometimes the terms “preceptive” and “penal” obedience (or “positive” and “negative” vicarious obedience) will be used interchangeably with the terms “active” and “passive” obedience.

Understanding these terms remains important. The term “passive” in “passive obedience” derives from the Latin term *patior*, which means “to suffer,”⁵ emphasizing Christ’s penal substitution, his suffering in the place of sinners in obedience to the Father, a suffering that climaxed in his death on the cross. The “active” obedience, then, complements the doctrine of penal substitution by pointing to the other side of Christ’s vicarious work—he not only bore the penalty and curse of the broken law, he positively fulfilled the law. He perfectly, unceasingly, and vicariously loved God and neighbor with his whole being. Some further points should be made, lest these terms be misunderstood.⁶

the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In Mark 12:28-31, a scribe asks Jesus a similar question, and Jesus responds in the same way, except that he adds “with all your strength.” In these cases, Jesus is drawing on the OT (Deut 6:4; Lev 19:18).

⁴Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 631. This language had already been hinted at by Robert Lewis Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (1871; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1985), 625.

⁵Clark, “Do This and Live,” 230.

⁶For further discussion of what “active” and “passive” do not mean, see especially John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 20-22.

First, the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ does not mean that Christ did some things actively and some things passively. Christ was not passive in his sufferings. Christ positively volunteered to do the will of God, including the suffering of the cross (Heb 10:5-7). No one took Christ's life; he laid it down of his own accord (John 10:18). "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).⁷

Second, to affirm merely that Christ had to live a sinless life is not necessarily to affirm the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. In a response to Robert Gundry, Tom Oden says, "Does the active obedience of Christ prior to his death form any part of the righteousness of Christ? The critic appears to answer no. But consider the alternative: Suppose Jesus is a bum, a philanderer, a punk. Would he be qualified to become our mediator?"⁸ Oden's response is off point⁹—again, to affirm that Jesus lived a sinless life is not necessarily to affirm the doctrine of active obedience. Theologians of all kinds would agree that if Jesus would have disobeyed, he could not have secured redemption for sinners. The sacrificial lamb truly had to be a lamb without blemish. However, the doctrine of active obedience says something more—it says not just that his obedience qualified him to offer a vicarious sacrifice to God, but that his whole obedience was itself vicarious.

⁷Scripture references are to the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

⁸Tom Oden, "A Calm Answer," *Books & Culture* 7, no. 2 (2001): 13.

⁹For a similar assessment, see D. A. Carson, "The Vindication of Imputation: On Fields of Discourse and Semantic Fields," in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 53. An opponent of active obedience, J. R. Daniel Kirk, agrees that the active obedience position affirms more than simply that Jesus' sinless life qualified him to die ("The Sufficiency of the Cross [1]: The Crucifixion as Jesus' Act of Obedience," *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 24, no. 1 [Spring 2006]: 63).

Third, the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ is not really a distinction between his life and his death. The issue is not a matter of a timeline. Christ's time on earth was not in "active obedience" phase until he reached the cross, at which point he switched over to "passive obedience" mode.¹⁰ In reality, both Christ's penal sufferings and his preceptive obedience extend throughout the whole course of his life.¹¹ When Scripture speaks of Christ's obedience, using either the word "obedience" or the concept of obedience, the reader should not quickly substitute "passive obedience" or "active obedience." The distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ is a *theological* distinction.

There is a close connection between the removal of iniquity and the gift of righteousness. The unity of Christ's work should be stressed. In reality, Christ's

¹⁰Robert Lightner appears to make this misstep: "Did Christ's obedience and suffering in life, sometimes called His active obedience, provide substitution for sin as well as His passive obedience, His suffering, and His death on the cross?" (Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation: The Theology of Everlasting Life* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1991], 87). Clark is much more helpful here: "The terms *active* and *passive* might tend to create the impression that the work of Christ is being distinguished chronologically, but this is not the intent at all" (Clark, "Do This And Live," 230). Machen says in this regard, "Do you not see, then, what the true state of the case is? Christ's active obedience and His passive obedience are not two divisions of His work, some of the events of His earthly life being His active obedience and other events of His life being His passive obedience; but every event of His life was both active and passive obedience. Every event of His life was a part of His payment of the penalty of sin, and every event of His life was a part of that glorious keeping of the law of God by which He earned for His people the reward of eternal life. In other words, the two aspects of His work are inextricably intertwined. Neither was performed apart from the other. Together they constitute the wonderful, full salvation which was wrought for us by Christ our Redeemer" (Machen, "Active Obedience," 190-91).

¹¹This point made even John Owen careful about using the terms active and passive obedience: "That which we plead is, that the Lord Christ fulfilled the whole law for us; he did not only undergo the penalty of it due unto our sins, but also yielded that perfect obedience which it did require. And herein I shall not immix myself in the debate of the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ; for he exercised the highest active obedience in his suffering, when he offered himself to God through the eternal Spirit" (Owen, *Justification*, 253). Likewise Jonathan Edwards asserts that Christ's cross-work constitutes the "principal part . . . of that active obedience by which we are justified" (Jonathan Edwards, "Justification By Faith Alone," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Edward Dwight Hickman [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987], 1:639). After all, the cross was the climax of Jesus' work, and the most difficult aspect of his mediation. One would expect that at the cross, Jesus' positive love for both God and neighbor was especially manifest.

obedience (active and passive) is one organic whole. One can affirm the propriety of the theological distinction, while at the same time hold to the ultimate unity of Christ's obedience. John Murray explains how the distinction answers the twofold demand of the law (penal and preceptive),¹² yet Murray also observes, "The Scripture regards the work of Christ as one of obedience and uses this term, or the concept that it designates, with sufficient frequency to warrant the conclusion that obedience is generic and therefore embracive enough to be viewed as the unifying or integrating principle."¹³

Unity makes sense in light of union. In Scripture, the benefits that come to God's people come through union with Christ.¹⁴ They are blessed "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3). Although Scripture uses legal and accounting metaphors, those metaphors do not tell the whole story. The picture is not simply that Christ has different "assets" that are transferred to the believer's account at various points in time. Rather, having received Christ, and being united to Christ, believers receive Christ clothed with his benefits.¹⁵ As Paul reiterates, believers are made the righteousness of God *in Christ* (1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9).

¹²Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 21-22.

¹³*Ibid.*, 19. In fact, it is actually the opponents of the doctrine of the active obedience who must drive an untenable wedge into the unity of Christ's obedience. They are the ones who must specify that it was only Christ's passive obedience and not his active obedience that brings eternal salvation, only his obedient penal suffering and not his obedient living that was vicarious.

¹⁴See the study of William B. Evans, *Imputation and Impartation: Union with Christ in American Reformed Theology* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2008). Evans does not much deal with the specific question of active obedience.

¹⁵So Calvin writes, "That joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to

Previous Literature

The doctrine of the active obedience of Christ, though often affirmed, has not received the kind of extensive defense that one might expect. A brief survey of previous literature demonstrates this point. John Owen, one of the most important Reformed theologians, wrote a book on justification (over 400 pages) that was published in 1677; however, Owen's main treatment of the active obedience of Christ occurs in chapters 11-12, two chapters that, combined, take up fewer than forty pages. Another Reformed giant, Francis Turretin, deals with the doctrine of active obedience in his systematic theology, but he does not devote great space to the subject.¹⁶ In fact, Reformed systematic theologies normally affirm the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ, but the discussion of the topic is usually limited to a handful of pages at most.¹⁷ Other works that deal explicitly with the topic of justification, even works that affirm active obedience, normally fail to devote very much space to that particular subject.¹⁸

make us one with him. For this reason, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him" (*Inst.*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960], 3.2.10). Similarly Owen, "Our righteousness is placed in the obedience of Christ, it is from hence, that we being incorporated into him, it is accounted unto us as if it were ours; so that therewith we are esteemed righteous" (Owen, *Justification*, 89).

¹⁶Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:445-55. Turretin's section on justification has also been published as a separate book, *Justification*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004).

¹⁷See A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1868), 300, 387; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1871; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 2:493-96; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (1888; reprint, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 720-22; Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 625-27; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 377-81, 393-95; James Petigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Press, 1887), 399; Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland, 1907), 749, 770, 858-59; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 379-81, 523; Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 631; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 570-71.

¹⁸James Buchanan, a Presbyterian minister who lived during the 1800s, wrote *The Doctrine of Justification*, a book divided into essentially two parts: historical material and biblical material. Both parts reference the active obedience of Christ, but again, not in great detail (Buchanan, *Justification*, 173-79, 307-14, 332-34, 499-501). Likewise James R. White, in his more recent book on justification, affirms the

There are also some articles on the subject of Christ's active obedience.

Lutheran Richard D. Balge has a chapter entitled, "The Active and Passive Obedience of Jesus Christ."¹⁹ Three Westminster Seminary colleagues have chapters addressing the topic—R. Scott Clark, "Do This and Live: Christ's Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification,"²⁰ David VanDrunen, "To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice: A Defense of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Light of Recent Criticism,"²¹ and Michael Horton, "Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice."²²

In addition to positive presentations, some theologians have written specifically against the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. E. H. Hoare, a British minister who lived during the late 1800s, wrote a book entitled, *The Scripture Ground of Justification; Or, An Inquiry Into the Doctrine of Scripture Concerning the Active and Passive Obedience of Christ* (London: William MacIntosh, 1867). In the book, Hoare sets out to show that the active obedience of Christ has no foundation in Scripture, and that "Christ's sufferings and death are set forth in Scripture as abundantly sufficient" to

active and passive obedience of Christ, but spends little space on active obedience (*The God Who Justifies* [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2001], 94-95). J. V. Fesko, in his book on justification, does spend close to twenty pages on issues surrounding Christ's active obedience (*Justification: Understanding the Classic Doctrine* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008], 146-64). All three of these writers affirm the doctrine. One other work that addresses the subject in more detail, specifically through the lens of the theology of Jonathan Edwards, is Craig Biehl's *The Infinite Merit of Christ: The Glory of Christ's Obedience in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Jackson, MS: Reformed Academic, 2009).

¹⁹Richard D. Balge, "The Active and Passive Obedience of Jesus Christ," in *We Believe in Jesus Christ: Essays on Christology*, ed. Curtis Jahn (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1999), 128-47. Balge endorses active obedience.

²⁰R. Scott Clark, "Do This and Live," 229-66.

²¹VanDrunen, "To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice," 127-46.

²²In *The Law Is Not Of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 315-36. See also Horton's brief summary, "A Dying Man's Consolation: The Active & Passive Obedience of Christ," *Modern Reformation* 5, no. 2 (1996): 23-24.

justify sinners.²³ Andrew Snider of Master's Seminary deals with the active obedience of Christ in his Th.M. thesis, "Justification and the Active Obedience of Christ: Toward A Biblical Understanding of Imputed Righteousness."²⁴ About thirty pages of his thesis are devoted to a historical survey of the subject, and about sixty pages are devoted to Scriptural exegesis and theological conclusions. In the main, Snider deals with some key NT texts that have often been used as evidence for active obedience,²⁵ and then draws on broader theological concerns relating to Christ's death, forgiveness, justification, and imputed righteousness. Snider concludes that the active obedience of Christ is not a biblical doctrine. J. R. Daniel Kirk, currently teaching at Fuller Seminary, has a two-part article addressing the subject: "The Sufficiency of the Cross (I): The Crucifixion as Jesus' Act of Obedience,"²⁶ and "The Sufficiency of the Cross (II): The Law, the Cross, and Justification."²⁷ Kirk argues similarly to Snider, working through various NT passages as well as marshalling theological arguments to deny the active obedience of

²³Hoare, *Justification*, 1. Hoare's book runs a brief sixty-four pages, so it should not be considered a major work. Furthermore, Hoare was not particularly influential, and his book is out of print.

²⁴Andrew Snider, "Justification and the Active Obedience of Christ: Toward a Biblical Understanding of Imputed Righteousness" (Th.M. thesis, The Master's Seminary, 2002).

²⁵Snider spends about ten pages on Rom 5:19, ten pages on Rom 8:4, five pages on Gal 4:4-5, two pages on Matt 3:15, and less than one page on Phil 2:8. Snider concludes that none of these passages support the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.

²⁶J. R. Daniel Kirk, "The Sufficiency of the Cross (I): The Crucifixion as Jesus' Act of Obedience," *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 36-64.

²⁷J. R. Daniel Kirk, "The Sufficiency of the Cross (II): The Law, the Cross, and Justification," *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 24, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 133-54.

Christ. There are other works that touch on the subject of active obedience, but again, usually the treatment is fairly sparse.²⁸

Warrant for this Study

The survey of previous literature on the active obedience of Christ leads to the first reason a dissertation is needed—there simply has not been that much written specifically about the subject. Strikingly, the three people that give the most attention to the subject, Kirk, Snider, and Hoare, all agree that the doctrine is not biblical. Owen’s treatment of the subject, like Clark’s, VanDrunen’s, and Horton’s, is certainly helpful, but the work does not have the same depth as a dissertation. They are not intended to be comprehensive treatments, nor can they be, given their limited page space. The time has come for a fuller treatment.

²⁸See, for example, G. C. Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ*, trans. Cornelius Lambregtse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 320-27; Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 77, 130-32, 153; Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 173; Richard N. Longenecker, “The Obedience of Christ in the Theology of the Early Church,” in *Reconciliation and Hope*, ed. Robert Banks (Exeter: Paternoster, 1974), 142-52; idem, “The Foundational Conviction of New Testament Christology: The Obedience/Faithfulness/Sonship of Christ,” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 473-88; T. F. Torrance, “The Atoning Obedience of Christ,” *Moravian Theological Seminary Bulletin* (1959): 65-81; William C. Temple, “An Exegesis of New Testament Passages Dealing with the Doctrine of the Active and Passive Obedience of Christ” (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975). There are a number of online resources, but two significant online resources stand out. First, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church released a committee report on justification in 2006, particularly related to controversies concerning the New Perspective(s) on Paul and the Federal Vision movement (Orthodox Presbyterian Church, “Report on Justification” [on-line]; accessed 18 March 2008; available from <http://www.opc.org/GA/justification.pdf>; Internet). The document is nearly 100 pages long, and many members of the drafting committee also serve as seminary professors. The report interacts with the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ at various points, including a positive presentation of it on pp. 18-24. Second, Gregory A. Van Court has a helpful article, “The Obedience of Christ” [on-line]; accessed 24 July 2009; available from <http://ptsco.org/ptsco/theobedienceofchrist.pdf>; Internet. Van Court’s article is a response to Steve Lehrer and Geoff Volker’s article, “Examining the Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ: A Study in Calvinistic Sacred Cow-ism” [online]; accessed 24 July 2009; available from <http://idsaudio.org/ids/pdf/classic/imputation.pdf>; Internet. Finally, there is a whole swath of literature on an issue very much related to the active obedience of Christ—the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. I will postpone that discussion until later in this prospectus.

Second, there seems to be a growing ignorance of the subject. In the 1600s, John Owen stated that Christ's active obedience "is a fundamental article, if I mistake not, of the creed of most Christians in the world."²⁹ Likewise, Turretin observed, "The common opinion and the one received in our churches is that the satisfaction of Christ, which is imputed to us for righteousness before God, embraces not only the sufferings which he endured either in his life or at his death, but also the obedience of his whole life, or the just and holy actions by which he perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law in our place."³⁰ When he refers to "our churches," Turretin is perhaps just thinking of his own Presbyterian segment of Protestantism. Nevertheless, this affirmation of the active obedience of Christ is also "the common opinion"—apparently belief in this doctrine was quite widespread.

Yet there is reason to believe the doctrine is not so common anymore. Even by the mid 1800s, Charles Hodge, in his review of George Junkin's *A Treatise on Justification*,³¹ thanks Junkin for giving the active obedience of Christ some attention since the doctrine is "at this time peculiarly seasonable, when by so many it is called in question."³² In the early 1900s, Lewis Sperry Chafer produced a fairly influential eight volume systematic theology, and he does not appear to deal explicitly with the doctrine at

²⁹Owen, *Justification*, 257.

³⁰Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:445.

³¹George Junkin, *A Treatise on Justification* (Philadelphia: J. Whetham, 1839). Junkin's book is out of print, and it is normally not referred to in the literature on active obedience.

³²Charles Hodge, "Art. V," *The Biblical Repository and Princeton Review* 2, no. 12 (1840): 268-82.

all.³³ More recently, three well-known systematic theologians (Millard J. Erickson, Charles Ryrie, and Donald Bloesch) do not address the subject in their systematic theologies.³⁴ Furthermore, there are a number of works that treat the subject of justification (or atonement) without discussing the active obedience of Christ.³⁵ Added to this evidence is my own personal experience—there have been countless times that I have received blank stares from other Christians when I told them the area of my doctoral research would be the active obedience of Christ.³⁶

Third, the active obedience of Christ is a very important subject. This doctrine is not an obscure topic with little interest for the Christian church; it is a doctrine of

³³Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (1948; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993). Chafer does perhaps affirm the substance of the doctrine in a different work, however—“Soteriology: The Savior—Things Accomplished by Christ in His Sufferings and Death,” *BSac* 104, no. 413 (1947): 18. I will return to this article in the next chapter.

³⁴Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody, 1999); Donald Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Savior & Lord* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006). This book is vol. 4 of Bloesch’s seven-volume series.

³⁵Admittedly, the subjects of justification and the atonement are vast and debated. They touch on many issues in the Christian faith, and people come at the subjects from many different angles and for many different purposes. No law states that every work about justification or the atonement should deal with every facet of the subject. Nevertheless, it is significant that so many works on the subjects do not seem to deal with the subject of the active obedience of Christ. See, for example, John Henry Newman, *Lectures on Justification* (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1838); George Cole, *The Threefold Cord; or Justification by the Grace of God, the Righteousness of Christ, and the Faith of Man* (London: J. Nisbet Co. Berners Street, 1845); Carl E. Braaten, *Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith*, trans. Jeffrey F. Cayzer (London: Continuum, 2006); Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Wayne Stumme, *The Gospel of Justification in Christ: Where Does the Church Stand Today?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); John Mcleod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement and Its Relation to Remission of Sins and Eternal Life* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006); Vincent Brummer, *Atonement, Christology, and the Trinity* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2005); D. Stephen Long, “Justification and Atonement,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, ed. Timothy Larson and Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007), 79-92.

³⁶Of course, the term is not the main issue; the substantial teaching is. However, I cannot help but believe that most Christians have not grasped the concept of Christ’s active obedience for them—they believe that Christ’s vicarious suffering appeases God’s wrath and earns them a full entitlement to heaven. I

considerable importance. If God is seeking to glorify himself through the gospel of Christ, and the doctrine of active obedience is helpful in unpacking Christ's gospel work, then the glory of God is at stake. Owen goes so far as to say that to deny the active obedience of Christ "does consequentially overthrow all the grace and love both of the Father and (of the) Son in his mediation."³⁷ Owen overstates the case, but even Jonathan Edwards writes, "To suppose that all Christ does is only to make atonement for us by suffering, is to make him our Saviour but in part. It is to rob him of half his glory as Saviour."³⁸ On the other hand, if the active obedience of Christ does not have a biblical foundation, it should not be foisted upon Christians at all. To stand in opposition to God's Word certainly does not glorify him, and there have been times when people have received some kind of psychological comfort from doctrines that were not scriptural. Therefore, the glory of God and the true comfort of believers are at stake.

Fourth, some criticize evangelicals for being overly preoccupied with the sufferings and death of Christ to the exclusion of his life. Normally such criticisms come from those who are opposed to the traditional Protestant doctrine of penal substitution.³⁹

base that conviction on conversations I have had, conversations with children at summer camp, students at Christian universities, and even students at evangelical seminaries.

³⁷Owen, *Justification*, 257.

³⁸Edwards, "Justification," 638.

³⁹Many sources could be cited, but for examples of some recent criticisms of penal substitution, see Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, eds., *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Steve Chalke, "The Redemption of the Cross," in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of the Atonement*, ed. David Hilborn, Justin Thacker, and Derek Tidball (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 34-45; Joel Green and Mark Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); S. Mark Heim, *Saved From Sacrifice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); Mark Baker, ed., *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006); John Sanders, ed., *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006).

For example, Joel Green and Mark Baker assert, “The life of Jesus that this model [penal substitution] presents is as disengaged from his historical reality as the atonement it provides is from our day-to-day reality. . . . There is no sense that Jesus’ life led to his death. . . . The only aspect of Jesus’ life that is presented concretely is his physical suffering.”⁴⁰ Stuart Murray Williams is similarly dismissive: “If penal substitution is correct, neither the life of Jesus nor his resurrection have [*sic*] much significance.”⁴¹ Paul Fiddes, while acknowledging the historic combination of active obedience and penal substitution, muddles their connection: “Protestant theologians who followed Calvin were intrigued by the place which Christ’s active obedience had within the scheme of salvation, but as long as they held to a theory a penal substitution they remained perplexed and confused about it.”⁴² Not surprisingly, Fiddes does not cite sources to corroborate his statement. Perhaps Fiddes does not think that these two doctrines mesh, but Reformed theologians have historically found a happy correlation between the two.⁴³

My purpose is not to articulate and defend the doctrine of penal substitution in this work. Others have done an admirable job expounding and defending penal substitution.⁴⁴ For this project, the truth of penal substitution is largely assumed.

⁴⁰Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal*, 149.

⁴¹Quoted in Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, eds., *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Recovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 212.

⁴²Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1989), 100.

⁴³See any of the Reformed systematic theologies cited in this chapter. Most treat both penal substitution and the active obedience of Christ under the Christology locus (and occasionally the soteriology locus), and explain how the two doctrines answer the twofold demand of the law.

⁴⁴See Thomas R. Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 67-98; Jeffery, Ovey,

However, if the doctrine of active obedience is a biblical one, this doctrine would serve to show that evangelicals have the resources for a robust understanding of Christ’s entire lifelong ministry—even if many evangelicals are ignorant of the doctrine of active obedience and that some do find redemptive significance solely in Christ’s penal suffering. Also, if the doctrine of active obedience is biblical, this doctrine would bolster penal substitution in a different way, for it would show that Christ’s whole work of earthly mediation was a vicarious one—arguably the substitutionary aspect of Christ’s work would be highlighted all the more.

Fifth, the imputation of Christ’s righteousness—a doctrine closely tied to the active obedience of Christ—has also come under attack in recent days. In an article entitled “Why I Didn’t Endorse ‘The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration’ . . . even though I wasn’t asked to,”⁴⁵ Robert Gundry takes issue with the document’s language of Christ’s righteousness being imputed to believers. Gundry’s fullest and most recent articulation of his position is “The Nonimputation of Christ’s Righteousness.”⁴⁶ For Gundry, God counts the believer’s faith for righteousness; he does not impute Christ’s righteousness to their account. Although Gundry does not specifically mention “active obedience” in the body of his chapter, in a footnote he does seem to equate

and Sach, *Pierced For Our Transgressions*; J. I. Packer, “What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution,” *TynBul* 25 (1973): 3-45; John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, esp. chap. 9, in *Works*, vol. 10; John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986); Henri Blocher, “The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ: The Current Theological Situation,” *European Journal of Theology* (1999): 23-36; R. C. Sproul, *The Truth of the Cross* (Orlando: Ligonier, 2007); Simon Gathercole, “The Cross and Substitutionary Atonement,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 21 (2003): 152-65.

⁴⁵Robert Gundry, “Why I Didn’t Endorse ‘The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration’ . . . even though I wasn’t asked to,” *Books & Culture* 7, no. 1 (2001): 6-9. See also Gundry’s rejoinder to Oden’s response, “On Oden’s ‘Answer,’” *Books & Culture* 7, no. 2 (2001): 14-15, 39.

⁴⁶Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, eds., *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 17-45.

“active obedience” and “Christ’s imputed righteousness.”⁴⁷ This makes sense, since traditionally the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to believers consists in his active obedience;⁴⁸ it does not consist in the believer’s faith.

Gundry’s denial of Christ’s imputed righteousness has launched some weighty rejoinders, including an article by D. A. Carson,⁴⁹ a book by John Piper,⁵⁰ and a book by Brian Vickers,⁵¹ all three of whom maintain that Christ’s righteousness is indeed imputed to believers. Carson notes that “for many, the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is bound up not only with a proper understanding of justification, but with discussions of Christ’s active and passive obedience.”⁵² Piper essentially limits his discussion of “active obedience” in his imputation book to a footnote, although he does affirm it.⁵³ Vickers’ work intersects with the doctrine of active obedience in a number of points. For instance, Vickers defines the term “imputation” as “the traditional Reformed view of justification consisting of the forgiveness of sins and the counting of Christ’s active obedience (the

⁴⁷Gundry, “Nonimputation,” 44 n. 56.

⁴⁸This is an important point to which I will return.

⁴⁹Carson, “The Vindication of Imputation,” 46-78.

⁵⁰John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002).

⁵¹Brian Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

⁵²Carson, “Vindication of Imputation,” 52.

⁵³Piper, *Counted Righteous*, 123-24 n. 6.

positive righteousness) to the believer.”⁵⁴ However, a couple important points should be made. First, Vickers’s scope is very narrow—he deals primarily with imputation in Romans 4; 5:19; and 2 Corinthians 5:21. My scope will be much broader. Second, the topic of imputation often deals with discussions concerning the means by which (Christ’s) righteousness comes to the believer—thus the focus on accounting metaphors and words like λογίζομαι. In this treatment of active obedience the focus will be more on the ground of justification than the means of justification. Put differently, the question is not so much, “How does Christ’s righteousness come to the believer?” but “What is the righteousness of Christ that comes to the believer?”

In addition, there are some who would affirm the imputation of Christ’s righteousness and yet still deny the active obedience of Christ. This position is at least as old as Johannes Piscator, a theologian who taught during the late sixteenth century. Piscator argued that “forgiveness of sin, and imputing of justice [righteousness], differ only in name; indeed they are the same.”⁵⁵ In responding to Bellarmine’s objection that Scripture never speaks of Christ’s righteousness being imputed to believers, Piscator states that “we are counted of God just, for the death of Christ, whereby he has satisfied his judgment for our sins. Which is all of one as if [to say] that Christ’s satisfaction is imputed unto us for justice.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness*, 23. Vickers later states, “The doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s active obedience—positive righteousness—became firmly established as a point of orthodoxy for a large number of Protestants” (ibid., 40). See also 61, 109, 147-48, 196, 226-28, 237.

⁵⁵Johannes Piscator, *A Learned and Profitable Treatise of Man’s Justification* (London: n.p., 1599), 105-06. (In my discussion of Piscator, I take responsibility for updated spelling.)

⁵⁶Ibid., 110.

Over against Bellarmine, Piscator affirms the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but he lodges this righteousness strictly in Christ's satisfaction for sins. Piscator apparently believed that when believers have the punishment for their sins taken away, and when they are forgiven by God, they are by those very facts fully righteous and ready for glory—there is no further righteousness that needs to be somehow credited to their account.

In his articles on active obedience, J. R. Daniel Kirk takes a similar position. Kirk argues that “the NT writers look, without exception, to the obedience of Jesus in his death, and the righteousness procured by it, as the grounds of justification.”⁵⁷ He further clarifies that by referring to Jesus' death he is referring to the passive, and not the active, aspect of Jesus' obedience,⁵⁸ and that Jesus' law-keeping is not part of the foundation of justification.⁵⁹ The fact that Kirk has no qualms with affirming the imputation of Christ's righteousness becomes clear when he writes, “the question is not whether the righteousness of justification is imputed or infused; it is not whether the righteousness is Christ's or the believer's. . . . The pointed question of debate is this: what is the quality of Jesus' righteousness that avails to sinners in justification?”⁶⁰ Kirk himself affirms the passive-only position.

⁵⁷Kirk, “The Sufficiency of the Cross (I),” 40.

⁵⁸Kirk, “The Sufficiency of the Cross (II),” 133.

⁵⁹Ibid., 139.

⁶⁰Ibid., 153. When Kirk speaks of the “quality” of Christ's righteousness, he is not entirely clear. Elsewhere he says that the law cannot provide the “kind” of righteousness needed (145), and that the traditional viewpoint “begs the question of the nature” of the righteousness (150). I think all that Kirk is trying to say is that it is not a righteousness that comes by law-keeping but only by the death (and resurrection) of Christ; however, Kirk has a strange way of phrasing it, especially in light of historical

Likewise, Andrew Snider, while denying active obedience, does maintain that Scripture teaches the imputation of Christ's righteousness.⁶¹ Snider seems to argue, like Piscator, that forgiveness and the declaration of righteous are synonymous. Whether one can deny the active obedience of Christ and affirm the imputation of Christ's righteousness in a meaningful sense remains an open question. This work will interact with these men at a later point, but for now it is important simply to reiterate that some evangelicals have no trouble affirming imputed righteousness while denying active obedience. Therefore the various projects on imputation are not necessarily a sufficient answer to the question of the active obedience of Christ.

Still others oppose the active obedience of Christ. For example, James B. Jordan, a major figure in the Federal Vision movement,⁶² says that the idea that Jesus' so called active obedience was meritorious "cannot be the case."⁶³ Jordan goes on to reiterate, "It is not Jesus' earthly life and 'works and merits' that are transferred to us, but

debates over whether Christ's imputed righteousness relates to his divinity, his humanity, or some combination.

⁶¹Snider, "Active Obedience," 79.

⁶²For more on the Federal Vision movement, see Steve Wilkins and Duane Garner, eds., *The Federal Vision* (Monroe, LA: Athanasius, 2004); E. Calvin Beisner, ed., *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision* (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004); Andrew P. Sandlin, ed., *Backbone of the Bible: Covenant in Contemporary Perspective* (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media, 2004); Guy Prentiss Waters, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology: A Comparative Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006); T. David Gordon, "Reflections on Auburn Avenue," *By Faith Alone*, 113-26; Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), "Report on Justification," 56-83. It is true that association with the Federal Vision does not necessarily imply a denial of the active obedience of Christ. For example, Douglas Wilson affirms the doctrine (Douglas Wilson, "The OPC Report on the Federal Vision" [online]; accessed 24 July 2009; available from available from <http://www.dougwils.com/index.asp?Action=Anchor&CategoryID=1&BlogID=2464>; Internet). However, given that Jordan's chapter comes in a programmatic book entitled, *The Federal Vision*, it is safe to assume that the Federal Vision movement has many who sympathize with Jordan. In addition, the OPC reports a denial of the active obedience of Christ as one of the errors of the Federal Vision movement (OPC, "Report on Justification," 16, 57).

⁶³James B. Jordan, "Merit Vs. Maturity: What Did Jesus Do For Us?" *The Federal Vision*, 194.

His glorified and resurrected life in the Spirit that is transferred to us. There seems to be nothing in the Bible to imply that we receive Jesus' earthly life and then also His death."⁶⁴ In addition to some Federal Vision advocates, N. T. Wright, one of the leading representatives of the New Perspective(s) on Paul,⁶⁵ says in an oft-cited passage, "If we use the language of the law court, it makes no sense whatever to say that the judge imputes, imparts, bequeaths, conveys or otherwise transfers his righteousness to either the plaintiff or the defendant."⁶⁶ For Wright, God's righteousness is his own covenantal faithfulness; it is not a gift imparted to sinners. One would expect, then, that in Wright's view Scripture does not teach that Christ, the God-man, lived a vicarious life of righteousness for sinners.⁶⁷ While representatives of the New Perspective on Paul (NPP)

⁶⁴Ibid., 195. The trajectory of thought from others associated with the Federal Vision also appears to deny the active obedience of Christ. See Richard Lusk, "A Response to the Biblical Plan of Salvation," in *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision*, ed. Calvin E. Beisner (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 118-48; Andrew Sandlin, "Covenant in Redemptive History," in *Backbone*, 63-84; Norman Shepherd, *The Call of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2000); idem, "Justification by Faith Alone," *Reformation & Revival* 11, no. 2 (2002): 75-90. In a blog post, Shepherd explicitly states, "Christ crucified, not the imputation of active obedience, was the gospel Paul preached," (Norman Shepherd, "Norman Shepherd Responds" [online]; accessed 24 July 2009; available from <http://my.opera.com/BarryHofstetter/blog/show.dml/109065>; Internet.

⁶⁵For more on the New Perspective, see Michael B. Thompson, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2002); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977); idem, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2005); idem, "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 65 (1983): 95-122; N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); idem, "New Perspectives on Paul," in *Justification in Perspective*, 243-64; Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); D. A. Carson et al., eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001); James A. Meek, "The New Perspective on Paul: A Select and Annotated Bibliography," *Concordia Journal* 27 (2001): 208-33.

⁶⁶N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 98.

⁶⁷In his exposition of Rom 5:18-19, Wright says, "What does Paul suppose the Messiah was obedient to? A long tradition within one strand of Reformation thought has supposed that Paul was here

have yet to say much explicitly about the active obedience of Christ, the fact that so many deny the need for perfect obedience would seem to indicate that they have no need for the doctrine.⁶⁸ One other segment of opposition comes from two figures involved in the movement known as New Covenant Theology.⁶⁹ Steve Lehrer and Geoff Volker argue that the doctrine of active obedience is “a doctrine without biblical foundations.”⁷⁰

To summarize, the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ is opposed on multiple fronts, even by those within the evangelical camp. These reasons—the direct attack on the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ or related themes, the lack of a

referring to Jesus’ perfect obedience to the law. In this view, Christ’s ‘active obedience’ and his ‘passive obedience’ work together. His active obedience acquires ‘righteousness,’ which is then ‘reckoned’ to those ‘in Christ’; his passive obedience, culminating in the cross, deals with his people’s sins. Powerful though this thought is, and influential though it has been (even in liturgy, where ‘the merits and death of Christ’ are sometimes mentioned in this double sense), it is almost certainly not what Paul has in mind here. . . . It refers to his obedience to God’s commission (as in 3:2), to the plan to bring salvation to the world, rather than his amassing a treasury of merit through Torah obedience” (N. T. Wright, *Romans*, in vol. 10 of *NIB*, ed. Leander Keck [Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 529. Granted Wright may simply be denying the doctrine’s presence in this particular passage of Romans. In addition, it is unclear whether Wright denies the doctrine of active obedience altogether in this passage or just a certain kind of presentation of it. (I personally would not use the language of “treasury of merits.”) Still, I know of no place where Wright affirms the doctrine.

⁶⁸A point rightly made by VanDrunen, “To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice,” 133-34. Carson observes that this denial of the need for perfect obedience is “a fairly common stance among the various strands of the ‘New Perspective’” (“Vindication of Imputation,” 53), citing Don Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, WUNT 79 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994). See also Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 137; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 361. I realize that Sanders is happy to affirm that Paul might contradict himself—so at times Paul may have affirmed the need for perfect obedience, but such statements need not be taken as divine mandate.

⁶⁹This movement is not as congealed as the Federal Vision, nor as academically influential as NPP. For more discussion, see Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002); John G. Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 1998); Dennis M. Swanson, “Introduction to New Covenant Theology,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 18, no. 1 (2007): 149-63.

⁷⁰Steve Lehrer and Geoff Volker, “Examining the Imputation of the Active Obedience of Christ: A Study in Calvinistic Sacred Cow-ism,” 11 [online]; accessed 24 July 2009; available from <http://idsaudio.org/ids/pdf/classic/imputation.pdf>; Internet. Given that New Covenant Media published Van Court’s response to Lehrer and Volker, a response that defended the doctrine of active obedience, one should not conclude that the New Covenant movement as a whole tends to deny the active obedience of Christ.

major work done defending the subject, the general ignorance of the topic, and the importance of the issue—all combine to present tremendous warrant for this study.

Structure of the Argument

After this introductory chapter, chapter 2 will offer a historical sketch of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. This historical chapter will be primarily informative in nature, but it will be helpful in a number of ways. First, it will help to show the importance of the topic in historical theology. Second, it will demonstrate how other Christians have understood the teaching of Scripture. Third, since those in church history wanted to be biblical, and since many Protestants—particularly in the wake of the Reformation—attempted to argue for the active obedience from Scripture, this dissertation will examine the Reformed position to see if it is biblical. Fourth, it will help to frame the debate. Theologians have been discussing the active obedience of Christ for quite some time; rather than entering the conversation, interrupting, and arguing the case immediately, the reader should find benefit from listening to some of the history of that conversation in order to gain its bearings.

Chapter 3 will examine Adam’s obedience for eternal life before the Fall. Many who have argued for the active obedience of Christ connect it to God’s initial arrangement with Adam, sometimes described as a covenant of works.⁷¹ This dissertation

⁷¹Many have seen confirmed spiritual life in some sense as offered to Adam, but not all agree on the propriety of the term “covenant of works.” See Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 5:44, 240-50, 19:337; Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 574-86; Jonathan Edwards, “Justification by Faith Alone,” 1:623, 636; Charles Spurgeon, *Sermons* (New York: Sheldon, 1860), 238; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:564-88; J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (London: Banner of Truth, 1965), 149-60; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 211-18; Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 27-44, John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976-82), 2:47-59; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 516-18. Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G. T. Thompson (London: Willmer Bros. & Co., 1950), 281-300; *The Westminster Confession*

argues for Adam's representative role and looks at Adam's calling to be an obedient son (not to mention a righteous king, a faithful servant, a wise man, and a covenant keeper). This work also argues in favor of the traditional Reformed view that sees Adam in a probation state with the potential of receiving confirmed life for mankind if he obeyed God. While such a view certainly supports the doctrine of active obedience (Christ is the last Adam), this work does not maintain that one must hold to a covenant of works position in order to affirm the active obedience of Christ.⁷²

The fourth chapter examines human obedience for eternal life after the Fall. Admittedly this is a broad topic; however, the chapter looks at it through the lens of the "do this and live" passages (Lev 18:5; Luke 10:28; Gal 3:12; Rom 10:5). Once again, often proponents of active obedience appeal to these passages in support of their

of Faith (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian, 1994), 7.2; *The Second London Baptist Confession* (1677; reprint, Auburn, MA: B & R Press, 2000), 6.1., 19.1; John Bolt, "Why the Covenant of Works is a Necessary Doctrine," *By Faith Alone*, 171-89; Bryan D. Estelle, "The Covenant of Works in Moses and Paul," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, 89-135; Morton H. Smith, "The Biblical Plan of Salvation, with Reference to the Covenant of Works, Imputation, and Justification by Faith," in *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision*, ed. E. Calvin Beisner (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 96-117. Of course, I plan on interacting with biblical scholars as well (such as Peter Gentry, William Dumbrell, and Gordon Wenham).

⁷²Wilhelmus á Brakel says that whoever "denies the existence of the covenant of works . . . will very readily deny that Christ by his active obedience has merited a right to eternal life for the elect" (Wilhelmus á Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, trans. Bartel Elshout [Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992], 1:355). Andrew Snider, in his study on the active obedience of Christ, remarks, "All theologians surveyed in this study who clearly espouse the view of vicarious active obedience connect it with the covenant of works. The question remains: must one affirm both, or is the idea of vicarious active obedience a biblically defensible view by itself, apart from the theological framework of covenant theology?" ("Active Obedience," 85-86). I know of no one who affirms the covenant of works who denies the active obedience of Christ. However, it is certainly conceivable that someone could deny the covenant of works and still affirm the active obedience of Christ. For example, Lutherans appear to be able to affirm active obedience without showing any special affinity to the covenant of works position. See the FC, where no mention is made of a covenant of works with Adam, but the substance of an active obedience position is affirmed in the "Righteousness of Faith" section, point 10; see also Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 242; George Park Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine* (Norwood, MA: Norwood, 1896), 348 n. 1; Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 81.

doctrine.⁷³ However, there is debate about the original meaning of Leviticus 18:5, not to mention the apparent use of this passage in the NT.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, proponents of active obedience often merely cite the verse as a mantra rather than examining the context and biblical development of a “do this and live” theology. A careful consideration of the texts shows that to some extent there is a typological principle in Leviticus 18:5. On the one hand, general obedience by the nation of Israel would have kept them in the land (thus “life” is not eternal life but temporal prosperity, and what was required was not perfect obedience but general faithfulness). On the other hand, a “do this and live” principle does point to the ultimate need for perfect obedience in order to secure eternal life. Jesus and Paul focus on this ultimate need for perfect obedience in their use of Leviticus 18:5. Consequently, the active obedience of Christ finds support from this line of thought as well—what is needed for heaven is not just forgiveness of sins but also a positive obedience to God.

⁷³Note again the title of the R. Scott Clark chapter, “Do This and Live: Christ’s Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification;” see also Owen, *Justification*, 262; John Gill, *Gill’s Complete Body of Practical and Doctrinal Divinity* (Philadelphia: B. Graves, 1810), 360-61; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 721; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 517, 570; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1872), 2:517; Richard Rawlin, *Christ, the Righteousness of His People* (Glasgow, Scotland: John Bryce, 1772), 251.

⁷⁴Perhaps the most thorough study of “do this and live” in Scripture and Judaism is Preston Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, WUNT 241 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Idem, “Law and Life: Leviticus 18:5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel,” *JSOT* 31, no. 3 (2007): 275-93; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971): 19–28; Bryan D. Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1-14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered,” *The Law Is Not Of Faith*, 109-46; Gordon J. Wenham, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 253; Andrew Bonar, *Leviticus* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 329-30; Joel Willitts, “Context Matters: Paul’s Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” *TynB* 54 (2003): 105-22; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul’s View of the Law in Romans 10:4-5,” *WTJ* 55 (1993): 113-35; idem, “Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A Re-examination of Galatians 3:10,” *JETS* 27 (1984): 151-60; Guy P. Waters, “Romans 10:5 and the Covenant of Works,” *The Law Is Not of Faith*, 210-39. Due to space limitations, I will not spend much time on the use of Lev 18:5 in Second Temple Judaism.

Having examined man's obedience for eternal life before and after the Fall, the fifth chapter turns to Messiah's obedience for eternal life, particularly as it is foreshadowed in the OT. (Of course, in one sense man's failure to obey already points to the need for an obedient representative. Consequently, chapters 3 and 4 already supply an initial plausible argument for chapter 5.) Chapter 5 briefly addresses those who underplay or deny an OT messianism,⁷⁵ and argues that Messiah should indeed be found in the OT.⁷⁶ Then, the chapter will develop an OT biblical theology of Messiah's obedience for eternal life. While penal substitution is a messianic theme in the OT,⁷⁷ there is also a prominent theme of a representative obedient son (dovetailing again with themes of a righteous king, a faithful servant, a wise man, and a covenant keeper). This area in particular is one that appears especially underdeveloped in the literature relating to the

⁷⁵For discussion see many of the contributions in Stanley Porter, ed., *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); J. H. Charlesworth et al., eds., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Jacob Neusner, W. S. Green, and E. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Roland Murphy, "Notes on OT Messianism and Apologetics," *CBQ* 19 (1957): 5-15.

⁷⁶See B. B. Warfield, "The Divine Messiah in the Old Testament," in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: P&R, 1952), 79-126; Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus: Divine Messiah* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003); O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980); idem, *The Christ of the Prophets* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004); Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1995); Michael P. V. Barrett, *Beginning at Moses* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999); Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 3-12; Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); David Baron, *Rays of Messiah's Glory: Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955); John Gill, *The Prophecies of the Old Testament Respecting the Messiah* (London: Aaron Ward, 1728).

⁷⁷The sacrificial system pointed ahead to Christ's work in this regard. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," 82-86.

doctrine of active obedience.⁷⁸ This work hopes to fill in some of the gap by looking at the covenantal movements of Scripture, observing how Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David all point to the need for a positive representational obedience. In addition, Joseph, Daniel, and the wisdom literature help to solidify the need for a wise man who demonstrates true wisdom by living virtuously in obedience to God—this wise man too represents and benefits others. Finally, the prophets prove to pick up on earlier covenantal themes, prophesying of a Messiah to come who as the God-man will bring in everlasting righteousness for his people through his positive obedience.

The sixth chapter turns to the NT to see how the OT's presentation of Messiah is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, looking first at the Gospels, examining Jesus' birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection.⁷⁹ The chapter argues that Jesus is

⁷⁸A few important exceptions should be noted. First, see the helpful chapter by R. Fowler White and E. Calvin Beisner, "Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology: Understanding the Principles at Work in God's Covenants," in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 147-70. Their thesis deals with personal merit and representative merit in the various covenants (148). While their concern is broader—they seek to apply their work to the concept of justification by faith alone—they do at various points reiterate the connection of covenantal development in the OT with the doctrine of active obedience (155, 157, 159, 166). Second, see Estelle's chapter, "Leviticus 18:5." Finally, the work of Michael Horton should also be noted. Once again Horton's concern is not necessarily to place the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ front and center. However, as he moves through the story of Adam and its various recapitulations in Scripture, he does not fail to note the importance of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ (Michael Horton, *God of Promise* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 87-102). See also various references to the doctrine in his *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 33; idem, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 133, 162-81, 191-93, 208, 218-43; idem, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 114-21, 177, 202-03; idem, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 19, 150, 296-98, and idem, "Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice."

⁷⁹I will interact primarily with some of the major commentaries. See D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 1-599; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* NAC, vol. 22 (Nashville: B&H, 1992); Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, WBC, vol. 34A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989); William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*

presented throughout as the preeminent obedient son, and that he should be seen as doing a vicarious work. Further, his obedience is one seamless whole. One cannot fragment the life and ministry of Christ—if any aspect of his obedience is vicarious and salvific, then one would expect that all of it must be. Set within the context of “I have been sent” and “I have come to do the will of my Father” in order “to seek and to save the lost,” Jesus’ mission should be seen from first to last as a mission of redemption. His full obedience in life and death is the ground of the sinner’s hope. The latter portion of this chapter turns to the rest of the NT, particularly the three references to Christ’s obedience in Romans 5:19, Philippians 2:8, and Hebrews 5:8. Romans 5:19 especially stands out because of the contextual links to Adam, justification, condemnation, and righteousness. A careful exegetical examination of these passages reveals that all three support the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.⁸⁰

Chapter 7 gathers together some of the common objections urged against the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.⁸¹ Objections to the doctrine are not new. Long ago John Owen said regarding the active obedience of Christ, “There is nothing in the whole doctrine of justification which meets with a more fierce and various opposition;

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Eugene Boring, *Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006); I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, WBC, vol. 35A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989); J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, AB, vol. 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981-85); Craig Evans, *Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990); D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); James M. Boice, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979); F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Basingstoke: Pickering & Inglis, 1983).

⁸⁰Other passages (Matt 3:15; Rom 5:8; 8:4; Gal 4:4-5) are often cited in support of the doctrine, so these also will need some examination.

⁸¹Of course, I will have to address specific objections along the way as I deal with various passages and theological arguments, so some redundancy is necessary. However, this chapter will draw together some of the major theological objections against the doctrine (rather than an extensive review of every single exegetical qualm).

but the truth is great, and will prevail.”⁸² This work stands in agreement with Owen, maintaining that all objections can be answered, and that the doctrine of Christ’s vicarious preceptive obedience stands as fully biblical. The last chapter, chapter 8, summarizes the arguments and offers some concluding thoughts, as well as pointing to some possible areas of further research.

⁸²Owen, *Justification*, 252.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL SURVEY

When Albrecht Ritschl set out to treat the subjects of justification and reconciliation, he made a definite decision to study the history of the doctrines first. He writes, “As a preparation, however, for the dogmatic presentation of these doctrines, I held it necessary to gain insight into their whole history from the beginning of the middle ages.”¹ Bruce L. McCormack concurs that Ritschl’s “strategy for doing dogmatic theology is the right one: first, the history of the doctrine, then a consideration of biblical material, and only then a turn to dogmatic reconstruction.”² Regardless of whether or not one totally agrees with McCormack and Ritschl on this point, it is difficult to deny the importance of historical theology. This chapter exists to set the stage for the major argument of this work (that the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ is a biblical teaching). This chapter is primarily a survey. It examines what others throughout church history have said that relates to the active obedience of Christ.

Such a chapter should be helpful in many ways, not least that it will frame the terms of the debate. Before embarking on the discussion of a topic (in this case the active

¹Albrecht Ritschl, *A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, trans. John S. Black (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), viii.

²Bruce L. McCormack, “What’s At Stake in Current Debates Over Justification? The Crisis of Protestantism in the West,” in *Justification: What’s at Stake in the Current Debates?* ed. Mark Husbans and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 84.

obedience of Christ), it is helpful to know just what has been said about the topic. In addition, historical positions, though certainly not to be placed on par with Scripture, are nevertheless significant. If it is the case that many Protestant pastors, theologians, and even laymen have heartily confessed belief in the active obedience of Christ, one should take great pause before dismissing it as an asserted but unfounded dogmatism.

A word about the structure of this chapter is in order. Unlike Ritschl, I will not begin with the middle ages but with the early church. However, my treatment of pre-Reformation church history will be relatively brief. I will look primarily at Irenaeus and Anselm.³ The bulk of this chapter will be taken up with the Reformation and post-Reformation periods (roughly 1500-1700). The greater attention given to this time period is due to the fact that the active obedience of Christ is at heart a Reformation doctrine—the term “active obedience” was coined during this time, and the doctrine received its major development during this period. I will examine the Lutheran tradition primarily through the windows of Luther, Melancthon, and the *Formula of Concord* (FC), and I will examine the Reformed tradition primarily through the windows of Calvin, Owen, and Reformed creeds such as the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF). I will also look briefly at the Arminian tradition, as well the continuation of the doctrine up to the present. Of course, someone might object that such a study is doomed to anachronism from the start—after all, the term “active obedience” did not actually come into play until

³The reason I focus on these two figures is that they are perhaps the most common pre-Reformation theologians referred to in the literature on active obedience. Irenaeus will serve as a representative of the early church, and Anselm will serve as a representative (though to a much lesser extent) of the medieval church. In addition, this dissertation is not a dissertation on the history of the doctrine—so I simply have to be selective to some extent. I should not attempt to produce an exhaustive historical study in only one chapter.

the 1570s.⁴ How could I even discuss this doctrine prior to that time? In response, it may well be that the *substance* of the doctrine was taught (or denied) before the doctrine itself received the name.

Irenaeus

According to Snider, “Until the Reformation the church did not speak of Christ’s obedience as playing a vicarious role in the atonement. Rather, when referring to or explaining the atonement, theologians referred exclusively to Christ’s death, rather than his life, as the redemptive element in his earthly ministry.”⁵ To test this assertion, I will first probe the thought of Irenaeus, a second century theologian. Others have suggested that Irenaeus may in fact be an ally of an active obedience position.⁶ For example, Michael Horton writes, “It is just this federal and organic union that is emphasized in Irenaeus’ model of recapitulation, with Jesus as the ‘leaven’ that makes

⁴R. Scott Clark, “Do This and Live: Christ’s Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification,” in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 231.

⁵Andrew Snider, “Justification and the Active Obedience of Christ: Toward A Biblical Understanding of Imputed Righteousness” (Th.M. thesis, The Master’s Seminary, 2002), 14. Curiously, Snider later acknowledges that Irenaeus “emphasized Christ’s obedient life” (18), that Irenaeus’ thought contained “proto-covenantal concepts” (20), that it could be said that Irenaeus “resonates with the later development of vicarious active obedience, whether or not he had a part in laying the foundation for that development” (20), and that “Irenaeus could be understood to be favorable to that view [the active obedience view]” (21 n. 15). Perhaps Snider would say that Irenaeus’ emphasis on Christ’s whole incarnational life of obedience never blossomed into true substitution, and never ultimately into redemption.

⁶L. W. Grensted, *The Atonement in History and in Life* (West Yorkshire, England: Pomona, 2007), 179; M. Valentine, “Justification By Faith,” in *Lectures on the Augsburg Confession, on the Holman Foundation* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1888), 124 (107-46); Walter Lowe, “Christ and Salvation,” ed. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 226; William Bridges Hunter, *The Descent of Urania: Studies in Milton, 1946-1988* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), 110-11.

the whole lump holy, beginning with his incarnation and then by filling up the years of human disobedience with his own obedience.”⁷

Turning to Irenaeus’ own writings, he does emphasize Christ’s obedience:

“And therefore in the last times the Lord has restored us into friendship through his incarnation, having become ‘the mediator between God and men;’ propitiating indeed for us the Father against whom we had sinned, and canceling our disobedience by his own obedience.”⁸ Irenaeus appears to lodge Christ’s redemptive work in his whole ministry, beginning with the incarnation and extending throughout the whole time he served as mediator. Moreover, commenting on Christ’s triumph in his temptation, Irenaeus writes, “there was done away with that infringement of God’s commandment which had occurred in Adam, by means of the precept of the law, which the Son of man observed, who did not transgress the commandment of God.”⁹ Here, it seems fairly clear that Christ obliterated Adam’s sin not merely by suffering its consequences but by positively obeying God’s commandment.

Still, these statements need to be set within Irenaeus’ organizing schema of “recapitulation.”¹⁰ For Irenaeus, Christ replicates in his own life the various stages of

⁷Michael Horton, *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 226. Horton goes on to write, “That which he [Jesus] offered was not merely a sacrifice of atonement, but an obedient life” (ibid).

⁸Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.17.1, in *The Antic-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts et al. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), vol. 1.

⁹Ibid., 5.21.2.

¹⁰For more on Irenaeus’ thought, see Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Dennis Minns, “Irenaeus,” *Expository Times* 120, no. 4 (2009): 157-66; idem, *Irenaeus* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994); Morton Scott Enslin, “Irenaeus: Mostly Prolegomena,” *HTR* 40, no. 3 (1947): 137-65; Mary Ann Donovan, “Insights on Ministry: Irenaeus,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 2, no. 1 (1986): 79-93; J. N. D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines* (1960; San Francisco: Harper

human history, succeeding where humanity failed. His view has also been termed a “physical” theory of atonement since he appears to have a seminal conception of mankind’s unity with Christ.¹¹ Irenaeus attaches programmatic significance to Paul’s teaching that God’s purpose is to sum up all things in Christ (Eph 1:10). In a mystery of ontology, Christ “includes or comprises the whole of reality in Himself, the human race being included.”¹² In trying to put all these teachings together, two observations stand out. First, Irenaeus, like many other early fathers, does have a holistic view of Christ’s work.¹³ But second, Irenaeus’ viewpoint appears to stress a physical union—the divine person redeems human nature by uniting himself with it and organically purifying it through the course of his life.¹⁴ While Irenaeus’ teaching could be seen as amendable to the doctrine of active obedience, “proponent” is perhaps too strong a conclusion. However, in Irenaeus’ view, it is obvious that Christ’s redeeming obedience as the

Collins, 1978), 170-74; Andrew P. Klager, “Retaining and Reclaiming the Divine: Identification and the Recapitulation of Peace in St. Irenaeus of Lyons’ Atonement Narrative,” in *Stricken by God*, 422-80; Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 68-78; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1971), 82-94.

¹¹Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 173.

¹²Ibid., 172.

¹³Lowe observes that for Irenaeus “the incarnation is not just a necessary prelude to the death on the cross. Rather, the incarnation itself is of a piece with Christ’s saving activity . . . Once again, as with the Apologists, a link is forged between Redeemer and Creator. But now there is something more: In redemption, creation itself is brought to completion” (“Christ and Salvation,” 226-27). According to Roger Olson, Irenaeus “emphasized every point of Jesus’ life as necessary for salvation. . . . For Irenaeus (and most of the church fathers after him) incarnation itself was redemptive, not merely a necessary step toward either Christ’s teachings or the cross event” (*The Story of Christian Theology*), 74. Somewhat cryptically, Irenaeus himself says when Christ “became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus” (*Against Heresies*, 3.18.1). See also Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 144.

¹⁴The extent to which Irenaeus’ view of Christ’s obedient life might additionally be “legal” is difficult to determine, although Horton finds a definite legal strand in Irenaeus (Horton, *Lord and Servant*, 129, 220).

second Adam encompassed more than just his dying on the cross. So Kelly writes, “He [Irenaeus] emphasizes that, since the essence of Adam’s sin was disobedience, the obedience of Christ was indispensable; it is obedience that God requires, and in which man’s glory consists. Hence he stresses, as an example of steadfast obedience, Christ’s resistance to the temptation. . . . He further points out that . . . the second Adam had to live his life through all its stages, not excluding death itself.”¹⁵

Before pressing on to Anselm, I offer a brief word about the intervening time period. Perhaps no other theologian exerted as great an influence on subsequent Catholic theology than St. Augustine (354-430). In regards to the question of how God can be just and justify the ungodly, Alister McGrath argues that Augustine “shows relatively little interest in this question, giving no systematic account of the work of Christ.”¹⁶ What Augustine did apparently hold was that justification involves God actually making the sinner righteous. So Augustine states, “What does ‘justified’ mean other than ‘made righteous’, just as ‘he justifies the ungodly’ means ‘he makes a righteous person out of an ungodly person’?”¹⁷ If people can be judged righteous because they really are inherently righteous, there does not appear to be as much need for someone else’s righteous obedience to be credited to them. To be sure, for Augustine the triune God was the author and finisher of salvation. Salvation was by grace through Christ. However, Augustine

¹⁵Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 174.

¹⁶Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44. David F. Wright concurs: “Augustine never addressed the topic of justification in a precise and focused way in any of his works and certainly never devoted a treatise or a sermon or a letter, and barely even a whole chapter or section of one of these, to it” (Wright, “Justification in Augustine,” in *Justification in Perspective*, 55.

¹⁷McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 47.

does not appear to wrestle with the possibility that Christ's righteous life on earth might be a whole cloth substitute for sinners. Augustine's views on this matter helped to set the tone for the medieval ages, since as McGrath observes, "All medieval theologians are, in some measure, at least, Augustinian theologians."¹⁸

Anselm

If Augustine is fairly silent on the issue of active obedience, and Irenaeus is sometimes considered a proponent, Anselm (1033-1109) could be regarded as an opponent. Anselm is significant since according to Pelikan he gave a more sustained treatment of the atonement than any other medieval theologian.¹⁹ In his study of Anselm's Christology, Daniel Deme states that "Anselm sums up Christ's entire activity and attitude in one single concept, namely, obedience. . . . This is the underlining and decisive motive of Christ's entire activity, summarizing the meaning and merit of his life from birth to resurrection."²⁰ Yet although in one sense Anselm stressed Christ's obedience, he did not emphasize it in a way that pointed toward the later doctrine of active obedience.

Anselm's work, *Cur Deus Homo?*, stands as an important explication of Christ's work of redemption. The work unfolds in the form of a dialogue between

¹⁸McGrath, *Justitia Dei*, 54. I have not taken space to examine Aquinas, but his views, and subsequent medieval views of the nature of Christ's merit, might relate to the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. John McDowell Leavitt writes, "Aquinas also distinguishes between *Satisfactio* and *Meritum*. This is somewhat similar to the modern distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ. Did Christ, by his active obedience to the law, earn for the believer a title to eternal life? Thomas answers this question in the affirmative" ("Scholastic and Tridentine Soteriology," *American Quarterly Church Review* 21, no. 1 (1869) 371 [360-76]).

¹⁹Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 3:131.

²⁰Daniel Deme, *The Christology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 192.

Anselm and “Boso.” Anselm opens section 1.9 by telling Boso, “It seems to me that you do not rightly understand the difference between what he did at the demand of obedience, and what he suffered, not determined by obedience.”²¹ Boso agrees that the Jews killed Jesus because “he invariably maintained truth and justice.”²² Then Anselm responds, “I believe that God demands this [obedience] of every rational being, and every being owes this in obedience to God. . . . That man [Jesus], therefore, owed this obedience to God the Father, humanity to Deity; and the Father claimed it from him.”²³ Boso understands this, but he cannot understand how it is that Christ’s obedience did not demand death. Anselm responds by arguing that if man would not have sinned, God would not have given him the sentence of death. Consequently, for Anselm, “God did not, therefore, compel Christ to die; but he suffered death of his own will, not yielding up his life as an act of obedience, but on account of his obedience in maintaining holiness.”²⁴

Anselm’s assertion raises significant questions concerning the passages that claim that Christ’s death was the Father’s will, and that even in dying Jesus was obeying the Father. Anselm anticipates these objections, and discusses these passages, though not at great length. To summarize, Anselm argues that although the Father did not prefer the Son’s death, the Father “was not willing to rescue the human race, unless man were to do

²¹Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium; an Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1944).

²²*Ibid.*, 1.9.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.* In other words, on account of his steadfast obedience to God the Jews killed Jesus—forcing him to give up his life. Even though this giving up of his life was voluntary on Jesus’ part, it was not part of the obedience he owed to God.

even as great a thing as was signified in the death of Christ.” The Son, then, “preferred to suffer, rather than that the human race should be lost.” Jesus acts “as if” the Father had commanded him to die.²⁵ Leaving aside the validity of Anselm’s argument, not to mention the question of biblical warrant, it is important to understand the thrust of what Anselm is saying with respect to Christ’s obedience. In short, humans must be saved by something above and beyond their normal duties of obedience to God. This Jesus provided in his death, leading to the remission of sins. However, Jesus’ life of obedience was simply the obedience he owed to God as a human. This life of obedience, while perhaps in some way specially qualifying him to be a Savior and to die, could not be vicarious and could not therefore provide redemption.²⁶

Deme agrees. He writes that for Anselm, “Obedience is something that God requires from every rational creature. Christ, as a real person, owed this obedience to God his Father, and his humanity owed this to his divinity.”²⁷ A mere upholding of righteousness in obedience is “simply what God requires from every creature. . . . Such an obedience could not form a compensation on behalf of the entire mankind.”²⁸ In fact, Deme contrasts Anselm’s view with the more representational view of Irenaeus: “For Anselm an Irenaean recapitulation of man’s duties and life in Christ would not be sufficient for the offering of an ultimate sacrifice to God, in which every creature could have a share. In such a recapitulation Christ could only perform personal and individual

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶In addition to 1.9, see also *ibid.*, 1.10-11.

²⁷Deme, *Anselm*, 193.

²⁸Ibid., 194.

duties, and therefore the merits of such a performance could not be effective outside his own personal and individual existence.”²⁹ Others agree that Anselm should not be seen as an ally of an active obedience position.³⁰

During the time period of the Reformation and post-Reformation the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ received its most significant development. The Reformed branch of Protestant gave the ablest articulation and defense of the doctrine. However, the Lutheran tradition, though eventually differing somewhat from the Reformed tradition in its explication of the doctrine, nevertheless did with the Reformed tradition affirm the doctrine. The Arminians (and Anglicans) present a wider swath of opinion, but both strands contain significant approval of the doctrine. Given such large

²⁹Ibid. Deme does point out that for Anselm “the free maintaining of righteousness and justice in Christ’s life is, however, an organic part of his salvific action so far as the one who dies for the salvation of mankind must be a righteous and just man” (ibid., 195). Once again, however, this affirmation is decidedly not an affirmation of the doctrine of Christ’s active obedience as it was eventually formulated and defined.

³⁰So I. A. Dorner writes, “As relates to *satisfactio*, in excluding therefrom Christ’s active obedience, Anselm has indeed properly nothing but *satispassio*, while attributing to the spontaneous (according to him, non-obligatory) suffering (in harmony with the mode of view met with elsewhere in medieval theology) the character of a good work, meritorious, because non-obligatory” (*A System of Christian Doctrine*, trans. Alfred Cave and J. S. Banks [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1882], 17). Berkhof writes, “According to Anselm Christ’s life of obedience had no redemptive significance, since He owed this to God for himself” (*Systematic Theology*, 380). According to A. R. Whately, “His own obedience Christ cannot give for this purpose to God, for, as in the case of human creatures, it belongs by right to God already” (“Anselm’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” in *The Atonement in History and Life*, 205 (198-213). John Scott Lidgett notes that the later prominent opponent of active obedience, Piscator (along with Karg), followed the lead of Anselm in denying active obedience (*The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement* [London: Charles H. Kelly, 1898], 470). See also Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1951), 2:373; Robert Sleightholme Franks, *The Work of Christ: A Historical Study of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Nelson, 1962), 33. Those who would actually see Anselm as a proponent of an active obedience position either do not understand Anselm or they do not understand the doctrine of active obedience (or both). See John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (1895; reprint, Ann Arbor, MI: Baker, 1981), 7:272. Paul Tillich criticizes Anselm for insisting that Jesus “owed God active obedience but not suffering and death” (*Systematic Theology* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957], 124). It is a bit unclear as to what Tillich is actually trying to say. Perhaps Tillich is not using the phrase “active obedience” in any kind of technical doctrinal sense. Otherwise, it appears that Tillich either misunderstands active obedience or misunderstands Anselm.

traditions and the time span, once again this section will have to be representational—focusing for the most part on major figures and confessions.³¹

Lutheran View

Martin Luther's precise view of justification is controversial.³² Part of the problem revolves around the shift in Luther's thinking on the subject. In addition, Luther did not attempt the kind of systematization that Calvin did. Furthermore, he was, to put it simply, a man of many words, brash and fearless in giving his opinions.³³ Nevertheless, one can find in Luther the outlines of what would later be called the active obedience of Christ. Luther's emphasis on union with Christ is fairly well known. Luther says, for example, "he who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he."³⁴ Believers are righteous since they are one with the righteous Christ. But what does this mean? Certainly it includes forgiveness of sins thanks to the

³¹Carl Trueman writes, "The historic identity of Reformed theology has always been expressed through public confessional documents such as . . . the Westminster Standards. These were the productions of committees and of historical circumstances and thus embody a certain theological catholicity," (Carl Trueman, "Calvin and Calvinism," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 225). On the importance of confessions see also Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics 1: Prolegomena to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 27ff.

³²See McGrath, *Iusitia Dei*, 218-48; Ritschl, *History of Reconciliation*, 133-38; Carl Trueman, "Simul peccator et justus: Martin Luther and Justification," in *Justification in Perspective*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 73-97; Mark Seifrid, "Luther, Melancthon and Paul on the Question of Imputation," *Justification: What's at Stake*, 137-52; Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness," in *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church*, ed. Timothy J. Wengart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 38-55; Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Shultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 118-29.

³³As Albert Mohler puts it, "Luther never had an unarticulated thought" (Together for the Gospel Conference, 2008).

³⁴*Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986), 31:298.

satisfaction of Christ. But for Luther, Christ did more than take on sin's penalty, Christ fulfilled the law that hangs over sinners and condemns them. In an important passage, Luther writes that Christ "fulfilled the Law perfectly, for He loved God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all his strength, and with all His mind, and He loved His neighbor as Himself. Therefore, when the Law comes and accuses you of not having kept it, bid it go to Christ. Say: There is the Man who has kept it; to Him I cling; He fulfilled it for me and gave His fulfillment to me. Thus the Law is silenced."³⁵ Elsewhere in a sermon entitled, "New Year's Day," Luther affirms, "It is impossible for us to purchase forgiveness; God ordained in our stead one who took upon himself all our deserved punishment and fulfilled the law for us."³⁶ It seems quite clear that Luther distinguished between a penal fulfillment and a positive preceptive fulfillment, and that just as Christ's sufferings were vicarious, so too was the positive aspect of law-keeping. It is not necessary at this point to enter into a discussion on imputation in Luther, or justification as a work of renewal in Luther.³⁷ Rather, the verdict on active obedience is fairly straightforward: Luther saw two aspects to Christ's vicarious work for his people: suffering in our stead and fulfilling the law for us.

Objections to this understanding of Luther founder at the critical point of

³⁵Quoted in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1951), 2:375.

³⁶Quoted in Brian Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 24.

³⁷See again the sources cited in n. 32. Whether justification in Luther is strictly forensic, the ground of justification is solely Christ and his work. So even if it could be shown that Luther would have included what we call "regeneration" in his concept of justification, he still stands in marked contrast to Roman Catholicism, since for Catholics, God declares people to be just because they are just—renewal logically precedes justification. For Luther, God's word of pronouncement in justification falls on the sinner, not on the righteous person. In regards to the question of imputation, it is true that imputation strikes

dealing with all that Luther says. For example, J. A. H. Tittman argues that Luther stressed Christ's death.³⁸ This point is true, but Tittman does not deal with the statements brought forward in this chapter, nor does he offer evidence that Luther denies the positive side of Christ's vicarious obedience. Strangely, Tittman also argues that the active obedience position, even under the category of imputation, would have been too close to Rome's view of inherent righteousness for Luther to accept.³⁹ This criticism misses the point entirely—imputation itself is not a transformative work, and therefore in itself does not bring any inherent change in the sinner. Against any others who might object to seeing active obedience in Luther,⁴⁰ it should be maintained that Luther affirmed the basic substance of the doctrine.⁴¹

close to the heart of the active obedience question; however, the issue of active obedience primarily concerns the ground of justification, not the means by which believers receive it.

³⁸J. A. H. Tittman, "What has Paul Taught Respecting the Obedience of Christ?," trans. M. Stuart, in *The Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer* (July 1836): 10.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰Seifrid argues that the development of the active and passive obedience of Christ cannot "be made to fit into Luther's understanding of justification" ("Luther, Melancthon, and Paul," 144). According to Seifrid, for Luther Christ is present to believers by faith, so that in union with him there is no need to impute Christ's righteousness to believers. The union of faith mediates the benefits rather than imputation (*ibid.*, 144-45). Once again I observe that the doctrine of active obedience deals first and foremost with the ground of justification, not the means by which believers receive it. Strangely, Seifrid, citing Ritschl, further argues that it was "Osiander, the 'heterodox father of Protestant orthodoxy,' who first assigned Christ's active obedience and passive obedience differing roles in justification" (*ibid.*, 144). Ritschl actually says that the distinction between active and passive obedience was "originally due to Luther," although Ritschl does say that Osiander posited separate ends for these ideas (Ritschl, *History of Justification*, 226). But Ritschl reiterates that "the distinction as well as the collocation of the two forms of Christ's obedience corresponds to certain quite distinct conditions and assumptions of the doctrinal system that received its impulse from Luther" (*ibid.*, 27). It appears that Osiander simply first took these distinctions to heterodox ends (*ibid.*).

⁴¹This understanding is supported by Jaroslav Pelikan, who argues that "the law of God, which was one of the 'enemies' over whom Christ the victor prevailed, was as well a divine demand that man had the obligation to fulfill but could not obey. In relation to the law in that sense Luther spoke of 'Christ the fulfiller'" (Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971-1989], 4:163). Pelikan further urges that this teaching of Luther's later came to be formulated in terms of active and passive obedience (4:164). According to Laurence William Grensted, "Both Luther and

The later Lutheran formulations are even more explicit on this matter, and perhaps this is due in part to Melanchthon's emphasis on righteousness set within a legal framework.⁴² For Melanchthon, according to Vickers, "Righteousness is uniformity with, or fulfillment of, the entire law."⁴³ One would expect, then, that Melanchthon would consider Christ's entire work of positive law fulfillment to be a part of the righteousness that is credited to believers, and this is in fact what Melanchthon does teach: "The Mediator's entire obedience, from his Incarnation until his Resurrection, is the true justification which is pleasing to God, and is the merit for us."⁴⁴ Melanchthon argues in accord with Calvin that believers receive not just forgiveness (negative) but also imputation (positive): "Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, so that we are justified."⁴⁵ Melanchthon teaches elsewhere that obedience to the law "is certainly righteousness," and that the glory of fulfilling the law "belongs properly to Christ."⁴⁶ As Melanchthon repeatedly affirms, we can never trust our works; instead we must believe that we are

Calvin are too clear-sighted to leave Christ's active obedience wholly out of account. Luther emphasizes this obedience especially as obedience to the law, regarding Christ's acceptance of the curse as the supreme instance of that obedience" (*A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement* [London: Manchester University Press, 1920], 223).

