

## Key Terms Insufficiently Defined

*101 Bible Words You Should Know*, by Mark Fackler and Brian Dennert. Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing. 2010. Print.

*101 Bible Words You Should Know* (hereafter *101*), previously published as *Big Ideas of the Bible*,<sup>1</sup> is a slim volume of short articles defining key Bible-related terms for a popular audience. The entries are arranged alphabetically, from *Adoption* to *Worship*. Each entry consists of an introductory definition, a passage of Scripture emphasizing the term or its main idea, a two-page article further defining the term, a memorable quote from a historical or modern source (e.g., an author, a theologian, a poet, a hymn, etc.), and additional Scripture references for further study. The articles, written by Mark Fackler, professor of communications at Calvin College, and Brian Dennert, an ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church in America and a Ph.D. student at Loyola University, are intentionally “introductory, not exhaustive” and are written in a simple, clear, and engaging style (9). The definitions offered “are not Methodist in orientation, or Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, or Baptist” (9), but differing perspectives are pointed out where relevant. *101*’s purpose, therefore, is not to promote the doctrinal distinctives of any one tradition (although the authors’ Calvinist loyalties become evident from time to time<sup>2</sup>), but to help readers work through “these big ideas” to “see the Bible’s core message” and to “discover the big God who conceived and communicated these big ideas” (9-10). The purpose is commendable, and readers exploring these biblical themes for the first time will find proper affirmations of basic Christian doctrines rather than narrow denominational emphases or arcane theological debates.

There is, however, much to be critiqued. While the terms selected for inclusion are generally well chosen, the volume is nonetheless marred by misinterpretations of Scripture that can frustrate earnest seekers of Christ from advancing in their experience of and growth in the divine life. This review will consider some of those key terms that *101* rightly recognizes as “big ideas” but, regrettably, fails to sufficiently define. Some key words not included in the volume will also be offered for consideration as ideas that are crucial for a proper understanding of the Bible’s central revelation concerning God’s eternal purpose with man.

## Inadequate Definitions of Key Terms

Many of *101*’s deficiencies can be traced to wrong or inadequate understandings concerning the tripartite nature of man, the divine life, the operation of the divine life in the believers, the growth of the divine life unto maturity, and the consummation of the growth of the divine life in a corporate Body to express the Lord of glory. Absent a proper understanding of these matters, other “big ideas” of Scripture lack a proper grounding in the unifying vision of God’s eternal economy.

### “Soul”

In its definition of “Soul,” *101* insists that *soul* and *spirit* are used synonymously in Scripture to denote the immaterial part of man and that any teaching that distinguishes between the two promotes anti-intellectualism.

Many people believe that physical forces can explain everything, including human behavior, but the Bible teaches that humans have a material and an immaterial aspect. Sometimes this immaterial aspect of humans is labeled as a soul and sometimes as a spirit. Since both terms appear in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12, some differentiate between the soul and the spirit, with the soul as a person’s consciousness and the spirit as the part that communes with God. This distinction between soul and spirit can cause a separation of the spiritual life from the physical or intellectual life and lead to anti-intellectualism. A better option is to view spirit and soul as synonyms for the immaterial aspect of humans, as the passages where they appear together do not require them to be distinct. Thus, humans are both material and immaterial, body and soul. (195)

Oddly, *101* cites two verses in which soul and spirit are distinct from each other, even to the point that the soul can be divided from the spirit, as in Hebrews 4:12. Yet it offers no scriptural evidence to support its assertion that the two are “synonyms for the immaterial aspect of humans.” The apostle Paul does not use the terms synonymously; in fact, he characterizes the soul and spirit as contrary sources of living. He writes that “a soulish man,” that is, one who is directed by the soul, “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them” (1 Cor. 2:14). However, “the spiritual man,” that is, one who is governed by the regenerated human spirit and who lives, moves, and

acts according to it (Rom. 8:4), is able to receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are “discerned spiritually” (1 Cor. 2:14-15). The soul and spirit are indeed distinct parts of a God-created human being. Failing to recognize this distinction causes a genuine believer in Christ to live as a soulish man, not a spiritual one.

