

“Brandon Crowe has already made significant contributions to our understanding of the person and ministry of Christ. Now he places us further in his debt with *The Lord Jesus Christ*—an outstanding exposition that is as readable as it is comprehensive. Dr. Crowe brings to his task the skills of a fine biblical scholar who is also sensitive to the history of doctrine. In addition he writes with a clear sense of the importance and value of systematic theology in its explorations of the deep logic of the biblical testimony to Christ. All this is combined with deeply thoughtful application for today. While wide reading and careful scholarship underlie every page of *The Lord Jesus Christ*, it is written in a style that is accessible to anyone willing to join Professor Crowe in his journey through Scripture and theology. It will be instructive to students and hugely stimulating to preachers and teachers, and it should delight any thoughtful reader. Indeed, it belongs to the special category of literature famously described by Francis Bacon: ‘Some books are to be ... chewed and digested.’ These pages simply increase our admiration for Dr. Crowe’s gifts and our debt of gratitude for the particular gift he offers us in this study. *The Lord Jesus Christ* is to be treasured—and so is this wonderful book about him.”

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Chancellor’s Chair of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary

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“While Brandon Crowe writes as a professor of theology on the glorious locus of Christology, one also detects—praise God!—a pastoral element at work in this book. In *The Lord Jesus Christ: The Biblical Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ*, Crowe brings together a range of skills to produce a book that highlights some of the best elements in a good systematic work—namely, both an accurate history of key questions and a biblical-theological emphasis that brings a richness to the work. I could see this work as a helpful tool for students of theology, but it may indeed have a wider use for those serious about learning more about the Lord Jesus Christ.”

**MARK JONES**

pastor, Faith Vancouver Presbyterian Church

“Here is a solid, readable, faithful Reformed Christology. Comprised of three sections—biblical, historical/dogmatic, and practical—the book provides a clear introduction to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Crowe’s joy in ‘the abiding grace of Jesus Christ’ is manifest on every page.”

**MATTHEW LEVERING**

James N. Jr. and Mary D. Perry Chair of Theology, Mundelein Seminary

“As the author asks, ‘Can we ever have too much of Christ? Can we ever think of him too often?’ Focusing broadly on the biblical witness to Christ, the dogmatic development of Christology, and the application of both to the life and ministry of the church, Crowe’s work is clear, profound, and far reaching. His work refreshingly displays both precision about Christ and warmth of devotion to him, as the author makes a solid case for Jesus’ person and work in ways that give readers a valuable compendium of a multi-faceted Christology. The precise intertwining of exegesis, systematic theology, and devotion makes this one of the best recent books on Christology that I have read. It is solid, thorough, and readable.”

**RYAN M. MCGRAW**

Morton H. Smith Professor of Systematic Theology,  
Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

“Brandon Crowe has produced a substantial systematic statement of Christology for our day, uniting exegetical rigor, historical sensitivity, and theological profundity as well as igniting proclamation and mission by giving the church plenty of fuel for our highest end: knowing Jesus Christ.”

**HARRISON PERKINS**

pastor, Oakland Hills Community Church (OPC)

“Brandon Crowe’s *The Lord Jesus Christ* is an exciting development. Not only is it the first published volume in a very promising new theological series, it is an accessible yet comprehensive Christology that covers both the person and work of Jesus Christ. Crowe’s approach is in the tradition of Bavinck and the best of the Reformed theological tradition that seeks to give careful attention to the whole deposit of revelation in Scripture in its natural unfolding while also synthesizing theological reflection. One of this volume’s many strengths is the exegetical skill Crowe brings to christological texts, which, in turn, provides freshness to his theological insight and contemporary application. This Christology is a confessionally Reformed one and rightly catholic in its scope through Crowe’s firm grasp on the history of christological reflection from the early church to the present. Whether you are a theological student or simply desiring to go deeper in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, I highly commend this book to you!”

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# THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE  
PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST





## **WE BELIEVE**

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# THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE  
PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

WE BELIEVE: STUDIES IN REFORMED BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

VOLUME 3

JOHN MCCLEAN AND MURRAY J. SMITH, SERIES EDITORS

BRANDON D. CROWE



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ACADEMIC



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Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἔχθές καὶ σήμερον ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

Hebrews 13:8

*The revelation made of Christ in the blessed Gospel is far more excellent, more glorious, and more filled with rays of divine wisdom and goodness, than the whole creation and the just comprehension of it, if attainable, can contain or afford.*

*... This, therefore, deserves the severest of our thoughts, the best of our meditations, and our utmost diligence in them. For if our future blessedness shall consist in being where he is, and beholding of his glory, what better preparation can there be for it than in a constant previous contemplation of that glory in the revelation that is made in the Gospel, unto this very end, that by a view of it we may be gradually transformed into the same glory?*

John Owen, Works

*For Cheryl*

קמו בְּנֵי וַיִּשְׂרֹיָהּ בְּעֵלְהָ וַיְהִלְלָהּ

Proverbs 31:28

τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν  
ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

Ephesians 5:32

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# SERIES INTRODUCTION

*Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path.*  
Psalm 119:105

*The unfolding of your words gives light;  
it imparts understanding to the simple.*  
Psalm 119:130

## AN INVITATION TO CONFESSIONAL THEOLOGY

*We Believe* is a series of eight studies of the primary doctrines of the Christian faith as confessed in the Nicene Creed and received in the Reformed tradition. The series marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) by re-affirming and advancing the Church's confession.<sup>1</sup> The title of our series is drawn from the first words of the Creed—the single Greek verb Πιστεύομεν—which introduces what has become the classic confession of the Christian Faith. Since the Church's confession neither began at Nicaea, nor ended with its creed, *We Believe* examines the biblical foundations of the Church's faith, traces its development (especially in the Reformed tradition), and applies its truths to the worship, life, and mission of the Church today. Since true theology begins in prayer and worship of the God who has revealed himself, each volume opens with a theme prayer, shaped by Scripture and the Church's confession. Further,

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1. For the history of the Nicene Creed, which received its final form at the Council of Constantinople (ad 381), see D. Fairbairn and R. M. Reeves, *The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 48–79.

since even the deepest truths of the faith need to be simply expounded so they can be clearly grasped and faithfully lived, each volume closes with a series of theses, which summarize the doctrine covered in the book. *We Believe* provides a comprehensive and integrated biblical, theological, and missional treatment of the major doctrines of the Christian faith.

## BIBLICAL REVELATION

The Church's confession is rooted in and ruled by God's revelation in Scripture. The Scriptures are "the Word of God written" and "the rule of faith and life" (Westminster Confession of Faith 1:2). The first part of each study, therefore, is devoted to a fresh examination of biblical revelation.

Fundamentally, our studies are tethered to the text of Scripture, and each volume in the series includes expositions of the primary biblical texts which form the doctrine under consideration.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, since Scripture is the only "infallible rule" for its own interpretation (Westminster Confession of Faith 1:9), our studies seek to interpret Scripture by Scripture, initially by embracing the discipline of Biblical Theology.<sup>3</sup> We begin—where God's people have always begun—with the recognition that Scripture is God's inspired and authoritative Word. We proceed by tracing God's progressive revelation of himself and his purposes in the organically unfolding canon of Scripture, taking full account of its varied forms, while especially recognizing its fundamental, Christ-centered unity. This procedure is one we learn from Scripture itself. The Bible regularly claims that its revelation forms a single coherent narrative climaxing in the gospel of Christ, even as it also indicates that this narrative has many dimensions, and is revealed in a diversity of literary forms.<sup>4</sup> Faithful Christian readings of Scripture—from Irenaeus and Augustine to Calvin and Kuyper—have,

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2. For convenience of reference, these biblical expositions are highlighted in text boxes. Several key biblical texts are important for more than one doctrine, but to avoid repetition, these are only treated once in the series.

3. We understand this discipline along the lines sketched by Geerhardus Vos in his 1894 Inaugural Lecture at Princeton Theological Seminary. G. Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. R. B. Gaffin (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1980), 3–24; *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 3–18.

4. See, for example: Deut 26:5–11; Josh 24; 1 Sam 12:6–18; Pss 78; 105–6; 136; Neh 9:7–37; Acts 7; 13:13–43; Heb 11.

therefore, always recognized a fundamental unity within the rich diversity of Scripture—a unity which is conceptual (in that the Scriptures speak of the same God relating in consistent ways to the same created world), and narrational (in that the Scriptures narrate a single redemptive-history).<sup>5</sup>

In the first part of each study, then, we look for the organic unfolding of God’s revelation from its seed form in the Garden of Eden (Gen 1-2) to its full flowering in the Garden-City of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22). As Augustine said, “in the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed.”<sup>6</sup> So we read Genesis in the light of the Gospels, Exodus in the light of the Epistles, and Ruth in the light of Revelation. We follow the rich network of citations and allusions—the “inner biblical exegesis”—by which Scripture interprets Scripture.<sup>7</sup> We outline the primary biblical themes relevant to each doctrine—God’s kingdom and covenant, God’s creation and blessing, God’s Son and people, God’s Spirit and temple—together with their many related sub-themes, as they inform and shape the Church’s confession. We use Scripture’s own words and categories to trace the drama of redemption from creation to new creation centered on Christ.

Following this approach, we recognize that the Bible fundamentally structures its own unfolding narrative, and organizes all its major themes, around God’s two primary covenants with Adam and Christ (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:22). Reformed theology came to characterize these as the “covenant of works” and the “covenant of grace,” confessing that, from start to finish, God has related to his people and his world by way of covenant (Westminster Confession of Faith 7:1-6).<sup>8</sup> Scripture thus presents each of the major post-fall biblical covenants—God’s covenants with Abraham,

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5. See C. H. H. Scobie, “History of Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 11-20.

6. Augustine, *Quaest. in Hept. 2: 73: Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet.*

7. The phrase “inner biblical exegesis” was coined by M. A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). See further: G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); G. E. Schnittjer, *Old Testament use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021).

8. See esp. G. P. Waters, J. N. Reid, and J. R. Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020); H. Perkins, *Reformed Covenant Theology: A Systematic Introduction* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, forthcoming).