⁴²See McGrath, *History of Justification*, 237ff.; and Ritschl, *History of Justification*, 167ff.; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993-2004), 3:225-28; Vickers, *Righteousness*, 30-34.

⁴³Vickers, *Righteousness*, 33.

⁴⁴*Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555*, trans. and ed. Clyde L. Manschreck (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 33.

⁴⁵*Loci Communes 1543*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 86. The fact that Melanchthon, like Luther, often emphasized Christ's death and forgiveness of sins is no surprise. After all, there was a need to emphasize once-for-all forgiveness over against the Catholic notion of penance and a continuing justification.

⁴⁶*The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, trans. F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), 35, 37.

accepted for Christ's sake.⁴⁷ The clear upshot of this line of thought is that Christ fulfilled the law for us, earning righteousness for us.⁴⁸ In addition, as Vickers helpfully observes, "Melanchthon sees 'blood' ('justified freely by faith, in his blood,' Rom. 3:24) as Paul's shorthand for Christ's entire work."⁴⁹ Furthermore, since Melanchthon views Christ's whole obedience as a unity, there is not at this point an explicit distinction between the "active" and "passive" obedience of Christ; however, both elements are present in Melanchthon.⁵⁰

The teachings of Luther and Melanchthon in this area help to provide the backdrop for the *Formula of Concord* (1577), a declaration which has served as a definitive creed of the Lutheran church.⁵¹ In a section entitled, "The Righteousness of Faith," the writers declare,

[Christ's] obedience, not only in suffering and dying, but also in this, that he in our stead was voluntarily made under the Law, and fulfilled it by this obedience, is imputed to us for righteousness, so that, on account of this complete obedience, which he rendered his heavenly Father for us, by doing and suffering, in living and dying, God forgives our sins, regards us as godly and righteous, and eternally saves

⁴⁷Ibid., 19, 21, 25, 27, 35, 37, 40-43, 48, 50, etc.

⁴⁸Succinctly, "Nor must we trust that we are accounted righteous for God by our own perfection and fulfilling of the law, but rather for Christ's sake" (ibid.).

⁴⁹Vickers, *Righteousness*, 33. This point is important to keep in mind when encountering (rightful) claims that Melanchthon stressed the cross of Christ and his suffering (Seifrid, "Luther, Melanchthon, and Paul," 144; Tittman, "The Obedience of Christ," 9-10).

⁵⁰Like Luther, Melanchthon's view of justification also saw some progression (see McGrath, *Justification*, 237-41). Nevertheless, historian Philip Schaff finds the teaching of active obedience in Melanchthon (Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* [New York: Harper, 1919], 274).

⁵¹The *Book of Concord* (1580) simply gathers together certain Patristic and Lutheran writings: *The Apostles' Creed*, *The Nicene Creed*, *The Athanasian Creed*, *The Augsburg Confession*, *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, *The Smalcald Articles*, *The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, *Luther's Small and Large Catechisms*, and the FC. For the sake of space I have chose to focus on the FC rather than earlier writings like the *Augsburg Confession*.

us.”⁵²

We should note the echoes of both Luther and Melanchthon here, as well as the observation that Christ’s obedience is in reality one “complete obedience,” even though it may have different theological aspects and effects.⁵³

Tittman acknowledges that active obedience can be found in the FC, but he argues that: 1) even the framers themselves were not all of the same mind on the matter, 2) the Osiander and Stancarus controversies pressed the Lutherans toward an overly quick dogmatic answer, and 3) the law Christ fulfilled (according to FC) was not the universal law of God but the Mosaic law.⁵⁴ In response: 1) he does not cite any specific framers’ understandings or interpretations, so we must let Concord stand as written,⁵⁵ 2) controversy naturally helps to sharpen doctrine, and such a sharpening is not necessarily wrong; and 3) for Luther and numerous subsequent Protestants, the Mosaic law contains many duties incumbent on all people, and the Mosaic law (insofar as it reflects universal norms that accord with God’s character) thus does have universal referent. In summary, Tittman’s arguments are not compelling. The Lutheran tradition, beginning with Luther

⁵²3.10.

⁵³“In the formula of Concord, stress was laid upon the active obedience, as well as the sufferings and death of Christ; and Lutheran theologians have generally acquiesced in the propriety and importance of this distinction, so that the satisfaction of Christ is viewed as embracing both his active and passive obedience” (J. A. Brown, “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review*, ed. Edwards A. Park and Samuel H. Taylor [Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1868], 471).

⁵⁴Tittman, “The Obedience of Christ,” 11-13.

⁵⁵Tittman concedes to Martin Chemnitz (one of the chief framers of the FC) the right of interpreting the FC (ibid., 13), yet does not show how Chemnitz ever denied or reframed the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. In fact, I found no one who denied active obedience in Chemnitz. For an example of someone who clearly does see active obedience in Chemnitz, consult John McPherson,

and Melanchthon and culminating in the FC, affirmed the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.⁵⁶

An affirmation of active obedience has continued in evangelical Lutheranism. Two examples must suffice.⁵⁷ First, Lutheran systematic theologian Francis Pieper, in his *Christian Dogmatics*, a work that continues to be an influential articulation of Lutheran theology, addresses the “Active Obedience of Christ” as a sub-theme under the priestly office of Christ. He affirms the doctrine and states that it is an “essential part” of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction.⁵⁸ More recently, the book *We Believe in Jesus Christ* contains Lutheran essays on Christology. One of the essays is entitled, “The Active and Passive Obedience of Jesus Christ.” Richard Balge, the author, begins in a very similar vein to John Murray: “All the work of Jesus Christ as our representative before God can be characterized as obedience.”⁵⁹ Balge goes on to say that the “righteousness of Christ consisted in his perfect obedience to the law. He was acting in our stead . . . ,” and Balge

“Anselm’s Theory of the Atonement: Its Place in History,” in *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1878), 231.

⁵⁶George Smeaton writes, “It is common among the writers who object to the element of active obedience in Christ’s atonement, and call it an ecclesiastical notion, to allege that it formed no part of Luther’s testimony, but was a mere subsequent addition, dating from the composition of the *Concordiae Formula*. That is very far from being a correct view of the Reformation doctrine; and to me it is a matter of no small surprise that writers, pretending to any accurate acquaintance with Luther’s works . . . could entertain a moment’s doubt of this fact. . . . No less explicit is Melanchthon” (George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Atonement* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870], 528). Pope also agrees that Lutherans have affirmed active obedience (*Christian Theology*, 2:441).

⁵⁷Of course, all evangelical Lutherans, in continuing to stand behind the FC, would presumably agree with the active obedience of Christ.

⁵⁸2:372ff.

⁵⁹“Active Obedience,” 129.

argues from passages like Romans 5:18-19 and Philippians 2:6-8.⁶⁰

While the Lutherans came to a creedal position not inaccurately described as an affirmation of “active obedience,” it was left to the Reformed branch of Protestantism to offer the fullest theological accounting of this doctrine. If one must select Luther as a major influence in Lutheran thought, then no better candidate stands out as the leading thinker in early Reformed thought than John Calvin.⁶¹

Calvin

Among those who argue that Calvin taught that justification was only the remission of sins and not the positive imputation of Christ’s lifelong obedience to the law, Johannes Piscator (1546-1625) stands out as one of the most well known (and one of the earliest).⁶² Others in church history have made a similar claim. For example, McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* simply asserts, without argument or citation, that the “active righteousness”

⁶⁰Ibid., 129. See also Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutherans*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1876), 376f. George Christian Knapp states that “most of the Lutheran and Reformed theologians accounted this doctrine [active obedience] essential to sound orthodoxy” (*Lectures on Christian Theology*, trans. Leonard Woods [Philadelphia: J. W. Moore, 1858], 406). See also P. A. Laury, “The Vicarious Atonement,” *The Lutheran Church Review* 23 (1903): 449 (439-51); Karl Rudolf Hagenbuch, *A Textbook of the History of Doctrines*, trans. by Henry B. Smith (New York: Sheldon, 1867), 362.

⁶¹Again a note on anachronism—Calvin died in 1564, and the term “active obedience” did not come into play until the 1570s. So it would be a mistake to assume that Calvin ever dealt with the term directly. Nevertheless, it may be true that Calvin affirmed the substance of what would soon be called the “active obedience” of Christ. After all, it would indeed be a little strange if a major fountainhead of Reformed theology failed to affirm an aspect of justification which that theology came to consider as critical. So this section also presses the question of the relationship of Calvin to the later Reformed tradition.

⁶²Johannes Piscator, *A Learned and Profitable Treatise of Man’s Justification* (London: n. p., 1599), 111. See James T. Dennison, Jr., “Johannes Piscator and the Doctrine of Justification,” *The Outlook* 53, no. 10 (2003): 8-11. The primary reason I do not examine Piscator in more depth in this chapter is because his views will be brought forward in the “objections” chapter later.

view is the view of “high calvinism,” standing in contrast to the “opinion of Calvin himself. . . that justification is simply the remission of sin.”⁶³

Turning to Calvin’s own words, Calvin does say that “the righteousness of faith is reconciliation with God, which consists solely in the forgiveness of sins. . . . Those whom God embraces are made righteous solely by the fact that they are purified when their spots are washed away by forgiveness of sins. Consequently, such righteousness can be called, in a word, ‘remission of sins.’”⁶⁴ Again, “righteousness . . . consists in forgiveness of sins.”⁶⁵ In fact, “the whole of righteousness” is in “free remission.”⁶⁶ Perhaps most shocking of all, in his 1541 Geneva Catechism, in commenting on the language in the Apostles’ Creed—language that moves from the birth of Christ directly to the death of Christ, Calvin writes in question fifty-five, “Why do you go immediately from His birth to His death, passing over the whole history of His life? [Answer] . . . Because nothing is said here about what belongs properly to the substance of our redemption.”⁶⁷ This statement appears to be a flat denial of any concept of an obedient life of Christ that is reckoned to believers as their righteousness.

⁶³John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (1895; reprint, Ann Arbor, MI: Baker, 1981) 4:526. See also E. H. Hoare, *The Scripture Ground of Justification; Or, An Inquiry Into the Doctrine of Scripture Concerning the Active and Passive Obedience of Christ* (London: William MacIntosh, 1867), iii, 61.

⁶⁴3.11.21. All quotations from the *Institutes* are taken from Ford Lewis Battles’ translation, ed. John T. McNeil (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 3.11.22.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 3.11.11.

⁶⁷Cited from T.F. Torrance’s translation of the Geneva Catechism in *The School of Faith* (London: Camelot Press, 1959), 13.

Yet by the same token, this was certainly not all that Calvin said on the subject.⁶⁸ In *The Institutes*, Calvin says in his definition of justification that justification consists in the remission of sins *and* the imputation of righteousness.⁶⁹ Now one might argue that the “imputation of righteousness” here for Calvin is the mere result of the remission, and not some additional obedient life of Christ. But the idea of Christ’s obedience is certainly not absent from Calvin’s view of justification. For example, in opposing Osiander’s doctrine of a kind of infused righteousness, Calvin argues that the righteousness that is imputed to believers has been acquired “by Christ’s obedience and sacrificial death.”⁷⁰ In a similar vein Calvin quotes Romans 5:19 as stating that “we are made righteous by Christ’s obedience.”⁷¹ Yet even in these cases, it could be objected that by “obedience” Calvin is only referring to Christ’s death, in which he obediently submitted to the Father’s will. That is, his death is both a sacrificial death and an obedient death. In Romans 5:19, then, the “one act of obedience” would serve as a metonymy for Christ’s mere substitutionary payment of the penalty of sin.

However, these interpretations of Calvin do not stand when put in the light of all that Calvin said. For instance, in later comments on Romans 5:19, Calvin asks, “What else is this but to lodge our righteousness in Christ’s obedience, because the obedience of

⁶⁸For a broad and helpful examination of Calvin’s view of the atonement, see Robert A. Peterson, *Calvin and the Atonement* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1999). This is a second edition of Peterson’s older work, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Atonement* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1983).

⁶⁹*Inst.*, 3.11.2.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 3.11.5.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 3.11.4.

Christ is reckoned to us as if it were our own?”⁷² Now one can see how Christ’s obedience construed as simple penalty-paying might lead to Christ’s obedience as believers’ “forgiveness,” but Calvin’s point is that God “reckons us” as “obedient” and not as simply forgiven. How would Christ’s suffering count as our “obedience”? Does God command people to suffer for their own sins? No, he does not—not in the sense that Christ suffered once for all for us. This idea would be more akin to a Catholic notion of penitence through self-mutilation, a concept opposed by Calvin and the other reformers. Here then it seems that by “obedience” Calvin must have more in mind than Christ’s suffering. Elsewhere Calvin asks, “Did he obey in any other way than when he took upon himself the form of a servant?” (Phil 2:7).⁷³ Here again, Christ’s obedience refers to more than just his suffering cross work, and it is this incarnational obedience that brings our justification.⁷⁴ Furthermore, in his commentary on I Corinthians 1:30, Calvin says, “He [Christ] is made unto us righteousness, by which he means that we are on his account acceptable to God, inasmuch as he expiated our sins by his death, and his obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. For as the righteousness of faith consists in remission of sins and a gracious acceptance, we obtain both through Christ.”⁷⁵ Here Calvin appears to make a clear distinction between expiation and imputation, between remission of sins and positive acceptance.

⁷²Ibid., 3.11.23.

⁷³Ibid., 3.11.9.

⁷⁴Ibid., 3.11.8; on Rom 5 and Phil 2, see also Calvin’s commentaries.

⁷⁵John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 20: 93.

Another line of argument stems from the way Calvin relates righteousness to law-keeping. He sets up the principle fairly early in the *Institutes*, stating, “If it is true that in the law we are taught the perfection of righteousness, this also follows: the complete observance of the law is perfect righteousness before God . . . we cannot gainsay that the reward of eternal salvation awaits complete obedience to the law, as the Lord promised.”⁷⁶ He later concludes, “For if righteousness consists in the observance of the law, who will deny that Christ merited favor for us when, by taking that burden upon himself, he reconciled us to God as if we had kept the law? . . . What was the purpose of this subjection of Christ to the law but to acquire righteousness for us?”⁷⁷ Calvin is perhaps even more explicit in a sermon where he comments on Deuteronomy 21:22-23: “because we cannot attain to righteousness, but by fulfilling the law in all points . . . it behooved our Lord Jesus Christ to be subject to the law to the intent that His obedience might now be imputed unto us, and God accept thereof as though we brought the like obedience of our own. . . . And so by that means we are taken for righteous in Jesus Christ. Why so? because He was obedient.”⁷⁸ For Calvin, Christ did indeed merit justification by obeying God’s law in behalf of sinners. Normally, those who deny that Calvin taught “active obedience” do not wrestle with the full weight of all of his teaching; they simply cite a few isolated statements.

In piecing together Calvin’s teaching on this subject, some observations merit attention. First, it is true that many times Calvin does emphasize justification as remission

⁷⁶*Inst.*, 2.8.3.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 2.17.5.

⁷⁸Quoted in Dennison, “Piscator,” 10-11.

of sins. Yet the context of his times must be taken into account. Calvin is opposing a Catholicism that places a heavy stress on justification as inward renovation and not once for all remission. That is, for Catholics, at the initial point of justification, God forgives the current slate of sins and regenerates a man so that his original sin nature is now a wholly righteous nature, so that God then declares him to be what he is: just. (Of course, further sin by the individual then erases his justified status.) Calvin, along with other reformers, wishes to stress that justification does not rest on the basis of an internal change (though an internal change will accompany true justification); justification is God's once for all declaration of a believing sinner's status—God justifies the ungodly. This claim brought the Catholic charge of a “bare remission” resulting in a “legal fiction”—that is, God says believers are just even though they still have sin. There is remission without full renovation. In light of this Catholic opposition, Calvin is right to stress that justification is indeed about “bare remission,” but bare remission as opposed to moral renovation and not as opposed to the imputed righteousness of Christ's obedience to the law in behalf of sinners.⁷⁹

It is also quite likely that Calvin intended his description of justification as remission to be a synecdochal description. In other words, for Calvin, “remission” could stand for both forgiveness and positive imputation. Calvin is well familiar with this figure of speech, elsewhere observing an important Scriptural synecdoche concerning the work of Christ. He says, “Whenever [in Scripture] mention is made of his death alone, we are to understand at the same time what belongs to his resurrection. Also, the same

⁷⁹See historical theologian William Cunningham's arguments, *Historical Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960), 2:14-15.

synecdoche applies to the word ‘resurrection.’”⁸⁰ In a similar way, one can make sense of the Bible’s twofold teaching that faith alone saves and that repentance is necessary for salvation. According to Calvin, repentance and faith “cannot be separated,” though they should be distinguished.⁸¹ Where true faith exists, so will true repentance. To put it another way, faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. For Calvin, that could be said of remission and imputation.

To cite another example from Calvin’s historical context, Calvin spends quite a bit of space in the *Institutes* refuting the ideas of a professing Lutheran named Osiander. In this dispute, Calvin is in earnest to safeguard the Reformation truth that the righteousness on account of which believers are justified is an alien righteousness—it is wholly outside of them and theirs only by imputation. Wendel helpfully observes that Osiander “supposed that the aim of justification was to render believers really righteous, and who saw the remission of sins as no more than a side-issue; whereas, for Calvin, the remission of sins constituted the very basis of justification.”⁸² Osiander “maintained that it was only the divine nature in Christ that could accomplish the work of our justification,” but Calvin stresses the humanity of Christ in his capacity as mediator.⁸³ Calvin acknowledges that Christ’s work would not have been effective unless he had been truly God, but that nevertheless he accomplished salvation “according to his human

⁸⁰*Inst.*, 2.16.13.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 3.3.5.

⁸²Francois Wendel, *Calvin*, trans. Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 258. Wendel acknowledges as well the necessity of Christ’s vicarious obedience in Calvin (260).

⁸³*Ibid.*, 259.

nature.”⁸⁴ It is in his mediatorial obedience and suffering that Christ earned eternal life. Believers are united to Christ and made partakers of Christ, but not in any sort of metaphysical sense. It is not that Christ makes believers justified by indwelling them as the eternally righteous God; they are justified by the imputation of his mediatorial life of righteousness for them (although he does also indwell those he justifies). Osiander failed to grasp this fundamental distinction between eternal divine righteousness and a righteous record, so Calvin needed to stress legal acts like remission, just as with the Roman Catholics. Unfortunately, when the historical contexts are left out, accounts of Calvin’s doctrine of justification can easily fall prey to a reductionistic understanding.

In the second place, admittedly Calvin’s use of theological terms is not as consistent and precise as later Reformed development. This is particularly true when it comes to notions of “obedience” and “righteousness.” It is not always entirely clear as to what exactly Calvin means when he speaks of Christ’s “obedience.” Modern Reformed teachers can easily lift out a statement from Calvin concerning “Christ’s obedience” and declare matter-of-factly, “There now—obviously Calvin held to the imputation of Christ’s active obedience.” As seen, there are times when the context of a Calvin statement, as well as the internal logic of the statement, does point in the direction of active obedience. However, at times Calvin may have no more in mind than Christ’s vicarious penal sufferings and death. Calvin students need to examine his use of the term “obedience” in the various contexts in his writing. Much more work needs to be done in this area, but again, his use does at least comprehend “active obedience.”

⁸⁴Ibid., 260.

A similar difficulty comes when one tries to pinpoint Calvin's use of the term "righteousness." In one section Calvin can decry Osiander's concept of "essential righteousness" as a "ghost," arguing that "Paul had established the source of righteousness in the flesh of Christ alone." Yet in the same section Calvin does not deny that the "righteousness of which Christ makes us partakers with himself is the eternal righteousness of the eternal God."⁸⁵ Despite Calvin's constant desire to be lucid and brief, one wishes that here Calvin might have offered a little more explanation. Perhaps in this latter quote Calvin is speaking of the believer's subjective communion with the whole person of Christ, rather than the objective ground of his justification, thus granting to Osiander the biblical truth of a real and vital union with the living Christ. But it is difficult to say.

In any case, with regard to these two terms, "obedience" and "righteousness," (or other theological terms for that matter), Calvin is not attempting to be equivocal in his language. The Bible itself, after all, speaks of both Christ's life and death as "obedience," and Scripture employs the concept of "righteousness" differently in different contexts. Calvin was in some senses just being as broad as Scripture. More to the point, in the wake of Calvin and further Reformed development, questions regarding justification began to be asked with more precision; consequently, a more precise use of theological terms developed. Surely Calvin should not be faulted for failing to foresee every theological and linguistic development over the next hundred years. He wrote with his own time in view. So to sum up so far, readers should bear in mind not only Calvin's historical context but also his various textual contexts.

⁸⁵*Inst.*, 3.11.9.

Third, and tentatively, it seems that over the course of Calvin's writings as a regenerate believer, there is actually a crystallization in Calvin's thinking on the subject of Christ's vicarious obedience. Of all his statements, the 1541 Catechism comment is by far the most difficult to reconcile. Once again, Calvin strongly implies that the Apostles' Creed leaves out mention of Christ's life because nothing in Christ's life "belongs properly to the substance of our redemption."⁸⁶ The question of the catechism is all the more vexing considering the importance that Calvin himself attached to it—even in his farewell message just one month before he died he told his fellow ministers to preserve the catechism and the discipline.⁸⁷ Furthermore, although the Geneva catechism is not so well known today, it had a massive influence in Calvin's own era and immediately following. One author argues that it was the catechism and not the *Institutes* "that served as the official statement of Genevan church doctrine for most of Calvin's life," and that the catechism in its English translation played a prominent role in the Scottish Reformation.⁸⁸

The catechism was put out in 1541, so it might be tempting to argue that Calvin simply changed his mind. After all, at that point the man had only been converted for fewer than ten years, and certainly he grew in the faith and in his understanding of the Bible's teaching. Yet, even aside from his late-life commendation of the catechism, one has to wrestle with the teaching of his Romans commentary, a commentary published in

⁸⁶Torrance, *School*, 13.

⁸⁷David F. Wright, "Calvin's Role in Church History," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 284.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

1540, and thus actually prior to the catechism. Calvin's comments on the end of Romans 5 and the beginning of Romans 8 seem to stand in contradiction to the catechism, and more consonant with the bulk of his teaching elsewhere.⁸⁹

In trying to "solve" this seeming contradiction, it is first important to note that the catechism remained in static form. That is, unlike the *Institutes*, it did not undergo recurring revisions. Calvin did publish an edition of the catechism in Latin (it was first written in French) in 1545, but assumedly this was a simple translation more than a revision (and it was the French version of 1541 that was later translated into English for the Scots). One should also note that Calvin did base the catechism on an earlier condensation of the *Institutes* called the *Instruction of Faith*, first published in 1537.⁹⁰ So at least the basis for the catechism was written years before the Romans commentary, and much closer to the time of his conversion. Certainly we cannot imagine that Calvin felt as if the catechism was perfect and could use no improvement. But likely he knew that it is difficult to ask people to re-memorize an "updated" version of what they already had memorized. So he simply let the catechism stand as it was, without taking the time to improve it later in life.

Also of note in this connection is the first edition of the *Institutes*, published in

⁸⁹Commenting on Rom 5:19, Calvin says that "Christ . . . has procured righteousness for us," and that Paul "explains the character of the righteousness of Christ by referring to it as obedience. Let us note here what we are required to bring into the presence of God, if we wish to be justified by works, viz. obedience to the law" (Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul The Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961], 118). Concerning Romans 8:4, Calvin observes, "As long as believers sojourn in the world, they do not make such progress that the righteousness of the law is full or complete in them. We must, therefore, apply this phrase to forgiveness, for while the obedience of Christ is imparted to us, the law is satisfied, so that we are accounted just" (ibid., 160).

⁹⁰Torrance, *School*, 3.

1536 (and thus prior to the *Instruction of Faith*). Unfortunately, even though in one section Calvin teaches through the Apostles' Creed, Calvin does not appear to discuss the Creed's move from the birth of Christ to the death of Christ. His other teaching in the 1536 edition could lead naturally to an "active obedience" position, but it is not as explicit as his later work. For example, Calvin repeatedly affirms that perfect keeping of the law would make a person righteous, but he does not say that Christ's substitutionary life of law-keeping is necessary for eternal life.⁹¹ Calvin does say that Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers, but he does not delineate exactly what that righteousness is, although he does say that through it believers become "fulfillers of the law."⁹² He also speaks explicitly of Christ's vicarious obedience,⁹³ but again it cannot be ascertained with certainty whether at this point "obedience" means more than penal suffering. Most importantly, Calvin's finalized version of the *Institutes* must stand whenever there appears to be some discrepancy in his earlier writing, because it is the *Institutes* that Calvin revises and updates continually over the course of his life (unlike the catechism). And very significant to this topic, in the final edition of the *Institutes*, finished in 1559, Calvin reads the article in the Apostles' Creed in a different light than he appears to have done in the catechism. Calvin begins section 2.26.5 by saying, "Now someone asks, 'How has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God, and acquired righteousness to render God favorable and kindly toward us?' To this we can in general reply that he has achieved this for us by the whole

⁹¹For examples see *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1936 edition*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 31-32.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 51.

course of his obedience . . . Paul extends the oasis of the pardon that frees us from the curse of the law to the whole life of Christ . . .” This is the language of active obedience.

Shortly after, in the same section, Calvin turns to the wording of the Creed. He observes that the Creed “passes at once in the best order from the birth of Christ to his death and resurrection, wherein the whole of perfect salvation consists. Yet the remainder of the obedience that he manifested in his life is not excluded.” Regardless of whether or not the Creed intends to imply it, Calvin at this point wants to infer a synecdoche—when the creed mentions Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection as the high points of his mediatorial work, it means to comprehend the totality of that work, including the life he lived between his birth and death, a life that is necessary for salvation. It is safe to conclude that one should not take an earlier statement from Calvin’s Geneva Catechism and pit it against the rest of his writings, especially when those writings included a later, updated understanding of the same portion of the Apostles’ Creed. Regarding Calvin’s view on active obedience, Robert Peterson appropriately concludes, “Calvin did not use the later Reformed terminology of the ‘active’ and ‘passive’ obedience of Christ. Yet he taught the substance of that later Reformed distinction without using the words.”⁹⁴ Calvin taught, in essence, the doctrine that would later come to be called “active obedience.”⁹⁵

⁹⁴Peterson, *Calvin and the Atonement*, 65. See also *ibid*, 81-83, 104-05.

⁹⁵Before moving away from Calvin, I want to note that while I believe Calvin was in essence a proponent of “active obedience,” the whole orthodoxy of later Reformed theology does not rise or fall with Calvin’s viewpoint. One simply cannot isolate Calvin’s teaching in any area as an infallible description of Reformed theology or as an infallible prescription for it. Calvin exerted massive influence, yes, but he was not the sole spokesman of the Reformed movement, even during his own lifetime. Trueman rightly argues that the “historic identity of Reformed theology has always been expressed through public confessional documents. . . . These were the productions of committees and historical circumstances and thus embody a certain theological catholicity; they certainly did not represent either the work or the thought of any one individual” (Carl Trueman, “Calvin and Calvinism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 225).

Westminster

Of those bodies that help to identify historic Reformed theology, the Westminster Assembly was certainly one of the most important. It was composed of numerous men with international representation, and its impact on later Reformed Protestantism is tremendous. Since the WCF remains in large part the sub-standard for the Reformed tradition,⁹⁶ its teaching on justification and active obedience in particular deserves special attention. There is no feasible way to poll all Christians who call themselves “Reformed” and record their view of justification. Here again, the WCF serves as an excellent representative of the Reformed tradition. If then, the Standards do in essence affirm “active obedience,” those who deny active obedience must acknowledge that at this point they are departing from the historic Reformed understanding (though of course this does not make such people automatically wrong). Though Westminster’s teaching on this matter is not identical to Calvin’s, it does not significantly deviate from Calvin. The first priority is to explore the basic teaching of the Standards on the subject, and the next issue is to relate that teaching to Calvin’s writings, noting different (but complementary) emphases.

Chapter 11 of the Confession concerns justification. The significant portions of the chapter that mention Christ’s obedience are 11.1 and 11.3. The divines say in 11.1 that God justifies his people by “accounting and accepting their persons as righteous . . .

⁹⁶Of course Reformed Christians would affirm that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, just as the Confession itself teaches. Yet the Bible never offers a concise topical summary of its own teaching, and unfortunately, throughout the course of history numerous heretics have claimed that their teaching is biblical. Confessions are therefore a helpful tool in explaining and defending “the faith once delivered” (Jude 3). Reformed Christians have overwhelmingly agreed to abide by the teaching on justification set forth in the WCF because they believe that it is biblical.

by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them.”⁹⁷ In 11.3, “Christ, by his obedience and death” made a “proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father’s justice in their behalf . . . and his obedience and satisfaction” are “accepted in their stead.” The teaching seems fairly straightforward in distinguishing both a preceptive (“obedience”) and penal (“satisfaction”) fulfillment of God’s just requirements. Nevertheless, it is true that the Confession does not use the term “active obedience,” nor does it go into great length to detail what Christ’s “obedience” is.

While a number of recent writers have attacked active obedience on exegetical grounds, some writers now argue that historically there was much more leniency on the topic, even in the Reformed tradition, than is often supposed, and they cite the Westminster proceedings as evidence of their assertion.⁹⁸ The minutes from the Assembly do indicate that there was discussion on the topic of active and passive obedience. After debate, the eventual vote “overwhelmingly” favored the inclusion of the language, “whole obedience,” meant to include both the active and passive aspects.⁹⁹ However, in the actual confession itself the word “whole” does not appear, but merely

⁹⁷Quotations from the Westminster standards come from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994).

⁹⁸See for example J. R. Daniel Kirk, “The Sufficiency of the Cross (I),” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (2006): 36-64. Kirk, after discussing the discrepancy at Westminster and arguing that in light of the Westminster proceedings any debate about the active obedience of Christ is an “intramural debate,” says that the minority position (passive only) is “well-documented and confessional” (39). Here he seems to imply that in subsequent church history numerous confessional ministers did not believe in the active obedience of Christ, yet he offers no evidence to support this idea. (Although perhaps Kirk simply means to refer to the documented arguments of the Westminster divines themselves.)

⁹⁹Jeffrey K. Jue, “The Active Obedience of Christ and the Theology of the Westminster Standards: A Historical Investigation,” in *Justified in Christ*, ed. K. Scott Oliphint (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2007), 125. Jue goes on to note that the minutes recorded “at least three dissenting votes,” 125.

“obedience.” What happened? Does the indication of a dropped “whole” indicate that the divines were not willing to take a stand on active obedience in the confession?

There was about a two-year lapse between the initial vote and the final actual drafting of the Confession in 1645. Further minutes only reveal that “reports were presented to the Assembly on the doctrine of justification from the committee [before the final drafting in 1645], and that the assembly debated these reports,” and that “nothing is included about the substance of the reports or the debates.”¹⁰⁰ So essentially, some current opponents of active obedience take that evidence and surmise that “whole” was stricken in order to make room for passive only members of the assembly (and to be sure, these members did not like the term “whole”).¹⁰¹ Others wish to let the omission remain a mystery, while arguing from the rest of the Confession and corresponding Catechisms that no real compromise was ever brooked in the substantial teaching of active obedience.¹⁰²

This latter interpretation seems to be the soundest. Again, it must be agreed that since the divines left no written record of their reasons for a change in wording, any conjecture is to some degree ultimately just that—a conjecture. It has already been noted

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 126.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 115-16.

¹⁰²So *ibid.*, 126. See also the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, “Report on Justification” [online]; accessed 25 June 2008; available from <http://www.opc.org/GA/justification.pdf>; Internet. After summarizing the issues at the Westminster proceedings, the OPC report concludes, “Any argument that the Westminster Assembly of Divines cast its teaching on justification to allow room for those who would deny the imputation of Christ’s active obedience is, at best, speculative, and does not comport, we would contend, with the tenor of the Standards as a whole or the church’s understanding of its Standards in subsequent years” (73). Obviously a criticism against both Jue and the OPC is that they are Reformed advocates of active obedience and therefore biased in their interpretation of Westminster. But there is some degree of bias on all sides—for example, Kirk is a proponent of the passive only view. The evidence itself must be evaluated as even-handedly as possible.

that the words “obedience” and “satisfaction” were still included in the Confession’s chapter on Justification, both in sections 11.1 and 11.3. If the divines truly wanted to leave out teaching on active obedience, could they not have simply left out the word “obedience” entirely? If the resulting “satisfaction” sounded too passive-only, could they not have opted for a broader term like “work”? Certainly the final language still lends itself to an active obedience understanding, and notably, it has been interpreted that way almost unanimously since the time of its original writing, even by those outside the Reformed covenantal tradition.¹⁰³ Only recently have multiple people registered significant doubts as to the Confession’s teaching in this area. Surely these people do not think they are the first people in church history to question active obedience, or the first people to wish that such teaching was not present in a major work like the WCF. (Perhaps, rather, people in the past who denied active obedience simply understood that this teaching was in the confession and thus did not try to argue that it was not.)¹⁰⁴

Importantly, the rest of the Confession’s teaching must be taken into account, along with the corresponding catechisms. Put sharply, if the divines really wanted to drop

¹⁰³Andrew Snider, while arguing against active obedience, freely acknowledges that the WCF “clearly teaches vicarious active obedience” (“Justification,” 32-35, 37).

¹⁰⁴In the preface to the London Baptist Confession of 1689, one of the earliest Confessions to be based off of Westminster, the ministers declare that they have “no itch to clog religion with new words, but do readily acquiesce in that form of sounds . . . used by others before us” (*Confession of Faith* [1677; Auburn, MA: 2000]). Consequently, they retain much of the exact same wording as Westminster. Yet interestingly, in its chapter on justification (ch. 11), the London Baptist Confession is even more explicit than Westminster in affirming active obedience. LBCF 11.1 declares that God accounts and accepts people as righteous “by imputing Christ’s active obedience unto the whole law, and passive obedience in his death for their whole and sole righteousness” It is significant that one of the earliest consensus interpretations of Westminster understood the implicit affirmation of active obedience in Westminster and simply made it more explicit. (Might it be said at this point that the Baptists were more Reformed than the Presbyterians?) In addition, the OPC report notes concerning active obedience that the SD included stronger language as a “clarification of what Westminster intended,” and the OPC report points out that no less a historian than Philip Schaff “did not regard the SD’s addition to WCF 11 as one worth mentioning in the changes that the SD made to the WCF (Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:718)” (73).

teaching which would lead to “active obedience,” they did a poor job. In Reformed theological categories, active obedience meets the requirements of the covenant of works, and the Confession explicitly teaches this covenant. In this covenant of works that God made with Adam (and in him with his posterity) God promised Adam eternal life “upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”¹⁰⁵ Though Adam ruined himself and mankind in the Fall by disobeying and breaking this covenant, God kindly extended another covenant, the covenant of grace.¹⁰⁶ In this covenant, however, God is not arbitrarily changing the standards by simply forgetting about the old covenant. No, the reason people can come to know God and live eternally with him through faith in Christ and not through perfect and personal obedience is because Christ obeyed for them—he fulfilled the terms of the first covenant. Consequently, the Confession goes on to say that Christ as mediator perfectly fulfilled the law and that he “by His obedience, and sacrifice of Himself” purchased “not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. . . .”¹⁰⁷ Note the parallels: (1) God promised Adam the right to eternal life if he would obey; (2) Adam forfeited eternal life by his disobedience; (3) Christ did purchase eternal life by his own obedience in our stead.

Already by this point, the clear implication is that Christ acted as a second Adam.¹⁰⁸ He did what Adam failed to do. But then one has to ask, what did it mean for

¹⁰⁵WCF, 7.2.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 7.3.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 8.4, 8.5.

¹⁰⁸The idea of Christ as an obedient second Adam is certainly not foreign to Calvin either. See Peterson, *Calvin and the Atonement*, 61-68.

Adam to obey? Adam’s “obedience” was not that he should have suffered the penalty for sin—there was no sin for which to suffer. Adam was to obey; he was to do what God told him to do; he was to keep God’s law. Consequently, Christ’s obedience must amount to the same thing if the internal logic of a two-Adam Christology is to remain consistent.

Furthermore, the Larger Catechism, also agreed upon by the Westminster Divines and meant to serve as a teaching aid with the Confession, states that “the rule of obedience revealed to Adam . . . was the moral law.”¹⁰⁹ The catechism goes on to state that the moral law is “the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto . . . promising life upon the fulfilling. . . .”¹¹⁰ The Confession and the Larger Catechism both speak in terms of Christ’s “perfect obedience” meriting justification and eternal life.¹¹¹ The implication is that Christ obeyed this “moral law.” In confirmation that this is the teaching, note that the Confession states in 8.4 and 8.5 that Christ was “made under the law, and did perfectly fulfill it,” and that it is Christ’s “perfect obedience” that purchases eternal life. What law was Christ “made under?” The statement in 8.4 is a direct reference to Galatians 4:4. This point should be kept in mind when turning to the Confession’s chapter on the law of God. There, in 19.6, it states that true believers are not “under the law, as a covenant of works. . . .” Bear in mind that the rule of obedience for the covenant of works was the moral law, so it is highly likely the moral law is in view for the divines. Why are believers not under the moral law as a covenant of works?

¹⁰⁹Ibid., question 92.

¹¹⁰Ibid., question 93.

¹¹¹Question 70; 8.5.

Because, as the divines cite in their Scripture proof, Christ has redeemed his people from the curse of the law. Then, in the Scripture proofs, after the divines have cited Galatians 3:13, they cite Galatians 4:4. So coming full circle, the law that Christ was “made under” (from 8.4) must at least include the moral law. Thus it is this law which he did perfectly fulfill for his people, cementing the Confession’s federal theology and teaching that Christ merited eternal life by keeping the law for his people. In further confirmation, 19.6 goes on to say that the law continues to help believers see their sin so that they might gain “a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience.” He fulfills their need because he obeyed the same law for them, liberating them to rejoice in full justification.

Turning back to the original precipitating debate in 1643, the minutes record verbal dissent from two men, Richard Vines and Thomas Gataker.¹¹² Without taking time to delineate their arguments at length, it helps to observe some highlights that relate to this study. First, Gataker denied that Adam had a probationary state. For Gataker, Adam was justified before the Fall. Justification, in Gataker’s viewpoint, did not include with it eternal life—eternal life was conferred through adoption.¹¹³ Yet again, the Confession explicitly teaches that God did create Adam in a probationary state, and it clearly implies

¹¹²Keep in mind that these men were ministers with solid credentials and well-established reputations, not theological novices (cf. Jue, 119). Nevertheless, it is instructive to note that there were only two out of over one hundred men who verbally dissented (although there may have been a handful more who were sympathetic to their views). This fact seems strongly to suggest that active obedience was the common and predominant viewpoint in the Reformed tradition even before the production of the Westminster Standards. By the same token, the fact that these men were not immediately branded as heretics and kicked out of the assembly indicates that the rest of the divines did not consider active obedience to be a “fundamental” of the faith.

¹¹³Jue, “Active Obedience,” 116-18.

that justification includes the promise of eternal life.¹¹⁴ All in all, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that for the divines, pacifying Gataker¹¹⁵ was not topping their docket of priorities, nor were they much inclined to rid the standards of active obedience teaching.

All of this discussion still leaves the question of the dropped “whole” fairly unresolved. It is unlikely that this omission was somehow a “scribal error” that simply “slipped through the cracks.” And yet, it is nearly as unlikely that the divines were content to jettison active obedience. Unfortunately, in piecing together historical details it is not always possible to reconstruct perfectly the motives behind decisions. I will refrain from speculating and simply reiterate that the WCF substantially affirms active obedience.

Even though Calvin and Westminster stand in substantial agreement on the doctrine of active obedience, one can discern different emphases in their teaching. First, Westminster’s covenant theology more clearly establishes a framework for active obedience than the covenant concept in Calvin.¹¹⁶ Second, in discussing Christ’s life of

¹¹⁴For the former, see again chapter seven of the Confession; for the latter, Jue helpfully points out that eternal life is promised for Christ’s obedience (8.5) and that it is that obedience of Christ which is imputed to the believer in justification (Question 70), thus resulting in eternal life being bound up with justification (ibid., 128).

¹¹⁵Or, by implication, any objector, including Vines and a possible third dissenter—Vines argued in a less detailed manner than Gataker, but both apparently held to a “passive-only” position. Also, both still did posit the idea that Christ as a man was obligated to obey God *for himself*. This viewpoint was rebutted, according to Jue, as being “tantamount to Christological heresy” (ibid., 123).

¹¹⁶This is especially true when it comes to the covenant of works. No one denies Westminster’s covenant theology (the covenant of works with Adam is explicitly taught in chapter 7), but many deny a covenant of works in Calvin’s theology. Peter Lillback’s excellent study of Calvin’s role in the development of covenant theology helps to clarify the issues (*The Binding of God: Calvin’s Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001]). Calvin, in the *Institutes*, does refer (very briefly and vaguely) to a pre-Fall covenant with Adam (4.14.18). And in his commentary on Genesis, Calvin implies that Adam would have been confirmed in eternal life had he obeyed (Lillback cites Calvin’s Genesis commentary: “Truly the first man would have passed to a better life, had he remained upright” [Binding, 289]). Due to Adam’s representative character, then, salvation “was offered to all on condition

obedience, the WCF tends to emphasize Christ's actions, while Calvin gives much attention to Christ's attitude.¹¹⁷ Third and finally, Calvin's presentation of Christ and his work is a bit more seamless than the WCF's presentation.¹¹⁸ Still, these emphases should

that they persisted in original righteousness" (ibid., 290). Yet Calvin, while affirming merited eternal life after the Fall, denied that there was any sense in which Adam could "merit" eternal life (ibid., 292-94). For Calvin, Adam's covenant experience cannot be paralleled to that of fallen sinners, and thus Calvin resists understanding Hosea 6:7 as a reference to the Adamic covenant (ibid.), and he resists drawing a line from Adam's covenant to the postlapsarian promises based on perfect obedience. Consequently, while Calvin sees the parallel between Adam's disobedience and Christ's obedience, the covenant of works concept is not to the fore. Westminster does see a direct relationship between the Adamic covenant and the postlapsarian commands, and it becomes easier for them to situate the imputation of Christ's obedience in a covenant of works that remains consistent both before and after the Fall.

¹¹⁷The Confession does acknowledge that Christ "willingly" undertook the office of mediator (WCF 8.4). Yet in the Larger Catechism's expansion of Christ's "humiliation," the focus is clearly on circumstances. Question 47 asks, "How did Christ humble himself in his conception and birth?" The answer is that Christ willed to be "made of a woman of low estate, and to be born of her; with divers circumstances of more than ordinary abasement." Here it is the "circumstances" surrounding Christ's birth which make for his "humiliation." It is the filthy animals and the barren stable which finds reference, not the meek disposition of Christ the infant. The answer to the next question concerns the course of Christ's life, and notes that he conflicted with "indignities of the world, temptations of Satan, and infirmities in his flesh . . ." Nothing is emphasized here of his persistent lifelong attitude of deference towards those circumstances. No mention is made of his childhood obedience to Mary and Joseph, and the marvel that the very God of the universe deemed it appropriate to yield to the wishes of his earthly parents. The answer to question 49 contains a similar focus on the circumstances surrounding his death—"having been betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his disciples, scorned and rejected by the world, condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors... he laid down his life." For his part, Calvin loves to dwell on Christ's attitude. He writes, "And this is indeed worth noting: to devote himself completely to saving us, Christ in a way forgot himself." In commenting on Phil 2:5-7 Calvin observes, "Paul is really teaching not what Christ was, but how he conducted himself." Just as God condemns people for their attitudes and their actions, so Christ satisfied God for his people by obeying God with the right attitude—he loved God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. Moving on to Christ's activity in his passion, Calvin states that "even in death itself his willing obedience is the important thing . . . no proper sacrifice to God could have been offered unless Christ, disregarding his own feelings, subjected and yielded himself wholly to his Father's will" (*Inst.*, 2.16.5). Blocher sums up nicely that when Calvin "refers to the life of Jesus, he seems to be interested mostly in our Lord's submission" (Henri Blocher, "The Atonement in John Calvin's Theology," in *The Glory of the Atonement*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004], 293).

¹¹⁸This point comes into focus in considering the topic of union to Christ. For Calvin, once a person is united to Christ, that person receives the whole Christ, and the whole of Christ's inseparable benefits. Westminster tends to enumerate the specific benefits and discuss how each one is applied to the individual. A certain reading of Westminster could tend towards this conclusion: Christ earned various benefits for sinners; now, the Sovereign God graciously transfers those benefits to sinners' account (which is certainly true, but tends to leave off the personal aspect). Westminster has individual chapters on effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance of the saints, and saving faith, but no chapter on union with Christ. Now, of course the divines believed strongly in union with Christ, but for them this kind of language seems to fall more under their discussion of the sacraments. So we read that baptism is to be to the recipient "a sign and seal . . . of his ingrafting into Christ" (28.1). The Lord's Supper was appointed for believers' "spiritual nourishment and growth in him," and it serves as "a bond and

be understood as complementary rather than as competing.¹¹⁹

Further Reformed Thought

The *Savoy Declaration* (1658) and the *London Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689) are explicit in their affirmation of active obedience. Both are patterned after the WCF and retain the vast majority of the WCF's wording; however, the SD is modified for congregational (as opposed to presbyterian) polity and the LBCF is modified both for

pledge of their communion with Him . . . as members of his mystical body" (29.1). In the supper believers by faith inwardly receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death, the body of Christ being spiritually present to them (29.7). There is another lone offhand remark about union to Christ that appears in the answer to Larger Catechism Q69: ". . . justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their [believers] union with him [Christ]." This statement does come closer to Calvin, but still does not seem to view union as fundamentally as Calvin does. In the Confession justification comes "for [in the sense of on account of] Christ's sake alone" by the "imputation" of his "obedience and satisfaction" (11.1). True, faith "receives and rests" on him and his righteousness alone, but it is still a reliance "on" Christ rather than a union to him. Listen to Calvin discussing faith: "We ought not to separate Christ from ourselves or ourselves from him. Rather we ought to hold fast bravely with both hands to that fellowship by which he has bound himself to us . . . that condemnation which we of ourselves deserve has been swallowed up by the salvation that is in Christ. And to confirm this he uses the same reason I have brought forward: that Christ is not outside us but dwells within us. Not only does he cleave to us by an indivisible bond of fellowship, but with a wonderful communion, day by day, he grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us." (*Inst.*, 3.2.24). Of course Calvin uses legal, "acquisition" language as well, but as in the above quote, often he seamlessly incorporates legal language ("condemnation") into a relational framework of union. And notice that for Calvin what "confirms" the legal reality is the evidence not just of Christ's benefits applied to us but of Christ himself in us. In his discussion of justification, Calvin states explicitly, "We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him" (*ibid.*, 3.11.10). In respect to active obedience, this discussion implies that for Westminster Christ's obedience is imputed to believers, whereas for Calvin Christ unites himself to believers, and correspondingly they partake of his obedience and it is imputed to them. For Westminster believers call to mind the fact that the terms of the covenant have been settled, for Calvin believers call to mind the fact that the Christ who is the covenant is theirs. The nuances related to active obedience might succinctly sound like this: according to Westminster, Christ obeyed for believers; according to Calvin, believers obeyed in Christ

¹¹⁹It could be objected that it is not fair to compare Calvin to the Westminster Standards since that is a comparison of a vast body of writing to one relatively brief work. The Westminster Standards are more concise documents and they simply can not include everything. There is, of course, some truth in this criticism. Nevertheless, first, these emphases pervade Calvin, as Blocher noted of the attitude emphasis. Second, consider even Calvin's own Geneva Catechism, a work much shorter than the Westminster Larger Catechism. Question 52 brings up the fact that Christ had to become man to fulfill the office of a Savior, and the answer reiterates, "Yes, indeed. For we must recover in Him all that we lack in ourselves, and this cannot be done in any other way" (Torrance, *School*, 13). What must be recovered is not just our outward misdeeds, but everything we lack in ourselves, presumably including our rebellious attitude and the will to submit to God's Lordship. Moreover, believers recover what they lack "in Him": again the emphasis falls on union with Christ.

congregational polity and for believer's baptism. In its chapter on justification, the SD says that God justifies his people by "imputing Christ's active obedience to the whole law, and his passive obedience in his death for their whole and sole righteousness."¹²⁰ The LBCF uses the exact same wording as the SD.¹²¹ In light of the close affinity of the three confessions, it is appropriate to infer that the SD and the LBCF were merely making explicit what was already implicit in the WCF.¹²² Consequently, it is safe to conclude that by the end of the seventeenth century the three major strands of the English speaking Reformed movement—the Presbyterians, the Reformed Congregationalists, and the Particular Baptists—all received the confessional legacy of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.¹²³

While Reformed Confessions were by their very nature brief summaries of leading doctrines, it was left to specific theologians to give doctrines like justification a more thorough articulation. Among such theologians, John Owen stands out as one of the ablest articulators of a mature Reformed view of justification,¹²⁴ and his discussion of the

¹²⁰11.1.

¹²¹11.1.

¹²²When Schaff lists the differences between these three confessions, he does not cite the addition of "active obedience" in the latter two (Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 707-41). It seems that for Schaff this particular wording was not a substantial change/addition to the WCF.

¹²³Once again, Turretin writes, "The common opinion and the one received in our churches is that the satisfaction of Christ, which is imputed to us for righteousness before God, embraces not only the sufferings which he endured either in his life or at his death, but also the obedience of his whole life, or the just and holy actions by which he perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law in our place" (Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:445). When he refers to "our churches," Turretin is perhaps just thinking of his Presbyterian denomination. Nevertheless, this affirmation of the active obedience of Christ is also "the common opinion"—apparently belief in this doctrine was quite widespread.

¹²⁴Owen's book was published in 1677, and apparently written the same year. See Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 107.

active obedience of Christ in particular deserves some attention. Owen's mammoth treatment of justification takes up some 400 pages in the Goold edition of his works. References and arguments related to active obedience are sprinkled throughout, but chapters 11-12 deal most expressly with the subject. Owen has just finished proving from Scripture that a person's own righteousness can never bring him justification (chapter 10), and in chapter 11 Owen begins by discussing mankind's original state in the garden. For Owen, God gave mankind law, a "law of creation," from the outset. This law, far from arbitrary, reflects God's nature and "doth eternally and unchangeably oblige all men unto obedience to God."¹²⁵ Owen understands this law to be "the rule and instrument of a covenant between God and man—a covenant of works and perfect obedience."¹²⁶ Even though Adam broke this covenant, "the unchangeable truth of its promises and threatenings . . . abideth the same as it was from the beginning."¹²⁷ The unchangeable God cannot abrogate or alter his demands, so the only alternative is to supply someone who can fulfill God's demands.¹²⁸ The only solution is to understand that God has provided Christ as the perfect vicarious law-fulfiller.¹²⁹

At the outset of chapter 12 Owen continues the theme of law, but he does so

¹²⁵Owen, *Justification*, 241.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 243.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 244.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 246. Once again, because of sin no one is able to keep God's law, but God cannot relax his law or reinterpret it.

¹²⁹Owen nicely summarizes his argument: "That there is no other way whereby the original, immutable law of God may be established and fulfilled with reward unto us, but by the imputation of the perfect obedience and righteousness of Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness unto all that do believe" (*ibid.*, 250).

not by considering law in the abstract but in its relation to God and God's glory. If the law is a revelation of God's righteousness, Owen argues, and God means to vindicate his righteousness, then not only the penal but also the preceptive demands of the law must be met.¹³⁰ Owen continues to press this doxological concern, even going so far as to say that to deny Christ's vicarious obedience "doth consequentially overthrow all the grace and love both of the Father and of the Son in his mediation."¹³¹ Owen moves on to objections, grouping them into three major categories before refuting each category in turn.¹³² Owen's work is laced with biblical passages and arguments throughout, but he moves most of his major exposition of biblical texts to the end of his book (pp. 295-371).¹³³

Owen represents the height of Reformed orthodoxy in his clarity on the role of the active obedience of Christ in relation to atonement and justification. Of all the theologians and confessions surveyed in this chapter, his articulation is the fullest and the most precise. (However, to be fair, once again Owen is also the latest writer, and the terms of discussion had greatly sharpened since the advent of the Reformation.) People have denied that Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, or the WCF espoused active obedience, but no one denies that Owen espoused it. It is also significant to observe that this precision of language and formulation of doctrine was not the exclusive domain of

¹³⁰Ibid., 251.

¹³¹Ibid., 257.

¹³²In brief, Owen lumps objectors in three different groups—those who see the doctrine of active obedience as (1) impossible; (2) useless; or (3) pernicious (ibid., 252).

¹³³In regard to active obedience, see especially his discussion of Romans 5:12-21 and 10:3-4 (ibid., 321-343).

theologians, waging war over fine esoteric points with no real importance to the average Christian. Owen proclaims that Christ's vicarious obedience "is a fundamental article, if I mistake not, of the creed of most Christians in the world."¹³⁴ While the concept of the active obedience of Christ may not be so widely known or affirmed by Christians today, according to Owen it was part and parcel of basic gospel conviction for most saints in the late 1600s.¹³⁵

The doctrine of the active obedience of Christ has continued to be affirmed in the Reformed branch of Protestantism up to the present time. A look at the teachers of Princeton Seminary for its first one hundred years begins to bear this out. The first professor, Archibald Alexander, clearly affirmed the doctrine in his writings.¹³⁶ His student and successor, Charles Hodge, followed suit.¹³⁷ Charles named his son after his mentor (Archibald Alexander), and A. A. Hodge went on to teach at Princeton Seminary, also affirming the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.¹³⁸ The Princeton tradition of affirming the active obedience of Christ was carried on by J. Gresham Machen.¹³⁹ Lest it

¹³⁴Ibid., 257.

¹³⁵It is remarkable how often Owen appeals to the conscience of Christians in order to help establish the reality and importance of his point (ibid., 3, 7, 104, 132, 145-46, 206, 208, 230, 238-39, 334, 338, etc.). His concern was clearly personal, pastoral, and practical.

¹³⁶Archibald Alexander, *A Treatise On Justification By Faith* (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1837), 21-35; idem, *Practical Truths* (New York: American Tract Society, 1851), 144-45.

¹³⁷Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1871; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 2:493-96; idem, *The Biblical Repository and Princeton Review* 2, no. 12 (1840): 275 (268-82). In fact, in a letter to Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander praises Hodge for his defense of the active obedience of Christ (A. A. Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge* [London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1881], 327).

¹³⁸A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1868), 300, 387.

¹³⁹Remember again that Machen's last words related to his thankfulness for Christ's active obedience. See also his sermon, "The Active Obedience of Christ."

be said that Princeton represents only one small school, the influence of Princeton Seminary during the 1800s (and early 1900s) can hardly be overestimated.¹⁴⁰ Of course, other Presbyterians, including William G. T. Shedd and Southern Presbyterian Robert Louis Dabney, also affirmed active obedience.¹⁴¹

With the reorganization of Princeton Seminary in the 1920s, the Seminary soon lost the strong confessional (and evangelical) stance it once maintained. However, the Reformed doctrinal convictions and confessionalism of Old Princeton was carried on by a new seminary, Westminster Theological Seminary, itself being very influential in evangelicalism from the 1930s up to the present. Westminster too has maintained a steady string of faculty who have espoused the active obedience of Christ.¹⁴²

As has already been mentioned, the Reformed Baptists find confessional support for the active obedience of Christ in the *Second London Baptist Confession* (1689). However, it is true that most Baptist churches today do not intentionally follow the LBCF. The *New Hampshire Confession* (1833) offers a shorter creed that has been

¹⁴⁰See David B. Calhoun, *History of Princeton Seminary* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1996); Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (Vancouver: Regent, 2004), 51-55.

¹⁴¹G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (1888; reprint, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 720-22; Robert Lewis Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), 625-27.

¹⁴²See John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 21-22; *Collected writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976-82), 2:47-59; Michael Horton, *God of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 87-102; idem, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 33; *Lord and Servant*, 133, 162-81, 191-93, 208, 218-43; idem, *Covenant and Salvation: Union With Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 114-21, 177, 202-03; idem, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 19, 150, 296-8; idem, "Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice"; R. Scott Clark, "Do This and Live: Christ's Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, 229-66; David VanDrunen, "To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice: A Defense of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Light of Recent Criticism," in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy Prentiss Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 127-46. It should also be noted that one time professor of Westminster, Norman Shepherd, left Westminster in part due to controversies surrounding his understanding of justification.

adopted by many Baptists. The NHC does speak of Christ's imputed righteousness, but it does not describe in detail what that righteousness is (chap. 5 on justification). There is no reason to assume that the author was trying to exclude active obedience; indeed, normally the substance of Christ's imputed righteousness is taken to be his active obedience. However, it is left to the teachers of various Baptist churches (who adopt NHC) to explicate the NHC on this point.

In 1858 the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary adopted the Abstract of Principles, a document similar to the WCF but shorter (closer in length to the NHC).¹⁴³ The article on justification, echoing the language of the WCF, speaks of believers being justified "on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ" (chap. 11). Similarly to the WCF, the separation of "obedience" and "satisfaction" seems to encompass Christ's whole lifelong obedience and his penal substitution. One of the first professors at Southern, and the man chiefly responsible for its beginning, James P. Boyce, clearly taught the active obedience of Christ.¹⁴⁴ It is true that many of the professors at Southern during the twentieth century did not sound a clear affirmation of a number of foundational evangelical doctrines, much less the active obedience of Christ. However, it should be remembered that the Seminary began to ignore its confessional mooring, a mooring that has now been reclaimed.¹⁴⁵ Among the Northern Baptists, Augustus Hopkins Strong was perhaps the most influential around the turn of the twentieth century,

¹⁴³For more information on the Abstract of Principles, see Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: 1859-2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31-40.

¹⁴⁴James Petigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist, 1887), 399.

¹⁴⁵See again Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*.

and he too taught the active obedience of Christ.¹⁴⁶

The Congregationalists (or “Independents”) have carried on this legacy as well.¹⁴⁷ The SD was the first major congregational confession, and as mentioned already, it clearly affirms the active obedience of Christ. John Owen, ablest articulator of active obedience, was himself an Independent. Jonathan Edwards, a Congregationalist who was perhaps the most significant theologian America has ever produced, also affirmed the importance of the doctrine. He states in no uncertain terms, “To suppose that all Christ does is only to make atonement for us by suffering, is to make him our Saviour but in part. It is to rob him of half his glory as Saviour.”¹⁴⁸

While the Lutheran and Reformed traditions both do appear to affirm the basic substance of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ, their articulations and endorsements of the doctrine are not identical. The Reformed tradition in particular came to articulate the doctrine in a more sharply defined way, as is evident especially in Owen. Perhaps the primary difference for the Reformed was their emphasis on a covenantal soteriological framework. As stated at the outset, the explicit term “active obedience” first appeared in the 1570s. Interestingly, the rise of a theological distinction between the “active” and “passive” obedience of Christ occurred around the same time as the rise of a more carefully articulated covenant theology. While one need not affirm that the two

¹⁴⁶Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland, 1907), 749, 770, 858-59.

¹⁴⁷Once again note that I have in mind primarily evangelicals.

¹⁴⁸Edwards, “Justification,” 638. Throughout this work he makes multiple positive references to the active obedience of Christ.

doctrines are absolutely mutually dependent,¹⁴⁹ it is true that covenant theology helped to provide a framework for discussions of justification in general, as well as the doctrine of active obedience in particular (especially so in the Reformed branch of Protestantism).¹⁵⁰ This framework has been hinted at earlier in the chapter in discussions of the WCF and Owen, but at this point a summary (albeit brief) of covenant theology will prove helpful.¹⁵¹

Taking its cue from Romans 5, covenant (or federal) theology argues that there are two great classes of people: those in Adam and those in Christ. Scripture further reveals that God deals with his created people by way of covenant; so too, covenant theology avers, there are two great covenants: the covenant of works and the covenant of

¹⁴⁹This point will be discussed further, especially in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁰Peter Lillback has argued an impressive case to support the claim that the elements of what would become covenant theology can be found in Calvin (*Binding of God*). However, it was left to the later school of Heidelberg and men such as Olevian and especially Ursinus to give covenant theology a more explicit and coherent treatment. For example, David A. Weir argues that “by 1562 Ursinus had proposed a prelapsarian covenant in Eden, which was the first really clear articulation of the federal theology by a Reformed theologian” (Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* [Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1990], 155). This teaching quickly spread, so much so that by the end of the century it had exploded in popularity within Reformed Protestantism. Again Weir states, “During this period [1585-1610] Reformed theologians had already adopted the covenant of works/covenant of grace interplay and were articulating it all over northern Europe. . . . After 1590 the idea of a prelapsarian covenant appeared all over Reformed Protestant Europe and the whole area of covenant thinking took on especial importance in all areas of life in the seventeenth century,” including the doctrine of justification (ibid., 157-58). Weir notes the impact covenant theology had on the WCF, with ramifications for active obedience (ibid., 5). He also observes that in Ursinus a prelapsarian covenant pointed towards Christ as law-fulfiller (ibid., 106). It is not my purpose here to pinpoint precisely when and how covenant theology took shape, but only to note that it did so, and that it became a cornerstone of Reformed thinking which gave shape to important issues in justification, notably Christ’s active obedience.

¹⁵¹For some helpful accounts of covenant theology, see Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:574-86; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:564-88; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 211-18; Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 27-44; Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press), 107-17; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 516-18; Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006); John Bolt, “Why the Covenant of Works is a Necessary Doctrine,” in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 171-89; Bryan D. Estelle, “The Covenant of Works in Moses and Paul,” *Covenant*, 89-135; Morton H. Smith, “The Biblical Plan of Salvation, with Reference to the Covenant of Works, Imputation, and Justification by Faith,” *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons*, 96-117.

grace. Those in Adam find themselves still in bondage under the covenant of works, while those in Christ find salvation through the covenant of grace. God initially ordained the covenant of works with Adam in the garden.¹⁵² In this covenant, God placed Adam on probation as the representative for mankind. Adam was to obey God perfectly. If Adam succeeded at this point, he would have positively fulfilled the “work” required, and God would have confirmed Adam and all mankind in him in a state of eternal life. However, when Adam sinned, he brought on himself (and all mankind) the covenant penalty—eternal death. Thus all people enter the world as covenant-breakers, under the curse of the covenant of works and owing an eternal covenant penalty to God.

God, being immutable and just, cannot simply overlook this broken covenant. He must enact the awful penalty demanded by his own nature. Hell stands as a witness to the fact that the penalty for the broken covenant will be carried out to the uttermost. And yet, God, in his grace and mercy, provides a way of salvation—not by changing his demands but by fulfilling them through another. Just as all people are legally in Adam, so too sinners can find a legal hope if they are in Christ. This hope exists precisely because Christ has fulfilled all the obligations of the broken covenant of works. He has taken on the covenant penalty, and in addition he has completed the probationary obedience and earned eternal life. The covenant of grace is thus offered to people by faith; by faith when they cling to Christ, God graciously accounts all of Christ’s work to their behalf, and his merit and reward is theirs.¹⁵³

¹⁵²The next chapter deals with God’s arrangement with Adam in the Garden.

¹⁵³In this brief accounting of covenant theology I have not discussed the covenant of redemption. This covenant, more debated among Reformed theologians but eventually largely accepted, is understood as an eternal covenant amongst the Trinity concerning the salvation of humans. Most of the

The point of contact for the active obedience of Christ under this scheme should be apparent:¹⁵⁴ Christ's vicarious and probationary life of obedience is not ancillary to eternal life, it is necessary. Christ may indeed fulfill the penalty of the broken covenant, but this only leaves people in the state of Adam's original creation—free from sinful guilt, but not yet enjoying the comfort of a confirmed everlasting life. Forgiveness restores, but it does not necessarily exalt.

There can be little doubt of the widespread acceptance of this covenantal perspective within the Reformed camp. WCF chapter 7 is entitled, "Of God's Covenant with Man," and sections two and three contain the pertinent information:

The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience. Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.

Notably, the FC does not speak of covenant theology or even significantly mention the biblical covenants. Of course, someone might object at this point that the FC came some seventy-five years before the WCF and Owen—might not the Lutheran tradition have matured and grown into a more explicitly covenantal framework, just as the Reformed tradition did? The short answer is yes, this might have happened, but it did not (at least to the striking degree that it did in the Reformed movement). There was no later emphasis

discussions in works of systematic theology that affirm the covenant of works also affirm the covenant of redemption. See e.g. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 265-70; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 518-19.

¹⁵⁴It is somewhat strange when Kirk declines to delve into "the complex federal theologies" that have supported the active obedience position ("The Sufficiency of the Cross [11]: The Law, the Cross, and Justification," *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 24, no. 2 [Fall 2006]: 133). Certainly he should not be obliged to treat every argument for active obedience in one article, but in its basic form the

on covenant theology for the Lutherans, as there was for the Reformed in the WCF. Likewise, there was no later influential Lutheran theologian who emphasized active obedience set within the context of covenant theology (as Owen did for the Reformed).¹⁵⁵ In understanding the difference between Lutherans and the Reformed in their articulation of active obedience, covenant theology serves as a major factor.¹⁵⁶

And yet there are other differences as well. First, the Reformed laid greater stress on the biblical storyline and God's work through redemptive history, while Lutherans tended to move to metaphysical affirmations and existential applications.¹⁵⁷

covenant of works is not particularly "complex," and its relation to the active obedience of Christ is fairly straightforward.

¹⁵⁵And of course, Owen was not alone in this. Rather, it became standard fare in the Reformed movement to link the covenant of works with the active obedience of Christ.

¹⁵⁶McGrath observes, "One of the most significant features of the doctrines of justification associated with Reformed orthodoxy, distinguishing them from . . . those of Lutheranism, . . . is that of the covenant between God and humans" (McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 266). Carl Trueman presents a compelling case for the importance of federalism in Owen's presentation of the active obedience of Christ (*Owen*, 110-13).

¹⁵⁷On this point I disagree somewhat with McGrath, who argues that the Reformed drifted into Aristotelian scholasticism more quickly (and presumably more deeply) than the Lutherans did (*Iustitia Dei*, 265-66). This argument is part of a larger debate concerning the direction and sources for Reformed thought after Calvin. Among those who see a stronger disconnect between Calvin and his followers, see especially Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). On the other side, see Richard Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists': Assessing the Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy," *CTJ* 30 (1995): 345-75 and 31 (1996), 125-60; idem, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); idem, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Carl R. Trueman and R. S. Clark, eds., *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998); Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker, eds., *Reformation and Scholasticism: an Ecumenical Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). In response to McGrath, I would simply encourage the reader to compare the WCF and the FC, the two major mature confessions of these two traditions. McGrath cites Beza and the Synod of Dort as examples of his point, but he does not demonstrate his argument well from either source, nor does he show, for example, how Beza is a better representation of Reformed thought than Calvin or the WCF. Another way of saying this might be that the Reformed did a better job of allowing Scripture to set the agenda for their theological method and for their theology itself, whereas Lutherans tended to frame their creeds in the light of current controversy. For example, the FC section on "The Righteousness of Faith" begins as follows: "The third controversy that has arisen among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession. . . ." The Confession goes on to combat in turn the Osiandrist and Stancarus positions. WCF, on the other hand, first deals with the gospel under the chapter on God's covenant with man, arguing that the covenant of grace was "differently administered, in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by

This point of method leads naturally to another subtle difference between Lutherans and the Reformed: the way they responded to controversy relating to the active obedience of Christ.¹⁵⁸ Pressing further back, there is yet another difference: the Reformed emphasis on Christ as the *mediator of the elect*. (WCF chap. 8).¹⁵⁹ Despite these differences, the

promises, prophecies . . . all forsignifying Christ to come” (7.5). For the WCF, there is organic growth in God’s one plan of salvation. So William Adams Brown writes, “In their treatment of the history of redemption, Reformed theologians have shown a keener appreciation for the varieties which have characterized God’s dealings with men, than has been the case with their brethren of a sister church [Lutherans]. A familiar illustration of this is to be found in federal theology of Coccejus” (*The Essence of Christianity* [New York: Scribner, 1906], 105). The next chapter on Christ the mediator begins by affirming that God, according to his eternal purpose, ordained Jesus to be the Prophet, Priest, and King (8.1), once again highlighting important categories the Bible itself develops. One looks in vain in the FC’s section on the person of Christ for this triple affirmation, while for the Reformed it is within this context that justification takes place, it is this Christ whose active obedience (and suffering) serves as the ground of the sinner’s justification.

¹⁵⁸Both agreed that the ground of a sinner’s justification was Christ’s vicarious penal suffering and his vicarious positive law-fulfillment, but when faced with challenges each movement met those challenges with their own particular emphases. For example, Owen mentions those who argued that Christ, as a human being, had to obey the law for himself, and that therefore his obedience could not be seen as vicarious (Owen, *Justification*, 252). In response to this objection to active obedience, Lutherans put forward their view of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the “sharing of attributes” (for a helpful discussion of this doctrine, see Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity* [Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007], 7ff). Since for Lutherans Christ’s human nature shares all the properties of the divine nature, it also shares the property of being above the law (often the law-giver has authority over the law rather than being subject to it). Since Christ then did not have to fulfill the law for himself, his activity of law-fulfillment should be seen as vicarious. The Reformed answer differs a bit, focusing on the person of Christ rather than on the natures. For the Reformed, the human nature of Christ can not be seen in abstraction from the person of Christ. The human nature of Christ gains the dignity of the divine nature not because the human nature itself mystically/ontologically participates in the divine attributes but because in the hypostatic union the two natures are united in one person, and it is this person who is the obedient mediator. Human persons have to obey in order to receive the glory of heaven, but at the moment of the incarnation Christ’s whole person (including his human nature) was worthy of heaven without obeying (just as he had been worthy from eternity as the divine one—e.g., Owen, *Justification*, 256). Carl Trueman also argues that Reformed Orthodoxy gives primary emphasis to the person of Christ rather than his natures (Owen, 109). Consequently, Christ’s active obedience should not be seen as strictly for himself but as vicarious.

¹⁵⁹It is not as though Lutherans denied the mediatorial role of Christ; however, the Reformed understanding of the covenant of redemption and the solidarity of Christ and his elect people led Reformed theologians to articulate more forcefully the successful vicarious nature of Christ’s whole work. For the Reformed, in eternity past God established an eternal purpose in Christ, whereby Christ, empowered by the Spirit, would take on human nature and fulfill the broken covenant of works (both in precept and in penalty) for the salvation of the elect, all to God’s glory. For this reason Jesus could speak of being sent on a mission from the Father, and he could speak of those the Father had given him. In short, Christ lived with his people on his heart, and his mission was not a general mission of general provision but a specific mission resulting in sure salvation for the elect; furthermore, this primary vicarious purpose is reflected in all Christ’s works on earth. So Trueman says, “For Owen, it is crucial that Christ’s appointment as mediator in the covenant of redemption means that all his works are those of voluntary condescension in

Lutheran and Reformed traditions share a common affirmation of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.¹⁶⁰ The Lutheran tradition, taking shape under Luther and Melancthon, and culminating in the FC, affirms Christ as the vicarious law-keeper. Likewise, Calvin and the WCF share the perspective that Christ not only took the penalty of sin, but that he also positively obeyed the will of Father in the place of sinners. Owen is the most explicit of anyone examined thus far in this chapter, setting out the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ within the context of a robust covenant theology.