Rather than raising the specter of “anti-intellectualism,” *101* would do better to recognize, as Paul did, that the mind, the leading part of the soul, must be set on the spirit (Rom. 8:6) to be renewed by the divine life in the spirit to become “the spirit of [the] mind” (Eph. 4:23). When Christ as life is dispensed from a believer’s spirit into his mind (John 1:4; 1 John 5:11-12), the believer’s mind becomes one with Christ’s mind, thus making his mind “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). To see the distinction between soul and spirit is not to forfeit the proper function of the mind; it is, on the contrary, to recognize that the mind is to be enriched and uplifted by the divine life in the spirit.

**“Born Again,”  
“Regeneration,”  
“Eternal Life”**

The human spirit is the residence of the Holy Spirit in a regenerated human being (2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:16; John 3:6; Eph. 2:22), but *101* misses this crucial point and, consequently, can offer only vague definitions of terms such as *born again*, *regeneration*, and *eternal life*. For example, “Born Again” is described as signaling “new life in the family of God” and connoting “a mysterious, real change of moral and spiritual orientation enacted by God’s Spirit” (27-28). These definitions are not wrong, but neither are they sufficiently clear. *101*’s definition of *regeneration* is similarly elusive:

The Bible provides no long sections, no elaborate teachings, on regeneration. A person (any person) who is “dead in transgressions” becomes “alive with Christ” solely at God’s initiative (Ephesians 2:5). Regeneration signals a change in attitude and purpose—change occurs, from the inside out. A regenerated person seeks, finds, and follows Christ. None of this makes a person perfect. But growth in love, joy, and peace follows as surely as a healthy natural birth also leads to growth. Passions associated with personal comfort recede, and those associated with compassion and generosity take on new meaning and urgency. (154)

*101* is clear that regeneration produces lasting change in

the life of a believer, but the nature of that change is difficult to grasp in the book’s explanations of it. It is not difficult to pinpoint the source of this murkiness. The human spirit has been explained away as being synonymous with the soul; consequently, *101* is unable to identify the human spirit as the locus of regeneration, that is, the organ into which the divine life is imparted to make fallen sinners the children of God by virtue of the divine birth (John 1:12-13).

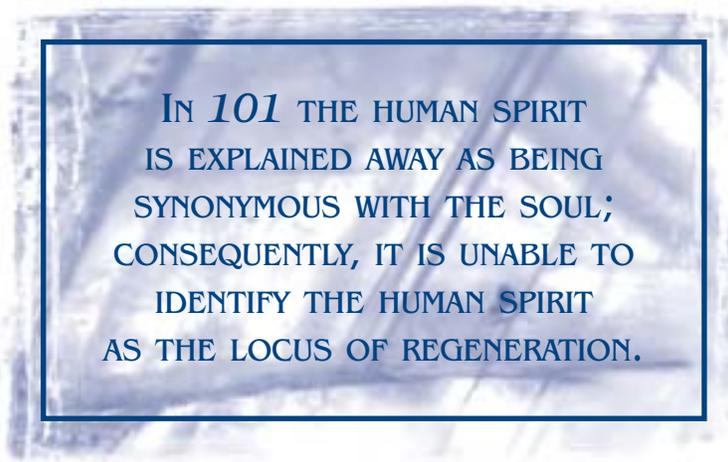
The entry for “Eternal Life” also falls short of a proper understanding and thus limits what the book can offer in its entries for “Born Again” and “Regeneration.” *101* insists that “this enduring life,” by which it means “God’s life,” was “God’s intention for all living things at creation” (63). But God’s intention from the beginning was to impart His life into man, not to the animals or other living organisms, and He created

man uniquely with a spirit to be the container of that life (Job 32:8). Interestingly, in its entry for “Obedience,” *101* posits that “if Adam and Eve had obeyed God in the Garden of Eden, they would have been righteous and had a perfect relationship with Him forever” (129). This may be true, and Adam and Eve could also have lived forever, apart from sin,

if they had only obeyed God’s commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and had never eaten of the tree of life. However, God’s purpose was not merely that man would live forever in the purity of a humanity untainted by sin but that he would be filled with the life of God symbolized by the tree of life. Regeneration, therefore, is much more than “a change in attitude and purpose”; it is to be born of the divine life with the divine nature as the initiation of the divine dispensing.