Israel, David, and the new covenant—as successive administrations of the single covenant of grace: the covenant which was first promised in the garden (Gen 3:15), climactically sealed by the blood of Christ (Matt 26:28 and Mark 14:24 with Exod 24:8), and which ultimately will be fulfilled in the new creation when the triune God comes to dwell with his people at last (Rev 21:3).<sup>9</sup>

Above all—and consistent with the covenant theology we have just sketched—we take Jesus’s own word as our guide, and look for him, the Lord Jesus Christ, “in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27). Following Jesus and his apostles, we recognize that God “promised...the gospel...beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (Rom 1:3–4; cf. Luke 24:44–49; Gal 3:8; 1 Cor 15:3–5; 1 Pet 1:12). Christ himself—his person, his work, and his kingdom—is the climax and goal of the triune God’s gracious plan to redeem his people and his world. Indeed, Christ is the very “substance” of biblical revelation (Col 2:17; cf. John 5:39; Rom 10:4; 1 Cor 10:4; 2 Cor 1:20; 2 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 1:10–12). The grace of God in Christ was not merely foreshadowed and prophesied in the Old Testament; it was mediated in advance to the saints of old, by the Spirit, through the “promises, prophecies, sacrifices...and other types” given to God’s people in that period (Westminster Confession of Faith 7:5–6). We therefore affirm that the Old Testament is *both* Christo-telic (in that it points forward to Christ as its goal), *and* Christo-centric (in that its types and promises really mediated God’s grace in Christ, through the Spirit).<sup>10</sup> Thus, with John Calvin, we are right to “seek in the whole of Scripture...truly to know Jesus Christ, and the infinite riches that are comprised in him and are offered to us by him from God the Father.”<sup>11</sup>

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9. For the central covenant promise—“I will be your God and you will be my people” (or variations), see: Gen 17:7–8; 28:15; 31:3, 5, 42; 39:2–6, 21–23; Exod 6:7; 29:45–46; Lev 11:45; 25:38; 26:11–12; Deut 23:15; 26:17–18; 29:12–13; 2 Sam 7:23–24; 1 Chron 17:22; Ps 95:7; Jer 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek 14:11; 34:24, 30–31; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech 2:11; 8:8; 13:9; Hos 1:8–2:23; Matt 1:23; 18:20; 28:20; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:3.

10. See: P. A. Lillback, ed. *Seeing Christ in All of Scripture: Hermeneutics at Westminster Theological Seminary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Seminary Press, 2016); L. G. Tipton, “Christocentrism and Christotelism: The Spirit, Redemptive History, and the Gospel,” in *Redeeming the Life of the Mind: Essays in Honor of Vern Poythress*, ed. J. M. Frame, W. A. Grudem, and J. J. Hughes (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 129–45.

11. From Calvin’s preface to Pierre Olivétan’s French translation of the New Testament (1534) in *Calvin: Commentaries*, J. Haroutunian and L. P. Smith, trans. and eds. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 70.

In thus seeking Christ in all the Scriptures, we find that later revelation in Scripture interprets earlier revelation in ways that are consistent with its original meaning; the later revelation shows the “true and full sense” (*sensus plenior*) in light of the fulfillment in Christ (Westminster Confession of Faith 1:9). The New Testament offers no radical reinterpretation, much less correction, of the Old, but unfolds the full meaning of God’s inspired Word. As B.B. Warfield put it, the Old Testament is like a room “richly furnished but dimly lighted,” such that “the introduction of light [from the New Testament] brings into it nothing which was not in it before,” but “brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before.”<sup>12</sup> As we read the Scriptures as the unfolding narrative of God’s redemptive purpose, we learn to see, again and again, that Christ is the center and substance of the Scriptures, and so the center and substance of the Church’s faith.

## DOGMATIC DEVELOPMENT

The Church confesses not only what is “expressly set down in Scripture” but what “by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture” (Westminster Confession of Faith 1:6). The second part of each study in the *We Believe* series, therefore, is devoted to an account of the dogmatic development of the doctrine under consideration. Far from being opposed to each other, Biblical Theology and Systematic and Confessional Dogmatics actually need each other; there is a necessarily reciprocal relationship between the two.<sup>13</sup> While both disciplines deal with God’s special revelation in Scripture, they analyze it according to different principles.

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12. B. B. Warfield, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Biblical Doctrines: The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), 141–42.

13. For reflection on the relationship between the two disciplines in the Reformed tradition, see esp. Vos, “Idea,” 3–24; J. Murray, “Systematic Theology,” in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 4. *Studies in Theology: Reviews*, ed. I. Murray (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1983), 1–21; R. B. Gaffin, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” *WTJ* 38 (1975–76): 281–99. For review of these contributions and a constructive proposal, see M. Allen, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology—Part One,” *JRT* 14 (2020): 52–72; “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology—Part Two,” *JRT* 14 (2020): 344–57. Note also: J. McClean, “Of Covenant and Creation: A Conversation between Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” in *An Everlasting Covenant: Biblical and Theological Essays in Honour of William J. Dumbrell*, ed. J. A. Davies and A. M. Harman, RTR Supplement Series 4 (Doncaster: Reformed Theological Review, 2010), 187–227.

The primary organizing principle for Biblical Theology is history—the organic unfolding of God’s work of redemption and his interpretation of the same in his inspired Word. The primary organizing principle of Dogmatics is logic—the rational organization of God’s revealed truth. As Geerhardus Vos observes, while Biblical Theology constructs a historical “line,” Christian Dogmatics constructs a logical “circle.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, while Christian Dogmatics, including the Church’s creeds and confessions, generally follow the redemptive-historical shape of biblical revelation, they self-consciously set that redemptive history within the reality of the triune God and his relations to his world as these are revealed in all of Scripture.<sup>15</sup> In the same way, while Christian Dogmatics fundamentally expresses itself using biblical language, it also employs extra-biblical language to summarize and synthesize biblical teaching, especially where Scripture uses a variety of expressions for the same reality, or where this is necessary to refute error.<sup>16</sup> Since “the Word of God is living and active” (Heb 4:12), the God-given language of Scripture remains primary. Faithful Dogmatics rightly recognizes what John Webster calls the “rhetorical sufficiency” of Scripture.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, since “the Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek” were “immediately inspired by God,” the final court of appeal for all Christian Dogmatics is the words of Scripture in the original languages (Westminster Confession of Faith 1:8). Yet still, the same theological judgment can be expressed in a range of different conceptual and linguistic forms, and the faithful presentation and propagation of biblical truth sometimes requires extra-biblical expression.<sup>18</sup>

There is, moreover, a real history of doctrinal development to be traced through the ages of church history. As the very Word of the living God, the Scriptures possess an inexhaustible depth. As the Church reads and re-reads God’s Word in an ever-changing world, we find that there is always more to confess regarding God and his ways in the world, and always more

14. See Vos, “Idea,” 23; cf. Murray, “Systematic Theology,” 9.

15. Cf. Allen, “Systematic Theology—Part Two,” 355–56.

16. Cf. “Systematic Theology—Part Two,” 355.

17. J. Webster, “Biblical Reasoning,” in *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 131.

18. See D. S. Yeago, “The New Testament and Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *ProEccl* 3 (1994): 87–100. Compare B.B. Warfield’s comments to this effect on the doctrine of the Trinity (Warfield, “Trinity,” 133).



to celebrate in the depths of his “being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth” (Westminster Shorter Catechism 4). Herman Bavinck states it well:

Scripture is not designed so that we should parrot it but that as free children of God we should think his thoughts after him...so much study and reflection on the subject is bound up with it that no person can do it alone. That takes centuries. To that end the church has been appointed and given the promise of the Spirit’s guidance into all truth.<sup>19</sup>

As each generation has read the Scriptures, confessed the faith, proclaimed the gospel, instructed children, disciplined converts, and refuted errors, the Church—under the oversight of its living Lord, and by the enabling of his Holy Spirit—has deepened in its grasp of biblical truth.<sup>20</sup> The Church has learned again and again that “the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word.”<sup>21</sup> The foundational doctrines of God and Christ were fundamentally established in the Church’s early centuries, and codified in the ecumenical creeds, such that they received only incremental refinements thereafter. Other doctrines, however, no less crucial to the life of the Church—for example, the doctrines of Scripture and authority—received considerable development in the medieval, Reformation, and modern periods.

Doctrinal development, however—at least where it can be considered faithful—never moves beyond Scripture; it only ever penetrates more deeply into its truth. Faithful Dogmatics is thus not the imposition of a foreign grid onto Scripture, but a complementary means of interpreting Scripture by Scripture. In doing so, we make use of sanctified human reason. For while the Fall has corrupted the human mind (Rom 1:21–23; Eph 4:17–18), that same mind is renewed in Christ and by the Spirit (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:10–13; Eph 4:23), and as such can play the role of servant in the task of theology. Thus Francis Turretin helpfully distinguishes between revelation as the “foundation of faith” and reason as the “instrument of

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19. H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Vol. 1—Prolegomena* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 83.

20. The role of the Spirit in doctrinal development is helpfully emphasized by Murray, “Systematic Theology,” 1–21, esp. 6.

21. G. Rawson, “We Limit Not the Truth of God” in *Leeds Hymn Book*, 1853, no. 409.

faith,” which can serve to “illustrate” and “collate” biblical passages or arguments, to draw out “inferences,” and to help assess whether various positions agree or disagree with what has been revealed.<sup>22</sup>

The Church has been at this task for nearly two-thousand years, and there is a great deal to be learned from the wisdom of the ages. For this reason, each volume in the *We Believe* series provides a survey of the historical development of the doctrine under consideration. In charting this development, we give the Church’s creeds and confessions pride of place. For while Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Turretin, and Bavinck—among a host of others—have provided significant insight into biblical truth, the Church’s creeds and confessions reflect the official teaching of the Church as Church or—perhaps better—the common teaching of the Church’s elders, that is, the teaching of those appointed by the Spirit, and charged with guarding and promoting the apostolic gospel and, indeed, “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 15:1-35; 16:4; 20:27-28; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:17-18; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:9).<sup>23</sup>

The Church’s teaching is always subordinate to Scripture. Scripture is the magisterial authority, the “rule that rules” (*norma normans*); the Church’s teaching is a ministerial authority, “the rule that is ruled” (*norma normata*). In the order of authority, “the Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture” (Westminster Confession of Faith 1:10). At the same time, in the order of knowing, there is wisdom in beginning with the Church’s confession. We rightly take the Church’s teaching as our guide in reading, interpreting, and applying Scripture. We learn the truth from our elders as they teach us the truth from God’s Word. This yields an iterative process: the Scriptures form our confession; our Scripturally-formed confession provides the lens through which we read

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22. F. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. G. M. Giger, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1992-97), §1.8.3, 6-7; 1.12.15.

