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Steam rose from their backs like fog from a warming road. A sweaty, earthy heat floated up through the cobwebs in the rafters where kittens stalked each other with ferocious abandon. The straw on the floor was matted down in thick circles. The heifers had been sleeping inside not too long ago but now they were tied up to feed, halters tied to posts, grounding them in barned reality.

A shot fired somewhere in the deep woods, sounds bouncing off of the trees and surely sending the last leaves fluttering down to the ground. A few of the girls looked up from the grain bunk. But he didn’t notice.

The man was reciting, again and again, the sermon for the next morning. His corduroys tucked into his boots, button down shirt hid beneath a barn coat. A small tuft of hair was climbing out around his collar, eeking out into the cold air. He pushed his hat back across his auburn grizzle in a subconscious effort to clear his furrowed brow and let his thoughts wander. Then he rubbed his hand across his day-old stubble, bringing the fingers together at his lips as if to coax out the words.

Chickens stared into the barn. Dark, glossy eyes over yellow triangles.

The heifers were happy to be listening. Happy to be in from the cold and constant rain. Happy to get attention from something other than the dogs that would come and bark at them because they, too, were bored. At least they were happy to be fed. And the many times this ritual played out, they listened to sermons. Like parishioners they chewed as he talked.

“John one, verse one,” he started. “The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” He stopped and started again in a lower register.
“The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” He paused. “This morning this verse from the Gospel of John touches us as humans because we so often forget that Jesus became one of us. Like us in every way.” He practiced reaching his hand to his chest for emphasis.

One of the heifers looked back at him, scolding him for being dramatic. Or for taking so long to get to her.

He was brushing them out, preparing them for a show next spring. Getting them used to ritual and routine.

He ran his comb through their tight curls pulling out dirt and manure, collectings of the day and the night and the world outside. “This morning—” he cleared his throat. Deep guttural sounds. Looking into the hair for something real to preach to. Something that needed to hear his words.

“…Touches us, both you and me…”

A gust of wind blew across the barnyard and one of the doors swung slowly open, refusing to stay put.

He was further now. “Creation longed for him to come, for him to reach down and affect us.”

The little heifer nudged his arm with her drippy nose, hoping for more grain. But it was useless, for the man was stuck in the routine of words and rhythm, communications and combing.

He felt done now. He loosed the girls and they lumbered out of the sagging barn toward the trough for a drink.

He walked over to the pigs. They recognized the shuffling gait and leaden boots clomping on earth. They snorted for the gossip, for whatever news the man had to bring. They didn’t care what you brought as long as you brought something. “And there was nothing that we could do. ‘But God!’ Ephesians says. ‘But God!’ He gave us his son. The best sacrifice.” He felt his mediocrity.

He let his breath escape him for emphasis and the pigs looked up at him. They were very near market weight and they would soon need sorting. He slopped the leftovers he
had carried into their pen and turned back toward the house. They circled around scraps of potatoes and eaten ears of corn.

He plodded back to the house, completely forgetting to say “hullo” to the lonely Percheron in the small pasture.

Three dogs circled him. They cooed and whimpered, and wagged their tails for lack of attention. And now his voice rose for his conclusion. “And we mustn’t ignore the flesh and blood in each other also. To provide for the body of Christ. To care for them and see them as ourselves.” He pushed the dogs out of the way with his bad leg, trying to get to the house.

Another shot fired and the dogs’ ears picked up. It was deer season and shots around dusk were common. They returned to their master anxious, looking for a command. He was lost in his thoughts, automatically kicking off his boots by the back door.

Hinges groaned as he stepped inside. He tried to picture whom he was meant to pastor and only saw a dim light, perhaps from his fireplace that needed stoking.
The Meaning of καινὴ κτίσις in Paul’s Epistles
Chungyeol Lim

I. Introduction

The phrase καινὴ κτίσις (new creation) appears only two times in Paul’s epistles (Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17). However, the concept of καινὴ κτίσις is crucial to our understanding of Paul’s epistles and his thoughts. First of all, in Gal. 6:15, the phrase καινὴ κτίσις appears in the middle of the conclusion, which details the hermeneutical significance of the letter.¹ This has led Jeffrey Weima to note, “The concept of new creation, therefore, is of paramount importance for understanding Paul’s theology in Galatians.”² In 2 Cor. 5:17, Paul reinterprets the concept of new creation from the Old Testament (especially Isa. 65:17) based on a Christological eschatology. This shows that καινὴ κτίσις is not a concept that was created by Paul himself, but originated in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the theme of καινὴ κτίσις appears in other Pauline passages (Eph. 2:15; 4:23-24; Col. 3:9-10), giving further indication that this concept is essential to understanding the thoughts that penetrate Paul’s epistles.

It is important to note that there are differences in the interpretation of Paul’s concept of καινὴ κτίσις. After the Reformation period, Protestant exegetes generally followed Luther in understanding καινὴ κτίσις to mean a renewed

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¹ See Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “The Pauline Letter Closings: Analysis and Hermeneutical Significance,” Bulletin for Biblical Research 5 (1995): 177-197. Weima says, “It is our contention that these epistolary closings are carefully constructed units, shaped and adapted in such a way that they relate directly to—sometimes, in fact, even summarize—the major concerns and themes taken up in the bodies of their respective letters” (178).

Christian on a personal level in the Pauline epistles. However, in more recent times many commentators and biblical scholars have claimed that Paul’s concept of καινὴ κτίσις goes beyond individual regeneration or renewal, meaning the transformed cosmos or the church, which encompasses both Jews and Gentiles. Until recently, most

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interpreters assigned Paul’s concept of καινὴ κτίσις to one of these three meanings: a Christian, the Church, or the cosmos.\(^5\)

However, no single interpretation wholly captures Paul’s concept of καινὴ κτίσις, whether personal, ecclesiastical, or cosmic. Rather, all three components are harmoniously intertwined.\(^6\) This is evidenced by the integrative Jewish

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6 According to Hubbard, J. L. Martyn is one scholar who attempts integration (*New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought*, 222). In reality, the situation is too complex to correlate commentators or biblical scholars with individual categories as Hubbard does.
understanding of καινὴ κτίσις. Here the cosmological concept encompasses not only the cosmos but also the individual and the community (Israel, the Church). Also, it is the eschatological (cosmic) concept from which salvation history (an individual and communal matter!) receives its twofold framework (“this age” and “age to come”). This age will be concluded and started by the coming of the Messiah. It is precisely this Jewish concept of new creation which Paul reconstructs based on Christ. This essay, then, will demonstrate that the meaning of the term καινὴ κτίσις (new creation) in Paul’s epistles stems from an integrative Jewish understanding interpreted in a Christological framework.

II. Eschatological Background to καινὴ κτίσις


In the epistles, Paul draws the concept of καινὴ κτίσις from various Old Testament texts. The Old Testament text from which many scholars believe that Paul drew the idea of a new creation is the book of Isaiah. Isaiah conceptualizes the new creation as the final completion (or renewal) of God’s creation and covenants with the Israelites. I examine the concept of καινὴ κτίσις (new creation) and eschatology in the Old Testament, focusing on Isa. 65:17–18.

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First, Isa. 65:17–18 indicates that καινὴ κτίσις entails a temporal divide. In the prophetic books of the Old Testament, eschatology is a major subject manifested in various concepts: the Day of the Lord (or YHWH), kingdom of God, new exodus, and the return of YHWH. Isaiah creates a more specific Jewish eschatology with the phrase שָׁמַיִם חֲדָׁשִִׁ֖ים וָׁאָָ֣רֶץ חֲדָׁשָָׁׁ֑ה (a new heavens and a new earth). This text describes a huge transformation from הָׁרִָ֣אשֹׁנ֔וֹת (the former things) to שָׁמַיִם חֲדָׁשִִׁ֖ים וָׁאָָ֣רֶץ חֲדָׁשָָׁׁ֑ה. This change is associated with the Jewish understanding of salvation history and eschatology, in which the two main axes are this age and the age to come. The Israelites of the Old Testament looked forward to the future attaining of the new creation by the coming of the Messiah on the last day. Isa. 65:17–18 shows that the faithful God will fulfill the history of the covenant made at creation by inaugurating a new, eternal creation and age. Isaiah foresees this future change in the new creation.

Second, Isa. 65:17–18 shows that καινὴ κτίσις will take place on the cosmological level. The phrase שָׁמַיִם חֲדָׁשִִׁ֖ים וָׁאָָ֣רֶץ חֲדָׁשָָׁׁ֑ה states that the scope of the new creation is universal. In the Old Testament, the phrase “the heavens and the earth” refers to the whole of creation. The new creation in Isaiah parallels the cosmological creation of Genesis 1.9 The Jewish concept of the cosmological new creation, though, does not exclude the individual and communal levels. Individuals and communities (Israel, the Church) connect and interact with one another in the universe. Isa. 65:18 illustrates all three components of the integrative cosmological concept of new creation: Israel (the community) is symbolized by Jerusalem, and individuals remember and rejoice in the cosmological new creation. The

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9 Jackson points out that בָּרָא (“create,” Qal participle of בָּרָא) in Isa. 65:17 is the same verb which appears in Gen. 1:1 when God creates the whole universe. See Jackson, New Creation in Paul’s Letter, 28.
Old Testament concept of the new creation based on Isaiah is a cosmological concept with individual and communal dimensions.

The eschatological background to καινὴ κτίσις in Isa. 65:17–18 informs Paul’s use of καινὴ κτίσις. First, Old Testament eschatology holds that the new creation will initiate a new era temporally. Second, the Old Testament concept of new creation is cosmological but encompasses the individual and communal levels.

2. Eschatology in Early Jewish Literature

The influence of the early Jewish literature on Paul’s concept of new creation is not as obvious as that of the Old Testament. However, scholars who interpret καινὴ κτίσις both cosmologically and individualistically agree that the early Jewish literature had an influence on Paul’s ideas.10 Douglas Moo points to the continuity between the Old Testament and early Jewish literature.11 Therefore, I examine the relationship between the concept of καινὴ κτίσις and eschatology in early Jewish literature as the

10 Scholars who work from the anthropological perspective and interpret καινὴ κτίσις as referring to individual conversion support their claims with early Jewish texts. Ben Witherington says, “It is difficult, however, not to hear in the background the language used in Judaism about proselytes being as newborn children, especially since the agitators wanted to treat the Galatians like proselytes” (Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998], 451). Likewise, J. B. Lightfoot says, “This phrase, καινὴ κτίσις, is a common expression in Jewish writers for one brought to the knowledge of the true God [i.e., regeneration]” (J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, 304).

11 Douglas J. Moo, “Creation and New Creation,” Bulletin for Biblical Research 20, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 59: “Following the trajectory initiated by Isaiah and continued in apocalyptic Judaism, Paul uses ‘new creation’ to describe the totally new state of affairs that marks the culmination of God’s plan.”
background for Paul’s concept of new creation. I describe the general concept of eschatology in Jewish apocalyptic texts and explore the concept of καινὴ κτίσις in early Jewish literature, analyzing specific texts which refer explicitly to new creation.

First, basic continuity exists between Jewish apocalyptic eschatology and Old Testament eschatology. Although apocalyptic literature understands eschatology in various ways, it commonly includes the future transformation and renewal depicted in the Old Testament (Jub. 1:29; 4:26; 1 En. 72:1; 2 Bar. 32:6; 44:12; 57:2; 4 Ezra 7:75). While recognizing the variety of concepts of new creation throughout the Jewish apocalyptic literature, Margaret E. Thrall claims that a common eschatological belief runs throughout early Jewish literature: future cosmological renewal. Various Old Testament texts similarly assert that, on the last day, the coming of the Messiah will inaugurate a new age throughout the universe so that all things are renewed and all people rejoice (Isa. 11:1–4, 6–9; Ps. 98:7–9). Jewish apocalyptic literature thus depicts future change and renewal through a new creation, similar to the Old Testament.

The concept of καινὴ κτίσις which appears throughout early Jewish literature is consistent with the cosmological and eschatological dimensions of the Old Testament concept. Among the early Jewish texts which deal with new creation, Jub. 1:29 and 1 En. 72:1–2 refer to it directly, presenting an eschatological concept of cosmological renewal through new creation. Jub. 1:29 describes the cosmological renewal of the heavens and the earth in the future “when the heavens and the earth shall be renewed and all their creation according to the powers of the

12 Thrall, The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, 422.
13 Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 1044.
heavens, and according to all the creation of the earth.”

Jub. 1:29 (also 4:26) applies the new creation to Israel, the covenantal community (“the elect ones of Israel”) in Jerusalem, who will receive the blessings of cosmological renewal (“healing,” “peace,” and “blessings”).

The notable point in Jubilees is the connection between the cosmological renewal and the restoration of the Israelites. Although a cosmological event, the new creation is linked to the covenant community—a notion similar to the integrative cosmological concept of καινὴ κτίσις in the Old Testament.

1 En. 72:1–2 also advances an eschatological description of cosmic renewal through new creation. 1 Enoch 72–82 focuses on the heavenly space. 1 En. 72:1–2 demonstrates that Jewish apocalyptic eschatology includes a future, new, eternal creation, specifically in the law given by the angel Uriel: “And he showed me all their laws exactly as they are, and how it is with regard to all the years of the world and unto eternity, till the new creation is accomplished which endureth till eternity.” This verse indicates that the new creation belongs to the future and that, upon its fulfillment, the new age will continue forever (cf. Isa. 65:18).

As with Isaiah, early Jewish literature presents a future, cosmological concept of new creation. Although the various ideas in Jewish apocalyptic literature are not entirely consistent with the Old Testament, they align with the Old Testament concept of new creation in these respects. Early Jewish literature follows both the future-oriented eschatology of the Old Testament which anticipates renewal


15 Wright characterizes the connection between new creation and Zion as follows: “Much second-temple Jewish eschatology was focused, as I have argued already, on the scripturally highlighted expectation that YHWH would return to Zion” (Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 1049).

16 See Jackson, New Creation in Paul’s Letter, 47.
at some future time and the cosmological concept of new creation which encompasses communities and individuals.