And yet, while the Lutheran and Reformed traditions agree on the substance of the teaching, once again they do not articulate the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ in precisely the same manner. The covenantal context picked up by Owen was the standard framework for Reformed discussion of justification, while the Lutherans eventually denied the particularity associated with the covenantal position. Their method, person of Christ, and work of Christ fell out along slightly different lines, and these differences had ramifications for their treatment of justification. All in all, however, it should be remembered that at heart both traditions could proclaim, “Christ for me,” both in life and death. In respect to the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ, while the

the ordained economy of salvation, not necessary to his being, and as such their significance and value is determined by the covenant” (*Owen*, 110). This view is not hyper-Calvinism, but it could be called a kind of hyper-vicariousness, since the vicarious aspect of Christ’s whole work, including his active obedience, comes into sharper focus. McGrath helpfully observes in this connection, “the doctrine of Christ as *caput et sponsor electorum* [captain and sponsor of the elect],” is that “by which the elect may be said to participate in all the benefits of Christ as if they had obtained them through their own efforts,” and significantly, this concept represented “a central element of Luther’s soteriology which Lutheranism failed to appropriate” (*History of Justification*, 273). Likewise Ritschl states that for the Reformed, “the standard for estimating Christ’s historical work is His position as *caput et sponsor electorum*” (*McGrath, History of Justification*, 255).

¹⁶⁰Smeaton nicely states, “Protestant doctrine, alike in the Lutheran and Reformed churches, with a wonderful harmony, set forth that the entire human life of Christ, consisting of the elements of suffering and obedience, constituted the atonement according to the twofold relation which man, as creature and as sinner, occupies to the divine law; and that they were equally indispensable” (*Smeaton, Atonement*, 528-29).

two traditions are not identical twins, they are certainly close siblings.

Arminian View

In charting some of the major Protestant movements and their relation to active obedience, I turn finally to Arminianism.¹⁶¹ Arminianism began with the teachings of Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) and coalesced in the controversy that resulted in the Synod of Dort (1618-19).¹⁶² The Arminians, known as the Remonstrants, were condemned by Dort for their views, but their teaching did not die, much to the chagrin of Reformed leaders. The Arminian view of justification is difficult to navigate—in general they did

¹⁶¹I have passed over the Anglican view in the main body of this chapter. The Anglican Church presents a much more difficult case, in large part because it is very difficult to speak of an official Anglican position on many doctrines, the active obedience of Christ included. Obviously many of the Reformed Puritans who helped to popularize the doctrine of active obedience remained within the Anglican Church. And yet, it is difficult to maintain the idea that the Anglican movement solidly held to the doctrine, in part because it is not clear in Anglican confessional statements, and in part because it is difficult to even establish any kind of Anglican consensus on the broader question of justification. Perhaps nowhere else did political maneuvering run so hand-in-glove with doctrinal oscillation. The Anglican Church has often tried to be so inclusive that it fails to pronounce on important points of doctrine. The 39 Articles (1572) do have a Protestant flavor, as evidenced in part by the treatment of justification in article eleven. There, believers are accounted righteous only by faith and only by the merit of Christ (see Gerald Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994). McGrath argues that “in the period of 1590-1640, the Caroline divines may be regarded as developing an understanding of justification which parallels that of Lutheran orthodoxy,” (McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 280). However, McGrath documents a trend during the Restoration (post 1660) to include inherent righteousness as part of the ground of justification (ibid., 278-82)—although here McGrath is emphasizing the forensic over transformative framework, not so much the narrower question of active obedience. McGrath does overturn Newman’s attempt to portray the Anglican Church as a consistent via media between Protestantism and Catholicism (*Iustitia Dei*, 282-84, 295-307, responding in part to Newman’s *Lectures on Justification* [London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1900]). However, it is difficult to argue that the Anglican Church was completely Protestant in makeup. As such, it is in turn even more difficult to argue for active obedience as a mainstay of Anglican churches. To be sure, there were (and continue to be) many evangelical Anglicans who hold to active obedience (e.g., J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* [Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2001], 117; Graham Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 117-19). However, one cannot tie this doctrine to Anglicanism in the same way as to Lutheranism or (even more) the Reformed churches. Also, bear in mind that there are Reformed and Arminian Anglicans

¹⁶²It should be noted that there is debate regarding just how Arminian Arminius himself actually was. See Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985).

not produce the kinds of careful confessions that Reformed and Lutheran Christians did. As a result, it is difficult to offer “the” Arminian view of justification, or to write up “the” Arminian doctrine of Christ’s atonement (just as with Anglicanism). The touchstone of original Remonstrant complaint lay more in disagreements over God’s sovereignty and the universality of Christ’s work. But, in theology, doctrines are so interwoven that they invariably exert an influence on other doctrines, and this fact can be seen in Arminian theological history.¹⁶³

Calvinists charged Arminians with a denial of penal substitution. If, after all, Christ really stood in for real people, how can they not really be saved? The Arminian answer, of course, was faith. Not all have faith, and thus not all rightly receive Christ’s objective work. But, Calvinists countered, for Christ’s work to be truly objective and truly substitutionary, it had to pay for all sins (including unbelief), and secure everything necessary for final salvation (including faith). This was, to the Reformed, a necessary entailment of a justification grounded solely in Christ and not in the believer. Some Arminians, wishing to make the final turning point hinge on the individual’s free response, and perhaps feeling the weight of the Reformed objection, began to teach that rather than imputing Christ’s righteousness to the believer, God accounts the believer’s faith as righteousness.¹⁶⁴ This whole question of the ground of salvation continues to be an issue within Arminian circles, and a tension is evidenced in perhaps the most

¹⁶³Arminian theologian William Pope agrees: “Its [Arminianism’s] firm maintenance of universal redemption affected its theory of justification at all points” (William Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology* [New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1882], 2:442).

¹⁶⁴Pope says that historically Arminians “gradually denied altogether the direct imputation of Christ’s righteousness” (ibid., 443).

influential Arminian of all-time, John Wesley.

On the one hand, sometimes Wesley could be made to sound as if he did hold to the imputation of Christ's righteousness. He says in one sermon, "All believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of anything in them, or of anything that ever was, that is, or that ever can be done by them, but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them."¹⁶⁵ Elsewhere he does seem to affirm the active and passive righteousness of Christ (provided they are not separated), and even the fact that this one righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers.¹⁶⁶ Yet in a sermon on the specific topic of justification, Wesley says,

Least of all does justification imply, that God is deceived in those whom he justifies; that he thinks them to be what in fact they are not; that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are. It does by no means imply, that God judges concerning us contrary to the real nature of things; that he esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. Surely no. The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth. Neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more, in this manner, confound me with Christ, than with David or Abraham. Let any man to whom God hath given understanding, weigh this without prejudice; and he cannot but perceive, that such a notion of justification is neither reconcilable to reason nor Scripture.¹⁶⁷

In the same sermon, Wesley defines justification simply as pardon from sin.¹⁶⁸ In short, it is quite difficult to determine Wesley's precise thinking in this area.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵*The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. John Emory (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), 1:172.

¹⁶⁶John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1855), 1:71

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 1:47.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹For more discussion, see Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ*, 36ff. Piper's assessment is more positive than mine.

Arminians themselves do not agree on exactly what Wesley taught at this point. J. Steven Harper, who argues that “Wesley affirmed imputed righteousness,”¹⁷⁰ acknowledges that Wesley later states that he would not use the phrase.¹⁷¹ In the same book, the other Arminian writer, Stephen Ashby, concedes that Wesley had a “modified penal substitution view,”¹⁷² but contends that Wesley “did not mean by ‘imputation’ what Reformed believers have meant by it for almost five centuries.”¹⁷³ Ashby is perhaps more on track here.¹⁷⁴

In this *Four Views* book, Harper and Ashby represent two different strands of Arminians. Ashby acknowledges that “most Arminians” do not hold to a penal substitutionary view of the atonement but to a governmental view, and that in turn their doctrine of justification receives adjustment, including the denial of imputation and active obedience.¹⁷⁵ And yet, it is equally clear that Ashby himself affirms the Reformed

¹⁷⁰*Four Views on Eternal Security*, ed. J. Matthew Pinson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 235.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 273.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁷⁴Harper alleges that Wesley’s negative statements were simply directed against antinomianism (*ibid.*, 236). While this might have been a problem, Reformed Protestants have never found the need to refute Antinomianism by denying that God can judge a sinner as righteous through the righteousness of Christ. Even more telling is Harper’s observation that “for Wesley justification . . . is again the mysterious and marvelous blending of imputed and imparted righteousness” (*ibid.*, 234). How Harper can admit this point and still contend that Wesley’s view of justification is squarely Reformed is beyond me, and Ashby rightly calls him on it (*ibid.*, 276).

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 149, 151.

viewpoint in all these areas.¹⁷⁶ He makes a fair case that Jacob Arminius also held to this “Reformed Arminian” understanding of justification, and that there are Arminians today (even if in a minority) who maintain this belief as well.¹⁷⁷ Arminianism is comparable to Anglicanism in regards to active obedience—it does not present a monolithic position; however, a denial of active obedience seems a little more prevalent in Arminianism than in Anglicanism.

So Methodist preacher Adam Clarke, writing on the topic of justification in the early 1800s, states, “Jesus, therefore, died for man; and it is through his blood, the merit of his passion and death, that we have redemption; and not by his obedience to the moral law in our stead.”¹⁷⁸ Pope, somewhat cryptically, states that Arminians generally affirm more than mere forgiveness but less than the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, specifically his active righteousness, and he quotes others with similar denials.¹⁷⁹

Decline of Active Obedience

At this point a question that has been pressing itself now needs to be addressed: if the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ received broad and cross-denominational support from the time of the Reformation on into the twentieth century, why does it

¹⁷⁶See both his article and his response to Harper, where he affirms the imputation of Christ’s active obedience numerous times.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 140–42, 150.

¹⁷⁸*Wesleyan Theology: A Sourcebook*, ed. Thomas A. Langford (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1984) 36, taken from Adam Clarke, *Christian Theology* (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1835).

¹⁷⁹Pope, *Christian Theology*, 2:445–47. Methodism in particular “has always maintained a firm protest against the distinct imputation of the active obedience of the Substitute of man; but has been reluctant to give up altogether the thought of an imputation of Christ’s righteousness generally” (*ibid.*, 446). Berkhof cites Richard Watson and R. N. Davies as examples of Arminian scholars who deny active obedience (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 380).

appear to have fallen by the wayside amongst so many Christians? One initial consideration is to remember that the substance of the doctrine counts more than the term. It may be that Christians do continue to hold fast to Christ for them in life and in death, and they simply do not use the terms “active” and “passive” obedience (or “preceptive” and “penal,” etc). However, perhaps more can be said.¹⁸⁰ The following factors are not meant to be definitive conclusions, and in addition, many of these factors relate to doctrinal laxity in general. Nevertheless, they are worth considering.

First is the exchange of confessions for briefer statements of faith. In part this factor is a response to the rise of liberal Christianity. On the one hand, liberal churches which do not believe in many of the most basic doctrines of historic Christianity have no desire or need to promulgate the active obedience of Christ. On the other hand, the need to respond to liberalism has created an emphasis amongst evangelicals on the most fundamental doctrines. This emphasis is certainly understandable; however, it is easier to minimize important (even if secondary) doctrines in the process.¹⁸¹ There is certainly a place for summary statements, and arguments can be made against mandated subscription to long confessions. However, if elders do not make special care to instruct their people in all the meat of God’s Word, many doctrines will inevitably slip through the cracks.

Second, consider the number of untrained ministers. I do not mean merely

¹⁸⁰Of course, I have not conducted extensive surveys or polls. Still, when one asks the average evangelical Christian about the “active obedience” of Christ, one will likely receive a blank stare. Even if one asks someone to describe the basis of their salvation, the reply will normally simply refer to Christ’s death for their sins.

¹⁸¹Even though Machen was an outspoken proponent of the “fundamentals” of the faith, he understood this danger. See Ned Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (1954; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 457.

ministers who do not have a seminary degree, but also ministers who simply have never received theological training, and who have not sought to make up the gap by reading theology. Having a high IQ does not qualify a man to be a pastor. However, if he is to be able to teach and to refute heresy (Titus 1:9), then he should have a good amount of doctrinal knowledge.¹⁸²

Third, today's churches, even churches that consider themselves evangelical, are becoming increasingly isolated and entertainment-oriented. The independent church movement continues to grow. This is not meant as a slight against independent churches. However, it appears easier for these churches to lose a sense of history. They might be "fellowships," "communities," or even "churches," but they are not Presbyterian churches, Lutheran churches, or Baptist churches. It can be a dangerous thing to come at the Bible as an individual, even as an individual church. And unfortunately, many churchgoers today care more about lights and music than about sound doctrine. They want a performance rather than worship. A consumerist culture has led to a shoppers' mentality when it comes to church. Entertainment is in; doctrine is not. Too often pastors succumb to the temptation to preach short messages with a little bit of moralistic application.¹⁸³

Another reason for the decline of the active obedience of Christ might be the rise of dispensational theology. I have already noted that Snider, a dispensationalist,

¹⁸²On the importance of ministerial training for Machen, see again Stonehouse, *Machen*, 151ff.

¹⁸³For more on the shift away from doctrinal emphases in many churches, see David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 263-309. Of course, parents too have a responsibility to teach biblical truth to their children—so the problem does not lie solely with churches.

makes a very close connection between active obedience and covenant theology.¹⁸⁴

Robert P. Lightner, a dispensational professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, makes a similar argument. According to Lightner, “Students of theology are usually divided into two classes in answer to the question, ‘What was the purpose of Christ’s suffering in life?’ Dispensationalists usually hold to one view and non-dispensationalists to another. In fact, one’s view of the value of Christ’s life suffering and obedience to the Law is directly related to acceptance or rejection of covenant theology.”¹⁸⁵ These men are both teachers at large evangelical seminaries, and presumably when they as dispensationalists teach against covenant theology, they also feel compelled to teach against the active obedience of Christ.¹⁸⁶

However, Lightner does not cite other dispensational writers. While it is true that there have not been very many dispensationalists who have written for the active obedience of Christ, it might be questioned just how many have actually written against it. Some may hold an active obedience position without using that precise language. For example, in delineating the typological functions of sweet savor and non-sweet savor offerings in the OT, Lewis Sperry Chafer writes, “The sweet savor offerings represent Christ offering himself without spot to God (Heb 9:14), and that this is substitutionary to

¹⁸⁴Snider, “Active Obedience,” 85-86.

¹⁸⁵Robert Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation: The Theology of Everlasting Life* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1991), 92; see also idem, “The Savior’s Suffering in Life,” *BSac* 127, no. 505 (1970): 33-34, and “A Dispensational Response to Theonomy,” *BSac* 143:571 (1986): 233-34.

¹⁸⁶Snider’s position has already been made clear. Lightner similarly concludes that the doctrine of active obedience “contains serious weaknesses which make it unacceptable to me” (Lightner, *Sin*, 94). Of course, since I will go on to show that many dispensational teachers do hold to the active obedience of Christ, I do not intend to assert that dispensationalism is uniformly anti active obedience. However, perhaps active obedience receives less attention among dispensationalists, even among those who do affirm active obedience.

the extent that, as the sinner is wholly void of merit before God (Rom 3:9; Gal 3:22), Christ has released and made available upon grounds of perfect equity his own merit as the basis of the believer's acceptance and standing before God. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the non-sweet savor offerings represent Christ as a sacrifice for sin."¹⁸⁷ While not explicit, Chafer does appear to suggest that the two different types of OT sacrifices represent two different aspects of Christ's work—one the sacrificial aspect of payment for sin, and the other the positive merits of Christ's work as the ground of full acceptance before God.

Richard H. Seume, former Dallas Theological Seminary professor, has a similar assessment of the sweet savor offerings: "They secure 'the same sufficient legal ground for the bestowal of merit as is provide in the non-sweet savor offerings aspect for the removal of demerit.'"¹⁸⁸ Here again, the two types of sacrifices relate to the two different aspects of Christ's work.¹⁸⁹ While it is hard to be absolutely conclusive about Chafer and Seume, their statements are suggestive. Other dispensationalists affirm the active obedience of Christ even more clearly. Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, though not as well known as either The Master's Seminary or Dallas Theological Seminary, is clearly committed to dispensationalism.¹⁹⁰ However, all of their professors

¹⁸⁷Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Soteriology: The Savior—Things Accomplished by Christ in His Sufferings and Death," *BSac* 104:413 (1947): 18.

¹⁸⁸Richard H. Seume, "Divine Propitiation—Part 2," *BSac* 99:395 (1942): 360-61.

¹⁸⁹Michael Horton also argues that the OT sacrifices prefigure the active and passive obedience of Christ, but he groups the OT sacrifices into sacrifices of thanksgiving and sacrifices of atonement ("Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice," 324).

¹⁹⁰Their website lists a dispensational approach as one of their distinctives (Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, "About Us" [on-line]; accessed 21 August 2009; available from <http://www.dbts.edu/1.asp>; Internet). See also their statement of faith (Detroit Baptist Theological

espouse the active obedience of Christ.¹⁹¹ Rolland McCune, retired professor at the Seminary, discusses the active obedience of Christ in volumes 2 and 3 of his systematic theology.¹⁹²

John MacArthur, president of The Master's Seminary, responds to the question, "Regarding justification, the idea of Christ's imputed righteousness, does that include his active obedience in life or only in death," by stating, "It includes the righteousness of Christ which includes both."¹⁹³ As one final example, prominent (progressive) dispensationalist Bruce Ware holds to the active obedience of Christ.¹⁹⁴

It is true that Reformed theologians often connect the active obedience of Christ to a doctrine of an Adamic covenant of works, and while it is true that a covenant of works bolsters the doctrine of active obedience, a rejection of a covenant of works with Adam does not necessarily entail a rejection of the active obedience of Christ.¹⁹⁵

However, that discussion awaits the next chapter.

Seminary, "Statement of Faith" [on-line]; accessed 21 August 2009; available from <http://www.dbts.edu/1-1/1-14.asp>; Internet).

¹⁹¹Personal correspondence, 27 August, 2009. The DBTS faculty normally ranges from 5-10 men.

¹⁹²Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity* (Detroit: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, forthcoming). Vol. 1 is now available, but vols. 2-3 are yet to be printed. However, they are written, and I am reporting what Dr. McCune communicated to me.

¹⁹³John MacArthur, "General Session Four: John MacArthur Q and A" (2008) [on-line]; accessed 2 September 2009; available from <http://dinghome.net/2008/03/06/general-session-4-john-macarthur-qa/>; Internet. See also his sermons (John MacArthur, "The Challenges to Christian Invincibility" [on-line]; accessed 2 September 2009; available from <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/80-256>; Internet; "God's Gift of Righteousness" [on-line], accessed 2 September 2009; available from <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/80-344>; Internet).

¹⁹⁴Personal correspondence, August 28, 2009.

¹⁹⁵So also Van Court, "Active Obedience," 20.

Conclusion

This brief historical survey is instructive. Irenaeus, while not seen as a full-fledged proponent of the later active obedience position, does have a holistic view of Christ's redeeming obedience. Although he stresses purification through physical participation, he does, in concert with much of the early church, lodge redeeming significance in Jesus' whole incarnational life—not just his death. Following Augustine there was a greater focus on the merits of Christ's death and the transformative nature of justification. Anselm is perhaps the clearest figure in the pre-Reformation time period to teach a view of the atonement that would exclude an active obedience position.

The Lutheran branch of Protestantism affirms the active obedience of Christ. This affirmation can be seen in both Luther and Melancthon, although it is even clearer in the FC, the major confession of the Lutheran Church. The Reformed branch of Protestantism, more than any other, has been home to the active obedience of Christ. It is within this tradition that the doctrine received its most extensive articulation and defense. Calvin did hold to a substantial form of the doctrine, and it can be found by implication in the WCF. Neither is the doctrine limited to Presbyterians. John Owen, an Independent, gave the doctrine perhaps its firmest articulation, and the SD is more explicit than Westminster in affirming the doctrine. On the American side of the Atlantic, the independent Jonathan Edwards would later defend the doctrine as well. The LBCF affirms the active obedience of Christ as clearly as SD, and many Baptists who identify with the Reformed branch of Protestantism have continued to affirm the doctrine.

The Anglican and Arminian traditions do not appear confessionally bound to active obedience, however, numerous Anglicans and Arminians have affirmed the

doctrine, including perhaps Arminius himself. However, if one were to plot a continuum of “strongest supporters” to “weakest supporters,” one would find the Reformed on one side and the Arminians on the other. Particularly those following in the tradition of Wesley have no special affinity to the doctrine, and many simply deny it. The doctrine continues to find its surest support today in the Reformed branch of Protestantism, particularly at Westminster Seminary, where men like Horton, Van Drunen, and Clark (among many others) continue on this point in the tradition of Old Princeton.

Significantly, while there is much confessional support for the active obedience of Christ, there have been few, if any, *movements* or *denominations* that stand against it.¹⁹⁶ Even dispensationalism, a movement known in part for its aversion to covenant theology, contains significant supporters of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. Generally speaking, there are (instead of movements) individual theologians who deny the active obedience of Christ.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Wesleyan Methodism could be seen as an exception, depending on one’s perspective. Of course even here there is great debate—Wesley’s views are somewhat unclear, and his followers have not all agreed. Furthermore, I am unaware of any movements within evangelical Wesleyan Methodism that stands united against active obedience. More recently, other exceptions might include the Federal Vision and the New Perspective on Paul. (Though again Douglas Wilson stands as a prominent Federal Vision figure who endorses the active obedience of Christ, and most NPP writers have not said much explicitly about the doctrine.)

¹⁹⁷ However, it is true that opposition to the doctrine of active obedience has come from a variety of sources—not just dispensationalists but even theologians identifying with the Reformed movement.

CHAPTER 3

ADAM'S OBEDIENCE FOR ETERNAL LIFE BEFORE THE FALL

In putting the doctrine of active obedience to the ultimate test—the test of faithfulness to Scripture—it is important to start at the beginning of Scripture. The Bible storyline begins in Genesis, and it is there that the reader first learns of creation, of mankind's fall into sin, and of God's promise of redemption. Adam, the first human, stands out as a crucial figure. The apostle Paul says that Adam is a type of Christ (Rom 5:14). Consequently, understanding Adam and his work should shed light on the work of Christ. Indeed, many theologians have argued for the active obedience of Christ on the basis of God's initial arrangement with Adam in the Garden—an arrangement often referred to as a covenant of works.¹ In fact, according to the seventeenth-century

¹See John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 5:44, 240-50, 19:337; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 574-86; Jonathan Edwards, "Justification by Faith Alone," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998) 1:623, 636; Charles Spurgeon, *Sermons* (New York: Sheldon, 1860), 238; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 2:564-88; J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (London: Banner of Truth, 1965), 149-60; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 211-18; Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 27-44; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 516-18. This teaching has confessional support from documents like the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian, 1994), 7.2; *The Second London Baptist Confession* (1677; reprint, Auburn, MA: B & R Press, 2000), 6.1., 19.1. Some recent chapters are also worthy of note: John Bolt, "Why the Covenant of Works is a Necessary Doctrine," in *By Faith Alone*, eds. Gary L.W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters (Wheaton: IL, Crossway, 2006), 171-89; Bryan D. Estelle, "The Covenant of Works in Moses and Paul," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 89-135; Morton H. Smith, "The Biblical Plan of Salvation, with Reference to the Covenant of Works, Imputation, and Justification by Faith," in *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision*, ed. E. Calvin Beisner (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 96-117.

Reformed theologian Wilhelmus á Brakel, whoever “denies the existence of the covenant of works . . . will very readily deny that Christ by his active obedience has merited a right to eternal life for the elect.”² Andrew Snider, in his study on the active obedience of Christ, similarly observes, “All theologians surveyed in this study who clearly espouse the view of vicarious active obedience connect it with the covenant of works. The question remains: must one affirm both, or is the idea of vicarious active obedience a biblically defensible view by itself?”³ In this chapter I offer a more moderating answer to Snider’s question: I affirm the covenant of works and its importance for the doctrine of active obedience; however, I also again acknowledge that one could deny a covenant of works with Adam and still affirm active obedience.

I will proceed as follows. First, I will unpack the nature of Adam’s headship. Second, I will show that an implied promise of eternal life should be inferred in God’s original arrangement with Adam; thus Adam’s positive obedience would have secured eternal life for mankind. Third, I will answer some objections to this teaching, and I will deal with the question of nomenclature. Fourth, I will address the relative importance of the covenant of works in relation to the doctrine of active obedience.

The Nature of Adam’s Headship

The first indication of Adam’s headship stems from the fact that he is the first man. In a real sense all of humanity descended from Adam. He is the biological head of

²Wilhelmus á Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, trans. Bartel Elshout (Ligonier: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), 1:355.

³Andrew Snider, “Justification and the Active Obedience of Christ: Toward A Biblical Understanding of Imputed Righteousness” (Th.M thesis, The Master’s Seminary, 2002) 85-86.

the human race. In addition, Adam was placed in a position of authority. When Paul tells Timothy that women are not to teach or exercise authority over men, he goes on to cite the creation pattern: Adam was created first, and then Eve (2 Tim 2:12-13). Furthermore, Adam's sin was not just a private matter; his sin had repercussions for all of creation, including pain in childbearing, broken male-female relationships, thorns and thistles, hard labor, and even death itself (Gen 3:14-19). Paul rightly says that all of creation groans under its current bondage (Rom 8:22), a bondage stemming from Adam's fall.

Second, Adam's relationship to Eve in Genesis lends support to Adam's special representative role. Even though Eve actually sinned first, God calls Adam to account. It is only after Adam partakes of the fruit that God initially calls out, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9), and God apparently speaks to Adam alone.⁴ Adam is presented as the head of his wife. He has the privilege of naming her, and he calls her "Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (3:20). Surely Adam recognized that in some sense he was the father of all the living ones to come after him; he had a special relationship to his posterity.⁵

Third, the rest of Scripture picks up the headship of Adam, and in particular Adam's relationship to Christ. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Paul often stresses union with Christ,⁶ but here

⁴The "you" is a masculine singular.

⁵Now of course it could be argued at this point that influence does not equal identity. The fact that Adam's sin had worldwide ramifications does not necessarily entail representation. Others suffer because of Adam's sin, but this need not indicate that they are implicated in his crime. Yet in response to this argument, Scripture does not teach that others are merely affected by Adam's sin; Scripture teaches that mankind is actually implicated in Adam's sin, as I will go on to show.

⁶"In Christ" is a frequent Pauline expression pointing to union with Christ. See e.g., Rom 3:24; 6:11; 8:1; 1 Cor 1:2; 3:1; 4:10; Gal 1:22; 2:4; 3:14; 5:6.

Paul also points to a kind of union with Adam. In some sense people are “in Adam” in a similar way that people are “in Christ.” The union does not appear to be a physical union, since no one is literally in the body of Christ. Rather, it seems to be a union of representation, a legal union.⁷

Paul is even more emphatic in Romans 5:12-19. Because of the importance of this passage, it will be helpful to examine this text in greater detail. The opening Διὰ τοῦτο of v. 12⁸ appears to draw a definite connection between this section and the preceding one, 5:1-11.⁹ On account of what Paul has argued thus far, culminating in 5:1-11, the subject of Adam and Christ’s respective headships finds warrant. The move from being found in Adam to being found in Christ hinges on justification by faith; more particularly, the gospel hope that believers have (5:2, 5) rests in the work of the second

⁷After all, Paul begins his discussion in 1 Cor 15 by reminding the Corinthians of a matter of “first importance”: Christ died *for* their sins (15:3). This is the language of penal substitution, of legal representation. Sinners did not literally, physically hang on a cross; rather Christ was their legal representative. Christ became a curse for his people (Gal 3:13). In 1 Cor 15, Christ as the resurrected one carries on in this representative capacity, and it is in this sense that his people are in him. In a similar way, the Christ-Adam comparison falters unless we conclude that Adam legally represented mankind. See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1224-26.

⁸The second ὁ θάνατος is missing in the Western family of manuscripts, but the evidence seems to point toward its inclusion—see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 270. In any case, the sense of the verse is not significantly affected either way.

⁹This interpretation of the “therefore” stands in contrast with C. K. Barrett, who says that the “therefore” is a transitional particle indicating “only a loose relation between what has gone before and what follows” (Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957], 110). In addition, it is worth noting that Rom 5:12-21 reaches both backward and forward. The passage deals with the sin question that Paul has brought up early in the book. After all, someone might easily wonder why it is that sin is so pervasive. Paul’s answer looks beyond Israel and the Mosaic Covenant all the way back to Adam. At the same time in this passage, Paul anticipates the discussion to follow in chapters 6-8 by highlighting the concepts of grace and death as reigning authorities and by bringing out the theme of union with Christ.

Adam.¹⁰ Paul begins a comparison that is broken off and not resumed until verse eighteen.¹¹ The comparison, as the whole passage will make clear, is between Adam and Christ. That Adam is the “one man” Paul introduces in verse twelve becomes apparent from verse fourteen. Adam brought sin into the κόσμον (world), a term that here focuses on the world of humanity—after all, the serpent appears in the garden prior to Adam’s sin (thus in some sense sin was in the physical universe before the Fall).¹² Adam’s sin brought with it “death” in every sense of the word.¹³ The end of verse twelve has been a battleground for commentators, a skirmish no less theological than exegetical. The phrase ἐφ’ ᾧ has perplexed many. Most likely, the phrase is an idiom, and ᾧ has no specific referent.¹⁴ This idiom is given a causal force “by most commentators and by almost all

¹⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 271. Murray states helpfully: “the apostle is now demonstrating that the divine method of justifying the ungodly proceeds from and is necessitated by the principles in terms of which God governs the human race. God governs men and relates himself to men in terms of solidaric relationship” (Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, vol. 6 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959], 180).

¹¹Contra Murray, who argues that Paul’s comparison picks back up in verse fifteen (Murray, *Romans*, 191). One difficulty with Murray’s view is that the content of verse eighteen seems to match the content of verse twelve more clearly—verse eighteen speaks of the resulting “life” for all men that corresponds to verse twelve’s “death” for all men, whereas verse fifteen does not explicitly mention “life.” Schreiner notes that “most commentators” refer the completion of the thought to verse eighteen (Schreiner, *Romans*, 272); cf. Moo, *Romans*, 319; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, vol. 42 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 273; N. T. Wright, *Romans*, in vol. 10 of *NIB*, ed. Leander Keck [Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 523; Dunn, *Romans*, 272.

¹²Throughout this whole discussion of Adam and the Fall, bear in mind Murray’s assessment of the view that Adam’s fall was not literally historical, nor believed to be so by Paul. Murray calls such a view “exegetically monstrous” (Murray, *Romans*, 181). After all, if condemnation comes through Adam, yet Adam never existed, why would Christ need to come in order to overturn Adam’s work?

¹³Contra Murray who wishes to privilege physical death (Murray, *Romans*, 182). The horrific effects of the Fall reverberate through the Genesis account and into the early portions of Romans. In addition, the “life” theme Paul is about to pick up clearly refers to more than just physical life.

¹⁴See the usage in 2 Cor 5:4 and Phil 3:12; 4:10; among interpreters who do find a specific referent for ᾧ, Augustine is one of the more famous. Augustine’s understanding fits hand in glove with his view of original sin, for Augustine saw the ἀνθρώπου of verse twelve as the referent. “All sinned” literally “in Adam.” Yet Schreiner rightly points out that this is unlikely for two reasons: first, the referent is so far

English translations,”¹⁵ and is thus rendered with “because,” or a similar term. Taking the causal idea, Cranfield helpfully divides interpreters into three groups, depending on how they understand “all sinned”: (1) people sinned in their own persons independently of Adam, though after his example; (2) people sinned in their own persons as a result of a corrupt nature inherited from Adam; and (3) people sinned not in their own persons but by participating in Adam’s transgression.¹⁶ Option (1), the view of Pelagius, must be rejected since it undermines Paul’s corporate focus and the parallels to Christ.¹⁷ Of the remaining two views, (3) is preferable for the following reasons. First, it is strained to insert a “middle term” of “corrupted human nature” into the verse.¹⁸ Second, since we are saved solely by Christ’s work, in keeping with Paul’s parallel thought we are ruined in the first place solely by Adam’s work.¹⁹ Third, in this passage, both before and after this phrase, Paul consistently roots condemnation and death for all in Adam. Fourth,

away from its antecedent, and second, Paul would more likely have used the preposition *ἐν* than *ἐφ* (Schreiner, *Romans*, 273-274).

¹⁵Moo, *Romans*, 321-22; cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 277-78, Murray *Romans*, 183, Wright, *Romans*, 526-27, Dunn, *Romans*, 273. Fitzmyer departs from the traditional reading (*Romans*, AB, vol. 33 [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 413-17, and “The Consecutive Meaning of *ἐφ’ ᾧ* in Romans 5.1,” *NTS* 39 (1993): 321-39. He does show that a causal interpretation should not be assumed, but I still lean towards it. Wright correctly observes that for Paul to say “death spread to all, with the result that all sinned” is “the opposite of what he actually says throughout, which is that sin causes death” (Wright, *Romans*, 527). This argument holds up (in my mind) against the non-causal position adopted by others (Schreiner, *Romans*, 274; Vickers, *Righteousness*, 127). It is true, as Schreiner argues (*Romans*, 276), that elsewhere in Scripture death causes sin. But that does not appear to be Paul’s main focus in this passage.

¹⁶Cranfield, *Romans*, 275.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 277; Schreiner, *Romans*, 275. Murray also observes that vv. 13-14 would not make sense under the Pelagian scheme, since for them all did sin in just the same way that Adam did (Murray, *Romans*, 183).

¹⁸Moo, *Romans*, 325.

¹⁹To put it another way, Paul teaches that we are not justified by inherent righteousness but by the righteousness of another; in order to keep the parallel, here Paul stresses that we are condemned by the sin of another (Murray, *Romans*, 185).

elsewhere Paul teaches that people died “in Adam” (1 Cor 15:22)—it would seem to follow that corporate, representative death necessitates original corporate, representative sin. Fifth, corporate solidarity was a common ancient theme that would have been very familiar to Paul.²⁰ Those who oppose the corporate view argue that ἡμαρτον normally refers to actual, personal sin,²¹ but in response, the headships of Adam and Christ provide special cases that are nevertheless *real*. The legal verdict of God is not a fiction. God justly counts people to be actual transgressors in Adam; he *views them* as though they did personally commit the sin.²²

After Paul closes verse fourteen by declaring that Adam was a type of Christ,²³ he proceeds in verses 15-17 to draw out the correspondence between Adam and Christ, focusing on the “much more” of Christ’s work. Though Adam and Christ are both federal

²⁰See Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSS 196 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995); Moo, *Romans*, 327-28; G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, trans. Philip Holtrop (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 424-45; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 53-64; Those holding this corporate view include Moo (*Romans*, 326), and Murray (*Romans*, 180); for a helpful discussion see also Anthony Hoekema, *Created In God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 154-67.

²¹So Schreiner, *Romans*, 275; Cranfield, *Romans*, 279.

²²Of course, a common response to such teaching is the cry, “Unfair!” Yet such an objection carries quite a bit of pride—the objectors assume that they would have done better than Adam given the chance. More importantly, at the end of the day, we are obliged to submit to God’s revelation and to let God be God. As Luther points out from Romans 11:32-36, “Now His judgments would not be past finding out, if we could always perceive them to be just” (John Scott, *Luther and the Lutheran Reformation* [New York: J & J Harper, 1833], 250). Gloriously, though we fell in Adam, we can be saved by the work of another—Jesus Christ himself. For a fuller discussion of this passage with particular reference to theological questions surrounding the imputation of Adam’s sin, see John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

²³In this verse the word τύπος is used explicitly. While other “types” might be debated, it is crystal clear that Paul does see Adam as a “type” of Christ. For a useful study on typology see Leonard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982). For an appraisal of typology in contemporary scholarship see the first chapter of Paul M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006).

heads, Adam is “not like” Christ in several respects.²⁴ First, the action is different: Adam trespassed, but Christ brought in a free gift of grace.²⁵ Second, the result is different: Adam’s sin brought condemnation,²⁶ but Christ’s gift brought justification. Third, the ruling power is different:²⁷ death reigns over people because of Adam’s sin, but people reign in life through Christ.²⁸ In light of these differences, one should not necessarily assume that Adam’s work and Christ’s work are parallel in every aspect.

However, the fundamental point of solidarity does stand out. In sum, “Many died through one man’s trespass . . . because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man . . . one trespass led to condemnation for all men . . . by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners” The continual theme of this section is that the actions of the one man Adam affected the whole race, and the implication is that

²⁴Chrys C. Caragounis argues that vv. 15-16 introduce comparisons rather than contrasts (“Romans 5:15-16 in the Context of 5:12-21: Contrast or Comparison?” *NTS* January [1985]: 142-148). For Caragounis, 15a and 16a should be read as rhetorical questions leading to an affirmative answer (Isn’t the free gift like the trespass? Yes it is! For . . .). I was not persuaded—the context seems to point in the direction of contrast, especially with the opposing results of condemnation and justification.

²⁵The endings for *παρατομα* and *χαρισμα* are a little unusual, but likely Paul was matching them to the other *-μα* words in the passage (So Schreiner, *Romans*, 283-84; Moo, *Romans*, 335).

²⁶The *ενοχος* in verse sixteen likely refers to “one [transgression]” rather than “one [man]” since the following parallel is to “many transgressions” (So Moo, *Romans*, 351; Schreiner, *Romans*, 285).

²⁷The *γαρ* at the beginning of verse seventeen helps to show the connection between verse seventeen and verse sixteen. The fact that death reigns helps to prove that all people were condemned because of Adam, just as the reigning in life helps to validate the gift of righteousness. Notice the close link between subjective experiences and objective verdicts.

²⁸What does Paul mean when he says that believers will reign in life? Is Paul looking forward to the eschaton (Dunn, *Romans*, 282) or speaking of a present reality? The answer is likely of a piece with Paul’s frequent inaugurated eschatology. Believers are in one sense already reigning with Christ, while the fullness of a consummated reign is yet to come (Moo, *Romans*, 353; Schreiner, *Romans*, 286). After all, Christ has already entered his resurrection life (5:10), and Paul frequently explores the believers’ union with their Savior. In addition, the theme of reigning picks up on the failure of Adam, whom God set as a vice-regent to reign and subdue the earth for God. Indeed, the theme of reigning in life looks forward to the new creation (Rom 8:18-25) and a restored order.

the one man actually represented the whole race. God is just, and God declares that he justly counts the sin of “the one” as the sin of “the many.” Once again, Paul seems to focus on a union that is fundamentally a legal one. The term “condemnation” points to a legal framework. God the judge counts all people to be guilty sinners because of the sin of their representative; God charges the sin of Adam to the account of all people; God imputes Adam’s transgression to them.²⁹ In theological terms, Adam was the federal head of mankind.³⁰ To anticipate a later discussion, the term “federal” simply draws on the category of covenant—the Latin term *foedus* means “covenant.” God saw fit to establish a legally binding union between Adam and his people and between Christ and his people. Adam and Christ are covenant heads, representing those bound to them by the legal declaration of God.³¹

Fourth, in the Biblical account of Adam and his place in history, there is an intimate connection between the categories of sonship, image, and representation. Scripture speaks of Adam not just in terms of his relationship to the rest of mankind but also in terms of his responsibility before God. Scripture presents Adam as the one intended to be an obedient son. Certainly other themes should be mentioned. For

²⁹Space does not permit a thorough defense of this position nor a detailed exposition of Romans 5, but for further discussion see again John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*.

³⁰In contrast to this “federalist” position, others argue for a “realist” position. Realists believe that mankind was actually physically “in” Adam, and thus in some sense actually participated in Adam’s original transgression. They find a parallel in Heb 7:9-10, which states that Levi “paid tithes [to Melchizedek] through Abraham, for he [Levi] was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him [Abraham].” One could conceivably hold that both the federalist and realist and views have elements of truth in them. Here I simply argue that the federalist position has clear biblical support. (It is not my purpose in this chapter to interact with the realist position.)

³¹ Later in this chapter I will examine the question of a covenantal relationship in the Garden of Eden.

example, Adam is to be a wise man, a righteous king, a faithful servant, and a covenant keeper.³² These various themes are not at all opposed to each other; rather, they are highly complementary. Each theme provides a lens through which to view Adam, or alternately, each theme adds a different color to the overall portrait. These themes point to how Adam was to act as the covenant head of mankind. These themes are important, because if Adam was acting in a representative role, then these themes illuminate varying ways Adam was bound to represent mankind before God. Assumedly, Christ as the second Adam would need to fulfill these positive roles (in addition to taking on the curse of Adam's sin).

In the genealogy in Luke 3, the Gospel account explicitly calls Adam the "son of God" (v. 38). The early Genesis, while not as direct, does state that Adam was made in the image of God, and this description implies sonship. Genesis 5:1-3 bears out this conclusion, stating, "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. . . . When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth." Stephen Dempster rightly observes, "As Seth is a son of Adam, so Adam is a son of God. Language is being stretched here as a literal son of God is certainly not in view, but nonetheless the writer is using an analogy to make a point."³³ Whatever else the image of God in Adam might have entailed,³⁴ it did entail sonship.

³²I will be making arguments for these themes subsequently in this work.

³³Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 58-59.

³⁴For discussions of the image of God see Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 11-101; Gentry, "Kingdom Through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* Spring (2008): 16-43; J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005); Fred H. Klooster, "Man: The Image of God," *WTJ* 26, no. 1 (1963): 47-52; W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and*

Creation was to point people to their God and their ultimate relationship to him, and the prominence of offspring in the creation account should not be missed. Adam and Eve were to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28); they were to produce sons and daughters. God wanted them to fill the earth with miniature examples of his relationship with them.

As a son of God, Adam was to obey his heavenly Father. God gave Adam certain commands, and Adam was to keep those commands. From the very outset, the Bible portrays Adam's relationship to God as both filial and legal.³⁵ The legal should not be pitted against the filial. God loved Adam as a son, but Adam's disobedience brought a breach to the relationship. The whole earth was cursed because of Adam's *disobedience*—this fact alone warrants the importance of the idea of obedience. Putting these two notions together, we have a strong case for an important presentation of Adam: Adam as obedient son. But there is more to the picture.

A further look at the image of God in Adam reveals that Adam was to function as God's vice-regent on earth. He was to lead mankind into the obedience that God required—he was to be a righteous king. Others have stressed the significance of the

Monotheism (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, NICOT, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 134-37; Karl Barth, *CD III/I*, edited and trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 183-203; Ian A. McFarland, *The Divine Image: Envisioning the Invisible God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); Gunnlaugur A. Jonsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research*, trans. Lorraine Svendsen (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988); James A. Brashler, "Image of God," *Int* 59, no. 4 (2005): 341-91; Horace D. Hummel, "The Image of God," *Concordia Journal* 10, no. 3 (1984): 83-93; John Edward Sullivan, *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence* (Dubuque: Priory, 1963); Theodore Parker Ferris, *The Image of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

³⁵We should not view God as somehow constrained by a law operating outside of him. God is a God who must remain true to his own nature—he must uphold his own just character. Therefore, he punish the sin that is repugnant to him; he must call people to account when they disobey him.

image of God as ontological³⁶ or relational.³⁷ I do not believe these categories are mutually exclusive. Therefore, I am not denying ontological or relational significance. But I do think that a functional aspect exists, and this aspect in particular sheds light on Adam's role in the garden. The following reasons offer support for a functional understanding.

First, Genesis 1:26 reads, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion . . .'" Many English versions (the ESV included) read as if there are two distinct suggestions by God in this text. In reality, the clauses *נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ* ("let us make man in our image") and *וַיִּרְדּוּ* ("let them have dominion") are related. The second clause serves as the purpose or result of the first clause—it is not a tack-on or a new thought.³⁸ God made mankind in his image so that they would have dominion.

Second, Genesis 1:27-28 contains a chiasmic structure. The overarching theme is that "God created man in his own image," followed by an A-B-B-A pattern. The two interior B clauses are easily seen to match up: "male and female he created them" joins

³⁶John Calvin, *Inst.*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeil (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.15.4. Calvin does perhaps allow some small space for including the notion of dominion and a relational element in the image of God (*Genesis*, 44-48), but his primary focus is ontological.

³⁷For example, Karl Barth, *CD III/I*, 183-203.

³⁸Seeing this second clause as purpose or result is certainly a grammatical option (Allen P. Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 403-04; Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and trans. A. E. Cowley [Oxford: Clarendon, 1910], 503). However, some are hesitant to say that such grammar dictates this interpretation (Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 653-54; T. J. Meek, "The Syntax of the Sentence in Hebrew," *JBL* 64 [1945]: 1-13). Others are firmer that the grammar does mandate this interpretation in this verse (Gentry, "Kingdom Through Covenant," 25; Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971], § 107). I agree with

with “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”—duality of genders provides progeny. But what that pairing also helps to show is that “in the image of God he created them” links to the command to “subdue [the earth] and have dominion.” Once again the image is linked to a ruling function.³⁹ Third, and finally, the Ancient Near East background supports the functional argument.⁴⁰ This functional notion serves as further evidence of representation. The son represents the father; the vice-regent represents the king. At the heart of Adam’s work is representation. And as I have argued, this representation cuts two ways. Not only is Adam to rule as God’s vice-regent on earth, he is also to be the obedient son who represents humanity.

But as Gentry further points out, Adam was also a kind of servant king.⁴¹ He did not rule according to his own whim; rather he was to be God’s humble agent of universal blessing. He was to minister God’s intentions for creation. He was to serve in the capacity of king, and he was to serve faithfully. The Garden of Eden foreshadows the later sanctuary, and Adam functions as a kind of priest ministering in the house of God.⁴²

Gentry on this point, because it does appear that similar grammatical constructions elsewhere function in showing purpose or result.

³⁹For a fuller explanation see Gentry, “Kingdom through Covenant,” 25-26. For more evidence of this understanding of the Hebrew structure, see Stephen Dempster, “Linguistic Features of Hebrew Narrative: A Discourse Analysis of Narrative from the Classical Period” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1985), cited in *ibid.*

⁴⁰Hans Walter Wolff writes, “In the ancient East the setting up of the king’s statue was the equivalent to the proclamation of his domination over the sphere in which the statue was erected. . . . Accordingly, man is set in the midst of creation as God’s statue. . . . As God’s steward he also exerts his rule,” (Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974], 160-61). According to Gentry, “In the ancient Near East, since the king is the living statue of the god, he represents the god on earth” (“Kingdom Through Covenant,” 27). See also Wolff’s and Gentry’s surrounding discussion for more detail.

⁴¹Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant,” 29.

⁴²G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 29-80; Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *I*

Just as the sanctuary was sacred space for God's presence, so too was the garden. Just as the tabernacle ministers were to tend and guard, so too was Adam.⁴³ Although Adam ultimately chose to be the servant of sin rather than the faithful servant of God, his failure is set against the backdrop of the way he was intended to function.

Finally, Adam was to act as a wise man. The forbidden tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. True wisdom would be expressed in restraint and submission to God's action, not in merely acquiring more intellectual knowledge. From the beginning, wisdom had a moral component, and the wise man is presented not simply as a man with a high IQ but as a man who lives virtuously—a man who obeys his God (Job 28:28; James 3:13-18). Wisdom is more than mere intellectually knowledge; it is the skillful application of knowledge in life, and in relation to God it has a definite moral dimension that comes to light not in bare contemplation but in righteous living.⁴⁴ Eve,

Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood, ed. R. S. Hess and D. T. Tsumara (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), 399-404; M. Weinfeld, "Sabbath and the Enthronement of the Lord—the Problem of Sitz im Leben of Genesis 1:1-2:3," in *Melanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1981), 501-512; Gentry, "Kingdom Through Covenant," 38; Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age, 2000), 31f; Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven* (London: SPCK, 1991), 68-103; Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 11, no. 1-2 (2000): 102-19; J. V. Fesko, *Justification* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 122-25; Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, 31, 35; Donald W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Desert Book Company, 1994), 126-51.

⁴³Man's responsibility to "tend and guard" the garden (2:15) finds parallel in the Levites' responsibilities for the sanctuary (Num 3:7-8). These are the only two types of situations in the whole Pentateuch where the two verbs, עבד and שמר, are conjoined (Brian Estelle, "Covenant of Works," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007], 101).

⁴⁴Richard Muller observes that the Reformed orthodox distinguished between knowledge and wisdom. While knowledge is opposed to ignorance, wisdom is opposed to folly or "error in conduct" (*Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 3:386). For various discussions of the theme of wisdom see Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Wisdom*, in *The Goldsworthy Trilogy* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 329-550; Daniel J. Treier, *Virtue and the Voice of God: Toward Theology as Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); D. Ford and G. Stanton, eds. *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); S. Barton, ed. *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* (T&T Clark, 1999); W. Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of the Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *SJT* 17 (1964): 146-58; K. Hoglund et al., eds. *Old Testament Wisdom* (Louisville: Westminster

and presumably Adam, were enticed in part because they believed that the forbidden fruit was “to be desired to make one wise” (Gen 3:6). The test in the garden was a test of wisdom.⁴⁵

The Offer of Eternal Life

God’s initial arrangement with Adam in Eden held forth the conditional promise of everlasting life.⁴⁶ Genesis 2:16-17 reveals the following important instructions from God: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Admittedly, in this text God does not say explicitly that he will reward Adam (and thus mankind) with eternal life for obedience. And yet, such a conclusion is warranted from Scripture for at least six reasons.

First, a canonical reading of Genesis 2:16-17 reveals a textual depth not encountered on a superficial reading. This text must be set in the context of the Eden narrative as a whole and even in the context of Scripture as a whole. At one level, a reader could assume from Genesis 2:16-17 that all God means is that if Adam eats of the tree, God will immediately kill him. Yet Genesis 3 shows such a reading to be overly simplistic. Adam does not physically die the same day he eats the fruit, even though the

John Knox, 1998); J. Day et al., eds. *Wisdom in Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); J. I. Packer and S. Soderlund, eds. *The Way of Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

⁴⁵Once again, the theme of Adam as covenant keeper awaits a later section of this chapter.

⁴⁶Just to be clear, once again I am not saying that Adam and Eve did not enjoy spiritual communion with God from the outset; I am simply observing that this sinless communion was losable. Since I take it that by definition “eternal” life can never be lost, the conclusion is that while they possessed spiritual life they did not possess eternal life.

threat states the time frame as “in the day that you eat of it.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, when God pronounces the curse (3:14-19), the whole world suffers, not just Adam. Was this an unforeseen consequence of Adam’s “private” sin? Perhaps in exact detail it might have been, but not in principle. Adam was God’s image-bearer, created to rule the earth as vice-regent for God, to exercise dominion to every corner of the earth. Therefore, the reader should not be surprised when the universal import of Adam’s sin is revealed. Likewise Scripture reveals a depth to the death threatened. Adam experiences something greater than mere physical death—he experiences spiritual alienation from God. Immediately he is driven from Eden; he is exiled from the sanctuary of God into the wilderness. Losing communion with God constitutes a death far more wretched than mere physical demise.

The Genesis prohibition in itself seems in a certain sense to be relatively minor. I presume that there was nothing inherently evil about the prohibited tree and its fruit—after all God made everything good. Yet God had every right to set up a test for Adam, and once God gave Adam the command, obedience became a personal matter. Adam’s sin had infinite consequences because Adam sinned against an infinite God. It also seems safe to presume that this test was not the sole standard of Adam’s morality. That is, while Adam could not eat of the tree, neither could he blaspheme God or murder Eve. Either of these actions would have been repulsive to God’s very nature, and the result would likewise have been expulsion from the garden. God’s initial command found root in an interpersonal morality. Stated positively, from the very beginning Adam had to

⁴⁷Gordon J. Wenham observes that we should not retranslate “on the day” with the vaguer “when,” because “though this phrase can mean vaguely ‘when,’ . . . it tends to emphasize promptness of action (e.g., Num 30:6, 8, 9, etc.)” (*Genesis 1-15*, WBC, vol. 1 [Waco, TX: Word, 1987], 68).

love God and love his neighbor. The specific prohibition concerning the tree drove at a greater point: would Adam's person and behavior stay conformed to God's own character, or would Adam willfully choose to sin and offend God's holy nature? Adam sinned, and in doing so he failed to love his neighbor (he brought all mankind into ruin) and he failed to love God (he shook his fist, as it were, and said "no" to God). He became a law-breaker, trespassing against the righteous demands of God's own nature.⁴⁸

Numerous evangelical theologians would readily agree with these points—that Adam's "little" sin was a repugnant moral affront to God almighty, and that the consequence of such a sin was eternal spiritual death for all mankind. And yet this understanding already reads more into Genesis 2:16-17 than is warranted from a superficial, abstracted reading. Still, the full canonical reading is appropriate. With this truth in hand, we must be willing to acknowledge that there might be even more theological depth in the Eden account, when taken in its entire canonical context. If something bigger is going on in this portion of Scripture, if there is a fullness to the "disobedience" and the "death," there may well be a greater significance to Adam's obedience as well.

Second, we may rightly infer an implied promise of life because of the symbolism of the tree of life. While there were likely many trees in the Garden of Eden, the Genesis account only mentions two specific trees: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life (2:9). Although the forbidden tree of life brought death, the

⁴⁸Even when God pronounces a temporary command or issues a temporal standard, the violations of those provisional commands ("laws") are by nature of the case also violations of the eternal and absolute moral law of God, a law that is in no way "above" God but simply stems from who he is. God did not simply choose to "vomit" Adam out of the garden; he was induced and compelled to do so.

tree of life was to bring life in the fullest sense—everlasting life.⁴⁹ This significance of the tree of life becomes even more evident when it is mentioned again in 3:22. There, after God expels man from the garden, he says that he does it “lest he [man] reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (3:22). The clear implication of this verse (“live forever”) is that eternal life is in view—this is the tree of eternal life.⁵⁰ This verse’s place in the Genesis narrative is also significant. It occurs soon after God pronounces the curse. When God announces the curse, he does not leave mankind without hope; he promises a curse-reverser (3:15). The tree of life is yet another beam of hope shining out of the nexus of pain and death. While God drives man away from eternal life, an almost inconceivable thought surfaces: eternal life is still possible. Genesis 3:22 indicates that if Adam and Eve were to eat of the tree of life, they would live forever.⁵¹ The hope now is not that they will be able to eat of the tree of life in Eden to gain eternal life; rather, the hope is that there is eternal life and that there will be a

⁴⁹Calvin sees Christ in the tree of life: “I am not dissatisfied with what has been handed down by some of the fathers, as Augustine and Eucherius, that the tree of life was a figure of Christ, inasmuch as he is the Eternal Word of God” (Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries, Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 117). In my opinion this perhaps goes too far. Nevertheless, there is tremendous spiritual significance in the tree of life.

⁵⁰Gordon J. Wenham states, “Trees as a symbol of life are well-known in the Bible. . . . In Scripture, trees, because they remain green throughout summer drought, are seen as symbolic of the life of God (e.g., Ps 1:3; Jer 17:8). . . . Furthermore, it seems likely that the golden candlestick kept in the tabernacle was a stylized tree of life; the falling of its light on the twelve loaves of the presence symbolized God’s life sustaining the twelve tribes of Israel (Exod 25:31-35; Lev 24:1-9)” (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 62). Terence E. Fretheim says, “The first tree mentioned symbolizes the fullest possible life, the eating of which would grant continuing life . . . the reference in 3:22 indicates that one would need to eat from that tree only once, as was also the case with the tree of knowledge” (Terence E. Fretheim, *Genesis*, in vol. 1 of *NIB*, ed. Leander Keck [Nashville: Abingdon, 1994], 350). Fretheim mentions a similar tree with a similar effect in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (ibid). See also Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, NICOT, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 162-63, 209; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 58-59, 94-96.

⁵¹The verse implies that Adam and Eve have not yet eaten of the tree of life, as Wenham observes (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 85).

curse reverser.⁵²

But the fact that the tree existed in the garden prior to the Fall helps to show that the expectation of eternal life also existed before the Fall in the symbolic tree.⁵³ Paradise centered⁵⁴ on two choices: life or death. If the tree of the knowledge of good and evil loomed over Eden with the threat of death, so too did the tree of life course with the expectation of everlasting life.⁵⁵ Also significant is the fact that this tree of life, laden with symbolism, is mentioned in tight connection with *probation*. Genesis only mentions it twice—first in connection with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the initial probationary command, and second with the “consequences of probation” in 3:22.⁵⁶

The tree of life appears again at the end of Scripture’s redemption story.⁵⁷ In Revelation 2:7 God promises, “To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of

⁵²Calvin comments, “The tree of life was given as a pledge of life. Wherefore, that he might understand himself to be deprived of his former life, a solemn excommunication is added; not that the Lord would cut him off from all hope of salvation, but, by taking away what he had given, would cause man to seek new assistance elsewhere” (Calvin, *Genesis*, 184).

⁵³Meredith Kline states, “One can hardly suppose that it was only after the blessing symbolized by the tree had been forfeited that the Lord invested the tree with that promissory character or that he then first disclosed its significance to man only to taunt him about the unsuspected treasure he had lost” (Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 94).

⁵⁴Interestingly, in 2:9 the tree of life is said to be “in the midst” of the garden, while 3:3 states that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is “in the midst” of the garden. The likely solution to these statements is that both trees were in the center of the garden.

⁵⁵Again Wenham, “The tree of life offered immortality” (*Genesis 1-15*, 63).

⁵⁶Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 94.

⁵⁷Four different times the book of Proverbs also refers to a “tree of life” (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4). I think there are links from the Proverbs tree of life to wisdom, in turn to Adam’s unwise behavior in the garden (and Eve thinking the false tree would make her “wise”), all the way to Christ who is the wisdom of the believer and the one who redeems us, in part by enlightening our minds and hearts. However, I do not have the space here to flesh out those connections.

life, which is in the paradise of God.” John is not speaking of a special subset of Christians who “conquer” and thus gain an additional reward that other genuine Christians do not receive. Rather, true believers will persevere. They will conquer and enjoy eternal communion with God. This interpretation is confirmed later in Revelation with the heavenly scene of chapters 21-22. In 21:7 all those who dwell in heaven as the sons of God are described as conquerors, and in 22:1-5 all enjoy the tree of life. As G. K. Beale observes, “To ‘eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God’ is a picture of forgiveness and consequent experience of God’s intimate presence (22:2-4). . . . The ‘tree’ refers to the redemptive effects of the cross, which bring about the restoration of God’s presence.”⁵⁸

The picture John presents of a “new heaven and a new earth” (21:1) connects to Eden. The Bible begins with the first creation, and ends with the new creation. Paradise is restored. The forbidden tree stood in the middle of the old garden, but the tree of life stands in the middle of the new garden, and “the leaves of the tree [are] for the healing of the nations;” joyously, “no longer will there be anything accursed” (Rev 22:2-3). The curse-reverser finished his work on the tree of Calvary. The “healing” effects of the tree likely find root in Ezekiel’s prophecy of future blessing.⁵⁹ Note that the life that believers will enjoy in heaven is a life of confirmed and unbreakable communion, an

⁵⁸G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 234-235. Gregory of Nazianzus says, “Christ is brought up to the tree and nailed to it—yet by the tree of life he restores us” (quoted in *Ancient Commentary on Scripture, Genesis 1-11*, ed. Andrew Louth [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001], 55).

⁵⁹Ezekiel 47:12 speaks of trees whose “fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.” Beale notes, “Both Ezekiel and Revelation thus envision an escalated reestablishment of the garden of the first creation in which God’s presence openly dwelled. . . . Despite possible debate about the figurative significance of Ezekiel 47, it is abundantly clear that Rev. 22:2 interprets the Ezekiel picture in this manner” (Beale, *Revelation*, 1106-1107).

unbreakable communion that Adam did not enjoy. The tree of life symbolizes this eternal life, a life held out to Adam in the beginning, and a life God graciously brings to man through Christ. Vos sums up nicely, “The tree was associated with the higher, the unchangeable, the eternal life to be secured by obedience through [Adam’s] probation.”⁶⁰

Third, the Sabbath principle is another argument for Edenic reward. Genesis 2:3 says, “So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” God never wearies, never changes, and never fails to adore his many perfections. He did not need a special day to rest and recuperate. God established an example for man’s sake. In his kindness God provided one day a week for Adam and Eve to rest from the work of their dominion mandate.⁶¹ Yet even in Eden, the Sabbath pointed forward to a rest yet to be realized. Adam had a job to do, and he had a probation to complete. While the work related to the dominion mandate was joyful and pain-free, and while the obedience Adam was to render was to be done in humble faith, nevertheless there was a goal in view.

The author of Hebrews demonstrates through a redemptive-historic reading that there is a greater eternal rest anticipated in the seventh day Sabbath that God established (4:1-9). On one level in Hebrews 4 “rest” refers to entrance into the Promised Land. Although many died in the wilderness without experiencing this rest, many in fact did experience this rest under Joshua’s leadership. And yet, “If Joshua had given them

⁶⁰Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (1948; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2000), 28.

⁶¹Wenham concurs, “The seventh day is the very first thing to be hallowed in Scripture, to acquire that special status that properly belongs to God alone. In this way Genesis emphasizes the sacredness of the Sabbath. Coupled with the threefold reference to God resting from all his work on that day, these verses give the clearest of hints of how man created in the divine image should conduct himself on the seventh day” (Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 36).

[ultimate] rest, God would not have spoken of another day [the “today” of Psalm 95]” (4:8). The author can then exhort the readers to strive to enter that final Sabbath rest by ceasing from their own works, just as God ceased from his own works upon the initial establishment of the Sabbath. The greater Hebrews context shows that Christians have a great high priest, Jesus Christ, who has already entered this eternal rest. Christ was “faithful to him who appointed him” (3:2; 4:15), living a perfectly righteous life. He has been installed as the faithful son and the merciful high priest over God’s house. By clinging to Christ in faith alone believers too enjoy the “already” of their Sabbath rest while looking forward to the “not-yet” of consummated eternal life. Although a sinless Adam did not have to cling to Christ for forgiveness, Adam did still have the hope of enjoying an everlasting Sabbath rest.⁶²

Fourth, a common biblical principle is that God rewards obedient law-keeping with life. Hebrews 11:6 testifies that we should view God as a rewarder: “Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” Psalm 19, in praising the beauty of God’s commands, declares that “in keeping them there is great reward” (v. 11). More specifically, the reward of perfect obedience is eternal life, for Jesus and Paul both teach (either directly or by implication) that perfect law-keeping leads to eternal life (Matt 19:16-22; Luke 10:25-37; Rom 2:7, 7:10, 10:5;

⁶²Kline says in this connection, “The situation never existed in which man’s future was contemplated or presented in terms of a static continuation of the original level of blessedness. For the God in whose likeness man was made is the consummating God of the Sabbath. This sabbatical aspect of the divine image was present in the image as imparted to man and it came to expression in the promise of consummation contained in the creational ordinance of the Sabbath” (Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 92).

Gal 3:10-12).⁶³ In Galatians 3:10, Paul argues that “all who rely on works of the law are under a curse.” Paul then cites OT Scripture as evidence: everyone who fails to do all the things written in the law is cursed. The necessary implication is that no one can perfectly keep the law. Yet Paul is equally clear that “the one who does them will live by them” (3:12). The problem does not arise from the inability of obedience to bring life but from the inability of humans to obey. There is no reason to assume that this principle is only a post-fall principle; rather, it has always been the case, both before and after the Fall. God had a right to create man in a confirmed state, but he did not do that; he chose to have man persevere in obedience in order to gain eternal life.

Fifth, Adam’s probation appears to find a loose parallel with the apparent probation of (at least some) angels. The Bible speaks of angels who “did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling” (Jude 6). These angels God keeps “in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.” Although this reference is cryptic,⁶⁴ we know that Satan and his minions are forever confined to hell. Yet God does not create evil; so apparently holy angels, Satan included, chose to rebel against God. These angels can never be restored to their original position; they will be confined to hell forever. Yet presumably the elect angels (I Tim 5:21) are confirmed forever in holiness—the Bible does not present us with the picture of angels

⁶³I will pursue this line of thought further in the next chapter. For now, see the following helpful works: Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders,” *WTJ* 47 (1985): 245-278; Geerhardus Vos, “The Alleged Legalism in Paul’s Doctrine of Justification,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 383-399; John Calvin, *Inst.*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.13.13.

⁶⁴It is possible that this reference is to the strange incident in Gen 6:1-4. But regardless of the exact timeframe or the exact sin which led to angelic rebellion, most would readily agree that since God is wholly good and since he cannot be the author of evil, there must have been an angelic fall at some point.

who can still abandon God's cause to join the devil's side. The elect angels, then, would be those who refused to rebel with Satan, and by virtue of their successful probation were kindly granted confirmation in holiness. While such a parallel cannot be automatically assumed in the case of Adam, it does help to establish warrant for the idea of such a creaturely probation.⁶⁵

Sixth, as I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, the Bible speaks of Christ as a second Adam (Rom 5:12-21; I Cor 15:22, 45-49). Christ succeeded in gaining eternal life for his people—the parallel implication is that Adam failed to gain eternal life for mankind. In Romans 5 Paul explains the *how* of Christ's achievement. Paul frames the Adam/Christ parallel in terms of disobedience/obedience: "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (5:19). Paul notes both similarities and differences between Adam and Christ, and one primary difference is the "much more" (v.17) gained by Christ. Christ actually brings his people out of a condemned, sinful state, not merely a state of innocence. But it is important to keep in mind that Christ, in gaining eternal life, acted in the capacity of a second Adam. Paul implies that Christ as second Adam took on the penalty brought by the first Adam. But when Paul goes on to speak of the "justification and life" that Christ brought, the comparison is still to Adam (5:18); thus in Paul's thought Christ is still acting as a second Adam. Paul is not making a parenthetical observation about some extraneous benefit that Christ wrought in some capacity outside of his function as second Adam. One implication of the second Adam's achievement of eternal life (by obedience) is that the first Adam failed to gain eternal life for those in him

⁶⁵Jonathan Edwards also speaks of angels obtaining eternal life by a covenant of works

(by obedience). After all, if the second Adam's "obedience" was merely penal suffering, if it merely erased the condemnation of the first Adam's sin, the result would be the original state of the original Adam—which is not a confirmed "justification and life."⁶⁶

To sum up thus far, Adam acted as a federal representative for mankind, and had he completed his probationary period in obedience, all of mankind would have been confirmed in eternal blessedness.⁶⁷ Many theologians have customarily referred to this arrangement as the "covenant of works."⁶⁸ The WCF offers the classic definition: "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience."⁶⁹ And once again, this teaching is not limited to Presbyterians—the *London Baptist Confession of Faith* also refers to the "covenant of works."⁷⁰ Still, belief in a "covenant of works," while quite widespread, is not without its detractors.

(Edwards, "Justification by Faith Alone," 646).

⁶⁶See again the treatment of Romans 5 by Murray (*Romans*, 178-210). I also made the same argument earlier in this work when dealing with God's initial arrangement with Adam.

⁶⁷Kline summarizes, "Obedience with respect to the tree of knowledge would qualify man to avail himself of the invitation of the Logos-Life to partake of the sacramental tree of life. By that sacramental communion he would be confirmed in the beatitude of the covenant; the promise of glorified life would be sealed unto him. He would experience Sabbath rest in the sense that he would be placed beyond the onus of probation; established by the Spirit in indefectible righteousness and holiness, no longer subject to a fall into sin and exposure to the covenant curse; and confirmed as the heir of the full-orbed, luminous glory of the imago Dei," (Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 96).

⁶⁸Once again John Owen, *Works*, 5:44, 240-50, 19:337; Francis Turretin, *Institutes*, 1.574-86; Jonathan Edwards, "Justification by Faith Alone," 1:623, 636; Charles Spurgeon, *Sermons*, 238; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:564-88; J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man*, 149-60; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 211-18; Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 27-44; Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 107-17; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 516-18; Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 281-300; John Bolt, "Covenant of Works," 171-89; Bryan D. Estelle, "Covenant of Works," 89-135; Morton H. Smith, "The Biblical Plan of Salvation," 96-117.

⁶⁹WCF 7.2.

⁷⁰*London Baptist Confession*, 20.1.

A Covenant of Works?

Many believe that it is unwarranted to infer a conditional offer of eternal life in the garden. In fact, one looming objection is that such a concept is too speculative.⁷¹ While I certainly respect the desire for biblical fidelity, interpreters must remember that both the explicit and the implicit teachings of Scripture are authoritative.⁷² Many important truths of the Christian faith do not derive from explicit Scriptural statements, but from putting different texts and teachings together to form appropriate conclusions. Perhaps the premier illustration in this regard is the Trinity. The word “Trinity” never appears in the Bible, but the teaching is nonetheless warranted.⁷³ The secret things do belong to the Lord our God, but whatever God has revealed, either explicitly or implicitly, belongs to his people. The covenant of works is one such truth.⁷⁴ However, there have been various objections to this idea. In this section I will first examine whether there was a covenant with Adam, and second, if there was a covenant with Adam, should

⁷¹Andrew Snider, “Active Obedience,” 83-86; Stephen M. Ashby, “A Reformed Arminian Response to Michael S. Horton,” *Four Views on Eternal Security*, ed. J. Matthew Pinson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 50-51; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 140.

⁷²This has been the consensus of many Christians in the past. For example, see the WCF, 1.6. Two further clarifications are in order. First, certain implications of Scripture (like the Trinity) are clearer and more important than others. Second, orthodox believers may disagree on whether a certain teaching (like the “covenant of works”) is actually an implication of Scripture.

⁷³Of course I do not mean to assert that my thesis in this work is as clear or as important as the doctrine of the Trinity. I am simply making an important point regarding how we view God’s Word.

⁷⁴The question of whether a covenant is part of the created order (and a necessary entailment of the image of God in man) or superimposed on creation is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see David VanDrunen, “Natural Law and the Works Principle under Adam and Moses,” in *The Law Is Not of Faith*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 289-91.

it be called a covenant of “works”?⁷⁵

The first point to consider is whether or not God’s relationship with Adam was truly a covenant. John Murray observes of the Adamic administration, “It is not designated a covenant in Scripture.”⁷⁶ Much could be said in the same vein as my response to the opening objection—lack of a specific term like “covenant” does not mean that a covenantal relationship is not in view. In correlation to this point, one more striking example can be added: Scripture does not initially use the word “covenant” to describe God’s promise to David (2 Sam 7); and yet later David speaks of this promise as a “covenant” (2 Sam 23:5). Was David wrong to use a word that God had not used? Of course not; rather, David correctly perceived that God was revealing a covenant word to him. The question of an Edenic covenant must be pushed beyond a simple survey of words to the conceptual truth revealed.