23. See M. S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 211-18.

the Scriptures, and; our further reading of the Scriptures further refines our confession.<sup>24</sup>

*We Believe* stands unashamedly in the Reformed confessional tradition, and seeks to defend and advance it. There are, of course, significant differences between the various Christian confessions. While the whole Church receives the doctrine of the ecumenical creeds (the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds, together with the definition of Chalcedon), the later confessions present divergent views on a host of significant matters. It is our conviction that the Reformed confessions, especially the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards, present the best—that is, the most fully biblical—account of Christian truth. That very tradition, however, has always aimed to contend for “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) and has thus championed a kind of Reformed Catholicity.<sup>25</sup> Our approach in the *We Believe* series is therefore eirenic, and ecumenical. We write *from* the perspective of the Reformed tradition, but *for* the Church catholic.

Moreover, while the Reformed confessions of the sixteenth century are a high point in the development of the Church's doctrine, they are not the end point. The body of Christ will not “attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13), until Christ fully unites us to himself by his Spirit, when he raises his people from the dead, and perfects us by his glorious presence (1 Cor 15:42–49; Phil 3:20–21). The bride of Christ will not be fully purified, “without spot or wrinkle,” until the Lord returns and presents us to himself “in splendour” (Eph 5:27; Rev 21:2, 9). The city of God will not be complete until God himself comes to dwell among us in all his fullness and illumine us with his light (Rev 21:3, 22–23). A Reformed commitment to the creeds and confessions is, therefore, not an end point, but a stimulus to further biblical exposition and dogmatic clarification.<sup>26</sup> As a work in Christian Dogmatics, *We Believe* does

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24. S. Swain, “A Ruled Reading Reformed: The Role of the Church's Confession in Biblical Interpretation,” *IJST* 14 (2012): 177–93.

25. Horton, *Christian Faith*, 30–32. Cf. M. Allen and S. R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015); *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

26. See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* 1, 31.

not merely aim to retrieve or to reprimatinate the Reformed tradition, but to constructively develop it, always under the authority of God's Word. If this series makes a modest contribution to the Church's pilgrimage to maturity in Christ, it will have achieved its goal.

## TRUTH FOR WORSHIP, LIFE, AND MISSION

The Church's maturity in Christ involves far more than doctrinal faithfulness and clarity. The drama of redemption, which forms the Church's doctrine, aims ultimately at discipleship and doxology.<sup>27</sup> The third part of each study in the *We Believe* series, therefore, briefly considers the ways in which the doctrine under consideration shapes the Church's worship, life, and mission. While the discussion here is necessarily indicative rather than exhaustive, we aim to demonstrate how biblical doctrine creates a moral vision for all of life. This includes, at the broadest level, observing the way in which the particular doctrine provides the basis for biblical principles for Christian worship, life, and mission, whether these are given explicitly in the biblical text (e.g. Matt 7:12 the "golden rule"), or summarized from biblical revelation as a whole (e.g. "the sanctity of life").<sup>28</sup> It includes, more sharply, consideration of the way in which Christian doctrine grounds the moral law, summarized in the Ten Commandments, and further summarized in the two great commandments of love for God and neighbor (Westminster Confession of Faith 19.2, 5; see esp. Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21; Matt 22:37-40; Rom 13:8; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). It also includes, further, consideration of the wealth of biblical examples which illustrate—both positively and negatively—the wisdom of life according to God's law. Crucially, since Reformed theology has always emphasized the necessity of the work of the Spirit in enabling faith and renewing those who were lost in sin by uniting them to Christ, this section also considers the way in which each doctrine highlights the gracious work of God in enabling his people "to live and work for his praise and glory" (*A Prayer Book for Australia*).

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27. For this alliterative summary—"drama, doctrine, doxology, and discipleship"—see Horton, *Christian Faith*, 13-27.

28. See J. Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (London: Tyndale Press, 1957), 78-140.

Each of the authors for the series subscribes to one or more of the major Reformed confessions, and shares the general approach to Scripture and theology we have just outlined. At the same time, each author has approached the task in their own way, and—within the rich agreement just sketched—there are differences between us at the level of detail. We have deliberately assembled a company of authors who are experts in either Biblical Theology or Dogmatics on the conviction that in the Reformed tradition scholars must have a facility in both, even while maintaining their own expertise. The books aim to show the necessary integrity of Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology, to introduce students to biblical-confessional theology, and to help enrich and expand Reformed theology, while serving as a resource and reference for pastors, elders, and thoughtful Christians. We're thankful to Lexham Press, and especially our expert editor Dr Todd Hains, for their partnership in this venture. Our hope and prayer is that these eight *Studies in Reformed Biblical Doctrine* might serve to ground the Church more firmly in the truth of God's Word, that together we might "glorify God and enjoy him forever" (Westminster Shorter Catechism 1).

Almighty God, you are enthroned on the praises of Israel,  
and all nations will worship and glorify your name.  
Grant us counsel, instruct us, and reveal yourself to us,  
that we would enjoy and glorify you in heart, soul,  
and mind in this life and forever.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit, one God,  
now and forever.  
Amen.

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# PREFACE

WRITING ON THE PERSON AND work of Christ is a daunting task. Who is sufficient for these things? I am not. And yet Christology stands at the heart of Christianity. As a professor called to teach at a Christian seminary and as an ordained minister of the gospel, I have been tasked with expounding the ineffable. Though the issues are mysterious, we can also take solace that Christ comes to us and meets us where we are, preeminently in the incarnation. Though I am acutely aware of my own inadequacies when explaining the wondrous glories of Christ, it is perhaps a greater danger to stay silent when the world is in such great need of faithful, biblical teaching on our only Savior.

The need is also great in the church. Can we ever have too much of Christ? Can we ever think of him too often? Christ is worthy of our most assiduous attention and most careful articulations.

The stakes are high; many have gone astray by failing to grasp Christology rightly.

I have therefore undertaken this project with both hesitation and alacrity. Combining the person and work of Christ into one volume is a challenge (many books focus on either the person or the work of Christ), but also reflects the proper biblical connection between the Savior and salvation, which must always be held together. It is not my aim to say anything substantially new about Christ and his work. I affirm the great creeds of the church, and my own ordination is based on the Westminster Standards as a faithful representation of the teaching of Scripture. Readers should expect to find in what follows a discussion of Christology that gleans heavily from the Reformed tradition, though as Robert Letham has noted, the

Reformed tradition in its best forms is consistently catholic<sup>1</sup>—an approach I hope to model as well. The Reformed creeds include extensive, faithful teaching on the person and work of Christ. And yet there is always more to say, even if the fundamental doctrines have long since been established. The doctrine of Christ must be engaged by each generation, though this must be done in conversation and conscious reliance on the best of the Christian exegetical-theological tradition.

I aim to provide an exegetical foundation for the doctrine of Christ and will highlight key themes throughout the section on the biblical witness, such as the role of the exodus and Christ as prophet, priest, and king. Even so, I will engage in both biblical- and systematic-theological discussion. This blending of approaches—if indeed it is necessary to call it blending—has a long history in Christian interpretation, and we do well to continue it today. Good systematic theology is robustly biblical, and sensitive biblical theology is both synthetic and canonically aware. As the discussions and references that follow will indicate, I am greatly indebted to many teachers, both past and present, who have shaped my understanding of the riches of Christology. However, given the catholicity of the tradition, it is not possible to identify the guiding source for every point I make. Here at the outset, I gratefully acknowledge my debt to so many who have shaped my understanding of Christology. Readers should be aware that—consistent with the whole *We Believe* series—I write from a Reformed framework, though my hope is that what I say will be profitable to those from other traditions as well.

I have sought both to uphold orthodox Christology throughout this volume and to provide fresh discussions of the issues. To this end, I interact with both contemporary scholarship and classic voices. At the end of each chapter I include a brief, annotated bibliography. Readers should not conclude that I endorse or recommend all these books. Instead, they reflect a range of perspectives on the issues covered in the chapter, even if I have reservations about some of the works. Comparing the bibliography to the footnotes in each chapter may give readers a sense for which works I find most helpful. Given the space restraints for this book—which is already much longer than originally planned—I have not been able to address

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1. Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 33.



every christological issue or engage every important primary or secondary source. This book must remain an introduction, though my aim has been to provide as thorough and user-friendly an introduction as possible, given the space constraints.

I am grateful to John McClean and Murray Smith for the invitation—and challenge—for a New Testament professor to write a book on a locus of systematic theology. Their feedback has proven quite valuable. Thanks to Todd Hains and the entire team at Lexham Press for their support and quality workmanship. I am grateful to the board of trustees, administration, staff, and colleagues on faculty at Westminster Theological Seminary for supporting and sharpening this project in various ways. My colleagues are consistent sources of information and wisdom. Thanks especially to Vern Poythress for reading the entire manuscript and making many valuable suggestions and to Todd Rester for sharing his time and expertise in Latin and his expansive knowledge of church history. Blake Franze read large portions of the manuscript and made many valuable suggestions, many of which I have fruitfully incorporated. Thanks also to Andy Abernethy, Greg Beale, Bob Cara, Stephen Coleman, Iain Duguid, Brannon Ellis, Sinclair Ferguson, David Garner, Mark Garcia, Jonny Gibson, Charles Hill, Ryan McGraw, Blair Smith, Gray Sutanto, and Chad Van Dixhoorn for serving as conversation partners and providing feedback of various kinds. Those who have served as teaching and research assistants while I worked on this book have supported its completion: James Beevers, Joe Fischer, Blake Franze, Michael Hunter, Jon Jung, Tyler Milliken, Pip Mohr, and Joel Sienkiewicz. Thanks to Donna Roof for tracking down a number of books and articles. I also benefited from insightful questions from and discussions with students at Westminster Theological Seminary. Thanks to James Beevers and Caleb Burkhart for preparing the indices.

I am grateful for my family. My wife, Cheryl, is a constant support and encouragement. She has done much in many ways behind the scenes to support the writing of this book; it is my privilege to thank her publicly. I also thank my children. My deepest desire for them is that they would always love, follow, and rest on the living Christ of Scripture. My parents and parents-in-law continue to provide encouragement and support, modeling Christlike love in many ways.

Though it typically goes without saying in acknowledgments, in this case I mention explicitly I write this book out love for Jesus Christ. This is not a book about an abstract idea or a dead figure from the past. This book is about the living Lord of lords who lives and reigns now. I therefore write with the prayer that what I have written will honor Jesus Christ and draw many to worship him. May Christ be exalted.