3. Paul’s Christologically Informed Eschatology

Paul’s concept of καὶ νῆ κτίσις has continuity with Jewish traditions. His eschatology builds upon Jewish eschatology which envisions two periods (“this age” and “the age to come”), and his concept of new creation is rooted in the cosmological concept found in the Old Testament and early Jewish literature, which encompasses both individuals and the covenant community. However, Paul’s eschatology and concept of new creation also exhibit discontinuity with Jewish understanding, marking a crucial difference with respect to Christ, particularly His crucifixion and resurrection. As F. F. Bruce states, “Christ is head of new creation.”

Paul’s concept of new creation is based on Christological eschatology, which the Christ event has inaugurated but not consummated. Before analyzing Pauline references to new creation, I examine his Christological eschatology as a necessary background to understanding the concept of new creation in his epistles.

Pauline eschatology transforms Jewish eschatology and centers it on Christ. Jewish eschatology foresees the passing of an era (“this age”) on the day of new creation which initiates the new age (“the age to come”). This eschatology appears throughout both the Old Testament and the Jewish apocalyptic literature. As Herman Ridderbos points out, Pauline eschatology remains in an organic relationship with the Old Testament but reconstructs the salvation history of Israel and Jewish eschatology and builds it upon Christ, who inaugurates and authors the new age. Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection form the heart of Pauline

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17 F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Galatians, 273.
18 See Herman Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 50.
eschatology. By these Christ fulfilled the covenant and initiated the “age to come” of the Jews, but the ultimate consummation of the new creation awaits the second coming of Christ. Based on the crucifixion, Pauline eschatology promises ultimate fulfillment to Christians, who live between the first coming of Christ (the crucifixion and the resurrection) and the second coming (the parousia). The Church forms an eschatological community, living in the new age while desiring the final fulfillment of new creation at the time of the parousia. Through the crucifixion and the resurrection, Christ ended the old age and initiated the new age.

Paul’s concept of καινὴ κτίσις also has cosmological characteristics originating in Jewish understanding. The Pauline concept of new creation thus encompasses not only the individual and the community but also the cosmos. In Paul’s concept, the new creation, encompassing individuals, communities, and the cosmos, is inaugurated in Christ. First, this new creation entails cosmological transformation through Christ from the old order to the new order. Paul takes up the Jewish eschatological belief in the change of eras throughout the whole cosmos but asserts that it will be fulfilled through Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-28; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:10). Second, new creation involves a communal transformation, which forms an eschatological community without distinctions among its members (Gal. 3:28). As Wright states, the new creation is “the defining mark of the

19 See Ridderbos, Paul, 45. “When [Paul] speaks here of ‘new creation’ this is not meant merely in an individual sense (‘a new creature’), but one is to think of the new world of the re-creation that God has made to dawn in Christ, and in which everyone who is in Christ is included.” Likewise, Seyoon Kim says, “When we are completely made καινὴ κτίσις, the whole creation, including inanimate objects, will also be recreated. For God’s act of new creation is not concerned only with mankind but with the whole creation, the whole cosmos” (The Origin of Paul’s Gospel [Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1984], 328).
people of God.” Every worldly distinction ends in the new creation of Christ as many nations join to become “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Third, new creation includes individual change; whoever is in Christ is reconciled with God in the new creation (Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:18). Reflecting the Jewish understanding, Paul does not separate the individual from the cosmos and the community but locates the individual in the cosmos and the community. Paul’s new creation concept is a Christ-centered cosmological concept based on the integrative Jewish idea of new creation.

In conclusion, Paul’s eschatology and concept of καινὴ κτίσις transform and make Christological the Jewish framework and understanding of eschatology and new creation. Paul’s eschatology reconstructs the Jewish eschatological framework of “this age” and the “age to come” into the Christological “already” but “not yet” through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Paul’s concept of new creation also draws from the Jewish cosmological concept which encompasses the individual and community but reframes it in the Christological perspective, reaching fulfilment through Christ.

III. Galatians 6:15

1. Structural Analysis

Galatians 6:15 is located in the closing section of Galatians (6:11–18). The conclusions of the epistles have a crucial role in the summary and restatement of the bodies of the letters. Weima categorizes the closing section of Galatian into five parts: (1) Autograph Formula: Introduction (v. 11); (2) Autograph Statement (v. 12–:15); (3) Peace Benediction (v. 16); (4) Hortatory Section (v. 17);

20 Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 1143.
and (5) Grace Benediction: Conclusion (v. 18).

Galatians 6:15 is located in the second section, the Autograph Statement. In Galatians, this section is emphasized by both its length and the emphatic introduction. Specifically, Gal. 6:15 capsulizes “the nub of Paul’s purpose in writing Galatians and the focal point of his subscription.” In this sense, Galatians 6:15 has to be considered as crucial to understanding both Galatians and the concept of καινὴ κτίσις.

2. Grammatical Analysis of Galatians 6:15

Connection between Gal. 6:14 and 6:15. Gal 6:15 starts with the conjunction γὰρ, which is used to express cause, inference, or an explanation. Contextually, it is appropriate to regard 6:15 as the explanation of 6:14. Therefore, we first need to examine Gal. 6:14 in order to understand the new creation in Gal. 6:15. Gal. 6:14 focuses on the cross and Paul’s crucifixion to the world: “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” The idea of new creation in Gal. 6:15 is based on the Christological and cosmological concepts of Gal. 6:14.

First, Paul distinguishes himself from the agitators who boast of things that belong to the world (v. 14a). This distinction is emphasized by the contrasting composition of αὐτοὶ (they) in v. 13 and ἐμοὶ (me) in v. 14. Paul makes this contrast to sharply distinguish himself from the Judaizers. Biblical scholars have noted the strategic position, repetition, and form of ἐμοὶ. Weima notes the emphatic placement of this personal pronoun at the start of Gal. 6:14,

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22 Weima, Neglected Endings, 158.
23 Weima, Neglected Endings, 131.
24 Richard Longenecker, Galatians, WBC (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1990), 295.
and its three-fold repetition (once as ἰμῶν). Donald Guthrie interprets the dative case as highlighting Paul’s insistence on his separation from those who boast in their flesh. Consequently, the cross of Christ stands as a landmark, separating Paul, who boasts only of it, from those who boast of circumcision. The cross provides the Christological basis for the concept of new creation in Gal. 6:15.

Paul also describes the results of the cross of Christ: δι᾽ οὗ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται κάγω κόσμῳ (The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world). For Paul, the term “world” is not neutral; it denotes the whole universe still ruled by the old order (boasting about the flesh). Therefore, the world is opposed to the new creation.

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26 Donald Guthrie, Galatians (London: Nelson, 1969), 160. In this regard, NRS “May I never boast of anything…,” NIV “May I never boast…,” and NET “But may I never boast…” alike fail to highlight Paul’s emphasis. The following translations better capture the emphasis: ESV “But far be it from me to boast…,” ASV “But far be it from me to glory…,” and RSV “But far be it from me to glory…”
27 Martyn, Galatians, 573: “Paul connects the christological note of 6:14a with the cosmic, new creational note of 6:14b and 15.”
28 The cross of Christ is connected with two aspects of the crucifixion (“to me” and “to the world”) through δι᾽ οὗ. The relative pronoun can refer grammatically to either Christ or the cross of Christ. However, because Paul contrasts the circumcision and the cross in Gal 6:12, it is likely that οὗ refers to the cross in 6:14 too. See Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians, 184; Lightfoot, St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, 223; Longenecker, Galatians, 295; Martyn, Galatians, 564; Schreiner, Galatians, 379. The alternative would scarcely change the meaning, “since for Paul ‘Christ’ is always the crucified redeemer Christ” (Betz, Galatians, 318).
29 See Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “Gal 6:11-18: A Hermeneutical Key to the Galatian Letter,” 102: “The antithesis to the ‘world,’ to which the Galatian agitators are enslaved, is the ‘new creation,’ with which Paul identifies himself.”
new creation as the antithesis of the world indicates a cosmological concept which includes not only the universe but also the individual. The word ἐσταύρωται (crucified) is connected to both Paul (individual) and the world (cosmos). It describes Paul’s individual death to the order of the old age in the eschatological framework. In Christ, the old order’s categories have been dissolved. However, Charles B. Cousar points out, “Paul significantly uses the perfect tense of the Greek verb ‘crucify,’ indicating that this world about which he speaks is not entirely over and gone.”\(^\text{30}\)

Thus, Christians and the church exist in a period of eschatological tension and must live in a crucified relationship to the old world. At the same time, Paul understands that the scope of the crucifixion encompasses the cosmos, the whole of creation. As Paul claims that the cross of Christ annulled the old order and the categories of value based on the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα), crucifixion has had effects throughout the universal order, including upon individuals. In particular, the phrase ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται κἀγὼ κόσμῳ shows that the individual and the cosmos are not separated but connected. This verse provides the background for understanding the cosmological concept of new creation in Gal. 6:15, which includes the individual and the community.

Gal. 6:14 introduces the Christological basis and the cosmological eschatology necessary to understand Gal. 6:15. First, he distinguishes himself from the Judaizers based on the cross of Christ, which establishes the Christological foundation of the Pauline concept of new creation (v. 14a). Second, Paul shows that the cross of Christ crucifies the whole cosmos, both individually and universally, providing a universal, eschatological view of new creation (v. 14b).

*Neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision.* Paul asserts that neither the circumcision that the agitators desire nor

\(^{30}\) Cousar, *Galatians*, 151.
uncircumcision has any value. Although he presents circumcision and uncircumcision as antithetical ideas in his epistles (Rom. 2:25-27; 3:30; 4:9-10; 1 Cor. 7:18-19; Gal. 2:7; 5:6; 6:15; Eph. 2:11; Col. 3:11), he rejects both circumcision and uncircumcision in Gal. 6:15. Why does he do so? Paul’s eschatological framework provides the answer. I examine the meaning of the phrase ὁ γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστιν οὔτε ἄκροβυστία (For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision) within this framework.

Some scholars interpret circumcision and uncircumcision as referring to the actual physical state of circumcision. Others interpret these as describing specific kinds of people (Jews and Gentiles). For example, in Col. 3:11 Paul lists many conflicting categories of people: Ἐλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἄκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δοῦλος, ἐλεύθερος (Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free). Thus, Paul claims that circumcision and uncircumcision and the distinction between Jew and Gentile no longer matter in the new age inaugurated by the new creation of Christ.

Since the world which was bound by the old order was crucified, the standards of the old age, such as circumcision, are worthless in the new age. Circumcision and uncircumcision have meaning only for Judaizers who belong to the old age. As Moisè Silva states, “Paul’s fundamental criticism of his opponents was that, by failing to recognize the eschatological significance of the crucifixion, they

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31 See Fee, Galatians, 252; Schreiner, Galatians, 379; James D. G. Dunn, The Epistle to the Galatians (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 342.
32 Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, 191; Hays, “The Letter to the Galatians,” 344; Betz, Galatians, 320. See TDNT 6, 81: “It is also used abstractum pro concreto for ‘the circumcised,’ ‘Jews,’ in distinction from ‘the uncircumcised,’ ‘Gentiles,’ …”
sought to remain in the old world of circumcision.”

Therefore, circumcision–uncircumcision has to be interpreted through the lens of Paul’s Christological eschatology. Paul shows that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is valued in the new age ushered in by Christ. Neither obeying the circumcision standard nor the distinction between Jews and Gentiles matters in this new age.

New Creation. The concept of new creation in Gal. 6:15 must be understood in a cosmological–eschatological–Christological framework. First, the concept of καινὴ κτίσις in Gal. 6:15 includes both the individual and the community. It is difficult to separate individuals from the community and the cosmos to which they belong because the concept of new creation draws from the Jewish integrative concept expressed in the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literature. In the Jewish perspective which encompasses the cosmos, individual, and covenant community, the new creation has effects on the whole universe. In addition, the concept of new creation in Gal. 6:15 implies that, as in Jewish eschatology, the old age will yield to the new age at the coming of the Messiah. Richard Hays shows how the grammatical syntax emphasizes the eschatological transformation: “The broken syntax of the sentence expresses the utter discontinuity between the abolished cosmos and the new world. There is no way to finish the sentence; Paul can only blurt ‘new creation!’”

The Christological element of Paul’s reconstruction of the Jewish concept of καινὴ κτίσις appears clearly in Gal. 6:14. The crucifixion of Christ leads to the crucifixion of the whole cosmos. The world which belonged to the old age has been crucified, so the old order is no longer valid. As

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Gordon Fee states, “In the new order neither religious ethnicity (Jew/Gentile), nor social status (slave/free), nor gender (male/female) counted for anything.” Indeed, the new creation is “a sphere of life wholly differentiated from the cosmos,” in which distinctive patterns of life operate. Thus, as Christ ended the old age and initiated the new age in the crucifixion, and will consummate it with His second coming, Christians and the Church must live today’s life eschatologically.

IV. 2 Corinthians 5:17

1. Structural Analysis

2 Corinthians 5:17 appears in a section on Paul’s ministry of reconciliation (5:16-21). Paul bases his ministry on Christ, especially the crucifixion of Christ, and appeals to the Corinthians. Christ ended the old age and inaugurated the new age through the cross. As a result, Paul lives in the new age with people who share the identity of the new creation (v. 17). Paul assures the Corinthians that his eschatological ministry of reconciliation comes from God through Christ (v. 18-19), so they should abandon their hostility toward him and accept his message of reconciliation (v. 20). Throughout this section, as a minister of the eschatological new age, Paul confirms that his ministry is based on Christ’s ministry, which initiated the new age through the cross and reconciled all things with God.

Many scholars argue that Paul drew the idea of καινὴ κτίσις in 2 Cor. 5:17 from the book of Isaiah as in Gal.

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35 Fee, Pauline Christology, 515.
In fact, 2 Cor. 5:17 more clearly connects with the eschatological transformation of the new creation of Isaiah than Gal. 6:15 does. Also, 2 Cor. 5:17 includes not only the eschatology of Isaiah but also the cosmological concept of καινὴ κτίσις referred to in the early Jewish literature. Indeed, here again Paul inherits the Jewish concept of καινὴ κτίσις from the Old Testament and from Jewish literature, and reforms it into his Christological concept.