**“Sanctification/Transformation”**

The divine, eternal life of God operates to sanctify and transform regenerated believers by an inward, subjective process, but *101* objectifies these distinct steps of God’s organic salvation and makes them synonymous in one entry titled “Sanctification/Transformation” (179-180). By asserting that the “New Testament way of sanctification (becoming holy) is to follow Jesus’ lead in serving others” (180), *101* seems to focus its exposition on natural effort to behave in a Christ-like manner. Sanctification



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and transformation will indeed produce a change in the believer's living and behavior, but that change is the result of an organic reconstitution with the element of Christ, not the issue of independent human exercise.

101's definition of "Sanctification/Transformation" unwittingly highlights further consequences of failing to distinguish the soul from the spirit. Properly understood, sanctification has both a positional aspect, which 101 recognizes by stating that "'sanctify' means 'to make holy, to set aside for special use'" (179), and a dispositional aspect, whereby the holy nature of God is imparted from the spirit into the soul (Rom. 6:19), thereby saturating a believer's inward parts with God's holy nature. As the continuation of sanctification, transformation is a metabolic process in which the old element of the natural life in the soul is discharged and replaced by the impartation of the new element of the divine life in the spirit, thus producing in the believers the very expression of Christ, the image of God (2 Cor. 3:18). If one understands *spirit* and *soul* as merely synonymous terms for the immaterial part of man, then one's understanding of sanctification and transformation is vitiated of its full and proper significance.

### ***"Resurrection of Christ"***

The entry on Christ's resurrection heralds the precious truth that Christ has indeed "been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4). It further affirms,

Following the four Gospels, the rest of the New Testament speaks of Christ as conqueror, firstborn among many brothers and sisters, intercessor at the right hand of God, high priest beyond the veil, and coming King. These active descriptors all assume a risen Christ—a resurrected God-man who was both recognizable yet magnificently different in body and physical capacity. (162)

The recognition of Christ as "firstborn among many brothers and sisters" is particularly noteworthy, although the entry makes no further comment on this vital truth. Neither does it mention that it was through Christ's resurrection from the dead that He became the life-giving Spirit and that He regenerated the believers. When these points are put together, a marvelous picture of God's eternal purpose revealed through the resurrection of Christ begins to emerge. It was through resurrection that the humanity of Christ was brought into divinity, and it was through resurrection that He was designated the Son of God in His humanity and made the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 1:4; 8:29). It was through resurrection that Christ became the life-giving Spirit to impart the divine life into the believers (1 Cor. 15:45), thereby making them human and divine as He is

divine and human. And it was through resurrection that Christ regenerated the believers to make them the same as He is in life and nature (1 Pet. 1:3), thus to match Him as the Firstborn to be His duplication as the expression of God in humanity. While the resurrection is indeed a historical fact and "a world-changing event" (161), it is also eternally significant for what it accomplished for God's eternal economy in the spiritual realm.

### ***"Body of Christ," "Fellowship"***

101's definition of the church as the Body of Christ is not wrong, but it is only partially right. The church is indeed composed of "people worldwide who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior" (25), but as the Body of Christ, it is organically one with Christ, the Head of the Body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Its function is not merely to be "a sanctuary in a wounded world" or to "[model] God's love, peace, and joy as real alternatives to greed, fear, and hurt" (26). It exists as a divine constitution of the Triune God mingled with redeemed humanity to give glorious expression to Christ the Head (Eph. 4:4-6).