Brandon D. Crowe

# ABBREVIATIONS

## GENERAL

CSB	Christian Standard Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NA	Nestle-Aland, <i>Novum Testament Graece</i>
NIV	New International Version
NT	New Testament
OG	Old Greek
OT	Old Testament
pars.	parallels
SBLGNT	Society of Biblical Literature Greek New Testament
THGNT	Tyndale House Greek New Testament

## ANCIENT JEWISH TEXTS

### *Dead Sea Scrolls*

1QS	Rule of the Community
4Q44	Deuteronomy <sup>q</sup>
4Q175	Testimonia
4Q365a	Temple Scroll <sup>a</sup>
4Q521	Messianic Apocalypse
4Q524	Temple Scroll <sup>b</sup>
11Q13	Melchizedek
11Q19–21	Temple Scroll

### ***Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha***

1 Macc.	1 Maccabees
2 Bar.	2 Baruch
LAB	Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)
LAE	Life of Adam and Eve
Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon

### **APOSTOLIC FATHERS**

1 Clem.	1 Clement
2 Clem.	2 Clement
Did.	Didache
Diogn.	Epistle to Diognetus
Barn.	Epistle of Barnabas
Ign. Eph.	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
Ign. Magn.	Ignatius, <i>To the Magnesians</i>
Ign. Trall.	Ignatius, <i>To the Trallians</i>
Ign. Rom.	Ignatius, <i>To the Romans</i>
Ign. Phld.	Ignatius, <i>To the Philadelphians</i>
Ign. Smyrn.	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrnaeans</i>
Ign. Pol.	Ignatius, <i>To Polycarp</i>
Mart. Pol.	Martyrdom of Polycarp
Pol. Phil.	Polycarp, <i>To the Philippians</i>

### **OTHER GREEK AND LATIN WORKS**

1 Apol.	Justin, <i>First Apology</i>
2 Apol.	Justin, <i>Second Apology</i>
Ant.	Josephus, <i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
Autol.	Theophilus of Antioch, <i>Ad Autolyicum</i>
C. Ar.	Athanasius of Alexandria, <i>Oratianes contra Arianos</i>
Carn. Chr.	Tertullian of Carthage, <i>De carne Christi</i>
Cels.	Origen of Alexandria, <i>Contra Celsum</i>
Dial.	Justin, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
Enarrat. Ps.	Augustine of Hippo, <i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>
Ep.	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Epistulae</i>

- Epid.* Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epideixis tou apostolikou kerygmatos*
- \**Haer.* Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio omnium haeresium*  
[\*Authorship uncertain]
- Haer.* Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*
- Hist. eccl.* Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica*
- Inc.* Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*
- Inst.* Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. LCC 20–21. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960
- Inst.* Turretin, Francis. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. Translated by George Musgrave Giger. Edited by James T. Dennison Jr. 3 vols. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992–1997
- Leg.* Athenagoras of Athens, *Legatio pro Christianis*
- Marc.* Tertullian of Carthage, *Adversus Marcionem*
- Noet.* Hippolytus of Rome, *Contra haeresin Noeti*
- Or.* Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*
- Paed.* Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*
- Pecc. merit.* Augustine of Hippo, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*
- Praescr.* Tertullian of Carthage, *De praescriptione haereticorum*
- Prax.* Tertullian of Carthage, *Adversus Praxean*
- Princ.* Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis*
- Protr.* Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*
- SPT* *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae / Synopsis of a Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation*. Edited by Dolf te Velde et al. Translated by Riemer A. Faber. 2 vols. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 187, 204 / Texts and Sources 5, 8. Leiden: Brill, 2014–2016
- Strom.* Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*
- Syn.* Athanasius of Alexandria, *De synodis*
- Trin.* Novatian, *On the Trinity*

## MODERN WORKS

- AB** Anchor Bible
- ABD** *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992

- ANF *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 10 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994
- BBR *Bulletin of Biblical Research*
- BC Belgic Confession
- BDAG Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
- BECNT Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
- BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
- CCSL Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina
- CCT Contours of Christian Theology
- CD Canons of Dordt
- COQG Christian Origins and the Question of God
- ESBT Essential Studies in Biblical Theology
- FET Foundations of Evangelical Theology
- HC Heidelberg Catechism
- ICC International Critical Commentary
- IJST *International Journal of Systematic Theology*
- JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
- K&D Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*. Translated by James Martin et al. 10 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996
- LCC Library of Christian Classics
- LW *Luther's Works*
- LNTS Library of New Testament Studies
- NAC New American Commentary
- NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament
- NIGTC New International Greek Testament Commentary
- NIVAC NIV Application Commentary
- NovTSup Supplements to Novum Testamentum

NPNF <sup>1</sup>	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> . Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994
NPNF <sup>2</sup>	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> . Series 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14 vols. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
PG	Patrologia Graeca [=Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
PPS	Popular Patristics Series
<i>ProEccl</i>	<i>Pro Ecclesia</i>
PRRD	Muller, Richard A. <i>Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725</i> . 2nd ed. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003
PTS	Patristisches Texte und Studien
RD	Bavinck, Herman. <i>Reformed Dogmatics</i> . Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008
SC	Sources chrétiennes
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism

- Works* Owen, John. *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold. 16 vols. Reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965–1968
- WSC Westminster Shorter Catechism
- WTJ *Westminster Theological Journal*
- WUNT Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
- ZECNT Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament



# A PRAYER FOR THE STUDY OF CHRISTOLOGY

“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. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

*Psalm 118:19-24 ESV*

Holy God: Father, Son, and Spirit,

We humbly ask for your help in studying truths that are too wonderful for us to comprehend.

Our Father, we thank you for sending your Son to redeem us when we were under the curse of the law.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for coming to be our reconciliation and redemption; for living the life that we could not live; and for your glorious resurrection from the dead which assures us of eternal life.

Holy Spirit, we ask for your illumination, that we may understand the Scriptures rightly, and that we may benefit from the work of Christ by faith.

O God: as we seek to grow in our knowledge of christological doctrine, grant that we may also grow more and more in love for you and for our neighbors, that they too may grow to love more and more the glories of our wonderful Savior.

We offer this prayer through the mediation of Jesus Christ, our great high priest.

Amen.

## INTRODUCTION

# “WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?”

**CHRISTOLOGY AT CAESAREA PHILIPPI** WE BEGIN AT CAESAREA PHILIPPI (Matt 16:13–20; Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–20). Jesus had been engaged in a powerful ministry of word and deed in and around ancient Roman Palestine, including Galilee, the Decapolis, Samaria, Syro-Phoenicia, and Judea. He had cleansed lepers, healed the lame, cast out demons, raised the dead, walked on water, and calmed a storm. He had forgiven sins and taught with authority no one had ever seen. He had rebuked Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes, choosing instead uneducated men for his disciples.

Then, at Caesarea Philippi, the narrative focuses in on one of the most consequential questions in history. Jesus had gathered with his disciples near the cave said to be home to the Greek god Pan, which was more recently distinguished by a temple in honor of Caesar Augustus. Under the pall of these pagan powers, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”<sup>1</sup>

The disciples wrestled with the identity of who Jesus was (see Mark 4:41; Luke 8:25). Peter responded to Jesus's question: “And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the

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1. For more on Caesarea Philippi, see Elaine A. Phillips, “Peter’s Declaration at Caesarea Philippi,” in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016–2017), 286–96; Bruce Chilton, “Caesarea Philippi,” *ABD* 1:803–6.

prophets.' [Jesus] said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matt 16:14-16).

Peter got it right. Even so, this brief encounter raises a host of issues.

First, Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man. The meaning of this phrase is not self-evident. Is it a title? A circumlocution for "a man like me"?

Second, Jesus assumed the prophetic world of ancient Judaism. When the people proffered possible solutions to the conundrum of Jesus's identity, they suggested he could be John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Jesus is indeed a prophet, but he is more than that. He is greater than the mighty Elijah, who himself ascended into heaven and who had just appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus is greater than Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, who spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem and a new covenant. John the Baptist—though he leaned forward as though to help cast open the doors of the coming eschatological kingdom—was the final prophet of the old order, whom Jesus considered to be the greatest of all those born among women. Yet even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John (Matt 11:11). How could this be? Answering this requires us to wrestle with Christology.

Third, Peter's answer identified Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Both these concepts also derive from the Old Testament. Christ means "messiah" and is one of the most profound, if rare, appellations for Jesus in the Gospels. He is the anointed one, the Son of David, who will bring deliverance. Additionally, Jesus is identified as the Son of the living God. That the true God is the living God distinguishes Israel's covenantal LORD from idols in the Old Testament. Jesus also spoke of his impending death and resurrection in Jerusalem (16:21), portraying himself as the suffering servant. This Messiah, this Son of the living God, was also the one who would suffer, die, and be raised. Again, the Old Testament precedents are crucial.

In sum, this key christological passage at Caesarea Philippi contains many of the elements that we must address if we are to understand Jesus rightly. And these only make sense if we understand their precedents in the Old Testament. Stated simply, if we want to understand New Testament Christology, we have to wrestle also with the Old Testament. For the Scriptures speak about him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; John 5:39).

## THE CHRISTOLOGICAL QUESTION TODAY: IN THREE PARTS

"WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I am?" This is not a question relegated to the past; it is a question everyone must answer. Who is this man who healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and preached with authority? Who is this man who was rejected, crucified, and raised to new life? Who is this man who talked about himself in unique ways? My goal in this book is to help us answer this question faithfully in our own day. To do this, we will look at the evidence from a combination of angles.

### *Biblical Theology*

IN PART 1 I PROVIDE a largely inductive approach to christological issues, following the contours of the biblical texts. I consider how key concepts begin early in Scripture and come to full bloom in the New Testament, noting elements both of continuity and discontinuity. I assume the inspiration and overarching unity of Scripture, which is particularly focused on the person and work of Christ.

I also give sustained attention to christological titles in the New Testament, but not exclusively so. It has long been understood that a focus only on titles is insufficient and can be myopic.<sup>2</sup> If we want to understand whether and/or how Jesus is the Messiah, focusing only on titles would cause us to miss the many ways that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah without using the term. The exigencies of Jesus's ministry seem to have required a certain opacity to his language, so that it was revealed to those with eyes to see and ears to hear. This is particularly true of the Gospels. The contours of the Gospel narratives—the way they are structured, the events that are included, how they are described, the pace of the action, and so forth—reveal who Jesus is no less than titles. Further, sound exegetical method requires avoiding the word/concept fallacy. We should not conclude that a given word indicates the same concept in every context; neither should we conclude that the absence of a word indicates the absence of a concept. New Testament authors often communicate Christology even where no titles are used (e.g., Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4:35–41). Additionally,

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2. See, e.g., Leander E. Keck, "Toward the Renewal of New Testament Christology," *NTS* 32 (1986): 368–70.