Another argument against an Edenic covenant is that “covenant” is purely a redemptive (and thus post-fall) category. Murray writes, “Scripture always uses the term covenant, when applied to God’s administration to men, in reference to a provision that is

⁷⁵Some object to the label “covenant of works” but still hold to the substantial teaching. I will return to this important consideration later. For organizational purposes I find it better to group all objections together, whether or not the objector makes his point in order to deny the substantial teaching or simply to call for a change of labels.

⁷⁶Murray, *Collected Writings*, 2:49. Likewise Hoekema asserts, “The Bible does not call this arrangement a covenant” (Hoekema, *Created*, 119). See also Andrew Snider, “Active Obedience,” 85.

redemptive.”⁷⁷ In response to this objection, what is it about the concept of “covenant” that demands redemptive significance? Notice that Murray must qualify his assertion. He does not say any covenant but rather covenant “when applied to God’s administration to men.”⁷⁸ Covenants were common features of the ancient world,⁷⁹ regardless of whether or not the context was a redemptive one. Examples of this sort can be seen in Scripture. For example, Abraham and Abimelech make a friendly covenant in Genesis 21:22-32.⁸⁰ Consequently, why must the “covenant” category be narrowed so dramatically when applied to God-man covenants? It is true that after the Fall, people are sinners who desperately need redemption in order to enjoy a right relationship with God. Therefore, if after the Fall God, by means of covenants, works to restore his fallen people, it makes sense that such covenants would have a special redemptive significance. Yet this truth does nothing to rule out a non-redemptive covenant before the Fall, since after all people were not then sinners in need of redemption.

Yet another objection states that not all the elements of a covenant can be found in Genesis 1-3. For example, Hoekema argues that “there is no indication in these

⁷⁷Murray, *Collected Writings*, 2:49. Again Hoekema concurs: “The word *covenant* in Scripture is always used in a context of redemption” (Hoekema, *Created*, 121). See also John H. Stek, “‘Covenant’ Overload in Reformed Theology,” *CTJ* 29 (1994): 40.

⁷⁸With this qualification Murray is more careful in his argument than Hoekema.

⁷⁹Peter Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant,” especially pp. 18-19; Michael Horton, *God of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), pp. 23-34; G. F. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: The Biblical Colloquium, 1955).

⁸⁰Some examples of other non-redemptive covenants can be found in the following passages: 1 Sam 18:3, 2 Sam 3:12-21, 1 Kgs 20:31-34, and 2 Kgs 11:17. Also very significant is the fact that the covenantal relationship of marriage existed before the Fall.

early chapters of Genesis of a covenant oath or a covenant ratification ceremony.”⁸¹ In response, we would not expect the slaughter of an animal before the Fall (before death), as with many elaborate post-fall ratification ceremonies. Also, bear in mind that there is an implied promise from God present in the narrative.⁸² In any case, we should be careful not to attempt a definition so precise that we actually rule out arrangements that for all practical purposes are covenantal.⁸³ Wayne Grudem helpfully states, “With respect to covenants between God and man in Scripture, we may give the following definition: A covenant is an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship.”⁸⁴

Against those who would wish to see the Noahic covenant as God’s first covenant with man,⁸⁵ the Noahic covenant itself actually helps to show that there was

⁸¹*Created*, 120.

⁸²God’s promise overlaps with “oath” speech, since God’s promises are always sure and he can never deny himself. So Peter Gentry rightly observes, “While the components and also the nature and status of the parties differ, and the language varies somewhat, in each case a covenant concluded involves commitment solemnized by oath in which a relationship between parties is specified” (Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant,” 17).

⁸³Taking a step back from these disputes, Genesis does reveal that God comes to man and sets up the terms of a relationship—there are two parties who are to relate to each other in a legally specified way, and a breach of behavior brings a breach of relationship. This arrangement certainly looks suspiciously like a covenant. Long ago Thomas Boston pleaded, “So here we have the thing; for the making over of a benefit to one, upon a condition, with a penalty, gone into by the party it is proposed to, is a covenant, a proper covenant, call it what you will” (Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works of the Late Rev. Thomas Boston* [London: William Tegg & Co., 1853; reprint, Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts Publishers, 1980]: 11:180). Indeed, it seems somewhat strange for one to affirm that mankind’s union with Adam is one of federal headship and legal binding and thus in some sense covenantal while at the same time denying that Adam’s own arrangement with God before the Fall was covenantal.

⁸⁴Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 515. Even simpler is the definition offered by Michael Barrett: a covenant is “a mutually binding agreement between two parties” (Barrett, *Beginning at Moses* [Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999], 111).

⁸⁵See Paul Williamson, *Sealed With an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, NSBT 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), and Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “An Argument Against Theologically Constructed Covenants,” *JETS* 50, no. 2 (2007): 259-273.

already an existing covenantal relationship between God and mankind.⁸⁶ In Scripture, it seems that sometimes covenants were initiated, while at other times they were renewed. The Noahic covenant falls into the latter category, an assertion born out by linguistic considerations. Peter Gentry observes, “A careful and exhaustive analysis of all instances of [כָּרַת] in the Hebrew Bible reveals a completely consistent usage: the expression ‘cut a covenant’ [כָּרַת כְּרִית] refers to covenant initiation while the expression ‘establish a covenant’ [הִקְדַּם כְּרִית] refers to bringing to personal experience in the life of someone who is already a covenant-partner a promise entailed in a covenant initiated previously.”⁸⁷ The Bible speaks of God “establishing a covenant” with Noah (Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17), but never of him “cutting a covenant” with Noah.⁸⁸ Since Noah is the next major figure in Scripture after Adam, and in light of the thematic parallels between the accounts of Noah and Adam, it is appropriate to conclude that there must have been some established covenantal relationship between God and Adam, and that this covenant serves as the background for the Noahic covenant.

Furthermore, it is likely that Scripture does explicitly refer to the Adamic covenant in Hosea 6:7. Because the interpretation and translation of this verse is very

⁸⁶Note first the literary connection between Adam and Noah: the flood story is a kind of new creation, and Noah is presented as a new Adam. For more specific parallels see Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant,” 21.

⁸⁷“Kingdom Through Covenant,” 20. Gentry traces this argument back to Umberto Cassuto, *La Questione della Genesi* (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1934), 112-16, and cites the more recent scholarship of William Dumbrell (*Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984], 15-26) and Jacob Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, AB, vol. 3B [New York: Doubleday, 2001], 2343-46), noting Milgrom’s further bibliography.

⁸⁸A good example of this cutting/establishing distinction appears in the Abrahamic covenant. In chapter 15 God “cuts” the covenant (15:18) while in chapter 17 he “establishes” it (17:7, 19, 21). In chapter seventeen God reaffirms the covenant initiated in chapter fifteen (Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant,” 20).

debated, a closer inspection is necessary. Hosea 6:7 reads, וְהָיָה כְּאַדָּם עָבְרוּ בְרִית שָׁם בְּגָדוּ בִי (“But like Adam they [Israel] transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me”). There has always been some debate about the אָדָּם. It can be a proper name (thus apparently referring to the first man Adam), or it could be a more general term signifying “man” or “mankind.” The LXX translates the phrase “αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰσιν ὡς ἄνθρωπος παραβαίνων διαθήκην,” in other words, “like a man.” Similarly, Calvin renders the verse “as a man.”⁸⁹ However, according to Cyril of Alexandria, “we need to say that in place of like someone the Hebrew text says ‘like Adam’ breaking a covenant, so that we may understand that the breaking by the people of Israel was like that committed by Adam.”⁹⁰ Luther translated the phrase along the same lines: “Aber sie übertreten den Bund wie Adam.”⁹¹ A number of current translations follow suit.⁹² This translation appears warranted. What covenant has been established with “mankind” that mankind has transgressed if not in Adam?

In addition, Hosea alludes to the Pentateuch many times, specifically Genesis and the earlier covenants. For example, Hosea 1:10, speaking of the Israelites being like the “sand of the seashore,” recalls the promise of Genesis 22:17. God’s promise to make a covenant with the created order (Hosea 2:18) is reminiscent of the Noahic covenant of

⁸⁹Calvin, *Hosea*, Ages Digital Software.

⁹⁰*Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, ed. Thomas P Halton, et al. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 143.

⁹¹“But they have transgressed the covenant, like Adam,” *Dr. Martin Luthers Auslegung des Alten Testaments* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1897), 1236.

⁹²See the ESV, NIV, NASB, NLT, and HCSB. An initial question is how a person would transgress a covenant other than as a man/person. I think Calvin sensed this difficulty; consequently he supplies: “They showed themselves to be men in violating the covenant” (Calvin, *Hosea*). But the context is the covenant violation of God’s people, not the generic sinfulness of human beings.

Genesis 9:10. Other instances could be cited,⁹³ but suffice it to say that Hosea was well-versed in the Scriptural traditions, and the fact that he would speak of Adam or covenant-breaching should not come as a surprise.

Despite the evidence for this translation, Wellhausen offered a highly influential emendation of the text in his work, *Die Kleinen Propheten*. In his note on the verse, he says, “Lies באדם, wegen des folgenden שם und der Lokalisierung der Sünde auch in den sich anschliessenden Versen.”⁹⁴ In short, Wellhausen proposed reading a *bet* instead of a *kaf*, so that the text could be read “at Adam,” instead of “like Adam.” Adam, according to Wellhausen, was a place and not a person. Wellhausen’s proposal has been gaining a hearing ever since. In fact, a 1995 monograph on Hosea adopts “the emendation, without argument, by merely asserting, ‘reading [be’adam] with *BHS*, as has been customary since Wellhausen.’”⁹⁵ To be fair, Wellhausen’s suggestion is not a wild one. The surrounding context deals with other geographical locations—Gilead (6:8) and Shechem (6:9). Perhaps even more important is the desire to explain the שם later in the

⁹³See the compilation of Byron G. Curtis, “Hosea 6:7 and Covenant-Breaking Like/At Adam,” in *The Law Is Not Of Faith*, 189-195.

⁹⁴“Read באדם, because of the following שם and because of the localization of sin in the following verses” (Julius Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten*, 3rd ed., ed. Rudolf Smend [Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1898], 116).

⁹⁵Curtis, “Hosea 6:7,” 184, citing Else Kragelund Holt, *Prophesying the Past: The Use of Israel’s History in the Book of Hosea*, JSOTSS 194 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 54 n. 8.

verse, a word normally translated “there.” The immediate question becomes—where?⁹⁶

A city named “Adam” provides the answer.

Despite the popularity of this translation, the following factors militate against it. First, the suggested textual emendation is not supported by manuscript evidence. The masoretic text reads *kaf*, not *bet*. While interpreters should not automatically rule out suggested emendations, they should be extremely cautious to accept emendations that do not have textual support. Such emendations are ultimately conjectures. Second, the Bible does not record a significant covenant-breaking event at a city called “Adam.”⁹⁷ Third, there are other interpretive options for the אָדָם. Following Gesenius, I would suggest that אָדָם here be taken as “therein, in that thing,” rather than referring to a particular geographical location.⁹⁸ Israel in solidarity with Adam dealt faithlessly with God. Hosea has a corporate focus.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Warfield, though ultimately favoring the interpretation “like Adam,” acknowledges that “at Adam” is “very attractive” (“Hosea 6:7: Adam or Man?” in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. John E. Meeter [Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1970], 1:124 [1:116-29]).

⁹⁷The book of Joshua contains the only mention of such a city, stating that when the people crossed the Jordan the water “rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam,” (3:16). If the city is truly very far away, it seems doubtful that Israel at some unknown point broke their covenant there.

⁹⁸*Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 832. For another supporter of my understanding of Hosea 6:7 see the discussion of O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 22-25. On the other side see John Day, “Pro-Deuteronomiac Allusions to the Covenant in Hosea and Psalm LXXVIII,” *VT* (January 1986): 1-6.

⁹⁹One other interpretation (among many) deserves note. Duane A. Garrett has somewhat of a unique view, arguing for a shift in referent from 6:7a to 6:7b—the initial אָדָם is indeed speaking of the historic Adam, but the אָדָם indicates a pun off the word that refers to a city (*Hosea, Joel*, NAC, vol. 19A [Nashville: B&H, 1997], 162-63. More recently, Byron Curtis develops this same line of thought (“Hosea 6:7”). (In the introduction to the book in which Curtis’ chapter is found, the writer previews Curtis’ chapter by saying that Curtis presents a “new interpretation” of the reference to Adam. However, Curtis himself does state in the last footnote of his chapter that after he had completed the article a colleague pointed him to Garrett’s commentary.) Although intriguing, I am not yet persuaded of this interpretation—the city of Adam is tangential, and I am not convinced that the structural parallelism of this verse is as clear as the other cases of “Janus parallelism” that Curtis cites.

Having established the fact that “covenant” is an appropriate designation for the Adamic administration, should it be called a covenant of “works”? Is it right to speak of a “covenant of works,” or is it better to use some other covenantal label?¹⁰⁰ Some have attacked the covenant of works because they seem to prefer relational categories to legal ones,¹⁰¹ but this is a false disjunction. There is no need to drive a wedge between the legal and the filial; the two ideas are not mutually exclusive. To put it positively, Adam was in a loving relationship with God and yet he still had rules to obey.¹⁰² This fact is implied in the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:28, but it becomes more explicit in the commands of 2:16-17. Although not identical to the form of commands given at Sinai the form here is similar (לֹא תֹאכַל), and both forms carry legal overtones.¹⁰³ Put simply, God gave Adam law.¹⁰⁴ However, true obedience was never to be merely perfunctory, robotic, and external; true obedience stems from the heart and thus is not opposed to filial trust. Obedience was to follow faith and spring out of faith.¹⁰⁵ The context of Adam’s

¹⁰⁰Other proposed labels include “covenant of creation,” “covenant of nature,” “covenant of life,” “covenant of law,” or simply “Adamic covenant” (see Morton Smith, “The Biblical Plan of Salvation,” 97, and Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 517-18).

¹⁰¹For example, Richard Lusk writes, “A program of works righteousness undercuts the filial nature of covenant sonship” (Lusk, “A Response to ‘The Biblical Plan of Salvation,’” in *Auburn Avenue*, 137).

¹⁰²Rightly Horton, “Law and love go hand in hand in Scripture. To obey God is to love him, and if one wants to know how to love God, the answer the Bible clearly gives is the law” (Horton, *God of Promise*, 84).

¹⁰³Estelle, “Covenant of Works,” 111.

¹⁰⁴This point is confirmed in Rom 5:13-14, where Paul parallels Adam’s transgression with Israel’s transgression of the Mosaic law.

¹⁰⁵So Lusk is somewhat misleading when he states, “Proponents of a covenant of works usually set the way of works in sharp antithesis to the way of faith” (Lusk, “Response,” 124). This point is true *after the Fall*, when people are incapable of perfect obedience. Where is the evidence that covenant of

obedience to God was a Father-son relationship. It is not as though Adam had to win God's favor.¹⁰⁶ The fact that there was law in the Garden of Eden does not undercut God's kindness. Even the lone prohibition began with a positive ("You may surely eat of every tree . . .").¹⁰⁷ God freely created Adam, and he made Adam upright, so that Adam had a bent toward obeying his loving God.¹⁰⁸

Karl Barth mounted an attack on covenant of "works" terminology because he believed it put law above grace.¹⁰⁹ John Murray softens this prognosis by arguing that

works proponents deny that Adam's obedience was to spring from filial faith and trust? Lusk, despite his accusations, cites no one espousing such a view, nor do I know of anyone.

¹⁰⁶Contra Snider, who says that "Adam already had perfect communion with God. The covenant theologian is in the rather difficult position of asserting that a perfect, sinless Adam needed to be 'saved'" (Snider, "Active Obedience," 85). Adam did enjoy spiritual life and communion with God, but it was not eternal life—obviously it ended. Adam did have the opportunity of confirmation through a probationary period.

¹⁰⁷The Hebrew is interesting. אָכַל תֵּאָכַל ("eating you may eat") is an infinitive absolute construction that in my view falls under the general category of an "intensive infinitive." For a discussion see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 584-588. "May surely eat" is a helpful translation because it brings out the certainty and emphasis of God's positive allowance.

¹⁰⁸The Garden of Eden—the scene of Adam's probation—is instructive in this regard. God's central and authoritative negative command is set in the context of narrative replete with fatherly love and care. It is not as though God merely created a nice environment and made Adam the gardener in charge, as though God might occasionally peer down from the balcony, so to speak, and find pleasure in his "garden" from a distance. Eden was a kind of sanctuary where God's very presence was to dwell. Hence, when man sinned and God expelled him from the garden, God was cutting off the direct line of fellowship which Adam and Eve had formerly enjoyed with God. The presence of the cherubim (3:24) is important, because in Scripture "wherever one finds a cherub . . . one finds divine presence" (Bryan D. Estelle, "The Covenant of Works," 101). For example, cherubim later hover over the ark of the covenant, the great symbol of God's presence for the nation of Israel, a point of implied significance according to the author of Hebrews (9:1-5). Additionally, man's responsibility to "tend and guard" the garden (2:15) finds parallel in the Levites' responsibilities for the sanctuary (Num 3:7-8). These are the only two types of situations in the whole Pentateuch where the two verbs, שמר and עבד, are conjoined (Estelle, "Covenant of Works," 101). Eden was a place for the first son of man could joyfully fellowship with his heavenly father. The whole record of later revelation shows that God's desire is to return and "dwell among" his people (Ex 29:45; 1 Kgs 6:13; 2 Cor 6:16). From first to last God's kindness and fatherly favor surrounds his commands.

¹⁰⁹See Barth's discussion of the covenant of works in *CD*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), 4:1, 54-66. In part, Barth believes that a covenant of works nullifies God's grace in eternity, in addition to obliterating the need for a mediator (*ibid.*, 64). In response, it is important to remember the Bible's portrait of God's sovereignty. Even though God held out the possibility of confirmed life through Adam, the Fall was a part of God's plan to provide ultimate salvation through Christ. And

“the elements of grace entering into the administration are not properly provided for by the term ‘works.’”¹¹⁰ It is true that God freely gave mankind many undeserved blessings,¹¹¹ and Murray’s point needs thoughtful consideration. On the other hand, “works” terminology helps to provide a beautiful platform for God’s saving grace. God’s eternal plan has always been to magnify his grace through the salvation of sinners (Ephesians 1). Should we object if part of that plan was to allow Adam to fail to obey, in order that humanity would need redemption by Jesus Christ and his work? “Works” phraseology, rather than undercutting grace, can actually help to serve God’s purpose of grace.

In addition, some object to the notion of “works” because they believe it is wrong to suggest that works could ever play a positive role in man’s relation to God.¹¹² Yet, all admit that a bad work did ruin man’s relationship with God. If God is an

surely as Romans 5 points out, Christ has done much more than Adam. Among other things, he has not just gained eternal life for believers—he has also freed them from God’s wrath.

¹¹⁰Murray, *Collected Writings*, 2:49.

¹¹¹Adam’s very creation was not something he deserved. Furthermore, God showed great kindness to place Adam in such a beautiful creation and to provide a helper corresponding to him. In addition, God was not obligated to offer humanity confirmation in blessedness—mankind received such an offer freely and undeservedly. There are those theologians who, while acknowledging God’s undeserved kindness, still wish to keep “grace” language post-fall. (More recently see Michael Horton, *God of Promise*, 84, and Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 108-110.) According to Mark Jones, who earned a Ph.D. at Leiden studying Thomas Goodwin, those who see grace in the covenant of works include John Owen, Francis Turretin, Thomas Boston, William Ames, R. L. Dabney, Louis Berkhof, and Anthony Hoekema, while those opposing this view include Herman Witsius, Charles Hodge, and Johannes Heidegger ([on-line]; accessed 2 September 2009; available from <http://thomasgoodwin.wordpress.com/2008/05/19/john-owen-the-covenant-of-works/>; Internet). However, all those who do see grace in the covenant of works distinguish condescending grace and saving grace—and argue that only the former was present). Part of this discussion simply hinges on one’s understanding of grace—must there be positive ill-desert present or not? Likewise, is “grace” always attached to redemption? Regardless of this dispute over pre-fall “grace,” all should be able to affirm that God expressed his free and undeserved kindness to Adam in many ways.

¹¹²Snider, “Active Obedience,” 88-90; Lusk, “A Response to ‘The Biblical Plan of Salvation,’” 121-126.

immutable God of justice, it would seem that some “work” must take place if man is to be restored. Must not Christ be human precisely in order that he might render up a proper work of satisfaction to God as human? Scripture does testify in many places that we can not be saved by works, but in these cases it refers to our own personal works in light of our post-fall condition: we can not render perfect obedience, and so it is futile to try.¹¹³ There need not be incongruence in affirming that Adam could have merited eternal life but that we now can do nothing to merit eternal life.¹¹⁴ We boast not in the first Adam but in the last Adam, who reclaimed us through his obedience.¹¹⁵

Thus far I have considered two issues: (1) whether or not there is a covenant with Adam; and (2) whether or not it should be called a covenant of works. However, it is

¹¹³See chap. 4 of this work.

¹¹⁴To some, talk of Adam’s “merit” sounds selfish, if not mercenary and calculating (see James Jordan’s chapter, “Merit Versus Maturity,” in *The Federal Vision*, 151-200, and Michael D. Williams, “Adam and merit,” *Presbyterion* 35, no. 2 [fall 2009]: 87-94). But the idea of “merit” is not necessarily wrong, nor is it inherently unrelational. When it is said that Adam could have “merited” eternal life, the idea is not that there was something inherent in Adam’s obedience that automatically “deserved” eternal life. God could have justly required human obedience without offering eternal life. So it is not as though Adam or any human could somehow pin God in the corner, hold up his obedience, and demand eternal life whether or not God ever offered it. The “merit” spoken of is best viewed not as “strict” merit but as “covenantal” merit. See the helpful discussion of R. Fowler White and Calvin Beisner, “Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology,” in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 150. God was not constrained to offer eternal life; he freely chose to do so by virtue of his arrangement with man. Put simply, God kindly said, “Do this, and I will give you that.” If the term “merit” was inherently problematic, it would be wrong to speak of Christ meriting salvation, as so many confessional documents do—Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, and the WCF (White and Beisner, *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, 435-36).

¹¹⁵What about Paul’s argument in Rom 4 that if Abraham could have been saved by works then he would have had something to boast about? Does not Paul presuppose that human boasting is all wrong? After all, salvation is “not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:9). Could Adam have boasted if he had gained eternal life for humanity by his obedience? This is a difficult question because “boasting” is a term often loaded with sinful, prideful baggage. Certainly a sinless Adam would not have been sinfully prideful, and neither was Christ. Yet Christ could still say with confidence, “Glorify me . . . I finished the work that you gave me to do” (John 17), and it seems that Adam could have confidently expected eternal life had he obeyed, due to God’s kind word of promise. In one real sense he would have been mankind’s champion. But here the eternal plan of God shines through again—it was God’s purpose to bring salvation not through Adam but through Christ. It was God’s marvelous plan to

important to keep in mind that many theologians who oppose the label “covenant of works” still *agree with the substantial teaching*. John Murray is one of the most well-known theologians to fall into this category. He states, “It is natural, if not necessary, to infer that it is the opposite of what actually transpired that would have secured this [everlasting] life, that to obedience was appended the promise of life.”¹¹⁶ Others follow suit.¹¹⁷ In interacting with these people, I first of all agree wholeheartedly that the most important thing is the substantial teaching, regardless of what one wishes to call God’s arrangement with Adam in the garden. My thesis stands whether or not one adopts the “covenant of works” rubric.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, a discussion of labels is still relevant. Not only do labels bring us into contact with the history of the doctrine, they also serve to shape our very understanding of the doctrine (though again not necessarily dramatically altering the core). Using covenantal language is helpful on many fronts, not least

exclude human obedience in order to magnify the obedience of Christ so that believers might boast only in him (1 Cor 1:31; 2:2; 2 Cor 10:17; Gal 6:14).

¹¹⁶Murray, *Collected Writings*, 2:48.

¹¹⁷G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, trans. Philip Holtrop (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 207-208, Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966), 214-220. In addition, it is argued that many church fathers held some sort of prototypical version of the covenant of works. According to Bavinck, “Materially, therefore, the doctrine of what was later called ‘the covenant of works’ also already occurs in the church fathers,” (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:567). Furthermore, “Included in Adam’s situation, as it was construed by the Scholastics, Roman Catholic, and Lutheran theologians, lay all the elements that were later summed up especially by Reformed theologians in the doctrine of the covenant of works,” (ibid.). Likewise Vos argues that the substantial seed of the doctrine has deep roots in church history (“Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,” *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard Gaffin [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980], 234-267).

¹¹⁸Herman Bavinck argues that the idea of a covenant of works with Adam goes back to the church fathers, Augustine included (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:567). Bavinck argues that the fathers appealed to Hosea 6:7 (ibid., 357). Richard J. Muller concurs (“The Covenant of Works and the Stability of the Divine Law in 17th Century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study on the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus á Brakel,” *CTJ* 29 (1994): 89-91 (71-101). See also Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 211

highlighting the Adam/Christ headship as Paul does.¹¹⁹

Relative Importance of the “Covenant of Works” with Adam

If God did make a covenant of works with Adam, the natural connection to the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ should be apparent. Christ must succeed where Adam failed. Not only must he pay the penalty of the broken covenant (eternal death), he must also fulfill its positive stipulation of obedience in order to gain the reward of the covenant (eternal life). God is just and unchanging. In order to remain true to his own character, he cannot simply “lower the bar.” He cannot merely forgive and forget (and reward) with no fulfilled covenant. Once his word has gone forth it abides forever. I affirm the covenant of works. Yet Snider’s question remains pertinent: “must one affirm both [the covenant of works and active obedience], or is the idea of vicarious active obedience a biblically defensible view by itself?”¹²⁰ Contra Brakel, I maintain that it is.¹²¹

In the first place, God’s covenant of works with Adam is not the sole line of evidence for the active obedience of Christ. As I seek to show in the rest of this dissertation, there are other important lines of argument. First, a careful development of a “do this and live” theology shows that after the Fall God requires a positive obedience in

¹¹⁹While I do wish to retain the idea of “covenant,” I am not as fixed on a specific name for the covenant. I do not object to the traditional label of “covenant of works,” although at times I think perhaps “covenant of creation” or “Adamic covenant” might be a better designation.

¹²⁰Snider, “Active Obedience,” 85-86.

¹²¹I should note again that in this brief section I am concerned more with the substance of the teaching than with nomenclature.

order to gain eternal life (chapter 4). Second, the OT presents the Messiah to come as one who saves his people by his positive representational obedience in life (chapter 5). Third, the NT picks up this theme in its presentation of Christ as Savior of his people, and there are specific passages showing that Christ's positive obedience counts for his people (chapter 6). Of course proponents of a covenant of works position would likely respond that the covenant of works is integral to these various motifs and passages. I do not deny this; nor do I wish to make it appear that theology is a grab bag of unrelated propositions.¹²²

However, there are a number of theologians and scholars who deny a covenant of works with Adam, and they should not thereby feel obligated to deny the active obedience of Christ. One could conceivably jettison a covenant of works with Adam while refusing to jettison the active obedience of Christ. If there was never an offer of confirmed eternal life before the Fall, it remains an open question what God might require for confirmed eternal life after the Fall. Even people who deny a conditional offer of eternal life to Adam might still agree with other major arguments of this work, and thus, barring major objections, should still affirm the doctrine of active obedience.

Snider, a dispensationalist, seems to tie active obedience so heavily to "the theological framework of covenant theology" that a rejection of one necessarily involves

¹²²As a corrective to this misperception about the nature of theology, see the work of Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*; Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005); Stephen J. Wellum, "Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis," in *Reclaiming the Center*, ed. Milliard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004) 183-85; 193-97 (161-97).

a rejection of the other.¹²³ And to be fair to Snider, some Reformed theologians do proclaim an all-or-nothing approach to their system. For example, I have shown how Brakel, a covenant theologian, does appear to agree with Snider that a denial of the covenant of works results in a denial of active obedience. But this need not be the case. Theologians of every stripe must move beyond labels and associations in order to think carefully about the substance of what is being said.

There is no reason why a person who denies a covenant of works with Adam *must* deny the active obedience of Christ (though I would be happier if people affirmed both!). There are examples to the contrary. For example, in the very same book Stephen Ashby denies conditional eternal life in Genesis but frequently affirms the active obedience of Christ imputed to the believer.¹²⁴ As noted in chapter 2, a number of dispensationalists do hold to the active obedience of Christ.¹²⁵ Another very significant example is the Lutheran tradition. As I demonstrated in chapter 2, the Lutheran tradition has typically affirmed the substance of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. But the Lutheran tradition as a whole does not maintain a covenant of works with Adam in the same way that the Reformed tradition does in Confessional documents like the WCF and the LBCF?¹²⁶ One must take into account all the evidence.

¹²³Snider, "Active obedience," 1, 36-40, 81-86.

¹²⁴Ashby, *Four Views*, 50-51, 142-51.

¹²⁵In chapter two I mentioned that Bruce Ware affirms the active obedience of Christ. I should also note that in one particular classroom situation he rejected a covenant of works with Adam in no uncertain terms.

¹²⁶See again the FC. Also see Robert Kolb, "A Lutheran Response," in *Understanding Four Views on Baptism*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 78-79 (78-82); Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 242; George Park Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine* (Norwood, MA: Norwood, 1896), 348 n. 1;

While it is not absolutely necessary to maintain a covenant of works in the Garden if one is to espouse the active obedience of Christ, it is important to keep in mind God's demand for perfect obedience. God does make an absolute demand on all creatures. Adam did not perfectly obey; he sinned and was expelled from the Garden. God's demand for perfect obedience is incumbent on all people, and given Adam's representative role, we come into the world guilty in him. We do not have the ability in and of ourselves to make up for Adam's disobedience, nor given our fallen nature do we have the capacity to obey perfectly and meet God's demands. Since we cannot meet God's holy and righteous demands, our only hope is that someone else would meet these demands for us.

Conclusion

Had Adam remained upright and successfully completed his probation in the garden, he and all of mankind would have been confirmed in holiness, gaining eternal life. The Scripture supports such a position. In the first place, the Bible does teach that Adam was the federal head of mankind. He was to be the representational human being, and he was to act as the obedient son, the righteous king, and the faithful servant. These themes already point to the need for a positive representational obedience. But even more specifically, Adam was to be a covenant-keeper, fulfilling the obligations that God laid upon him. The result would have been confirmed eternal life for all of mankind.

Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 81. To be clear, I am not saying that all Lutheran theologians deny the substance of a covenant works position—rather simply that this teaching is not bound up in their confessional heritage as it is in the Reformed tradition. For a Lutheran example of a covenant of works proponent see S. S. Schmucker, *Elements of Popular Theology* (New York: Leavitt, Lord, & Co., 1834), 133-34, where the subtitle under the “Plan of Salvation” is “The Covenant of Works.” However, R. Scott Clark does point out that “confessional Lutherans typically reject the notion of a prelapsarian covenant of works” (“Lutheran or Reformed? You Make the Call” [on-line];

Many biblical ideas point toward this conclusion—ideas such as the theological depth of the Genesis narrative, the symbolic function of the tree of life, the ordinance of Sabbath, the theme of eternal reward for law-keeping, the probationary example of angels, and the Adam/Christ parallels. Taken together, these reasons do make for a weighty and compelling case. No doubt theologians will continue to debate the virtues of a “covenant of works,” but the substantial teaching should be embraced. Unfortunately, some of the objections against the covenant of works wielded for rhetorical effect actually present a cheap grace rather than a truly lavish grace. God can be fully for us and still demand perfect obedience. God’s grace in Christ is highlighted through the mighty *work* that Christ accomplished for his people.

The gospel theme of Christ as a second Adam brings out an important link between the “covenant of works” and a full-orbed view of justification. While an affirmation of a covenant of works with Adam is not absolutely necessary to an affirmation of the active obedience of Christ, such an affirmation does provide symmetry and harmony in understanding the gospel and the biblical storyline. Christ, in bringing his people to glory and repairing Adam’s loss, not only pays the penalty for Adam’s sin but also completes a probationary life in perfect obedience for them.

CHAPTER 4

HUMAN OBEDIENCE FOR ETERNAL LIFE AFTER THE FALL

In Matthew 19, a man asks Jesus an important question: “What good deed must I do to have eternal life?” (v. 16). Jesus responds, “If you would enter life, keep the commandments” (v. 17). On the face of it, Christ’s response appears straightforward: God only grants eternal life to those who have kept his commands. In this chapter I will examine this requirement in more detail. Does the Bible as a whole support this teaching? If so, what kind of obedience is required—perfect obedience, or something less than perfect obedience? If something less than perfect obedience is in view, then humans could potentially provide that obedience themselves. However, given the sinful condition of humanity and given humanity’s inability to achieve perfection, if perfect obedience is required then obedience must come from someone else. It will be the burden of later chapters to show that this perfect obedience is provided by Christ’s vicarious life of obedience for his people. In this chapter, I simply argue that since the Fall God requires perfect obedience to his commands in order to receive eternal life.¹

¹If my argument from the last chapter is convincing, then this chapter flows naturally from chapter three. The immutable God has not changed his terms. Just as he required a perfect obedience before the Fall to secure confirmed life, so after the Fall this stipulation remains. For those who do not accept the covenant of works as I outlined it in chapter three, God is presumably instituting a new offer after the Fall—the offer of confirmed spiritual life. If this is the case, then it still must be asked what the requirements are, and the answer should still be perfect obedience. Consequently, those denying a covenant of works before the Fall should still accept the need for a perfectly obedient life after the Fall, an arrangement that points toward the perfectly obedient life of another—Christ and his active obedience.

I will examine this question particularly through the window of some “do this and live” passages (Lev 18:5; Luke 10:28; Gal 3:12; Rom 10:5).² Often proponents of active obedience appeal to these passages in support of their doctrine.³ However, there is debate about the original meaning of Leviticus 18:5, not to mention the use of this passage in the NT.⁴ Unfortunately, it is true that proponents of active obedience often merely cite the verse as a prooftext rather than carefully examine the context and development of a “do this and live” theology. Consequently, I want to offer a more robust develop of a “do this and live” theology in close conversation with biblical scholars.

²The general themes of obedience and law keeping are hotly debated in biblical studies, not just in systematics. See Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old And New On Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004); James Dunn’s thorough bibliography in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 128 and his discussion on pp. 129-61; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); Douglas Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and ‘Legalism’ in Paul,” *WTJ* 45 (1983): 73-100.

³R. Scott Clark, “Do This and Live: Christ’s Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification,” in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 229-66; see also John Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner, 1990), 5:262; John Gill, *Gill’s Complete Body of Practical and Doctrinal Divinity* (Philadelphia: B. Graves, 1810), 360-61; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 721; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 517, 570; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1872), 2:517; Richard Rawlin, *Christ, the Righteousness of His People* (Caltoun: John Bryce, 1772), 251.

⁴Perhaps the most thorough study of “do this and live” in Scripture and Judaism is Preston Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, WUNT 241 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). See also idem, “Law and Life: Leviticus 18:5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel,” *JSOT* 31, no. 3 (2007): 275-293; Friedrich Avemarie, “Paul and the Claim of the Law according to the Scripture: Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12 and Romans 10:5,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity: A Collection of Articles*, ed. Jack Pastor and Menachem Mor (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2005), 125-48; Simon Gathercole, “Torah, Life and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 126-45; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971), 19-28; Bryan D. Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1-14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered,” in *The Law Is Not Of Faith*, eds. Bryan Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 109-146; Gordon J. Wenham, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 253; Andrew Bonar, *Leviticus* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 329-30; Joel Willits, “Context Matters: Paul’s Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” *TynB* 54 (2003), 105-22; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul’s View of the Law in Romans 10:4-5,” *WTJ* 55 (1993): 113-35; idem, “Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A Re-examination of Galatians 3:10,” *JETS* 27 (1984): 151-60; Guy P. Waters, “Romans 10:5 and the Covenant of Works,” in *The Law Is Not Of Faith*, 210-39. Due to space limitations, I will not spend much time on the use of Lev 18:5 in Second Temple Judaism.

Leviticus 18:5

Leviticus 18:5 stands out as the foundational “do this and live” verse in the OT, with later development coming from the books of Ezekiel (20:11, 13, 21) and Nehemiah (9:29).⁵ Since Leviticus 18:5 is so foundational, I will spend more time here than I will in Ezekiel and Nehemiah.⁶ In Leviticus 18:1-5 God reminds Moses that Israel is to be a distinct people, a people who live differently from their pagan neighbors. The Lord closes this reminder in vv. 4-5, saying, “You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.” Leviticus 18:5 contains the key phrase, *וְעָשָׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וְחָי בָהֶם* (“if a person does them, he shall live by them”). This verse plays a central role in Leviticus, as well as in the entire law covenant given to Israel at Sinai.⁷

⁵In Gen 42:18, Joseph does tell his brothers, “Do this and you will live.” Yet I believe this passage does not offer significant contribution to the “do this and live” theme of the NT, as I will argue in the discussion of Luke 10:28.

⁶Francis Watson states that Lev 18:5 “encapsulate[s] the very essence of the law, summing up the law’s entire rationale and content in a single lapidary utterance” (*Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 314-15).

⁷Lev 18 is one of the chapters associated with the “holiness code,” the term given to Lev 17-26. The holiness code contains several commands that Israel must obey in order that they may be holy as God is holy (19:2). Not only does chapter eighteen begin with a summary reminder and command, it also ends with an important warning: “You shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you . . . lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean . . .” Life in the land was tied to keeping the stipulations of the covenant. Israel was to keep in mind the summary commands and warnings of chapter eighteen even as they sought to perform the minutiae outlined in the holiness code. While chapter eighteen plays an important part in the holiness code, the holiness code itself follows directly on the heels of Lev 16, arguably the most important chapter in the book of Leviticus, since it contains directions for the day of atonement, the most important day of the year in Israel’s worship calendar. Lev 16 stood as a stark reminder to Israel that they would need atonement, and that they would have atonement. These points help to set the context of Lev 18:5.

In coming to Leviticus 18:5, the first question concerns the referent of the pronoun direct object (“them”). What is the “them” a person must “do”? The referent itself is clear enough—“my rules and my statutes.” But which rules and statutes are to be understood? The best answer is all of God’s rules and statutes, particularly in the context of the Mosaic covenant. The people should obey all of God’s covenantal commands, not merely the specific sexual laws of chapter 18.⁸ “Statutes” and “rules” (הַקְּטָוֹת, חֻצְוֹת) are general terms used frequently in Leviticus for a wide range of laws (cf. 19:37; 20:22; 25:18; 26:3). In addition, the “statutes and rules” seem to be coextensive with those statutes and rules which help to distinguish Israel from Canaanite practices (18:1-3), and therefore cannot be limited to sexual practices—numerous Israelite obligations were rejected by their neighboring pagans, from the worship of only one God right on down to practices such as boiling a goat in its mother’s milk. Furthermore, God says that if Israel breaks the “statutes,” the land would vomit Israel out (18:28), and Israel could be expelled from the land for any number of persistent covenant breaches.⁹

⁸Contra Douglas Mohrmann, “Making Sense of Sex: A Study of Leviticus 18” (*JSOT* 29, no. 1 [2004]: 57-79), 76.

⁹Also interesting is the fact that Lev 18:26 reads, “But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you.” In this verse, God includes “strangers” living in Israel as under the same obligations as native Israelites. Presumably, then, Leviticus 18:5 holds true for the “strangers” in Israel as well. Some do espouse this view of Leviticus 18:5 (J. Jootsen, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17-26* [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 77, and Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5,” 115), though others reject it (e.g., Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus*, AB, vol. 3 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2001], 2:1522). The overlap in language between the verses does appear to provide warrant for this conclusion. Consequently, already in Lev there is a hint that a “do this and live” principle runs broader than simply ethnic native Israel. Jootsen argues that “Lev. 18:5 intimates the universal tenor of the OT message,” (*People and Land*, 77) and Estelle concurs (“Leviticus 18:5,” 115-16).

The second question in this text concerns the meaning of the term ׀ (“he shall live”).¹⁰ To simplify, I think we can first divide interpreters into two groups: those who view the “living” as nearly synonymous with the “doing,” and those who view the “living” as a result of the “doing.” Walter Kaiser is an example of the first group of interpreters.¹¹ While acknowledging that Kaiser’s viewpoint is certainly grammatically viable,¹² the second general viewpoint (life is the result of the doing) is more likely for the following reasons: 1) many other passages containing instructions do state that obedience brings the result of staying in the land (Lev 18:26, 28; 20:22; 25:18-19; 26:3-5; Deut 28-30), and as suggested, “life” and “land” are intricately tied;¹³ 2) “life” in theocratic texts often refers to tangible covenantal blessings, and thus should not be equated with the condition of those blessings—obedience;¹⁴ and 3) Ezekiel, in using this text, seems to understand “life” to be the result of obedience (Ez 20).¹⁵

¹⁰Sprinkle outlines six different interpretations, but he admits that they overlap (*Law and Life*, 32).

¹¹Kaiser, “Do This and You Shall Live.”

¹²The related grammatical question concerns the use of ׀ (will live “in/by them”). Is the sense of the preposition ׀ locative or instrumental? That is, should the translation be “in them” or “by them”? While it is true that “walk in them” is the proper sense of the preceding verse (“You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them . . .”), the instrumental translation (“by them”) is preferable in verse five. To support this case, I would make the same arguments I make for life as the result of obedience. It is a bit of a tautology to argue that the one who does the statutes will be living in them (that is, doing them).

¹³Sprinkle helpfully notes, “Other similar exhortations do not list any result for obedience (19:19, 30, 37; 20:8; 22:31–33), but when a result is listed it is always related to land—the ability to dwell in it or the prosperity of the land itself,” (Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 35).

¹⁴See for example Deut 28-30.

¹⁵Throughout Ezek, and especially chapter 20, Israel’s exile is portrayed as the result of their failure to obey the laws and statutes. The clear implication seems to be that had they obeyed the statutes, as a result they would have remained in the land.

Having argued that life should be understood as the result of obedience, I must now consider what kind of “life” God is holding out. Here again, interpreters who agree that “life” is the result of obedience can be further subdivided into two groups: those who emphasize the earthly, temporal aspects of the life promised and those who tend to stress “life” here as eternal life.¹⁶ In this case, the primary referent does appear to be the old covenant, typical blessings of abundant “life”—longevity in the land, social and economic prosperity, etc. In this I agree with the first subcategory of interpreters. This “land-life” stands out once again from the repeated command and the threat of vv.24-30.¹⁷ In addition, Leviticus 26:3-10 reiterates a program of land prosperity if the people obey: “If you walk in my statutes . . . then I will give you your rains . . . the land shall yield its increase . . . you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely. I will give you peace in the land . . . I will . . . make you fruitful and multiply you” Deuteronomy 28:1-14 contains more of the same.

Nevertheless, these temporal land blessings were to serve as signposts for the people of Israel, pointing them to greater eternal realities.¹⁸ Leviticus 18:5 must be given a full-orbed reading as it comes to Israel in redemptive history. Bear in mind that the

¹⁶Representatives of the former group include Gordon J. Wenham, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 253, and Martin Noth, *Leviticus*, 134. Representatives of the latter group include Andrew Bonar, *Leviticus* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 329-30, and Alva J. McClain, *Law and Grace* (Chicago: Moody, 1954), 17 (quoted in Gundry, Stanley N, ed. *Five Views on Law and Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 190).

¹⁷Rightly John Hartley, “Placed in the context of the parenthesis (vv 24–30), it means that Israel will have a secure, healthy life with sufficient goods in the promised land as God’s people” (*Leviticus* WBC, vol. 4 [Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1992], 293).

¹⁸So although I do not agree with those interpreters who see eternal “life” as primary, I nevertheless agree with them that it is not illegitimate to draw a typological lesson about eternal life from this verse. So too White and Beisner, “Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology,” 147-70, and Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5,” 118.

whole OT theocratic system was a copy and shadow of heavenly things (Ex 25:40; Heb 8:5; 10:1). Israel should have been well-versed in the saga of Adam and Eve and the ultimate realities of spiritual life and death. True life in the beginning entailed not just a bountiful land but a curse-free land. In this original sinless land there was not merely long life but an absence of death. Israel, God's son just as Adam was God's son, was on a journey to a good land, but they were to be looking and hoping for a heavenly country whose maker was God, and the NT informs us that this heavenly hope did exist among the saints of old (Heb 11:10, 13-16). The OT priestly sacrificial system allowed God to dwell with his people in a mediated way, but surely God's saints longed for the kind of intimate communion "life" Adam originally had with God. The sacrifices, though God-ordained for "purity," were also a constant reminder of sin, and of the need for a greater sacrifice and a greater mediator in order to restore the paradise that was lost in Adam. In light of redemptive-historical themes and typological connections, Israel had a right to infer "eternal life" lessons from Leviticus 18:5. Temporal land-life is the most obvious referent. Still, eternal life, while not on the surface, is latent in the text.¹⁹

The next important question in interpreting Leviticus 18:5 could be put this way: what kind of obedience is Leviticus 18:5 calling for? Again two interpretations

¹⁹And yet on top of this, there is yet another clue in the text itself that something greater than mere temporal land-life is lurking behind the scenes. Somewhat oddly, verse five switches from a second person plural subject (vv. 3-5a) to a third person singular one (v. 5b) before reverting to the second person plural (vv. 6ff). Some have suggested that this change takes place in order to include the "sojourning stranger" (e.g. 18:26). In this view, since some laws were binding only on the ethnic Israelite and not on the sojourning stranger, God is clarifying that the particular statutes he has in mind are obligatory on all. Yet, as I have argued, it seems that the statutes in question were in fact all the statutes. The point here is not to include a group sometimes left out, but to state a general principle: the one who does what he is commanded to do will live. This focus on the individual does point to the striking individual responsibility of each Israelite (and sojourner) to choose for himself to keep the covenant. However, it also points to an undercurrent theme spoken to God's people: yes, your nation can be "holy" and enjoy the typical corporate blessings of corporate holiness, but how will you as an individual be finally and completely holy before a

stand out, and both usually go with the two respective “life” viewpoints already outlined. Those who see life as temporal blessing would usually understand the demand to be a demand for a general faithfulness, including the proper offer of sacrifices for sins committed.²⁰ Those who see life as eternal life naturally see a call for absolutely perfect obedience.²¹

One argument in favor of the general obedience position is that the language of the OT seems to indicate that certain people did “obey,” that they were in a sense “blameless,” and that they consequently could be recipients of land life.²² In this connection the sacrifices came into play—God provided atonement by sacrifices so that old covenant offenders could still be “obedient,” “righteous” people even though they were not perfect. For example, when the Scripture calls Job “blameless and upright” (Job 1:1), the point does not seem to be to state that Job was justified—that is, blameless by imputation (although such was likely the case). Rather, the text follows up with the explanation that Job positively “turned away from evil.” Thus “blameless” seems to refer to Job’s general character and behavior, not his status before God.

holy God? Will the parable of Israel find its mirror in you personally for eternal curse or for eternal blessing? The true weight of the law was to rest on every Israelite.

²⁰Sprinkle speaks of “comprehensive” or “blameless” obedience (Ibid., 51). See also “Interview with Preston Sprinkle on Leviticus 18:5” (accessed August 25, 2009; available from <http://jimhamilton.wordpress.com/2007/09/07/interview-with-preston-sprinkle-on-leviticus-185/>; Internet). Yet I find these labels unhelpful. Clearly Sprinkle wishes to oppose these terms to “perfect” obedience (see “Interview”), yet in and of themselves both terms could imply perfection. For instance, a simple synonym search in Microsoft Word included “complete” and “all-inclusive” for “comprehensive,” as well as “spotless” and “guiltless” for “blameless.”

²¹So Bonar, *Leviticus*, 329-30. The perfect obedient proponents stress the character of God. For them, God cannot fellowship with any kind of sin, and just as Adam was expelled from God for one sin, so too now the one who offends in one point is guilty of all. The inescapable conclusion is that if eternal life in fellowship with God is conditioned on obedience, that obedience must be perfect.

²²So Estelle says, “In the context of the OT itself, there is often the assumption that the law can be kept in some measure and indeed has been kept by certain generations, such as the generation of Joshua and Caleb” (Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5,” 118 n. 45).

Both obedience positions concerning Leviticus 18:5 have good points, and as might be expected, since I believe there is truth in both ideas of “life,” I also believe there is a dual aspect to the obedience required. And again, I hold in this case that general obedience is the immediate referent, while the ultimate need for perfect obedience is an underlying motif. Even the sacrificial system itself points to this motif. God gave the people sacrifices because He cannot tolerate sin. Various kinds of sins called for various kinds of sacrifices. The central sacrificial day in the calendar year of Israel was the day of “atonement.” Sacrifice was central. God did not simply forgive. He demanded exacting obedience and required atonement for disobedience. Yet a significant tension develops in the OT story—how can God truly and finally forgive on the basis of an animal sacrifice? The answer is that he cannot. As Hsebrews says, “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (10:4). The sacrificial system was based on the priesthood, but even the representative priests in Israel had their own sins that needed to be atoned for. The whole old covenant system pointed to the need for a greater sacrifice and a greater priest—one whose obedience and sacrifice would truly provide for the disobedience of God’s people.

The need for perfect obedience also finds warrant in typological considerations. Israel was a new Adam. Both Adam and Israel were called into existence by God’s creative word, both were God’s “son,” and both were placed in a land of “paradise.” Both were to serve as a leader—Adam to all his posterity and Israel to the nations. Both had to obey in order to remain in the land. The parallels could go on,²³ but

²³See the interesting discussion of Michael Horton (*God of Promise* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 94-104). Horton, citing Lev 18:5, also argues the point that for both the Adamic and Mosaic covenants the operating principle was a conditional “do this and you shall live” (102).

obedience is the point of parallel that deserves attention here. Just as the land of Canaan was only typical of heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 3-4; 11:8-16), so too the obedience requisite for Canaan was only typical of the obedience necessary for eternal life. How else could it be that the nation received the land “because Abraham obeyed . . . my statutes” (Gen 26:1-5)? Abraham’s obedience was not perfect. It would be strange indeed if the faithfulness of Abraham (the nation’s father)—faithfulness that was a means of Israel’s obtaining the land—was not the same kind of faithfulness God enjoined of the nation in order for them to keep the land.

And yet again, as Israel was to grasp at the heaven behind Canaan, they should have realized that ultimately a perfect obedience was necessary, an obedience none could deliver. What each individual needed to reclaim was the paradise lost by the nation’s prototype, Adam. And what Adam lost he lost by one sin, one deviation. Just as Adam had to remain perfect to keep his inheritance, so Israel had to be absolutely perfect to regain the original (true) inheritance. Dismay at their inability could only be removed by remembering that their father Abraham was ultimately justified by faith (Gen 15:6), and not by any works of his own. God called them, first and foremost, to a life of faith. Yet Leviticus 18:5 by itself contained no word of grace or faith; it was law. It served as a subtle yet persistent reminder of the people’s inability. By Leviticus 18:5 came the knowledge of sin.²⁴

²⁴The context of Lev 18 also points toward a twofold application, especially in considering the day of atonement (Lev 16) that preceded the holiness code. The day of atonement was a reminder that there surely would be sin, and yet that God made provision for that sin. Disobedient people could purify themselves and remain “holy” provided they obeyed the sacrificial regulations. “Do this and live” was incorporated into a framework that expected and provided for failures “to do.” In this sense the Leviticus “doing” points to a general walk of faithfulness that takes advantage of God’s expiatory sacrifices. But yet again, as Hebrews so powerfully reveals—the old covenant system was imperfect and by itself could never bring ultimate restoration. The priests were imperfect, the sacrifices were imperfect, and the worshippers

Ezekiel 20

I turn now to Ezekiel 20, which appears to contain at least three citations of the Leviticus 18:5 formulation (vv. 11, 13, 21). In each case, discussion of the “statutes and rules” is followed by the refrain, “by which, if a person does them, he shall live.” It may be possible to detect allusions to Leviticus 18:5 elsewhere in Ezekiel (18:9, 17, 19, 21; 33:19). In fact, one recent proposal posits a Leviticus 18:5 theology as a key structural motif in the entire book of Ezekiel,²⁵ and such a proposal is not without warrant.

The book opens with the prophet recounting that “as I was among the exiles by the Chebar canal, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God” (1:1). The book begins with exile—with hopelessness and lifelessness. One must keep in mind that removal from the land, exile, was the promised result of disobedience in Leviticus 18. Israel’s condition as exiled was a testimony to the fact that they did not obey God’s statutes and rules and thus did not retain life in the land. Rather, the land vomited them out.²⁶ At this low point, what was needed was a dramatic inbreaking of God. The people certainly were not capable of delivering themselves from captivity. And yet, in this hopelessness, the heavens do open—God reveals himself. He speaks, and eventually promises to perform remarkable wonders.

had to live with smitten consciences—in and of itself the typical system could not bring full and final forgiveness for any sin. The “smiting” function of Lev 16 becomes all the more jarring when placed up against God’s absolute word of command: do. The only way to have full relief and to avoid the transitory assuaging of Lev 16 was to have no need of Lev 16—to keep the law perfectly. And no one could do this.

²⁵Preston Sprinkle, “Law and Life: Leviticus 18:5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel,” *JOT* 31, no. 3 (2007): 275-293. For an abbreviated discussion see Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 36-44.

²⁶This historical contextual point brings out again the foreground emphasis on life in the land.

After a series of revelatory judgments, Ezekiel eleven brings an extended meditation on rescue. God says to his exiles, “I will give you the land of Israel . . . and I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them . . . that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them . . . ” (vv. 17-19). God promises to do what the people cannot do. After more denunciations and pictures of the sinful nation, God testifies repeatedly in Ezekiel 18 that while the sinner will die, the one who does righteousness will “live” (vv. 9, 17, 19, 21, 22). The chapter ends with the command to turn and live, but more than that, God tells the house of Israel to “make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit” (v. 21). In chapter 18 there is no mention of God’s promise to perform the work himself as in chapter 11.

This point is significant. Chapter 18 contains many commands, with promised repercussions for failure to obey. In this respect it is similar to Leviticus 18 (if not also explicitly alluding to Leviticus 18). But the intervening history (between the Leviticus and Ezekiel timeframes) only proved Israel’s inability. Are they going to try and make one more fresh start on their own? Are they really going to make themselves a new heart and spirit? They cannot. Also interesting is the fact that Ezekiel 18 normally uses a singular subject (except the closing command). If Ezekiel 18 implies inability, then it also implies the individual’s inability. As the negative function of Leviticus 18:5 (the condemning power of law) surfaces more clearly in Ezekiel 18, so too the dimension of individual responsibility before God increases.²⁷

²⁷Such a ratio is altogether appropriate. The typological is connected more to the corporate body, but when the typology of a general obedience and temporal blessings fades, what is left is the individual’s raw guilt before God and his need of perfect obedience, as well as his need for supernatural intervention. Estelle argues that the influences of Pharisaism and Hellenism also eventually led to an increased individualization, which in turn influenced Paul’s interpretation (“Leviticus 18:5,” 119-20, 137-39).

After a poetic lament in chapter 19, the theme of Israel's rebellion picks up again in chapter 20, and in this chapter Leviticus 18:5 finds explicit mention three times, as I have noted. Yet this chapter ends with hope—God announces that he will bring Israel into the land and that they will serve him in the land (vv. 40-44). The juxtaposition of this hope with deserved punishment brings up a jarring question: how can God be just if he allows rebels into his land, when he said he would not? If it is the case, and it seems to be so, that Israel will experience moral renovation and thus cease from defiling the land, how will they experience such renovation? Clearly, change does not lie within their power, as they themselves acknowledge: "Surely our transgression and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?" (33:10).

The answer, anticipated in Ezekiel 11, finds expression in God's restoration.²⁸ In Ezekiel 36, the prophet says that God will do a sovereign, gracious work in the heart: "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you . . . and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land . . ." (vv. 26-28). In this way, the problem of Israel's failure to keep the command of Leviticus 18:5 will be remedied.²⁹ The promise of restoration comes to a climax in chapter 37 with the vision of the dry bones. There, the death-life contrast and necessary work of the Spirit shines. The only way the people will live is if God's life-giving Spirit actually breathes life into them.

²⁸In Ezek 34 God denounces the unfaithful shepherds of Israel, but then promises that He himself will save the flock—through his royal servant "David." I will pick up this Davidic and Messianic theme in the next chapter.

²⁹Estelle summarizes, "The purpose of these echoic allusions in Ezekiel [of Leviticus 18:5] is to show that what Israel has failed to do, God will do" ("Leviticus 18:5," 120). See also Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 292; Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 646.

An important point remains from Ezekiel. In Leviticus 18:5, life is the result of the doing. Yet in a turnabout, in the Ezekiel restoration oracle life precedes the doing. The point seems to be that true life was not something to be had by human effort—it was the gift of God’s grace. Of course, it could be argued here that such was the case originally with Canaan—the people were given the land by grace, but had to remain in it by works. I grant this point, but remember that Canaan was only a “shadow” of the real heavenly inheritance.³⁰ In Ezekiel 36-37, while typological language is still used, the portrait has the ring of finality and perfection about it: “They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they sinned” (36:23). They will no longer sin at all, since true life eventually and graciously will bring perfect obedience. There will be eternal life, and those that possess this life will dwell in the heavenly country, the new Jerusalem, where they will live and do right—perfectly.³¹

Nehemiah 9:29

I turn finally in the OT to Nehemiah 9:29, which reads, “And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he

³⁰On top of this point, the people would still need the Spirit’s assistance if they would perform even a general faithfulness.

³¹The point I am making is not that God rewards his people with heaven on the grounds of foreseen glorified perfection. The point is that sin originally brought expulsion from God’s presence, but that in heaven no one will commit such a crime. Furthermore, if it can be said in a sense that Israel was given Canaan because of Abraham’s general obedience (Gen 26), it can much more be said that believers receive eternal life because of Christ’s perfect obedience. The “do this and live” principle remains in operation even though for the revived Israel the “doing” follows the “living”: God grants Israel life because their head has already “done” perfectly for them. In my estimation, Sprinkle does not adequately address the reversal—life followed by doing—in Ezekiel or the significance of its relationship to Christ’s work.

shall live by them, and turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.” The reference to “do this and live” here is almost a parenthetical aside. This verse comes in the immediate context of a prayer of repentance.³² The entire prayer takes up vv. 5-37. It follows a redemptive historical line, beginning with God’s creation, and moving on—to his calling of Abram, to the deliverance from Egypt, to the covenant at Sinai, to the golden calf, to God’s forgiveness, to land possession, to continued rebellion—concluding with a petition for deliverance. The prayer of Nehemiah 9 is the center of the people’s covenant renewal and return to God in response to his Word (chs. 8-10). This covenant renewal is in turn the center of the book.

A few observations prove helpful. First, the covenant renewal under Nehemiah mirrors the covenant reception at Sinai. The people profess their allegiance and promise to obey (10:28-39), just as at Sinai they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Ex 19:8). Of course, I am not criticizing the people for stating their intention to obey, but one finds little confession of inability and a humble crying out to God in faith that he would do the sovereign work that he has promised to do.³³ The chapter 9 prayer cites Abraham not because of Abraham’s faith but because he is “faithful” (v. 8).³⁴

³²For discussion of this prayer see H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra–Nehemiah*, WBC, vol. 16 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 305–10; F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, NICOT, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 227-34; Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, NAC, vol. 10 (Nashville: B&H, 1993), 233-42.

³³Make no mistake—the people do recognize God’s grace (Neh 9:17, 31), but there almost seems to be the attitude that they can do it, and that they will do it.

³⁴Perhaps even the parenthetical nature of the Lev 18:5 formula in Neh 9 points toward an overzealous presumption of ability—if a person does them he will live by them (and of course we will do them and consequently live by them).

Yet the next two points highlight the irony in this self-help mindset. On one hand, whereas Leviticus 18:5 functioned positively (here is what the people should do), Nehemiah 9:29 functions negatively (here is actually what the people have not done). To put it another way, Leviticus 18:5 originally prescribes what should happen, while Nehemiah 9:29 describes what did happen.³⁵ This devolution should have been a clue that obedience would be more difficult than Israel perhaps originally anticipated. On the other hand, a striking similarity remains in the Nehemiah context—once again there is a switch from a plural subject to a singular and then back again to a plural. This subject switch offers a clue that there is a direct allusion to Leviticus 18:5 in the Nehemiah 9 prayer. From a canonical standpoint, this singular stands out quite markedly from the surrounding promises of the people, plural. Once again, there appears to be a canonical sub-theme of the individual's responsibility to God, a responsibility no person can keep. Finally, it is interesting to observe that in Nehemiah the people do not receive immediate life/restoration. Perhaps this is a canonical clue that the anticipation is building for God to reveal the true way of law-keeping life from heaven.³⁶

Space forbids a detailed treatment of texts in Second Temple Judaism pertaining to do a “do this and live” theology. However, the general teachings of Second Temple Judaism conform to Paul's accusations in the NT, and in the main they square

³⁵So Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 46.

³⁶Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5,” 122.

with interpretations of the Reformers.³⁷ Those who argue otherwise perhaps fail to understand what the Reformers really opposed.³⁸

Luke 10:28

In the NT the Leviticus 18:5 command is quoted three times, and a study of these texts reveals that “do this and live” is an important NT teaching. Christ says “do this and live” in Luke 10:28. While some commentators fail to note any allusion here,³⁹ others do see a reference to the OT. Among those that see an OT reference, many cite Leviticus 18:5 as the text from which Jesus draws.⁴⁰ However, in a recent article Preston Sprinkle has argued that the OT use in this case does not stem from Leviticus 18:5 but

³⁷See Sprinkle’s helpful discussion, *Law and Life*, 53-130.

³⁸Critics of Reformation exegesis point out that the Second Temple literature does attribute an important role to God’s grace. Therefore such teaching should not be considered “legalistic.” Yet the historic Roman Catholic position did attribute a role to God’s grace, and the Reformers acknowledged this point. The problem the Reformers had was that for them, to make works fundamental to justification in any way was legalistic—it amounted to a works righteousness. Stephen Westerholm hits the nail on the head: “Sanders has shown that Judaism did not generally believe that salvation was earned from scratch by human deeds of righteousness; the point is well taken, but it by no means differentiates Judaism from the classical opponents of ‘Lutheran’ thought. Each acknowledged human need of divine grace. What the opponents of ‘Lutheranism’ emphatically did *not* do, however—what they indeed regarded as morally disastrous to do—was to suggest that humans can contribute *nothing* to their salvation” (Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 351). Horton is harsher: “Despite Sanders and his diverse students having made the Reformation views part of their thesis (viz., the Reformers missed Paul’s point), not a single representative of the new perspective on Paul demonstrates any scholarly familiarity with primary or secondary sources in the field. . . . Sanders’ so-called discoveries are hardly new, except to the generations of biblical scholars who have heard distorted versions of Reformation theology only secondhand or thirdhand and assumed a crude view of Judaism as ‘law without grace,’ which the Reformers were too well-informed to have adopted.” (Michael Horton, “Which Covenant Theology,” in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007], 199-200). And again, “It is impossible to read Sanders’ description of Second Temple Judaism and Heiko Obermann’s description of late medieval nominalism and not recognize striking similarities. This covenantal nomism is the official position of post-Tridentine Rome” (ibid., 205-206).

³⁹Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, WBC, vol. 35B (Dallas: Word, 1993).

⁴⁰Sprinkle cites a lengthy list, including Fitzmyer, Schlatter, and Plummer (“The Use of Genesis 42:18 (not Leviticus 18:5) in Luke 10:28: Jesus and the Good Samaritan,” *BBR* 17, no. 2 [2007]: 194).

from Genesis 42:18 (where Joseph says to his brothers, “Do this and you will live”).⁴¹

Contrary to Sprinkle, I believe Leviticus 18:5 is the allusion in view.⁴²

Sprinkle argues his case with the following primary points: 1) Luke 10:28 bears a closer linguistic similarity to the LXX of Genesis 42:18 than of Leviticus 18:5; 2) the Christian community did not have a positive appreciation of Leviticus 18:5, as evidenced by the fact that Paul refers to it negatively; 3) Jesus’ wording is markedly different from other allusions to Leviticus 18:5 (later OT and early Jewish writers); 4) Luke often draws on the book of Genesis; 5) Luke shows great familiarity with the Joseph story.⁴³ In response, as to 1), all three texts share the common verbs ποιέω (linked with a pronoun object) and ζάω. In both LXX verses ποιέω occurs in the aorist tense, while in Luke it is in the present tense. It is true enough that in Leviticus the form is a participle (with ἄνθρωπος as the subject), while in Genesis it is an imperative, but one seems hard-pressed to claim this as sufficient evidence. As to 2), I believe Jesus’ use, like Paul’s, is negative—he is showing the self-righteous lawyer that he has in fact not kept the law, that he can not “do and live.” As to 3), I think it is quite possible that Jesus was simply giving a personal answer to a personal question—other writers employing Leviticus 18:5 typically realize they are addressing a group. Luke was simply reporting

⁴¹Ibid. Sprinkle notes other scholars who take this position but then states that they fail to discuss how the Genesis context and story fits in to Jesus’ account (194).

⁴²This point is fairly important. In Sprinkle’s reading, Luke 10:28 employs Joseph as Jesus and the brothers as the lawyer. As a result, the point of Luke’s story bears little connection to Leviticus 18:5, and to what Paul does with Leviticus 18:5 later, and for that matter the law in general. I will argue that Jesus’ use and subsequent teaching here is of a piece with Paul. (And even if it could be shown that Jesus was quoting Genesis 42:18, I would not change my opinion about Jesus’ point or that point’s relation to Paul; rather, I would simply have a harder time explaining Jesus’ quote as anything more than a sentence lifted out of context.)

⁴³Ibid., 195-199.

the second person form Jesus used in his one-on-one answer. In addition, Jesus responds to the lawyer even grammatically on the lawyer's own terms (the lawyer uses a second person singular in citing the law's instructions). As to both 4) and 5), without unpacking a large comparative study, and without denying that Luke in his writing may have alluded to Genesis and to the Joseph narrative, I simply observe that the closest apparent allusion in this Lukan parable is actually to Leviticus, not to Genesis—Jesus' instruction to "do and live" is immediately precipitated by the lawyer's citation of Leviticus 19:18 ("Love your neighbor as yourself"). The question is not what Luke sometimes (or even frequently) does, but what Luke is doing here.⁴⁴ I believe that Jesus, along with the later OT and Second Temple tradition, is drawing on Leviticus 18:5.

Jesus' words could be paraphrased in this way: "Obey the law perfectly, and you will gain eternal life." The fact that Jesus is referring to eternal life becomes clear from the lawyer's question. The lawyer asks, point blank, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" After the interchange about the law's instructions in this regard, Jesus says, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." There is no reason to assume

⁴⁴The lawyer, likely well-versed in legal stipulations, asks Jesus a question about eternal life (v. 25). Jesus in turn asks for the law's answer (v. 26). The lawyer responds by citing imperatives of the law covenant, and makes specific reference to Leviticus 19. Sprinkle elsewhere affirms the close connection of Leviticus 18-20 (Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 28-29)—why is there a need to assume Jesus left the law covenant for narrative in giving his answer? Jesus' point appears to be to show the lawyer that the law itself condemns him. The Joseph account is quite different. In that story, Joseph is making what he himself knows to be a false accusation. He recognizes his brothers (42:7) but still accuses them of deceit and treachery. The brothers in this specific instance are not guilty; they are innocent. Therefore it seems odd that Sprinkle wants to draw the comparison between the brothers and the lawyer. Certainly the brothers did not show proper compassion to Joseph, but that incident comes far earlier in the Genesis storyline. Here in this case, and in the cases of the "stolen" goods, it is Joseph who acts, in one sense, deceitfully (though with good intentions). Strangely, Sprinkle sees Jesus depicting himself to the rich young ruler as the Joseph figure (Sprinkle, "Use of Genesis 42:8," 204). On top of these considerations, the command to "do" in Genesis is not in any sense law comprehensive—it refers to one specific action that is achievable (bringing back Benjamin). In correlation, the Gen 42:8 "life" appears to have strict reference to physical life. There does not seem to be warrant for inferring a typological connection to eternal life from the "life" of Gen

that Jesus was changing the topic to a different sort of “life.” Jesus still seems to have eternal life in view. Further confirmation of this fact comes in the next verse, where Luke records that the lawyer responds by trying to “justify” himself. The implication: “Do this and you will be justified.” These verses also imply that eternal life is the result of the doing. The lawyer asks Jesus, “τί ποιήσας ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω.” I would take the ποιήσας participle as an adverbial participle of means.⁴⁵ That is, the lawyer is curious about what means it will take to inherit eternal life.

The next question concerns the nature of the obedience. If it is true that both the lawyer and Jesus are referring only to eternal life, it would seem to follow that the obedience in question must be perfect obedience—the law must be kept perfectly. The way Jesus prods the lawyer gives evidence that this is in fact Jesus’ point. When Jesus tells the lawyer if he does the great commandments he will live, the lawyer asks, “Who is my neighbor?” (10:29). Luke inserts an editorial comment—the lawyer was asking this because he was trying to “justify himself” (v.29). In other words, he was trying to figure out exactly what must be done in order to keep the second great commandment. He thinks there is a chance that he might just be able to “do it.” Jesus responds by offering the parable of the Good Samaritan, a tale of unbelievable generosity and love. Luke’s insertion of the self-justification mindset suggests that Luke sees Jesus’ response as an effective rebuttal of such self-reliance. Jesus, perceiving the lawyer’s heart, responds with a story that strikes to the heart. Significant is the fact that in Jesus’ parable the priest and

42:8, whereas I have argued that there is such connection with regards to the blessed covenant life of Lev 18:5.

⁴⁵Daniel B. Wallace takes it as a participle indicating result (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 637), but even in this case the interpretation would not be much affected.

the Levi did not love. Yet the priest and the Levi would have represented in some ways the best that the Jews could offer in terms of passionate law-keeping. The lawyer's question and concern seems to indicate that he too has a very high regard for the law. Yet Jesus subtly points out that even the most religious people often fail to love from their heart—no one really loves his neighbor as himself all the time. The conclusion is that no one can gain eternal life by doing the things of the law.⁴⁶

In conclusion, observe the way Jesus uses Leviticus 18:5. He does not imply that a general faithfulness will lead to temporal blessing. In this he does not employ the primary significance of Leviticus 18:5 in its OT context. However, I argued that even in the OT context “do this and live” contained a typological relationship that Jesus does bring out. So it would be wrong to say that Jesus is merely proof-texting, reinterpreting, misusing, or abusing this text. Remember that the primary OT meaning was tied to the old covenant law and the corporate nation of Israel. As such, in the NT we could expect such application to fall away. Jesus himself is the true Israel who lays the axe to the old covenant nation of Israel and inaugurates a new covenant that makes the old covenant obsolete. In this new covenant Jesus does not promise his people temporal blessing or socio-economic prosperity. In this new covenant the new creation dawns and eternal life dawns with it. The shadowy shell of the old covenant falls away to reveal the unfading eternal glory of the new. In this connection, the typological skin of Leviticus 18:5 sloughs

⁴⁶See R. Scott Clark, “Letter and Spirit,” in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 359-60. The story does end with Jesus' command to “Go, and do likewise” (v. 37), and I am not suggesting that there is absolutely no call to personal obedience in this story. Jesus is holding out the Samaritan's behavior as a good example to follow, and it is likely that the Christian reader is encouraged to good works, and to show mercy to all kinds of people. However, it is important to recall that the story begins with the question of eternal life (v. 25). In addition, Luke notes the lawyer's thought—he wanted to justify himself (v. 29). This sets the context for Jesus' response, and it helps to indicate that one of Jesus' points was to expose sin and bring conviction.

off and what is left is a command that conditions true eternal life on perfect obedience. It remains to be seen whether Paul uses Leviticus 18:5 in similar fashion.