2. Grammatical Analysis

Connection between 2 Cor. 5:14-16 and 5:17. 2 Corinthians 5:17 starts with ὥστε, a relative conjunction which establishes that 2 Cor. 5:17 is connected to the preceding part. 2 Cor. 5:14–16 refers to the cause of καινὴ κτίσις referenced in 2 Cor. 5:17. Verse 16 describes the eschatological changes under the new order ushered in by the cross and resurrection of Christ, particularly Christians’ changed perceptions of others and Christ.

2 Cor. 5:16 also begins with ὥστε, connecting v. 16 to vv. 14–15, which also mention Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Christ not only died on the cross but also was raised.

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38 See Garland, 2 Corinthians, 286-297. Also Keener, 1-2 Corinthians, 185.
from the dead for our sake, initiating the eschatological change. Garland states, “Christ’s death is the turning of the ages. It reveals that this world is passing away and shows that all attachments to it are unimportant and vain.” 39 2 Cor. 5:14-15 establishes the crucifixion of Christ as the reason for the eschatological change. Therefore, the crucifixion of Christ is the focal point of the eschatological transformation.

The crucifixion and the resurrection also bring about individual and communal transformations of believers’ perceptions of others and Christ (2 Cor. 5:16). 40 Ralph Martin heralds that “a new eon has been inaugurated by the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, and Paul sees the whole of life through fresh eyes because of the new order of creation that has arrived at the ‘tuning point of ages.’” 41 In v. 16, νῦν (now) and νῦν οὐκέτι (now no longer) point to the eschatological change from the old order based on the flesh to the new order based on the Spirit. For this reason, Victor Paul Furnish calls this νῦν “the eschatological νῦν.” 42 The eschatological change entails two major transformations. First, it changes one’s way of looking at others, abolishing such categories as social status, race, and gender and founding knowledge of others on the Spirit. Second, it changes how we know Christ. Consider, for example, Paul’s pre-conversion understanding of Christ. As Bruce states, “Before his [Paul’s] conversion Paul had a clear picture of

39 Garland, 2 Corinthians, 281.
40 The eschatological change of 2 Cor. 5:16 includes not only individual transformation but also communal transformation. “Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer” (2 Cor 5:16 ESV). See Furnish, II Corinthians, 329: “Thus, in accord also with the anyone of v.17 … the emphatic we probably refers to the whole believing community.”
41 Martin, 2 Corinthians, 36.
42 Furnish, II Corinthians, 329.
Christ in his mind; now he knows it was a wrong picture.\textsuperscript{43}

The eschatological change transforms understandings of others and Christ according to the new order.

2 Cor. 5:16 describes how Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection wrought eschatological change. First, they are the focal point of the eschatological change. Second, they introduce eschatological changes in individual and communal perceptions of others and Christ.

\textit{In Christ, New Creation.} Does καινὴ κτίσις in 2 Cor. 5:17 refer to the cosmos as in Gal. 6:15 or the individual? One’s answer will effect his/her understanding of τις (anyone) in 2 Cor. 5:17. τις could be interpreted as an individual conversion experience. For this reason, Guthrie says καινὴ κτίσις in 2 Cor. 5:17 must refer to a new creature, although he interprets the new creation in 2 Cor. 5:17 cosmologically.\textsuperscript{44} However, καινὴ κτίσις in 2 Cor. 5:17 cannot be interpreted as strictly individual, without attention to communal and cosmological aspects. It must be understood as integrating these various spheres.

First of all, the concept of καινὴ κτίσις in 2 Cor. 5:17 has to be understood in the cosmological framework. This verse shows the radical newness of the believer’s eschatological existence in the cosmological transformation. However, some English translations interpret this verse as a personal change through conversion experience: “If any man is in Christ, \textit{he is a new creature}” (ASV, KJV, NASB). This is caused by not only τις (anyone) but also the incomplete phrase of the main clause which lacks both subject and verb.\textsuperscript{45} However, καινὴ κτίσις in 2 Cor. 5:17 cannot be

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Bruce, \textit{1 and 2 Corinthians}, 208.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Guthrie, \textit{Galatians}, 161.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Hays proposes the following in support of the cosmological new creation: “The sentence in Greek, however, lacks both subject and verb; a very literal translation might treat the words ‘new creation’ as an exclamatory interjection: ‘If anyone is in Christ—new creation!’” Richard B. Hays, \textit{The Moral Vision of the New Testament}, 20.
\end{itemize}
interpreted as a new creature, which implies personal change through a conversion experience. Instead, it has to be interpreted as the cosmological new creation fulfilled in Christ. First, Paul does not apply the concept of new creation to the individual level. Second, 2 Cor. 5:17 is based on the cosmological new creation of Isaiah, which includes the individual and the community. Third, the conditional sentence that includes τις functions as a tool of persuasion in Paul’s broader argument. In this regard, as Garland says, “The translation ‘there is a new creation’ would mean that the new creation does not merely involve the personal transformation of individuals, but encompasses the eschatological act of recreating humans and nature in Christ.” Therefore, the concept of new creation in 2 Cor. 5:17 includes the individual as a significant part of the cosmological new creation.

Also, καινὴ κτῖσις in 2 Cor. 5:17 must be understood in light of Paul’s Christology. The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ) seems to be connected with τις (anyone). However, it may be linked with καινὴ κτῖσις semantically. Martin says, “ἐν Χριστῷ governs the expression καινὴ κτῖσις, ‘new

46 See Moo, "Creation and New Creation," 52. “Carrying over the subject of the protasis (τις) into the apodosis and accordingly taking ‘new creation’ to refer to the individual person (‘anyone’) is certainly plausible reading. But the syntax also allows for translations such as is found in the TNIV: ‘If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come’ (see also NJB, HCSB). Paul can change both subject and verb from protasis to apodosis.”

47 Garland, 2 Corinthians, 286.


49 Jackson, New Creation in Paul’s Letter, 147. “The protasis is assumed both by Paul and by his audience and he thus urges them to live out the implications of that truth—that they are part of God’s eschatological plan of redemption and that the former way of living characteristic of the old world is no longer valid or appropriate.”

50 Garland, 2 Corinthians, 287.
creation,’ not τις, ‘anyone.’”51 In this case, the cosmological concept of the new creation is the Christological new creation. 2 Cor. 5:18-19 suggests as much in its description of this new creation’s effects: Christ reconciles not only the individual (5:18) but also the world with God (5:19). Therefore, 2 Cor. 5:17 exhibits the cosmological and Christological characteristics of the Pauline concept of new creation.

The Old-The New: Eschatological Transformation. In 2 Cor. 5:17 Paul clearly articulates the eschatological transformation of the καινὴ κτίσις of Isaiah from the old age to the new age. The temporal transformation from the old age to the new age often appears in the book of Isaiah (42:9; 43:18-19; 48:6-7; 65:17; 66:22). Paul reconstructs this Jewish concept of the eschatological change in light of his Christology.

The phrase τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἵδοὺ γέγονεν καινά shows us that Paul’s eschatology is based on the Jewish cosmological eschatology. First of all, the plural expressions τὰ ἀρχαῖα (the old things) and καινά (new things) show that his eschatology does not refer solely to an individual.52 Indeed, it implies the Jewish cosmological eschatology of Isaiah connected with the change of age and order. This phrase also includes the concept of a twofold period, which is the root of the Jewish eschatology; the old things (this world) will pass away, and the new things (the age to come) will come.

However, Paul reconstructs the Jewish eschatology within his Christological framework. As Hays says, “He [Paul] is proclaiming the apocalyptic message that through the cross God has nullified the kosmos of sin and death and brought a

51 Martin, 2 Corinthians, 152.
52 See Martin, 2 Corinthians, 152. “Paul is talking of a ‘new act of creation,’ not an individual’s renovation as a proselyte or forgiven sinner in the Day of Atonement service.”
new *kosmos* into being."\(^{53}\) In fact, the fulfillment of eschatology through Christ can be confirmed by the change of tense between Isa. 65:17 and 2 Cor. 5:17. The references in Isaiah use the future tense of the verb, which means that the eschatological transformation will be fulfilled in the future (42:9; 43:18-19; 48:6-7; 65:17; 66:22). But in 2 Cor. 5:17, Paul uses the past and perfect tenses, showing that the eschatological change was fulfilled in Christ. The old things παρῄλθεν (passed away; aorist tense), and the new things γέγονεν (have come; perfect tense). Paul interprets the eschatological prophecies in Isaiah as already having been fulfilled in Christ.

Therefore, the phrase τὰ ἀρχαὶ παρῄλθεν, ἵδον γέγονεν καινά highlights the eschatological transformation of the new creation, which is caused by the new creation of Christ. Paul uses the reference from Isaiah, which includes the Jewish eschatology, but he reforms the Jewish eschatology and interprets the reference from Isaiah within the Christological framework.

V. Conclusion

The Pauline concept of καινὴ κτίσις cannot be understood from one perspective only, whether personal, ecclesiastical, or cosmic. Primarily, this is because the Pauline concept of new creation is based on the integrative Jewish concept of new creation. First, the Jewish concept is a cosmological concept that encompasses not just the cosmos but also the individual and the community (Israel, the Church). Second, it is an eschatological concept that allows the history of salvation to be understood from a twofold perspective ("this age" and "age to come"). This age will end at the coming of Messiah. This Jewish interpretation appears continuously from the Old Testament to the earliest Jewish literature. The Old Testament, especially Isa. 65:17, indicates that in a

cosmic sense, the new creation will accompany the transformation from the old age to the new age. The various ideas explicated in early Jewish apocalyptic literature are also consistent with the above passage from Isaiah. In particular, the direct references to new creation in the Jewish literature (Jub. 1:29; 1 En. 72:1–2) are consistent with the eschatology and the concept of new creation mentioned in the Old Testament. The Pauline concept of new creation is influenced by this Jewish concept of new creation.

However, Paul reconstructs the integrative Jewish concept of new creation in light of his Christological framework based on the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. In other words, Christ is the focal point of Paul’s concept of new creation. Christ fulfilled the cosmic redemption of the world through the crucifixion and the resurrection. He also effected the eschatological transformation, ending the old age (this age) and inaugurating the new (the age to come). However, the consummation of the new creation is yet to come, even though Christ has already fulfilled it through the crucifixion and the resurrection. Paul reforms the Jewish concept of new creation based on his Christological eschatology.

Pauline references to καὶ νὴ κτίσις appear twice in the New Testament (Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17). In Galatians the focus is on how the cross of Christ effects the cosmological dimension of the new creation (“the world,” 6:14) as well as the individual dimension (“me,” 6:14). The new creation concept also nullifies old concepts such as religious, ethnic, or gender distinctions, and initiates the new age in which the Spirit of Christ is followed. The second reference can be found in 2 Corinthians and focuses on how the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ brought about a transformation in how to look at others and at Christ as participants in the cosmic new creation. Consequently, the Pauline concept of
new creation must be understood in light of direct references to it which confirm that Paul adopts the Jewish concept of new creation but reconstructs his concept of καινὴ κτίσις based on Christ.
The Wise Woman of Tekoa: Lady Wisdom in the Court of King David?

Doren Snoek

The narrative of 2 Samuel 14:1-23 is a fascinating entry point into a study of the wisdom in the primary history and the way in which themes from wisdom literature are sounded and developed by narrative literature. The story falls amidst what is commonly called the succession narrative (2 Samuel 9-20). Absalom, the heir apparent, is in exile because of his fratricide of Amnon. King David, torn by grief, longs to be reconciled with Absalom, but such reconciliation seems impeded by the seriousness of Absalom’s offense. It is a crisis for David and for Israel. Joab notices David’s grief and intervenes by enlisting the help of an anonymous “wise woman from Tekoa.” At his instruction, she enters the king’s court under the ruse of mourning for her son who, like Amnon, was killed by his brother. Others in her village want to kill the brother, but this would result in the end of her family line. The king promises a ruling and tells her to go home. But the woman stays on! She tells a proverb, and then charges the king with being in

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1 Originally submitted to Dr. Arie Leder on December 18, 2014 for OT 515: Wisdom Literature in its Canonical Context.

2 There is a debate as to whether the phrase לֶצֶאת אֶל־אֲבָסָלוֹם in 2 Sam. 14:1 has to do with going to Absalom for reconciliation or to fight with him or even to kill him. It seems likely that David intends reconciliation, given that he was comforted (נחם) following Amnon’s death. See Andrew Willet, An Harmonie upon the Second Book of Samuel (Cambridge: 1607), 86.

3 It is not significant which of the two cities named Tekoa she is from. Probably, Joab and the narrator are emphasizing her anonymity; she needs to be anonymous to carry out her role. See Naama Zahavi-Ely, “‘Turn Right or Left’: Literary Use of Dialect in 2 Samuel,” in Hebrew Studies 53 (2012), 45, 47, and particularly her notes 7 and 10.
the same situation as the blood-thirsty villagers. David finds out that Joab orchestrated the woman’s appearance and decides to bring back Absalom from exile. The woman suddenly disappears.

The story is rife with biblical resonances; most significantly, the woman’s story recalls the motif of sibling rivalry. The narrative is also chock-full of literary devices and is divergent in literary character from the surrounding material. The narrator and the woman both use anonymity. For the woman, anonymity allows her freer speech with the king: she speaks extensively and is rather bold with the king at points, more than any other unnamed characters. In the hands of the narrator, anonymity also draws special attention to her role.

The present essay will argue that accounts of the woman’s role should be extended. Even more than portraying her in a specific societal role, the narrative invites us to see her as

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4 Her story calls to mind Nathan’s parable to David in 2 Sam. 12:1-4 and other juridical parables. See Uriel Simon, “The Poor Man’s Ewe-Lamb: An Example of Juridical Parable,” in Biblica 48 no. 2 (1967), 221-225. It also recalls Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau. See Larry L. Lyke, King David with the Wise Woman of Tekoa: The Resonance of Tradition in Parabolic Narrative, JSOTSup 255 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 25-89, and especially p. 84 where Lyke writes, “2 Sam. 14.6 functions as a synecdoche for the topos of sibling rivalry and brings with it an accumulation of related traditions…”

5 Zahava-Ely writes, “The complex plot of the Succession Narrative mentions thirty-seven individuals by name, many with their fathers’ and even mothers’ names—adding up to fifty-seven names in all, seven of them women; yet the ‘wise woman of Tekoa’ is identified only as such, without a given name. Of the sixteen characters in this body of text who speak more than three times, she is the only one who is not referred to by name” (“Right or Left,” 46).