I will give attention to the role of the Old Testament in the New Testament, and often the New Testament echoes the Old Testament for christological purposes even where no titles are used. For indeed, many streams of Old Testament expectation coalesce in Jesus himself (see Ps 78:2 in Matt 13:35).<sup>3</sup>

With these caveats, I will nevertheless give sustained attention to the theme of sonship as a ballast throughout the Scriptures to provide continuity and as a landmark to keep the discussion calibrated. This is appropriate and fits well with the filial emphasis of the New Testament writers.

**Dogmatic Development** IN PART 2 I ADDRESS christological issues from a dogmatic and systematic perspective. Here I will consider the historical developments of orthodox christological doctrine, along with the sorts of topics one might expect to find in a systematic work on Christology. These include the development of the church's creeds, the role of Christ as mediator of the covenant of grace, the two natures of Christ, the unity of Christ's person, the two states of Christ, and the atonement.

Here again it is important to understand how terminology will be used. Doctrinal precision requires the use of technical, theological terms, even terms that are not found in Scripture or that may be used differently from Scripture. It has long been understood that technical terminology is legitimate and useful to ensure clarity and precision.<sup>4</sup> For example, though the word "Trinity" is not found in Scripture, the doctrine is necessary exegetically. Further, technical terms are needed because often debates have centered on what the words of the Bible mean.<sup>5</sup> Thus, I will use technical terminology in part 2. To aid in understanding some of these technical terms, a glossary is included at the end of this volume.

**Applying Christology** PART 3 ADDRESSES THE APPLICATION of proper Christology. Here I argue for the centrality of Christology to the gospel message and discuss implications of the person and work of Christ in a pluralistic world. Given space

3. See D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank A. Gaebelin (repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 321–23.

4. See especially Calvin, *Inst.* 1.13.3 (1:123–24); Turretin, *Inst.* 1.1.3 (1:1).

5. See Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 100.

constraints, these will be briefer, but are crucial inasmuch as they reflect the relevance of the christological question posed at Caesarea Philippi for life in the twenty-first, globalized century.

It is not overstatement to say that the question Jesus posed to his disciples at Caesarea Philippi is one of the most consequential questions in world history. More personally, it is a question we all must answer—and answer rightly. But it is not merely a private question; it is a question with implications for the world at large. To answer this question we turn first of all to Scripture.





PART 1

# **BIBLICAL REVELATION**



# THE SON OF GOD IN CREATION AND THE OLD COVENANT

## HIDDEN PRESENCE

TO PROVIDE SHAPE AND STRUCTURE to our understanding of the person and work of Christ, we begin in the Old Testament. In this chapter I will consider the relevance of the Pentateuch for Christology through three primary lenses. First, I consider briefly the presence of the Son of God in the Old Testament, especially in creation. Progressive revelation means that more is known about the Son of God in the New Testament than in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> However, this does not mean that the Son is entirely hidden in the Old Testament. For indeed, the Son of God is the eternal and divine Son—the second person of the Trinity. He is therefore present and active in the Old Testament. To find the Son in the Old Testament is not necessarily to read the Old Testament inappropriately, though we must be aware of overreading the first Testament in a way that leaves no room for further revelation and organic development in the New Testament.

Second, I focus more specifically on the Old Testament theme of sonship. As eternal Son, Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity. Yet

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1. Following the NT and confessional precedents, I will speak of the presence of Jesus Christ in the OT. This is because of the unity of the person: the Son of God is identical to Jesus of Nazareth; therefore, it is appropriate to speak of the presence and work of Christ in the OT, even prior to the incarnation. See, e.g., 1 Cor 10:4; Jude 5; WLC 31; Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 502 (following Aloys Grillmeier). I discuss this further in ch. 8.

as the incarnate one he is also the true human son, the true Israelite, and the true Davidic king. The category of sonship is thus a concise heading that subsumes much relating to the person and work of Christ.

Third, I consider a selection of other relevant themes that provide proper context and background for the work of Christ, including the exodus as a paradigm of redemption, Israel's sacrificial system (especially the Day of Atonement), and the persons and institutions of prophet, priest, and king.

These lenses must be related to the twin themes of creation and covenant. The Son was active in creation and before the fall of Adam, and he is also the Mediator of the covenant of grace who works redemption from sin. Though we can rightly speak of a "covenant" with Adam, much of my focus on covenant will be on the outworking of the single, postfall covenant of grace throughout the Bible.

## THE SON OF GOD IN CREATION

CREATION IS A WORK OF the triune God. It would be mistaken to think of a divine monad, or only one person of the Godhead, creating the heavens and the earth. God is and always has been Trinitarian. Further, all the external works of God (as Trinity) are undivided (*opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*). When Genesis says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," this describes the work of the triune God. Later, the Gospel of John alludes to Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... All things came to be through him and apart from him came not one thing which has come to be" (John 1:1, 3).<sup>2</sup> In John this creative, eternal Word is Jesus of Nazareth (see 1:14). While it would not be correct to say that *only* the Son created the world, it is proper to say that the Son created the world.<sup>3</sup>

If creation is the work of the triune God, this includes the creation of humanity in the image of God. In Genesis 1:26 God (אלהים) says, "Let us make man in our image" (see also 5:1). The plural here is not best taken as a "royal we" or as an address to the divine council. God did not employ the assistance

2. My trans. Here I do not follow the punctuation in the NA<sup>28</sup> Greek text (which places  $\delta$  γέγονεν at the beginning of a new sentence), but I take  $\delta$  γέγονεν with the sentence that precedes it.

3. See also Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 1:445.

of any created being in the creation of humanity, nor was humanity made in the image of angels. Creation was the work of God alone, as Scripture repeatedly emphasizes (e.g., Gen 1:1; Exod 20:11; Isa 40:28).<sup>4</sup> Instead, the plural “let us make man” may be a reference, however shadowy at this point in Scripture, to the triunity of God.<sup>5</sup> However we understand this particular passage in Genesis, the whole of Scripture makes it clear that creation was a work of the triune God, which means the Son of God was active in creation.

The creation of humanity in the image of God is further important in light of the incarnation of the Son, which came later.<sup>6</sup> The Son’s taking a human nature demonstrates the organic unity of the whole person—body and soul—in the image of God.<sup>7</sup> Further, since humanity was made in the image of God, it is both possible and fitting for the Son of God to take a human nature in the incarnation. Herman Bavinck captures the matter pithily: “God could not have been able to become man if he had not first made man in his own image.”<sup>8</sup>

The Son of God was present and active in the work of creation. But the Son’s work is not limited to creation, for the Son is present and active throughout the Old Testament. This means that the Son is present and active in the old covenant—a topic that merits more extensive discussion.

## THE SON OF GOD IN THE OLD COVENANT

### *The Old Covenant and the Covenant of Grace*

THE SON IS THE MEDIATOR between God and humanity not only in the New Testament but already in the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup> Again the Gospel of John helps us understand the Old Testament. In John 1 the Son is identified as

4. See also Turretin, *Inst.* 3.26.4–5 (1:273–74).

5. See, e.g., Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, trans. Todd M. Rester, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2021), 2:109–10, 500; Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 1:446; Samuel Maresius, *Theologiae elencticae nova synopsis; sive Index controversiarum fidei ex Sacris Scripturis* (Groningen: Nicolaum, 1646), 1:3.1 (page 76).

6. It is common to see humanity made in the image of the Son, who is the image of God (e.g., Col 1:15; Athanasius, *Inc.* 11, 13–14; Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 364). Yet Bavinck argues that humanity—male and female—is made in the image of the triune God. See *RD* 2:554–55, 60; Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, “Herman Bavinck on the Image of God and Original Sin,” *IJST* 18 (2016): 178–84.

7. Following *RD* 2:560.

8. *RD* 2:560.

9. *RD* 3:215.

the λόγος (= word; John 1:1, 14), which has long been understood in Christian exegetical tradition as a fitting way to refer to the mediatorial and communicative role of the preexistent Word of God.<sup>10</sup> Logos again points to the activity and mediatorial role of the Son of God already in the Old Testament.<sup>11</sup>

To speak of the old covenant immediately raises the question of what this phrase means. From one angle, “old covenant” is virtually the same as saying Old Testament, since “testament” historically has designated a covenant. This approach works. Another approach is to relate the old covenant to the redemptive covenant of grace introduced in Genesis just after the fall of Adam and Eve (see Gen 3:15).<sup>12</sup> Simply put, the covenant of grace refers to the provision of God whereby he offers life and salvation to sinners by faith in the work of a Mediator—Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> The LORD promised to redeem his people by the seed of the woman, who would emerge victorious over the seed of the serpent.<sup>14</sup> The one covenant of grace, in which the coming of the woman’s seed is progressively revealed, is found both in the Old Testament and New Testament, though it is administered in various ways. All told, whether by “old covenant” we mean the Old Testament or the covenant of grace administered in the Old Testament makes little difference, since the Old Testament recounts the outworking of this covenant of grace from Genesis 3 onward.<sup>15</sup>

I devote most of my attention in this chapter to the Son of God in the context of the old covenant. I have already argued that the Son of God is really present in the Old Testament. In what follows I consider the biblical-theological, filial precedents in the old covenant that are

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10. E.g., Justin, *Dial.* 127–128; Irenaeus, *Epid.* 12, 45–46. I discuss this further in ch. 6. See also Geerhardus Vos, “The Range of the Logos Title in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel,” in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 59–90; Vern S. Poythress, *Theophany: A Biblical Theology of God’s Appearing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 207.

11. See RD 3:215–16.

12. See, e.g., WCF 7.3–5; WLC 30–34; WSC 20. The Reformed creeds referenced throughout this volume can be found in James T. Dennison Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in English Translation, 1523–1693*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2008–2014).

13. WCF 7.3; WLC 32.

14. The Latin Vulgate mistranslates this as the woman who will bruise the head of the serpent (*ipsa conteret caput tuum*, “she will bruise your head”), whereas in the MT it is the seed of the woman who will bruise the head of the serpent (הוּא יְשׁוּפֵד רֹאשׁוֹ).  
 15. See John Owen, *Works* 1:120–25.

more fully developed in later biblical texts, particularly with reference to Christ himself.

### **Sonship in the Old Covenant**

#### **Adam as Son of God**

TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTOURS OF the old covenant, and the biblical-theological theme of sonship, we start with Adam. Adam was not only created in the image of God, but is also identified as the son of God. In Genesis 5:1–3 Adam is said to be created in the image of God (דמות, 5:1), and in a similar way Adam fathered a son (Seth) in his own image (5:3). The implication is that just as Seth's image bearing entails sonship, so Adam's being made in the image of God entails sonship.<sup>16</sup> This point is made explicit in Luke 3:38, where Adam is identified as son of God.