Galatians 3:12

Paul first refers to Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12. The Galatians verse occurs in the middle of a five-verse section (3:10-14) that continues to trouble interpreters. Paul appears in some sense to pit the OT against the OT—favorably quoting Habakkuk 2:4 and negatively quoting Leviticus 18:5. Some of the questions stem from the debated meaning of the phrase “works of the law” in verse ten, and for that matter broader questions surrounding the nature of justification and the opposition of “works” to “faith” throughout the book of Galatians.⁴⁷ But my primary concern is with the Leviticus 18:5 citation. Paul states in Galatians 3:12, “But the law is not of faith, rather, ‘the one who does them shall live by them.’” Here in this verse, as with Jesus’ statement in Luke, “life” appears to correspond to justification—thus eternal life is in view. Paul has been discussing justification throughout Galatians (2:15-16; 3:8) and even in the immediate context (3:11). Furthermore, Paul seems to parallel “life” with the “blessing” given to Abraham (vv. 9, 14). This blessing comes “in Christ” (v. 14) and is itself equated with gospel blessing, a gospel which promises that God will “justify” the Gentiles (3:8). But if

⁴⁷In short, I believe the phrase “works of the law” comprehends all that the law commands, rather than merely the “boundary markers.” For a defense of this position see Thomas Schreiner, “‘Works of Law’ in Paul,” *NovT* 33 (1991): 217-44. In addition, I believe that justification is a legal term indicating one’s standing before God. For a discussion of related issues in light of recent claims, see Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: the “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004). To me some of the more compelling reasons for such a conclusion are: 1) In Romans 3:20 Paul summarizes his preceding case by claiming that no one can be justified by the law—but formerly he cites specific moral violations (2:21, 22, etc.) and not merely problems with boundary markers; 2) Paul further cites in this connection the examples of Abraham and David, and in their cases boundary markers are not in view but rather their faith, a faith that is stands in contrast to human labor to merit salvation, a labor which instead issues in sin; 3) In Galatians 3:10-12, justification before God by law

it is the case that the life of 3:12 (citing Lev 18:5) is eternal life which stems from justification,⁴⁸ then why is it “evident that no one is justified before God by the law” (3:11)? In summarizing answers to this question, Sprinkle outlines five approaches to the use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12: 1) dogmatic; 2) nomological; 3) salvation historical; 4) anthropological; 5) divine and human agency.⁴⁹

According to the dogmatic approach, the question is answered quite forthrightly in 3:11b with Paul’s Habakkuk quotation: “For ‘the righteous will live by faith.’” Righteousness cannot be by the doing of the law simply because it is by faith in Christ.⁵⁰ There does not need to be any further elaboration on why Paul has said what he did. Support for this view comes not only from 3:11b but also from 2:21, which states that “if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.” On the surface, this viewpoint seems simple enough, but related concerns arise when examining some proponents of this position. For example, E. P. Sanders, one representative of this approach, believes law-righteousness is achievable. Consequently, if certain people had law-righteousness but still were not justified in the Pauline sense, then justification must be by another means. J. Louis Martyn represents another strand of interpretation from

hinges on doing “all” things written in the book of the law (of course such justification by works of the law is impossible).

⁴⁸Sprinkle offers a strong defense of the idea that Paul has soteriological concerns in mind, and that the “life” is eschatological life that comes as a result of the doing (*Law and Life*, 146-153) contra James Dunn and others who see Paul as merely describing a manner of life (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]).

⁴⁹Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 152-164.

⁵⁰E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 483–84; idem, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 26–27; Phillip F. Esler, *Galatians* (NTR; London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 187.

those who fall under the “dogmatic” approach umbrella.⁵¹ These interpreters believe that there was a contradiction in the OT itself (or at least between Paul and the OT). Moses said righteousness and life came by law; Habakkuk (and/or Paul) disagreed. Sometimes these interpreters do not have a high view of Scripture; thus they expect to find dogmatic contradictions. Martyn is slightly different in this passage in that he argues on the basis of Galatians 3:19 that the law was instituted “by angels” and not by God⁵²—the words of Leviticus 18:5 are not God’s words but the false program of others. But the dogmatic approach is open to definite criticism. As Sprinkle rightly points out, if Paul was making a mere dogmatic assertion in 3:11, he would have no need to go on and elaborate reasons for that assertion.⁵³

The “nomological” approach argues that the law cannot bring life because God never intended the law to bring life. As I understand it, that is, there is not even the hypothetical possibility that the law could bring life. Whereas the anthropological approach (see below) views the problem residing in the condition of humanity, this

⁵¹J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, AB, vol. 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

⁵²*Ibid.*, 337.

⁵³Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 153. Also, while it is true that what Paul (and from an evangelical perspective God) says goes without further ado, it is also true that since God speaks through his inspired Word and he cannot lie, we should not expect to find competing theologies in Scripture. Certainly Paul’s audience in Galatians had a high view of the OT and believed that it came from God. Naturally they would wonder how to interpret the Christ event against the backdrop of the law. Furthermore, Paul himself does not merely offer a couple of isolated dogmatic assertions in 2:21 and 3:11—both of these verses stand in the context of the whole letter, a letter in which Paul declares that the law is not “contrary” to God’s promises in an irreconcilable way; rather the law pointed to the need for Christ and was never intended to usurp the promise. Martyn’s particular take regarding the angels is quite speculative and very difficult to maintain—in many places the Scripture says that God did give the law (Exod 19:9; 24:15; Deut 4:11; 5:22; Neh 9:13–14).

approach sees the problem residing in the condition and purpose of the law.⁵⁴ Support for this view comes from Galatians 3:21, which states, “. . . For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.” Sprinkle agrees with this approach to a certain extent, observing that “Here [3:21] it is clear that Paul does not believe that the law has the ability, nor was it intended, to give life. So at least here, Paul rejects the life-giving power of the law on the basis of the inherent inability of the law itself. Moreover, it does not seem that Paul denies the validity of the life-giving power of the law in light of his anthropology.”⁵⁵ The chief objection to this viewpoint, though, is that Paul states that the one who does them will live by them (not that he will not live by them).⁵⁶

The third approach is the salvation-historical approach. According to this approach, the contrast between “faith” and “law” is a contrast between “historical periods

⁵⁴Sprinkle cites H. J. Eckstein as the representative proponent of this viewpoint (155). He also says that Westerholm follows “a similar approach” (156 n. 56), but I did not find clear evidence to put Westerholm under this category. And later Sprinkle cites Westerholm as an “anthropological” proponent (160).

⁵⁵Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 156. In my mind Sprinkle waffles on this point but basically comes down as believing that Paul’s negative anthropology comes out not so much in Galatians but in Romans, though even there humanity’s problem is not lack of perfection but lack of “an adequate performance of the law” (157).

⁵⁶In addition, the nomological approach runs into sharp conflict with Paul’s teaching in Rom 7:10 that the law was ordained “unto life” (εις ζωην). The context in Romans provides a clear anthropological answer to the problem of the law—while the law is holy and righteous and good, people are sinners; they break the law rather than keeping it. Also, the same teachings concerning law and humanity serve as a continued thread throughout Scripture. Such a demonstration is beyond the scope of this chapter, but I have already argued man’s inability from Ezekiel’s use of Lev 18:5, and I have argued that Christ himself apparently taught that law keeping would in fact bring life. While the anthropological dimension may not be as prevalent in Galatians as it is elsewhere, certainly we should not extract Galatians from the rest of the canon (or of Paul’s writings particularly), especially in light of the frequent biblical appeals made by Paul in the epistle. (And as I will argue, Paul does present a clear negative anthropology in Galatians itself.)

in salvation history.”⁵⁷ In 3:23-25, for example, Paul does seem to use the terms “faith” and “law” in just such a sense. Bringing this understanding back into 3:11-12, Paul is not using Habakkuk (faith) and Moses (law) as “two mutually exclusive bases for righteousness;”⁵⁸ he is simply noting that salvation history has progressed. One large problem with this view, as Sprinkle points out, is that according to such a mindset, “in principle there is nothing wrong with ‘doing these things’ in order to ‘live by them.’”⁵⁹ Could Paul be saying that in a former era in salvation history eschatological life could come by doing the law?⁶⁰ No, rather in 3:10-14 Paul uses both Habakkuk and Leviticus to prove that no one has (or will be) justified by their works of the law.

The fourth approach Sprinkle lays out is the “anthropological approach.” In this viewpoint “doing” could hypothetically lead to life, but the problem is with man—he is unable to “do” as he should.⁶¹ Sprinkle acknowledges that negative anthropology is a “Pauline theme” but that “in Galatians, humanity’s inability to perform the requirements

⁵⁷Joel Willitts, “Context Matters: Paul’s Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” *TynB* 54 (2003), 119.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 159.

⁶⁰Sprinkle rightly asks, “If Lev 18:5 represents the time of ‘unrealised covenant potential,’ then what has caused its lack of unrealisation?” (*ibid.*).

⁶¹Sprinkle also puts under this category those who say that even trying to “do” is sinful since it is inevitably legalistic, like Bultmann (*ibid.*, 159-160); in addition, for Sprinkle, “Some in this approach, such as Stephen Westerholm and Simon Gathercole, hold to an anthropological approach but do not necessarily think that lack of perfect obedience or legalism is the issue. For these interpreters, it is simply the inability of Adamic humanity (including Israel) to adequately obey the law (Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 418–21; Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1–5* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 128–35, 222–24 [Gathercole’s comments are related to Romans, not Galatians here])” (160). However, the normal approach among those under the “anthropological” umbrella is to hold to a perfect obedience position. See T. R. Schreiner, “Perfect Obedience,” 151-60; Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 128-30.

of the law has more to do with their enslavement to the powers of “this present evil age” (1:4; cf. 4:1–11, 21–31) than with the corruption of the human nature itself—the latter is present (e.g. 1:4, 2:20) but not as dominant as the former.”⁶² Sprinkle, noting the explicit Galatian motif of bondage to cosmic powers, avers, “to say that Lev 18:5 is invalid because ‘no one fulfils the law perfectly’ goes beyond what Paul says in Galatians.”⁶³ Sprinkle’s essential point on this score is that cosmic bondage is the more appropriate anthropological issue in Galatians.

But in response,⁶⁴ the fault with this cosmic stress is that it almost implies that these two emphases (viz., cosmic bondage vs. inherent human corruption/inability) are alternative answers, rather than correlative answers. Sprinkle acknowledges as much when he agrees that human depravity is a preeminent Pauline theme. These two themes are not independent truths—they are intimately connected.⁶⁵ In fact, in considering these two correlative issues, human sinfulness appears to be more fundamental. If people

⁶²*Law and Life*, 160-61.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴It is interesting to note that the “perfect obedience” approach has long-standing pedigree in the Christian tradition. Indeed, it is arguably the dominant “traditional” Protestant understanding from the time of the Reformation onward (Schreiner, “Perfect Obedience,” 151). This by no means makes the view somehow automatically correct, but it does suggest that such a position should be given significant treatment. Sprinkle relegates discussion of a “lack of perfect obedience” to a footnote, and basically notes two things—first, that this viewpoint hinges on reading an implied premise into 3:10 (and then connecting that notion to 3:12), and second, that this approach to 3:10 “has been severely critiqued by representatives of all other views” (*Law and Life*, 161). One might wish Sprinkle had discussed some of the actual arguments of these apparently devastating critiques. Is it dramatically surprising that interpreters who hold alternative views would “all” find fault with this view? Interpretation is not a democratic affair, and just as “traditionalists” should not merely say, “Everyone used to believe that,” so too should those with differing approaches be wary of implying, as if it is a trump card, “Well, no one believes that anymore.” The arguments themselves must be examined.

⁶⁵How is it, Paul, we might ask, that humans manifest their bondage to evil powers? Paul would answer: by practicing unrighteousness instead of righteousness—they are taken captive by Satan to

obeyed God perfectly, they would not be under bondage. Again, while the theme of human corruption is prevalent in Scripture, it is not absent in Galatians. Strikingly, Sprinkle mentions parenthetically two such passages (1:4, 2:20)⁶⁶ but fails to note the significant place of 1:4. At the very outset of the letter Paul reminds the Galatians that Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age.” It is sin that must be taken care of if people are to be delivered from bondage. At the end of the letter Paul reiterates that the opponents have failed to do something (something more than simply recognizing their cosmic bondage)—they have failed to keep the law themselves (5:3; 6:13). The Spirit that liberates from the bondage of being “under law” (parallel in some sense to “cosmic bondage” 4:1-7) is the Spirit who opposes the workings of the flesh—this Spirit overcomes personal sin and produces good fruit (5:16-26). The human corruption and sinfulness that so marks the “old creation” finds its righteous answer in the dawn of the “new creation” in believers.

On top of this point (and the points outlined above under the nomological approach), a closer inspection of Galatians 3:10-12 seems to give weight to the anthropological approach. A “perfect obedience” approach to verse ten does understand an implied premise. The syllogism would look something like the following. Major premise: all who do not keep the works of the law (perfectly) are under a curse. Implied minor premise: no one keeps the law perfectly. Conclusion: All are under a curse. An initial and important question is why Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26: “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them.”

do his will, that is, to sin. But Paul, how does it come to pass that Satan has power over God’s creation? Answer: because of sin—Adam freely chose to surrender his liberty by disobeying God.

⁶⁶Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 160.

How many are under this curse? Paul will soon say that Christ “redeemed us from the curse of the law” (v. 13). Surely Christ did not die needlessly (2:21). Since all people must flee to Christ, it appears that all people are under God’s curse.⁶⁷ If indeed all are under the curse, it would seem to follow that all have failed to “abide by all things written in the book of the law.” Paul grounds his initial statement (“all who rely on works of the law are under a curse”) in the Deuteronomy quotation (note the γὰρ). Paul gives the reason why all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. The reason is not that perfect law-keeping would not gain life; the reason is that there is a curse on everyone who does not abide by “all things written.” This fundamental assertion issues in the need for another way of salvation, and this gracious alternative Paul discovers in Habakkuk: people can be just through faith.⁶⁸ The fact that Paul quotes from the LXX might be a further evidence that Paul does have in mind perfect obedience—the LXX adds the word “all” (the MT for Deuteronomy 27:26 does not attest to an “all”). If Paul did not want to emphasize perfect obedience, why does he quote from a Bible translation that speaks explicitly of “all” things written in the law? Paul’s stress is on a jot and tittle obedience that no person can provide.⁶⁹ Were it not for human sinfulness, justification by law would

⁶⁷Whether or not the “us” in v. 13 refers explicitly to all people, surely Westerholm is correct to observe: “the curse that the law pronounces on transgressors is hardly to be distinguished from the divine condemnation that looms over all who fall short of God’s required righteousness” (Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 376).

⁶⁸Of course, one could object at this point that even if people kept the whole law they would still be under a curse since righteousness comes by faith. Yet if this objection comes, it must be observed that such a view is actually quite speculative, for Paul does not say this. To merely observe that righteousness comes by faith and not by law does not answer the important question—but why is this so? Paul has already answered himself by setting up the plight in 3:10.

⁶⁹One objection to such a teaching is the idea that perfect obedience in some sense was possible. After all, does not Paul say in Phil 3:6 that he was blameless as to the righteousness found in the law? In understanding Paul’s statement here, one must note the context, as well as considering what Paul

be hypothetically possible, since, as Paul goes on to say, “The one who does them will live by them” (v.12b).⁷⁰

It is difficult to understand why the idea of an implied proposition strikes some as so far-fetched. (It is difficult to account for the place of the Deuteronomy 27:26 quotation without such an understanding.) Implied propositions are quite a common feature of language.⁷¹ And it must be stressed that this feature is not the invention of a post-Enlightenment rationalistic Western viewpoint. As noted earlier, Calvin, pre-Enlightenment thinker that he was, had no difficulty inferring an implied proposition from Galatians 3:10. Ancient Roman textbooks on rhetoric discussed such devices, and Paul uses them elsewhere.⁷² The upshot of all this is simply that the Leviticus 18:5 quotation can be taken at face value—the one who does all the things of the law will in

says elsewhere. For example, in I Timothy Paul calls himself the chief of sinners, citing a list of specific sins like blasphemy and persecution (1:12-15). Certainly the law condemned such sins. It is best to understand Paul’s statement in Philippians as his pre-Christian, Pharisaical estimation of his “righteousness” (so Schreiner, “Perfect Obedience,” 158). While the OT does speak of certain men like Abraham and David as “righteous” and/or “obedient,” it is also true that in Romans Paul cites both of these men as examples of God justifying the “ungodly.” While they may have acted righteously in a general sense, they did not have the perfect righteousness needed to stand before the bar of God’s justice—and for this reason they needed forgiveness and imputed righteousness.

⁷⁰G. Vos offers a warranted conclusion concerning Gal 3: “In this whole chapter the representation is, throughout, that the law method of justification is ineffective.... But it is plain that judgments of this class imply nothing derogatory to the law method of securing eternal life in the abstract. The disability under which the legal system labors is not inherent in the system itself, but arises wholly from the fact that men attempt to put it in operation in a state of sin” (“The Alleged Legalism in Paul’s Doctrine of Justification,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980], 388).

⁷¹For example, the truth of simple statement like “You can’t live forever” is built on the premise that “No one lives forever,”—just a different version of the famous Socrates syllogism.

⁷²See Marc J. Debanne, *Enthymemes in the Letters of Paul* (London: T&T Clark International, 2006). In a recent article, David E. Aune is critical of the notion that Paul drew from Aristotle (“The Use and Abuse of the Enthymeme in New Testament Scholarship,” *NTS* [2003], 49: 299-320), but Debanne rightly points out that “as long as a Pauline scholar can correctly identify a truncated syllogism in one of the epistles and reconstruct it effectively, whether or not she believes that this scheme comes from Aristotle becomes, in a sense, a secondary issue” (31-32).

fact live. But no one does.⁷³ The anthropological approach has not misunderstood Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3. Paul, like Jesus, highlights mankind's inability and the consequent condemning power of the law.

⁷³In my judgment, Sprinkle's "divine and human agency approach" (*Law and Life*, 161) proposal does not exactly qualify as a different outlook. Developing off the work of Francis Watson (*Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), Sprinkle believes that "with the antithesis between Hab 2:4 and Lev 18:5, Paul is not pitting two modes of human action up against each other—e.g. 'believing' versus 'doing'—but is driving a wedge between divine action and human action in appropriating eschatological salvation" (*Law and Life*, 161-62). Importantly, "This view is different from the *anthropological* approach, since it does not see lack of perfection or legalism as the issue; it differs from the *nomological* approach, since it does see a problem with human endeavour" (162). The gospel prioritizes divine action, not human action. It is not what people do but what God has done in Christ. Sprinkle spends several pages (164-176) defending this approach through three arguments from the broader context in Galatians, which he summarizes as follows: "First (§3.1), I will show that the theological shape of Galatians 1 and 2 exhibits a gospel that prioritises divine action over human endeavour. Second (§3.2), the correlation between "works of the law" and "the flesh" (Gal 3:2-5) suggests that law-obedience is a "merely human" way to maintain God's activity. Finally (§3.3), the opposition between Hab 2:4 and Lev 18:5 itself may portray two different paradigms regarding the attainment of eschatological life" (163-64). In evaluating Sprinkle's own "divine action" position, doubtless such an approach does indeed sound helpfully "christological" (162). Yet Sprinkle needs to further clarify his position in order to distinguish it from other approaches. I doubt that many (any?) other interpreters would really disagree with the idea that God's action takes priority over human action. The question is not a question of fact (whose "action" takes priority), but of understanding (why or how is this the case). Often throughout his discussion Sprinkle appears merely to say, "God saves, not man." But again, who disagrees with that? Certainly not the traditional "anthropological" interpreters. And Sprinkle acknowledges that the faith in view is human faith—he says that "even Habakkuk speaks of *faith*, a human act" (171). After reaffirming that the faith in view is human faith (not Christ's faith/faithfulness), Sprinkle then offers arguments to show that such faith lines up on the divine side of the antithesis between God's action and man's. These are fine arguments insofar as they go, but they do nothing to constitute a unique contribution. Reformed Protestants have always pointed out that faith cannot be a "work" since it is a gift of God's sovereign grace. Many Protestants have already stated that faith is not a work precisely because it trusts in what God has done. Sprinkle understates it to conclude that his viewpoint is "compatible" with "elements of other views, in particular the *nomological* view and a nuanced *anthropological* view"—that is, of course anthropological "without the 'legalism' or 'sinless perfection' slant" (176). Yet again, Sprinkle is somewhat confusing in arguing for a modified anthropological view (without sinless perfection) that still sees humanity as lacking "the ability to escape the curse under their own power; namely, by 'doing these things' so as to gain life 'by them'" (176). Presumably, then, for Sprinkle 'doing these things' must mean keeping the law generally, not perfectly. But elsewhere Sprinkle implies that saints like David did achieve precisely this kind of righteousness. See "Interview with Preston Sprinkle on Leviticus 18:5" [on-line]; accessed 25 August 2009; available from <http://jimhamilton.wordpress.com/2007/09/07/interview-with-preston-sprinkle-on-leviticus-185/> 176; Internet). If David did achieve this righteousness, why didn't David "live" on those terms, instead of by faith, as Romans implies?

Romans 10:5

Paul cites Leviticus 18:5 once more, this time in Romans 10:5.⁷⁴ Here, the citation is even more explicit—Paul introduces the quotation with the formula, “For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law” Not only does he attribute the Leviticus formulation to Moses and the law covenant, he also offers a topical explanation: Leviticus 18:5 discusses “righteousness that is based on the law,” literally the “from-law righteousness.”⁷⁵ This quotation comes in an important place in Paul’s argument concerning the law and the Gentiles in respect to Israel’s unbelief. In the broader section (chs. 9-11) Paul argues that God has not abandoned his people Israel—there has always been a remnant by grace. Gentile inclusion is part of God’s purpose to manifest his mercy to all people, both Jews and Gentiles. The OT itself, as Paul shows, foretold this inclusion (9:24-26). Yet why is it that Gentiles have gained righteousness while the Jews in large part have failed to gain righteousness? Paul answers in 9:32:

⁷⁴Due to space constraints, I do not give Rom 2 sustained attention in this chapter, although it arguably brings up a similar theme. There, Paul pauses in his discussion of universal sinfulness and makes a striking statement: God “will render to each one according to his works; to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil . . . but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good” (vv.6-10). Again the reward given is eternal life, and again the condition is the obedience of works. Note in this passage that eternal life does not come from one act or from one moment of well-doing but from “patience in well-doing” (v.6). The implication is that there is a period of sustained “well-doing” that gains eternal life. Paul’s larger point in Rom 1-3 is that all people are likewise failures. Nobody achieves consistent obedience. Nobody successfully completes probation. All sin. The remedy that Christ provides (Rom 4-5) does not sidestep Rom 2:6-10; it fulfills it. Now it should be admitted that this passage is debated. Thomas Schreiner, while acknowledging that the interpretation supported here is “certainly possible,” and even “promising” in light of the flow of the argument in Romans (“Did Paul Believe in Justification by Works? Another Look at Romans 2,” *BBR* 3 (1993), 137 [131-58]), ultimately opts for a Christian obedience interpretation. For a defense of the position I take see Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 139-42.

⁷⁵Sprinkle, after discussing the difficult question of establishing the original text, rightly (to me) concludes that the textual variations in this case should not make a dramatic difference in interpretation (180).

because Israel “did not pursue it [righteousness] by faith, but as if it were based on works.”

Context is all-important when coming to consider 10:5. In unpacking this verse, it is imperative to note that the verse begins with a $\gamma\alpha\rho$. It appears, then, that verse five is not an arbitrary quotation that should be understood apart from the context. Rather, verse five serves as the ground of what precedes it—in verse five Paul offers a reason for his preceding argument. In my opinion the $\gamma\alpha\rho$ links up to the whole section of 9:30-10:4.⁷⁶ An important question is the relationship of the “righteousness of law” (v. 5) and the “righteousness of faith” (v.6).⁷⁷ To put it differently, how does Paul understand Leviticus 18:5 to relate to Deuteronomy 30:12-14? Sprinkle divides interpreters into two categories: “antithetical” and “correlative.” He summarizes the positions as follows: “The antithetical approach understands these texts as standing in opposition to each other: Lev 18:5 (Rom 10:5) is antithetical to Deut 30:12–14 (Rom 10:6–8). The correlative approach

⁷⁶Paul’s leading question, “What shall we say then?” (9:30) seems to demarcate a concluding transition of some sort. This question is further elaborated in the “why” of v. 32 and is answered by a series of “for . . .” Even if the $\gamma\alpha\rho$ of 10:5 only links to the preceding verse, that verse in turn begins with a $\gamma\alpha\rho$, pushing the interpreter back farther. And so the chain goes. It is very difficult to prize out any verse from this entire section. For a discussion of the prior context see Thomas R. Schreiner, “Israel’s Failure to Attain Righteousness in Romans 9:30-10:3,” *TJ* 12 (1991): 209-220.

⁷⁷Grammatically, the question is whether the $\delta\epsilon$ should be construed as an adversative (“but”) or a connective (“and”). Adversative interpreters include Schreiner, *Romans*, 552-54; Moo, *Romans*, 650; Murray, *Romans*, 51; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 286-87; Christian Beker, “Echoes and Intertextuality: On the Role of Scripture in Paul’s Theology,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSS 83 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 64-69; Guy P. Waters, “Romans 10:5 and the Covenant of Works,” in *The Law Is Not Of Faith*, 214-16 (210-39); Dodd, *Romans*, 165. Connective interpreters include Kaiser, “Do This,” 27; Daniel Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 85-88; G. N. Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study in Romans 1-4*, JSNTSS 39 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 190-200; Hays, *Echoes*, 76; R. Badenas, *Christ, the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective*, JSNTSS 10 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 120-25.

understands these texts as compatible: Paul cites Deuteronomy 30 to *redefine* the meaning of Lev 18:5.”⁷⁸ I prefer the “antithetical” approach for three primary reasons.

First, the immediate context suggests that a contrast is in view. Although there are certainly difficulties in understanding Paul’s use of Deuteronomy 30, the repeated references to “Christ” in Romans 10:6-8 show that at least for Paul the “from-faith righteousness” brings Christ into play—it leans on Christ. Paul does not insert a “Christ” reference in citing Leviticus 18:5—apparently the one “doing” there for Paul is not relying on Christ but on himself. In 10:4, in a similar way believing in Christ is the key to overcoming law-righteousness, a law-righteousness which Paul defines in terms of Leviticus 18:5. In v. 3 Paul declares that Israel wrongly tried to establish its own righteousness. This attempt stands in opposition to submitting to “God’s righteousness.” “God’s righteousness” appears to be the “from-faith righteousness”—the faith that clings to God’s gift of righteousness, Jesus Christ. Earlier still, Paul explicitly states the reason Israel did not achieve righteousness: they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works (9:32). These works were an attempt to pursue the law (9:31). It is extremely difficult to avoid the conclusion that “doing the commandments” (v. 5) is an attempt to pursue the law, specifically by works.

Second, Paul elsewhere frequently opposes doing/works to believing/faith. In Romans 3:28 he states, “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” Then in 4:14, “For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.” In Galatians 2:16, “Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in

⁷⁸Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 181.

Jesus Christ, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law”

In Philippians 3:9 Paul expresses his earnest desire to be found in Christ, “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.” The subject in each of these passages is justifying righteousness, the same topic Paul is discussing in the Romans 10:5 context.⁷⁹

Third, it is likely that Paul is using Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 similarly to the way he uses it in Galatians 3:12. And as Sprinkle observes, “virtually all scholars agree” that the use in Galatians 3:12 is antithetical—to Habakkuk 2:5 and the living by faith.⁸⁰ While it is true that Paul could be using Leviticus 18:5 with a different significance in Romans 10:5, one would naturally think that he would use the text in a similar way. Especially in light of the similar subject themes of Galatians and Romans—it is doubtful that Paul is employing Leviticus 18:5 in a dramatically different way in Romans.

Some who propose a “correlative” approach believe that Christ is the one who does the law in Romans 10:5.⁸¹ Of course, this interpretation would provide a much more direct support for the active obedience of Christ. However, Christ does not appear to be the primary referent in this verse. An antithetical approach remains better, and is more in

⁷⁹See Schreiner, *Romans*, 552; Waters, “Romans 10:5,” 215.

⁸⁰*Law and Life*, 183. See also Johan S. Vos, “Die hermeneutische Antinomie bei Paulus (Galter 3.11-12; Römer 10.5-10),” *NTS* 38 (1992): 254-270.

⁸¹Karl Barth, *CD 2/2*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 245; C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (London: T&T Clark International, 1985), 254. The more general correlative approach that sees vv. 6-8 explaining/redefining v. 5 includes representatives such as N. T. Wright, *Romans*, in vol. 10 of *NIB*, ed. Leander Keck [Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 658–63; Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 76.

keeping with Paul's faith/works contrast elsewhere. Others argue that an "antithetical" approach pits one OT passage against another. Surely Paul never would have done this,⁸² especially in trying to persuade readers who believed in the fundamental unity of Scripture. In reply, Paul is simply making two factual statements. As I have argued, both are true in and of themselves. God is not being deceptive in Leviticus—the offer is genuine. The conflict is not on the side of divine schizophrenia but on the side of anthropological weakness. Furthermore, faith does not circumvent the law but grasps hold of the one who has fulfilled the law.⁸³ In conclusion, while it is grammatically possible that the initial δε of 10:6 could be a consecutive ("and"), the adversative translation ("but") is much preferred. Leviticus 18:5 stands in antithesis to Deuteronomy 30:12-14 and the "from-faith" righteousness.

Presuming "antithesis" is the correct model, how does Leviticus 18:5 function for Paul in this antithesis? James Dunn stands as a representative of scholars who believe that the Jews' primary problem was national pride. According to Dunn, "if we are to understand Paul's use of Lev 18:5 in context, we must see it as having a particular target—*not* as condemning all 'doing' or 'good works' in general, but as characterizing that Jewish covenant zeal which restricted God's righteousness to ethnic Israel."⁸⁴ Dunn

⁸²Wright, "Romans."

⁸³"Correlative" interpreters also point out that the original context of the two quotations is quite similar—Deuteronomy's surrounding context speaks of the "commandment" (30:11), obeying "the commandments" (v. 16), and keeping "the commandments" (v. 16). But in reply, is it not significant that Paul leaves out these "doing" and "commanding" formulations in his use? For Paul the "word" is near not because the commandments are keep-able but because of Christ, grasped by the "word of faith."

⁸⁴James D. G. Dunn, "'Righteousness from the Law' and 'Righteousness from Faith': Paul's Interpretation of Scripture in Romans 10:1–10," in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis for His 60th Birthday*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 223. Dunn's more recent commentary deals with this verse in a more nuanced,

finds the conceptual antecedents for the “them” of Romans 10:5 in “their own” righteousness (10:3), their “zeal for God” (10:2), and their “works” (9:32). Yet for Dunn, in each case these phrases are merely the boundary markers—that is, ceremonial laws (and the like) which set apart Israel as a distinctive nation.⁸⁵ This understanding of “works” or “works of the law” has come under significant criticism by scholars such as Simon Gathercole, Thomas Schreiner, Stephen Westerholm, and Douglas Moo.⁸⁶ Again, it is best to take “works of the law” as referring to what the law commands *in toto*.⁸⁷ Yet even if it can be maintained that Paul sometimes uses the phrase “works of the law” to refer to boundary markers, such an interpretation of 9:30-10:5 is implausible. Here Paul does not use the phrase “works of the law” but merely “works,” and these works stand in contrast to God’s grace (11:6; cf. 4:4–5) and his calling (9:12; cf. 9:16).⁸⁸ Paul’s point is that any human attempt to gain God’s favor by “doing” fails.⁸⁹

but not substantially different, way (*Romans*, 600-01). One entailment of this view for Dunn is that Paul is not referring to eschatological life but life within the covenant. This opinion is open to the same objections as I outlined earlier—it is better to understand life consistently as the result of the doing in these various citations.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶See Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Thomas R. Schreiner, “‘Works of Law’ in Paul,” *NovT* 33 (1991): 217-244; idem, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 110-15; Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives*; Douglas Moo, “‘Law,’ ‘Works of the Law,’ and ‘Legalism’ in Paul,” *WTJ* 45 (1983): 73-100.

⁸⁷See the works cited in the previous footnote.

⁸⁸So Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 188.

⁸⁹For further effective critique against Dunn with respect to “zeal for God” and “their own righteousness,” see *ibid.*, 189; Waters, “Romans 10:5,” 218-220. It should be noted that there are some scholars who see Paul’s use of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10 as a rebuttal to legalism. In this case the “the very attempt to gain salvation by law is sinful whether it can be obeyed or not.” (Schreiner, “Paul’s Use,” 12). Certainly Paul says the attempt to gain salvation by the law is wrong, but this begs the question of why this is so. While it is true that those trying to gain life by law-keeping were pursuing such obedience in a sinfully proud way, Paul does not state that genuine obedience is somehow inherently wrong. As Schreiner

Another approach would be to understand this text in similar fashion to Paul's use of it in Galatians 3:12—that is, anthropologically. Sprinkle criticizes this position, arguing, “Paul has in mind humanity's and Israel's sinful condition, not their falling short on a few commandments here and there.”⁹⁰ Such a statement is an unfortunate characterization of the anthropological (understood as perfect obedience) view. The point of an anthropological approach (to Paul's use of Leviticus 18:5) is not to conclude that religious people barely fall short of perfection, and thus need Christ. Anthropological interpreters like Calvin have laid heavy stress on the fact that humanity is totally depraved and full of iniquity. And yet, since many people inevitably resort to trusting themselves and their works, and since many are apparently blind to the depth of their own failure and depravity, Paul smites the proud by reminding them that absolute perfection is what is required if one is to trust in one's own doing.⁹¹ The law reveals that people are not law-keepers but law-breakers. By the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20). For Paul the strict severity of the law and its demands wounds the conscience and highlights all the more the amazing grace of Christ.

Sprinkle continues to object that “in Rom 9–11, Paul does not focus on the disobedience of Israel (or humanity) but on the irrelevance of human activity as it relates to God's election and preservation.”⁹² Here the ambiguity of “activity” needs unravelling.

rightfully states, “There is no warrant for concluding that *doing the law* leads to death when Paul says precisely the opposite, viz., that doing the law leads to life” (13). The inevitable conclusion once again is that no one “does” the law sufficiently.

⁹⁰Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 189.

⁹¹Waters observes that “many older commentators see Romans 10:5 as a witness to the standard of righteousness set forth in the covenant of works” (“Romans 10:5,” 211).

⁹²*Ibid.*, 189.

If Sprinkle means “human works/doing,” then I would make the same points as in the Galatians 3:12 discussion (perfect obedience proponents agree that God’s gracious work saves, not the efforts of people trying to merit their own salvation, etc.). Yet while God’s election is foremost in this section, Paul does lay blame at Israel for sinning—they pursued the law wrongly (9:30-32), they stumbled (9:32), they did not submit to God’s righteousness (10:3), and they are a disobedient (!) and contrary people (10:21). God works his sovereign purposes not apart from but through human (dare I say?) activity. In Romans 9-11 Paul does make the call for the human activity of faith. Such an activity is not “irrelevant.” People were cut off due to unbelief, but people will be grafted in if they believe in Jesus (11:17-23).

Many of the reasons cited to argue for an antithetical approach in Galatians 3:12 could stand in here (along with the contextual summary). Paul does not criticize the law in and of itself. As he says elsewhere, the law is holy, righteous, and good (7:12). He criticizes the nation of Israel because they have failed to see their wretched sinfulness and inability to gain life by the law. Instead of believing in Christ, they stumbled at this rock of offense, wishing instead to cling to their “own” righteousness, which was in fact no righteousness before God. In sum, Paul uses Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 essentially the same way as he used it in Galatians 3:12—as a negative condemning word that shows people their inability and prods them to forsake trusting in their own works.

Conclusion

A “do this and live” theology offers a consistent witness: both Jesus and Paul use Leviticus 18:5 to show sinners that they must obey the law perfectly if they would attain eternal life by their own works. Such a conclusion does not stem from purely

“dogmatic” categories or traditional theological perspectives imposed on the texts; such a conclusion arises from a careful consideration of the texts themselves. Furthermore, this use is not a twisted “reinterpretation” of the original command in Leviticus 18:5—the OT itself contains such an application (though this application is not as evident on the surface). Naturally, Paul and Jesus confronted their contemporaries with the true and deep import of the OT’s “do this and live” witness.

The intersection of this teaching and the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ surfaces quite readily. Jesus and Paul agree that the law has always been “ordained to life” (Rom 7:10).⁹³ Law-keeping for eternal life is not, in the end of the day, a human invention. Rather, the God of perfect justice has appointed obedience to him as the means of eternal life. However, the perfectly holy God demands perfect obedience. Yet no human this side of the Fall can fulfill God’s condition. The offer of eternal life is a bona fide offer, but no sinful human will ever meet God’s expectations. Yet the requirement remains. Simple forgiveness is not enough—obedience must still be supplied. Given the fact that some will inherit eternal life, the only solution to the dilemma of perfect obedience to God is for someone else to obey God perfectly in the place of sinners. A

⁹³For many, the Mosaic covenant served in part as a republication of the covenant of works made with humanity in Adam (see e.g., Turretin, *Institutes*, 2.267). In that sense this chapter provides continuity with the last chapter—even after the Fall, God has not changed his standard. An obedience-for-life principle is retained, despite humanity’s inability. However, it is again helpful to stress that one could agree with the argument of this chapter and still disagree with the argument of the first chapter. Denying a covenant of works with Adam should not necessarily lead one to deny the need for perfect obedience after the Fall to gain eternal life.

pattern of representational dis/obedience is already set in place in the person of Adam, and the next chapters focus on Messiah's vicarious obedience for eternal life.⁹⁴

⁹⁴Coming full circle, those who cite "do this and live" passages as evidence for the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ are correct to do so. (However, it would still be helpful for them to unpack some of the biblical theology and typology lying behind such conclusions.)

CHAPTER 5

MESSIAH'S OBEDIENCE FOR ETERNAL LIFE FORESHADOWED

Those who have espoused the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ have not done much in the way of developing a biblical theology for this doctrine, especially when it comes to the OT. To be sure, they have argued from God's initial arrangement with Adam,¹ they have cited the "do this and live" verses,² and they have appealed to specific texts that refer to God in some way bringing about righteousness.³ Yet for all

¹John Owen, *Justification by Faith Alone*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 5:250; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 3:393-95; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1958; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000), 380; Jonathan Edwards, "Justification by Faith Alone," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 1:636; J. V. Fesko, *Justification* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 139; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 570; R. Scott Clark, "Do This and Live: Christ's Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, ed. R. Scott Clark (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 246; R. L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 626; John Bolt, "Why the Covenant of Works is a Necessary Doctrine," in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy Prentiss Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 184.

²Note again that the title of the R. Scott Clark chapter, "Do This and Live: Christ's Active Obedience as the Ground of Justification," in *Covenant, Justification, and Pastoral Ministry*, 229-266. Yet others cite various "do this and live" verses. See Owen, *Justification*, 262; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 721; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 517, 570.

³Owen, *Justification*, 274; Francis Turretin, *Justification*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 29; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:378; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 380; Edwards, "Justification By Faith Alone," 636; Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 721; Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 626; VanDrunen, "To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice: A Defense of the Active Obedience of Christ in the Light of Recent Criticism," in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy Prentiss Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 139; Fesko, *Justification*, 152; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 571.

this, there seems to be little attention to the unfolding storyline of the OT.⁴ Does the OT begin to develop the idea of a Messiah to come who will represent the people of God, positively obeying God for them? This chapter explores that question in four sections: 1) the question of Messianism in the OT; 2) the major covenants; 3) the wisdom literature; and 4) the prophets.

Messiah in the OT?

At the outset, I need to address one potential objection. Many scholars today argue that the concept of messianism is not prevalent in the OT, if it even exists at all.⁵ And certainly if we cannot even speak of an OT expectation of Messiah it will be very hard to focus on one aspect of his work. Those who object to OT messianism point to the

⁴A couple important exceptions should be noted. First, see the helpful chapter by R. Fowler White and E. Calvin Beisner, "Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology: Understanding the Principles at Work in God's Covenants," in *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 147-170. Their thesis deals with personal merit and representative merit in the various covenants (148). While their concern is broader—they seek to apply their work to the concept of justification by faith alone—they do at various points reiterate the connection of covenantal development in the OT with the doctrine of active obedience (155, 157, 159, 166). The work of Michael Horton should also be noted. Once again Horton's concern is not necessarily to place the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ front and center. However, as he moves through the story of Adam and its various recapitulations in Scripture, he does not fail to note the importance of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ (*God of Promise* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 87-102). See also various references to the doctrine in his *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 33; *Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 133, 162-81, 191-93, 208, 218-43; *Covenant and Salvation: Union With Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 114-21, 177, 202-3; *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 19, 150, 296-98.

⁵See many of the contributions in Stanley Porter, ed. *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); J. H. Charlesworth et al., eds. *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Jacob Neusner, W. S. Green, and E. Frerichs, eds. *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Roland Murphy, "Notes on OT Messianism and Apologetics," *CBQ* 19 (1957): 5-15.

usage of the Hebrew term itself—מָשִׁיחַ (“messiah,” or “anointed one”).⁶ The term is used thirty-nine times in the OT, and most of these references refer to a king.⁷ Those who object to OT messianism argue that the king in view is not a coming eschatological king.⁸ Rather, the immediate context of the references points toward the present king.

In response, it is true that often מָשִׁיחַ does not explicitly refer to a coming eschatological king. For example, when Saul dies Samuel goes to Jesse by the Lord’s instructions, prepared to anoint one of Jesse’s sons the king of Israel. When Samuel sees Jesse’s son Eliab, he thinks that Eliab is surely מָשִׁיחַ (1 Samuel 16:6). Of course, it is possible that Samuel is thinking in terms of the coming one who is to redeem Israel; however, it seems more likely that Samuel simply thinks Eliab is God’s chosen man for the time being to be king in Israel. Furthermore, the foreign and wicked king Cyrus is even called God’s מָשִׁיחַ (Is 45:1). Surely there is no prophecy here of a coming redeemer; rather Cyrus is simply God’s chosen vessel for the time to inflict judgment on God’s people. Yet more must be said before the case can be surrendered to these objectors.

First, in at least a few cases the מָשִׁיחַ does clearly refer to a coming eschatological figure. For example, Daniel 9:25-26 reads, “Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one [מָשִׁיחַ], a prince, there shall be seven weeks. . . . After the

⁶The LXX regularly translates the term with χριστος.

⁷The verb form appears in the OT close to seventy times. For a study of the verb see Richard S. Hess, “The Image of the Messiah in the OT,” in *Images of Christ: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Stanley Porter, Michael Hayes, and David Tombs (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 23-30. Hess concludes that the verb form also usually relates to a royal figure (*ibid.*, 29).

⁸Roland Murphy, “Notes on OT Messianism,” 5; John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 1; Tremper Longman, “The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings,” in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, 13.

sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off.” The context is prophetic, and although certain aspects of this prophecy are somewhat enigmatic,⁹ the general import is difficult to debate: sin will be atoned for and everlasting righteousness will be brought in (9:24). This type of finality can hardly come through a merely human figure such as Zerubbabel or Joshua—what is needed is a divine ruler who is also a man of Israel.¹⁰

Second, scholars are by no means all agreed that מָשִׁיחַ rarely if ever refers to a coming eschatological figure. Walter Kaiser, for instance, thinks that nearly a quarter of the times the term is used it does signify the Lord’s coming king.¹¹ Third, in many cases the term refers to David or a Davidic king of Israel. Yet we must remember that David was a type of the greater Messiah to come. The NT fills out this picture, for in a number of places the NT cites a passage that appears to speak of David and applies the passage to Christ.¹² Therefore an OT typology does seem to be set in motion, a typology in which OT “messiahs” in many places point forward to a greater Messiah to come.

⁹In 9:25, the term מָשִׁיחַ, which the ESV translates “prince,” is difficult to define precisely. For a discussion see Trygve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacramental Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 151-85, and Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1981), 1-11. For discussion of Daniel’s prophecy see Vern S. Poythress, “Hermeneutical Factors in Determining the Beginning of the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:25),” *TJ* 6, no. 2 (1985): 131-49; Tim Meadowcroft, “Exploring the Dismal Swamp: the Identity of the Anointed One in Daniel 9:24-27,” *JBL* 120, no. 3 (2001): 429-49; John Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 261; John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 355.

¹⁰Goldingay rightly points out that the term is normally used of an Israelite ruler, either a prince or high priest (*Daniel*, 261). Although Meadowcroft argues against an individual messianic interpretation (opting instead for a communal understanding), he acknowledges that an individual interpretation is the usual one (“Identity of the Anointed One,” 430).

¹¹Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 16.

¹²To cite some of many: Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 4:25-26; 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5. Davidic typology is a broad topic in and of itself, but for further reflection see Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 231-34; Robert L. Raymond, *Jesus: Divine Messiah* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003).

Fourth, and more importantly, this objection against OT messianism rests in part on a lexical fallacy. Those criticizing OT messianism appear to assume that all they have to do is look at the individual term מָשִׁיחַ. Yet theology is not based on word studies alone. Concepts must be considered as well. That is, even if the term מָשִׁיחַ is not always used of an eschatological figure, we must still ask whether or not the Bible presents such a concept, perhaps using different specific words. The answer to this question is an affirmative one. Starting with the curse-reverser who will crush the serpent's head, and concluding with Malachi's messenger of the covenant, after the Fall the OT presents a prevalent hope for a coming champion.¹³ And there is nothing wrong with calling this coming champion God's Messiah.¹⁴

Fifth, and as a corollary to the fourth point, the NT itself bears witness to Messiah in the OT. Luke 24:25-27 reports, "And he [Jesus] said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Later in the

¹³At this point I will not argue this case in detail. Others have done a fine job and in many ways I stand on their shoulders. See B. B. Warfield, "The Divine Messiah in the Old Testament," in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: P&R, 1952), 79-126; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980); idem, *The Christ of the Prophets* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004); Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1995); Michael P. V. Barrett, *Beginning at Moses* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999); Raymond, *Jesus: Divine Messiah*; Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 3-12; Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); David Baron, *Rays of Messiah's Glory: Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955); John Gill, *The Prophecies of the Old Testament Respecting the Messiah* (London: Aaron Ward, 1728).

¹⁴Even if some do not wish to call this figure "Messiah," they still must come up with some way to designate him. Whatever name is chosen, he is still the promised eschatological Savior. Therefore, the warrant for this chapter still exists, since it is still appropriate to ask what this figure does, and how he saves (regardless of the name by which he is called).

same chapter Christ says, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled,” and Luke comments, “then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” (24:44-45). In John, Jesus confronts the Jews, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (5:38). The gospel concerning Jesus was “promised beforehand through his [God’s] prophets in the holy Scriptures” (Rom 1:2). The gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection happened “in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4). Paul reminds Timothy, “from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). Having shown that the NT itself provides warrant for finding Christ in the OT, I now turn to explore the covenants.

The Covenants

It will be helpful to trace through the OT using, insofar as possible, the Bible’s own categories and emphases. Taken in as a whole, the OT seems to fall out in covenantal epochs. The major movements of the story turn with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David, and the respective arrangements that God made with each. Therefore this chapter will seek to follow that line of movement. Throughout, this study is done with a view toward the question of Messiah’s obedience for his people.

Adam

I will not at this point repeat all that I said about Adam in chapter 3. In sum, I argued that in Scripture Adam is presented as the federal head of mankind, that his

obedience would have secured confirmation in life, and that he was to act as the obedient son, the righteous king, the faithful servant, the covenant-keeper, and the wise man. Even though I will not repeat these Adamic themes in detail here, it is important to bear in mind the Scriptural testimony concerning Adam, since Adam is a type of Christ (Rom 5:14). Already in Adam, the canon sets various messianic themes in motion.¹⁵

Obedience and sonship are two prominent themes in the garden before the Fall, yet after the Fall these two themes do not drop off the map. God promises a curse reverser to come from Eve's offspring (Gen 3:15).¹⁶ The text does not specify exactly how Eve's offspring will crush the serpent's head. The language is militaristic, which in and of itself might emphasize a purely *Christus Victor* theme. Yet it is important to keep in mind the whole narrative of the Fall. God is a God of justice who cannot tolerate sin. His holiness is at stake, and he cannot simply let bygones be bygones. Somehow, God is able to justly hold out the prospect of everlasting life (Gen 3:22). How is this possible? If condemnation came through disobedience, it would appear that if justification is possible, it must come through obedience. The seed of the woman will wage war against the seed of the serpent, but this will not be a battle merely of raw power but of upright living. Without an obedient son, the serpent can rightfully claim victory.

When Eve bears her first son Cain, she declares, קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה. The ESV

¹⁵Again, even if one disagrees with a covenant of works with Adam, the portraits of Adam as obedient son, etc., should be agreed upon, and are still therefore messianically significant.

¹⁶Vos warns against reading the Eve's seed as personal rather than collective (*Biblical Theology*, 70). Yet the weightiest factor for seeing the seed as an individual in this case is that the verse follows by using a singular pronoun—"he" will bruise your head. For further discussion see C. John Collins, "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?" *TynBul* 48, no. 1 (1997): 139-48; Jack P. Lewis, "The Woman's Seed (Gen 3:15)," *JETS* 34, no. 3 (1991): 299-319; M. Woudstra, "Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15," *CTJ* 6 (1971): 194-203; W. Wifall, "Gen 3:15—A

translates this verse, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” In this translation, “the help of” is a supplied phrase. The $\eta\kappa$ could indeed signify “with,” but it could also be an object marker. I would argue the latter, and that Eve is actually simply saying, “I have gotten a man—the Lord.”¹⁷ Trusting in the Lord’s promise, Eve perhaps believed that her firstborn was the curse-reverser God had promised, a divine and obedient son. Yet these hopes are quickly dashed. Instead of slaying the serpent, Cain kills his own brother. Abel acted righteously (Heb 11:4; 1 John 3:12), but Cain acted unrighteously, and the NT pronounces a woe on those who walk in the way of Cain (Jude 11). The firstborn son turns out to be a murderer, and the obedient son is in this case defeated. The genealogical theme continues to be especially important in the book of Genesis—major sections of the book are marked out by the phrase, “These are the generations of” Still, though the population grows, obedience does not: “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). Evil was never merely a matter of outward actions; rather morality cuts into the depths of the heart. The primary problem with fallen mankind was never a physical weakness or a creaturely weakness, but a moral weakness. They disobeyed and they loved to disobey.

Protoevangelium?” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 361-65; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 197-200; Raymond Albert Martin, “Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *JBL* 84, no. 4 (1965): 425-27.

¹⁷Luther apparently read the verse this way (cited in Hamilton, *Genesis*, 221). See also Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 37; Barrett, *Beginning at Moses*, 215.

Noah

After Adam, the next major figure in the biblical story is Noah.¹⁸ In contrast to the wicked around him, Noah is a righteous man who walks with God (Gen 6:9). When God gives Noah commands, Noah does them—everything that God commands (6:22; 7:5). When God determines to kill the wicked, God tells Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me” (7:1). It is important to note the “for” in this verse. The text transparently says that Noah is saved because of his righteousness.¹⁹ Even more significant is the fact that Noah represents his family. There is no record of the faithfulness of Noah’s family. Rather, because of their relation to Noah they get to go in the ark too. Moreover, those who are related to Noah are not saved (in this case) by his suffering a penalty for them but by his faithful obedience to God. Noah evidences the principle of solidarity so common to the book of Genesis. Noah is another Adam.²⁰ And just as Adam’s disobedience had ramifications for the created

¹⁸On the Noachic covenant see W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (UK: Paternoster, 1984), 11-33; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 109-25; Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 159ff; Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed With An Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 59-76; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 311-18; Mark D. Vander Hart, “Creation and Covenant: A Survey of the Dominion Mandate in the Noachic and Abrahamic Covenants,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 6 Spring (1990): 3-18, and Fall (1990): 105-116; Irvin A. Busenitz, “Introduction to the Biblical Covenants: the Noachic Covenant and the Priestly Covenant,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 10, no. 2 (1999): 173-89.

¹⁹See the discussion of Warren Malcolm Clark, “Righteousness of Noah,” *VT* 21, no. 3 (1971): 261-80. Clark parses out three interpretive camps. First is the notion that Noah’s righteousness “is the immediate reason for his salvation” even though it serves more as a test than as the ground of the original “favor” shown to Noah (“Righteousness of Noah,” 261). Second, others think 7:1 is the logically prior reason for 6:8—Noah actually found favor because he was righteous (*ibid.*). Third, some see Noah’s “favor” as the gift of righteousness (*ibid.*, 262). Clark himself wants to see Noah’s righteousness as prospective of his future righteousness (*ibid.*, 274).

²⁰Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant,” 21; Dorothy M. Peters, *Noah Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 75-78; Walter E. Brown, “Noah: Sot or Saint?” in *The Way of Wisdom*, ed. J. I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 36-60 (46); Thomas Wingate Mann, *The Book of Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1988), 21-25.

order, so too does Noah's obedience relate to non-human creation. God is determined to wipe out not just man but also the "animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens" (6:7). Yet thanks to Noah, representatives from the animal world also are allowed to come into the ark and be saved. As the flood rages and everything dies, the text reports, "Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark" (7:23). Those united to Noah find salvation. After the flood Noah emerges from the ark and receives a renewed commission in this new creation (8:17; 9:1-17).²¹ He appears poised to be the righteous vice-regent that Adam never was. But in short order Genesis reports that Noah gets drunk (9:21). It appears that Noah is not the ideal faithful servant of God after all. Noah is not the obedient son who brings eternal life but a sinner who dies (9:29).

Several points from the Noahic narrative can be highlighted. First, while the text does initially stress Noah's righteousness, this righteousness is set within the prior context of God's grace.²² The thoughts of people's heart were only evil continually (Gen 6:5), Noah included.²³ God's sheer and sovereign grace shines through. Noah finds "favor in the eyes of the Lord" (6:8), not after he acts obediently but before he obeys.²⁴ God's grace empowers Noah's righteous living. Second, it is wrong to assume that when the text speaks of Noah walking righteously and obeying all that God commands, it

²¹Gentry, "Kingdom Through Covenant," 21; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 73; Walter Brueggemann, "Kingship and Chaos," *CBQ* 33 (1971): 317-32.

²²See Anthony Nevin Barnard, "Was Noah a Righteous Man?" *Theology* 74, no. 613 (1971): 311-14.

²³See Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 185.

²⁴Barnard argues against seeing the "favor" that Noah found from the Lord as ultimately stemming from Noah's righteousness ("Noah," 313).

means that Noah was perfect and without sin. Before Noah received God's grace, he was a miserable sinner like the rest. And in light of all the Scripture's teaching, we can be sure that even after receiving God's grace he did not behave perfectly. The eventual sin of drunkenness clinches this point.²⁵ Third, a nagging question remains: if the just God demands perfect obedience, how can he rightly reward imperfect obedience? If one sin made Adam a failure rather than a champion, how is it that Noah did bring salvation? The answer is that the text is operating on the level of earthly and temporal blessing rather than ultimate spiritual salvation. In the story of Noah, the Bible provides a picture of hope along with pointers to a more fundamental reality. Noah's general obedience and righteousness provided a general and temporal salvation for those "in him." Nevertheless, God ultimately does require perfect obedience for those who will be saved finally and eternally.²⁶ Noah's end—his sin and death—helps to remind the reader that Noah ultimately was not God's obedient son. Nevertheless, Noah's story points beyond Noah and hints at a profound theology of eternal salvation—the perfectly obedient Son will win eternal salvation for those in him by his positive righteous living.

Abraham

The next major figure in the biblical story is Abraham. Once again, God issues a command to his chosen servant, and his chosen servant faithfully obeys (Gen

²⁵Once again Barnard, "The story of Noah's drunkenness and the Tower of Babel make it clear that the nature of man is unaltered," ("Noah," 313).

²⁶In Ezek 14, in speaking of the wickedness of his people, three times God says that even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, they would deliver only their own lives by their righteousness (vv. 14, 16, 20). Here it appears that God is speaking of temporal destruction and captivity, yet the emphasis in this passage is the heinousness of the rebellion of God's own people.

12:1-4).²⁷ Yet Abraham is presented not merely as a servant but also as a kind of king. When Lot is captured, Abraham leads his men into victory over Chedorlaomer and the other kings (14:17), rescuing Lot and all his possessions. Then Abraham is blessed by Melchizedek, the king of Salem (14:18-19). Abraham's association with the kings in this passage suggests that Abraham himself is an important leader—he is a “vastly superior ‘king.’”²⁸ And Abraham refuses to take more than his rightful share (14:22-24)—he is a righteous king.

The fact that others are blessed through Abraham's obedience becomes more clear when God is speaking to Isaac in Genesis 26:3-5. There God tells Isaac, “I will be with you and I will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” Israel receives the Promised Land because Abraham obeyed God.²⁹ The righteous law-keeping of the people's head leads to life in the land for the people.

Earlier in the narrative, after God gives Abraham the promised son, Isaac, God tells Abraham to kill Isaac (22:2). This event appears to foreshadow God's sacrifice of his own Son. Abraham is set to obey God, and then God provides a ram to sacrifice instead of Isaac. Then God tells Abraham that he will bless Abraham, his offspring, and

²⁷Clearly in this text God chooses Abraham. While God does not explicitly call Abraham his servant here, he does so later in Genesis (26:24).

²⁸Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 79.

²⁹White and Beisner, “Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology,” 159, 164.

the nations because Abraham has “obeyed my voice” (vv. 17-18). The focus has shifted from the substitutionary ram to Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice. Even in an act of sacrifice, God highlights and rewards Abraham’s positive obedience. As with Adam and Noah, so too with Abraham—obedience carries universal significance.³⁰ And as with Adam and Noah, so too with Abraham—the context is covenant.

Many stress the one-sided, unconditional nature of the covenant revealed in Genesis 15.³¹ God is the one who walks through the pieces, certifying that he will ensure that this covenant comes to pass. Such an emphasis on God’s sovereign promise is certainly not an unbiblical idea. By the same token, though, in Genesis 17:1-2 God does tell Abraham rather explicitly, “Walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” Here the relationship between God and Abraham seems to be conditioned in some sense on Abraham’s

³⁰Commenting on Abraham’s intercession for Sodom, Dempster states, “From a larger perspective the radical nature of Abraham’s intercession is seen. . . . There is a suggestion in this text that Abraham’s role (and by implication his seed) will have consequences for the salvation of the nations” (*Dominion and Dynasty*, 83). While it is true that this passage in Scripture speaks explicitly of Abraham’s intercession, not his “obedience,” it is difficult to divorce the two—Abraham’s intercession is a faithful response to the revelation of God’s graciousness and ultimate intention of salvation for the world.

³¹See, for example, John Bright, *Covenant and Promise: the Prophetic Understanding of the Future in Pre-exilic Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1976), 25-31; Michael Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 49-50. On the Abrahamic covenant in general see Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 47-79; Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 127-45; Williamson, *Sealed With An Oath*, 77-93; idem, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: the Patriarchal Promise and its Covenantal Development in Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000); Vander Hart, “Creation and Covenant;” Meredith Kline, “Oath and Ordeal Signs,” *WTJ* 27 (1965): 115-39; T. D. Alexander, “Gen 22 and the Covenant of Circumcision,” *JSOT* 25 (1983): 17-22; Cleon L Rogers, “Covenant with Abraham and its Historical Setting,” *BSac* 127, no. 507 (1970): 241-56; Ronald F. Youngblood, “The Abrahamic Covenant: Conditional or Unconditional?” in *The Living and Active Word of God*, ed. Ronald F. Youngblood (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 31-46; Keith H. Essex, “The Abrahamic Covenant,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 10, no. 2 (1999): 191-212; Frederick Carlson Holmgren, “Faithful Abraham and the ‘amana Covenant Nehemiah 9,6-10,1,” *ZAW* 104, no. 2 (1992): 249-54; John P. Davis, “Who are the Heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant?” *Evangelical Theological Review of Theology* 29, no. 2 (2005): 149-163; Francis I. Andersen, “The Scope of the Abrahamic Covenant,” *Churchman* 74, no. 4 (1960): 239-244.

obedience.³² A better understanding is to acknowledge that God ultimately will fulfill the Abrahamic covenant, but that he will do so through an obedient son.³³

And just at this point God's grace in back of all of Abraham's obedience should be stressed. Joshua later reminds Israel that God took Abraham out of a land where the people served other gods (Josh 24:2-3). Abraham was a pagan like all the rest, but God called him and empowered him. The blessings that Israel received through Abraham's obedience had their ultimate source in God and not in Abraham. By the same token, Abraham failed at many points. He doubted the Lord's promise. He feared for his own safety and asked his wife to lie, even letting her be taken in marriage by another man (Gen 12). He himself tried to circumvent God's plan by taking a woman who was not his wife (Gen 16). As great as Abraham was, he was not the ultimate Messiah. Yet as with Noah, his story contributes to the portrait of Messiah bringing in everlasting life in the land for his people through obeying God and walking in righteousness.

The next major movement in the biblical storyline occurs when God establishes the Mosaic covenant, but before looking at that covenant and the nation of Israel, Joseph deserves brief attention.³⁴ The Joseph narrative takes up a large chunk of space in the book of Genesis. While many important teachings can be gleaned from

³²This contrast is a factor that leads Williamson (*Sealed With An Oath*, 85-90, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations*, 188ff) to argue that there are actually two covenants made with Abraham. However, a better solution sees the covenant of Genesis 17 as a reaffirmation/formalization of the Genesis 15 covenant—after all, God holds out essentially the same covenant promises in both passages.

³³White and Beisner, "Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology," 155-7; 162.

³⁴The Joseph story does fit into the covenantal context of the Pentateuch. The story shows, among other things, how God preserved his people, and how they come to be in Egypt when God brings them out through Moses. For more on the link of the Joseph story with the Israelite covenant tradition, see Lindsay Wilson, *Joseph, Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37-50*

Joseph, for the purposes of this chapter the theme of wisdom stands out. In the middle of the Joseph account, when Pharaoh is troubled by a dream, none of his wise men can help him (Gen 41:8). After Joseph comes to aid with the proper interpretation of the dream, Pharaoh announces, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command” (Gen 41:39-40). Joseph is given a position above all the other wise men of Egypt who could not interpret Pharaoh’s dream—Joseph is set as the chief wise man that he himself had suggested be put in place (41:33). And in addition, Joseph serves as a kind of a vice-regent, a second in command king over Egypt. How does Joseph fare as a wise man and a righteous king? Because of Joseph’s wise actions, the nation of Egypt is saved (41:46-57). Not only so, but the nation of Israel (in the twelve sons who would become the twelve tribes) owes its preservation to Joseph (chapters 42-47). Corporate salvation comes through the positive wisdom of one man. Interestingly, while the Bible clearly shows the faults of Adam, Noah, and Abraham, its picture of Joseph is basically positive throughout. However, Joseph does acknowledge that what he has comes from God (40:8; 41:16). In addition, Joseph dies (50:26). It appears that Joseph too suffers from the results of sin, and there is no anticipation that he will rise from the dead to redeem his people. When the book of Exodus begins, after the nation has multiplied in Egypt, another king arises that does not know Joseph (Exod 1:8). Joseph, great and influential as he was, does not ultimately prove to be the righteous and wise one who

(Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004). For more on Joseph see Michael V. Fox, “Wisdom in the Joseph Story,” *VT* 51, no. 1 (2001): 26-41.

brings final deliverance to the people of God.³⁵

Israel

The book of Exodus begins with the sonship theme: “These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household” (1:1). The nation has grown and multiplied in Egypt, but they find themselves to be slaves in a foreign land—a far cry from freedom in the Promised Land. Yet God has not forgotten his people. They are not just any people; they are his people by covenant. In fact, the Bible presents the corporate nation of Israel as a firstborn son of God. When God tells Moses to confront Pharaoh, he makes an important declaration: “Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, let my son go that he may serve me” (Ex 4:22-23). God’s final plague of judgment—the killing of the firstborn children in Egypt—highlights the fact that God redeems his true firstborn, while judging those who are not ultimately his own (Exod 13:15). Given the previous biblical context, the reader might well wonder whether perhaps Israel was the obedient son so long sought and predicted. In addition to the fact that the Bible calls Israel God’s son, the Bible also predicts that salvation comes to the world through Israel. This prediction only builds the hope and increases the similarity between Adam and Israel. Adam was to be the obedient son who brought blessing to the world through his obedience, but instead his

³⁵The rest of Scripture does not refer to Joseph very much, but a notable exception comes in Stephen’s speech in Acts 7. Stephen points out that God “gave him [Joseph] favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household” (v. 10). Among various facets of Joseph that Stephen could have identified, he chooses to point out Joseph’s wisdom and his position as ruler. In Stephen’s account, the Joseph saga appears to emphasize that it was through that series of events that the nation of Israel ended up a multiplied yet enslaved people in Egypt, which in turn was the occasion for God to show his glory and call out the nation to himself. Stephen also appears to place Joseph in a line of OT figures who are persecuted, yet through their lives announce the coming of a righteous one.

disobedience brought a curse to the world. Now Israel, God's son, is set to bring blessing to the world.³⁶

As a son Israel was to image forth their God. A significant part of this function involved Israel's obedience to the covenant.³⁷ Before giving the law, God tells the nation, "If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all people" (Exod 19:5). God freely chose Israel to be his son, but it remains that Israel in some sense had to maintain its sonship through a covenant faithfulness that would be reflected in their obedience. Just as with Adam, a failure to obey God would bring a breach into the relationship.

In addition, it is noteworthy that in Exodus 19-20, God establishes the Mosaic covenant with Israel from a mountain. The solemn ceremony is complete with thunder and lightning and a loud trumpet blast. Part of the point is the people's distance from this holy God. God will not be trifled with. The people cannot approach him on their own terms or with impure hands. If they are to ascend the mountain of the Lord to dwell with him, they must be obedient. The heart of the covenant lay in the ten commandments.

³⁶Frequently in this work, when I speak of God's "intention" or "plan," I am speaking of his revealed will, that is, what he has said should happen or what he has instructed humans to do. Of course, ultimately God's will is always done (Eph 1:11). Human failure is a part of God's plan (Gen 50:20). So the repetition of human failure should not lead one to conclude that God kept coming up with alternative plans. God has always purposed to glorify his Son, and a part of that process is the backdrop of human failure. Nevertheless, people are responsible for their own sin (Acts 2:23).

³⁷For discussion of the Mosaic covenant, see Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant*, 80-126; Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 167-99; Williamson, *Sealed With An Oath*, 94-119; Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*, 17ff; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 100-07; John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 277-305; Mark W. Karlberg, "Reformed Interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant," *WTJ* 43, no. 1 (1980): 1-57; F. C. Fensham, "The Role of the Lord in the Legal Sections of the Covenant Code," *VT* 26 (1976): 262-74; Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, vol. 2 (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 447-73; E. Gerstenberger, "Covenant and Commandment," *JBL* 84 (1965): 38-51; Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 168-216; William D. Barrick, "The Mosaic Covenant," *Master's Seminary Journal* 10, no. 2 (1999): 213-32; David W. Baker, "The Mosaic Covenant Against Its Environment," *Ashland Theological Journal* 20 (1988): 9-18.

These tables of the law were kept in the Ark of the Covenant and carried with the people wherever they went, an important reminder of their need to be an obedient son. Moses reminds the people in Deuteronomy 5:33, “You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you . . . : that you may live long in the land.”

The covenant connects to the land of Canaan, which is important since Canaan is a type of the eternal inheritance.³⁸ If Canaan is secured through law-keeping, it stands to reason that in the bigger picture that God is painting he intends the reader to perceive that the eternal inheritance is also secured through positive law-keeping. True, God makes promises, and he never reneges on those promises. In Joshua one finds that God did give the land to Abraham and his seed, just as he promised he would do. Joshua reminds the people of this fact: “Not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed” (23:14). God fulfilled his end of the deal, so to speak. And yet Joshua can warn the people, “But just as all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land . . . if you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you” (vv.15-16). The people go on to profess their allegiance to God and promise to obey, and “Joshua made a covenant with the people that day” (24:25). This covenant renewal brings up an important point brought out by White and Beisner: “We must distinguish between the seed’s reception of

³⁸The book of Hebrews appears to make this argument. The patriarchs desired “a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (11:16). The Promised Land was a pointer to something greater—see T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002). Some argue that Canaan is not a type of heaven—see John Hundley, *The Perfect Priest* (Florida City, FA: Xulon,

the blessings and their retention of them. This is the same distinction we made in the case of Adam: he received blessings at creation; he would have retained (and eternalized) those blessings by standing his probation.”³⁹ The people did not keep covenant, and thus did not remain in the land. Israel, like Adam, failed.

Moreover, the Mosaic covenant set up the pattern of fearing God and obeying his commands as a pattern of wisdom. In Deuteronomy 4:5-6 Moses says to Israel, “See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom.” Corporate Israel also had the chance to be the wise man that Adam failed to be, and for Israel too, wisdom consisted in obeying the commands of God. And inevitably, the keeping of God’s commands also links to the theme of righteousness. Later in Deuteronomy, Moses announces the requirements for a king. This king should read the law and heed the law, not turning aside from any of its commandments (17:18-20). The reader knows that law-keeping relates to righteousness since Scripture has already stated concerning the Mosaic Law, “And it will be righteousness for us [Israel], if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God” (Deut 6:25). Righteousness for the people is surely righteousness for the king. Thus Scripture anticipates the need for a righteous king. Peter Gentry helpfully comments on Deuteronomy 17, “In other words, the only positive requirement is that the king embodies Torah as a model citizen.”⁴⁰ The king was not above God’s righteous law

2004), 195. But there is no need to press every point as parallel (there are no battles in heaven, etc.) to affirm the general point of the typology.

³⁹Whie and Beisner, “Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology,” 156.

⁴⁰Gentry, “Sure Mercies,” 11.

but was himself subject to it.

In addition, the king's righteousness was to serve as an instrument of God's blessing. The king is not to turn aside from the commandment "so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel" (17:20). Obedience again relates to long life in God's kingdom, and others are affected by the obedience of the king. This passage does not explicitly state that the king's obedient law-keeping is vicariously credited to his children. However, there is still the expression of the principle that the actions of the king affects and represents others. The later narrative continues to reflect the fact that in the history of Israel, often the people followed the king's lead, and often the people were either blessed or cursed according to whether the king did righteousness or unrighteousness.