The Body of Christ is characterized by the fellowship of the divine life as a flow within and among the members of the Body. In this fellowship, which is called "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" and "fellowship of [our] spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1), the believers in Christ participate in all that the Father and the Son are and have done for them. 101, however, misses the organic nature of fellowship and focuses instead on the act of congregating together to share material goods and to take care of one another's needs. To be sure, the believers should meet regularly, as the Bible charges them to do (Heb. 10:25), and opportunities to render particular care in fellowship are afforded by the mutual gathering of the saints. The Body of Christ cannot be built up by isolated individuals. But the flow of the divine life transcends time and space, being, as it is, the fellowship of the members of the Body with the Triune God and with the apostles (1 John 1:3). It is in this fellowship that the Body of Christ is supplied with the divine life and becomes the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23).

### ***"New Creation/New Heaven and New Earth/New Jerusalem"***

The summary definition of "New Creation/New Heaven and New Earth/New Jerusalem" offered prior to the expository article states, "God's renewal of the cosmos at the end of time so that He might dwell with His people in complete and perfect fellowship" (127).

The built-up, organic Body of Christ consummates in the

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New Jerusalem as a living composition of all the saints redeemed by God throughout all generations. As the incorporation of the Triune God with the tripartite man, the New Jerusalem is the mutual dwelling place of God and man for eternity. It is not a physical city but a corporate person and the last and greatest sign in the Bible. Following the age of the millennial kingdom, the old heaven and old earth will pass away through fire (2 Pet. 3:10-12) and be renewed to become a new heaven and a new earth (v. 13; Rev. 21:1), and the New Jerusalem will descend out of heaven from God to be the dwelling place of God and man for eternity on the new earth (vv. 2-3). *101*, however, misses the organic significance of the New Jerusalem and seems to conflate the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem.

The picture of life on the new earth is amazing. While the description of precious jewels and a street of gold points to its tremendous beauty, the more incredible truth is that humans will dwell with God and live in worship of Him. The whole city is the temple, and God is the only light needed. It will include the believers of all times, as shown by the names of the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles being etched on the gates and walls. These saints will come from all nations, and kings will bow down and give their glory to God. (128)

**A**lthough *101* lacks for accuracy in its exposition of the new heaven and new earth and the New Jerusalem, it can be commended for seeking to apply the future hope to the living of believers today:

The promise of the new heaven and new earth should spark faithful and holy living...The Bible does not end with Christians going to heaven but heaven coming to earth. Christians seek to model the heavenly kingdom now as they live on earth since they are already part of the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). (128)

But in order to have a “faithful and holy living” today, believers must be more than inspired by the hope of a blissful eternity. Rather, they must become the New Jerusalem by enjoying the Triune God as the light of life (Rev. 21:23), the tree of life (22:2), and the river of water of life (v. 1)—the elements of the holy city for the believers to experience today.

### Key Terms Not Included

No list of significant Bible words or “big ideas of the Bible” can ever be complete, and *101* does an admirable job of selecting appropriate terms and concepts for consideration. Here, however, it is useful to offer an additional selection of some key terms not included in the volume. All the terms that follow, for which only cursory definitions can be provided, are centrally related to the

Triune God’s work in the believers to produce the corporate expression that He desires in redeemed humanity.

### Economy

From the Greek word *oikonomia* in Ephesians 1:10, 3:9, and 1 Timothy 1:4, the word *economy* indicates an administrative arrangement to distribute the wealth of a household to the members of the household. In God’s eternal economy He dispenses the riches of His infinite divine being in Christ as the life-giving Spirit to His chosen and redeemed people, the members of His household.

### Sonship

Whereas *adoption* is the more common translation of the Greek word *huiiothesia* (and is the term chosen as *101*’s first entry), “sonship” is a better translation in Romans 8:15, 23, 9:4, Galatians 4:5, and Ephesians 1:5. *Adoption* emphasizes a legal transaction whereby one not a son by birth is recognized as a son by law to enjoy the right of inheritance. *Sonship* indicates a divine birth and includes the life, the position, the living, the enjoyment, the birthright, the inheritance, and the manifestation of a son.

### Partake/Partakers

According to Hebrews 12:10 and 2 Peter 1:4, as children of God, the believers in Christ partake of God’s holiness and the divine nature, thus becoming the same as God in life and nature to live a heavenly life on earth. The divine nature consists of the elements of God’s being, such as love, light, holiness, righteousness, kindness, compassion, etc. By partaking of the divine nature, the believers enjoy the riches of God.