Sonship, therefore, entails image bearing. Since Genesis portrays God as the great king, then Adam's filial image bearing means that he was a royal son of God. He was called to rule over God's creation (Gen 1:28). Adam also had a task given to him: he was to serve in (עבד) and guard (שמר) the garden of Eden (2:15). These same Hebrew terms are used elsewhere for the tasks of priests (e.g., Num 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6; 1 Chr 23:32; Ezek 44:14), and many have noted that the garden is portrayed as a temple.<sup>17</sup> These factors most likely mean that Adam is portrayed as a priest in the original created order. Likewise, Adam was entrusted with the word of God (e.g., Gen 1:28–30; 2:16–17), denoting the role of a prophet. From the beginning, then, we find in Adam a son of God who is portrayed as a prophet,

16. See further G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 401–6; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 58.

17. See further Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 61, 67; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 66–77; Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 255–56, 460, 741; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age, 2000), 26–33; Richard P. Belcher Jr., *Prophet, Priest, and King: The Roles of Christ in the Bible and Our Roles Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016), 5–11; L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 27 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 52–53; Brandon D. Crowe, *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2017), 64.

priest, and king.<sup>18</sup> The close correlations made between Adam and Christ in Scripture include the concepts of sonship and these three offices (or at least functions) of prophet, priest, and king. I will return to these three offices later in this chapter.

The task given to Adam will also help us understand the work of Christ. Adam was created upright and called to love and obey God fully. Yet he also had a goal of permanent eternal life before him, which required Adam's perfect obedience (WCF 7.2; 19.1). Adam was presented with a probationary test not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16–17). This test summed up all that was required of Adam.<sup>19</sup> The positive side of this negative command, though not stated explicitly, is that were Adam to have passed the test, he would have inherited eternal life (signified by the tree of life).<sup>20</sup> Because Adam failed this test, and thus failed to persevere in obedience in his sinless state of integrity, he forfeited his right to eternal life. This Adamic administration is often referred to as the covenant of works.<sup>21</sup> Though the term “covenant” (ברית) is not used in Genesis 1–3, the concept is present, and Hosea 6:7 likely does refer to a covenant with Adam.<sup>22</sup> That this is called the covenant of works does not mean that Adam could have autonomously earned eternal life. Nothing Adam could ever have done would have earned eternal life, strictly speaking—he was a created being who owed obedience by nature. Instead, the covenant of works teaches that Adam would have inherited eternal life because of God's goodness to grant this in the context of a covenant relationship.

Crucially, eternal life required Adam's perfect obedience. Once Adam failed, he could no longer meet the strict demands of the covenant of works. This is the context in which we first meet the covenant of grace in Scripture. The New Testament makes it clear that Christ did what Adam failed to do: obey God fully, thus attaining eternal life (see Rom 5:12–21). But Jesus had to do even more than Adam, for he had to overcome the disastrous

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18. See RD 3:331; Benjamin L. Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church: A Biblical Theology of the People of God*, ESBT (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 12–19.

19. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 215–18.

20. See, e.g., Augustine, *Pecc. merit.* 1.2; Turretin, *Inst.* 8.3.7 (1:575–76); Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 27–29.

21. Other terminology includes “covenant of life,” “covenant of creation,” or “covenant of nature.”

22. For a defense, see Crowe, *Last Adam*, 59–61.



consequences of the sin that Adam caused as well. The covenant of grace is not only a New Testament idea, but begins already from the time of the fall. Already the Son of God was Mediator and was active as prophet, priest, and king.<sup>23</sup>

**Israel as Son of God** THE NATION OF ISRAEL IS also identified as son of God in the Old Testament. The first explicit reference comes in Exodus 4, where Moses is instructed to tell Pharaoh: “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, ‘Let my son go that he may serve me.’ If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son” (Exod 4:22–23). Here Israel, enslaved in Egypt, is already identified as the LORD’s firstborn son. The LORD wanted his firstborn son to be allowed to worship him freely, and the consequence of Pharaoh’s disobedience was the death of his firstborn. The exodus became the paradigmatic act of redemption in the Old Testament, and the logic of the exodus leans heavily on sonship. Israel’s identification as son of God underscores the deep, covenantal love that God has for his people (see Deut 1:31). He heard their cries for help and liberated them with a mighty, outstretched hand.

Israel’s sonship also called for their obedience—in the context of covenant, love and obedience go hand in hand. This is evident when Israel comes to Mount Sinai, where the Mosaic covenant is instituted (see especially Exod 19–24). The logic of redemption, however, is clear that Israel’s obedience did not save them. Rather, Israel was saved by the power and initiative of God. Yet those who are redeemed are called to obey God from the heart, and the Ten Commandments and other laws (Exod 20–23) showed Israel what it meant to obey. Sonship requires obedience. This logic is particularly clear in Deuteronomy, where Israel’s call to obedient, covenantal sonship is one of the organizing features of the entire book.<sup>24</sup> Because Israel is son of God, they should obey God from the heart (see esp. Deut 8:5–6; 14:1–2). If Israel disobeyed, they would be turning their back on the covenant, and it would be as if they were no longer God’s children (Deut 32:4–6, 18–20,

23. These two sentences follow Bavinck, *RD* 3:365.

24. On sonship in Deuteronomy, see Brandon D. Crowe, *The Obedient Son: Deuteronomy and Christology in the Gospel of Matthew*, BZNW 188 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 88–117.

43).<sup>25</sup> This emphasis on Israel's covenantal sonship, and the accompanying call to obedience, will be foundational for Israel's prophets. The exodus is paradigmatic not only for redemption but also for sonship, which entails both God's deep love for his people and his people's call to true obedience.

As son of God, Israel was a royal nation. This is implicit in Israel's sonship, especially in light of the Adamic precedent of sonship in Genesis 1–5. In a similar way, when the LORD delivered Israel from Egypt, he did so as the great king who saved a people and entered into covenant with them. As son of God, Israel was like Adam, a royal image bearer. This is also stated explicitly at Mount Sinai in a highly significant passage to understand the role of Israel: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel” (Exod 19:5-6; see also 1 Pet 2:9–10). Here, just after the redemption from Egypt, Israel was corporately identified as a kingdom of priests, denoting Israel's royal status as son of God, and as a holy nation. This priestly aspect of Israel's identity likely reflects their privilege to walk in close fellowship with the LORD, serving him, thereby mediating the knowledge of God to the surrounding nations.<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere it is clear that Israel was entrusted with the oracles of God (see Rom 3:2; 9:4), denoting a prophetic aspect to Israel's existence as well. In sum, Israel, like Adam, not only was son of God, but also is portrayed as prophet, priest, and king.

Despite the similarities between Adam and Israel, we must also take due note of differences between them.<sup>27</sup> Adam and Israel are not interchangeable. First, only Adam is the progenitor of the entire human race. Second, only Adam had the opportunity to inherit eternal life on the basis of perfect covenantal obedience, thus fulfilling the covenant of works. All Israelites were

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25. Deut 32:43 presents a difficult textual issue. Departing here from the MT, the best reading is “his sons” (LXX, 4QDeut<sup>a</sup>), agreeing with the ESV, which translates this phrase “his children.”

26. See, e.g., R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 153; Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 422–23; Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 104; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1974), 367.

27. See also Crowe, *Last Adam*, 65–67.

fallen in Adam and in need of redemption from sin. Thus, the obedience of the Israelites could never be sufficient to meet the demands for eternal life. The Mosaic law given to them must be understood as part of the covenant of grace. In the New Testament Jesus is portrayed as the true Israelite and as new, faithful Israel. Yet even more fundamental to understanding the work of Christ is the identification of Jesus as the second and last Adam. This does not mean we must dichotomize sharply between Israel and Adam, but we must ensure that we do not miss the distinctions between Adam and Israel. Both Adam and Israel are called to covenantal obedience as sons of God, and both are described in terms of prophet, priest, and king.

The roles of both Adam and Israel in the Old Testament provide ample biblical-theological precedents for the sonship of Jesus. Adam is the first son of God. Israel as son of God dominates much of the rest of the Old Testament. Later the Davidic dimensions of son of God will swell. Even so, it is important to remember the Son of God's preexistence: he is the Creator who existed before Adam, Israel, or David. These biblical-theological dimensions of sonship find roots in the eternal sonship of the Second Person of the Trinity.<sup>28</sup> The sonships of Adam, Israel, and David anticipate the fullness of sonship manifested in the incarnation and are ultimately typological manifestations of the eternal, unchanging, ontological sonship of Christ.

## **ANTICIPATIONS OF THE WORK OF CHRIST IN THE PENTATEUCH**

### *Exodus and Redemption*

THE PARADIGM FOR REDEMPTION IN the Old Testament is the exodus. Geerhardus Vos puts the matter quite strongly: "The Exodus from Egypt is the Old Testament redemption."<sup>29</sup> Given the prominence of the exodus paradigm, an appreciation for

the exodus is necessary to understand various dimensions of the work of Christ.

In the exodus, the LORD proved faithful to his covenant promises. In Genesis 3:15 the LORD promises to defeat the seed of the serpent by the seed of the woman. Later the world was preserved through Noah, which provided the context for the protection and flourishing of the coming seed

28. See, e.g., Bavinck, *RD* 2:272.

29. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 109, emphasis original.

(Gen 6–9). The promised seed gains more specificity in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 15; 17), where we learn that it is Abraham’s seed that will be the means by which the entire world will be blessed (Gen 12:1–3). The LORD later told Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (15:5), but they would also be slaves in a foreign land for four hundred years (15:13). This happened after Joseph, one of Abraham’s great-grandchildren, ended up as governor in Egypt (42:6). Joseph not only saved Egypt in the midst of a great famine, but also provided a refuge for his estranged family (Gen 37–50). Yet, though the focus of these final chapters of Genesis is largely on Joseph, Jacob prophesied at the end of his life that it would ultimately be Judah who would rule over his brothers (49:8–12).

The book of Exodus begins with a list of the children of Jacob (i.e., Israel) who came to Egypt. True to the Abrahamic promise, the Israelites had grown into a great company of people (Exod 1:1–7; see Gen 15:5). Yet eventually a new pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph, and he feared the numerous Israelites (1:8–9). Thus Abraham’s descendants were enslaved in Egypt.