The blessing and cursing alternatives set out by the Mosaic covenant pervade the book of Joshua. The juxtaposition of the events of Joshua 6 and 7 make this clear. In chapter 6 the people obey God and gain a miraculous victory at Jericho. However, in chapter 7 Achan disobeys and all of Israel suffers. Dempster summarizes, "The point is clear. Residence in the land will depend upon obedience, and disobedience will mean expulsion from the land, just as it was in the Garden of Eden at the beginning. To underline this theologically, it is recorded that the disobedient man brings down a curse not only on himself but on the entire community."⁴¹ The book of Judges continues the story by showing Israel's need for a righteous leader—the book ends soberly: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). While various judges provided temporary periods of relief, none brought in everlasting

⁴¹Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 129.

righteousness.⁴² The book of Ruth concludes with a genealogy reminiscent of Adam-Noah (Gen 5:1-32) and Shem-Abraham (Gen 11:10-26).⁴³ God's promise of an obedient seed to come has not been forgotten, and he incorporates foreigners into his plan.

David

As I continue to trace the Bible's story along the major covenants, the next and last major covenant established in the OT is the Davidic covenant.⁴⁴ Once again, Scripture prophesies of another son of God, and once again, this son must obey. In 2 Samuel 7:12 God tells David that he will raise up his offspring and then in 7:14 God announces of this offspring: "I will be to him a father, and he will be to me a son." God also promises a seed, a throne, and a kingdom (v. 16). Although in an important sense God's promise is unconditional, individual participation in the promise is conditioned on obedience on the part of David's future sons. This point becomes clearer elsewhere. In 1 Kings 2:1-4 God promises to bless the king provided that the king observes the law—provided that the king is righteous. On his deathbed, David implores Solomon to obey

⁴²Dempster observes, "The lament for a king with which Judges concludes, coming as it does on the heels of the ultimate failure of the judges, shows the need of a greater than Othniel to complete the task, an individual like the ruler mentioned in Genesis 49 and in the Balam oracles, an individual who would not only defeat Israel's enemies but be a model of virtue as well. Such a person would give Israel more than a temporary rest" (ibid., 133). I would press this further and say that Israel needed more than just a "model" of virtue—even the most effective model does not in and of itself transform the hearts of sinners. What the people needed for ultimate rest and acceptance with God was a king would be virtuous *for* them, obeying and keeping covenant in their place.

⁴³All three genealogies have ten members (Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 193).

⁴⁴For general discussion see Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 127-52; Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants*, 229-269; Gentry, "Sure Mercies;" Williamson, *Sealed With An Oath*, 120-45; Stephen L. McKenzie, "The Typology of the Davidic Covenant," in *The Land That I Will Show You*, ed. James Maxwell Miller, John Andrew Dearman, and Matt Patrick Graham (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 152-78; Jon D. Levenson, "The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters," *CBQ* 41, no. 2 (1979): 205-19; William Dumbrell, "The Davidic Covenant," *Reformed Theological Review* 39 (1980): 40-47;

and to instruct his sons to obey in order that “the Lord may establish his word that he spoke concerning me” (1 Kings 2:1-4). That the Davidic covenant is in some sense conditioned on a righteous king is also evident in 2 Chronicles 6. There Solomon prays, “O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk in my law’” (v.16).⁴⁵ In sum, the Davidic covenant “clearly demarcates both divine and human obligations.”⁴⁶ This does not necessarily mean that both God and man play an equal part, or that both carry half of the burden, so to speak. In the Samuel narrative, the king’s obedience (7:14-15) is surrounded by God’s mighty promises (7:8-13, 16). God will surely do what he says, but he will somehow do it through an obedient son. In short, “the Davidic King is inheriting both the role of Adam as son of God and Israel as son of God.”⁴⁷

David’s response to God’s promise is significant. The translation of 7:19 is

Griphus Gakuru, *An Inner-Biblical Exegetical Study of the Davidic Covenant and the Dynastic Oracle* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2000);

⁴⁵Gentry again proves helpful: “Certainly the covenant with David entails promises that Yahweh must keep to be faithful. But the oracle through Nathan makes clear that Yahweh will only keep them to and through a faithful son. Therefore from the Chronicler’s point of view, the promises of Yahweh await fulfillment only when the throne is occupied by an obedient son. What the subsequent course of history shows is that Yahweh must not only keep the promises, but also provide the obedient son if the covenant is to be maintained” (“Sure Mercies,” 16).

⁴⁶Gentry, “Sure Mercies,” 283. It is sometimes argued that the Davidic covenant followed the ANE form of a royal grant covenant—see M. Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” *JAOS* 90 (1970): 184-203. It may not be best to try to force every biblical covenant into the exact mold of either suzerain-vassal or royal grant model. While there are parallels, to be sure, God’s covenants might present unique cases, for only God can graciously ensure that all conditions on the part of his covenant partners are met.

⁴⁷Gentry, “Sure Mercies,” 286.

debated,⁴⁸ but the ESV does very well in this case: David acknowledges that God’s revelation to him is “instruction for mankind.” Davidic blessing will fall out not simply for the people of Israel but for the world. In some way, the righteous actions of the Davidic king would have ramifications for all the nations. As Gentry puts it, “Faithfulness on the part of the Davidic Son would effect the divine rule in the entire world.”⁴⁹

I do not want to overemphasize this commanding aspect of the covenant; I simply want to point out that it is there. However, just as with the Abrahamic covenant, so too with the Davidic covenant the accent falls on God’s unconditional promise—he will surely bring the covenant to pass. Indeed these are both “everlasting” covenants. In the Mosaic covenant, however, the accent falls on the conditional aspect, just as with the Adamic covenant. The Mosaic covenant highlights the nation’s inability to obey in order to secure the blessing, while the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants highlight the divine word of promise: God will surely bring the covenant to pass. In the case of the Davidic covenant, the necessary conclusion is that God will bring an obedient son, a righteous king, a wise man, a covenant-keeper.

In many ways both David and Solomon were obedient to God, and in a sense the nation of Israel reached its zenith in the land under the reigns of David and Solomon; Israel was blessed because of the obedience of God’s sons, David and Solomon. At points

⁴⁸See Walter C. Kaiser, J., “The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton, Milton C. Fisher, and Leslie W. Sloat (Philadelphia: P&R, 1974), 298-318; Barrett, *Beginning at Moses*, 139; Gentry, “Sure Mercies,” 11-12.

⁴⁹Gentry, “Sure Mercies,” 288. Further, “2 Sam 7:19 is the key to the universalization of the Messianic vision in the psalms and prophets” (ibid.).

Solomon is especially commended as a wise man. In fact Solomon is often called the wisest man that ever lived. So wise was Solomon that he “excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind” (1 Kings 10:23-24). The Queen of Sheba recognizes that the whole nation is blessed because of Solomon’s wisdom (10:1-10). Prosperity comes to the nation thanks to their wise leader. However, if Solomon is the apex of wisdom, 1 Kings 11:1-2 stands out all the more—the wisest man that humanity could produce unwisely took foreign wives in direct contradiction to God’s commands. Since God had expressly forbidden future kings to take multiple wives (Deut 17:17), and since keeping God’s commands was to be the “wisdom” of God’s people (Deut 4:6), Solomon fell critically short of the wise ideal. If the epitome of the wise man could not prove himself sufficiently wise in saving his people from a divided heart, then who could? Neither David nor Solomon could be, in the final analysis, the ultimate son of God. David’s sinful disobedience becomes painfully clear in the Bathsheba-Uriah incidents, and David’s family suffered through his failure in headship.⁵⁰ When David sinned by numbering Israel, the whole nation suffered because of his demerit (1 Chron 21).⁵¹ Salvific blessing through representation would come by an obedient son, but neither David nor Solomon would be that Messiah.

Wisdom Literature

Far from being an unrelated interlude in the biblical story of fall and

⁵⁰ Likewise Solomon’s divided heart is clear from a passage like 1 Kgs 11:1-2.

⁵¹ Ultimately, David must appeal to the Lord’s forgiveness rather than his own righteousness (Ps 51), and ultimately David was justified because of God’s work in Christ (Rom 4).

redemption, the wisdom literature contributes to the portrait of a wise man.⁵² The book of Job can be read as an elaborate chiasmic structure that centers on chapter 28, a chapter best read as a hymn to wisdom.⁵³ The chapter focuses on God as the one who holds all wisdom, and ends “And he said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding’” (v. 28). Job’s wisdom consisted in humbly submitting to God’s purposes and persevering in righteous behavior. Because Job does what is right, God says that he will accept Job’s intercession for Job’s unwise friends (Job 42:8).

Turning to the Psalms,⁵⁴ I have already argued for the need to find Christ in the OT, and I will not repeat that argument here. However, it is important to reaffirm the biblical warrant for seeing Christ in the Psalms, especially in light of the fact that: 1) so many psalms deal with a Davidic King;⁵⁵ 2) there is a trajectory of a greater Davidic king to come, a trajectory lodged in the Davidic covenant itself; and 3) the NT reveals Christ

⁵²In this chapter, I am tracing through the OT canonically. Dempster makes a very good case for giving more attention to the Hebrew ordering of the canon (*Dominion and Dynasty*). While sympathetic to Dempster, I think it will be more efficient here to follow the normal ordering. Also, for a gospel-centered discussion of “wisdom” in Scripture, see Graeme Goldsworthy’s *Gospel and Wisdom*, in *The Goldsworthy Trilogy* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 329-550.

⁵³Michael J. Peterson, “Job 28: The Theological Center of the Book of Job” (Ph.D. diss., Bob Jones University, 1994).

⁵⁴My discussion of the Psalms has been greatly helped by Richard P. Belcher, Jr. See his *The Messiah and the Psalms* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2006), and “The King, the Law, and Righteousness in the Psalms: A Foundation for Understanding the Work of Christ,” in *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 147-69.

⁵⁵John H. Walton, “Psalms: A Cantata About the Davidic Covenant,” *JETS* 34, no. 1 (1991): 21-31.

as the ultimate Davidic king.⁵⁶ Trying to discern the organization of the Psalter is not an easy task;⁵⁷ however, many scholars have attempted to address questions of the relationship of the Psalms to each other as well as to other portions of Scripture.⁵⁸ Throughout the Psalms, Davidic kingship is linked to law-keeping. The Psalms anticipate a righteous king who by his obedience to God will bring in everlasting righteousness.⁵⁹

The Psalms open with a Torah psalm that contrasts the righteous man and the wicked man. The ungodly man walks in the counsel of the wicked (1:1), is driven away (1:4), and ultimately perishes (1:6), while the righteous man delights in God's law (1:2), is known by the Lord (1:6), and prospers like a fruitful tree (1:3). Psalm 1 harkens back

⁵⁶David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTS (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990); John Calvin, *The Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Ages Digital Software, 1998); James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A theological Handbook in the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 504-525; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Christian and the Old Testament* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1998), 145, 245.

⁵⁷One Jewish rabbi is supposed to have said that if a person could figure out the correct order of Psalms, that person could also raise the dead and do miracles (James Lindberg, "Review of Klaus Koenen, *Jahwe wird kommen, zu herrschen über die Erde: Pss 90-110 als Komposition*," *JBL* 116 [1997]: 543). Even Augustine said that "the arrangement of the Psalms, which seems to me to contain a secret of great mystery, has not yet been revealed to me," (quoted in Mitchell, *Message of the Psalter*, 14).

⁵⁸See David M. Howard Jr., "Recent Trends in Psalms Study," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 329-50; Howard, *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988); *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. Clinton McCann (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993); James L. Mays, "The Place of Torah Psalms in the Psalter," *JBL* 106 (1987): 3-12; Patrick D. Miller, "Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15-24," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 279-97; Patrick D. Miller, "Deuteronomy and Psalms: Evoking a Biblical Conversation," *JBL* 118 (1999): 3-18; Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Atlanta: SBL, 2004); Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1985); Roland Murphy, "A Consideration of the Classification 'Wisdom Psalms,'" in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Literature*, ed. James Crenshaw (New York: KTAV, 1976), 456-67.

⁵⁹Richard P. Belcher asks the question whether the active obedience of Christ can be found in the Psalms, and then states that this is an important topic since it relates to the covenant of works, justification by faith, and the role of works in salvation ("The King, the Law, and Righteousness in Psalms," 147-50). After his study he concludes with an affirmative answer to his question.

to the dichotomy of the Mosaic covenant: blessing for obedience to God’s law and cursing for disobedience. There are two kinds of character, two ways, and two destinies. Yet in addition, the fruitful tree of Psalm 1 has connotations reaching all the way back to Eden and the way of life set before Adam. Adam is given God’s word and commanded to obey God’s word. The Lord makes Adam in his image and knows Adam intimately. God sets death and life before Adam in the two trees standing in the middle of the garden. The tree of life is planted by streams of water (Gen 2:9-14). In the book of Revelation, the tree of life shows up again by a river, yielding fruit in its season, and its leaves do not wither—they heal the nations (Rev 22:1-2). Thus the Psalter begins with a Psalm that brings into its purview the great drama of the fall and redemption by means of obedience to God.⁶⁰

The next “Torah” psalm is Ps 19, a psalm that also calls to mind the Adamic administration. The Psalm begins by rehearsing the glory of God seen in creation. The rest of Scripture reiterates the truth that God does all things to display his glory, and the creation of the world is no exception. God spoke, and worlds were brought forth. The universe is a grand testimony to the efficacy of God’s speech. From the beginning, creation perfectly accorded with God’s Word—it was mankind who turned aside. After rehearsing the glories of God in creation, the Psalm moves into a pantheon of praise to God’s law. God’s laws are true and righteous (v. 9), they enlighten the eyes (v. 8), and they make people wise (v. 7). The echoes of Eden persist: Adam desired to be wise, but he refused the true and righteous word of God, eventually having his eyes enlightened—

⁶⁰In Ps 1 by itself there is not an explicit mention of vicarious obedience, yet bear in mind the allusions to Gen and Revelation—it is clear from the rest of Scripture that Adam acted in a representative capacity, that humans can no longer achieve the requisite obedience on their own, and that Christ vicariously brings in everlasting life.

to the experience of evil. Psalm 19 reiterates the fact that in the keeping of God's word there is great reward (v. 11), and in Eden there was the implicit offer of confirmation in life upon complete obedience to God's word. Finally, Psalm 19 says that the fear of the Lord "endures forever" (v. 9), and had Adam properly feared the Lord, it appears that he too would have lived forever. Obedience to God links to life.

The final "Torah" psalm is Ps 119, the longest Psalm in the whole Psalter. The entire psalm is one tremendous acrostic—every verse of the first stanza begins with aleph, every verse of the second stanza begins with beth, and so forth. This kind of acrostic pattern seems to point toward the fullness and completeness of God's law and the wholeness of life achieved by those who live by it. Everything necessary for life from "A to Z" can be found in obedience to God.⁶¹ This psalm is also clear in pointing out that obedience is not a matter of mere outward performance—it must stem from the heart. The psalmist's soul is consumed with longing at all times for God's word (v. 20), he will run in the way of God's commandments when God enlarges his heart (v. 32), he finds his delight in God's commandments, and he loves them (vv. 47-48). By God's precepts life comes (v. 93). God's testimonies are righteous forever; the psalmist begs for understanding so that he may live (v. 144). In fact, the psalmist can even ask for life on the basis of God's justice (v. 149), the presumption being that the evildoers who seek the life of the righteous are far from God's law (v. 150).

The motif of law-keeping should be expected to find a link with God's king. Once again in Eden, Adam was to serve as God's vice-regent over creation—he was to be a king obedient to God. Likewise in Deuteronomy 17, the kings of Israel are commanded

to be first and foremost men who keep God's law (vv. 18-19).⁶² Given these anticipations, one would expect the Torah psalms to relate to God's king. In this case, there is even more explicit confirmation—each of the Torah psalms is juxtaposed with psalms that highlight kingship.⁶³ Belcher, noting the *וַיִּשְׁמַח* that appears in the first verse of Psalm 1 and the last verse of Psalm 2, argues that the word points to an *inclusio* that links these two psalms together.⁶⁴ Psalm 2, one of the most quoted Psalms in the NT, portrays the enthronement of God's king. If the people would have been fearful of failure in keeping God's law, given the history of Israel and the failure of Adam, they would be able to “take refuge” (2:12) in a Son of God who would be fully approved by the Lord, inheriting and ruling over the nations.

Psalm 19 is also surrounded by kingship Psalms. Psalm 18 ends, “Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows his steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever” (v. 50). The echoes of the Davidic covenant are apparent, and the people, even as they hear Psalm 19 and the need to obey God's Word, are to remind themselves of a promised anointed one who will bring in victory. This righteous king can truly say, “The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have

⁶¹J. Clinton McCann Jr., *Psalms*, in vol. 4 of *NIB*, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 1166.

⁶²While I will not deal with Ps 8 at any length, it is interesting to observe the Adamic themes present in the Psalm. The son of man in the Psalm is given dominion over all the creatures of the earth (vv. 5-8). If the Psalms focus on the king, then this Psalm presupposes that the king is to act as a new Adam.

⁶³Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 1-4.

⁶⁴Belcher, “The King, the Law, and Righteousness,” 155. Belcher also notes that both Psalms use the word *הִתְחַלֵּם* in important places (1:2 “meditate” and 2:1 “plot”), and that both Psalms end with the wicked perishing (*ibid.*). See also Howard, *Structure of the Psalms*, 93-100.

not wickedly departed from my God. For all his rules were before me, and his statutes I did not put away from me. I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt. So the Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight” (18:20-24). Psalm 20 is a Psalm of David, and it speaks of God saving “his anointed” (v. 6) and contains a prayer that God would save “the king” (v. 9). In Psalm 21, the king asks for life, and God gives it to him (vv. 2-4). Moving out in concentric circles, Psalms 15-17 and 22-24 also bolster this link of king and law. Psalm 15 and 24 begin with similar questions: who will ascend the hill of the Lord and dwell with God (15:1; 24:3)? Only the one who is blameless (15:2; 24:4). Psalm 16 provides the answer to this question, and it is interpreted messianically by the NT (Acts 13). Jesus is the ultimate king who trusts in God (16:7-8) and who awakes in righteousness, satisfied in God (17:15). This king will lead his people in a royal procession of worship. Ps 19, then, makes best sense on the lips of the great king to come, the king who perfectly hallows the law of the Lord.⁶⁵

Psalm 118, just prior to the great meditation on the law given in Psalm 119, picks up a similar theme of the righteous entering the presence of the Lord: “Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it” (vv. 19-20). The psalm goes on to speak of the “cornerstone” (v. 22), which the NT identifies as Christ (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:4-7). Psalm 119 begins with the “blameless” man (תמים), and marks him out

⁶⁵Belcher notes (“The King, the Law, and Righteousness,” 157-8) that in Psalm 15:2 the person who enters God’s presence is תמים (“blameless”), and so too the law in 19:8. The law is ברה (“pure”—19:9), and so too the heart of the one who comes into God’s presence (24:4). Likewise the law is אמת (“true”—19:10), and the one who enters God’s presence has his speech characterized in the same way (15:2-3). Belcher concludes, “Bringing together Psalms 1, 15, 19, and 24, it is clear that the person who

as the one who walks “in the law of the Lord” (119:1). The eternal righteousness of God’s law leads to life (v. 144). Psalm 119 is followed by several songs of ascent—songs that the people used when going to worship the Lord. Once again worshipping God in his presence is linked to obedience to the law. A lesson remains: without obedience to God’s law, no one is able to dwell with God. Given the sinfulness of the nation, indeed the sinfulness of humanity, the only hope is in a greater king who by his righteous obedience could lead the people into full and final rest, into eternal worship of the living God.⁶⁶ After all, Psalm 143:2 makes it clear that “no one living is righteous before you [God].” Likewise if God justly counts up sins, no one is able to stand before him (130:3).

Granted, there are times when the psalmist appeals to his own righteousness and asks God to save him on that basis (e.g., 7:9; 18:21; 26:1). A few things should be said about these verses. First, they should not undercut the finality of man’s sinfulness and hopelessness which is prevalent in the Psalter (Ps 14:1-3; 32: 1-5; 51:5; 53:1-3; 58:3-5). Second, they should not undercut the rest of the Scripture’s teaching on God’s holiness and justice in the face of universal sinfulness (Gen 6:5-7; Hab 1:13; Rom 1:18-32). Third, in many cases there is a specific historical situation the psalmist has in mind. For example, he might be literally surrounded by the enemies of God and asking God to vindicate him in the presence of his enemies in that particular instance—he need not necessarily be referring to final justification before the judgment seat of God (e.g., Ps 18). Fourth, and in connection with the third point, the psalmist may be appealing to the fact that he is counted as being among God’s people—in that sense he is covenantally set

meditates on the law will reflect the character of the law in his life. It is this kind of person who may enter into God’s presence” (ibid.).

apart or righteous (Ps 28). Fifth, the psalmist need not necessarily be saying that he is perfectly and sinlessly righteous; rather he may be offering a “description of the general tenor of his life.”⁶⁷ Sixth, and perhaps most important, the Psalms are often best read on the lips of Christ. In other words, often a typological relationship exists between the original historical situation and its prophetic culmination in Christ. If the Psalmist may at times be able to appeal to his own limited righteousness in certain limited circumstances, Christ can indeed appeal to his own perfect righteousness for the complete justification of his people before God. Given the way that the Psalms intertwine Messiah as the king to come with obedience to God and his law, it is appropriate to conclude that the righteousness of Messiah that comes to his people includes his perfect obedience for them. Hebrews 10 applies Psalm 40 to Christ: “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.”⁶⁸

Turning briefly to Proverbs, it might be wondered whether this particular book has anything to contribute to a biblical theology of Messiah and his work. After all, the book makes no explicit mention of a Messiah, and many question just how this book fits into the Bible’s storyline.⁶⁹ Although this book’s place in Scripture may not be as

⁶⁶Belcher (ibid., 160-61) helpfully observes the pattern of Mosaic covenant blessing and cursing evident in the Psalms (e.g., 91, 74, 79, 106).

⁶⁷Belcher (“The King, the Law, and Righteousness,” 164) points to Psalm 26. See also Mays, *Psalms*, 129; Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 472; Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 225.

⁶⁸Though this passage relates to Christ’s sacrifice for sin, this “passive” act of Christ can not be divorced from his active obedience, since the very act of sacrifice was done in positive obedience to the sanctions of the law (Belcher, “The King, the Law, and Righteousness,” 166). Christ, in sacrificing himself, was continually loving God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself.

⁶⁹So G. E. Wright states, “In any outline of biblical theology, the proper place to treat the Wisdom literature is something of a problem” (*God Who Acts* [London: SCM, 1962], 115). Likewise

apparent as others, it is by no means foreign to the thought of the OT. Proverbs, just like the rest of the OT, stresses the fear of the Lord (Deut 6:5; Josh 24:14; Is 29:13; Prov 1:7, etc.).⁷⁰ In addition, as Bruce Waltke observes, “Solomon ascribes the same attributes and actions to God as those ascribed to him by Moses and the prophets.”⁷¹ Proverbs does fit with the rest of the OT.

In Proverbs 4, the father instructs his son: “Let your heart hold fast to my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom” (vv. 4-5). Here obedience results in life, and these issues appear bound up with wisdom. Life is also held out as wisdom’s reward: “The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life” (13:14). Moreover, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (9:10), and “the fear of the Lord leads to life” (19:23). There is debate about the nature of the “life” spoken of in Proverbs,⁷² but even if in many cases the “life” in view is temporal prosperity and social well-being, there is still a tie to the Mosaic covenant, where life in the land is conditioned on

Hartmut Gese says, “It is well known that the wisdom literature constitutes an alien body in the world of the Old Testament,” (*Lehre and Wirklichkeit in der alten Weisheit* [Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1958], 2)—quoted in James L. Crenshaw, *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), 91. See also J. C. Rylaarsdam, *Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946).

⁷⁰A point well made by Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 46.

⁷¹Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 65. Waltke continues, “According to all three, he is the creator of the cosmos (Deut 10:14; Prov 1:7; 3:19-20) and of all humanity (Deut 4:32; Prov 14:31; 29:13; Isa 42:5). He is the same living God who will avenge wrong (Deut 32:35, 40-41; Prov 5:21-22; Nah 1:2) and the same spiritual Being who comforts people and knows their ways (Deut 23:14[15]; Prov 5:21; 15:3; Jer 16:17). He is the Sovereign directing history (Deut 4:19; 29:43], 26[25]; Prov 16:1-9, 33; 19:21; 20:24; Isa 45:1-13) and yet present in it, withholding and giving rain (Deut 11:13-17; Prov 3:9-10; Hag 1:10-11), disciplining his children (Deut 8:5; Prov 3:11-12; Isa 1:4-6) and in his mercy answering their prayers (Deut 4:29-31; Prov 15:8, 29; Isa 56:7). He is merciful (Deut 4:31; Prov 28:13; Isa 63:7), delights in justice and hates iniquity (Deut 10:17; Prov 11:1; 17:15; Isa 1:16-17), and has aesthetic-ethical sensibilities (Deut 22:4-11; 23:10-14[11-15]; Prov 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:20; 15:9; Jer 32:35)” (ibid.). See also his article, “The Book of Proverbs and Old Testament Theology,” *BSac* 136 (1979): 221-38.

⁷²Waltke, *Proverbs*, 105-09.

obedience and wise living. Wisdom, bound up as it is in Proverbs with the fear of the Lord, has a significant moral dimension. The wise man is the one who obeys God. Yet surely the reader of Proverbs, armed with the knowledge of the past failures of God's people, would tremble at a verse like Proverbs 11:19: "Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live." Proverbs, like the Mosaic covenant, points to the greater need of a perpetual righteousness.

The tree of life also resurfaces in Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4), reminiscent of the Garden of Eden and mankind's relationship to God. The wise man that hears the words of his father and obeys receives life and enjoys the tree of life. Yet set in the context of the entire canon, it is difficult not to see that something greater than mere temporal prosperity is in view. In fact, as Waltke argues, "life' in the majority of Proverbs texts refers to abundant life in fellowship with God, a living relationship that is never envisioned as ending in clinical death."⁷³ The reader is not left with mere truisms common to pagan and godly societies alike—he is confronted with the claims of the living God and the hope of a positive relationship with him. Yet once again, given man's sinfulness and the need for wise, obedient living, how can this relationship ever come to fruition?

The early church understood the personification of wisdom in Proverbs, particularly Proverbs 8, as a reference to Christ.⁷⁴ Waltke argues that such an

⁷³Ibid., 105.

⁷⁴According to Waltke, early Christians, "almost without exception," identified wisdom in Prov 8 with Christ (*Proverbs*, 127). He goes on to speak of "this almost universal interpretation of the passage" (ibid.). Of course, the point of focus, especially in light of the Arian controversy, was more on the person of Christ than the work of Christ. Nevertheless, the point remains that the early church, rightly or wrongly, saw Christ in Prov 8.

identification should not be made, although he notes many parallels between Lady Wisdom and Christ.⁷⁵ While I would not necessarily argue that Lady Wisdom in Proverbs is always a direct reference to Christ, it is important to remember that ultimately wisdom cannot be found apart from Christ, for “in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). Those who try to grasp wisdom apart from Christ are destined to fail. Christians, who have the whole canon set before them, have every right to find hope in their Saviour, who in his person and work is the very embodiment of wise living. Set within a full canonical context, the book of Proverbs does contribute to the portrait of a need for a representative obedient son.⁷⁶

The Prophets

The prophets further develop God’s plan of redemption. They chastise the people for disobedience and promise judgment, but at the same time they offer hope for a glorious future through a righteous king. The book of Isaiah has often been called an OT gospel because of the good news it promises.⁷⁷ Isaiah 11:3 predicts a “branch” that will judge “with righteousness.” Indeed righteousness will “be the belt of his waist” (v.5). The unique characteristic of this king is that he is wholly and completely righteous, unlike

⁷⁵Ibid., 128-131.

⁷⁶I simply do not have the space to examine every book in detail, so in this discussion of wisdom literature I am leaving out Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. However, even a book like the Song of Solomon, so often seen as simply a celebration of human love, can find a place in the canon as part of the revelation of God’s redemptive program—see Iain D. Campbell, “The Song of David’s Son: Interpreting the Song of Solomon in Light of the Davidic Covenant,” *WTJ* 62, no. 1 (2000): 17-32.

⁷⁷John F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Mark Gignilliat, *Karl Barth and the Fifth Gospel: Barth’s Theological Exegesis of Isaiah* (United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2009); David L. Jeffrey, *Houses of the Interpreter* (Waco,

every king in the past. Thus, only he can bring in true and everlasting righteousness. Given the history of OT kings and the holiness of the Lord, God's promise could appear hopeless—unless the Lord who is perfectly righteous is himself the promised king.⁷⁸

The theme of righteousness stands out against the theme of judgment, judgment due to the people because of their unrighteousness. Yet alongside judgment, hope is still held out. This theme of hope becomes especially prominent in chapter 40, which begins: “Comfort” This stark beginning to chapter 40 is initially perplexing—how could the people find comfort when both they and their leader had failed so miserably?

In chapters 38-39, the historical narrative unfolds Hezekiah's sinfulness and God's promise of a Babylonian exile. This exile might seem to call into question the Davidic promise of a king and an everlasting kingdom. However, God unveils his purposes in terms of two “servants.” The political servant/messiah is Cyrus (43:28ff). Through Cyrus's warfare, both Jerusalem and the temple will be enabled to be rebuilt.

Of more importance is the salvific “servant of the Lord.” This servant has the Spirit of the Lord and exercises justice in the earth (42:1-4). This servant, although he suffers immensely, is obedient (50:4-6). He is the one who provides the ultimate answer to the dilemma of God's promised salvation despite the people's profound sinfulness. The great gospel call of Isaiah 55 is embedded in a context describing the work of God's servant, and Isaiah 55:3 makes an important contribution to the unfolding theology of the

TX: Baylor, 2003), 75; Carolyn J. Sharp, *Old Testament Prophets for Today* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 58.

⁷⁸Cf. Is 9 and the comments of J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 89.

OT. In the gospel call of chapter 55,⁷⁹ Wine and milk, OT symbols of blessings, are offered “without money and without price” (55:1). Those who listen find that their souls can live (55:3). God makes a promise in 55:3, and the ESV renders the latter portion of the verse, “I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” Other translations similarly give the impression that the “sure mercies of David” [חַסְדֵי דָוִד] refer to God’s promise to David. This is a viable option; however, the Hebrew is more ambiguous. The text could actually be saying, “the sure mercies that David does,” and in this case, this latter option is preferable. The “everlasting covenant” is explicated in terms of sure mercies done by David rather than for David.⁸⁰ Although not everyone follows this interpretation,⁸¹ a consideration of the evidence bears out this understanding.

Normally when the Hebrew word *חסד* is the x in an x of y construction, the y is in fact the subject, not the object, of the *חסד*.⁸² Yet one reason why commentators do not take this normal reading in Isaiah 55:3 is that it would seem to attribute more to

⁷⁹Craig A. Evans, “From Gospel to Gospel: The Function of Isaiah in the New Testament,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. Craig C. Boyles and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 2:651-92.

⁸⁰What follows is based largely on Gentry, “Sure Mercies of David.” Although Gentry admits his position is not the consensus view (“Sure Mercies,” 279), he notes that this position was advanced by A. Caquot, “Les ‘Graces de David’: A Propos d’Isaie 55, no. 3b,” *Sem* 15 (1965): 45-59, as well as W. A. M. Beuken, “Isa. 55,3-5: The Reinterpretation of David,” *Bijdr* 35 (1975): 49-64.

⁸¹H. G. M. Williamson, “‘The Sure Mercies of David’: Subjective or Objective Genitive?,” *Journal of the Semitic Studies* 23 (1978): 31-49; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Unfailing Kindnesses Promised to David: Isaiah 55:3,” *JSOT* 45 (1989): 91-98; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 121; Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 2:355; Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 158-59; John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, NICOT, vol. 20 (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2001), 313-14.

⁸²Gentry, “Sure Mercies,” 281. Gentry observes that Williamson acknowledges this point, and that elsewhere in the OT, in only 8 of 246 cases is it possible that an objective idea is in view (*ibid.*).

David than is right. An everlasting covenant cannot be established on the basis of a David who did not ultimately obey. This objection, right as it is, fails to perceive that Isaiah is speaking messianically. The prophet does not refer to the historic David but to a messianic David to come. Jeremiah (30:8-9) and Ezekiel (34:23-24; 37:24-25) also refer to a future Messiah as “David,” and there is no reason to assume that Isaiah is not doing the same thing. After all, in Isaiah 53:2 Messiah is the shoot and root, picking up on the Davidic imagery of Isaiah 11. In the servant songs, it appears that the servant figure is both Davidic and royal.⁸³ When Isaiah 55:3 is read as the sure mercies performed by David, the normal grammatical pattern is followed, and such a reading fits quite nicely into the previous theology of the Davidic covenant in the OT. Everlasting righteousness will be brought in through an everlasting covenant to the ends of earth through the loyal deeds of the representative Davidic Messiah, the royal and obedient son of God. The Messianic David will ratify the covenant by proving himself to be the king who perfectly obeys, the surety who keeps covenant. The promise is that the people will find everlasting acceptance with God through the Davidic covenant because Messiah himself will positively fulfill every covenant obligation.

Repeated covenant failure in the OT highlights two other precious promises from the prophet Isaiah. Twice Isaiah says that God will give Messiah as a covenant for the people (42:6; 49:8). In light of the growing need for a covenant keeper that builds throughout the OT, the reader should understand Isaiah to be saying that Messiah will keep the covenant. But Messiah’s obedience is not for his own sake—he is given as a

⁸³Daniel I. Block, “My Servant David: Ancient Israel’s Vision of the Messiah,” in *Israel’s Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 17-56.

covenant *for* the people. He is their ready-made, fulfilled covenant. His covenant keeping will in some way count for them. These verses cannot be construed simply to mean that Messiah will take on the covenant penalty for his people. While other passages of Scripture do highlight that explicit truth (Gal 3:13), these texts cannot be so limited without doing violence to the plain and natural import of the verses. Messiah stands in as the vicarious covenant keeper for his people—he meets all of their obligations, including their obligations to keep the positive terms of the covenant, to obey God’s law.

Jeremiah sounds a similar note of hope, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called, ‘The Lord is our righteousness’” (23:5). This passage is striking. The fact that a king is coming who is organically connected to David suggests an offspring of David who will finally bring the Davidic covenant to pass. This king will do righteousness and will live wisely—two of the prominent attributes needed for a right relationship with God, and two of the biggest points of failure for Adam and Israel after him. The king’s people will be saved, the implication already being that somehow the king’s righteousness counts for the people (or else he miraculously enables them to do righteousness). But the text ends by drawing out its own implication. The people are not righteous—their Lord is their righteousness. Given the context of this passage, “righteousness” must be more than simply penal suffering. If the king “executes righteousness” in contrast with the other disobedient kings, his “executing righteousness” includes keeping the Mosaic covenant, including every positive demand. In every case

where the people and their kings fail to obey, the Lord himself provides a remedy, not only by taking their covenant penalty but by positively obeying for them.⁸⁴

The character of Daniel holds a contribution to this chapter as well. Daniel stands in line with Joseph as wise man whose wise actions serve as the means of salvation for others. In many ways Daniel's story is Joseph's story all over again. Daniel too finds himself in a foreign land under a king who is seeking men who are "skillful in all wisdom" (Dan 1:4), and he too will eventually outshine the other wise men through interpreting a dream. The writer of Daniel sets up the reader for later events in the book by pointing out that "in every matter of wisdom" Daniel was ten times better than the men of the kingdom (1:20). Sure enough, the king has a dream but he turns first to his wise men, the wise men of the world. None of them can demonstrate the necessary proficiency in wisdom needed to interpret the king's dream, and as result, the king gets angry and calls for the death of all the wise men (2:1-13). Daniel seeks God's help, obtains favor, and reveals to the king his dream (2:14-45). Just as with Joseph, the wisdom obviously comes from God, and not from Daniel. Yet Daniel's active demonstration of wisdom preserves the lives of the wise men (2:48). Very interestingly, when Daniel begins to give Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation, he says, "Now we will tell the king its interpretation" (2:36). Daniel appears to be speaking individually and privately to the king—why would he say "we"? It seems unlikely that Daniel is referring to himself and God, as if they were somehow co-authors of the solution. He ascribes all

⁸⁴Similarly Jer 33:15-17 says, "In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: The Lord our righteousness. For thus says the Lord God, David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel." The same themes of David covenant fulfillment and vicarious righteousness through a Messiah

the glory to God, and in this case could have easily said, “Now the God of heaven will reveal to the king its interpretation.” Instead, I would posit the notion that Daniel was speaking on behalf of the wise men, the wise men that had formerly failed and earned death by their lack of wisdom. Again the Bible gives a vivid picture of a wise man who saves those whom he represents—and he saves them not by suffering their penalty but by acting wisely in their behalf to make up where they failed. Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men rightly point out that the wisdom Nebuchadnezzar seeks lies only with “the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh” (Dan 2:11). In the wake of Adam’s failure, the redeemer needed to be a wise human, and yet no human could embody appropriately divine wisdom. A perfect wise man was needed, one who was God-in-flesh.

The minor prophets do not serve as isolated period pieces; rather they too form a unity and contribute to a theology of sin, judgment, and restoration.⁸⁵ Hosea puts in stark form the sinful idolatry of the nation. Yet Hosea offers hope for restoration and a new exodus (2:14-23). Tucked into the middle of the book is another prophecy of hope: “Come let us return to the Lord, for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him” (Hosea 6:2-3). This word of resurrection comes in the middle of a book rife with guilt, condemnation, and punishment. God has just told Israel, “I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face” (5:15). In 6:4-6 Israel’s love for God is anything but steadfast, and consequently

apply here. While I will not take the time here to examine Ezekiel, he too prophecies of deliverance through a Davidic Messiah (33-39).

⁸⁵J. D. Nogalski and M. A. Sweeney, eds. *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, SBL 15 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC, vol. 31 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), xxxi-xxxii.

God slays them in judgment. Then comes 6:7: “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.” The guilty Israel is pressed up against the mold of the guilty Adam—the protological and the typological are joined in an encapsulated summary of sinful man as condemned covenant-breaker. What God’s people (and all mankind) need is justification.⁸⁶ How can God be just and still give resurrection life to sinful people?

Admitting that Hosea speaks on one level of Israel’s return from exile, might there be a further Messianic application? Calvin is familiar with such interpretations. He begins by dismissing a Hebrew exegesis that sees Israel’s first life as their coming out of Egypt, their second day as their return from Babylonian captivity, and the third day of resurrection as a final gathering from dispersion “by the hand of Messiah.”⁸⁷ However, Calvin does admit that even outside Jewish interpretational circles this text “is usually referred to Christ . . . that the prophet here encourages the faithful to entertain hope of salvation, because God would raise up his only begotten Son.”⁸⁸ Calvin initially objects to this interpretation.⁸⁹ But strikingly, after Calvin unpacks the original intent, he cannot

⁸⁶Moving all the way to the end of the book, God promises to heal Israel’s apostasy and to love Israel freely, because his anger has turned from them (14:4). They will return and they will flourish (14:7)—again seemingly a return from exile theme. The concluding verse of the book contains the following admonition: “Whoever is wise, let him understand these things, whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them” (14:9). Throughout the book, the prophet has been highlighting the whoredom, failure, and sin of the nation as whole. Here at the end of the book, then, it appears that 14:9 should also be seen as a word of corporate condemnation. Israel is not upright; Israel is a transgressor. So how will the God of righteous ways heal them? How can he justly resurrect Israel, as Hos 6:2 maintains?

⁸⁷These are only “frivolous notions” (Calvin, *Hosea*, 217).

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹“Yet this sense seems to me rather too refined. We must always mind this, that we fly not in the air. Subtle speculations please at first sight, but afterwards vanish. Let everyone, then, who desires to

refrain from finding Christ in the text as well: “But at the same time I do not deny that God has exhibited a remarkable and memorable instance of what is here said in his only-begotten Son. . . . We have then in Christ an illustrious proof of this prophecy.”⁹⁰

The NT gives us an indication that such a rich reading may not be so inappropriate after all. When Luke records Jesus’ final words to his disciples, we see Christ at pains to highlight the fact that the OT Scriptures pointed to him. Among other things, he declares, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead” (24:46). An immediate question springs forward: where does the OT speak of his resurrection *on the third day*? Jesus does not cite the text he has in mind, but it seems hard to deny that Hosea 6:2 at least contributes to his thought.⁹¹ The apostle Paul likewise says that Christ was raised *on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures* (1

make proficiency in the Scriptures always keep to this rule—to gather from the Prophets and the Apostles only what is solid” (ibid.).

⁹⁰Ibid., 219. One could argue (a bit anachronistically) that Calvin is distinguishing analogy and type. That is, Calvin in his own application can point to an interesting example or parallel of Hosea’s words in the resurrection of Christ, but he objects to the person who finds a divinely intended prophecy of Christ’s resurrection in Hosea’s words. The difficulty with this reading is Calvin’s fairly strong language: Christ is indeed a proof of the prophecy. Perhaps we could suggest instead that Calvin’s zeal to begin with a historically rooted understanding of the text eventually gels with a more fully canonical reading and his hermeneutics of faith—eyes that see and ears that hear, the mystery of Christ hidden and revealed.

⁹¹See Jim Hamilton, “The Typology of David’s Rise to Power: Messianic Patterns in the Book of Samuel,” 23-25 [on-line]; accessed 8 July 2009; available from http://www.sbts.edu/pdf/JBGay/the_typology_of_davids_rise_to_power2008-03-101.pdf; Internet. See also Wright, *Resurrection*, 320-322, as well as D. A. Carson’s typological observations in “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*, vol. 2: *The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, WUNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 409. Some commentaries do not address the question of the OT in Luke 24:46 (Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, ICC, vol. 39 [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1977]; John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, WBC, vol. 35C [Dallas: Word, 1993]). Certainly, Christ does relate Jonah’s three days in the whale to his own resurrection (Matt 12:40; cf. Jon 1:17), and perhaps there is an OT pattern of significant events on the third day (Hamilton, “Davidic Typology,” notes Gen 22:4; Exod 19:11, 16; 1 Sam 30:6; 30:26; 2 Sam 1:1-2; 2 Kgs 20:5; Ezra 6:15; Esth 5:1). However, some of these references may be coincidental, and it may be in the case of Jonah that Christ’s quotation is more of an analogy than a typological interpretation. Jesus as the true Israel provides (to my mind, at least) better warrant for seeing a kind of divinely intended typology in Hos 6.

Cor 15:4).⁹² How can we reconcile Hosea's context and these inspired Christological declarations?⁹³ Without taking time for a thorough argument, I would suggest that Jesus is the true Israel. He embodied all the Israel was supposed to be, and the nation's life anticipated the life of their messianic head. Their exile and return/resurrection was a type of his greater exile and resurrection.⁹⁴

This typological point explains how God can be just in resurrecting his people: Christ, along with suffering the full and final exilic penalty for sin, also walked righteously in the commandments of God, earning a justification that fully accords with God Almighty's holy standards of justice. Those united to him in turn enjoy the same privileges of justification and resurrection life. Christ's work grasps Israel in one hand

⁹²Interestingly, when Calvin comments on 1 Cor 15:4, he says that Christ's death and resurrection are predicted "nowhere more plainly than in Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:26, and Psalm 22" (*I Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979]). It is debatable whether or not these texts refer to Christ's resurrection at all, but there certainly is no mention of resurrection *on the third day* in any of them. Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer do see a reference to Hosea 6:2 in this text (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC, vol. 43 [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978], 334). For better or worse, the ACCS (ed. Gerald Bray [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999]) records only one source for 1 Cor 15:4 that cites Hos 6:2—Pelagius (150).

⁹³It is possible that someone might object that Jesus and Paul are not saying that the "third day" aspect was a specific component of the OT prophecy but rather that the "third day" is a formulaic way of speaking about the resurrection. (In other words, Jesus and Paul are simply saying that his death and resurrection were foretold.) One difficulty with this understanding is that both Jesus and Paul are quite comfortable speaking about the resurrection without any reference to the third day (Matt 17:9; 26:32; Rom 4:24-25; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11). It seems reasonable to assume, then, that the resurrection "on the third day" was a part of the OT's theology. Perhaps commentators' reticence to identify potential OT prophetic passages of a third day resurrection reflects an overzealous scrupulosity with regard to "allegorical" interpretations. Among commentators who do not believe the "third day" phrase finds warrant from the OT, see F. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 91-93.

⁹⁴On Jesus as the true Israel, see Schreiner, *NT Theology*, 170-73; Beale, *Temple*, 171-76; R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 55. Once again, the NT draws out this very point elsewhere in Hosea—notice Matthew's citation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:13-15. Briefly, we can understand this citation as follows: The OT builds the theme of Israel as God's son (Exod 4:22-23) while at the same time seeing the representative king as God's son (2 Sam 7); Christ fulfills the Davidic covenant and is in the ultimate sense God's true Son; thus he is the antitype of which both the king and the nation are types. Even in Hos 11 itself there is a clue that the prophet is thinking typologically—he refers to the people returning from Egypt and Assyria, so that past deliverance becomes a pattern for future deliverance. On the use of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:13-15 see Schreiner, *NT Theology*, 73.

but reaches further, stretching all the way back to Adam's exile from Eden. The ultimate issues of death, condemnation, justification, and resurrection, begun in Adam and then pictured in the tragedies and triumphs of the nation of Israel, build toward the presentation of a Messiah to come. This champion will earn justification, and his resurrection would stand as a testimony of that very fact: God first justifies the godly one. Only then does God have a ground to justify the ungodly.⁹⁵

Conclusion

From the opening pages of Genesis onward, the Bible presents the need for an obedient son. Adam failed, and in the wake of his failure the OT presents a two-pronged theology of obedient sons: on the one hand, there were little obedient sons who in some sense brought God's blessing to those related to them, yet on the other hand, all of these people ultimately failed to be the perfectly obedient son that God required. Their typological success contributes to a burgeoning theology of positive representational obedience, while their failure points to the clear need of a greater Messiah to come. As with Adam, so too with Noah, Abraham, and David—God works through the principle of covenant and representation. Figures like Joseph and Daniel, while not as central covenantally, nevertheless help to show the need for a wise man. Although the theme of wisdom in relationship to a coming Messiah is often overlooked, the wisdom literature likewise carries a definite messianic thrust. True wisdom before God is wisdom in action,

⁹⁵Once again, space prevents a thorough look at each of the minor prophets, but simply note that Joel speaks of the mountains dripping with wine and the hills with milk (3:17-18), Amos predicts the rise of David's house and restoration to the land (9:11-15), Micah foretells Gentile salvation (4:1-5), Zechariah writes that God's people will dwell securely (14:8-10), and Malachi speaks of a "messenger of the covenant" who purifies worship (3:1-4). These are only some of the many words of hope that sound out

the fear of God that spurs moral living and obedience to the heavenly father. The prophets continue the themes of covenant curses and exile for disobedience, yet at the same time they hold out hope that a greater David will come, and by his positive loyal deeds he will fulfill all of God's covenant purposes. While Messiah's penal suffering should never be minimized (cf. Isaiah 53), the OT has much to say about the totality of Messiah's obedience to God for his people. And as the NT so clearly reveals, Jesus Christ is the final obedient son, righteous king, faithful servant, wise man, and covenant-keeper. In him, all of God's promises are "yes and amen" (2 Cor 1:20).

from the minor prophets. Yet none of these words of hope could be truly hopeful unless God provided an obedient son for his people.

CHAPTER 6

MESSIAH'S OBEDIENCE FOR ETERNAL LIFE FULFILLED

In the last chapter, I argued that the OT presents a picture of a Messiah to come who by his positive obedience would provide redemption for his people. In this chapter, I argue that the NT fills out this picture by presenting Jesus Christ as the one who was to come—he does provide salvation by the whole course of his obedience. More specifically, his positive obedience to God is vicarious in character. Not only does he pay the penalty for sins, he also provides a complete and justifying righteousness in the obedience worked out throughout his life on earth. In this chapter, I will begin by looking at the Gospels' presentation of Messiah, and then I will move on to the rest of the NT, focusing especially on the book of Romans.

The Obedient Son in the Gospels

In Matthew 16:15, Jesus asks a question that is both pointed and provocative: “Who do you say that I am?” Peter’s answer is both direct and stirring: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (16:16). Through the years, people have asked and answered that question about Jesus in many different ways. The early church identified Jesus as one person who has both a fully divine nature and a fully human nature. The Chalcedon Creed stands as a pinnacle of early church Christology, carefully unpacking the relationship of the two natures of Christ in the context of his unified person. As

important as this early creed is, the language of Chalcedon does not exhaust the richness of the Bible's various and complementary portraits of Jesus. In this section I will focus on one such biblical portrait. In short, I argue that the Gospels present Jesus as the obedient son. I will organize this section around the main points of Jesus' birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection.¹ After walking through the biblical material to establish my thesis, I will conclude by drawing some theological implications.

Birth

The NT opens with a genealogy: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). Matthew concludes his genealogy with another reference to David and Abraham: "So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to Christ fourteen generations" (1:17). Matthew has a purpose in his genealogy. Before Matthew reports the birth of the Jesus, he wants to set the redemptive historical context, stressing some of the epochal

¹For the purposes of this chapter, then, my layout will be more or less synoptic. Since in my view this theme is prevalent in all four Gospels, structuring the paper around the individual gospel witnesses would simply create too much repetition. In organizing my paper in this fashion I do not mean to minimize the distinctive emphases and contributions of each gospel writer, but I do believe that put together they do contribute to the divine author's unified plan. For accounts that focus on individual Gospels see D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 1-599; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew NAC*, vol. 22 (Nashville: B&H, 1992); Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, WBC, vol. 34A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989); William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); Eugene Boring, *Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006); I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, WBC, vol. 35A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989); J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, AB, vol. 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981-85); Craig Evans, *Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990); D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); James M. Boice, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979); F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Basingstoke: Pickering & Inglis, 1983).

highpoints of the OT.² In the OT, Adam was a son of God, and Abraham was the father of the nation of Israel, a nation God refers to as his son (Exod 4:22). David was a king in Israel, and given the importance of kingship in the OT, not to mention the ANE context,³ we may presume that David had a special role to play in representing God to the people. David, like Abraham before him, was a special son of God (2 Sam 7:14). Further, both Abraham and David were the recipients of covenant promises. Among other things, God promised Abraham that he would have a seed who would bring universal blessing. Likewise God gave David a covenant that was “instruction for mankind” (2 Sam 7:19),⁴ a covenant that would come through the means of a righteous king, an obedient son of

²For more discussion of the relative importance of Matthew’s genealogy, including the issues related to his “fourteen” generations, see D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, 61-69; Mark Minnick, “The Matthean Genealogy and Birth Account” (Ph.D. diss., Bob Jones University, 1983); H. C. Waetjen, “The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel according to Matthew,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 205-30; H. Milton, “The Structure of the Prologue to St. Matthew’s Gospel,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 175-81; B. van Elderen, “The Significance of the Structure of Matthew 1,” in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos*, ed. J. Vardaman and E. M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 3-14; E. Krentz, “The Extent of Matthew’s Prologue,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 409-14; C. T. Davies, “The Fulfillment of Creation: A Study of Mathew’s Genealogy,” *JAAR* 41 (1973): 520-35.

³For further information on the relationship between sonship and kingship in the ANE, as well as the related themes of image and likeness, see Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 253-306; Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California, 1976), 2:25-103; W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 85-94, 146-158; idem, “‘Image’ and ‘Likeness’ in the Inscription from Tell Fakhariyet,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 50, no. 3-4 (2000): 227-34; Gerald Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” *ZAW* 73, no. 2 (1961): 202-25; idem, “Sons of the God(s),” *ZAW* 76, no. 1 (1964): 22-47; Peter Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* Spring (2008): 26-29. Cooke observes the divine fatherhood and kingship/sonship in various biblical passages (e.g., Psalm 89, “Israelite King,” 207). Gentry notes his indebtedness to Paul Dion, “Ressemblance et Image de Dieu,” in *Suppléments aux Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. H. Cazelles and A. Feuillet (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1973), 55:365-403.

⁴Another similar translation is “charter for humanity.” For support of these types of translation for 2 Samuel 7:19 (as opposed to “Is this the manner of men?”), see Peter Gentry, “Rethinking the ‘Sure Mercies of David’ in Isaiah 55:3,” *WTJ* 69 (2007): 11-12; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton, Milton C. Fisher, and Leslie W. Sloat (Philadelphia: P&R, 1974), 310-18; Stephen J. Wellum, “Baptism and the Relationship Between the Covenants,” in

God.⁵ This OT background is extremely important, for it helps to indicate that when Matthew announces Jesus as the son of David and Abraham, the anticipation builds that Jesus may be this final obedient son.

In Luke's gospel, when the birth of Jesus is announced to Mary, the angel tells her that Jesus "will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (1:32-33). Notice a few things. First, once again Jesus is called a son, particular the son of the Most High. This title is tantamount to calling Jesus the Son of God.⁶ Put in the OT context of Adam, Israel, and David as sons of God, this title is one indication that Jesus is set to be the last Adam, the true Israel, and the final David, completing the task they failed, fulfilling the obedience they left unfulfilled. Second, when the text goes on to say that Jesus will receive the throne of his father David, the echoes of the Davidic covenant should not be missed, and once again this covenant relates to an obedient son. Third, the finality of this king is emphasized—he is the one will reign forever and have an everlasting kingdom. Yet once

Believer's Baptism, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 131; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 241.

⁵Ultimately, neither Abraham nor David proved to be the final obedient son, and neither was able to bring in the anticipated covenant blessings. Abraham failed to trust God, he lied, and he did not believe God's Word. David committed adultery, murdered a man, and sinfully numbered his troops. God ultimately demands a perfectly obedient son, as the story in the Garden of Eden teaches.

⁶In Luke 1:35 the angel tells Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." Here the Holy Spirit, who is God, exerts the power of the Most High (God) to miraculously conceive the Son of the Most High—Jesus himself. If it is not already clear enough that this is the Son of God, the angel concludes by saying so explicitly. (Cf. Nolland, *Luke*, 55). And already the knowledge that Jesus is the "holy" Son stands in contrast to the OT nation of Israel.

more the reader is reminded of the promises of the Davidic covenant.⁷ And although the OT kings were largely chastised for their disobedience, the fact that this king will in fact reign forever indicates that he will be the final obedient son promised to David.⁸ In addition, the wise men's visit to Jesus recollects the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-13; 2 Chron 9:1-12),⁹ helping to point to Jesus as the greater Solomon, the obedient son who lives wisely and walks in righteousness.¹⁰

⁷Luke reminds his readers not only of the Davidic covenant but of the Abrahamic covenant. In her *Magnificat* Mary proclaims that God has "helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever" (1:54-55). Simeon likewise realizes that Jesus will be the glory of Israel and a light to the Gentiles (Luke 2:32). The Abrahamic covenant is now coming to pass. Abraham's seed has finally arrived in the Son of Mary. Jesus is Mary's "firstborn" (2:6)—the true Israel of God.

⁸In the original Davidic covenant, while God does promise to fulfill the covenant, this fulfillment is nevertheless viewed as coming through an obedient king (Gentry, "Sure Mercies," 16).

⁹W. Davies and Dale C. Allison are worth quoting at length: "A Jesus/Solomon typology may also be discerned in Matthew 2:11. . . . Gold and myrrh were among the gifts brought to king Solomon by foreigners. . . . Leaving aside Eccles 24, 15, frankincense and myrrh appear together only three times in the OT, each time in connexion with Solomon: Ct 3:6; 4:6, 14. . . . Just as the magi give both gifts and homage to king Jesus, so foreign royalty once rendered both gifts and homage to King Solomon . . . and in late Jewish tradition the queen of Sheba saw a star as she made her way to David's son" (*Matthew 1-7*, ICC, vol. 37 [Edinburgh: Continuum, 2004], 250-51). They also mention a legend in which Adam took gold, frankincense, and myrrh with him out of Eden (*ibid.*, 251). If this has any kind of background circulation to Matthew's account, there could also be a veiled allusion to Jesus as the true Adam.

¹⁰The Queen of Sheba comes from a far off land bringing gold and spices to honor the king (1 Kgs 10:2; 2 Chr 9:1), and there the theme of wisdom likewise stands out. Solomon has just finished asking for and receiving great wisdom from God (1 Kgs 9). The Queen of Sheba comes "to test him with hard questions" (10:1)—she is portrayed as a wise woman. And she is astonished at his wisdom, as she repeats (2 Chr 9:3-7). Through both her gifts and her speech, the Queen of Sheba shows deference to Solomon. He is the greater king and the wiser man. Yet as great as Solomon was (1 Kgs 10), the Bible quickly reveals that he failed—he loved many foreign women (11:1) who turned his heart away from God (11:4). Solomon had a certain kind of wisdom, but he did not demonstrate the moral fortitude necessary to *live* wisely. He was unwilling to obey God's instructions to the king (Deut 17; 2 Kgs 11:2). As much as the people may have hoped in Solomon, he was not the ultimate wise man who would live wisely and virtuously for the people. In the NT account, the wise men then help to signal the fact that Jesus may indeed be the ultimate wise man that Solomon never was. Further confirmation of this theme comes from Jesus' own lips in Matt 12:42: "The Queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here." Here Jesus identifies himself as the greater Solomon.

Another significant piece of evidence in connection to Jesus' birth comes from one of Matthew's early fulfillment sayings. After the wise men depart, Joseph flees to Egypt with Mary and Jesus to avoid Herod's persecution, and the family remains in Egypt until Herod dies. Then Matthew reports, "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son'" (2:15). Matthew is quoting Hosea 11:1, but the difficulty with understanding this selection is that on first blush Hosea 11:1 does not appear to be speaking of an individual person at all, much less Jesus. In Hosea's context, it seems clear that Hosea has in mind the nation of Israel—they are the ones who are called out of Egypt. Hosea 11:1-2 reads, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols." There have been many attempts to understand Matthew's quotation.¹¹ While I do not have the space to consider all of the issues in detail, I believe Matthew correctly perceives that Jesus is the true Son of God, he is the true Israel.¹² The OT builds the theme of Israel as God's son (Exod

¹¹R. T. France, "The Formula Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," *NTS* 27 (1981): 233-51; Carson, *Matthew*, 91-93; Schreiner, *NT Theology*, 73; France, *Matthew*, 76-81; John H. Sailhammer, "Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15 (with response)," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 87-105; Jonathan Nkhoma, *The Use of Fulfillment Quotations in the Gospel according to Matthew* (Zomba, Malawi: Kachere, 2005), especially 167-71; Martinus J. J. Menken, "Out of Egypt I have Called My Son: Some observations on the Quotation from Hosea 11.1 in Matthew 2.15," in *Wisdom of Egypt*, ed. Anthony Hilhorst and George H. van Kooten (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 143-52; Anne Rice, *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* (New York: Knopf, 2005); Tracy L. Howard, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: An Alternative Solution," *BSac* 143 (1986): 314-28.

¹²On Jesus as the true Israel, see Schreiner, *NT Theology*, 170-73; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004) 171-76; France, *Matthew*, 55; *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Vancouver: Regent, 1998), 43-60; Dale C. Allison Jr., "The Son of God as Israel: A Note on Matthean Christology," *Irish Biblical Studies* 9 (1987): 74-81; William L. Kynes, *A Christology of Solidarity: Jesus as the Representative of His People in Matthew* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991); Peter L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 45; Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 491; John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality*

4:22-23) while at the same time seeing the representative king as God's son (2 Sam 7); Jesus fulfills the Davidic covenant and is in the ultimate sense God's true Son; thus he is the antitype of which both the king and the nation are types. Even in Hosea 11 itself there is a clue that the prophet is thinking typologically—he refers to the people returning from Egypt and Assyria, so that past deliverance becomes a pattern for future deliverance. The fact that Matthew understands the significance of a sonship typology shows up from the outset—as we have seen, Matthew begins his gospel by announcing Jesus as the son of Abraham and the son of David.¹³

Before moving on to Jesus' baptism, it will be helpful to consider the childhood story of Jesus reported in Luke 2:41-51.¹⁴ The story is bracketed with two verses that parallel one another in thought. Luke 2:40 reads, "And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him." Luke 2:52 reads, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." It appears that these verses form an *inclusio* that serves to preview and summarize a significant point of this particular incident—Jesus' growth in wisdom links to a growth in

in the First Gospel (New York: Paulist, 1979), 55; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 29; *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), especially 477-548; *The Challenge of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 184; Thorsten Moritz, "Mark, Book of," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, et al (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 480-85.

¹³See the concise and helpful discussion of Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, NSBT 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 88-90.

¹⁴This story is the only biblical story we have from Jesus' childhood. This in and of itself is significant. Clearly, the gospel writers, though they certainly intended to write history, were not merely trying to write biography—they wrote theologically. The material in the Gospels is clustered around Jesus' birth and the events of his brief public ministry, death, and resurrection. What about the twenty five years between those clusters of recorded events? What was Jesus doing during these "silent" years? The incident Luke reports happens when Jesus is 12—in the Jewish world, he was right on the brink of manhood. In addition, this incident occurs at about the midpoint of the unreported years: Luke offers a window into the developing character of Jesus. Consequently, if Luke's account here highlights Jesus as the obedient son, we have strong warrant to believe that this was a major theme of Jesus' life through all the silent years.

favor.¹⁵ Coming to the story itself, we learn that when Jesus is twelve he goes to Jerusalem with his parents to celebrate the Passover. After the feast, the parents begin their journey home, assuming Jesus is somewhere in their group of travelers. After a day they discover that Jesus is in fact not with the group, and they return to Jerusalem to look for him. They find him after three days. Even though Jesus is not in the wrong (he was doing what his heavenly Father wanted him to do), Luke records rather matter-of-factly, “he [Jesus] went down with them [his parents] and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them” (2:51). Jesus obeyed his earthly parents. Such an attitude and behavior was not out of character for Jesus—that is one of Luke’s points.¹⁶ To put it in terms of the ten commandments, Jesus regularly “honored his father and mother.” Luke selects one story

¹⁵Jesus’ increase in wisdom is evidenced by his dialogue with the Jewish teachers—all were amazed at his “understanding and his answers” (v.47). H. J. de Jonge observes, “The information that Jesus was only twelve throws this wisdom into the desired prominence,” (“Sonship, Wisdom, Infancy: Luke ii. 41-51a,” *NTS* 24 [1977-78]: 317-54 [322]). De Jonge also points to one extra-biblical source that speaks of Solomon’s wisdom at the age of twelve (*ibid.*, 323); however, a look at the OT shows that Solomon asked for and received his unique wisdom after he had built the temple—not when he was a boy. As a result, it is best not to see the reference to the twelve year old Jesus as second Solomon theology. I also agree with de Jonge that it appears unwarranted to assume that the reference to “three days” in this periscope anticipates the resurrection—an understanding held by Origen and Ambrose (*ibid.*, 326), as well as James Keith Elliot (“Does Luke 2:41-52 Anticipate the Resurrection?” *Expository Times* 83 [1971-72]: 87-89). Despite these agreements with de Jonge, I disagree with his own highly speculative construction of the text’s redaction (342-48). Yet it is also important to link these truly historical events with Luke’s report that Jesus grew in favor with God (2:52). Jesus is the true wise man, but he is not just any truly wise man; he is not an isolated wise man. He has in his capacity as a wise man a special rapport with God. Luke’s comment about Jesus growing in favor with God is in one respect astonishing. The Son of God enjoyed eternal favor with God; he had a glorious relationship with God before the world existed (John 17:5); he was daily God’s delight, and forever the son of his love. The Trinity bears within itself an eternal and perfect communion; each person has always recognized and enjoyed the perfections of the others. So how could Jesus grow any more in favor with God than he already was? The answer lies in understanding Jesus’ human work as a vicarious and mediatorial work. Though Luke does not say so explicitly, he seems to want to remind the reader that Jesus’ life is not for himself but for someone else. Each step of loving God and neighbor, of submitting to parents and living wisely, draws Jesus one step closer to completing the vicarious task God has given him.

¹⁶Of course there can be other significant points as well. Marshall rightly points out that in Jesus’ first recorded words, Jesus confirms the fact that he is the Son of God, just as was reported in Luke 1:32, 35 (*Luke*, 129).

from the silent years to highlight in part Jesus' obedience. He always did what he was supposed to do. He was an obedient son.

Baptism

While only two Gospels discuss the events surrounding Jesus' birth, three of the four Gospels report the baptism of Jesus.¹⁷ There is a large swath of literature on the significance of Jesus' baptism, and commentators and theologians of all stripes debate its significance.¹⁸ However, there is no need to limit the significance of Jesus' baptism to one particular idea, and it may well be that a number of important themes arise from such a significant event. Jesus' baptism signified at least: 1) his being clothed with power for

¹⁷For Matthew's account see Carson, *Matthew*, 98-109; France, *Matthew*, 96-123; Morris, *Matthew*, 50-68; Nolland, *Matthew*, 132-57; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 43-59; Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing With Israel: the Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 64, no. 3 (2002): 511-526; *Matthew 1-13*, ed. Manlio Simonetti, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 38-54. For Mark's account see France, *Mark*, 65-87; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 15-35; Lane, *Mark*, 47-58; C. E. B. Cranfield, "The Baptism of Our Lord: A Study of St. Mark 1:9-12," *SJT* 7 (1955): 53-63; I. Buse, "The Markan Account of the Baptism of Jesus and Isaiah lxiii," *JTS* 7 (1956): 74-75; Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds. *Mark*, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 6-16; Boring, *Mark*, 38-45; For Luke's account see Marshall, *Luke*, 144-56; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 145-65; Arthur A. Just Jr., ed. *Luke*, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 59-68; Heidi J. Hornik, "The Baptism of Christ and Temptations by Michele Tosini: A Lukan Reading," *Int* 61, no. 4 (2007): 376-85.

¹⁸In addition to the sources in n. 4, consider also G. R. Beaseley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 45-67; James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 23-37; R. Alastair Campbell, "Jesus and His Baptism," *TynBul* 47, no. 2 (1996): 191-214; L. E. Keck, "The Spirit and the Dove," *NTS* 17 (1970): 41-67; P. Bretscher, "Exodus 4:22-23 and the Voice from Heaven," *JBL* 87 (1968): 301-11; George Harry Packwood Thompson, "Called—Proved—Obedient: a Study in the Baptism and Temptation Narratives of Matthew and Luke," *JTS* 11, no. 1 (1960): 1-12; S. Lewis Johnson, "Baptism of Christ," *BSac* 123, no. 491 (1966): 220-29; Paul Garnet, "The Baptism of Jesus and the Son of Man Idea," *JSNT* 9 (1980): 49-65; Stephen Gero, "Spirit as a Dove at the Baptism of Jesus," *NovT* 18, no. 1 (1976): 17-35; Kilian McDonnell, "Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan," *Theological Studies* 56, no. 2 (1995): 209-236; Daniel A. Smith, "Irenaeus and the Baptism of Jesus," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 4 (1997): 618-642.

his ministry;¹⁹ 2) his identification with others,²⁰ and more specifically his establishing the nucleus of a new Israel;²¹ and 3) his undergoing judgment.²² Yet most significant for

¹⁹France, *Matthew*, 121; Nolland, *Luke*, 165; Marshall, *Luke*, 154; Hagner, *Matthew*, 57; Guelich, *Mark*, 35; Keck, “Spirit and the Dove,” 67; Campbell, “Jesus and His Baptism,” 204. This is especially clear in Luke’s gospel. Luke’s report of the baptism is not particularly long, but he does mention that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove (3:22). This descent is a foreshadowing of Luke’s Pentecost account, when the Spirit likewise descends on the disciples, clothing them with power for their ministries. Jesus’ last words to his disciples in the Gospel of Luke were to stay in the city until they were clothed with power from on high (24:49). In this connection too Jesus can be seen as the one inaugurating the new covenant age. See James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism*, 24; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power* (Dallas: Word, 1991), especially chapter four, “The Spirit at the Baptism and Temptation of Jesus;” Graham Cole, *He Who Gives Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 158. Justin Martyr denied the idea of Jesus being in any way empowered at his baptism, since for Justin Jesus fully possessed every needed power from birth (Smith, “Irenaeus and the Baptism of Jesus,” 620). But again, I am not seeking to argue that Jesus was deficient and therefore not fully divine before his baptism. Smith shows that Irenaeus understood the baptism in part as equipping the humanity of Jesus for his ministry as Messiah (Ibid., 621).

²⁰Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmyer (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 189; Hagner, *Matthew*, 60; Boring, *Mark*, 44; France, *Matthew*, 120; Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 157. Baptism, as a religious rite, marked people out. All who were so baptized were joined together as a kind of collective entity. Just as many people came and “were being baptized by John in the Jordan,” so too was Jesus (Mark 1:5, 9). (For some linguistic parallels in Mark, see U. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness* [London: SCM, 1963], 93-95.) Jesus enters his public ministry in solidarity. This point naturally brings out the question of who Jesus was identifying with. The fact that Jesus was identifying with sinners can be drawn from Scripture’s witness that John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). On first blush, it might be wondered how Jesus can identify himself with sinners and how he can receive a baptism of repentance. After all, the people who came to be baptized were confessing their sins (Matt 3:6; Mark 1:5). I am assuming, in accord with the rest of Scripture (e.g., Heb 7:26), that Jesus was sinless. Consequently, Jesus cannot be confessing his own personal sin, for he has none to confess. Instead, then, it appears that Jesus’ baptism helps to show that he is taking on the sins of others.

²¹Just as the nation was baptized in the wilderness (Exod 14; 1 Cor 10:2), so too Jesus was baptized in the wilderness (Matt 3:1, 6; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3-4). Put together with the theme of repentance, Jesus was identifying with the remnant of Israel. It was apparently primarily Jews who came out to John (a Jew) to be baptized, but it was not all Jews, only the repentant sinners listening to John’s message. This theme of Jesus and the remnant of Israel relates to an earlier theme already put forward in this study—Jesus is the true Israel. What begins to surface is that those who ally themselves with Jesus form the nucleus of a new Israel. In fact, many see the descent of the dove as a sign that Jesus is the new Israel. See Carson, *Matthew*, 109; Lane, *Mark*, 50-58; Morris, *Matthew*, 57; Campbell, “Jesus and His Baptism,” 206-08; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964), 40-44. In addition, some see the dove as a sign that Jesus is the new creation, perhaps echoing the language of Gen 1 where the Spirit “hovers” over the waters—France, *Matthew*, 122; Hagner, *Matthew*, 58. McDonnell shows that a Genesis allusion in Jesus’ baptism was a theme picked up by the early church, concerned as they were with cosmic renewal (“Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan,” 217-19, 236). Guelich denies that dove carries any symbolic significance (*Mark*, 35).