### One New Man

On the cross Christ tore down the ordinances separating Jews and Gentiles and created the one new man, a corporate entity, in Himself, “so making peace” (Eph. 2:15). As a corporate person, the new man is composed of all the believers in Christ, and in the new man “Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:10). It is through the new man, the highest aspect of the church, that God’s eternal purpose will be accomplished on earth. *101* incorrectly cites Ephesians 4:24 as referring to a “new self,” not the “new man,” and equates the “new self” with a “new you” that relates to God “in a new and living way” (158), thus depriving the term of its true and corporate significance.

### Kingdom of the Heavens

The term *the kingdom of the heavens* is unique to the

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gospel of Matthew. The kingdom of the heavens is a section within the kingdom of God, it is constituted of regenerated believers, it is heavenly and spiritual, and it came when the church was established. It has three aspects: a reality (chs. 5—7), an appearance (ch. 13), and a manifestation (ch. 24). *101* wrongly interprets the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven added to the meal as conveying positive aspects of the kingdom (Mark 4:30-32; Matt. 13:31-33), but these are related to the appearance of the kingdom and, thus, do not have a positive connotation.<sup>3</sup>

### Overcome(s)

To overcome in this age is to overcome Satan, sin, the flesh, the world, death, religion, and all things that frustrate believers from the proper experience and enjoyment of Christ today (cf. John 16:33; 1 John 2:13-14; 5:4; Rev. 2—3). The overcomers will reign with Christ in the kingdom of a thousand years, while defeated believers will undergo a period of discipline during the kingdom age.

### Conclusion

While a number of items have been selected for critique in this review, it also bears repeating that *101* contains many affirmations of essential Christian doctrines and seeks to exalt Christ as the One who “alone is Savior and Lord” (80). These affirmations will likely help readers to have an increased appreciation of the Bible as the inspired Word of God and of Christ as the Son of God. But if readers respond to the book’s charge to “use these 101 words to pray for and live the life God intends” for them according to the book’s definition of these words (9), their living will fall short of God’s eternal purpose.

by Tony Espinosa

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Strictly speaking, not all the terms selected for definition are words used in the Bible (e.g., “Millennium,” “Perseverance,” and “Trinity”). Thus, *Big Ideas of the Bible* is a more appropriate title than *101 Bible Words You Should Know*.

<sup>2</sup>For example, the entry for “Predestine” is strongly Calvinistic (141-142).

<sup>3</sup>For expositions of these parables, see the footnotes for Matthew 13:31-33 in the Recovery Version of the Bible.

### Works Cited

Lee, Witness. Footnotes. Recovery Version of the Bible. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 2003. Print.

## The Pneumatological Weakness of Resurrection Scholarship

*Risen: 50 Reasons Why the Resurrection Changed Everything*, by Steven D. Mathewson. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013. Print.

Modern scholarship on the resurrection has largely fallen prey to a false dichotomy. Many have accepted modernity’s skepticism and focused on resurrection as a subjective experience within the believer, denying its objective historicity. Others have responded by defending the objective historicity of Christ’s resurrection with little attention to its significance for the believers in their present experience. In recent years several authors have attempted to bridge the gap between the objective fact and the subjective experience, and Steven Mathewson, senior pastor of the Evangelical Free Church of Libertyville, Illinois, and adjunct professor of homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, adds his contribution in *Risen: 50 Reasons Why the Resurrection Changed Everything* (hereafter *Risen*). By careful attention to the full range of scriptural passages on resurrection, *Risen* attempts to give a clear and balanced view of how the historical event of Christ’s resurrection has “changed everything” for the believer here and now. While his project is certainly commendable, *Risen* ultimately gives an unsatisfactory picture of the relationship between the objective fact of Christ’s resurrection and the subjective experience of the believer in Christ. At the root of the problem is an inadequate understanding of the Spirit’s operation in the divine economy, an understanding that pervades much of contemporary theology. After commenting on the book, this review will consider how a more adequate understanding of the Spirit’s role in the divine economy might have helped.