7 Claudia V. Camp, “The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Early Israel?” in Catholic Bible Quarterly 43 (1981): 14-
an appearance of Lady Wisdom in the court of King David. To establish this thesis, we will compare the narrative characterization of the wise woman of Tekoa with personified wisdom and the individual wisdom sayings in Proverbs. We will also argue that the wise woman of Tekoa is not only wise in the sense of being crafty. Like Lady Wisdom, her actions lead towards restoration and wholeness. We will now proceed by comparing the account of the Tekoite woman with wisdom in Proverbs on three points: her speech, her knowledge of the divine, and her instrumentality in reconciliation.

The Tekoite Woman’s Speech

The woman’s speech with the king is surprisingly lengthy; in fact, it is the longest exchange of direct speech reported in the succession narrative! There are several noteworthy features of the woman’s speech within this dialogue. First, we will consider the woman’s use of words to diffuse tension with the king while keeping herself out of danger. Second, we will consider the way in which the woman uses local dialect to position herself as less of a threat to the king. Third, we will note poetic devices and a proverbial saying in the woman’s speech. Finally, we will observe that the woman’s dialogue with the king is ultimately persuasive.

The woman uses her words to diffuse tension with the king when she presses her audience with him longer than she ought. By 2 Sam. 14:8, the woman has presented her case to the king and he has promised to rule about it. But


8 An uninvited audience may result in death (Esther 4:11), but royal audiences are touchy even when invited—the slightest misstep may result in death (Dan. 2:12-13).
she has not yet accomplished her purposes and needs a longer audience. Recognizing the danger, she employs self-imprecatory speech: “Upon me, my lord the king, be the guilt, and upon the house of my father…”

She simultaneously shows deference to the king and keeps his attention, tipping her hand—there is more to this story! After this instance, she uses a similar strategy of deference and politeness throughout (14:12, 17, 19, 20). More particularly, the woman uses speech to diffuse the king’s potential anger when he discovers that Joab was behind her ruse (14:18-20, cf. Prov. 16:14-15; 20:2). She flatters him outright, “my Lord is wise on the order of the wisdom of an angel of God to know all that is in the land.”

It is clear that she knows how to handle a king.

At the same point in the narrative, the woman seems to purposefully employ a local dialect to portray herself as a court outsider, thus diminishing whatever threat she poses. Naama Zahavi-Ely observes that all three words of the phrase “turn right or left” are misspelled in the consonantal text of 2 Sam 14:19 (אמ־אש להמין ולהשמל, usually spelled אם־יש להימין ולהשמאל). She makes an argument that the author chose these three common words that had recognizable and transcribable non-standard forms.

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9 Unless otherwise noted, all Bible translations are my own. J. Hoftijzer points out that a similar device is used by Abigail in 1 Sam 25:24 (“David and the Tekoite Woman,” in *Vetus Testamentum* 20 no. 4 [1970], 424 [419-444].)

10 The Hebrew here is difficult to translate: ואדני חכם כחכמת מלאך האלים. The comparison seems to be between the *wisdom* of “my lord” and the “angel of God.” The literal “my lord is wise like the wisdom of an angel of God” is clumsy, but “my lord has wisdom” makes the relationship genitival (NIV, NET) rather than predicative. I have opted for “on the order of” to retain the repetition of “wisdom” in English and to clarify what is being compared. Note that Mephibosheth compares David to an angel of God in 2 Sam. 19:27, but without reference to wisdom.

11 Zahavi-Ely, “Right or Left,” 45-53.
precisely in order to indicate the woman’s provincial background and her ability to skillfully drop down to a lower register in order to appear less threatening. Together, the woman’s use of dialect, deference to the king, self-imprecation, and flattery are indicative of the skillful use of words to avoid danger and dance down the knife’s edge of a tense royal audience.

Words are not just used to avoid danger; the woman uses qualitatively more refined sorts of speech as well as a local dialect. In 2 Sam 14:13-14, she uses repetition and a proverb to convey her point. The king is guilty of plotting (חשב) against God’s people by keeping Absalom in exile (נדח), but God “does not take away life, but devises devices (חשב מחשבות) so that the exiled one (נדח) will not remain exiled (נדח).” This is coupled with a proverb, “for we must surely die, like water that is poured onto the earth and cannot be gathered.” The inevitability of death amplifies the king’s lack of mercy to Absalom, and this is set in stark contrast to God’s mercy.

In much the same way as other wise women who appear in 2 Samuel, the wise woman of Tekoa aims her speech at the persuasion of the king. Her skilled tongue conveys her safely through the delicate situation. She proves persuasive—ultimately, the king does what she wants him to do! He orders that Absalom be brought back to Jerusalem from exile (2 Sam 14:23).

In what ways are these four aspects of the woman’s speech wise? Consider the following proverbs (NIV):

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12 Zahavi-Ely, “Right or Left,” 50.
13 Camp, “The Wise Women of 2 Samuel,” 16, 19-20. Camp suggests that the image of water spilling out is common in proverbial sayings and that differing moralizing “punchlines” are appended to it. Cf. Prov. 17:14, “starting a quarrel is like letting out water, stop it before strife breaks out!” (NET).
Prov. 12:18: The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
Prov. 15:1: A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
Prov. 15:4: The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse spirit crushes the spirit.
Prov. 25:25: With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue can break bones.

The woman exemplifies the wise speech the proverbs envision in many ways. It is clear that she is persuasive. By the careful use of words, she avoids any anger that the king might show (given her indictment of him). When set against the background of the other two proverbs, which have to do with healing and restoration, the woman’s words and the outcome of her words lie in sharp contrast with the preceding narrative. With the rape of Tamar and the killing of Amnon both occurring in 2 Samuel 13, death and the crushing of spirits prevail in the story. The woman’s first story to the king is about death and revenge, too. 2 Samuel 14 begins to turn away from death and towards restoration on the hinge of the woman’s words to David.

The Woman’s Knowledge of the Divine

The Tekoite woman seems to possess unusual knowledge about God. Indeed, she claims to have knowledge about what God is devising or planning (וָנֵא). The source of her knowledge is not indicated—she just has it. On a cursory reading, this direct speech about God and his plans seems unique in the succession narrative. With the exception of Nathan’s speech in 2 Sam. 12:7-12, most other assessments of God’s plans express uncertainty about what he is going to do (e.g., 2 Sam. 10:12; 15:25) rather than clearly indicating what God is planning, thinking, or doing.

The Tekoite woman’s direct and unimpeded knowledge of God may be compared with the proximity of the Lady
Wisdom to God in the opening chapters of Proverbs. She claims to have knowledge and insight (Prov. 8:12, 14). Indeed, wisdom’s nearness to God in creation is cited as a reason she should be heard (Prov. 8:22-32). Wisdom is also given a voice by other characters in Proverbs, especially parents. In Prov. 3:11-12, the parental voice claims to know the motivation of God’s discipline—his love. To be clear, these texts do not indicate that wisdom has direct access to God’s planning. What they do show is that Lady Wisdom is in a position to have better and more direct knowledge of God’s plans or intentions than humans and that other wise voice(s) implicitly claim some access to those plans or intentions. The Tekoite woman takes on the same role.

**The Tekoite Woman on Justice and Reconciliation**

The woman functions in the narrative not as the mere puppet of Joab, but as the proximate cause of reconciliation between David and Absalom. Before the woman’s appearance on the scene, Absalom is in exile. The reference to the avenger of blood in the woman’s parable resonates with biblical law, especially Num. 35:16-34. Presumably, Absalom fled (2 Sam. 13:34, 38) because his own life was at risk, having instigated the killing of Amnon.

We will briefly discuss the status of Absalom, because it bears on our evaluation of the course of action the Tekoite woman sets in play. Is it right for David to reconcile with Absalom and bring him back from exile? If Absalom really

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15 Contra Alice Ogden Bellis, who argues that the woman cannot really be said to be “wise” since she is playing a role that was designed for her by Joab. See Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women’s Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 154. There have been suggestions that Joab is the one who is really wise in the story—but this seems a stretch because Joab is never described in this way. Zehavi-Ely suggests instead that Joab is a military man who is uncomfortable with the delicate situation. See Zahavi-Ely, “Right or Left,” 52.
is a murderer, then he must be executed (Num. 35:16-34). If David restores Absalom from his exile, has he not vindicated a murderer and acted unlawfully? This is not so clear. Amnon raped Tamar and should have been put to death (2 Sam. 13:14). David hears about what happened and is angry (2 Sam. 13:21), but does nothing; he fails to carry out justice. Absalom has killed a man who would be condemned to death. Perhaps because Absalom had Amnon killed without due process, he is still guilty. In any case, Absalom has had Amnon killed and has fled, whether in fear of a blood avenger or retaliation by David, but there are mitigating circumstances.

There are parallels to the story the Tekoite woman tells in 2 Sam. 14:4-7. She states that she is a widow, and that her two sons were fighting in the field (presumably, there are no witnesses). One kills the other. At present, the villagers want to kill the perpetrator, who is the only one left to inherit the widow’s possessions and to continue the family

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16 The depiction of what Amnon does is brief and terrible, “since he was stronger (חזק) than her, he forced her down (שען) and lay (שכב) with her.” Cf. Deut 22:25, where it is clear that in the event of forcible rape (חזק + שכב) when there is no one to help, the perpetrator must be executed. The passage in Deuteronomy assumes a setting in a field where there is no one to help. Although Amnon and Tamar are not in a field, it is clear that there is no one present to help her as Amnon has sent out all of the attendants (2 Sam. 13:9).

Jan-Wim Wesselius suggests that the rape of Tamar and her subsequent welcome into Absalom’s home is “over-stressed” in the narrative as a sign to the reader that this event catalyzed Absalom’s rise to power. See Jan-Wim Wesselius, “Joab’s Death and the Central Theme of the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel IX-1 Kings II),” in Vetus Testamentum 40 (1990), 339. Wesselius also notes that “Absalom’s bid for power” is bracketed by the appearance of “wise women,” both of whom interact with Joab.

17 Andrew Willet, Harmonie upon the Second Book of Samuel, 83.

18 Although, in the case of a rape with no witnesses it is not as clear what this due process might be, given that other capital punishments require multiple witnesses (Num. 35:30).
line. But this would leave her without an heir, and the family name would be extinguished. David’s just ruling is that the remaining son should not be executed, but allowed to live. So too, in the midst of the tumult in David’s family, the son whose life is in danger ought to live. As God plans to reconcile the exiles, so David should be reconciled with Absalom.

It is at this juncture that wisdom literature bears on our story. Wisdom is concerned with the proper execution of justice (Prov. 18:5; 24:24). But at other points, wisdom literature seems to be interested in reconciliation (Prov. 10:12). In the story, David and Absalom have wronged each other—David by failing to execute justice on behalf of Tamar, and Absalom probably by executing justice in the wrong way.19 The wise way forward is not revenge—God will do this (Prov. 20:22; 24:12). The wise woman offers David an alternate way, the way of reconciliation. He seems to follow it (2 Sam. 14:21), albeit in fits and starts (2 Sam. 14:24; 14:33).20 As further evidence that the woman should be understood as offering the correct or just course of action, we note that wisdom literature claims to have access to the mind of God concerning justice in particular (Prov. 17:15). In the same way, the woman claims to have access to the mind of God on what is precisely a question of justice: the return of exiled Absalom.

19 See Willet, Harmonie upon the Second Book of Samuel, 90. Willet writes, “therefore the meane way is best, neither to condemne or justifie [that David excuses Absalom]: excused it may be by diverse circumstances: 1. there were no accusers or revengers, which followed this crime against Absalom… he considered that it was God’s justice upon Amnon…”

20 We will pause to note that as the woman claims to have knowledge of the mind of God, so wisdom literature claims to have access to God’s state of mind about the miscarriage of justice (e.g., Prov. 17:15).
Lady Wisdom and the Tekoite Woman Compared

We have noted three aspects of the woman’s encounter with David: her speech, her knowledge of the divine, and her interactions with justice and reconciliation. On each of these points of comparison, the woman displays remarkable consistency with the prescriptions of Proverbs. By her speech, her conduct with King David, and the outcome of her actions, she is proven to be very wise.

The peculiarity of the woman’s anonymity further suggests to us that her wisdom is of utmost importance to the narrative. Indeed, wisdom (חכמה) brackets her appearance in the narrative (14:2, 20) and constitutes an inclusio. It is not a stretch to suggest that this woman is not merely a wise woman, but is Lady Wisdom herself (or at least a type of Lady Wisdom). She appears in this narrative interacting with the king, guiding him, rebuking him, keeping herself out of danger with words, and bringing about reconciliation while balancing justice.

Conclusion: The Wise Woman of Tekoa—Not Merely a Societal Role

As mentioned at the outset of this paper, the Tekoite woman and other wise characters in 1-2 Samuel have received attention as filling a particular societal role in ancient Israel. This direction in scholarship towards perceiving the common role is good. In the case of the Wise Woman of Tekoa, though, it is probably not enough. The role of the Wise Woman of Tekoa may be extended so that the narrative is read as portraying a sort of appearance of Lady Wisdom herself to David. Read in this way, the stakes

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21 We have not discussed the woman’s appearance in the royal court as consistent with wisdom as described in Proverbs, but it seems to be the case that this, too, associates her with wisdom in Proverbs. The first verse of Proverbs associates wisdom with royalty and with David by name. Wisdom is further associated with royalty in Prov. 8:15-16.
in the narrative are significantly increased, even given the tension that is already present in the succession narrative. At a critical point in David’s reign, his family is in turmoil. The crown prince raped his sister, who is in mourning. He has now been killed, and Absalom is in hiding for fear of his life. *Now* wisdom appears. What will David *do*? Will he recognize her, will he listen? It is clear that he needs to.