²²Going under the water has a biblical theology of judgment. God’s first universal judgment was the flood (Gen 6-9), and Peter later connects Christian baptism to the story of Noah and the ark (1 Pet 3:18-22). The armies of Egypt, that great type of the world, are judged when the waters of the Red Sea pass over them. Jesus himself speaks of the flood of God’s wrath that he experiences on the cross as a kind of

this section, Jesus' baptism reiterates the theme of Jesus as the obedient son. Gathercole observes that in Matthew's account Jesus' baptism is "sandwiched between two emphatic references to Jesus' obedience: the fulfilling of all righteousness (Matt 3:15) on one side and the longer version of the temptation narrative in Matthew 4."²³ Matthew gives the most extensive account of the events surrounding Jesus' baptism. What particularly stands out in Matthew's gospel is the contrast between Jesus and the self-righteous religious rulers. When the Pharisees and Sadducees come out to John's baptism,²⁴ John excoriates them as a brood of vipers who do not repent and who wrongly place confidence in Abraham (Mat 3:7-9).²⁵ But when Jesus comes, John's attitude is

baptism (Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50). One of the fullest accounts of this theme is offered by Meredith Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968). Duane Garrett, while criticizing Kline's view of baptism, acknowledges that in his baptism Jesus recapitulates Israel passing through the waters before the Egyptians ("Meredith Kline on Suzerainty, Circumcision, and Baptism," in *Believer's Baptism*, ed. Shawn Wright and Thomas R. Schreiner [B&H, 2006], 274]). Yet Israel is not deluged by the waters as Jesus is—they pass through dryly. It is Egypt, those judged by God, who face the deluge of the waters. I do not think one has to agree with every point of Kline's case to recognize that the themes of baptism and judgment find some linkage in Scripture, and that Jesus' baptism can be seen as a foreshadowing of his cross experience. Ben Witherington helps to show how the waters of baptism can relate to both redemption and judgment (*Troubled Waters: Rethinking the Theology of Baptism* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007], 27-37). With a similar link, Michael Horton writes, "Soon after he makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem for Passover—exactly where and when the disciples' triumphalism was at its peak, Jesus began to prepare them for his departure: the triumphal entry into the heavenly sanctuary (John 14-16). Jesus, the greater Joshua, passed through the waters of judgment and entered triumphantly into the promised land, having conquered all opposition" (*People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008], 17).

²³Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 377. Gathercole goes on to affirm that "obedience is an important aspect of Jesus' baptism and sonship in Matthew" (*ibid.*), agreeing with U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 180, and D. J. Versput, "The Role and Meaning of the 'Son of God' Title in Matthew's Gospel," *NTS* 33 (1987): 538.

²⁴It is not entirely clear whether or not these rulers were coming to watch the baptism or to actually be baptized. It may be that since John's baptism was so popular, they did not want to miss out on this chance to appear to be unified with the crowd. Regardless of their intentions, though, the gospel writers make it clear that they were not ready for true repentance.

²⁵Again, notice that these rulers are not really a part of God's true people. They presumed on Abraham their biological father, yet forgot that God was able to raise up from stones children of Abraham (Matt 3:9). God is never beholden to biological relationships, "and even now the axe is laid to the root of

altogether different. John does not want to baptize Jesus, and he confesses that he is actually the one who needs to be baptized by Jesus (3:14). John perceives that he is the sinner and Jesus is the righteous one. When Jesus is baptized, all three gospel writers report the words of the Father from heaven: “This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:21). This statement stands as the summary and climax of Jesus’ baptism, and helps to serve as God’s own summary of the event. Once again, Jesus is called the “son,” picking up the sonship themes from the earlier birth accounts. Furthermore, again remember that such language harks back to the Davidic king as the son of God and the nation of Israel as the son of God (see also Psalm 2). Here, at the outset of his public ministry, Jesus is announced as the paramount son of God.²⁶

In addition, the evangelist alludes to the words of Isaiah 42:1: “Behold, my servant . . . in whom my soul delights.” This servant will “faithfully bring forth justice” (42:3). God calls him “in righteousness” and give him “as a covenant for the people” (42:6). Jesus takes on the identity of the righteous servant from Isaiah, the promised covenant-fulfiller for the people.

Also note Jesus’ response to John’s hesitation to baptize him: “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15). This verse is

the tree” (3:10). The nation would be judged and redefined on God’s terms, redefined around God’s Messiah.

²⁶His position over the earlier “sons” can be drawn out from God’s approbation. Jesus is the only beloved son, and God is “well pleased” (εὐδοκῶ) with Jesus. God was “not pleased” with the majority of Israel (1 Cor 10:5), for they continually showed themselves to be an unrighteous people who disobeyed God. David, though seemingly better than the nation taken as a whole, still failed in key areas. When David sins with Bathsheba and ensures her husband’s death, God is “displeased” (2 Sam 11:27), and God is “displeased” when David numbers the troops (1 Chr 21:7). (Despite the fact that in the LXX verses, εὐδοκῶ is not the exact word that is used, there is still an interesting conceptual parallel.) With Jesus the matter is much different. Jesus is put forward as the one who obeys God, as the greater David and the greater Israel. He is the obedient Son.

sometimes taken as a reference to Christ's active obedience.²⁷ However, one problem with this interpretation is that both Jesus and John fulfill all righteousness ("for *us* to fulfill"). If the verse is speaking directly of Jesus acting vicariously, then it would appear that John somehow makes a vicarious contribution as well, a point that Carson brings out.²⁸ This passage is better interpreted missionally. Jesus was fully aware of the fact that he had been sent on an important mission from God, and he was getting ready to be clothed with the Spirit to enter a special public phase of that mission.²⁹ He was prepared to follow God's will from start to finish. He had set his face to follow God's plan and was not looking back. He was going to obey the Father, and a part of that obedience involved receiving the baptism from John and the corresponding ministry of the Spirit. The right thing was for Jesus to be baptized, and Jesus, as the righteous and obedient son, was determined to fulfill all righteousness in obedience to God.

Kirk argues that Jesus' baptism, as a prolepsis of his baptism with fire (death on the cross) actually points simply to Jesus' passive obedience.³⁰ I agree that there is an allusion to Jesus' future penal suffering, but I am not willing to exclude other important

²⁷John Owen, *Communion With God*, 2:214.

²⁸Carson, *Matthew*, 107-08. See his helpful discussion of the verse in *ibid.* Lane also remarks that Jesus "walked into the waters of baptism in obedience to the Father's will," (Lane, *Mark*, 56). In addition see Hagner, *Matthew*, 56; France, *Matthew*, 120.

²⁹The debate on the amount of messianic self-understanding that Jesus possessed is beyond the scope of this work. For discussion see Geerhardus Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954); George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 178-80; Aquila H. I. Lee, *From Messiah to Preexistent Son: Jesus' Self-Consciousness and Early Christian Exegesis of Messianic Psalms* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 117-200; William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. Greig (Cambridge: Clark, 1971); James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 63-65; Shirley Jackson Case, "The Alleged Messianic Consciousness of Jesus," *JBL* 46 (1927): 1-19.

³⁰"Sufficiency of the Cross (I)," 52-54.

considerations. As already stated, in his baptism Jesus does identify with others. In particular though, he forms the nucleus of a new Israel by passing through the waters just as they passed through the waters. Jesus takes on the identity of Israel, and in doing so he obligates himself to succeed where they failed. This entails not only taking on their judgment but also walking in positive obedience.

Notice in Matthew 3 that there is still a significant focus on Jesus' positive obedience. Matthew brings out Jesus' "determination to do his assigned work," and the fact that Jesus as the servant of God was acting in "obedience to the will of God," since "the Servant's first mark is obeying God."³¹ In both the birth and baptism narratives, the Gospels highlight Jesus as the obedient Son of God.³² If his baptism points toward a substitutionary suffering of judgment, it should also point towards a substitutionary positive obedience to God.

Temptation

The three synoptic Gospels record the temptation of Jesus after the baptism of Jesus. Mark's account is rather short (1:13-14),³³ and there is much overlap between

³¹Carson, *Mathew*, *ibid.*

³²Carson aptly summarizes: "At the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, his Father presented him, in a veiled way, as at once Davidic Messiah, very Son of God, representative of the people, and Suffering Servant" (*Matthew*, 109).

³³For Mark's account see Jeffrey B. Gibson, "Jesus' Wilderness Temptation According to Mark," *JSNT* 53 Mr (1994): 3-34; Lane, *Mark*, 59-62; James A. Brooks, *Mark*, NAC, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 43-44; Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, ICC, vol. 38 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 12-14; E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); France, *Mark*, 83-87.

Matthew and Luke,³⁴ so for simplicity sake I will focus on Matthew's account.³⁵

Matthew records that Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted (4:1).

The fact that the Spirit led Jesus helps to indicate that God the Father was sovereignly in back of Jesus' temptation. Although it is true that Satan presented the immediate personal challenge to Jesus, nevertheless this was in some sense a testing orchestrated by God.³⁶

In the OT, Israel is also said to have been "tempted." God tested them to find out what was in their heart, whether or not they would keep his commandments (Deut 8:2, 16).

Once again, a close link is forged between Jesus and Israel. Clearly they failed their wilderness testing—their hearts proved to be evil, and they did not obey God. Jesus is now tested as the new Israel, a fact further confirmed when he is said to fast forty days and forty nights, a parallel to Israel's experience in the wilderness to forty years as well

³⁴For Luke's account see Marshall, *Luke*, 165-75; Robert Stein, *Luke*, NAC, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 143-50; Nolland, *Luke*, 174-83; Guelich, *Mark*, 36-40; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, ICC, vol. 39 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977), 105-16; F. J. Glendening, "The Devil and the Temptations of Our Lord according to St. Luke," *Theology* 52 (1949): 102-05.

³⁵On Matthew's account more specifically see John T. Fitzgerald, "The Temptation of Jesus: The Testing of the Messiah in Matthew," *Restoration Quarterly* 15, no. 3-4 (1972): 152-60; Daniel L. Akin, "A Discourse Analysis of the Temptation of Jesus Christ as Recorded in Matthew 4:1-11," *Occasional Papers in Translation and Text Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (1987): 78-86. For general discussions of Jesus' temptation see Birger Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son* (Lund: Gleerup, 1966); Theodore J. Jansma, "The Temptation of Jesus," *WTJ* 5, no. 2 (1943): 166-81; Robert Holst, "Temptation of Jesus," *Expository Times* 82, no. 11 (1971): 343-44; A. Victor Murray, "The Temptation of Jesus," *Expository Times* 60, no. 4 (1949): 99-101; Andrew J. Kirk, "Messianic Role of Jesus and the Temptation Narrative," *Evangelical Quarterly* 44 April-June (1972): 91-102; Arthur Herbert Curtis, *The Vision and Mission of Jesus: A Literary and Critical Investigation Based Specifically Upon the Baptismal and Temptation Narratives* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1954); Paul R. Stevick, "The Second Temptation of Jesus," *Methodist Review* 44, no. 1 (1896): 74-85; Archibald B. Taylor, "Decision in the Desert: The Temptation of Jesus in the Light of Deuteronomy," *Int* 14, no. 3 (1960): 300-09.

³⁶The Greek word for "tempted" (πειραζω) can have a broader idea—a kind of "testing" which is not automatically pejorative. It is true that Satan attempted to get Jesus to sin, so in that narrow sense it is conceptually a temptation. However, from the vantage point of God's plans and purposes, it can be seen as part of Messiah's "testing." (Note again the title of Gerhardsson's book, *The Testing of God's Son*.)

as the experience of Israel's leader Moses (Exod 24:18).³⁷ In addition, Jesus' testing relates to sonship. Repeatedly the devil says, "If you are the Son of God . . ." (4:3, 6). All of these factors combine to form a powerful "presentation of Jesus himself as the true Israel, the 'Son of God' through whom God's redemptive purpose for his people is now at last to reach its fulfillment."³⁸

The theme of Jesus as the obedient Son is clear in his temptation.³⁹ In the baptism, God has just publicly declared that Jesus is his only beloved Son. The temptation of Jesus, following right on the heels of the baptismal account, helps to prove that Jesus is the true Son, and it shows that the true Son is always obedient to his Father. Jesus' temptation is quite comprehensive. This point can be shown by tracing the geographical movement of the narrative. The first temptation occurs in the barren wilderness, the second temptation occurs on the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem, and the third temptation takes place on a very high mountain. From low to high, from rural to urban, from valley to mountain, there is no place in the cosmos where Jesus will succumb to disobedience. In addition, the appeals of Satan reflect the comprehensive character of Jesus' testing. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are all called on in service to persuade Jesus to abandon his holy vocation. Truly it can be

³⁷See also other OT references to forty days (Gen 7:4; Exod 34:28; Num 13:25; Deut 9:9; 1 Sam 17:16; Jonah 3:4). Of course not all of these references need be loaded up with theological significance. Still, there does seem to be a significant pattern of "forty day" events.

³⁸France, *Matthew*, 128.

³⁹Walker writes, "In the temptation narrative Jesus demonstrates his sonship by entering into the historic experience of Israel in the wilderness but, instead of failing as had Israel, he offers perfect filial obedience," (Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 45).

said that in all points Jesus was tempted like mankind, and yet without sin (Heb 4:15).⁴⁰ Significantly, Jesus responded with quotations from Deuteronomy 6-8, and this portion of OT Scripture begins with the Shema. This important OT saying in many ways summarized the kind of devotion that God required: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:4-5). In the temptation we see not only that Jesus had God’s Word hidden in his heart but also that he truly loved God with all his heart, soul, and strength.⁴¹ Jesus was ready to give first allegiance to God’s will, and keeping God’s commands was the most important thing. The wilderness was a place of beginning and subsequent failure for Israel. Adam failed shortly after his beginning as well, but Jesus triumphs through the most difficult opposition immediately after the start of his public ministry. In the face of overwhelming temptation, he obeys.

Ministry

John concludes his gospel with a powerful report on the wonder of Jesus’ public ministry: “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that could be written” (21:25). No one did the works that Jesus did, and it would be impossible to examine fully his public ministry. I will begin by examining two common titles of

⁴⁰For a discussion of this verse in relation to Jesus’ temptation see Marguerite Shuster, “The Temptation, Sinlessness, and Sympathy of Jesus: Another Look at the Dilemma of Hebrews 4:15,” in *Perspectives on Christology: Essays in Honor of Paul K. Jewett*, ed. Marguerite Shuster and Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 197-209.

⁴¹Gerhardsson makes an intriguing argument that Jesus’ three temptations from Satan correspond to the three elements of the Shema (heart, soul, and strength), based in part on an appeal to other Jewish literature (*Testing of God’s Son*, 71-79); however, as attractive as such an interpretation is theologically, it appears that Gerhardsson is reaching for too many exact parallels.

Jesus—“Son of Man” and “Son of God”—to see how they might shed light on the theme of Jesus as obedient son. The title “Son of Man” appears in the Gospels eighty-two times, and it is Jesus’ own favorite self-designation. Although there has been some discussion of this title and a possible Aramaic background,⁴² I want to look at the title in the Gospels themselves, with more attention to the OT background than non-canonical sources.⁴³ Perhaps the first point to note is that the “son of man” is a true human being.⁴⁴ Among humans in the OT, however, no one is called “son of man” more frequently than the prophet Ezekiel.⁴⁵ In this case, it is hard to believe that God merely wanted to remind people that Ezekiel was a human being. Some have suggested that the point of emphasis is on Ezekiel as a lowly human being,⁴⁶ a creature who is to respond to his creator as a

⁴²See P. M. Casey, “Method in Our Madness, and Madness in their Methods: Some Approaches to the Son of Man Problem in Recent Scholarship,” *JSNT* 42 (1991): 17-43; “Aramaic Idiom and the Son of Man Problem,” *JSNT* 25 (2002): 3-32; “General, Generic and Indefinite: The Use of the Term ‘Son of Man’ in Aramaic Sources and the Teaching of Jesus,” *JSNT* 29 (1987), 21-56; J. A. Fitzmyer, “The New Testament Title ‘Son of Man’ Philologically Considered,” in *A Wandering Aramaean* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1979), 143-60.

⁴³See C. Tuckett, “The Present Son of Man,” *JSNT* 14 (1982): 58-81. In general, the literature on the “Son of Man” is vast. Some helpful studies include C. C. Caragounis, *The Son of Man* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1986); D. R. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 253-271; idem, “The Son of Man in Mark’s Gospel,” *Expository Times* 115 (2004): 366-72; H. E. Todt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1965); C. F. D. Moule, “‘The Son of Man’: Some of the Facts,” *NTS* 41 (1995), 277-79.

⁴⁴In the OT, for example, the phrase “son of x” can often denote that the person so described is of a particular class. So a “son of the prophets” is simply someone who is a prophet. Num 23:19 says that God is not a man that he should lie, or a “son of man” that he should change his mind. The repetitive parallelism helps to explain the phrase: put simply, God is not prone to deceit and vacillation as humans are.

⁴⁵Ezekiel is called “son of man” a staggering ninety-three times.

⁴⁶Andrew Blackwood, *The Other Son of Man: Ezekiel/Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 11-25; S. Vernon McCasland, *The Pioneer of Our Faith: A New Life of Jesus* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 120; Burkett, *Son of Man*, 58-59.

servant to his lord. For others, the term in Ezekiel focuses on Ezekiel as prophet.⁴⁷ These two themes need not be mutually exclusive. While some deny that Ezekiel's "son of man" has any relation to the title as applied to Jesus in the Gospels,⁴⁸ George Lovell Cary has rightly pointed out that nine-tenths of all the OT passages containing the "son of man" apply to Ezekiel.⁴⁹ We cannot suppose that Jesus was ignorant of the OT, and we need to read Scripture as one unified story. Consequently, I would tentatively conclude that Jesus, in using the "son of man" title, is announcing himself as a lowly human being who is the humble servant and prophet of God.

But there is still more from the OT. Daniel 7:13-14 reads, "Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away." In Matthew 24:30 Jesus picks up on the Danielic son of man: "Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Again in Matthew 26:64 Jesus says, "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."⁵⁰

⁴⁷George Lovell Cary, *The Synoptic Gospels* (New York: Putnam's, 1900), 363; Burkett, *Son of Man*, 57-58; Pierson Parker, "The Meaning of the 'Son of Man,'" *JBL* 60 (1941): 151-57. Although Parker affirms the prophetic carryover, he denies any messianic significance to the title (*ibid.*).

⁴⁸Burkett concludes that "the theory that traces the Gospel 'Son of Man' to Ezekiel has never been widespread and now appears only sporadically" (*Son of Man*, 60).

⁴⁹Cary, *Synoptic Gospels*, 363.

⁵⁰See also Mark 13:26 and 14:62.

Jesus himself steps into the role of the Danielic son of man.⁵¹ This figure presents a picture of divine power and ruling authority, and thus seems to stand in contrast to the understanding of the Son of Man I have outlined so far. Yet the tension is resolved when we recognize the multi-faceted nature and work of Jesus as the Messiah of God. There is debate over the meaning of “son of man” in Matthew especially,⁵² but Matthew, like Mark, brings out the point that the son of man “came” in order to serve (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). This important statement by Jesus lines up with the many other “I have come” sayings, which in turn relate to Jesus’ mission. Even Luke’s gospel, which scholars have not studied as much in relation to the “son of man” title,⁵³ observes that the Son of Man “came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). In these various passages relating to Jesus’ mission, it is important to keep in mind that Jesus did not come at his own whim, he came because the Father sent him—he came willingly and

⁵¹According to Gathercole, “Daniel 7 remains fundamental to the interpretation of the Son of Man sayings,” (*Preexistent Son*, 258). Early Judaism apparently viewed this figure as messianic. Based on evidence from 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra, J. J. Collins concludes that the presentation of this figure is that he is, among other things, an individual and messianic figure (*The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* [New York: Doubleday, 1995]). T. B. Slater concurs with this assessment (“One Like a Son of Man in First Century Judaism,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 183-98. For more discussion see P. M. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979); N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 291-97; Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, 35-82; I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004) 83-86; Seyoon Kim, “The ‘Son of Man’ as the Son of God (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 16-31.

⁵²M. Pamment, “The Son of Man in the First Gospel,” *NTS* 29 (1983): 116-29; U. Luz, “The Son of Man in Matthew: Heavenly Judge or Human Christ,” *JSNT* 48 (1992), 3-21; J. D. Kingsbury, “The Title ‘Son of Man’ in Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 193-202.

⁵³There are some articles on particular passages—for example, see D. R. Cathpole, “The Son of Man’s search for Faith (Luke xviii 8b),” *NovT* 19 (1977): 81-104; idem, “The Angelic Son of Man in Luke 12:8,” *NovT* 24 (1982): 255-65. But as Gathercole notes (*Preexistent Son*, 266), many believe Luke’s use of the “Son of Man” is not distinctive, although Todt’s work challenges this viewpoint (*Son of Man*, 100-12). My purpose is not to argue so much for a distinctive Lukan use but simply to glean a few ways that Luke contributes (in some cases by repetition) to a Gospels understanding of the Son of Man.

obediently.⁵⁴ Even the powerful and reigning Son of Man reigns in obedience to the Father's will. From humble servant and prophet to exalted king, the Son of Man is the obedient son.

The "Son of God" title, while not as frequent, remains germane to this study. As we have seen, at Jesus' birth he is announced as the "Son of God" (Luke 1:35), at his baptism, God the Father calls him the beloved Son (Mat 3:17), and during his temptation Satan persists in challenging Jesus with his claim to be the Son of God (Mat 4:3, etc.). Moreover, Mark announces in the opening of his gospel, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1).⁵⁵ Understanding Jesus as the Son of God is essential not just to Mark's portrait but to the gospel itself. In Luke's Gospel, between the baptism and temptation of Jesus Luke inserts a genealogy, in which he traces Jesus back through David, Abraham, Noah, and Adam, all the way up to the conclusion of Adam as "the son of God" (3: 38). The implication could hardly be clearer: Jesus is the ultimate Son of God. John bolsters this point by recording the words of Nathaniel in John 1:49. There, Nathaniel, the one who is without guile, and therefore whose words the reader is surely meant to trust, says to Jesus, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." Jesus is the true king of the nation of Israel—the disobedient son of God will be ruled by the obedient son.

⁵⁴In addition, the Son of Man comes in his kingdom (Matt 16:28). And note that in the Lord's Prayer Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come; your will be done" (Matt 6:10), an attitude of submission that Jesus himself follows in the garden. Paul simply fleshes out the theology begun during Jesus' ministry: the kingdom is Jesus', but he rules under the sovereignty of God (1 Cor 15).

⁵⁵It should be noted that there is a textual question here and some doubt that the phrase "Son of God" is the original reading—see P. M. Head, "A Text-Critical Study of Mark 1:1: 'The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,'" *NTS* 37 (1991): 621-29. However, the Son of God does have early and diverse, if not completely universal, testimony. See the discussion in Bruce Metzger's *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: UBS, 1994).

Studies related to the title “Son of God” often focus on individual Gospels.⁵⁶ However, taken as a whole, the Gospels seem to agree in presenting the Son of God, like the Son of Man, as the one who in some sense has been sent by God and/or who has come from God (Matt 8:29; Luke 3:38; John 11:27). In Mark 12:1-12, for example, Jesus tells the story of man who sends servants to tenants in a far land before finally sending his son. While the explicit title “Son of God” is not used, the conclusion is clear: Jesus uses the parable to show that he is the beloved Son of God sent into the sinful world by his father.⁵⁷ Likewise the familiarity of John 3:16 should not eclipse the significance of Jesus as the Son of God who has been sent into the world.⁵⁸ He lives in obedience to the will of the Father. The Son of God is the obedient Son of God, the final Davidic king.

The Gospels reiterate the fact that Jesus is coming to do the will of God—he is coming to obey. Both Matthew and Mark refer to Jesus as the “servant,” (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45), implying that he sees his whole ministry as one of obedience to his heavenly master. In Luke 4:43 Jesus declares, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I sent for this purpose.” Once again Jesus

⁵⁶Carl Kelly, “The Messiah: Whose Son is He? Another Look at the Son of David and Son of God Titles in Matthew,” *Trinity Seminary Review* 26, no. 1 (2005): 17-28; Verseput, “Son of God,” 532-36; Robert L. Mowery, “Subtle Differences: The Matthean ‘Son of God’ References,” *NovT* 32 (1990): 193-200; idem, “Son of God in Roman Imperial Titles and Matthew,” *Biblica* 83, no. 1 (2002): 100-10; A. Yarbro Collins, “Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews,” *HTR* 92 (1999): 393-408; “Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans,” *HTR* 93 (2000): 85-100; Brian M. Nolan, “Rooting the Davidic Son of God in Matthew 1-2 in the Experience of the Evangelist’s Audience,” *Estudios Biblicos* 50, no. 1-4 (1992): 149-56; Joel Marcus, “Are You the Messiah-Son-of-God?” *NovT* 31, no. 2 (1989): 125-41; Lewis Scott Hay, “Son of God Christology in Mark,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 32, no. 2 (1964): 106-14.

⁵⁷E. Schweizer comments: “Endlich ist der ‘geliebte Sohn’ natürlich direkter Hinweis auf Jesus als Gottessohn” (*Das Evangelium nach Markus* [Gottingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1987], 136, quoted in Gathercole, *Preexistent Son*, 283). [“Ultimately, the ‘beloved son’ is, naturally, a direct reference to Jesus as God’s Son”].

is obedient to the task given to him by God the Father. In John 6:38 Jesus puts the matter plainly: “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” Likewise in John 12:49-50: “The Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. . . . What I say therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” Again in John 5:30, “I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” In summary, Jesus can say, “I do as the Father has commanded me” (John 14:31). Jesus’ public ministry was a ministry of full obedience to his Father.

The emphasis on Jesus’ death is one clear piece of evidence of the fact that the Gospels are not merely biographies. Much of the Gospels’ narrative is taken up with a very brief span of time in the life of Jesus. The death of Jesus is charged with theological significance. And all the way up to the very end of his life, Jesus can be seen as the obedient Son. The titles examined earlier, “Son of Man” and “Son of God,” both touch upon his sufferings. It is the Son of Man who came to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Jesus teaches his disciples that the “Son of Man must suffer many things . . . and die” (Mark 8:31), and that “it is written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt” (Mark 9:12). The same can be seen with the “Son of God” title.⁵⁹

⁵⁸See E. Schweizer, “What Do We Mean When We Say ‘God Sent His Son . . .?’” in *Faith and History; Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer*, eds. J. T. Carroll et al. (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 298-312.

⁵⁹Luke reports of the trial of Jesus: “They all said: ‘Are you the Son of God, then?’ He [Jesus] said to them, ‘You say that I am.’ Then they said: ‘What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips’” (Luke 22:70-71). On the cross, Jesus is tempted with the echo of Satan’s earlier challenge in the wilderness: “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matt 27:40). Matthew and Mark both report the centurion’s punctuating declaration upon Jesus’ death: “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39).

Crucifixion

Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane provides a window into the character of this Son. Jesus' words to Peter, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation," (Matt 26:41), imply that Gethsemane was another kind of testing ground for Jesus himself. The fact that this great agony of temptation occurred in a Garden recalls the former paradise lost by Adam's disobedience in the face of temptation. Will this last Adam and true Son of God remain faithful to the end? While even Jesus' disciples give in to the flesh, Jesus himself remains fixed on God. In a powerful prayer he resigns his will to the will of his Father: "My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matt 26:30).⁶⁰ Jesus expresses the intimacy he has with his Father as well as his full-fledged allegiance to performing the will of God and accomplishing his Word. Jesus kept the greatest commandment by loving God with his whole person even in the most difficult of circumstances. And on the cross, in what must have been excruciating agony in every respect,⁶¹ Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Truly he embodies God's great command

⁶⁰In Mark's account Jesus uses the word "Abba," an Aramaic term likely carrying special connotations of endearment. See Lane, *Mark*, 517-18; Cranfield, *Mark*, 433; Schreiner, *NT Theology*, 131.

⁶¹Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), especially 22-32. As difficult as the physical pain may have been, even more inscrutable is the kind of spiritual pain Jesus experienced as he felt in some sense forsaken by God and under the wrath of the one he had loved from all eternity. Grudem writes in this regard, "To face the deep and furious wrath of an infinite God even for an instant would cause the most profound fear. But Jesus' suffering was not over in a minute—or two—or ten. When would it end? Hour after hour it went on—the dark weight of sin and the deep wrath of God poured over Jesus in wave after wave . . ." (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 577).

to love one's neighbor. No wonder the rest of the NT speaks of Jesus learning obedience through suffering (Heb 5:8) and of his obedience all the way unto death (Phil 2:8).⁶²

Resurrection

Although Jesus appeared defeated when he was crucified, in the resurrection he was vindicated. But this vindication was not just any vindication; it was Jesus' vindication as the obedient Son. In Mark 8:31 we learn that Jesus "began to teach them that the Son of Man must . . . after three days rise again." After the transfiguration, Jesus charges his disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen "until the Son of Man had risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9). While the Son of Man in the Gospels is the suffering Son of Man, it should not go unnoticed that this Son is set to rise from the dead. After Jesus is raised, the angels remind people that Jesus had said the Son of Man must rise from the dead (Luke 24:7). Not only is he confirmed as the Son of Man through his resurrection but also as the Son of God—indeed the purpose of John's Gospel is to persuade the reader that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30), a statement made directly on the heels of John's report of the resurrection.⁶³

When Jesus is speaking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, at one point he tells them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have

⁶²Carson comments, "The dramatic 'It is finished' (19:30) did not mean that everything connected with the 'lifting up' of the Son was finished, but only that Jesus' suffering was finished, his obedience perfect and the will of the Father accomplished up to the decisive juncture of Jesus' death" (*John*, 631). Carson goes on to observe that it is impossible to sever the cross from the resurrection (*ibid.*), a comment that provides a nice bridge into a consideration of the resurrection as it relates to the obedient Son. If obedience is so tied to Jesus' cross work, and his resurrection is inextricably linked to that cross work, it seems highly probable that obedience relates to the theme of resurrection as well.

⁶³So Carson, "The resurrection proved that he [Jesus] was vindicated by God, and therefore none less than the Messiah, the Son of God he claimed to be" (*John*, 632). See also N. T. Wright's *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

spoken! Was it not necessary that the Jesus should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Luke 24: 26-27).⁶⁴ For Jesus, suffering was not the end; rather, it was a passageway to glory. But Jesus could not enter into his glory unless he was raised from the dead. The resurrection, then, is a step in Jesus’ exaltation, but a step that is not out of step with the OT’s teaching.⁶⁵ A part of Jesus’ vindication is his receiving glory. John echoes this sentiment, recording Jesus’ prayer: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son. . . . I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do” (17:1, 5). Jesus’ receiving glory and entering into his glory hinge on the perfect completion of his work. The resurrection, in the Gospels (not to mention elsewhere in Scripture), demonstrate that Jesus has perfectly completed the work given to him by God. But what is the completion of that work if not full obedience to the will of the Father? All the particulars of the events of Jesus’ life can be placed under the rubric—“I was sent” and “I have come” to “do the will” of the Father. The resurrection stands as the Father’s stamp of approval on the perfect obedience of his Son. From birth to new birth, Jesus is

⁶⁴Nolland rightly observes that this verse finds a counterpart in Luke 9:26, where the Son of Man “comes in his glory” (*Luke*, 1205).

⁶⁵According to Luke, Jesus’ suffering, resurrection, and glorification can be found in the OT. I find it likely that Luke’s reference may be to the Psalms, a book appealed to often in Acts. For a demonstration of the importance of the Psalms in Luke’s writing, see Peter Doble, “Luke 24.26, 44—Songs of God’s Servant: David and His Psalms in Luke-Acts,” *JSNT* 28, no. 3 (2006): 267-83. Doble does note that many scholars do not believe the OT really warrants the kind of theology that Luke draws out, citing G. B. Caird, *St. Luke* (London: Pelican, 1963); H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960); J. M. Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1950); S. Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (London: Oliphants, 1974); C. F. Evans, *St. Luke* (London: SCM, 1990); Fitzmyer, *Luke*; E. Franklin, *Christ the Lord* (London: SPCK, 1975); K. Grayston, *Dying, we Live* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990); Green, *Luke*; L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991); W. S. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993); W. Manson, *The Gospel of Luke* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930); Nolland, *Luke*; Plummer, *Luke*; Schweizer, *Lukas*; M. L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995); C. H. Talbert, *Reading Luke* (New York: Crossroad, 1988); R. C. Tannehill, *Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996); W. Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988). However, such a piecemeal reading does not due justice

the vicariously obedient Son. So Torrance writes, “Unless we can see . . . the vicarious nature of His [Christ’s] life of obedience on earth to the heavenly Father, we cannot do justice to the New Testament presentation of Christ in the Four Gospels.”⁶⁶

Romans

Romans 5:12-21

Human unrighteousness, the work of Christ, and justification are important themes in the book of Romans. Several passages from this book in particular are pertinent to the topic of the active obedience of Christ. Romans 5 stands out as one such passage. In vv. 12-19, Paul uses four different Greek words to speak of concepts relating to righteousness/justification: δικαίωμα (v. 16, 18), δικαίωσις (v. 18), δικαιοσύνη (v. 17), and δίκαιος (v. 19). Paul’s sustained focus on the righteousness achieved by Christ in Romans 5 warrants a special look at these words.⁶⁷ I will deal with each term individually, giving special attention to its use in this passage.

In tracing out the meaning of δικαίωμα, BDAG outlines three different categories of usage. First, δικαίωμα can refer to a “regulation relating to just or right action,” that is, a commandment.⁶⁸ This category does find heavy support from the LXX

to Scripture as one unified book. Doble believes the Psalms provide the primary backdrop for Luke’s theology at this point (“Song of God’s Servant,” 280).

⁶⁶T. F. Torrance, “The Atoning Obedience of Christ,” *Moravian Theological Seminary Bulletin* (1959): 65.

⁶⁷According to Douglas Moo, “No set of words is more important for a correct understanding of Paul’s message to the Romans than those that share the root *dik-*” (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, vol. 6 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 79).

⁶⁸Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Revised and ed. Frederick W. Danker. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, 249. See also the *Theological Dictionary of*

background (e.g. Exod 21:1; Deut 6:1; I Sam 8:3; Ps 118:5; Ezek 5:6). In addition, Paul appears to use the word this way elsewhere in Romans (2:26; 8:4). The second category BDAG offers for δικαίωμα has respect to “an action that meets expectations as to what is right or just,” that is, a righteous deed.⁶⁹ For example, Revelation 19:8 speaks of the “δικαιώματα of the saints.” BDAG also finds an example of this category in Romans 5:18, where δικαίωματος stands over against παραπτώματος (“trespass”).⁷⁰ The contrast between the two terms justifies this understanding of δικαίωματος in Romans 5:18—the “trespass” contrasts with a “righteous act,” not a “righteous command.” BDAG posits one final category, and interestingly, this category has only one example—the occurrence of δικαίωμα in Romans 5:16.⁷¹ On the surface, it seems odd that a word consistently referring to commandments or to commandment-keeping deeds could ever refer to a judicial verdict. However, the immediate context does point in this direction—δικαίωμα is set against κατάκριμα, a word clearly referring to “condemnation.”⁷² “Justification” is therefore an appropriate translation.

This brings us to the term δικαίωσις, used by Paul in Romans 5:18. Once again, the clear contrast is to the term κατάκριμα (“condemnation”), and it is therefore difficult

the New Testament, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Frierich, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:221.

⁶⁹BDAG, 249.

⁷⁰The εἶδος likely speaks of “one” man and not “one” righteous deed. So Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 286; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, vol. 42 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 289; Moo, *Romans*, 341; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, vol. 38A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 283.

⁷¹BDAG, 249.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 518-519.

to argue against using a term of acquittal to translate δικαίωσις.⁷³ Interestingly, Paul does break the parallelism to add the genitive ζωῆς on to δικαίωσις. So the “justification” spoken of here is a “justification of life.” While it is better to see “life” as a consequence of “justification” than an appositional description of justification,⁷⁴ Paul does not hesitate to find a close link between God’s objective verdict and its subsequent subjective entailments, a pattern developed even more in Romans 6.

Pressing on, the term δικαιοσύνης appears in 5:17. The general meaning of the word δικαιοσύνη is debated, and the literature is vast.⁷⁵ J. A. Zeisler argues that while the verb δικαιοῶ is always forensic, δικαιοσύνη normally has both a forensic and an ethical dimension.⁷⁶ Moo, on the other hand, states that most uses of the noun “fall clearly into one category or the other,” that is, into the forensic category or the ethical category.⁷⁷ It is difficult to deny that Paul does at times use the word subjectively/ethically. For example, in Romans 6 Paul speaks of people as slaves of sin and slaves of “δικαιοσύνης” (vv. 13, 19). The contrast there between acts of sin and acts of obedience lead to the conclusion that Paul is speaking about people’s subjective behavior. Yet in other places in Paul the

⁷³Ibid., 250; *TDNT*, 2:223-224; The idea of a judicial sentence in connection with this term also appears in the LXX (e.g. Lev 24:22).

⁷⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 287; Murray, *Romans*, 202; Cranfield, *Romans*, 289.

⁷⁵For example, see the select bibliography in BDAG, 248-249.

⁷⁶Zeisler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 128-144, 186-208.

⁷⁷Moo, *Romans*, 88.

word appears to be strictly forensic. For example, in 2 Corinthians 3:9 the ministry of condemnation is juxtaposed with the ministry of “δικαιοσύνης” (righteousness).⁷⁸

In Romans 5:17, believers are described as those who receive τὴν περισσεΐαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης (“the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness”). The genitive phrase seems best taken as epexegetic—the free gift is defined in terms of righteousness.⁷⁹ Paul previously unpacks this free gift as coming by the grace of Christ (v. 15) and as following many trespasses (v. 16). It is hard to overemphasize the “free gift” character of δικαιοσύνης in Romans 5:17. For Paul in this passage, the bottom line is that “righteousness” is not something done or achieved by humans; it is a gracious gift that comes to them from without. Taking δικαιοσύνη in this verse in an ethical/transformational sense would seem to undercut Paul’s forensic focus.⁸⁰

Finally, in dealing with the last δικ- term in this passage, the adjective δίκαιος, I turn to 5:19 and the controversial phrase: δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί (“many will be made righteous”).⁸¹ On first blush, the translation “made righteous” might sound

⁷⁸ Answering the question of whether or not the term δικαιοσύνη can ever have both a forensic and a transformational meaning is more difficult. At present I tend to lean more towards Moo’s position (that it cannot); however, it will become clear that in my understanding too sharp a wedge is often driven between the “forensic” and “ethical” understandings.

⁷⁹ So Schreiner, *Romans*, 286.

⁸⁰ Contra Zeisler, *Righteousness*, 198. While it could be argued that our subjective transformation is still a gift of God’s grace and not a result of our own doing, Paul’s stress here is on the work done for us rather than in us. This gift of righteousness is likely the same as the “righteousness of God” elsewhere spoken of (e.g. 1:17; 3:21; 10:3). Murray further identifies this righteousness not as “the justifying act” but as that which “constitutes our justification” (*Romans*, 198). In other words, in granting believers the gift of Christ’s righteousness, God may then justly declare that they are righteous—He may justify them. This line of thought helps to show how this righteousness is not inherent but still εἰς δικαιοῦμα (“leads to justification”).

⁸¹ Universalists take “the many” to refer to all without exception; thus all will eventually be righteous—all will be saved. For a recent defense of universalism in this passage see Richard H. Bell, “Romans 5:18-19 and Universal Salvation,” *NTS*, July (2002): 417-432, and Thomas B. Talbot’s chapter

like an “ethical” use of δίκαιοι. The understanding of δίκαιοι here is closely connected to the meaning of κατεστάθησαν. The most frequent meaning of the latter term is the idea of “appointment,”⁸² so in the NT the word often describes a person being put in a new position, a higher or better position (e.g. Matt 24:45, 47; 25:21, 23; Acts 6:3; 7:10; Titus 1:5; Heb 5:1). In most cases the focus is on the person’s new status and not some kind of internal change. This is, to be sure, not a pseudo-change but a real change.⁸³ In Romans 5:19, the obedience of the one constitutes the many as righteous people;⁸⁴ they are appointed a righteous status.

in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006). Barth also seems to take a universalist position. (See his *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn Hoskyns [London: Oxford University Press, 1933], 181-182, and his *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5*, trans. T. A. Small [New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1956, 87ff.) From this isolated passage, one might be able to make such a universalist argument. After all, the “many” who were condemned in Adam were all without exception. In addition, how can Christ accomplish a “much more” redemption unless he redeems all those who were lost? Nevertheless, this passage can not be torn from the greater context of Romans. In 2:1-11 Paul has already referred to God’s discriminating judgment among people. The larger difficulty with universalism is that the Scriptures so clearly teach that not all will be saved, a sober truth found no less in Jesus than in Paul (Matt 13:30, 49; 25:32; 2 Thess 1:9; 2:10). A better solution in Romans 5 is to observe a covenantal inclusivity—“all” who are *in* Adam vs. the “all” who are *in* Christ. God has determined that the “many” who are in Adam would be all without exception, but this is not the case for the “many” who are in Christ. The “many” in Christ are the elect of God (Eph 1). See Robert Haldane, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, 1958), 219.

⁸²Brian Vickers, *Jesus’ Blood and Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 118; *TDNT* lists the basic sense of καθίστημι as “to set down” or “to put in place.” vol 3, p444; BDAG lists three categories: 1) to take someone somewhere (bring, conduct, take); 2) to assign someone a position of authority (appoint, put in charge); and 3) cause someone to experience something (make, cause), 492. Granted, καθίστημι is a broad word, as evidenced by the fact that in the LXX it is used to translate over twenty different Hebrew words. Nevertheless, once again the predominant usage revolves around words referring to the idea of appointment (Vickers, *Righteousness*, 118).

⁸³As Vickers points out, “If one is ‘appointed’ king or priest, one really is a king or a priest . . . An ‘appointment’ to a position often carries with it the creation of the actual state” (ibid., 121) Even more important, Vickers argues that the emphasis is never placed “on the actions of the person who holds the office or status;” rather the emphasis is “on the state of being and/or the change to that state rather than the acts [of the person changing states]” (ibid., 121-122). Thus I agree with his conclusion that “Paul’s use of καθίστημι is itself the best argument against a transformative interpretation of this text [Rom 5:19]. The confusion over 5:19 stems most likely from the meaning of the English word made, rather than to any ambiguity in the Greek text” (ibid., 122).

⁸⁴H. C. G. Moule argues that “constituted” is a better translation than “made” here (*Studies in Romans* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977], 110).

At this point some tentative conclusions can be drawn. For Paul in Romans the *δικ*- terms often relate to persons, and they often have strong moral overtones, describing commandments or commandment-keeping. This is to be expected, for people who fail to conform to God's commandments are morally, personally responsible to God. Righteousness thus frequently relates to obeying God, to keeping his law.⁸⁵ Paul states at the outset of his letter that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (1:18). This suppression of truth can be seen through their failure to honor God and give him thanks, with the result that God judicially abandons them to “shameful acts” (v.26). They become filled with “all manner of unrighteousness,” evidenced by their envy, murder, strife, and so forth (v.29ff). As Paul sums up the sinful state of mankind in ch.3, he can say that none are “righteous” since “none do good” (vv.10-12). We have already seen in chapter 6 that people demonstrate righteousness by presenting themselves as slaves to obey God. In Romans 9, Israel's pursuit of righteousness is a pursuit of positive action—they try to live righteous lives by keeping the law (9:31).

With this heavy emphasis on the “ethical” dimension of righteousness, how then does a forensic notion of righteousness find place? Are these simply two distinct and disparate categories with no relation? Further, what of the important question—how can

⁸⁵This conception of righteousness is not unique to Romans. So Simon Gathercole argues that “the basic sense of righteousness in the Old Testament and early Judaism” is ““doing what God requires”” (“The Doctrine of Justification in Paul and Beyond,” in *Justification in Perspective*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 237. Regarding the word *δικαιος*, *TDNT* states, “If in the rest of the Greek world a man is *δικαιος* who satisfies ordinary legal norms, fulfilling his civic duties in the most general sense, here the *δικαιος* is the man who fulfills his duties towards God and the theocratic society” (2:185). The emphasis in either case is on acting rightly, behavior that accords with the norm. (Of course for the Christian, God defines right behavior. If God's law defines right behavior, than the righteous man is the one who keeps the law.) Examples of this type include the following verses: Matt 1:19; Luke 1:6; Acts 10:22; Titus 1:8; 1 John 3:7.

God be just if he declares people to be righteous who are inherently unrighteousness? Paul's answer is that people are declared righteous because they possess a *real* righteousness, even though they personally did not achieve it and it does not lie in them. It is the righteousness wrought out by Jesus Christ. Romans 5 goes a long way towards unpacking this theme of vicarious righteousness.

Understanding the bedrock realities of Adam and Christ and their respective works helps to explode the dichotomy between an "ethical" righteousness and a "forensic" righteousness. These distinctions are helpful insofar as they relate strictly to the sinner denominated as righteous, but the distinctions sometimes obscure the fact that the righteousness of Christ which is forensically reckoned to the sinner is in its redemptive-historical achievement an ethical righteousness. Unlike Adam, Christ fulfilled his mediatorial probation by keeping God's standards day in and day out. He lived a perfectly righteous life in thought, attitude, and behavior, and it is this righteousness that believers possess by faith.⁸⁶

Paul's discussion of the condemnation brought about by Adam serves as the backdrop for the glorious restoration and advancement achieved by Christ through the righteousness that he brings. If in this passage condemnation stems from Adam's

⁸⁶A similar observation can be made with respect to the idea of "status." Speaking of a believer's new righteous "status" is not at all incorrect, but "status" tends to be a vague term susceptible to many connotations. An abstract, righteous "status" which simply means "free from sin" could in one sense be applied to an inanimate object like a rock. But in Pauline categories, righteousness is a personal affair shot through with morality. The gift of "righteousness" in Romans 5:17, then, is not just the gift of the declaration "not guilty." The gift contains the gift of a righteous record—a positive moral fulfillment of God's requirements wrought out by Jesus Christ. In Romans 5:19, people are constituted "righteous" in a legal fashion, but they are legally constituted as having the ethical righteousness of Jesus Christ. See the helpful discussion of John Piper, *The Future of Justification* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 73-80. In speaking then of the distinction between a believer's being declared righteous and his actually being made righteous, I tend to prefer a pairing like "declarative/judicial/forensic" vs. "transformative" rather than a pairing like "declarative/judicial/forensic" vs. "ethical."

disobedience, righteousness in turn stems from Christ's obedience. This "obedience" (ὕπακοης) is mentioned explicitly only once. In 5:19 Paul says, ὥσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί ("For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous"). This verse serves as the summary and culmination of Paul's thought in 5:12-18. Therefore it is all the more important to consider just what it is that Paul has in mind when he speaks of Christ's obedience. The question is often put in these terms: is Paul speaking merely of Christ's suffering on the cross,⁸⁷ or does Paul have in mind Christ's whole life of obedience?⁸⁸ Several considerations point towards the latter conclusion.

First, Paul's understanding of righteousness warrants such a conclusion, for righteousness and obedience are bound up together in this passage. It is clear from 5:19 that whatever this obedience is, it makes the many righteous. 5:19 is parallel in thought to

⁸⁷Schreiner appears to fall into this category (*Romans*, 287); So also Dunn, *Romans* (284-285); Schlatter, *Romans*, 131; Wright, *Romans*, 529; Michael Bird, "Incorporated Righteousness: A Response to Recent Evangelical Discussion Concerning the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness," *JETS* June (2004): 268. 253-275. Moo suggests that Paul "may be thinking of the 'active obedience' of Christ," but more likely, "Paul's focus seems to be on Jesus' death" rather than on Christ's "lifelong commitment to 'do his Father's will and so fulfill the demands of the law'" (*Romans*, 344). Moo's comment brings up a critical point in the debates swirling around imputation and the "active obedience" of Christ: we must not assume the cross only deals with penal suffering, or that it only has reference to forgiveness. The cross is the preeminent display of Christ's positive love for God and man. Consequently, "active obedience" should not be relegated to Christ's pre-cross life, as Moo appears to do, any more than Christ's pre-cross sufferings can be excised from his substitutionary sufferings for sinners. As a result, even if it is maintained that "obedience" in Rom 5 refers only to the cross, one must make a further argument to deny "active obedience" in this passage. After all, Jonathan Edwards long ago argued that Christ's cross work constituted the "principal part . . . of that active obedience by which we are justified" (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987], 1:639).

⁸⁸So Murray, *Romans*, 203-205; Cranfield, *Romans*, 289; John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 110; *TDNT* 2:221-222; Richard N. Longenecker, "The Obedience

5:18. In 5:18, the one “trespass” is contrasted to the one δικαίωματος (“act of righteousness”), so that in 5:19 the “disobedience” matches the “trespass” and the ὑπακοῆς (“obedience”) matches the δικαίωματος. Where in Paul, or in Scripture, does δικαίωμα refer exclusively to suffering/death? From one perspective it is certainly allowable to include Christ’s penal suffering in this “righteous deed,” because the law demands the death of sinners—so Christ by his death was fulfilling the demand of the law. Nevertheless, it is difficult to suppose that Paul was excluding the normal import of the “righteous deed” category of δικαίωμα: positive actions like doing good, loving God and neighbor, etc. The connections between righteousness and the work of Jesus Christ in this passage could continue to be traced out, but suffice it to say that they are closely linked throughout. If this is the case, and if as I have argued terms related to “righteousness” normally relate to a standard (God’s law) and have a positive moral orientation, it appears more likely that Christ’s entire mediatorial life of righteousness is in view.

In the second place, the nature of “obedience” (here ὑπακοῆς) implies that Christ’s whole work of obedience is included. The Scriptures, though not often making explicit reference to Christ’s obedience, continually present such a concept.⁸⁹ Christ himself characterizes his whole mediatorial mission as one of obedience in John 6:38: “I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me.” The

of Christ in the Theology of the Early Church,” *Reconciliation and Hope*, ed. Robert Banks (Exeter: Paternoster, 1974), 145.

⁸⁹John Murray says, “The concept of obedience as applied to the work of Christ on behalf of believers is more embracive than any other” (*Romans*, 205). He elsewhere elaborates, “The Scripture regards the work of Christ as one of obedience and uses this term, or the concept that it designates, with sufficient frequency to warrant the conclusion that obedience is generic and therefore embracive enough to be viewed as the unifying or integrating principle” (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955], 19.

Scriptures present Jesus as the preeminent servant and a servant is one who, if nothing else, obeys his master. Certainly Paul was well-versed in the knowledge of Jesus as the prophesied servant of God.⁹⁰ The same Paul who speaks of Jesus' obedience in Romans 5:19 surely understood that Christ's whole life was a life of sinless obedience and that Christ was the righteous one precisely because he kept God's law without fail. Taking these facts into consideration, the burden of proof lies on those who would say that in Romans 5:19 Paul intended to parcel out only one aspect of that obedience rather than to present Christ's obedience as a unitary whole.⁹¹ Paul moves from the indicative to the imperative in the next chapter, encouraging the Christians to be what they are. They can freely pursue righteousness armed with the knowledge that they are already righteous in Christ. They can present themselves as obedient slaves because they have already been reckoned to be such in Christ, the obedient slave *par excellence*.⁹²

Third, Paul's concern in Romans 5 is with two representative economies. Paul, in comparing and contrasting Adam and Christ, is not concerned merely with one isolated aspect of their respective lives; he is concerned with the federal character of their entire work. As mankind was "in" Adam, so the elect are "in" Christ. Again, it is not as though one act merely in some loose way affects the many; rather the many find their whole

⁹⁰See Mark Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah's Servants* (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

⁹¹Murray writes that the use of "obedience" in Rom 5:19 "indicates the broad perspective from which we must view that accomplishment of Christ which constitutes the basis of God's justifying act. Undoubtedly it was in the cross of Christ and the shedding of his blood that this obedience came to its climactic expression, but obedience comprehends the totality of the Father's will as fulfilled by Christ" (Murray, *Romans*, 205).

⁹²Paul later says to the Romans that their obedience is known to all, in contrast to the deceptive behavior of the divisive ones (16:18-19). Here Paul appears to be speaking simply of their entire lives of devotedness to obeying God. There is not sufficient reason to presume that Christ's "obedience" in Rom 5:19 is otherwise.

identity wrapped up in the “one.” Mankind lived in corporate solidarity with Adam before the Fall; so too the elect were one with Christ before the crucifixion. Mankind’s preexisting union with Adam grounds the transfer of his sentence of condemnation; his transgression did not effect a corporate condemnation and subsequent “union.” Likewise, the solidarity of the elect with the incarnate Christ issues in their redemption, not vice versa.⁹³ Paul does not move from circumference point parallels between Adam and Christ back to a vague identification of people “in Adam” or “in Christ;” he moves from the center—union and federal headship—out, in order to draw specific applications. Consequently, when Paul uses Adam/Christ language, it is safe to assume that fundamental to his presentation is the notion of mankind’s solidarity with the entire life of Adam prior to (and including) the Fall, and the elect’s solidarity with the entire life of Christ as the second Adam.

Fourth, and as a corollary to the third observation, Paul’s argument for the superiority of being “in Christ” presumes the need for Christ’s entire work to eclipse and surpass Adam’s entire work. Paul notes both similarities and differences between Adam and Christ, and one primary difference is the “much more” (v.17) gained by Christ. But it is important to keep in mind that Christ, in gaining the “much more” of eternal life, still acted in the capacity of a second Adam. As I argued in chapter 2, Paul implies that Christ as second Adam took on the penalty brought by the first Adam. But when Paul goes on to speak of the “justification and life” that Christ brought, the comparison is still to Adam

⁹³Furthermore, Rom 5 is not the only Pauline analogy between Christ and Adam. He picks up the theme again at a critical juncture in 1 Cor. There, his emphasis remains on a federal “in Adam”/“in Christ” correspondence (15:22). Yet in Corinthians, he explicitly draws out the truth of the believer’s participation in the resurrected life of Christ. Believers continue to remain “in Christ” beyond the cross and

(5:18); thus in Paul's thought Christ is still acting as a second Adam. Paul does not make a parenthetical observation about some extraneous benefit that Christ wrought in some capacity outside of his function as second Adam. Yet if the second Adam's obedience was merely penal suffering, if it merely erased the condemnation of the first Adam's sin, the result would be the original state of the original Adam—which is not a confirmed “justification and life.” The implication of the second Adam's achievement is that the first Adam failed to gain eternal life for those in him. The first Adam did not begin with eternal life, so one must ask how he could have achieved it. The most straight-forward answer is by persevering in obedience. Consequently, this is what the second Adam did do—he persevered in positive vicarious obedience throughout the probationary term of his life.

One objection to this understanding of Christ's obedience in Romans 5 is that it is described as δικαιοῦματος. The term is singular and thus seems to refer to *a* righteous deed.⁹⁴ How can a series of actions, multiple occasions of law-keeping, be only one deed? In response it should be stated that those who believe that Christ's “obedience” in Romans 5 relates exclusively to his penal suffering must still face this same objection.⁹⁵ Furthermore, even if it be granted that in some way the crucifixion event was “one deed,” Christ's penal suffering should not be limited to the crucifixion, since he suffered

into the resurrected exaltation of their Lord. But a fundamental fact remains: all of this stems from a prior covenantal union, by which God's elect are “in Christ.”

⁹⁴J. R. Daniel Kirk, “The Sufficiency of the Cross (I): The Crucifixion as Jesus' Act of Obedience,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 43-44.

⁹⁵Christ's cross work, while rightly and truly “obedience,” is not comprised of one specific act but a series of acts. Christ sweat great drops of blood in the garden; he endured flogging from the Roman soldiers; he shouldered his cross on the way to Golgotha; he refused to take the numbing wine; he cried out to God in agony; he gave up the ghost. Which of these was the one act, or where did the one act begin?

vicariously throughout the whole course of his earthly life, trial after trial (Heb 2:10:17-18). “A righteous deed” must be understood by all in some sense as a comprehensive description of a course of behavior.

At this point, one other objection should be dealt with. This objection might be categorized as a literary one. According to this literary argument, the parallel between the “tree” Adam ate from in the garden parallels the “tree” on which Christ was crucified.⁹⁶ On top of the arguments already made against such a sparse summary of Romans 5, I agree that there may well be a literary “tree” connection in view, but the connection is not simple foreshadowing; the literary device is rather *inclusio*. That is, the “story” of a historical objective redemption begins with the tree in the garden and ends with the tree of Calvary.

Redemption is the saga of two men, and those who are caught up in the lives of those two men. But as is the case with so many stories, we cannot understand the comparison of various points in the two men’s lives unless we understand them as complete revealed characters—thus their whole life experience must come into play. Paul would not want readers simply to skip from the beginning of the story to its end without enjoying the richness of all that comes between.

The tree of Calvary concludes the reversal brought about Christ, but it certainly does not exhaust that reversal. In light of the fact that even Christ’s crucifixion was not merely a demonstration of penal suffering but the supreme positive act of love, it is best to view the obedience of Romans 5:19 as Christ’s entire obedience in every respect, an obedience culminating in his death.

⁹⁶Kirk, “Sufficiency of the Cross (I),” 45.

Romans 8:1-4

After Paul deals with the need for the believer's holiness in chapter 6 and the inability of the law in chapter 7, he opens chapter 8 with a stirring reminder: "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). He goes on to write that God sent his son ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν ("in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us"). Many have taken this verse as a reference to the active obedience of Christ. For example, John Owen writes, "God sent Christ as Mediator to do and suffer whatever the Law required at our hands, for that end and purpose, that we might not be condemned, but accepted of God. It was all to this end, 'That the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us;' that is, which the Law required of us, consisting in Duties of Obedience, this Christ performed for us."⁹⁷

But not all agree with Owen. The debate centers on how the law is fulfilled in believers—is it fulfilled in them when Christ's righteousness is imputed to them, or is fulfilled in them when they actually obey the law? Another way to put the question is whether Paul is dealing with justification or sanctification in this phrase. According to Charles Hodge, "the view of the passage given by the majority of the early Fathers and by almost all evangelical interpreters, including the Reformers," is that the phrase deals with justification.⁹⁸

⁹⁷Owen, *Communion with God*, 218.

⁹⁸Hodge, *Romans*, 232.

There is reason to question Hodges' assertion.⁹⁹ Regardless, many commentators believe that the verse refers to a Christian's obedience, and not the substitutionary obedience of Christ.¹⁰⁰ However, there are still scholars who take the phrase forensically.¹⁰¹ The main arguments for the Christian obedience position can be summarized as follows: 1) The immediate context of vv. 1-4 suggest such a conclusion; 2) this conclusion fits better with the following context (vv. 4:bff); 3) the broader context of chapters 5-8 point in this direction; 4) Paul uses "fulfillment" language elsewhere to speak about the Christian's obedience to the law.¹⁰² Moo, as a representative of the forensic position, argues that: 1) the verb is passive, suggesting something done by God and not by the Christian; and 2) "the always imperfect obedience of the law by Christians does not satisfy what is demanded by the logic of this text."¹⁰³

The argument from the passive verb is not very strong. Paul labors more abundantly than all, yet it is not Paul but the grace of God at work in him. Although the believer surely participates, God is the ultimate source and agent of sanctification. By the same token, not all the arguments for a Christian obedience position are especially persuasive. The end of the verse does describe those who do not "walk" according to the

⁹⁹See Kevin McFadden, "The Fulfillment of the Law's *Dikaioma*: Another Look at Romans 8:1-4," *JETS* 52, no. 3 (2009): 483. McFadden notes that both Augustine and Luther (and others) held to a Christian obedience (sanctification) view.

¹⁰⁰For example, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 405; idem, "The Abolition and Fulfillment of the Law in Paul," *JSNT* 35 (1989): 60; Murray, *Romans*, 283; Dunn, *Romans*, 423-24; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:383-84.

¹⁰¹E.g. Moo, *Romans*, 514-17; R. H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 176; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 487-88.

¹⁰²McFadden, "Fulfillment," 486-90.

¹⁰³Moo, *Romans*, 483.

flesh but according to the Spirit, and the following context continues to speak of sanctification; however, the move from objective to subjective is common enough in Romans—the question is not whether Paul makes such transitions but precisely when he makes them. Why should the interpreter assume that the beginning of 8:4 is subjective merely because the ending is? The participle phrase τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα is best taken as descriptive, not as instrumental.¹⁰⁴ Forensic proponents acknowledges that those who have been credited with Christ’s righteousness do indeed live holy lives, so that this description would certainly be accurate, even if a forensic view of the first part of the verse is maintained. It is true that Paul does root believers’ obedience in their dying with Christ (e.g. 6:4; 7:4); however, in these verses the believers are not only the ones who obey but the ones who die (granted “with Christ”)—in Romans 8:1-4 it is Christ’s death that is in view. More importantly, Paul also roots the believer’s forensically-given righteousness in the work of Christ (e.g. 5:12-19).

The chapter does open with a justifying word—the promise of “no condemnation.” However, verse two seems to indicate not just that the Spirit has set believers free from the penalty of the law but also from the power of the law. Indeed, this is one clue that a person is in fact free from condemnation—all those who receive God’s righteous verdict in Christ also receive the power of the Holy Spirit to commence a new life of obedience. A significant question is what the law is unable to do in verse three. Was it unable to provide the power to obey consistently, or was it unable to provide a justifying verdict (issuing in eternal life) because weakened flesh could not obey

¹⁰⁴Even Christian obedience commentators argue this point (e.g. Schreiner, *Romans*, 405).

perfectly, or perhaps both?

Paul answers by pointing to Christ's cross work, but again, Christ's work is Paul's frequent answer to both the penalty and the power of sin. Unless Christ would have taken sin's penalty, people would not have the right to receive justifying righteousness. Similarly unless Christ would have rendered sin powerless, people would not be able to walk in obedience. Paul's thought in this passage is complex and full, but at the end of the day, it seems difficult to limit these verses to the sphere of justification. The believer's freedom in verse two does not appear to be merely a freedom from sin's judicial condemnation (although verse one does highlight freedom from condemnation). And this is right, for true holiness is always an evidence of the presence of justification. If personal holiness is included in verse two, it would appear to follow also in verses three and four, since verse three begins with a γὰρ (unless one argues that the γὰρ skips verse two to link to verse one—and I am not prepared to make that argument.) Therefore I would tentatively conclude that this passage is referring to Christian obedience and not to the imputed law-fulfillment of Christ. Consequently, this passage should not be seen as a direct support for the active obedience of Christ.

The biggest objection to this conclusion is that Paul appears to be speaking absolutely—the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in believers. Yet believers are not perfect; they do not live perfectly righteous lives. An answer to this objection is that Paul is not speaking quite so absolutely. He is not saying that believers always fulfill the law in the way that they live; rather, he is saying that they do fulfill the law whenever they perform a genuine act of righteousness. Love is the fulfillment of the law, and believers, while not being able to love perfectly, can truly demonstrate a love that springs

from faith. Whatever is not from faith is sin, but a genuine act of love springing from faith does in one sense fulfill the law. In Romans 13:8, speaking to believers, Paul writes, “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”¹⁰⁵ Here it does not appear that Paul is encouraging believers to fly to Christ since they cannot fulfill the law. Rather, he is encouraging them to obey, to actually love others and so fulfill the law, something they can in fact do (thanks to the liberating grace of Christ).

Romans 10:5

I turn now to Romans 10:5, a verse I have already discussed in the context of developing a “do this and live” theology.¹⁰⁶ I argued that Paul taught that perfect obedience results in eternal life. The one who perfectly keeps the law will indeed be justified by the law. Of course, Paul has already argued in Romans that all fall short; none keep the law; all are sinners. The question that obtains in this section is how Romans 10:4 fits into the picture. There Paul states, τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι (“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”—ESV). A much debated issue in this verse is what τέλος means—“end” or

¹⁰⁵See Thomas R. Schreiner, “Loving One Another Fulfills the Law: Romans 13:8-10,” *SBJT* 11 (2007): 104-09. Schreiner elsewhere observes the relationship between love and certain specific commands from the OT: “Love without specific and concrete moral explication easily becomes a plastic notion which is molded in the way each person desires. Adherence to these commands is not a sufficient indication that one is living in love, but no one can claim to be living in love and at the same time transgress these commandments. Thus, love of necessity involves the observance of these commandments, but these commandments are not a comprehensive description of what love is” (Schreiner, “The Abolition and Fulfillment of the Law in Paul,” 60).

¹⁰⁶See chapter four.

“goal”?¹⁰⁷ Although the word does mean “goal” in at least one passage, more frequently in Scripture the term denotes “end.”¹⁰⁸ More importantly, a consideration of the context helps to show that Paul is not attempting to make an absolute statement relating the law and Christ in and of themselves. Rather, Paul qualifies his assertion that Christ is the end of the law in two respects: 1) Christ is the end of the law *for righteousness*; and 2) Christ is the end of the law *to everyone who believes*.

The verse begins with a γὰρ, linking the verse to the preceding section where Paul denounces the Jews for their misuse of the law. Israel “pursued a law that would lead to righteousness” (9:31), but they did not attain righteousness. The problem was not with the law but with the people. They thought they could work out their own salvation, not recognizing that they were sinners condemned by the law. Paul himself was formerly blinded by a similar belief. But now, in light of his conversion, Paul realizes that believing in Christ marks the end of attempting to earn righteousness by keeping the law. Schreiner neatly summarizes, “Those who believe in Christ cease using the law as a means of establishing their own righteousness, for believers see that righteousness comes through believing in Christ, and it cannot be attained by obeying the law.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Those arguing for “end” include Richard N. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), 144-47; Käsemann, *Romans*, 282; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 54. Those arguing for “goal” include Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.519-20; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This, and You shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971): 26; Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 84-85; G. E. Howard, “Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Romans 10:4ff,” *JBL* 88 (1969), 333. Some (e.g. Moo, *Romans*, 641) believe that the term in this verse carries nuances of both “end” and “goal.” For a thorough survey of this verse and its interpretations see Robert Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10:4 in Pauline Perspective* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985). See also the helpful article by Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul’s View of the Law in Romans 10:4-5,” *WTJ* 55 (1993): 113-35.

¹⁰⁸Moo, *Romans*, 629; Schreiner, “Romans 10:4-5,” 118; Murray, *Romans*, 49.

¹⁰⁹Schreiner, “Romans 10:4-5,” 121; cf. Murray, *Romans*, 50.

Righteousness comes through Christ and not through the law.

Yet now a question must be asked: how is it that righteousness comes through Christ? The law still serves as a standard announcing the righteous requirements of God. God's commandments must be kept; he must be obeyed. It cannot be that God has abandoned his requirement for obedience. Nor should we argue that God has changed the requirements for eternal life. Instead, if righteousness frequently relates to commandment keeping, to obedience to God, the natural conclusion is that in Christ God counts the believer as having obeyed perfectly. The righteous demands of God are met in Christ because Christ obeyed perfectly for those who believe. While the language of imputation is not as direct in this passage as it is in Romans 4, and while a stress on Christ's obedience is not as explicit as it is in Romans 5, the same theological conclusions are warranted.

Other Passages

In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine three particular passages. Alongside Romans 5:19, two other NT texts explicitly refer to Christ's obedience—Philippians 2:8 and Hebrews 5:8. Consequently, these passages deserve attention. First, however, I will examine Galatians 4:4-5.¹¹⁰ In considering these passages, it is important

¹¹⁰2 Corinthians 5:21 is certainly an important gospel text: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." However, the focus of this text appears to be on Christ's being made sin for us—his passive obedience. It is true that his sin-bearing is crucial to our becoming righteous. However, the focus of this dissertation is on the active obedience of Christ. While the text does speak of the fact that Christ lived a sinless life ("knew no sin"), I am uncertain that the "for us" modifies "knew no sin." It seems more likely that "for us" modifies the main verb—Christ was made sin "for us." As I have had occasion to bring out in this dissertation, some who deny the active obedience of Christ fully agree that Christ needed to live a sinless life in order to be the spotless sacrifice, and they agree that Christ's work results in righteousness for the believer. However, they stop short of saying that Christ "knew no sin" throughout his life in a vicarious way. Consequently,

to keep in mind the biblical theology already established in this dissertation. The Bible is ultimately one book, and the OT stands as the backdrop to the NT. Therefore when the NT speaks of the law and of Christ's obedience, there are heavy echoes of the OT's cry for a representative obedient son. The NT is not a different story but a climax of the story begun in the OT. It might be tempting to skip straight to the "important" texts that refer explicitly to Christ's obedience, just as it can be tempting to skip to the conclusion of any story. But God, the all-wise divine author, wants us insofar as possible to take in the whole story of redemption. He gave his people a significant amount of material that deals with the preparation for Christ's coming, and I have sought to reflect that fact to a certain extent in this work. In one sense the previous chapters serve as important contributions to an exposition of the following passages.

Galatians 4:4-5

This text is all the more important considering the fact that justification is a central theme in the book of Galatians. The situation in Galatia that occasioned Paul's letter seems to have been the teaching of a certain group—Paul repeatedly refers to those who are troubling the Galatian believers (4:17; 5:10, 12; 6:12). There has been debate over exactly what it was that these opponents were teaching the Galatians. Betz, after noting that "information about the Galatian churches . . . is extremely scarce," rightly concludes that "we must reconstruct their [the opponents'] views primarily on the basis

there appear to be other texts even more fundamental to the doctrine of active obedience than 2 Corinthians 5:21.

of Galatians alone.”¹¹¹ Apparently, these agitators were Jews who proclaimed much of the Christian message but desired to make Mosaic law-keeping necessary for ultimate justification. Their teaching becomes especially apparent in 2:13-21, where Paul argues that justification comes by Christ alone and not by the works of the law. Another support comes from 5:4, where Paul strongly implies that issue unsettling the Galatians concerns justification by law.

The primary issue in the foreground was circumcision (5:1-13; 6:12-15). Yet in attacking circumcision, Paul makes a broader point: any method of achieving a right standing before God by means of one’s own endeavors must be rejected. Consequently, even if the primary thrust of the opponents’ message was ritual law, Paul, in correcting their false teaching, dismantles any notion of justification by human works of any kind.

Paul is not just concerned about cultic cliquishness. The issue at stake is the gospel itself, as the opening of the book indicates. He is astonished that the Galatians are deserting their true calling and turning to a “different gospel” (1:6). This “gospel” is not an acceptable version of the true gospel; it is a disastrous distortion of the gospel of Christ (1:7). The truth at stake is so serious that Paul twice pronounces an anathema on anyone who brings a different gospel (1:8-9). It is not merely that the Galatians were in danger of missing an administrative shift in God’s program; they were in danger of losing the gospel. The opponents had turned the law into a means of justification, and Paul clearly denounces this idea (2:15-21). To misunderstand the law is to minimize Christ.

In Galatians there is also the theme of slavery and freedom. To be under the law is to be in slavery (3:23), but to be in Christ is to be free (5:1). In chapter four, Paul

¹¹¹Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 3.

reminds the Galatians that they are not slaves but sons of God. However, adoption and inheritance are not blessings that come through the work of the Galatians; rather they come through the work of Christ. So Paul writes in 4:4-6, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’”

The focus of this dissertation is not on the results of Christ’s work—although they are indeed glorious! Rather, my focus is on the work of Christ itself—the redemption he achieved. According to this text, God’s purpose in sending Christ to be born was to redeem those under the law. The significance of being “born of woman” is fairly transparent: Christ was a true human being; indeed he had to be a true human in order to achieve redemption. But in what sense was Christ born “under the law,” and in what sense did that lead to redemption?

I have had occasion to point out previously that the law is not something that somehow stands over God or outside of God—the law is not an abstract reality that presides as judge over God and his actions. Rather, the law stems from God’s own character and nature. He is the one over the law, and the law flows from him. As the divine Son, Christ did not need to be put under the law. Rather, as the mediator who was also truly human, he was born of a woman and made subject to the law in order to render to the law the obedience that fallen humanity owed.