### The Structure of the Book

*Risen* is composed of fifty short chapters, each only two or three pages in length. The book is designed to be used during the fifty days between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday, providing substance for thought and reflection on the nature of Christ’s resurrection during the period of the liturgical calendar between the remembrance of Christ’s crucifixion and the celebration of the outpouring of the Spirit (13-14). Each chapter focuses on one or two passages of Scripture highlighting a particular reason that the resurrection “changed everything.” The order of chapters generally follows the order of the New Testament text, though with considerable exception, making it difficult to discern whether or not a particular progression was intended. The tone of the book is pastoral. Given that each chapter is only a few pages in length, exegetical depth cannot reasonably be expected.

Each chapter begins with an anecdote from popular culture or the author's own experience, followed by a reference to the aspect of resurrection in the pertinent passage of Scripture and a brief presentation of how it applies to the believer. The book concludes with directions for an eight-week Bible study, including assignments, Scripture passages for reading, and questions for group discussion.

### A Summary of the Book

Because the book reads more like a devotional, having no easily discernible progression or thesis, it is difficult to summarize. Instead, this review will focus on the manner in which the book as a whole conveys the mystery of the believers' experience of Christ's resurrection. The basic approach of the book in this regard is to make a distinction between eschatological reality and the intrusion of that reality into present experience. *Risen* holds that verses testifying of the believers' experience of resurrection speak most properly concerning the next age: Christ's resurrection from the dead is primarily a promise to the believers of their own bodily resurrection in the future (61-62). Even verses that speak explicitly of the believers' already having experienced the resurrection are reinterpreted in this light. For example, when Ephesians 2:6-7 speaks of the believers' having been raised up and seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, it is taken to mean that "the apostle Paul is so confident of our future that he writes as if it has already taken place" (78). Language concerning the believers' experience of resurrection is therefore valid because the eschatological truth of the bodily resurrection of the believers has an impact on the present, an impact which implies that "the resurrection of Jesus provides for us a new quality of life right here and right now" (16).

The impact that the resurrection casts on the believers' present is primarily conveyed in the form of encouragement: "The fact that the resurrected Christ will one day be fully revealed is our cause for encouragement when we face discouraging, hopeless patches of life" (86). When we are "overcome by feelings of guilt and wonder how God can ever accept [us]," we are to remember the promise of "future grace" bestowed by the resurrection (78). The present reality of suffering is to be reconsidered in the context of "the future glory brought about by resurrection," a glory which consists in "our future life in the new heaven

and new earth promised in the Old Testament" (39-40). As the resurrection encourages us in our daily life, it is also to encourage us in our service: "'Recognizing that a far better life awaits us, we can risk our lives or well-being for the gospel' rather than simply living for ourselves" (60, quoting Blomberg). The resurrection and ascension of Christ give us "a great sense of urgency and encouragement to continue the mission of Jesus," because we do so "with the full authority of Christ behind us!" (104).

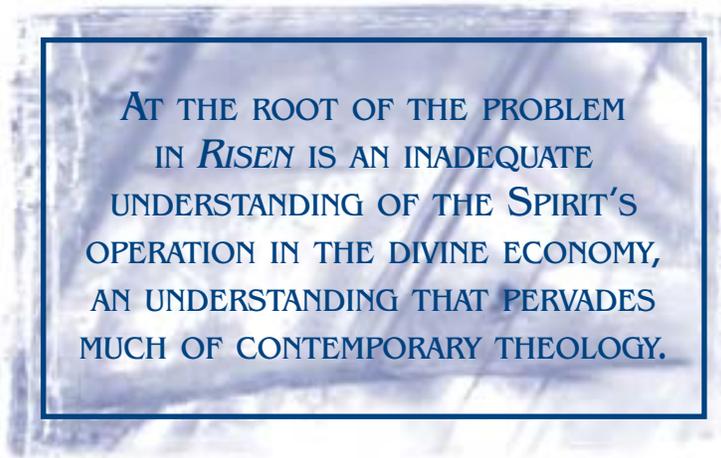
While the theme of encouragement dominates its pages, *Risen* also explores the present reality of the believer's subjective experience of Christ's resurrection in a number of places, again a reality made possible because of the eschatological fact: "Even though resurrection is a future event for the believers, it is also a present reality. The truth is, the future has been pulled back into our present experience!" (83). *Risen* suggests that "it