Lady Wisdom becomes, in some ways, the spokesperson for God in a story in which he neither appears nor is explicitly named. Her words, while not as direct as those of the prophet Nathan (“thus says the Lord”), are just as forceful. She puts it as a question at first, “Why have you devised like this against the people of God?” But there is only one answer—the king is guilty! She has softly put him in a trap. He sees what is happening—is Joab behind it? Yes.

But Joab is not the only one behind the story. He is acting, but God is there somewhere behind the scenes, watching, observing. God has seen the rape of Tamar, the killing of Amnon, the flight of Absalom, and the distress of David. *And he has been silent so far.*²² As far as David knows, as far as the narrator will say, God has *not* been an imminent presence in the events of 2 Samuel 13. In this way, the woman’s poetic statement becomes a narrative hinge. It is a very small window through which the reader can see for a very brief moment that no, this is not what God wishes for the house of David. Perhaps there is another possibility. The reader cannot see it on his own—David cannot see it on his own. Joab can, but it will take the voice of a sage—of wisdom herself—to steer David into it. And it is wisdom

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²² Meir Sternberg suggests in various places that the omissions of the narrator are just as important as the details that are provided. See Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).
that does this, speaking in just the right way about the concerns of God as regard the house of David.

Of course, this is not the end of the narrative. Wisdom has appeared, and the situation has been changed—for now. The reader learns just a few verses later that not all is well. Absalom and David are not on speaking terms (2 Sam. 14:24). Although they eventually make their peace, Absalom will later usurp David’s place (2 Sam. 14:28-33; 2 Samuel 15 and following). Folly and greed are still operative and their fruits cannot be entirely prevented, even when wisdom herself intervenes and is heard.
Introduction
Throughout the seventeenth century, many theologians such as Blaise Pascal, Robert Bellarmine, and John Owen wrote in the area of apologetics. However, one popular theologian less known for his apologetic writings was Richard Baxter. Despite the increased interest in the thought of Richard Baxter, little has been done to examine the more technical aspects of his theology, and virtually nothing to examine his apologetic writings. One question arises in Baxter’s context: What were the contributions of Baxter’s apologetic writings in light of prominent atheistic and deistic objections to the Christian faith in his seventeenth-century context? This essay will demonstrate that Baxter's apologetic writings were framed contextually by the logical order of his day, the pastoral sensitivity in his writings, and the prominence of deism and re-circulated forms of particular Greek objections in his context.

An examination of Baxter’s two volumes of apologetic writings is important in order to gain insight into Baxter’s apologetic methodology. By looking at *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* and *More Reasons for the Christian Religion*, we will see Baxter’s dealings with the atheism of his day and the understanding of the peculiar deist claims and heresies of Lord Herbert. We will also that Baxter’s apologetic works demonstrate a pastoral tact common to his other writings. The essay will also look at Baxter’s analysis of unbelief versus the Christian religion during the seven-

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1 A prior edition of this paper was submitted for the course Puritanism and Orthodoxy at Calvin Theological Seminary on May 28, 2014.
teenth century, with a focus on Baxter’s method as he defends the Christian religion in his two volumes.

Baxter’s apologetic writings have not been addressed by many scholars at length. This is most likely due to the fact that in 1707, a group of non-conformist ministers separated Baxter’s thought from his context and injuriously misrepresented Baxter for subsequent generations. The “so-called” practical works of Baxter were separated from his other works and published apart from his other writings. Some of the forgotten volumes were his more apologetically focused writings, two of which will be addressed in this essay: Reasons and its lengthier appendix More Reasons.

Baxter deals theologically and pastorally with doubters, unbelievers, hypocrites, and the deism of his day. By examining the apologetic correspondence between Baxter and Lord Herbert and other contra-Christian letters, the implicit methodology that he used to defend the Christian faith in the seventeenth century can be exposited. The apologetics of Baxter are, in part, his personal reflections on evidences for the Christian religion that he published both for the benefit of Christians and, as he phrases it, “unbelievers” and “hypocrites.” Baxter’s works are primarily an overflow of his personal reflections. Some of these reflections are an outgrowth of the immense medical ailments that he faced throughout his life, with the difficulties of the pastorate, the English civil war, and the presence of various theological controversies. His first volume examines natural and special revelation and makes rational arguments to those who have doubts or

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disagreements concerning the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{5} Baxter, once a doubter himself, empathizes with his audience in an especially pastoral way as he conveys the gospel and its validity.\textsuperscript{6} The volume also addresses Greek objections, both in ancient and contemporary philosophical forms, to the Christian faith. He also addresses reasons for belief grounded in natural and special revelation.

In his second volume Baxter addresses an audience that is exposed to deism and other heresies by writing a series of letters to one of his major opponents, Lord Edward Herbert. Herbert, a noteworthy seventeenth century philosopher, is a prime target that Baxter writes against in the first portion of his book. The collection of letters he wrote to Herbert was his attempt to admonish him in love, that he might know the truth of the gospel and believe it. The second portion of volume two is a critical analysis of Herbert’s major work on deism, \textit{De Veritate}. Baxter addresses questions and implied questions of Herbert through his Christian worldview to minister to Herbert, and includes other readings exploring similar questions. Baxter’s apologetics, though less known, are significant to the Reformed orthodox position, as he defends Christian theism against the deism of Herbert, among other things. Prior to examining Baxter’s writings, it is beneficial to peer into the life of Baxter in order to see the prominent events that were formational to his work as an apologist.

**Baxter’s Implicit Apologetic Method**

**Guidelines for Reading Baxter in Context**

When examining Baxter’s apologetic writings, it is important to begin first with some of the fundamental

\textsuperscript{5} Baxter, \textit{Reasons}, c3-c6.

presuppositions of his seventeenth century context. With regard to Baxter’s apologetic method, Muller writes that Baxter uses the logic of proofs to support piety against both genuine and practical atheism. This contrasts with the early and high orthodox eras, when the proofs did not take on the form and function that theistic proofs usually did among numerous rationalist philosophes of the age. Muller states:

The Cartesian form of the ontological argument is scorned, and the more empirical patterns of argument found in the a posteriori rational theism of writers like Lord Herbert of Cherbury are not applied with any rigor nor are they used, as typical of rationalism, to argue the soundness of natural reason and natural theology as an independent and morally or soteriologically significant form of the knowledge of God.

Muller also notes that the historical context of argumentation is essential for comprehending the development of proofs for the existence of God in reformed theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Muller explains:

Clues to the altered historical context can be found in the location of the proofs, the reference to principia and principal knowledge found in many of the expositions, the alteration of the relationship of rhetoric and logic characteristic of Renaissance and early modern thought, and the connection between the proofs and the polemic against atheism and skepticism that they embody.

Furthermore, a significant element for understanding Baxter in context is Baxter’s latitudinarian views. Baxter was also a dissenter, i.e., one who separated himself from the Church of England, and a proponent of Calvinist theology.

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8 Muller, *Divine Essence*, 291.
9 Muller, *Divine Essence*, 291.
10 Muller, *Divine Essence*, 291.
11 Dewey D. Wallace, *Natural Theology Among the Dissenters*: 45
As a dissenter and a latitudinarian, Baxter maintained the necessity of natural theology in his theological works. Arguments of seventeenth-century latitudinarians considered natural theology essential for developing a case for religion and the necessity of Christian revelation. The arguments of these divines began by proving the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Baxter’s argumentation continued on to prove the truth of Christian revelation, which was referred to as “Evidences of Christianity” at that time.\textsuperscript{12}

When reading Baxter’s writings, the reader is left to interpret Baxter’s apologetic method in light of numerous writings in order to find his means of communicating, defending, and advancing the gospel in conversation with the unbeliever. Glimpses of Baxter’s method are found in numerous letters of correspondence, some of which are seen in \textit{More Reasons}, while other letters are seen in \textit{A Call to the Unconverted}. A collection of treatises entitled \textit{Divine Life} also encompasses Baxter’s understanding of epistemology and its place over against the rationalistic deists of his day.\textsuperscript{13} Despite the many polemical works of Baxter that defended the Christian faith, Baxter never penned a precise method in any single volume. He consequently disputes his opponent in a tactful, pastoral manner that presupposes his method in his writings. Yet, in our effort to define Baxter’s apologetic method, there are still two works that stand out among his polemical writings as uniquely “apologetic” in their focus: \textit{Reasons} and \textit{More Reasons}. Baxter’s two volumes on apologetics appear to be largely unexplored by contemporary readers.

\textsuperscript{12} Wallace, \textit{Natural Theology}, 1.
\textsuperscript{13} Wallace, \textit{Natural Theology}, 1-2.
Baxter’s apologetic books include polemics against atheistic and deistic objections to the Christian faith prominent during his seventeenth-century context.\textsuperscript{14} Baxter’s first volume addresses believers, unbelievers, and hypocrites.\textsuperscript{15} It does so by arguing for the supremacy of the Christian religion on the basis of holiness. The second portion of the book argues for the Christian religion on the basis of God’s special revelation of himself. For Baxter, God’s revelation of himself is both supernatural and natural and these are means that God uses for evidences with regard to himself. Our examination of Baxter’s apologetic method will begin chronologically with \textit{Reasons}. As a dissenter, Baxter utilizes natural theology in his apologetic writings with lists of arguments. The order of his argumentation is sometimes random. He addresses many practical concerns upfront and writes in a warm and personal manner.

\textbf{Baxter’s Use of Reason in Context}

In Baxter’s thought, reason was central to him. When Baxter understood the attributes of God, God was to him what the sun was to his eyes: a clear, bright, and undeniable illumination for his faith.\textsuperscript{16} Further, Baxter held that the purpose of humanity is for people to realize themselves fully. In order to do so, one must attain perfection and reason is the guide to that end. In the authorship of his two volumes on reasons for the Christian religion, Baxter has in mind a particular intellectual community in his world that is in disbelief about the reasonableness of Christianity.\textsuperscript{17} Though many things are above or outside of human reason,

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{14} Baxter, \textit{Reasons}, d1-d2.
\item\textsuperscript{15} Baxter, \textit{Reasons}, a3-c2.
\item\textsuperscript{16} Baxter, \textit{Reliquiae}, 22.
\item\textsuperscript{17} N. H. Keeble, \textit{Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 34.
\end{itemize}
those things are not objects of faith.\textsuperscript{18} As a result, he seeks to prove Christianity’s reasonableness.

For Baxter, the very intimation of a universe without God but with order appeared to near insanity. God in all of his wisdom, goodness, power, and so forth communicates some attributes to his creatures. We are his subjects and he becomes our benefactor, governor, and owner.\textsuperscript{19} Baxter was also rationally persuaded in Scripture by the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 whereby the seed of the woman, who is promised to crush the head of the serpent, is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. In another proof, he is persuaded that the sum total of the truths of Christianity could not be compared to those of any other world religions.\textsuperscript{20} Every other religion seemed unreasonable and irrational to him.

As a dissenter, Baxter maintained that persons seeking to follow reason must oppose irrationality. This presupposition shaped controversies of Baxter’s time.\textsuperscript{21} Anglicans accused dissenters of being “fanatics,” whereas dissenters perceived themselves as “defenders of reason.”\textsuperscript{22} Baxter says that God is imminently “intellection, reason and wisdom,” and his revealed truth must be “the most rational in the world.”\textsuperscript{23} Baxter’s goal in his apologetic method is to prove “there is a God.”\textsuperscript{24} He focuses on what is “certain, undeniable, and clear.”\textsuperscript{25} Burton points out from Baxter’s Reliquiae that Baxter’s understood humankind’s reason not as autonomous but instead as dependent on the Creator’s divine illumination. In all acts of comprehension human intellect is

\textsuperscript{18} N. H. Keeble, Richard Baxter, 34.
\textsuperscript{19} Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae, 22.
\textsuperscript{20} Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae, 23.
\textsuperscript{21} Wallace, Natural Theology, 7.
\textsuperscript{22} Wallace, Natural Theology, 8.
\textsuperscript{23} Wallace, Natural Theology, 8.
\textsuperscript{24} Baxter, Reasons, 32.
\textsuperscript{25} Baxter, Reasons, 32.
passive to the divine actions of God. In fact, Baxter describes God as the “Sun of the mind” for human beings, reflecting our dependence on God for reason.

Epicureanism, Practical Atheism, and Theoretical Atheism

During the time of Baxter, Epicureanism and practical atheism were viable options while theoretical atheism was essentially unthinkable. Atheism and unbelief were a common enemy throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Atheism was a practical atheism with an Epicurean flavor whereby individuals were living as if there was no God, as compared to a theoretical atheism that maintained intellectual disbelief in God. Intellectual disbelief in God was not a prominent problem until after the middle of the seventeenth century. Prior to the middle of the seventeenth century, intellectual disbelief in God was hardly an “imaginable possibility.” It was typical for natural theologians to move from defending the Christian religion against atheism to practical exhortations to godliness. This is what we see with Baxter’s Reasons.

In Reasons Baxter begins with natural theology and works up to supernatural or revealed theology. Logically, the divines moved from natural revelation, which they considered among the “lower things” to divine or special revelation. Baxter compared natural theology to an “alphabet.” Christianity, being made up of natural and special revela-

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30 Wallace, *Natural Theology*, 16.
31 Wallace, *Natural Theology*, 16.
32 Wallace, *Natural Theology*, 16.
tion, displays the alphabet of nature and then develops these presupposed points in special revelation.  

Supernatural revelation reciteth most of the natural, because of the searching of the great Book of Nature, is a long and difficult work, for the now-corrupted, dark and slothful mind of the common sort of men. Special revelation interprets the book of nature for humankind. For Baxter, natural and special revelation are contingent upon one another. He writes that “[g]race is medicinal to nature, and that where natural light ends, the supernatural begins.”

The majority of humankind was probably living as practical atheists. It is in dissenting natural theologians that the use of the term atheist begins to refer to intellectual rejection of God’s existence. In addition, the culture of practical atheists commonly functioned as a mockery of religion. Consequently, natural theologians like Baxter focused on addressing the “evil of scoffing” at great length.