When Paul speaks of the law in Galatians he brings to bear both the works that the law requires and the curse of the law that disobedience brings. When he speaks of the “works of the law” (e.g. 2:16), he is not speaking of the penal suffering the law requires

but rather the positive commands that must be fulfilled. I have already argued in chapter 4 of this dissertation that in Galatians 2:12 when Paul says “the one who does them shall live by them,” he is saying that in order to gain eternal life a person must keep the law perfectly. One reason it is evident that no one is justified by the law is that no one lives this life of righteousness. While these demands remain, humanity’s failure also result in the law’s curse (3:13).

Paul states prior to chapter four that Christ “became a curse” for sinners (3:13). But in chapter four, Christ’s coming “under the law” cannot mean merely that he became a curse for his people, that he bore the curse of the law for them. He was “under the law” in the same way that his people were “under the law”—obligated to fulfill every precept. This Christ did for his people. So Owen writes of this passage that Christ was made under the law “not so for himself, . . . [but] for us. But as made under the law, he yielded obedience unto it; this, therefore, was for us, and is imputed to us.”¹¹²

Some do not find this exposition compelling. For example, Kirk counters that the issue in this passage is not the prescript or the penalty of the law but rather the law as a ruling power.¹¹³ Kirk argues that “Galatians 4:4 is not an indication of the nature of Jesus’ obedience; it is rather an indication of the power to whose grip Jesus submitted in order to redeem those who were held in its grasp.”¹¹⁴

The problem with this line of argument is that Kirk does not go far enough.

¹¹²Owen, *Justification*, 272.

¹¹³Kirk, “Sufficiency (I),” 55. Kirk cites Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) and J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, AB, vol. 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

¹¹⁴Kirk, “Sufficiency (I),” 56.

Why is it that the law holds people in its sway? The answer is that the law demands things that cannot be achieved by sinners. The power and bondage of the law is that it demands perfection for eternal life, with the threat of punishment upon disobedience. To be under the law includes being under the demands of the law. Therefore Jesus was placed under the law for his people. He submitted to the ruling authority of the law by submitting to its call for perfect obedience, as well as by becoming the curse of the law on behalf of his people. This resulted in believers' redemption and adoption.

The "sending" language of this passage should not be missed. God "sent" his Son, pointing once again to God's plan of salvation from ages past. The purpose of Christ's incarnation was not first and foremost exemplary but redemptive. Christ was sent into the world with the chief mission of redemption. This goal of redeeming his people was why he was placed under the obligations of the law. Redemption comes through substitution, as Paul has already had occasion to point out in Galatians (1:3; 3:13). The natural connection and theological implication is that Christ's whole work, from the time he was "born of a woman" to the time when he died, was a work of mediation, of substitution. Ronald F. K. Fung concludes, "Christ achieved the purpose of redeeming those under law by bearing the full obligation of the law in life as well as the curse of the law in death."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵R. K. Fung, *Galatians*, NICNT, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 182. For similar conclusions see Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC, vol. 41 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 171; Canon R. A. Cole, *Galatians*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 161; S. M. Baugh, "Galatians 5:1-6 and Personal Obligation," in *The Law is not of Faith*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 276.

Philippians 2:8

The NT explicitly refers to Jesus' obedience in two other texts. The first is in the book of Philippians. In this book, Paul reiterates his desire for partnership in the gospel. Paul thanks God and makes his prayer with joy when he remembers the Philippians' "partnership in the gospel" (1:5). Paul reminds the Philippians that God is the one who began a good work in them and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (1:6). The gospel is the story of God's work and of his grace. Even the gift of faith is for the sake of Christ (1:29).

Paul does exhort the Philippians to fruitfulness, but this fruitfulness too stems from Christ. He prays that they would be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (1:11). They are to let their "manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ," standing and striving in unity for "the faith of the gospel" (1:27). Paul puts it simply: "To live is Christ" (1:21).

Yet Paul does not leave the Philippians with merely a vague conception of Christ. In 2:6-11 Paul reminds them who this Christ is and what he has done. In his careful study of this passage, Ralph P. Martin argues that this text was an early Christian hymn.¹¹⁶ In the preceding verse Paul instructs the Philippians, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (2:5). Here, although Paul exhorts the Philippians to humility, he reminds them of the indicative reality of their union with Christ. The following hymn lies on the plane of the indicative—"the hymn tells how they

¹¹⁶Ralph P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2.5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); see also Robert Strimple, "Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Studies: Some Exegetical Conclusions," *WTJ* 41 (1979): 247-268.

came to be ‘in Christ.’”¹¹⁷ So while surrounding verses might *apply* the hymn in an ethical manner, the content of the hymn should not be viewed as merely ethical or exemplary.¹¹⁸

Pressing on to the content of the hymn, Christ makes himself nothing by “taking the form of a servant” (construing the λαβών as a participle of means). The servant imagery is especially appropriate. Not only does it fit well with the humbling incarnation of Christ, it also reverberates through the message of the OT. The gospel tells of the fulfillment of God’s saving promises in Christ. Throughout the OT, God promises a coming Messiah. One of the significant images the OT uses for Messiah is that of servant, as chapter 5 of this work demonstrates. The servant is the righteous one, the covenant-keeper for the people. “In the narrative identity of the servant, one catches a glimpse of a figure whose entire being and reason for existence is to carry out obediently the will of God’s redemptive purposes.”¹¹⁹ And the servant works in behalf of others. He “makes his life a substitute, he makes righteous, he pours out his life, he acts vicariously.”¹²⁰

The Christ of Philippians 2:6-11 is clothed with the promised gospel of the OT. He is, as one would expect a servant to be, obedient, as Paul goes on to emphasize in verse eight. There, Paul states that Christ “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Surely Christ’s obedience is important to the

¹¹⁷Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 86.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 215.

¹¹⁹Mark Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah’s Servants* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 89.

¹²⁰Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1965), 2:257.

hymn. One commentator even suggests that the hymn turns on Christ's obedience.¹²¹

Still, what does this obedience encompass?

The fact that Christ is already identified in this passage as a servant is one clue that the obedience mentioned is comprehensive. The OT speaks of the need for an obedient servant who keeps the covenant from first to last. Christ himself identifies his whole mission as one of humble service (Matt 20:28). The earlier section of this chapter dealing with the Gospels brought this theme to light.

In this text Christ's obedience reaches its climax in his death. However, that obedience does not exclude the obedience leading up to that death.¹²² The ESV uses the phrase, "to the point of," to translate one Greek word, μέχρι. According to BDAG, this word can be: 1) a marker of extension up to a point in an area; 2) a marker of continuance in time up to a point; or 3) a marker of degree or measure. The first meaning cannot be correct, since there is no spatial area in view in Philippians 2:8. Both the second and third categories are possible, but BDAG lists this verse as an example of category three.¹²³ The ESV apparently follows this interpretation.

BDAG lists two other NT verses under category three—2 Timothy 2:9 and Heb 12:4. In the former Paul κακοπαθῶ μέχρι δεσμῶν; he is suffering to the point of chains. In the latter, the Hebrews Οὐπω μέχρις αἵματος ἀντικατέστητε; they have not resisted to the point of blood (assumedly the sense is that they have not resisted to the

¹²¹Martin cites Michaelis (*Carmen Christi*, 216).

¹²²Martin cites Bornkamm to the effect Christ's obedience "is not an isolated act, but belongs to the whole course of His life, reaching its climax in death" (*Carmen Christi*, 216).

¹²³Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, revised and ed. Frederick W. Danker (3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 644.

point of actually shedding their blood). In both cases, the focus is on the epitome of the action, but not the exclusivity of it. In other words, it is not as though Paul's only suffering consisted in being chained, nor that the Hebrews resistance could only consist in blood-shedding. Rather, being chained is the climax of suffering, and shedding blood is the climax of resisting. So too in Philippians, even if BDAG is correct in categorizing 2:8 under their third meaning, this categorization does not mean that one should read μέγρι as inherently excluding any lesser obedience. It is an amazing fact that obedience of the eternal Son of God would carry him all the way to the point of accepting death. If he obeyed in this greatest act, then he must have obeyed in every lesser act.

The context in Philippians 2:5-11 provides further evidence for this comprehensive view of Christ's obedience. The entire section contrasts Christ's state of humiliation with his state of exaltation. Christ's humiliation begins with the incarnation. Christ "emptied" himself by taking on human flesh. Verse eight supports this idea by stating that Christ was found "in human form." And being found in human form, he "humbled himself." The thought is still with the incarnation, and there does not seem to be an assumption of a great time gap between the "being found" and the "humbling." Yet the humbling manifests itself in a certain way. Christ humbled himself by means of becoming obedient (construing γενόμενος as a participle of means, standing in parallel with λαβών.) If the incarnation immediately precipitates the humbling, and obedience is the means of humbling, then the obedience spoken of begins at birth. The incarnate life of Christ as a period of humbling is then, in its entirety, a period of obedience. The

obedience climaxes with the cross, but does not begin there.¹²⁴

Further proof that the obedience is comprehensive comes from the reward language of verse nine. On the basis of Christ's obedience (διὸ), God highly exalts him and bestows on him the name above every name. Christ's exaltation does not result from one aspect of his humiliation; rather, his exaltation ensues upon the success of the entirety of his humiliation. He was sent on a mission from God, and he received the reward for that mission on the basis of his entire life of mediation. Christ repeatedly spoke of those the Father had given him, and he lived with his people on his heart. Christ prays that he might be glorified since he accomplished the work the Father gave him to do (John 17:1-5). The exaltation of heaven is preceded by the humiliation that begins at the cradle. No wonder Paul goes on to write that he forsakes all attempts at his own righteousness and clings instead to the righteousness found in Christ (3:8-9).

Hebrews 5:8

The final passage that explicitly mentions Christ's "obedience" is found in the book of Hebrews. In this book the writer encourages Christians to persevere in light of the superiority of Christ. The author opens the book by bringing forward God's Son, the heir of all things (1:1). In 1:5 the writer quotes two OT passages that refer to a "Son," one a quotation from the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7. The Davidic covenant called for a son who would keep God's laws, and the book of Hebrews reports that Christ has loved

¹²⁴ Peter T. O'Brien states that the phrase means as long as Jesus lived (*The Epistle to the Philippians*, NIGTC, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 230. Jac J. Muller writes, "The whole time of his [Christ's] sojourn on earth was a time of self-humiliation. . . . From the manger to the cross He trod a path of humiliation, which culminated in the misery and suffering and reproach of a shameful death on a tree. Obedience unto God and surrender and submission to the will of God was maintained by Him unto the

righteousness (1:8). Indeed he rules with a scepter of uprightness (1:8). From the outset of the book of Hebrews, Christ is presented as the one who fulfills the Davidic covenant. The OT backdrop is especially crucial to the book of Hebrews. Lane observes, “Hebrews is impregnated with the OT. . . . A detailed knowledge of the OT is indispensable for understanding what the writer of Hebrews is endeavoring to say. He assumes on the part of his audience a deep familiarity with their contents.”¹²⁵

This opening reference to Christ as the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant helps to show that while expiation is certainly a heavy theme in the book of Hebrews, it is not the only theme. The writer reiterates that Christ was “faithful to him who appointed him,” that he was “faithful over God’s house as a son” (3:2, 6). Christ is the great high priest, and yet he also proves himself to be the faithful son.

The author of Hebrews reminds his readers that God swore that those who were disobedient would not enter into God’s rest (3:18). This quotation fits with the understanding of a “do this and live” OT theology developed in chapter 4 of this dissertation. However, the writer of Hebrews concludes that the people were not able to enter in “because of unbelief” (3:19). Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews assumes that his audience could draw the same conclusion regarding unbelief (“So we see . . .”). There seems to be a tension—is the problem disobedience or unbelief?

The tension is answered by the “good news” (4:2, 6), announced formerly to the OT people in a shadowy form, and more clearly in the NT’s revelation of Jesus of Nazareth. Persevering faith helps to show that people have come to share “in Christ”

end,” (*The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon*, NICNT, vol. 10 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 86).

¹²⁵William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, WBC, vol. 47A (Dallas: Word, 1991), cxv.

(3:14). In one sense, if the OT people had truly grasped Messiah by faith, they would have joyfully fulfilled the obedience requisite to maintain the typological Promised Land. However, on a more fundamental level, faith clings to the perfectly obedient Son for final eternal life. The gospel reminds people to rest from their own works and participate instead in the work of the Davidic Son.

All this leads to one particular text for consideration, Hebrews 5:8, which reads, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." The immediate context of this verse seems to point to the sufferings surrounding Christ's death. Verse seven reads, "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence." This verse appears to contain a clear allusion to Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane. This being the case, it would seem that "what he suffered" in 5:8 appears to be the agonies surrounding his death. Consequently, the "obedience" that he "learned" was the obedience of patiently enduring his crucifixion. However, there are other indications that the author of Hebrews means to include Jesus' sufferings and obedience in the broadest sense.

The first point is again the development of the theme of the Davidic Son in the book. The Son who was to be set over God's house had to be faithful in all things, obedient from first to last. He had to represent his people not just as a propitiation but also as a righteous king. His expiatory work is not set in antithesis to his positive law fulfillment; rather the king-priest fulfills every aspect of the law's demands.

Second, in Hebrews, Christ's priesthood shines through all of his earthly suffering. Christ as a sympathetic high priest is able to help those who are being tempted

because he himself was tempted, and this tempting brought with it suffering (2:18). Surely “tempting” here does not exclude the trial in the wilderness that commenced Christ’s public ministry. But can we not say then that Christ learned obedience in part through his wilderness experience, an obedience that included the aspect of positive law-keeping, of honoring God alone?

God made the founder of our salvation perfect through suffering (Heb 2:10), and it is certainly that last great act of cross suffering which finally “perfects” him (2:9). Language of “perfecting” and “learning” points to Christ’s role as a surety for his people. His “learning obedience” does not mean that as the divine Son he grew from ignorance to knowledge or from sinfulness to holiness. Rather, as a true human he grew in obedience—he persisted in obedience and “learned” to keep obeying in the face of greater and greater obstacles. The greatest obstacle of all was his cross suffering, so it is no wonder that having overcome this obstacle and having learned obedience to the greatest degree, he was “made perfect” and “became the author of eternal salvation” (v.9). Accordingly the focus in Hebrews 5 concerns the perfecting climax of his suffering and obedience, but a climax does not occur without a buildup, and the understood buildup is Jesus’ whole successful life-long pursuit of obedience.¹²⁶ Set within the context of Jesus’ high priestly ministry of mediation, a mediation of offering himself up for the people, once again the text points to a holistic view of Christ’s ministry on earth: from start to finish it was a ministry of vicarious obedience.

¹²⁶See Murray, *Redemption*, 22-24. Luke Timothy Johnson suggests that “the author of Hebrews is thinking of a learning that took place over the course of Jesus’ human existence” (*Hebrews* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006], 147-149). Paul Ellingworth similarly observes that in the broader context of the whole book of Hebrews and the contrast to Israel’s disobedience, Jesus’ sacrifice

Hebrews 10 lends further support to this understanding of Christ's obedience in Hebrews 5, even though Hebrews 10 does not use the specific term "obedience." Hebrews 10:5-7 reads, "Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" Hebrews quotes Psalm 40, which speaks of God giving the Psalmist an "open ear" (Ps 40:6). The emphasis there seems to be that an open ear corresponds to one who hears and does what God commands—obedience. So the Psalmist says in 40:8, "I delight to do your will, O my God, your law is within my heart."

The theme of God preferring obedience to sacrifice is fairly common in the OT (Is 11:1; Jer 6:20; Hos 8:13). Although God did ordain the old covenant sacrifices to serve as a reminder of sin, what he wants are people who are fully devoted to him—children created in his image who delight in rendering full obedience. I would suggest that this is what the author of Hebrews is pointing to in speaking of "a body prepared" for Christ (10:5). The author of Hebrews is not changing the intention of Psalm 40 but expounding on it. The "open ear" of Psalm 40 serves as a metaphor for ready obedience—Hebrews speaks of a body ready for full service. Note too that Hebrews relates this body to Christ's coming into the world (10:5), not merely to his sacrifice on the cross.¹²⁷ Jesus lived the way that Adam and Israel never did—in full obedience to

should be understood as the culmination of a life of obedience (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC, vol. 11 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 292).

¹²⁷See Michael Horton's helpful discussion of this text and related themes in his "Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice," in *The Law Is Not of Faith*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 315-336. Even in the sacrificial system Horton finds warrant

God throughout his entire life. No wonder God announced that he was well pleased with his Son.

As Horton summarizes, “His active obedience is therefore as crucial soteriologically as his passive obedience.”¹²⁸ Even though God’s law has been written on the heart of his people (Heb 10:16), they still do not obey perfectly. And yet, they “render obedience that comes from the heart of sons rather than slaves. In Christ, the Great King finally has received the *human* service in which his fatherly heart delights. And the whole creation will enter thanksgiving behind its new Adam.”¹²⁹

Conclusion

The theme of Jesus as the obedient Son is a prevalent theme in the Gospels. From his birth to his baptism and temptation, throughout his ministry, and climaxing in his death and resurrection, Jesus perseveres as last Adam, new Israel, and obedient David. Jesus is the promised Messiah of the OT—he is indeed the Christ. Such a conclusion could almost go unstated, but surely this is a major impetus for the gospel writers.¹³⁰ In addition, Jesus is both fully man and fully God.¹³¹ Such a portrait of Jesus

for the active obedience of Christ: “All of these sacrifices can be grouped into two categories: sacrifices of atonement and sacrifices of thanksgiving. I would suggest that the thank-offering [represented] the joyful obedience that is the goal of all divine covenants . . . Christ is both the thank-offering par excellence (active obedience) and the only satisfactory offering for sin (passive obedience)” (ibid., 324).

¹²⁸Ibid., 321.

¹²⁹Ibid., 332.

¹³⁰Once again John writes so that people will believe that Jesus is the Messiah (20:31). Likewise Mark begins his account with the gospel of Jesus “Christ,” the anointed one to come (1:1). Matthew begins his book with the genealogy of Jesus the “Christ” (1:1). In the first chapter of Luke’s gospel, the angel, Mary, and Zechariah all speak of Jesus’ birth as the fulfillment of OT prophecy.

¹³¹Jesus could not be the last Adam, the new Israel, and the final Davidic son unless he was truly human—thus the genealogies, thus the assurances that he is indeed the Son of David. And yet, the OT

as the obedient Son in the Gospels supports the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. To posit a “passive-only” position forces an untenable wedge into the unity of Jesus’ obedience. As this study has shown, Jesus’ obedience is emphasized from the cradle to the grave, and it is all of a piece. If any part of his obedience is vicarious, then we should expect that the whole of his obedience is vicarious. Jesus is the Son of God sent from God to redeem sinners by his entire course of obedience.¹³² As always, the person and work of Christ are intimately intertwined.

The book of Romans stands as a high water mark in clarity concerning the fundamental gospel issues of law, righteousness, Christ’s obedience, and justification. Romans 5:19 indicates that Christ’s obedience results in righteousness for believers. A careful exegetical examination showed that “obedience” in this verse should not be limited simply to Christ’s penal suffering. Also pertinent is Romans 10:4, where belief in Christ marks the termination of a person attempting to pursue righteousness by the law keeping—and an appropriate theological conclusion is that Christ has abrogated such a need by keeping the law perfectly himself. Finally, although Romans 8:4b is oftentimes seen as a reference to Christ’s active obedience, I concluded that this passage speaks of Christian obedience (an obedience that is nevertheless grounded in and stemming from the work of Christ).

reports that, due to the pervasiveness of sin in the world, God himself must save. Even the greatest figures in the OT were disobedient sinners. Consequently, for Jesus to be the perfectly obedient Son, he must be more than a man—he must also be divine. In other words, a part of Jesus’ identity in the Gospels is that he is truly God and truly man. This study, then, would support the thrust of Richard Bauckham’s work on the identity of Jesus. See many of his writings on the subject in his *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

¹³²So Calvin writes, “Now someone asks, ‘How has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God, and acquired righteousness to render God favorable and kindly toward us?’ To this we can in general reply that he has achieved this for us by the whole course of his obedience. . . .

Galatians 4:4-5 does contribute to the doctrine of active obedience. There, Paul's flow of thought indicates that Christ's breaks the power of the law by being subject to its demands and successfully fulfilling all of it—in order that he might redeem people. The other two passages in the NT that explicitly refer to Christ's "obedience," Philippians 2:8 and Hebrews 5:9, have a greater specific focus on the high point of Jesus' obedience—his obedient death; nevertheless, neither passage excludes a redemptive life of obedience. And yet again, in considering Christ's "obedience," we need not limit ourselves to passages that use the exact word. Numerous other passages describe Christ's whole work as a work of obedience. Jesus describes his work this way in John 6:38: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Christ came for the purpose of obedience. In coming down "for us and for our salvation," the whole obedience that he rendered was a part of his work for us and for our salvation. His coming in obedience to the Father and for the mediatorial purpose of salvation dovetails with the viewpoint that his entire incarnate life is redemptive.

Paul extends the oasis of the pardon that frees us from the curse of the law to the whole life of Christ" (*Inst.*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960], 2.26.5).

CHAPTER 7

OBJECTIONS

Systematic Formulation

So far I have advanced several lines of positive argument that support the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. In this chapter I will first bring these arguments together and formulate a systematic conclusion. Second, I will consider some of the chief biblical objections to the doctrine.¹

A look at historical theology helps to frame the terms of the discussion. The terms “active obedience” and “passive obedience” came to be used to designate the twofold answer to the law that stands against sinners. “Passive obedience” refers to Christ’s suffering the wrath of God in the place of sinners—he bore the curse of the law for them. However, the positive sanctions of the law still require fulfillment—this Christ achieved throughout the course of his earthly mediation in humble obedience to God.

While it is important to stress that the distinction between Christ’s active and passive obedience is a theological distinction, it is an important distinction nonetheless. Rather than muddle the witness of Scripture, it actually serves to clarify the wonderful achievement Christ accomplished. Both in living and dying Christ felt the weight of

¹Some overlap with the material of previous chapters cannot be avoided. However, many previous objections were of a more narrow and exegetical nature. The objections dealt with in this chapter are broader and more comprehensive. Also, when I speak of “biblical” objections, I simply mean to indicate that in this chapter I will not be considering historical arguments (e. g. that active obedience is not confessional).

suffering and the joy of righteous obedience. This dissertation focuses on the latter aspect—the fact that Christ achieved a positive righteousness for his people.

Systematic conclusions are most compelling when they are guided not only by historical theology but more importantly by exegesis and biblical theology—an examination of Scripture itself. Due in part to the sheer amount of material most systematic theologies have to cover, with any particular doctrinal conclusion there can be a tendency to cite a few texts rather than to trace the Bible's own storyline with respect to the unfolding truth of the doctrine under consideration. But it is helpful when possible to let the Bible's own categories and emphases shine through. By looking at one particular doctrine, this dissertation has the space to do just that.

The story of Christ begins with the story of Adam, for Christ comes as the second Adam. But the story in the Garden is not merely the story of a man but rather of humanity's relationship to God. God is presented as marvelous creator, but he is also presented as the holy and righteous judge. One transgression results in expulsion and death: God will not tolerate sin. He demands perfection.

This demand continues after the Fall. The numerous sacrifices of the old covenant system help to show that sin requires atonement. The smoke of the sacrifices is pleasing to God—not because he is sadistic but because he must be true to his own nature. He is perfect and must remain true to himself. Sin is by its very nature infinitely offensive.

Israel is another Adam and their entrance into the land symbolized a typological return to paradise. Yet they too sin and God vomits them out of the land. The old covenant is summarized by a standard: do this and live. While there are typological

intricacies in the OT's development of this command in the life of Israel, in the NT Jesus and Paul bring to the foreground God's demand for perfect obedience. Eternal life results from the keeping of all of God's commands—one failure is not excusable.

Although God never lowers the bar, in love he promises redemption and eternal life. If God is to remain God, the clear conclusion is that he must provide an obedient Son. A tension develops in the OT: after the Fall no human can obey perfectly, yet if humanity is to be redeemed the redeemer must be truly human. God's word of promise sustains the hope of his people. Through various OT covenants God declares that he himself will provide the redeemer. God will provide a covenant-fulfiller. The faithful deeds of a messianic David will bring everlasting salvation.

God always keeps his word. The NT unveils a Christ who is truly human (and therefore able to redeem) and truly God (and therefore able to render the necessary obedience and suffer infinite wrath). Christ is the righteous one who both suffers in the place of his people and lives a life of righteousness for them. The righteousness that is credited to believers, then, has a definite shape and content: the righteousness that Christ achieved throughout the course of his earthly ministry.

The basis of a sinner's justification does not rest in himself but in Christ. Humans are unrighteous people. We fail to keep God's righteous commands. We fail to obey him. We fail to love him with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourself. The answer to the guilt we feel is not simply to try harder but to trust in Christ. The fight of the Christian life is a fight of faith. God smiles on us not because of our work but because of the work of his Son for us. We are fully accepted because of what Christ achieved. Christians need not live in slavery or fear—they can live in joy and hope. True Christians

will produce fruit, but our fruit is not the ground of our acceptance with God. Christ's righteousness is.

Objections

It is left to examine some of the major theological objections to the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. Owen summarizes objections to the active obedience of Christ under three heads: 1) It is impossible; 2) It is useless; 3) It is pernicious to believe.² Others divide up objections somewhat differently.³ Acknowledging that there is no one absolutely right way to categorize objections, I have chosen to gather objections under six headings.

The Terms “Active” and “Passive” Force an Unbiblical Dichotomy

Some would perhaps argue that the terms “active” and “passive” are not expressly biblical. At this point, it is important to remember that “unbiblical” language is not necessarily wrong—so long as it accurately reflects biblical teaching. For example, even though the Bible does not use the term “Trinity,” Christians throughout the centuries have found it a helpful way to speak of the three persons of the Godhead. Some objectors might grant this truth, yet still argue that these terms are not helpful and do not reflect biblical teaching. After all, where does the Bible divide Christ's obedience into two

²John Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner, 1990), 5:252. E. H. Hoare, an opponent of active obedience, does indeed call the doctrine “unnecessary” (*The Scripture Ground of Justification; Or, An Inquiry Into the Doctrine of Scripture Concerning the Active and Passive Obedience of Christ* [London: William MacIntosh, 1867], 49).

³See J. V. Fesko, *Justification* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 150-64.

parts? Is it not wrong to separate the one unified work of Christ?⁴ Snider, for example, argues that his proposal “provides for a more unified view of Christ’s atoning work on earth.”⁵ For Snider, Christ’s divine righteousness enables him to obey throughout his life, which in turn “facilitates, qualifies, and validates” his passive obedience.⁶

The first point of response is to question why Christ’s life of obedience is a necessary qualification. Certainly if Christ would have sinned that would have disqualified him, but in Snider’s view why did Christ need to live for thirty years at all (other than perhaps to fulfill prophecy, provide an example, etc.)? Why could not Christ have arrived as a full-grown man and suffered for sins immediately? For the passive-only position, there appears to be little (if anything) essentially redemptive about Christ’s life prior to his suffering. The active obedience position, on the other hand, does see Christ’s mediatorial work on earth as one vicarious and seamless whole.

In addition, what must be kept in mind is that the distinction between Christ’s active and passive obedience is a theological distinction, as mentioned at the outset in chapter 1. Theologians who affirm the propriety of this theological distinction nevertheless teach a unity in Christ’s work. For example, Charles Hodge writes, “The active and passive obedience of Christ, however, are only different phases or aspects of the same thing. . . . Hence this distinction is not so presented in Scripture as though the obedience of Christ answered one purpose, and his sufferings another and a distinct

⁴Fesko lists this particular objection in *Justification*, 152-53.

⁵Snider, “Active Obedience,” 97.

⁶Ibid.

purpose.”⁷ Other theologians could be cited to similar effect.⁸

In fact, it is actually the *opponents* of active obedience who wrongly divide the one work of Christ. Those who hold to a “passive-only” position are forced to argue that Christ’s redeeming obedience in passages like Romans 5:19, Philippians 2:8, and Hebrews 5:8 only refers to his penal substitution for sins, achieved in his death on the cross.⁹ Active obedience proponents are actually the ones who maintain a fully unified obedient work of Christ in these passages, an obedience that includes but is not limited to his penal substitution for sins. Likewise it is the proponents of active obedience who are able to put together a biblical theology in which the Messiah-Son’s obedience from first to last is the justifying hope of sinners.

Mark Seifrid argues that even the “distinction” between active and passive obedience is “unnecessary and misleading.”¹⁰ This distinction “arose from a failure to grasp that Christ’s work represents the prolepsis of the final judgment and the entrance of the age to come.”¹¹ Even if this theme of prolepsis is less conspicuous in Reformation era writers, it is unclear why this emphasis would undercut active obedience. Although the resurrection marks the acceptance of Christ’s work and the beginning of the age to come,

⁷Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 3:143.

⁸Owen, *Justification*, 253; Clark, “Do This and Live,” 248; Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955), 21; David VanDrunen, “To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice,” *By Faith Alone*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson & Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 144; Cornelius P. Venema, *The Gospel of Free Acceptance in Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), 246-69; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 3:395; Fesko, *Justification*, 152-53.

⁹See Kirk, “The Sufficiency of the Cross (1): The Crucifixion as Jesus’ Act of Obedience,” *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 51; Snider, “Active Obedience,” 103; Hoare, *Justification*, 29-34.

¹⁰Mark Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, NSBT 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000): 175.

¹¹*Ibid.*

the question of the content and effects of Christ's work should still be answered. Further, Reformed writers who in many ways championed inaugurated eschatology among evangelicals (e.g., Vos, Ridderbos, Murray, Gaffin) are all firmly committed to the active obedience of Christ—clearly they see no tension between these commitments. In reality, the prolepsis of the final judgment is a judgment wherein God certifies the whole course of Christ's obedience from cradle to grave.

The Active Obedience of Christ is a Legal Fiction

Put in its simplest form, the objection could sound like this: it is never just to treat a sinner as if he was fully righteous because of the behavior of someone else; in human law courts, everyone would despise a judge who let a convict go free because the judge was for some reason willing to transfer the righteousness of another person to the convict. Unfortunately, I will not be able to spend too much time on this objection. This has been a frequent charge against penal substitution, and as stated at the outset, defenders of penal substitution have done an admirable job responding. However, in brief, it is important to note that in this case the judge of the earth (God himself) is the one who has been offended. God is not a neutral party administering some system of justice outside of or above himself. In addition, God himself supplies the remedy.

Furthermore, in the examples often cited from human law, there is no legal relationship between the substitute and the offender. However, just as all mankind is united to Adam in federal headship (see chapter 3), so too are those in Christ united to Christ in covenantal solidarity. For those who object to corporate responsibility, one reply is humbly to say, "Who are you to reply against God?" God, the holy and just one, has deemed to govern his universe in certain ways, and a part of that government includes the

imputation of sin and righteousness. For those who would continue to object that God cannot rightly declare a person to be righteous when he is still personally a sinner, it is helpful to continue to press the point that God defines reality. (This objection really drives back to the rejection of the idea of corporate solidarity.) In the very beginning, physical “reality” issued from God’s declarative word—so too does his verdict of “Righteous in Christ!” effect reality. As Clark states, “In this universe, the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to those who are not intrinsically and fully sanctified is no more a legal fiction than was God’s *fiat lux* (Gen 1:3) or naming of the first creation (1:5) or the new creation (2 Cor 5:17). God’s powerful word makes things so.”¹² The believer’s life, his most true and real life, from a divine perspective, is hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3).

Finally, under this heading, I include Anselm’s variant of this objection: the active obedience of Christ is a legal fiction because Christ already owed earthly obedience for himself to God—therefore that obedience cannot be credited to someone else.¹³ Without taking the space for a long metaphysical discussion, I simply point out that natures do not obey, persons do. Christ’s human nature cannot be severed from his

¹²Clark, “Do This and Live,” 259.

¹³See the discussion of Anselm’s view in the history chapter. In addition, Owen deals with this objection in *Justification*, 253-63, citing Socinus as one who pressed it (*ibid.*, 253-54). Socinus writes, “*Jam vero manifestum est, Christum quia homo natus fuerat, et quidem, ut inquit Paulus, factus sub lege, legi divinae inquam, quae aeterna et immutabilis est, non minus quam caeteri homines obnoxium fuisse. Alioqui potuisset Christus aeternam Dei legem negligere, sive etiam universam si voluisset infringere, quod impium est vel cogitare. Immo ut supra alicubi explicatum fuit, nisi ipse Christus legi divinae servandae obnoxius fuisset, ut ex Pauli verbis colligitur, non potuisset iis, qui ei legi servandae obnoxii sunt, opem ferre et eos ad immortalitatis firmam spem traducere. Non differebat igitur hac quidem ex parte Christus, quando homo natus erat, a caeteris hominibus. Quocirca nec etiam pro alibis, magis quam quilibet alius homo, legem divinam conservando satisfacere potuit, quippe qui ipse eam servare omnino debuit*” (De Jesu Christo servatore). Although there are some questions of interpretation, the main point is clear—Christ was “not for others . . . able to satisfy the divine law . . . since he himself must wholly keep it” [*nec etiam pro alibis . . . legem divinam conservando satisfacere potuit . . . quippe qui ipse eam servare omnino debuit*].

divine nature and treated as if it owed God obedience as a mere human.¹⁴ Christ was never a mere human, nor was he ever two persons. In the incarnation, the divine Son was united with a human nature. Although the human nature was not infused with divinity, nevertheless it was immediately an aspect of the second person of the Trinity, Lord over all. In addition, it should be pointed out that God designed Christ's obedience to stand in for sinners.¹⁵ Again the purpose of the Godhead determines reality. Returning to language from church history, Christ's actions should be considered in his capacity as *caput et sponsor electorum*.

Jesus' Death is the Sole Ground of Justification

This objection is implicit in the title of Kirk's articles: "The Sufficiency of the Cross." How could anyone say the cross is not enough to achieve full and final salvation? Kirk argues that "the NT writers look, without exception, to the obedience of Jesus in his death, and the righteousness procured by it, as the grounds of justification."¹⁶ Snider likewise states that "Justification is always by faith in Christ because of his *death* on behalf of sinners" [emphasis his].¹⁷ For example, Romans 5:9 says, "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."

¹⁴See Owen, *Justification*, 255-56.

¹⁵Ibid., 257-58, 60-61.

¹⁶Kirk, "Sufficiency (I)," 40.

¹⁷Snider, "Active Obedience," 87. This argument is the main burden of E. H. Hoare, *The Scripture Ground of Justification; Or, An Inquiry Into the Doctrine of Scripture Concerning the Active and Passive Obedience of Christ* (London: William MacIntosh, 1867). See the general tenor of pp. 7-9, 15-47.

There are a number of responses to this objection. First, it is important to remember that Christ's active obedience includes his time of suffering on the cross (see chapter 6). At this dramatic moment in redemptive history, Christ displayed a supreme positive love for God and neighbor. Passive-only proponents make the mistake of assuming that "suffering" or "cross" or "death" only refers to penal substitution. But active obedience proponents are happy to affirm more. Therefore, even if it could be shown that the cross is the only biblical ground of salvation, it would still have to be shown that the cross only refers to penal substitution and not also to active obedience.

Second, at times passive-only proponents seem to have a hard time identifying whether the "cross" alone is truly sufficient. For instance, Kirk will say that in the NT "obtaining eschatological blessing" comes through "the sufficiency of the cross."¹⁸ However, in other places he adds in the resurrection, as when he states, "Paul continues to locate the believer's hope for eschatological life in the death and resurrection of Jesus."¹⁹ So which saves—the cross, or the cross and the resurrection? Kirk is forced to admit that the Scripture does at times include the resurrection as necessary for salvation. And yet at precisely this point passive-only proponents must admit that the cross alone is not sufficient for salvation.

Of course, even at this point one could argue that Christ's life is not included as the ground of justification—only his death and resurrection. Richard Lusk stresses the importance of the resurrection, and states that Machen's final telegram should have read,

¹⁸Kirk, "Sufficiency I," 64.

¹⁹Kirk, "Sufficiency II," 138.

“So thankful for the resurrection,” not “so thankful for the active obedience of Christ.”²⁰

James Jordan likewise says, “It is not Jesus earthly life and ‘works and merits’ that are transferred to us, but His glorified and resurrected life in the Spirit that is transferred to us.”²¹

But these writers are not entirely clear how the resurrection actually serves justification. Put differently, if all that was required for man’s redemption was penal suffering, in what sense does the resurrection contribute to penal suffering? The best solution is to see that the resurrection demonstrates Jesus’ justification (Rom 4:25; 1 Tim 3:16).²² In raising God from the dead, God stamped his approval on all of Christ’s work. Jesus was justified because he had established a mediatorial righteousness by his life and death, by both his preceptive and penal obedience. We are saved by the resurrection because we participate in the justifying verdict given to Jesus, which is as much to say that God imputes the totality of Christ’s work to us. Thus when the Bible speaks of salvation by the resurrection, active obedience is included in that idea, not excluded.

If one were to ask writers like Kirk whether the cross alone saves or the cross and the resurrection, perhaps they would respond by arguing that it is one complex event—the cross cannot be separated from the resurrection, neither can the resurrection be separated from the cross. Often one stands for both, in synecdochal fashion. I would simply extend that argument one step further—the cross and the resurrection serve as the climax of Jesus’

²⁰Richard Lusk, “A Response to the Biblical Plan of Salvation,” in *The Auburn Avenue Theology, Pros and Cons: Debating the Federal Vision*, ed. Calvin E. Beisner (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Knox Theological Seminary, 2004), 140-41.

²¹James B. Jordan, “Merit Vs. Maturity: What Did Jesus Do For Us?” in *The Federal Vision*, eds. Steve Wilkins and Duane Garner (Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2004) 194-95.

²²See Richard B. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987).

ministry; therefore it is perfectly appropriate for either or both to serve as a synecdoche for Christ's entire mediatorial work on earth. Even those who stress simply the death of Christ should admit that they have some kind of synecdochal understanding. Surely they do not think that when the Bible says that believers are saved by Christ's "death," it means that the only ground of salvation was the moment in time when Christ breathed his last—when he actually died. They would understand "death" to include the sufferings leading up to his death. Again, admitting a synecdoche of some sort, I would simply extend the synecdoche further and argue that in many cases, words like "death" and "blood" simply refer to the totality of his work, including his positive obedience.²³ Speaking of the cross or the resurrection as providing justification is, for the biblical writers, a shorthand way of saying that Christ's entire vicarious work of reconciliation serves as the ground of justification.

Imputed Righteousness and Forgiveness of Sins Are Synonymous

Piscator says, "Now forgiveness of sin, and imputing of justice, differ only in name; indeed they are the same."²⁴ It should be fairly clear how this argument undercuts the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.²⁵ If imputed righteousness and forgiveness of sin are the same thing, and if Christ's penal substitution is sufficient by itself to provide forgiveness of sins, then it is also sufficient to provide imputed righteousness—without the imputation of Christ's active obedience. As proof of his assertion, Piscator

²³Cf. Owen, *Justification*, 271.

²⁴Owen, *Justification*, 105-06.

²⁵Of course, some claim that it is unbiblical to speak of Christ's imputed righteousness in any sense. For them faith in some way counts for righteousness, or God credits righteousness (but not Christ's

cites Romans 4:6-7.²⁶ There, Paul writes, “Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.’” As proof of Paul’s positive claim for imputed righteousness, Paul cites a verse that speaks of forgiveness of sins. If these are two distinct acts, how could one be cited as proof of another?

The answer is that Scripture does not view these acts as separable—distinct yes, but not separable.²⁷ Whenever people are forgiven, they also receive the imputed righteousness of Christ, and vice versa. Since these events are inseparable, the presence of one indicates the presence of the other. The one who is forgiven is also credited righteousness, and vice versa. It might be helpful at this point to revisit the analogy from Zechariah 3:4-5. Joshua’s filthy garments are taken away, but he is not left naked—he is clothed with clean garments. More importantly, as I have argued in chapter 6, righteousness is frequently associated with law keeping—it is a verdict with substance, not simply an abstract change of status.

Snider’s view on this point needs some parsing. In one place he says that forgiveness and imputed righteousness “are not separate acts or concepts, but rather two perspectives which give a complete picture of a single whole.”²⁸ Further clarity is needed—is the single whole made up of distinguishable parts, or are forgiveness and

righteousness). This argument has been answered admirably by others. See the introductory chapter and especially the works of Gundry, Vickers, Carson, and Piper cited in the discussion surrounding imputation.

²⁶Ibid., 106. See also E. H. Hoare, *Justification* 4, 27, 49.

²⁷Cf. Owen, *Justification*, 267.

²⁸Snider, “Active Obedience,” 83.

imputed righteousness really just two different lenses for viewing the exact same reality? In commenting on 2 Corinthians 5:21, Snider says that becoming the righteousness of God in Christ “points to forgiveness.”²⁹ While it is difficult to say for certain, it appears that for Snider forgiveness is equivalent to imputed righteousness.

Snider goes on to argue that it is not Christ’s life of righteousness but “the divine righteousness, that . . . attribute of the Godhead, that is imputed to the believer.”³⁰ This assertion brings up the question of what imputed righteousness actually is. In the traditional viewpoint, it refers to the righteousness of Christ from the cradle to the grave—his mediatorial life of righteousness. Christ’s submission to his earthly parents, his refusal to give in to temptation, his constant love to his neighbor, his obedience to God to the point of death—all of these are occasions of Christ’s righteousness, and these are examples of the content of the righteousness of Christ credited to believers. This righteousness is not limited to outward actions; it includes Christ’s pure heart motives—after all, worshipful obedience is in vain if a person’s heart is far from God, and whatever does not spring from faith (even if outwardly good) is sin. However, in the traditional viewpoint, imputed righteousness is not an abstract quality, much less an eternal attribute of the Trinity. Christ’s righteousness has a special dignity and value since he achieved it as the infinite and eternal Son of God, but there is a real transfer of his probationary record. God does not merely pretend that we have a loving disposition—he actually credits us with the loving disposition that Christ demonstrated throughout his earthly

²⁹Ibid., 95.

³⁰Ibid., 97.

ministry.³¹

Snider's position appears somewhat reminiscent of Osiander.³² According to Calvin, "Osiander's opinion is that, since Christ is God and man, he is made righteousness for us with respect to his divine nature, not his human nature."³³ For Calvin, this has the effect of leading people away from the person and priesthood of Christ and to his outward deity.³⁴ Calvin's response is to direct believers to the ordained purpose of God. Calvin is not opposed to contemplating divine attributes; however, he rightly recognizes that fallen sinners need the mediatorial person and work of Christ, not a view of merely *divine* righteousness. Calvin says, "Christ was made righteousness when 'he took upon him the form of a servant' [Phil 2:7]; secondly, he justifies us in that he has shown himself obedient to the Father [Phil 2:8]. Therefore he does this for us not according to his divine nature but in accordance with the dispensation enjoined upon him."³⁵ The righteousness credited to believers is "of God" in the sense of "from God,"

³¹In addition, keep in mind the whole OT theology of an obedient one to come. This coming one must be truly human. Yet more than that, he acts in his representative capacity as a human. All that Jesus did, he did in his capacity as the mediator of God's elect, fully God but also fully human.

³²Of course, there are notable differences. Osiander in places tends towards arguing for an infused righteous, and Snider keeps the language of imputation. In addition, Osiander perhaps saw the divine righteousness as providing a foundation for the believer's works of righteousness, works that in some way contribute to their salvation (See Calvin, *Inst.*, 3.11.5-12, and Ritschl, *Justification*, 214-230).

³³Calvin, *Inst.*, 3.11.8.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.* The righteousness is a righteousness that comes from the covenant ordinance of God. Just as God ordained sinners to be represented by Adam and his behavior, so too he ordains his elect to be represented by Christ and his behavior. Passages like these from Calvin help to show that the later development of an explicit "covenant of redemption" is really not a departure from Calvin's thought at all.

not in the sense of an attribute of God.³⁶

Although Kirk also affirms imputed righteousness, it is not entirely clear what that righteousness is for Kirk. He claims that “God’s righteousness and the law’s righteousness are not identical.”³⁷ He goes on to argue that “the law does not provide the *kind* of righteousness requisite for obtaining eschatological life.”³⁸ Kirk claims that according to Philippians 3:6, “Paul does not view the law as setting an impossible standard of perfection; rather, he views the law as holding a standard of righteousness that is not only hypothetically attainable but that he himself actually obtained.”³⁹ Against Kirk is the argument of chapter 4 of this work—time and time again, the Bible portrays perfect fulfillment of the law as impossible. In addition, this interpretation of Philippians 3:6 would contradict what Paul says elsewhere. Paul points out that none are righteous (Rom 3) and that the law brings the knowledge of sin (Rom 7). Paul admits that before his conversion he was a blasphemer (surely a violation of the law) and the chief of sinners (1 Tim 1:13-15). A much more likely interpretation of Philippians 3:6 is that Paul is speaking of his pre-conversion vantage point—a confidence in the flesh (3:4) that he now rightly sees and renounces as folly.⁴⁰ Keeping the law would indeed gain the righteousness that brings eternal life, as I argued in chapter four. The law reflects God’s

³⁶Again Calvin, “It is sometimes called the righteousness of God because God is its author and bestows it upon us,” (ibid., 3.11.9).

³⁷Kirk, “Sufficiency (II),” 142.

³⁸Ibid., 145; cf. 147, 150, 153.

³⁹Ibid. Kirk references the work of Sanders to support his interpretation (ibid.).

⁴⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 533.

righteous character and standard. It does not posit a subpar righteousness entirely different from the work of Christ and his gift of righteousness. Once more, the gift of righteousness is not a purely divine righteousness but the righteousness worked out by the God-man.

One final variant of this objection is that the cross renders believers as if they had performed the whole law. Piscator wields this argument forcefully:

Remission of sins, wherein man's justification consists, is remission of all sins: and therefore not only of sins of committing, but also of sins of omitting: whereby it comes, that he to whom God forgives sins is so accounted of as if he had not only committed nothing which God has forbidden in his law: but also, omitted nothing of that which he has commanded: and therefore, as if he had perfectly fulfilled the law of God. Now where the perfect fulfilling of the law is, there also is life; according to that, 'The man that does these things shall live in them.'⁴¹

Piscator accepts the "do this and live" principle; however, for Piscator such an appeal does not necessitate a period of positive obedience. Owen refers to a similar line of argument in his own time—those who argue that the active obedience of Christ is useless "because all 'our sins of omission and commission being pardoned in our justification on the account of the death and satisfaction of Christ, we are thereby made completely righteous.'⁴²

The difficulty with this argument is that it assumes too much—namely, that whenever someone is pardoned, they are deemed to have done all that they should have done. But this is not the case. Pardon entails forgiveness, but not necessarily righteousness. For example, suppose parents tell a child that unless the child does his chores he will be grounded. Perhaps the child chooses to watch TV and disobey his

⁴¹Piscator, *Justification*, 106-07. See also Hoare, *Justification*, 3-4.

⁴²Owen, *Justification*, 252. Cf. 262-63.

parents. The parents might choose to forgive the child of the wrong and refrain from grounding him, but the fact remains that the chores have not been done—the grass is not mowed and the trash has not been taken out. The parents can forgive the child and refrain from punishing him, but they do not view the child as if he had actually done the chores. Pardon “removeth guilt, which is the respect of sin unto punishment.”⁴³

However, pardon does not necessarily confer the reward. In the example given above, suppose the parents had promised the child that if he did his chores without fail for one month they would buy him a bicycle (and if he failed they would ground him). The parents may forgive the child of his wrongdoing and refrain from punishing him, but surely the child does not have a right to say, “Thanks . . . and now where is my bicycle?” Or, if the parents did choose to ground the child, after serving his suspension the child would not have a right to say, “Wow, glad that punishment is over . . . now where is my bicycle?” He deserves the bicycle only if he actually did his chores, not if he merely avoided punishment or even received punishment.

Snider objects to this type of analogy on two counts.⁴⁴ First, God’s law is unlike man’s law in that God’s law entails an eternal punishment—the sinner could never complete the punishment and make a further demand to God.⁴⁵ This objection misses the mark. The point of the analogy is not to say that God’s law is like man’s law in every respect, nor to say that man could conceivably complete the punishment. Rather, the analogy provides a hypothetical question: if a person’s punishment was in fact remitted

⁴³Owen, *Justification*, 264.

⁴⁴Snider, “Active Obedience,” 82. Snider deals with a similar type of analogy offered by Dabney (*Systematic Theology*, 624-25). See also Owen, *Justification*, 266.

⁴⁵Snider, “Active Obedience,” 82.

(or paid), would such a person be automatically entitled to reward? The answer is no.

Snider's other objection is more complex. Snider argues that there is no morally neutral realm with respect to God's law.⁴⁶ There is no category of "non-obedience and non-disobedience. One is either a sinner or perfect. If one is perfect, then one has favor with God. If one is a sinner, then one is deserving of punishment."⁴⁷ This point is true *in fact*. In other words, it is true that humans are either fully condemned or fully justified. But this fact is so not by any philosophical necessity but because of God's ordained plan. God has so ordained it that whenever a sinner is forgiven, not only is the sinner's punishment taken away, he is also counted righteous and granted justification unto eternal life. Yet God was under no necessity to save people to any extent, nor was he required to offer eternal life. Could God not have ordained Christ simply to suffer the pains of hell for sinners, without assuring them of eternity in heaven? If this had been the case, could believers have claimed a right to eternal life any more than Adam could have claimed a right to eternal life (rather than probationary life) immediately upon his creation? Believers receive confirmed life in heaven not because it *necessarily* follows escape from punishment—but because God is so amazingly gracious, and he has ordained to give Christ's mediatorial life of righteousness (along with forgiveness of sins) through faith.

“Works” Never Contribute to Salvation

Snider, after observing that Paul “stresses that salvation is a free gift and not

⁴⁶See also Hoare, *Justification*, 36.

⁴⁷Snider, “Active Obedience,” 82.

earned in any way by works,” argues that this point is an “indirect critique of the vicarious active obedience view.”⁴⁸ For Paul, justification comes apart from law-works. Snider goes on to argue that since Paul “does not qualify this statement by specifying whose works are excluded, he seems to be saying that justification *per se* is not based on works—not only works done by man, but works *qua* works,” a statement that stands in contrast to the vicarious obedience view of Christ’s works.⁴⁹ Likewise Kirk writes, “In Galatians 2, where Paul takes up the very question of how the law is related to the righteousness by which believers can stand before God, he not only highlights the death of Jesus, but excludes the righteousness of the law altogether.”⁵⁰

Galatians 2:18 states that a person “is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.” At this point I again affirm the traditional reading of this text which is that Paul stresses the inadequacy of works-salvation for fallen human beings simply because they can never achieve a purely righteous record.⁵¹ Paul speaks directly to the Galatians in regards to justification from their perspective, viz., “You Galatians cannot be justified by your own works.” The problem in the book of Galatians concerns agitators who are trying to get the Galatians to believe that the Galatians themselves must work in order to achieve salvation. Paul’s answer for what people must do is clear: simply

⁴⁸Ibid., 88-89.

⁴⁹Ibid., 89.

⁵⁰Kirk, “Sufficiency II,” 142. See also E. H. Hoare, *Justification*, 38.

⁵¹See chapter four and in particular the discussion of Gal 3:10-12.

believe; do not add your works to your faith as some sort of ground for salvation. The context and flow of argument in Galatians (and other places where Paul opposes justification by works) supports the traditional view.

Furthermore, an argument against justification by works abstractly and absolutely tends to undercut the need for penal substitution as well.⁵² Such an accusation sounds harsh, but once again consider the direction of the argument. Those who make such claims about law-work wish to highlight the gracious freeness of God's salvation, and they might say that to insist that "works" somehow secure our justification undercuts the fundamentally gracious character of salvation. Salvation is all about grace and not about anybody's "works," not even Christ's. But in response, if absolutely nothing can constrain or condition God's forgiveness and bestowal of salvation, then Christ did not need to die. God can save whenever he wants simply because he is a kindly person. You ask; he forgives. Evangelical opponents of active obedience such as Kirk and Snider would presumably not want to go down this road; they acknowledge that God's justice must be satisfied; Christ had to do something for us. And that is just the point—even Christ's suffering is in some sense a work, so one should not argue absolutely against salvation by works. "But," they might say, "Christ's death is not a work of the law—it is something different." Yet they affirm that Christ came "to redeem us from the curse of the law."⁵³ Consequently, one is still driven back to seeing Christ's death in some way as law fulfillment, and thus in some way a "work" that (the breach of) the law requires. One

⁵²I realize that many passive-only proponents do strongly affirm the necessity of penal substitution, and I rejoice in that; yet I fear that they do not perceive the full fallout of this no-works argument.

⁵³Kirk, "Sufficiency II," 149; Snider, "Justification," 71.

might argue that only the penal sanctions of the law need to be met, but one should not argue that law requirements, considered absolutely, have no relation to salvation by grace through faith. The cross itself tells us otherwise. Salvation is by grace because God did not have to “work out” our salvation in Christ; he freely chose to. Salvation is by grace, not because it is unearned but because believers do not earn it. Salvation is by faith because instead of working believers lay hold of Christ and his work. Put differently, Christ stands as the perfect representative of believers due to his glorious obedience.

Belief in Active Obedience Leads to Antinomianism

This objection was alive and well in Owen’s time. Owen says that some argue that the imputation of Christ’s obedience is pernicious because it “takes away ‘the necessity of our own personal obedience, introducing antinomianism, libertinism, and all manner of evils.’”⁵⁴ While it is true that Roman Catholics frequently charged any type of Protestant doctrine of justification with antinomianism, Owen also observes that the charge of antinomianism comes especially against “this part of the doctrine of justification.”⁵⁵ Seifrid, though not as forthright, also appears to offer this objection to active obedience: “In reducing ‘justification’ to a present possession of ‘Christ’s imputed righteousness’, Protestant divines inadvertently bruised the nerve which runs between justification and obedience.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴Owen, *Justification*, 252.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 253.

⁵⁶Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness*, 175. Of course, I would not argue that justification is *merely* imputed righteousness. However, in the context Seifrid is discussing Christ’s active and passive obedience, and he refers to Protestant divines—so apparently he thinks that regardless of the intention, the traditional formulation does reduce justification.

But even the apostle Paul faced this objection. After outlining the righteousness Christ provides by his obedience, Paul anticipates an objection: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (6:1).⁵⁷ Paul’s answer is clear: “By no means!” (6:2). Union with Christ and a true understanding of justification actually provides the motivation and power to obey.⁵⁸ Believers should not sin since they have been buried and risen with Christ (Rom 6:1-14). They obey not of bondage or fear but from love and joy, for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). Especially in Romans, Paul’s appeal to sanctification hinges on his explanation of justification. In short, a true understanding of justification is “the chief principle of, and motive unto, all that obedience which is accepted with God through Jesus Christ.”⁵⁹

Conclusion

Although a number of major objections are brought against the active obedience of Christ, all can be overcome. However, there is one final point to be made. If the active obedience of Christ is a biblical doctrine, an objector might wish that Scripture was clearer on this matter. Of course, I believe that Scripture is clear on this matter, but it is true that there are many points where the biblical authors had opportunity to argue

⁵⁷Owen notes that Paul faced the same objection (*Justification*, 4).

⁵⁸See Clark, “Do This and Live,” 252-53.

⁵⁹Owen, *Justification*, 4.

more explicitly for active obedience and did not do so.⁶⁰ But in this matter as in many cases, God gives no account of his ways to men. He is the supremely wise and good God, and He alone knows what is best to record in his Word. As Protestants, we might acknowledge that there are a whole host of issues that we might wish were even more explicit from Scripture.⁶¹ God has made us in his image and given us minds to use and hearts guided by the Spirit—we should be willing to draw appropriate implications and conclusions from Scripture.

⁶⁰And once again, I grant that other doctrines in Scripture are more clear than the active obedience of Christ.

⁶¹Interestingly, the Bible does not explicitly say that our sins are imputed to Christ, yet the evangelicals who object to active obedience seem to have no problem affirming the imputation of sin. Or to cite another doctrine, consider the closure of the canon. Certainly it is extremely important to establish what constitutes the inerrant Word, yet God nowhere in his Word provides a list of canonical books, though he certainly could have done so. But this fact does not make the matter automatically unimportant by any means. God has given many clues that help believers recognize that which is truly canonical. Likewise, the Bible gives ample testimony to the doctrine of active obedience.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In this project, I have argued that the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ is in fact a biblical doctrine. After introducing the doctrine and setting out a history of it, I offered several lines of argument for the doctrine. In this final chapter I will summarize my findings. In addition, I will address some potential areas of further research, and I will deal with the relative importance of the doctrine.

Summaries

In the introduction, I used Wayne Grudem's definition of active obedience, while at the same time pointing to several sources that affirmed the same basic meaning. Although the terms "active" and "passive" can be somewhat confusing, both have been used fairly consistently in church history, and there was not sufficient warrant to depart from these terms. However, these terms do not refer to modes of action in Christ (He was not passive in his sufferings), nor do they refer to chronological periods of Christ's ministry (the cross was the climax of his active obedience). These terms are theological distinctions. Furthermore, affirming the active obedience of Christ is more than simply affirming that Christ lived a sinless life. In the active obedience view, Christ's whole sinless ministry of obedience was thoroughly vicarious. It is also important to bear in mind that the benefits of Christ's work should not be abstracted from union with Christ.

In the second chapter, I observed that the active obedience of Christ was

primarily a Reformation doctrine. The doctrine received its primary articulation and defense during the 200 years following the Reformation. In fact, the term itself was first coined during this time. However, I argued that it is possible to talk about the substance of the doctrine before the term “active obedience” was coined.

Two pre-Reformation theologians were taken into special consideration—Irenaeus and Anselm. Irenaeus might be said to be friendly to the doctrine. He does place a heavy emphasis on Christ’s obedience, and he does argue that Christ’s whole life was salvific. However, Irenaeus seems to emphasize the organic more than the legal. I did not argue that substitutionary or legal motifs were absent in Irenaeus. But what seems clearer is that Christ purified humanity generically and physically through his taking on human flesh.

On the other side, Anselm should be considered an opponent of active obedience. For Anselm, Christ’s humanity owed God the obedience that all humans owe God. Since Christ owed God this obedience for himself, this obedience to God’s law could not in any way count for sinners. However, since Christ was pure and spotless, he did not deserve to die. Consequently, it is this satisfaction in death that provides redemption.

Coming to the Reformation time period, I examined the Reformed tradition in particular, and to a lesser extent the Lutheran and Arminian traditions. Although neither Calvin nor the WCF explicitly affirm the active obedience of Christ (of course Calvin died before the phrase was coined), both espoused the substance of it. Other Reformed confessions (e.g. SD and LBCF) and theologians (e.g. Owen and Turretin) were found explicit in their affirmation.

In the Lutheran tradition, Luther, Melancthon, and (most importantly) the FC affirmed the substance of the doctrine. The Arminian tradition is much more diverse, although it appears that Arminius himself, along with a good number of his followers, affirmed the doctrine. (Those following the Wesleyan tradition appeared more likely to deny it.)

Evangelical Reformed and Lutheran theologians have in the main continued to affirm the doctrine up to the present. However, the doctrine appears to have been in decline in the last two hundred years, perhaps more from ignorance than from direct attack. I suggested several possible reasons for this decline: 1) the rise of liberalism; 2) exchanging confessions for creeds; 3) the growing number of untrained ministers; 4) the growth of the independent church movement; and 5) a church culture enamored with entertainment rather than doctrine. The rise of dispensationalism might well be another factor, although I pointed out that many dispensationalists have held to the active obedience of Christ.

Chapter 3 dealt with God's initial arrangement with Adam. The substance of a covenant of works position was affirmed on six grounds: 1) the need for a fully canonical reading; 2) the symbolism of the tree of life; 3) the Sabbath principle; 4) the consistent Scriptural promise of the reward of life upon law-keeping; 5) the parallel of angelic probation; and 6) the testimony of Christ as the second Adam. In addition, I affirmed Adamic headship, outlined some contours of Adam's role in the garden, and discussed objections to the covenant of works.

Chapter 4 handled humanity's obedience for eternal life after the Fall. I examined the "do this and live" passages in particular. A consideration of these passages

was important since so many theologians who espouse the active obedience of Christ appeal to them. In addition, these passages are important in their own right as witnesses to the law's purpose and function. The old covenant offered temporal life in the land for a general obedience; however, even in the OT there are signs that eternal life was conditioned on perfect obedience. In the NT Jesus and Paul draw out this ultimate purpose of the "do this and live" formulas. They do not presuppose that humans can actually achieve perfect obedience in a fallen world; rather their purpose in highlighting the need for perfect obedience is to help sinner's see their inability and turn to God's gracious provision in Christ.

In chapter 5 I unpacked a biblical theology of Messiah's obedience for eternal life in the OT. I followed the Bible's own storyline by tracing through the covenants. In particular I highlighted the theme of Messiah as the obedient son, but in addition, I pointed out that Messiah was to be a righteous king, a faithful servant, a covenant keeper, and a wise man. All of these themes have a prominent thrust of positive obedience. Furthermore, these themes do not merely identify the Messiah—Messiah's roles are representative.

Chapter 6 showed how Jesus fulfilled these roles in the NT, preeminently the role of obedient son. The Gospels throughout presented a picture of Jesus as the representative obedient son. I showed how Paul linked righteousness and justification with Jesus' full obedience, looking especially at the book of Romans and important passages like Romans 5:19. Some of the passages in the NT quickly and casually claimed to support the doctrine of active obedience do not actually directly support the doctrine; however, at the end of the day the weight of exegesis in other passages is compelling.

Granted that there are compelling biblical reasons to hold the doctrine of active obedience, I turned in chapter 7 to some of the major objections, grouping them under six heads: 1) “active” and “passive” lead to an unbiblical dichotomy; 2) the doctrine poses a legal fiction; 3) Jesus’ death is the sole ground of justification; 4) imputed righteousness and forgiveness of sins are synonymous; 5) works can never contribute to salvation; and 6) the doctrine of active obedience leads to antinomianism. All six major objections can be answered, leading to the conclusion that the active obedience of Christ stands as a biblical doctrine.

Avenues for Further Research

Of the making of books there is no end. Humanity will always find things to write about, and theologians will do their part. The Bible is a rich and fascinating book, and its influence in humanity’s history is difficult to calculate. Those with religious convictions about the nature of Scripture as God’s Word have an even greater personal interest in the Bible’s teaching. (In addition, Ph.D. students have to keep coming up with fresh dissertation ideas.)

The topic of the active obedience of Christ should provide fertile soil for the students of the Bible for years to come. Due in part to the lack of material specifically on the subject of active obedience, I took a broader approach, bringing together a great (if diverse) amount of relative material. In taking this approach, unfortunately there was not always space to exhaust every line of thought. However, I hope that my work can provide a touchstone for further exploration.

A history of the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ needs a full-length book of its own. Perhaps the two major standard histories of justification, Ritschl and

McGrath, treat the subject, but not in much detail. The histories of Christ's atoning work similarly deal with the subject, but often only in a cursory way. Much discussion of late concerns the history of penal substitution, particularly in regard to the early church. Similar questions need to be raised and addressed in more detail concerning active obedience. More could be written on how other pre-Reformation theologians relate to the subject. For example, how does Aquinas' view of merit, and the later medieval view of merit, relate to Christ's meritorious obedience?

A dissertation could be written simply on Calvin's view as it relates to the later Reformed articulation. The Lutheran and Arminian tradition histories also need more work in this area. One subject of particular debate remains dispensationalism's relationship to the topic of active obedience. I have argue that dispensationalism is not inherently opposed to active obedience; however, the rise of dispensationalism and the decline of active obedience is likely not a mere coincidence. What is the future of dispensationalism and active obedience? Will dispensational seminaries and teachers espouse the doctrine, ignore the doctrine, or attack the doctrine? Only time and publications will tell.

Covenant theology provides a framework that essentially requires the doctrine of active obedience. But the covenant of works is under attack even in Reformed circles, and it needs further defense. This does relate to the doctrine of active obedience, since a defense of the covenant of works provides a defense for active obedience. In particular, a detailed study of the tree of life would serve biblical scholars and systematic theologians alike.

Sprinkle's *Law and Life* provides an excellent "do this and live" survey.

However, Sprinkle deals in large part with Second Temple Judaism's understanding of the concept—his examination of the OT is briefer. The relationship between the OT and the NT in this area needs to be teased out further. I have argued for a typological relationship, with the result that Jesus and Paul need not be seen as misinterpreting (or even reinterpreting) Leviticus 18:5. But much more work could be done, particularly as it relates to the theological implications for general obedience and perfect obedience positions. (*The Law Is Not Of Faith* is a good start.)

“Proof-texting” is too reductionistic a label for theologians' traditional support for active obedience. However, as I have had occasion to point out, the biblical theological support for active obedience has been sparsely developed. Much, much more work could be done in the OT to contribute to the loci of Christology and soteriology. While the theme of Messiah's positive obedience is perhaps even more pervasive than the theme of his penal suffering, normally the sacrificial system and passages like Isaiah 53 are the chief OT texts used to undergird the atoning work of Christ. His penal suffering is surely extremely important, but a lop-sided emphasis is not warranted from the OT.

In the NT, systematic theologians discussing the work of Christ typically rush past the Gospels to Paul (besides the occasional reference to Matthew 3:15 or Mark 10:45). Such an emphasis is understandable: it is helpful to build a case on the clearest texts, and to interpret other passages in light of those clear texts. However, in making such a jump a significant biblical-theological fulfillment is missed—the Gospels do set forth Christ as the fulfillment of the OT messianic promises, and these thematic appeals contribute to atonement theology as well. Biblical commentators and scholars are quick to show the literary connections, but systematic theologians should take liberty to draw

out theological conclusions from the Gospel accounts.

Furthermore, although there have been numerous studies on “justification” and “righteousness,” more work needs to be done. How sufficient is the language of “status”? How helpful is the categorization of “ethical” righteousness language and “imputed” righteousness language? Is the righteousness that is credited to believers strictly and theologically equivalent to the active obedience of Christ, or is penal suffering included? In other words, although penal substitution is necessary for salvation, is it a ground of imputed righteousness, a result of imputed righteousness, a part of imputed righteousness, or some combination of those options? Other avenues for further research could be mentioned, but suffice it to say that much work remains to be done.

Importance of the doctrine

On a simple level, everything that God has revealed is profitable. Therefore, when the Scriptures speak of Christ’s obedience, of righteousness, and of believers’ justification, it is important to understand these ideas as much as possible. However, God places a special premium on the gospel. If the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ is true, then it is a part of the gospel message. As such, it deserves special prominence.

While Christians should proclaim every teaching of Scripture with confidence, it nevertheless remains that some doctrines are more important than others, and some should be proclaimed louder and more frequently than others. Doctrinal triage is a helpful way of thinking. With that much said, where does the doctrine of active obedience fall in this triage?

On the one hand, it cannot be placed in the lowest tier. It is, once again, a part of the fullness of the good news for sinners. Yet on the other hand, it is difficult to claim

that an abandonment of active obedience is an abandonment of the gospel. Many who deny the active obedience of Christ would agree that all people are sinners who can only be saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone—it is all of grace and not of works. Furthermore, they might agree that God is a holy and just God who must punish sin, and that Jesus, God’s divine Son, suffered in the place of sinners to pay the penalty for sin and provide redemption. Yet they are still convinced that Jesus’ life of positive obedience to God was not also a substitute for sinners. What should be said to such people?

Perhaps one answer is to say that while they have the gospel, they do not have the gospel in its fullness. They have the light of truth, but it could be brighter. Christians can differ over significant truths and still consider each other Christians. For example, paedobaptists and credobaptists both agree that they have a serious disagreement over the proper subjects of baptism. Both agree that this disagreement has important ramifications for a host of other doctrinal and practical concerns. The nature of the church is at stake. And yet, paedobaptists and credobaptists can agree that each does have the ordinance of baptism. They might accuse one another of distorting it, but one group should not say the other group has lost it altogether.

In the realm of soteriology, consider Calvinism and Arminianism. The disagreement here is perhaps even sharper than it is with paedobaptists and credobaptists. The differences between Calvinists and Arminians touch on the nature of God, the sinful condition of humanity, God’s grace, and the saving work of Christ. While both groups would say that the errors of the other group could lead to even more serious errors, neither group should say that the other group is completely without the gospel.

Of course, this does not answer every question, but I do not wish to be the final

arbiter in this matter. Seminaries will have to decide whether or not their professors must hold to the active obedience of Christ. More importantly, denominations and churches will have to decide if their leaders need to believe in this doctrine. Some churches might decide that this doctrine is necessary for their leaders to hold but not necessary for every member to hold. But this decision is ultimately for churches to make.

These decisions should be made with much prayer and searching of the Scriptures. I hope that I have written in this way. My conclusion is that we should be careful not to say that a denial of active obedience is exactly the same as a denial of the gospel. It does not overthrow all the love of God and grace of Christ, as Owen uttered in a moment of characteristic (and often stirring) zeal. The views of Gataker and Vines did not win the day at Westminster, but there is no record that they were branded arch heretics and kicked out of the Assembly. However, Jonathan Edwards' assertion is much to the mark: those who deny the active obedience of Jesus Christ rob him of a significant part of his glory as Savior. And above all else, we must always uphold his glory. As for me, I have come away from this study even more profoundly thankful for the fullness of God's provision in Christ.

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ABSTRACT

THE ACTIVE OBEDIENCE OF JESUS CHRIST

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This dissertation examines the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ.

Chapter 1 defines the doctrine, surveys previous literature, offers warrant for the work, and previews the argument of the work. In short, the thesis of this work is that the active obedience of Christ is a biblical doctrine.

Chapter 2 presents a historical survey, tracing theologians from the early church up to the present time to see the development of the doctrine. Special attention is given to the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras, during which the doctrine received its primary development.

Chapter 3 examines God's original arrangement with Adam. This chapter argues that God established a covenant with Adam, and that had Adam obeyed instead of disobeying, all mankind would have been confirmed in eternal life.

Chapter 4 examines human obedience after the Fall. Looking especially at the "do this and live" passages, this chapter argues that God requires perfect obedience from humans in order to gain eternal life.

Chapter 5 traces the OT's presentation of the need for a Messiah to come who would represent his people in perfect obedience. This chapter moves through the OT

covenants, the wisdom literature, and the prophets.

Chapter 6 demonstrates the fulfillment of this movement of thought in the person of Christ. Beginning with the Gospels and moving on to the rest of the NT, this chapter shows that Christ represented his people in perfect obedience throughout the whole course of his earthly mediation.

Chapter 7 first offers a systematic formulation of the doctrine. This chapter then answers some of the major objections put to the doctrine of Christ's active obedience, examining the views of opponents both ancient and contemporary.

Chapter 8 summarizes the work. This chapter restates the conclusions of the other chapters, and it also suggests some possible avenues for further research. Finally, this chapter addresses the question of the relative importance of the doctrine.

VITA

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