is by being united with Christ in his death and resurrection that we experience the blessings of the gospel" (31), a union effected by the believers' faith and portrayed in their baptism (18, 31). By being incorporated into the death of Christ, the believers are no longer the old persons they once were (34), and by Christ's resurrection, the believers are regenerated as sons

of God (94). The believers thus have confidence that the risen Christ lives within them "today and every day" (106).

While statements such as these begin to touch the intrinsic significance of the resurrection in the divine economy, it is difficult to understand what Mathewson truly means by them. According to *Risen*, it is still only in the future that the believer will genuinely walk in "newness of life," the present reality of that future expectation being merely to "live life for the glory of God" (29). We are to "consider or take into account our new identity" and to "live out this new identity by choosing God over sin" (30). Ultimately, the subjective experience of Christ's death and resurrection is reduced by *Risen* to living a "cross-shaped" life by "resurrection power," subjecting ourselves to "humility, ridicule, discrimination, loneliness, and other types of sacrifice" while "[looking] forward to our own resurrection" (80).

It seems that Mathewson genuinely wants to show a real connection between the objective fact of Christ's resurrection and the subject experience of the believer. At times he



affirms exactly this. He rightly challenges those who would preach Christ's resurrection as a spiritual event rather than a historical one. His logic is that if the resurrection was not a historical event, "there would be no power available for life transformation" (50). Again he affirms that the putting to death of our "old life" is not to be done "in our own power" but "flows out of the apostle Paul's teaching about our union with the resurrected Christ" (87). Yet the reader is left without a clear notion of what this actually means and how it is that the believer is meant to appropriate the effectiveness of the crucifixion and resurrection in experience. "Resurrection power" seems to function as little more than a slogan meant to rouse us from our discouragement, and the believers are rendered little help in their daily life. This lack of help pervades the fifty chapters of *Risen* largely because there is no real connection made between its objective emphasis on the believers' future bodily resurrection and the believers' present experience of Christ's resurrection. When the future objective fact serves only as a means for subjective "encouragement," is there any real experience of resurrection itself? A genuine experience of the power of Christ's resurrection comes when we are found in Christ, and being in Christ is a matter of walking by the Spirit (Phil. 3:9-10, 16; Gal. 5:25; 6:16).

### Pneumatological Aspects of Resurrection

Perhaps Mathewson is not to be blamed. Much of contemporary theology is unable or unwilling to speak of the believer's subjective experience of Christ, which results from an inadequate understanding of the Spirit's role in the divine economy. A more robust pneumatology would help his project, because it is precisely the Spirit's role in the divine economy to apply the objective facts accomplished by Christ to the subjective experience of the believer in Christ. During the brief span of His life and ministry on earth, the Son is revealed as the One who incorporates the operations of the Spirit (and the Father) in His every manifest action:<sup>1</sup> the Spirit is intimately involved in His conception, human living, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection (Luke 1:35; Matt. 12:28; Heb. 9:14; Rom. 1:3-4). But in the transition from His earthly to His heavenly ministry, the Spirit is revealed as the One who incorporates the operations of the Son (and the Father) in His every activity within the believers in carrying out their full salvation. A strong understanding of the Spirit is necessary in order for the objective fact of the resurrection to be applied to the subjective experience of the believer in any substantial manner.