The tone that Baxter wrote with was pastoral and he met his opponents with classical authors that he cited in the margins. His opponents would not have been receptive to Christian authorities because they would not have believed them, so he referenced classical authors in his arguments for the Christian religion. Reason alone was recognized even by his wisest opponents. By referencing these pseudo-philosophers, Baxter found a common language with his opponents and contextualized the gospel. Baxter is more pastoral than artistic in his writing. His chief aim was to

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communicate the gospel in order to save lost souls.\textsuperscript{40} He perceived himself as a preacher to his hearers and attempted to reach the ignorant. Even when addressing the more learned he restrained his full knowledge in order to meet his opponents where they were at.\textsuperscript{41}

\textit{Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Apologetics}

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, natural theologians maintained that atheism was irrational because it went against a transcendent divine order that was commonly and universally recognized during that time.\textsuperscript{42} As a result, these dissenting natural theologians placed the proof for God’s existence at the center of their apologetic.\textsuperscript{43} Baxter was among their ranks—having been taught in the scholastic tradition, he, too, partook in the use of the traditional arguments for God’s existence.\textsuperscript{44} This argument for the proof for God’s existence in the writings of Baxter is used when he advocates for a first cause of a necessary being as an essential presupposition.\textsuperscript{45} For instance, seventeen chapters of \textit{Reasons} focus on various apologetic aspects of arguing for a transcendent divine being. We see the first cause arguments for God’s existence primarily in chapter four.\textsuperscript{46}

Along the same lines, argumentation progressed logically from a first cause to arguments for a necessary being. Baxter moves from God as the first cause to the cause in itself, which involves a description of God in the perfections of his attributes.\textsuperscript{47} One example Baxter gives for a first

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{40} Keeble, \textit{Richard Baxter}, 48.
\textsuperscript{41} Keeble, \textit{Richard Baxter}, 48-49.
\textsuperscript{42} Wallace, \textit{Natural Theology}, 13.
\textsuperscript{43} Wallace, \textit{Natural Theology}, 13.
\textsuperscript{45} Wallace, \textit{Natural Theology}, 14.
\textsuperscript{46} Baxter, \textit{Reasons}, 9-16.
\textsuperscript{47} Baxter, \textit{Reasons}, 16-32.
\end{flushright}
cause is that the perfection of the first cause in a being requires that it must be eternal—without beginning or end. “Nothing” has no power, action, or effect and so nothing can come out of nothing. Therefore, if there had been a time when nothing was, nothing could ever have been.\textsuperscript{48} The world was perceived as an effect of a supreme God.\textsuperscript{49} Baxter maintained that God did not use miracles to convince atheists because the natural world is convincing enough.\textsuperscript{50} By moving logically from advocating for a first-cause and God’s perfect attributes, God was set up as a necessary being. After this was established, God could be seen through natural revelation.\textsuperscript{51} Baxter’s favorite arguments involved teleology because he saw natural revelation as pointing logically towards special revelation.\textsuperscript{52}

**Volume One: The Reasons of the Christian Religion**

In 1667, Baxter’s first apologetic writing was published. *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* was one of the first extensive writings on the topic of natural religion and the evidences of Christianity among dissenters in England.\textsuperscript{53} Baxter’s apologetic works were the first to use the term “natural theology” over against works dedicated to revealed or supernatural theology.\textsuperscript{54} He has also been described as the “first English practitioner of the evidences of Christianity.”\textsuperscript{55} In his discussion of natural religion and

\textsuperscript{49} Wallace, *Natural Theology*, 14.
\textsuperscript{50} Wallace, *Natural Theology*, 14.
\textsuperscript{52} Wallace, *Natural Theology*, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{54} Wallace, *Natural Theology*, 15-16.
evidences of Christianity, Baxter states that he wanted to “eschew controversy over small matters and attend to the central matter of the defense of Christianity itself.”\textsuperscript{56} The perplexities that Baxter’s apologetic writings posed about Christianity were the same ones that he struggled with in his own personal confession of weakness. This confession, though humble, was intimidating to later writers because of the depth and articulation Baxter exhibited.\textsuperscript{57} Nevertheless, Baxter saw his book as a useful tool for common Christians who wavered in their faith when they heard arguments raised against Christianity and needed help in defending it.\textsuperscript{58}

\textit{Structure of Part One: Of Natural Revelation or Godliness}

\textit{Reasons} contains over six hundred pages that consumed large portions of Baxter’s attention in its construction. There are two prefaces: one to believers and another to hypocrites, with a note to unbelievers addressed in a manner to the preface to hypocrites.\textsuperscript{59} One of the purposes Baxter wrote this book was to aid the “conversion of idolaters and infidels to God and the Christian faith.”\textsuperscript{60} Baxter lived during a time when few individuals were addressing unbelievers.\textsuperscript{61} In his dedication to \textit{Reasons}, he states that “five parts of the world were still heathen” and Muslim. Many during Baxter’s time period failed to address unbelievers in their writings.\textsuperscript{62} Yet, Baxter saw the need for reaching the lost and so it became a preoccupation for him in his writings.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{56} Wallace, \textit{Natural Theology}, 5.
\textsuperscript{57} Wallace, \textit{Natural Theology}, 5.
\textsuperscript{58} Wallace, \textit{Natural Theology}, 5.
\textsuperscript{59} Orme, \textit{Life and Times}, 19.
\textsuperscript{60} Orme, \textit{Life and Times}, 19.
\textsuperscript{61} Orme, \textit{Life and Times}, 19.
\textsuperscript{62} Orme, \textit{Life and Times}, 19.
\textsuperscript{63} Orme, \textit{Life and Times}, 19.
The first part of Baxter’s work examines “Of Natural Religion or Godliness.” In this section, he looks at human nature and the knowledge of ourselves. He proceeds by examining the person’s relations to things “below” ourselves, and our mutual relationships to each other. Next, he looks at the first cause above us and the first cause, Himself, which is God. He then considers firstly the relationship of God to his creatures and mankind as their owner; and secondly, God’s relationship to man as our ruler. God rules man morally by his laws and judgments. Baxter addresses God as man’s benefactor, chief good, and Father. The following chapters deal with the nature of man’s present condition; the retribution after this life; the evil of sin; present sin; and the mercy of God to humankind.

**Content of Part One: Of Natural Revelation or Godliness**

The first portion of Baxter’s book is apparently a dissertation by Baxter on natural religion. It could also be classified as a study on the extent to which persons may attain a knowledge of God and a relationship with God through their own duties. This section also looks at the future state of reality and the independence of special revelation. Baxter writes with great ability and thought that presupposes a significant knowledge of prior reading, as is common to Baxter’s works. Part One of Reasons focuses on what is typically missed by dominating popular opinions; specifically, Baxter looks at God’s guidance in human reason. Humanity was never left autonomously to themselves as the domineering opinions of his age

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64 Baxter, *Reasons*, 35.
suggested. Instead, humankind’s reason has been the character of God which was made known from the beginning in order to convey the works of God.\textsuperscript{69}

In paradise God assisted Adam when he conversed with him and gave him information beyond what he might have acquired from the external manifestations of God’s goodness and power through natural revelation. These original communications with God were never lost in their entirety. The invisible things of God may be understood from creation and people who reject God are left without excuse. The revelation that God has given adds responsibility to creatures and therefore, must be taken weightily.

Part Two: Of Christianity, and Special Revelation

In the second portion of Reasons, Baxter examines Christianity and God’s special revelation of himself.\textsuperscript{70} His emphasis is uniquely centered on the revelation from God. Baxter’s statements on Christian revelation contain the nature and properties of the Christian religion and its “suitableness” to our natural conceptions of God as well as its “adaptation to our own characters and wants.”\textsuperscript{71} In chapter six, Baxter delves into the witness of Jesus Christ, or the demonstrative evidence of the fundamental truth of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{72} This section is organized into four primary parts:

1) Prophecy
2) Christ’s person, life, and doctrine
3) The miraculous power and works of Christ and his disciples

\textsuperscript{69} Orme, Life and Times, 20.
\textsuperscript{70} Baxter, Reasons, c4.
\textsuperscript{71} Baxter, Reasons, c4.
\textsuperscript{72} Baxter, Reasons, c4.
4) The actual salvation of humankind\textsuperscript{73}

In the following chapters of this section, Baxter deals with the difficulties that faith has to overcome, including common difficulties and their causes. Similarly, he answers apparent internal and external objections against the Christian faith. These objections are resolved, in part, by a set of reasonable conditions that are required by unbelievers in order to overcome these difficulties. Part Two concludes with an emphasis on Christ and his church; the souls of human beings; the promotion of the church; and the enemies and impediments of the church in the world.\textsuperscript{74}

After Part Two, the book contains a section which serves as a conclusion or an appendix. It serves as a defense of the immortality of souls and an apologetic against the Epicureans and other pseudo-philosophers.\textsuperscript{75}

**Volume Two: More Reasons for the Christian Religion**

**Context**

Baxter’s second volume on apologetics was published in 1672. *More Reasons for the Christian Religion* functions as a second volume or an appendix to *Reasons*.\textsuperscript{76} In his second volume, Baxter faces an unbelieving audience. Whether he is continuing in correspondence with the same unbeliever or he is writing to a series of unbelievers is unclear. However, it is clear that he has compiled a collection of his apologetic letters for the purpose of defending the Christian religion to his recipient. In doing so, he offers his contemporary readers sound biblical, evidential, and reasonable conjectures for Christian beliefs.

\textsuperscript{73} Baxter, *Reasons*, c4.

\textsuperscript{74} Baxter, *Reasons*, c4.

\textsuperscript{75} Baxter, *Reasons*, c4.

\textsuperscript{76} Baxter, *More Reasons*, a1.
The second portion of his volume addresses Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury. Baxter, with a pastoral and tactful manner, addresses the deistic claims and heresies of Lord Herbert. In 1624, Herbert published *De Veritate*, a work which expresses a universalistic understanding of grace that confronts the grace that Baxter maintained.  

Perhaps most unique and appealing about Lord Herbert’s universalistic understanding of grace is that its source was Jesus Christ; and therefore, his universalism was appealing to his audience because it attempted to magnify the Christian religion. Herbert was a Christian universalist attempting to expound dogmatic conclusions about God which culminated in the universal salvation of sinners.

**Structure**

*More Reasons* contains a simpler structure than Baxter’s preceding piece. It is broken up into two primary parts, the first of which is a letter to an anonymous unbeliever who wrote Baxter. The second portion of the book contains the correspondence Baxter held with Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury.

*Correspondence with an unknown unbeliever*. Baxter begins his letter with a sense of gratitude for the desire of the individuals who wrote to him. He says he writes to tell the writers and the world how much he “honors” them. He addresses each person individually and places the person’s character and approach of writing in its best light, despite considerable disagreements between Baxter and his opponents. Although the title in the table of contents asserts that these are letters from unknown persons, we do know some things about the authors on the basis of the letters’

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contents. Baxter’s correspondence letters are to anonymous authors who are bringing charges against the Scriptures. In one instance, Baxter’s opponent is a man named Samuel Herbert. He claims that Christianity and the Scriptures contain contradictions and he urges Baxter to answer them, which he does. Baxter’s thorough response to Samuel’s objections argues point-by-point against various objections from Samuel and advocates for the Scriptures. Furthermore, Sir Henry Herbert is an example of another correspondent with Baxter. In 1633, Baxter was sent by his parents to live with Sir Henry as a tutor. In Baxter’s dedication, he acknowledges Sir Henry’s relation to Lord Edward Herbert, as Henry was a brother to Edward and a means by which Baxter came to know of Lord Edward and his De Veritate.

Correspondence with Lord Edward Herbert. In Baxter’s correspondence with Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury, he addresses Herbert’s De Veritate. Baxter possessed a capacity for writing against his opponents with “readiness of mind, inherent honesty, amplitude of knowledge, fairness, clear moral insight, tact,” and most of all, “sympathetic understanding.” Baxter’s address to Lord Herbert is no exception to this standard. Baxter finds it important to examine Herbert’s books, “lest, having been unanswered, they might be thought unanswerable.” Despite a certain distaste for Herbert’s

80 Orme, Life and Times, 22
82 Keeble, Calendar, 2:126.
83 Keeble, Calendar, 2:127.
84 Keeble, Calendar, 2:127.
86 Hunt, Religious Thought, 460.
book, he is at the same time not writing against the entire work. For Baxter, Herbert’s writing contains much intrinsic value. Baxter argues that the five articles Herbert develops are natural certainties that should not be denied. The difficulty Baxter had with Herbert was his lack of Christian presuppositions. He contended with Herbert’s rejection of the supernatural and the lacking internal conditions that were needed from the Holy Spirit to illuminate these truths.\textsuperscript{87} Baxter knew that Herbert had intellectual apprehension but lacked the internal conditions and, therefore, was dabbling in the realm of natural revelation separated from special revelation. Still, Baxter saw some validity in \textit{De Veritate} in terms of its comprehension of natural revelation. It was its singular focus that delimited the potential of the work. Even in Baxter’s previous volume, Baxter acknowledges that there are natural evidences of the being of God: the necessity of holiness and the future of retribution.\textsuperscript{88} Even the “wisest heathens” confess the same things believers confess, except with less clarity.\textsuperscript{89} Hunt writes, “The laws that are revealed to humans by nature are clear revelation of god’s will. Natural laws inform us to keep our reason clear, govern our thoughts, affections, passions, senses, words and actions.”\textsuperscript{90} Baxter attributes the testimony of conscience in all human beings as an indicator of the proof of the life to come. He also argues from the universal consent of everyone in all times and places who advocate for truth naturally revealed—men like Seneca, Cicero, Plutarch, Plato, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, Porphyry, Julian the Apostate, Antoninus, Epictetus, Arrian, and others. Though they were unbelievers, these men were individuals that

\textsuperscript{87} Keeble, \textit{Calendar}, 2:127.
\textsuperscript{88} Hunt, \textit{Religious Thought}, 460.
\textsuperscript{89} Hunt, \textit{Religious Thought}, 460.
\textsuperscript{90} Hunt, \textit{Religious Thought}, 460.
Baxter saw some good in, and he acknowledged that they took care of their souls, exercising “great industry” in pursuing knowledge and the mysteries of the works of God.91

**Conclusion**

In closing, Baxter, though known as a pastor, contributed significantly to the field of apologetics in the seventeenth century. Although few remember Baxter as an apologist, he is one of the first English writers on the evidences of Christianity.92 Baxter operates within his seventeenth-century context of dissenters, latitudinarians, and natural theologians. In *Reasons* Baxter presents his apologetic arguments in a logical order that represents the contemporary situation of his day as well as his familiarity with scholasticism. In Baxter’s presentation of the evidences for Christianity, he moves from a first-cause to a necessary being who is perfect in his attributes. Yet, Baxter stands out among his contemporaries because he was personable, possessed humility, and understood well the arguments of other theologians, philosophers, and writers in his era. By taking on the burden of writing *Reasons*, Baxter displays a compassionate heart for the lost during a time when the church was more centripetally focused in its mission. Baxter, having been a doubter himself, also admits his own personal weaknesses, despite the strength of his argumentation, along with his depth and zeal of knowledge.