This provides the context for the exodus. The exodus can refer to a range of related events, including the ten plagues, the Passover, the plundering of the Egyptians, the leading of the Israelites by cloud and pillar of fire, and the parting of the Red Sea, with the attending defeat of Pharaoh’s army. Given the importance of the exodus for understanding the work of Christ, I list here eight ways the exodus serves as an Old Testament paradigm of salvation and prepares us for the work of Christ in the New Testament.<sup>30</sup>

First, the exodus provides objective deliverance from the bondage of sin. The Israelites were enslaved not only physically but spiritually. They were not free to worship God, as the goal of the exodus—that is, to worship the LORD—suggests (see Exod 3:18; 4:23; 5:3; 8:27). Put in modern terms, the Israelites were enslaved to the world in Egypt and liberated from this system of oppression in the exodus.<sup>31</sup>

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30. Here I glean heavily from Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 109–21, though several of the points are my own.

31. Vos argues that the exodus also provided subjective deliverance from the power of sin, at least for some Israelites (*Biblical Theology*, 112). This is, however, difficult to quantify, especially given the role of the wilderness generation collectively as a warning against hard-heartedness and faithlessness (Pss 78; 95:7–11; Heb 3:7–4:13). Even so, Israel’s sacrificial system was given to enable fellowship with God (see, e.g., Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 23–38). Several passages teach that the Israelites were given to sin and idolatry in Egypt (Josh 24:14;

Second, the exodus demonstrates the singular power of God to save his people. The people were powerless to redeem themselves; only God could do this. This is one of the key emphases of the exodus: divine omnipotence in the face of human weakness.<sup>32</sup>

Third, the exodus displays the love of God and his unmerited favor, and confirms God's faithfulness to his covenant promises. Israel was not better than other people, but God freely chose to deliver them, multiply them, and subsequently to provide them the promised land of Canaan (e.g., Deut 4:32-40; 7:7-11). This also underscores the second point (above): God's grace is necessary because of the people's inability to liberate themselves.

Fourth, the ultimate outcome of the exodus is not simply the liberation of the people from bondage but the glory of the covenant LORD, who redeemed his people. This is consistent with the goal of the exodus being the proper worship of God. It also points to the fellowship with God that ensued after the exodus: God's people were redeemed in order to live in covenant fellowship with him in the promised land.<sup>33</sup> Later the people were threatened with exile for disobedience, which entailed removal from the land and enslavement to foreign powers. Even so, on the other side of exile lay the hope of a new exodus and renewed covenant fellowship with the LORD (e.g., Deut 30:1-10).

Fifth, the exodus highlights God's provision to take away sin. Central to the exodus was the Passover, in which the angel of the Lord passed over the houses that had applied blood to their doorframes by means of hyssop (Exod 12:21-27). Hyssop was later used for sacrifices, and the sacrificial system that came later further elaborated on the need for blood to effect cleansing for God's people (e.g., Lev 17:11). The Passover, in other words, was a type of substitutionary, sacrificial atonement (see Exod 12:27)

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Ezek 20:8-9; 23:8, 19-21). Yet in Deuteronomy Moses reminds the Israelites that the Lord had delivered them from bondage (Deut 6:21; 7:18; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:18, 22). See, e.g., Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 304 and n. 8. Some of these texts are noted by Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 112. In short, Israel's deliverance in the exodus must have, to some extent, entailed subjective deliverance from sin for at least some Israelites (see also Irenaeus, *Epid.* 46; *Haer.* 4.16.3).

32. See, e.g., Exod 6:6; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 26:8; 2 Kgs 17:36; Ps 66:1-7; 77:10-20; 78:11-16; 81:10; 105:26-45; 106:6-12; 135:8-12; 136:10-16; Isa 43:16-27; Jer 32:21.

33. See Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 78-79.

pointing forward to the final sacrifice of Christ.<sup>34</sup> The exodus shows us that redemption requires a blood ransom for deliverance; this provides important background for the term “redemption” in Scripture.<sup>35</sup>

Sixth, the exodus highlights the structure of redemption: first deliverance, then the giving of the law. God’s people were saved by his sovereign grace and power, and then were given the law.<sup>36</sup> Consistent with the emphasis on God’s sovereign power and grace, God’s people did not earn redemption by means of sufficient obedience; deliverance was granted by divine grace. The pattern of the exodus highlights the indicative-imperative dynamic of biblical religion after the fall. The indicative refers to God’s actions to save his people. The imperative refers to the people’s call to obedience. The order cannot be reversed, but neither can the two be divided. This structuring feature is highlighted by the order of events in the exodus: first God redeemed his people, then he gave them his law. Fathers are thus instructed to teach this pattern to their children: deliverance yields obedience (Deut 6:20–25). The exodus shows God’s people that their obedience is not salvific, but neither is it optional.

Seventh, the exodus highlights the central role of sonship in deliverance. As noted earlier, the logic of the exodus redemption centers on sonship (Exod 4:22b–23). The tenth and climactic plague against Egypt was the death of the firstborn, whereas the benefit for God’s covenant people was their liberation as firstborn. Indeed, Israel’s deliverance was corporately like the resurrection of God’s son—anticipating the greater resurrection in the New Testament.<sup>37</sup> Israel’s sonship entails both the tender love of God and the correlating call for Israel to obey as God’s son (e.g., Deut 1:31; 8:5–6; 14:1–2; 32:4–6, 18–20).<sup>38</sup> This emphasis on Israel’s sonship provides much of the context for understanding Jesus’s obedient sonship in the New Testament.

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34. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 120. On substitution, see Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 80.

35. See also Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 80.

36. This is not to deny that they already had some sort of law, as the Pentateuch makes clear before Sinai. Already God’s moral law was known to Adam and to others in the patriarchal age. Even so, by saving his people first and then giving the law, the exodus reveals the structure of indicative, then imperative.

37. L. Michael Morales, *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*, ESBT (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 49–50.

38. See further Crowe, *Obedient Son*.

Eighth, the exodus is integral to final redemption. We should not merely think of the exodus as a preview of “true” redemption in the New Testament. Instead, the exodus is real deliverance that is of a piece with God’s final redemption in Christ. As part of the one covenant of grace, the exodus makes true progress toward the consummation. The conflict between Moses and the covenant LORD and Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt highlights the spiritual conflict in the exodus (Exod 4:1–5; 7:8–13).<sup>39</sup> We can even correlate Pharaoh with the seed of the serpent—the one who seeks to keep the Abrahamic promise from flourishing and who, as the representative for the nation enslaving God’s people, seeks to stop their liberation and worship.<sup>40</sup> This is all the more likely in light of the prevalence of serpentine and supernatural themes in the exodus, and the identification elsewhere in Scripture of Pharaoh (though not the same Pharaoh) or Egypt as a sea monster or sea dragon (Ps 74:13; Isa 30:7; 51:9–10; Ezek 29:3; 32:2; cf. Isa 27:1; Rev 12:3, 9).<sup>41</sup> Though the exodus was not the final deliverance, it anticipates the eschatological new exodus accomplished by Christ.

**Sacrificial System** THE EXODUS IS CENTRAL IN Old Testament redemption, and a key aspect of the exodus is the expiation of sin by means of the Passover sacrifice. The role of Moses in the exodus, and ensuing events, is also significant. Moses was the mediator for God’s people, who represented God to the people (Exod 19) and the people before God (Exod 24).<sup>42</sup> Moses anticipates the priestly, mediatorial work of Christ—the one who shares in our humanity, even as he remains the eternal Son of God. Compared to Christ, the mediatorial role of Moses was limited. In response to the people’s idolatry in the golden calf episode (Exod 32), Moses sought to make atonement for the people and even asked that God might blot him out in order to spare the people (32:30–33). Though Moses interceded for the people (33:12–16) and the LORD showed mercy (33:17; cf. 33:19; 34:6–7), Moses was a sinner who was not able to give his own life for the sins of the people.

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39. See, e.g., John Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 97–129.

40. See Morales, *Exodus Old and New*, 62–63.

41. See Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 191–98.

42. Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 89–93.

The intercession of Moses highlights the need for Israel's forgiveness. In the center of the Pentateuch stands Leviticus, the book that expounds the sacrificial system in detail. This is not the place to deal at length with the numerous issues related to the sacrificial system, but in brief the sacrificial system provided means for sinful Israelites to have fellowship with a holy God.<sup>43</sup> The daily sacrifices, along with the holiness laws, highlighted the unchanging holiness of God, and the inescapable problem of sin.<sup>44</sup> Leviticus 19:2b captures the issue succinctly: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." Yet the Israelites were inherently and perpetually unholy. Thus the sacrificial system provided means of atonement for sin, enabling access to and fellowship with God.<sup>45</sup>

The sacrificial system given to the ancient Israelites was a means of true grace and enabled real fellowship with God. Even so, the Levitical sacrifices were not ultimate. Hebrews teaches that the old covenant sacrifices had no true efficacy in themselves, for they were only shadows of the true sacrifice that takes away sin. The blood of bulls and goats is ultimately ineffectual; only the final sacrifice of the perfect God-man, Jesus Christ, is able truly to take away sin. This means that the one sacrifice of Christ stands behind and provides efficacy to the sacrifices made in the old covenant, which anticipated the coming work of Christ.<sup>46</sup> The access to God enabled in the Day of Atonement was real—Morales even argues it was closer here than it was anywhere post-Eden.<sup>47</sup> Yet Israel still awaited the ultimate presence of God with his people. The New Testament speaks of the Son of God coming to tabernacle among his people, revealing his glory (John 1:14). He is Immanuel—God with us (Matt 1:23)—in a way that surpasses even the access granted on the Day of Atonement. He himself would be exiled and slaughtered for our sin and would then enter the heavenly holy of holies. Yet the details of how these things are must await our consideration of the New Testament.

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43. Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 23–38.

44. See, e.g., L. Michael Morales, "Atonement in Ancient Israel: The Whole Burnt Offering as Central to Israel's Cult," in *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*, ed. Jon C. Laansma, George H. Guthrie, and Cynthia Long Westfall, LNTS 516 (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 28–39.

45. See Jay Sklar, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 50–55.

46. See WCF 7.5.

47. Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 167.