Similarly, one cannot read *More Reasons* without an appreciation for his extended personal responses to those who criticized his first volume. Baxter’s second volume of evidences for Christianity is an articulate, personal reply to opponents that might easily be mistaken as friends to the

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uninformed reader. Baxter relates to his opponents with a basic comprehension of their humanity and lives out the godliness and functional natural theology that he writes about so technically in both of his volumes. Baxter utilizes natural theology as a means to pointing a broad audience to the narrow road conveyed through the divine revelation of the Scriptures. Although the use of natural theology as a pointer to special revelation is scattered throughout his writings, we see this prominently in his correspondence with Herbert. *More Reasons* demonstrates Baxter’s charity as he differentiates between the sound and unsound teachings of Herbert, namely, through the acceptance of natural theology that Herbert maintains that reflects Christian ideology, while rejecting that which contradicts a specific Christian Theism.

In Baxter’s works, one cannot find an explicit apologetic methodology. Yet, his writings bear witness to a pastoral sensitivity and tactfulness which he brings into his conversations against the heterodox theologians that act as an example to his contemporaries. Many have come to appreciate Baxter for his more pastoral works and have forgotten the man who had a heart for the lost and went beyond the typical tasks of the seventeenth-century pastorate.
The Significance of ἀρχή in Colossians 11:8 and Revelation 3:14 in Light of Roman Imperialism
Kyusung Jang

1. Introduction
The purpose of this article is to argue that the use of ἀρχή (beginning) in Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 3:14 should be understood in light of the Roman imperialism in first-century Asia Minor. Although ἀρχή is used 12 times in the New Testament, the two texts mentioned above are the only cases where it refers to the supremacy or authority of Christ over all creation. This similarity between these latter instances is attributed to a common allusion to Proverbs 8:22, or to the Laodicean church’s familiarity with the epistle to the Colossians. Less often noticed, however, is

1 “Beginning of time or event” (Mt. 24:8; Mk. 1:1; 13:8; Rev. 21:6; 22:13); “secular authority” (Lk. 20:20); “beginning of world” with ἐν (Jn. 1:1, 2); “beginning of event” with ἐν (Acts 11:15; Phil. 4:15). Although “ἀρχή” in Rev. 21:6 and 22:13 refers to the eternal and nature of Christ in an eschatological sense (ἡ ἀρχή καὶ τὸ τέλος), it is not used in the context of creation.

2 While Revelation 3:14 explicitly defines Christ as “the beginning of the creation of God” (ἡ ἀρχή τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ), in Colossians 1:18 (ὁς ἐστιν ἀρχή), this nuance is implied by the context of the cosmological Christology (Col. 1:15-20). The use of ἀρχή to indicate “pre-eminence over creation” in this verse, however, is widely sup-ported. See Douglas J. Moo, The Letters to the Colossians and to Phi-lemon (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 128–129; David W. Pao, Colossians & Philemon: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 100; Nicholas. T. Wright, The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 74.


4 See Col. 4:16. For scholars who take this view, see David E. Aune, Revelation 1-5, Word Biblical Commentary 52 B (Dallas: Word
the similar *Sitz im Leben*, namely, a cosmic authority usurped by Roman imperialism.\(^5\) The Roman Empire propagated its cosmic authority on the basis of the cosmological imperialism in which the emperor was considered the center of the world, and this imperial ideology was constantly reproduced by the various imperial cults in Asia Minor.\(^6\)

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6 Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 122–127. Although the date of the book of Revelation (around A.D. 90) is at least later 30 years than Colossians (around A.D. 60), it is not anachronistic to set both in the context of the Roman imperialism because the ideology of cosmic authority of the Roman Empire had come to permeate the whole of Asia since B.C. 9 when they decided to make the birthday of Augustus as Asia’s New Year (Ibid., 32–34). Although the imperial cult underwent some changes after the death of Augustus, the authority of Augustus had been perpetuated through the formation of the imperial cults till the end of the second century in Asia Minor (Price, *Rituals and Power*, 57–58).
Thus, I will argue that ἀρχή in Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 3:14 signifies the true cosmic lordship of Christ over all creation against the false lordship of the Roman Empire. To support this, I first consider the meaning of ἀρχή in biblical texts. Secondly, the significance of the cosmic lordship of Christ will be argued in terms of the Roman imperialism. Lastly, I will consider the significance of Christ’s cosmic lordship in the contemporary Korean church.

2. ἀρχή as Lordship of Christ in Col. 1:18 and Rev. 3:14

This section aims to clarify the meaning of ἀρχή in the broader biblical tradition. After establishing its semantic range within Scripture, the particular contexts of Col. 1:18 and Rev. 3:14 will be considered.

2.1. The Meaning of ἀρχή in the Biblical Tradition

In the LXX, ἀρχή is usually adopted to translate the Hebrew ṣārā. It is not easy to determine its meaning from this alone because ṣārā is also translated in various ways due to its figurative sense.7 The detailed survey by Michael J. Svigel, however, contributes to delimitating the meaning of ἀρχή for the given texts. After surveying hundreds of usages of ἀρχή in Ancient Greek writings, Svigel develops nine categories of meaning for ἀρχή: 1) protemporal (commencement of an event); 2) causal (chronological or logical origin of something); 3) propartial (first part of an object); 4) prosequential (first item in a series of items that do not share the same nature or quality); 5) governmental (political power or a particular office); 6) prospatial (first part in a physical sense); 7) preeminent (supremacy by nature or merit rather than merely by office); 8) elemental (elementary principle); and 9) miscellaneous (some cases other than the above categories).8 Although the most

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7 See Svigel, “Christ as Archē in Revelation 3,” 221 n. 38.
frequent usage is protemporal, he finds that ἀρχή exclusively has the governmental or the preeminent sense in biblical texts when it is used in a singular, personal form. 9 Although some analysis is not exact, 10 his argument sufficiently supports understanding ἀρχή in the given texts as the authority or primacy of the Christ.

2.2. The Meaning of ἀρχή in Colossians 1:18

The meaning of the phrase ὡς ἐστιν ἀρχή (Col. 1:18) is articulated in the structure of the so called Christological hymn in Col. 1:15-20. 11 The structure of the hymn shows that ὡς ἐστιν ἀρχή denotes the cosmic primacy of Christ over both the first creation and the new creation. Its chiastic structure is as below: 12

A 1:15-16 (ὡς ἐστιν): Lord of creation (firstborn over all creation)
B 1:17 (καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν): Lord of creation (before all things)
B’ 1:18a (καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν): Lord of the new creation (head of the church)
A’ 1:18b-20 (ὡς ἐστιν): Lord of the new creation (first-born from the dead)

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9 Svigel, “Christ as Archē in Revelation 3,” 223.
10 Many of the 7 cases of “ἀρχή” that he regards in a ‘preeminent’ sense do not exactly refer to a person, e.g., Sir. 11:3 (bee’s fruit); 29:21; 39:26 (chief things of life). Moreover, other cases only refer to a nation or city (Amalech [Num. 24:20]; Jerusalem [Ps. 136:6]; Samaria [Amos 6:1]).
Manifest in this structure is Paul’s emphasizing that “the creator is also the redeemer, and *vice versa.*” This structure of the first creation and the new creation is attributed to Paul’s “Jewish redemption-ideas” which interpret Exodus as a new creation. In this theological framework, Paul brings the cosmic Christ who has supremacy over all creation (A, B) down to earth “to anchor this supremacy in salvation history and in his Lordship over the church” (B’, A’). Thus, ὃς ἐστιν ἀρχή refers to the new creation in contrast with the former creation. The different focus of the second section, however, does not rule out that ἀρχή also refers to the first creation. Instead, the significance of ἀρχή as the supremacy over all creation is reinforced in this section because Christ’s cosmic supremacy has been sealed by his blood on the cross through which God is reconciling all things on earth and in heaven to himself.

This immediate context rules out other meanings of ἀρχή (e.g., protemporal, propartial, or prosequential), which would render Christ as only the first part of the new creation. Thus, it is obvious that ἀρχή in Col. 1:18 denotes Christ’s primacy over both the first creation and the new creation in both time and rank.

2.3. *The Meaning of ἀρχή in Revelation 3:14*

The usage of ἀρχή to indicate the cosmic primacy of Christ is more manifest in Revelation 3:14 where Christ is regarded as “the beginning of the creation of God” (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ). In order to avoid a hasty conclusion,

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13 Wright, “Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1:15-20,” 452.
14 The Exodus overtone of the preceding pericope (1:13 “He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us in to the kingdom of his beloved Son”) strongly supports this understanding. Wright, “Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1:15-20,” 453-454.
16 Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 74.
however, this understanding should be closely evaluated through a syntactical and contextual analysis. Although some commentators interpret ἀρχή as the primary source or temporal priority of creation, these are not syntactically supported because ἀρχή is never used in these senses in the ancient Greek writings with reference to a person. Moreover, the prosequential meaning of ἀρχή (Christ as the first of God’s creative actions) is improbable because κτίσις usually refers to the created universe (in a passive sense) as a whole in the Septuagint and the New Testament, rather than the “act” or “process” of creating. Thus, it is more plausible to understand ἀρχή as indicating the primacy of the Christ over God’s creation, interpreting τῆς κτίσεως as a genitive of subordination.

On the other hand, the meaning of ἀρχή also needs to be construed in terms of the meaning of κτίσις. Although Gregory K. Beale argues that κτίσις here exclusively refers to the new creation, it seems that he does not consider the broad context in which ἀρχή is used. Although the OT background supports that ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ (3:14) refers to the new creation, the same ἀρχὴ is also used to denote the original creation in terms of the creation and new creation framework in Revelation (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος, 22:13). Because the same title is also adopted to refer to

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18 Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 256.
19 See Svigel, “Christ as Archē in Revelation 3,” 221–223.
God (21:6), it is clear that John emphasizes that Christ is not only the inaugurator of the new creation, but also the Lord of the new creation. Moreover, if this text has Colossians 1:15-20 in mind, as Beale argues, the ἀρχή would indicate primacy over all creation (original and new) because, as already mentioned, the new creation accomplished by the blood of the cross intensifies the cosmic lordship of the Christ over all creation. Therefore, we can conclude that ἀρχή in Revelation 3:14 refers to the lordship of Christ not only over the new creation but also over the original creation.

3. The Significance of the Cosmic Lordship of Christ in Light of Imperialism in Asia Minor

The Ara Pacis Augustus (Altar of Augustan Peace) clearly shows the cosmological ideology of the Roman Empire. On the altar Augustus is carved in the hands of a goddess as a baby who rules the winds, the sea, and the animals. Augustus is the cosmic peacemaker as well as the paternalistic emperor of his subjects. This Roman cosmology came to permeate all the cities by way of the imperial cult.

3.1. Imperialism in Asia Minor

The claim by Mary Beard, John North, and S. R. F. Price that “there is no such thing as ‘the imperial cult’” disputes the organized form of imperialism, indicating a need to clarify its expression in the Roman Empire. Likewise, the imperialism in Asia Minor should be understood in its particular religious and political context.

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Asia Minor, the center of Greek polytheism, had many temples to worship Zeus, Artemis, and so on.\textsuperscript{26} They also worshiped the living rulers as gods from the fifth century onward.\textsuperscript{27} This polytheistic context engendered the tendency of Asia Minor to link the Roman emperors directly with the ancient Greek gods,\textsuperscript{28} which seemed scandalous to the eyes of the Roman citizens.\textsuperscript{29} The polytheism itself, however, cannot explain the full significance of the imperial cult until it is articulated alongside the typical political context of Asia Minor as the subject of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{30}

Individual cities in Asia Minor often requested the emperor to permit the imperial cult in order to obtain political hegemony over other cities.\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, the client–patron culture in the Roman Empire also precipitated the spread of the imperial cult in Asia Minor. For the provincial elites, the emperor was the supreme patron to perpetuate their political and economic privileges. In order to repay the imperial benefits, they had to express their loyalty to the emperor.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, the local elites played a crucial role in adopting and spreading the imperial cult within their

\textsuperscript{26} Price, \textit{Rituals and Power}, 146–156.

\textsuperscript{27} On the history of the cults of Hellenistic kings in Asia Minor, see Beard, North, and Price, \textit{Religions of Rome}, 25–40.


\textsuperscript{29} See the citation of Dio Cassius 51.20.6-9 by Friesen, \textit{Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John}, 26.


This does not mean that imperial cult was significant only to the local elites. Nourished by the hierarchical chain of patronage, the imperial cult functioned as a social order to lead all residents to participate in the imperial ideology. Moreover, some excavations show that the centers of civil life of Asia Minor, such as the bouleuterions, gymnasiums, and public baths, were also places in which imperial worship took place.

Thus, we can say that the imperial image pervaded Asia Minor. This imperialism was distinct from the cult forced by the Babylonian king in Daniel. In Asia Minor, the emperor himself was not principally involved in setting up the cult. However, it held a similar forceful influence upon the provincial people as one of the strongest worldviews. Its allure was due to its potential for connecting people with the authorities of the day, a connection resulting in political and economic advantages. In this sense, Roman imperialism can be understood as a byproduct of human greed in the context of the Roman hierarchy.

3.2. The Cosmic Lordship of Christ in Colossians 1:18 and Imperialism

Few scholars connect the emphasis on the cosmic lordship of Christ in Colossians 1:18 with Roman imperialism. Many

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33 On the function of the local elite in the imperial cult, see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 87–100.
35 On imperial cults outside the imperial temples, see Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 65–76.
scholars interpret it as Christ’s primacy over the so-called heresies, which are regarded as ancient religions, whether Judaism, Hellenism, or paganism. What Paul rejects in this hymn, however, are not merely spiritual religions, but the worldview that usurps Christ’s cosmic authority over all creation, whether in the heavens or on the earth, visible or invisible. Because the most basic tenet of imperialism was the cosmological ideology of the Roman Empire, the Colossian church must catch the significance of the cosmic lordship of Christ not only over the various gods, but also over the alleged cosmic authority of the emperor. As Wright points out, this high Christology of the Pauline letters is the tactical way to reject Caesar’s empire.

Admittedly, Paul never explicitly opposes the Roman empire in his epistles. For this reason, some scholars think that anti-imperialism is not supported by the text itself.


38 Wright, “Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1,” 453, 464.


40 Bevere insists that the anti-imperial overtone in Colossians 1:15-20 is too weak (Allan R. Bevere, “Colossians and the Rhetoric of Empire,” in Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New
We cannot deny, however, that the alternative ethics in Colossians formed by the Christian worldview is in principle against imperialism. For instance, Paul declares that “there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythians, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11). This statement opposes the imperial ideology visualized in Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, where 50 statues of barbarians, slaves, and free people are carved as if they are incorporated into a unity through the Roman military triumph. It does not simply celebrate the triumph of Rome. Rather, it portrays the imperial ideology as ruling the world. If the original readers were familiar with such imperial iconographies, Paul’s declaration that real unity comes from Christ, not the emperor, must have led them to face the false message of imperialism. True reconciliation comes only by the sacrificial blood of Christ, not by military triumph. In addition Paul’s emphasis on gratitude (3:15) is also directly against imperialism. Because human greed lies near the core of imperialism, there is no place for gratitude in the imperial system. Although they honor and worship the emperors and sometimes lavishly donate money for the cult, the only purpose is to gain greater power. On the contrary, Paul

*Testament Studies*, ed. Scott McKnight and Joseph B. Modica [Downers Grove: IVP, 2013], 188–195). Galinsky says that imperial language is used in the Pauline letters not to resist the empire, but only to appeal to the readers with cultural terms (Galinsky, “The Cult of the Roman Emperor,” 14–15).


42 Sebasteion was within 100 kilometers of Colossae and Laodicea. See Maier, “Barbarians, Scythians and Imperial Iconography,” 394.
exhorts the Colossians to love and forgive others with gratitude (3:12-15), which is only engendered by faith in the lordship of Christ over all things. Thus, even though Paul does not explicitly offer an anti-imperial message, anyone who lived out his message would inevitably come to resist imperialism.

3.3. The Cosmic Lordship of Christ in Revelation 3:14-22 and Imperialism

Although a strong imperial overtone is deployed mainly in Revelation 13-18, it is also seen in the message to the church in Laodicea. As already mentioned, the formulaic name of Christ, “the beginning of all creation” (3:14), signifies that Christ is Lord over the original creation as well as the new creation. It is striking that this cosmic authority is also promised to anyone who “conquers” (3:21), not only in the future but also in the present. Nonetheless, it is not about Christian triumphalism. Rather, the notion of “conquering” signifies preserving the faith in purity which may engender suffering in the social context of first-century Laodicea.

The problem of the Laodicean church is its “self-sufficiency” gained by the city’s businesses so as to “need nothing—not even Christ” (Rev. 3:17), which results in a lukewarm faith in God. Recent commentators regard the lukewarmness as a rhetorical device to emphasize their indifferent attitude toward the faithfulness in Christ, analogous to the unpalatable water of Laodicea. More recently, however, Craig Koester refutes this interpretation by asserting that it rather represents the daily dining context

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44 Mitchell G. Reddish, *Revelation* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 82. Laodicea was famous for its bank industry, textile production, and the medical school which made the city wealthy.
in Asia Minor, in which cool or hot water was often used to warm or cool wine for good health or taste; the used water, which became lukewarm, was dumped as no longer valuable.\textsuperscript{46} Either way, it is clear that Christ rebukes their spiritual status since it is neither acceptable nor tolerable. Significantly, this lukewarmness is attributed to idolatry committed by Christians in order to protect their financial initiative in the commercial guilds.\textsuperscript{47} In Asia Minor, many businesses were governed and protected by the guilds, and they usually required the members to worship the patron deity, praying for success in the business.\textsuperscript{48} Refusal to join the ceremony could result in a financial crisis for the business. This background clarifies that the self-sufficiency of the Laodicean church probably came from the Christians who willingly participated in idolatry at the expense of their faithfulness to God.

As far as contemporary imperialism is concerned, however, to refuse idolatry resulted in not merely financial loss, but even life itself. Refusing idolatry in the guilds also presupposes refusal to worship the emperor as the supreme patron in the empire. Nonetheless, this refusal did not necessarily result in a political persecution by the emperor because imperial worship was, as already mentioned, adopted voluntarily by the subjects who sought hegemony in the society. Rather, persecution came from peers, family members, neighbors, and the local communities who regarded this new way of life as intolerable.\textsuperscript{49} This informal


\textsuperscript{47} Beale, \textit{The Book of Revelation}, 302; Reddish, \textit{Revelation}, 63.

\textsuperscript{48} Reddish, \textit{Revelation}, 66.

\textsuperscript{49} Although Revelation evidences severe persecution of Christians by the Roman empire (Rev. 2:10, 13), the persecution by the emperor did not take place nationwide. For this reason, Beale also agrees that the
persecution isolated one from all of the social and financial relationships in the local community. This might explain why many Laodicean Christians found it hard to refuse idolatry.

Against this historical context, the declarative statement “He is the beginning of the creation of God” provides two significant points of contact. First, it gives a rationale for not joining the idolatry. Life is not governed by the emperor or his patronage, but by the Lord who is even over the empire. Thus, it challenges the church to be faithful to God in spite of all the expected sufferings. Second, the promise that authority will be given to anyone who conquers gives hope in the face of the imperialism that overwhelms the local community. Ironically, the way to conquer is to endure suffering and even to be put to death just as Christ on the cross. Thus, the statement “He is the beginning of the creation of God” must have been a radical challenge for the church in Laodicea to be faithful to the true King of kings even to the point of suffering.

4. The Cosmic Authority of Christ and the Materialism of Korea as the New Imperialism

Whereas imperialism is identified with pluralism, globalization, or consumerism in the context of North America, the contemporary counterpart of imperialism in Korea is the materialism that drives the whole society to worship mammon.

The recent tragic ferry accident displays many phases of Korean materialism. The ferry “Sewol” sank on Apr. 17,

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50 For the analogy between Roman imperialism and postmodern imperialism, see Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 49–64.
2014 near Jindo in Korea. Nearly 300 passengers were reported dead or missing. The main reason for the accident was that the ferry exceeded its 2,000 ton carrying regulation, motivated by $70,000 extra profit, which caused the ship to lose its balance. Even worse, there seem to be covert political connections behind it. More concerning than this, research shows that 85% of Korean people think a similar accident could happen again in Korea.\(^{51}\)

Apparently, the materialism of Korean society is too overwhelming to be overthrown in a day. There is a social pressure to accommodate this materialism as a fruitful principle in one’s life. Children are encouraged to compete against their peers rather than collaborate with them for a better future. Employers demand that workers act deceitfully for the sake of profit. Politicians and entrepreneurs have formed symbiotic relationships feeding their power and greed. Some victims protest against these colossal powers once in a while, but fail as a rule. Furthermore, in many cases, these protesters are regarded as maladjusted or naïve. Thus, many people come to accommodate materialism as the wisdom of life. Churches are reluctant to raise the issue because many church members gain profit in this manner. Thus, materialism may be regarded as the imperial ideology of Korean society.

This analogy between Korea and Asia Minor leads to some valuable lessons for the Korean church. First, the church must teach and preach the lordship of Christ over every dimension of life. The dichotomy between the secular and the sacred has produced many nominal Christians who accommodate materialism in their daily lives. This is the reason that Korea, despite many Christian politicians and entrepreneurs, is often self-identified as the “Republic of Corruption.” If every Christian not only confesses Christ’s

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lordship in their places of worship, but also lives life as one ruled by the King of the world, the strong wave of materialism could be checked to some extent.

Second, the Korean church must also turn from its prosperity theology to the theology of the cross. To some extent, the materialism in Korea has been promoted by churches that teach that wealth and power are the blessings of God. It cannot be denied that this prosperity theology was one of the factors of the rapid growth of the Korean church during the second half of the twentieth century. The expense, however, was the loss of a radical discipleship that engenders suffering for righteousness’ sake. Only when the church goes back to the sacrificial ethic of Jesus, and only when more Christians live a subversive life in their local community, will there be an alternative voice for the Korean society.

Lastly, the Korean church should participate in ministries to establish alternative communities such as schools, NGOs, and even cooperative associations which will resist nationwide materialism. More often than not, the Korean church has restricted the gospel’s effects to the individual level. It is presupposed that if enough individuals change, the whole society will also be changed. This has proved to be wrong so far. Social changes occur only when fruitful systems are adopted by society. If the hundreds of thousands of Korean churches promoted such alternative ministries, the impregnable fortress of materialism might be opposed more effectively than before.

5. Conclusion.

The statement that Christ is the beginning (ἀρχή) means that Christ is the Lord over all creation. This was a radical message for the Christians in Asia Minor who were inculcated with the imperial ideology in which the emperor was the lord and the beginning of the world. Many failed to
resist this ideology due to the pressure of peers who felt that non-compliance jeopardized their power and wealth. The same thing happens in Korean society, in which materialism takes the place of imperialism. It is not forced by the government but promoted by the people who share the desire for power and money; and now it has become a part of life which will not be easily subverted. In this way, mammon has taken the throne of Christ. The statement “Christ is the beginning of all creation” clearly urges Christians to resist any ideology that denies the lordship of Christ. It challenges the church to take up its cross in faithfulness to its Lord. Hence, the theological significance of ἀρχή in Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 3:14 becomes manifest only when it is articulated against Roman imperialism.
Reviews


Christine Pohl declares that, “The best testimony to the truth of the gospel is the quality of our life together” (2); however, community is more often than not tainted by anger, disagreements, rumors, and strife. This is an all too common predicament in churches, schools, and families, and when these breakdowns happen in Christian communities, it endangers the community’s testimony and effectiveness. Pohl outlines four practices that aid in sustaining community: (1) *Embracing Gratitude as a Way of Life*, (2) *Making and Keeping Promises*, (3) *Living Truthfully*, and (4) *Practicing Hospitality and Beyond*. Pohl argues that these four practices are most effective when they flow naturally, but since they are not affirmed consistently in the wider society, we cannot assume Christians always recognize their importance. Therefore, we must assume that often these practices do not flow naturally even in a Christian community, and therefore need intentional cultivation within Christian communities.

In part one, *Embracing Gratitude as a Way of Life*, Pohl introduces the first practice that sustains Christian community: *gratitude*. Gratitude, according to Pohl, should go hand-in-hand with grace. “If we really understand our lives as redeemed by costly grace,” she says, “then our primary response can only be gratitude” (17). Pohl articulates that *gratitude* is deeply connected to generosity, explaining that when we practice gratitude, we are also expressing generosity towards others. In chapter four, Pohl specifically outlines practices and behaviors that weaken and strengthen the practice of gratitude, such as *grumbling* and *envy*. Pohl cites Cornelius Plantinga’s definition of envy: “to covet is to want someone else’s good so strongly…that one is tempted to steal it. To envy is to resent somebody else’s good so much that one is tempted to destroy it” (46). Evidence of the ways in which grumbling can destroy gratitude within community are found in Exodus 15-17 and Numbers 11.

In part two, *Making and Keeping Promises*, Pohl introduces the second practice that she believes sustains Christian community.

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1 Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*, 162.
Pohl explains that society is moving in a direction where promises are not kept, asserting that promising is “out of step with culture,” and concluding that “we are wary of making commitments that bind us or limit our freedom” (71). She attributes this decline in making and keeping promises to cultural and generational shifts. Pohl emphasizes betrayal as a grave sin, noting that “for John Calvin, unfaithfulness or infidelity is at the root of the fall” (93).

Against the many actions that weaken this practice, Pohl asserts that Christian communities can strengthen the practice of keeping promises by honoring faithfulness, practicing patience, and telling and re-telling the stories of the community thereby rearticulating the vision of the community as a unifying act.

In part three, Living Truthfully, Pohl explains what it means to live truth-filled lives. In chapter eight Pohl provides many examples of how communities can live lives marked by truth together, emphasizing its theological and moral significance for the community. She also details the cultural divergence and distinction which marks the lives of individuals and communities that live truth-filled lives. Pohl notes several actions which complicate the practice of living truthfully: deception of others and self, idle speech, and gossip. Living out truth is compromised by such actions; living truthfully can be strengthened through seeking reconciliation, careful speech, and clear communication regarding communal expectations and desires.

In part four, Practicing Hospitality and Beyond, Pohl emphasizes the moral significance of the practice of hospitality and draws heavily upon Christian tradition and biblical evidence for the significance of this practice. Pohl states that hospitality is at the center of the Christian faith because “in hospitality, we respond to the welcome that God has offered and replicate that welcome in the world” (159). Pohl concludes her work by addressing communion as the unifying act of hospitality within the Christian community, asserting that “layers of gratitude, hospitality, fidelity, and truthfulness are drawn together in this

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communion ritual,” (176), thereby revealing an amalgamation of all four practices within the Christian communal meal of the Eucharist.

_Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us_ is a masterful work that interweaves both practical and theological elements through each chapter and each of its four parts. Pohl’s consistent structure, with a repeated arrangement for each of the four parts, lends the book clarity and accessibility. Pohl provides concrete evidence through stories, case studies, and historical examination to explain the crucial elements of each of these four practices and their importance for healthy and effective Christian communities. She not only addresses the complications and deformations related to each of these four practices in community, but also challenges the reader through suggested actions on how to strengthen each of these four practices within their community. This is an excellent resource for both academic inquiry and practical application.

- Blake Campbell