## Leviticus 16

IF LEVITICUS IS FOUND AT the heart of the Pentateuch, the heart of Leviticus is the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).<sup>a</sup> The Day of Atonement was a yearly “sacrifice of sacrifices” (or perhaps better, set of sacrifices) that provided thoroughgoing expiation and cleansing of sin. On this day, the high priest would enter into and cleanse the holy of holies—the most holy place (16:2–3, 11–19). This involved making atonement for his own sins and his household by offering a bull (16:6, 11), and then atoning for the sins of all Israelites (16:15–16). This he did by taking two goats. The first he sacrificed as a sin offering (16:15–16), taking its blood into the holy of holies. The second goat would then be presented alive, in order that the high priest could place all the sins of the Israelites on the live goat (16:20–22). The live goat (i.e., the scapegoat) would then be exiled east into the wilderness, carrying the sins of the people away from the tabernacle and the presence of the LORD.<sup>b</sup>

The Day of Atonement was a solemn affair and was to be remembered in perpetuity as the day when the people would be cleansed from all their sins (16:30). At the same time, it did not provide permanent cleansing, as its yearly repetition would have reminded the people. The concepts of substitution and representation were apparent throughout the sacrificial system: the death of an animal standing in place of the death of the offerer. This arguably would have been doubly clear on the Day of Atonement, as two goats were presented to the people, one slaughtered and one set free to bear their sins.

The slaughtering of the animals is explained in more detail in the following chapter: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life” (Lev 17:11). At least two questions arise from this text: First, does the blood refer to the life or the death of the victim? The best answer here may be some combination of the two, though the emphasis falls on the death of the sacrifice. Second, how do we understand atonement (Heb. כפר; Gk. ἐξιλάσκομαι)? Here the best answer is again probably a combination, in this case of cleansing and ransom from death.<sup>c</sup> Some of these concepts will be important for our discussions in the New Testament, where we will see debate has persisted about terms such as ἰλάσκομαι and ἰλαστήριον and the nature of expiation or propitiation in view.

a. Here I glean from Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, esp. 23–38.

b. On exile, see Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 243, 248.

c. Sklar, *Leviticus*, 50–55; Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 130–32.

**Prophet, Priest, and King** AS WE CONCLUDE THIS CHAPTER on the Pentateuch, we return to the themes of prophet, priest, and king.

I have introduced these throughout this chapter, but more remains to be said. The threefold office of Christ (*munus triplex*) refers to his roles as prophet, priest, and king, and the foundations for these offices come in the Pentateuch. Adam, Israel, Moses, and others serve as precedents for Christ's threefold office.<sup>48</sup> In what follows I consider each office and institution in a bit more detail.

**Prophet.** Prophets are entrusted with and make known the word of God. This applies to Adam in the beginning, on whose heart was written the law, and later to Israel. Being entrusted with the word of God also assumes obedience to the word of God, though both Adam and Israel failed to exhibit the filial obedience expected of those entrusted with the word of God. Moses is also a prophet, as the anticipation of a future prophet like Moses makes clear (see Deut 18:15–18). The future, eschatological prophet would be patterned after Moses. Though later prophets such as Jeremiah fit into the Mosaic mold,<sup>49</sup> ultimately the New Testament teaches that Jesus is the prophet like Moses: he is entrusted with the word of God, proclaims the word of God, and obeys the word of God.

**Priest.** Priests mediate between God and humanity, serving in the house of God. Again Adam was a priest, as was Israel, who collectively is identified as a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6). Likewise, Moses (from the tribe of Levi) was a priest, for he ordained Aaron, the high priest (Exod 29; Lev 8), and instructed the Israelites in the proper mode of worship throughout the Pentateuch. Though Moses was a sinner unable to offer his life as a perfect substitute, his mediation for the people in wake of the golden calf episode also points to his priestly role. It is even possible that Moses' death, outside and before Israel entered the promised land, highlights the principle of substitution and provided a pattern for the high priest's death, which provided a new start for the people. (For example, those guilty of manslaughter are released from the cities of refuge; see Num 35:25–34.)<sup>50</sup>

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48. Thanks to Iain Duguid and Jonny Gibson for their feedback on this point.

49. E.g., Jeremiah's *new covenant* echoes the covenant mediated by Moses (see, e.g., Crowe, *Obedient Son*, 124–28).

50. Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 223–24.

Beyond this, other priestly precedents from the Pentateuch help us understand the priestly work of Christ. Aaron the high priest serves as the initial precedent for the high priesthood of Christ, though Christ's service in the inner sanctuary excels that of Aaron and his descendants (Heb 7-10).<sup>51</sup> Phinehas was a priest who was zealous for the Lord's holiness (Num 25:1-13), anticipating the zeal of Christ for the things of God (John 2:13-17), even to the point of sacrificing his own life (John 2:18-22).<sup>52</sup>

We also meet another priest in the Pentateuch, one who is not from the house of Levi (for indeed, he comes before Levi was ever born). In Genesis 14:17-24 Abram met Melchizedek, the king of Salem, to whom Abram paid a tithe. Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High. Melchizedek provides another angle to the priesthood of Christ in the New Testament, for Christ did not come from the tribe of Levi but of Judah (see Heb 6:20-7:22). Further, with Melchizedek's priesthood we have an example of pre-Levitical priesthood, which shows that the Levitical priesthood was not ultimate priesthood. Hebrews will have more to say about this.

In the Levitical system, it is crucial that the priest come from the house of Levi. But in addition to the Levitical priesthood, the Pentateuch provides a more polyvalent view of priesthood, one that includes Adam, the progenitor of all humanity, and Melchizedek, the priest-king. These, together with the Levitical priesthood, provide ample precedents for understanding the priestly work of Christ.

King. Adam was created in the image of the Great King and called to rule over God's creation, reflecting the Creator he served (Gen 1:26-28). Likewise, Israel is identified as a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6) and called to reflect their covenant LORD's glory in the promised land.

Yet the Pentateuch also foresees a coming king who will rule over God's people. This is evident in Judah's blessing (Gen 49:8-12; see also Num 24:17), and Moses also spoke in Deuteronomy 17:14-17 of a coming day when an individual king would rule over God's people (see also Gen 17:16). This passage provides warrant for Israel's later kingship—for the Lord himself would choose the king the people desired to set over them (Deut 17:15).

51. Morales argues that Aaron is also portrayed as a new Adam (*Who Shall Ascend*, 118).

52. See also Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 4 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1981), 211-12.

Thus, though there may be questions about the people's later desire for a king to be set over them in the days of Samuel, Deuteronomy 17 shows us that it was not inherently wrong for Israel to desire a king.<sup>53</sup> It was possible both for God to be king and for him to rule via an anointed representative. Deuteronomy 17 is thus important for understanding the rise of David as king and later for understanding Christ's kingship.

Additionally, Moses himself provides precedent for a king, for he spoke of the qualifications of kings and ruled over Israel by judging them (Exod 18:13). He also opposed the king of Egypt (Pharaoh) as the LORD's chosen emissary and the leader of the nation. God's king is to walk in his ways, rule over his people, and indeed like Adam rule over all his creation. These royal aspects anticipate the work of Christ. Melchizedek also anticipates the royal work of Christ, for he was not only a priest but a king. Hebrews will tease out these implications in more detail. Indeed, in the New Testament we will find that the offices of prophet, priest, and king all cohere in Christ.

## THE PRESENCE OF THE SON IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE OLD TESTAMENT IS FULL of anticipations and types of Christ who will come in the fullness of time in the New Testament.

However, we can say even more than this.

The Son of God is the eternal Son who was active already in the world in the Old Testament. It is therefore appropriate to speak of Christ himself—that is, as personally present—in the Old Testament. Thus, even though it was not until the fullness of time that the Son took to himself a human nature into a personal union,<sup>54</sup> it is possible that we meet the Son himself appearing in various forms—including human forms—in mysterious ways in various Old Testament texts. Among many memorable examples are Abraham's encounter with three mysterious men, which is described as the LORD appearing to him (Gen 18:1–33); Jacob wrestling with an angel (after which he calls the place “Face of God”; Gen 32:22–32; see also Hos 12:4); and the commander of the LORD's army, who requires Joshua to remove his sandals (Josh 5:13–15).<sup>55</sup> To this we could add many other texts, including appearances

53. See Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 690.

54. Compare Owen, *Works* 1:349.

55. Compare also Irenaeus, *Epid.* 44–47; Bavinck, *RD* 1:329; Graham A. Cole, *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*, NSBT 30 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity,

of the angel of the LORD, in whom the word of God was especially present.<sup>56</sup> At times the angel of the LORD is distinguished from the LORD, while at other times he seems to be identified with the LORD (e.g., Exod 3:2–6; Hos 12:4).

Though we cannot answer definitively all questions we may have about such encounters (and though we cannot isolate the Son's actions from the other Trinitarian persons), it is possible to conclude that (at least some of) these are preincarnate appearances of the Son of God, the Logos and Mediator between God and humanity.<sup>57</sup>

**CONCLUSION** THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS OF the Old Testament provide a wealth of background information for understanding the person and work of Christ. In this chapter, I have only begun to scratch the surface. Even so, we have seen that the Son of God is eternal and preexistent, and has been active in the world long before his incarnation. This sonship is reflected in the emphasis on sonship with Adam, Israel, and later the king of Israel. These biblical-theological themes of sonship highlight both the privileged relationship between God and his people and the call to obedience. The Pentateuch also shows us clearly the problem of sin, the power of God to save (especially in the exodus), and the means by which a holy God can have fellowship with a sinful people. Key in the administration of God's people, and crucial for understanding the work of Christ, are the offices and institutions of prophet, priest, and king. All these receive further clarification in the biblical prophets.

## FURTHER READING

Beale, G. K. *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. NSBT 17. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004. Beale shows the importance of God's

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2013), 51–69.

56. For this and for the rest of this paragraph, see Bavinck, *RD* 1:328–30; 2:262–63; see also Turretin, *Inst.* 3.4.7–18 (1:185–87); 3.26.9 (1:275–76); Owen, *Works* 1:349–50.

57. See Bavinck, *RD* 1:344; 3:280; Poythress, *Theophany*, 417–24; see also the cautions of Cole, *God Who Became Human*, 116–20; Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, *New Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 224–26.

dwelling place in Scripture and how that is fulfilled in Christ and the church.

Belcher, Richard P., Jr. *Prophet, Priest, and King: The Roles of Christ in the Bible and Our Roles Today*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016. Belcher discusses the three anointed offices in the Old Testament with an eye to how they are fulfilled in Christ.

Estelle, Bryan D. *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. Considers the role of intertextuality in Scripture and applies this specifically to the exodus. A semitechnical monograph that covers the biblical-theological theme of exodus throughout the Scriptures, with a focus on its fulfillment in Christ.

Morales, L. Michael. *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*. ESBT. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. Highlights the centrality of the exodus in the outworking of redemption and the movement toward new creation, relates it to the sacrificial system, and shows how Jesus fulfills the exodus in the New Testament.

Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*. Repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975. A standard, foundational work on the contents and structure of biblical theology. Vos gives extended attention to the opening chapters of Genesis.