The Spirit's particular role in the divine economy can be seen in the resurrection of Christ and in the operations of the Spirit in the believer's subjective experience of Christ's resurrection. Regrettably, *Risen* has little to say concerning several key passages that shed light on the intrinsic significance of Christ's resurrection. While it comments on Romans 1:3-4, its account could have been

enriched by attention to 1 Peter 3:18. Both verses make the contrast between "the flesh" and "the Spirit" in relation to Christ's death and resurrection, language that speaks of the distinction between the human and the divine in Christ. Explaining the designation of the Son of God by the Spirit of holiness in Romans 1:3-4, *Risen* suggests that Paul "is not describing a change in *essence* but a change in *status*...Through the resurrection, Jesus is exalted to a greater level of power and authority than he previously had" (26). Here, Christ's designation as "Son of God" is understood purely in a legal, rather than organic, sense. But 1 Peter 3:18 demonstrates that the Spirit's operation in the resurrection was one of enlivening. Just as the crucifixion put Christ to death in His humanity, the resurrection germinated the divine life within His humanity, resulting in a genuine birth in the divine life. This basic thought is confirmed by Acts 13:33, which indicates that the "raising up" of Jesus was the day of His being "begotten." It is also confirmed by pairing 2 Samuel 7:14 with Hebrews 1:5, where God's promise to David that his son would be the Son of God is interpreted to have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. The "day" of the Father's begetting in Hebrews 1:5 cannot be a reference to the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father. Romans 1:3-4, which speaks of Christ as the "seed of David," indicates that the "day" of His being begotten was the day of resurrection. Of course, it should be made clear that this birth in no way suggests the error of Adoptionism,<sup>2</sup> an error that Mathewson keenly wishes to avoid (25). It is this error that prompts Mathewson to deny the reality of a birth of the divine life in the resurrected humanity of Jesus. But the positing of a divine birth at the time of the resurrection need not entail the error of Adoptionism. While the second of the Divine Trinity was, continues to be, and always will be the only begotten Son of God in His eternal deity, He is now also the firstborn Son in His resurrected humanity (John 1:18; Rom. 8:29).

As was the case in Christ's conception, human living, ministry, and crucifixion, the Spirit is thus intimately involved in the resurrection of Christ as the One who germinates the divine life within the humanity of the incarnate Son, uplifting His humanity into the divine sonship to become the firstborn Son of God. The relationship between the two persons of the Godhead is so close that Paul would testify that the last Adam, who terminated the old humanity in His crucifixion, is now "a life-giving Spirit" in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45). Again, while *Risen* comments on this portion, it misses the intrinsic significance—its emphasis is that Christ's possession of a spiritual body is a promise of our own receiving of spiritual bodies in the future (62). *Risen* thus misses the mystery that makes possible the very thing it wants to suggest. In resurrection Christ was not only begotten as the firstborn Son of God but "*became* a life-giving Spirit." As such, the objective fact of Christ's resurrection can be applied to

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the believers, as testified by the various titles that the Spirit takes on in the New Testament: He is the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and the Lord Spirit (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 3:18). It is as such a Spirit that Christ is able to apply the accomplishments of His earthly ministry to the believers for their ongoing salvation in His heavenly ministry.

The key distinction is not between the eschatological reality and its present intrusion but between the objective fact and the subjective realization. The New Testament testifies strongly that the believers have been crucified with Christ, that they have been regenerated by being raised up, and that they have been seated in the heavenlies in Christ (Gal. 2:20; 1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:6-7). But these divine facts are realized by the believers through their experience of the Spirit. On the one hand, Paul could testify that he had been “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). On the other hand, he could say that “if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:13). There is then a killing and an enlivening element within the post-resurrection Spirit. The mere facts of Christ’s death and resurrection are not sufficient for the believers’ experience. These facts must become a reality by the Spirit’s incorporation of the Son’s operations within the believers. The fact that Paul charges the believers to live by the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, and be led by the Spirit indicates that Paul understood the Spirit Himself to be the reality of the resurrection (Gal. 5:25; Rom. 8:14).

This experience of Christ’s death and resurrection by the Spirit of Christ is the reality of the believers’ sonship. Galatians 4:4-6, a paradigmatic passage on the purpose of the sending of the Son and of the Spirit in the economy of God, reveals that the sending of the Son at the fullness of the time was to bring us the sonship in fact and in position through His death and His resurrection. The sending of the Spirit of the Son into the believers’ hearts is the application and realization of that sonship in the present subjective experience of the believers. As the death and resurrection of the God-man was a genuine begetting, so the realization of these facts by the Spirit of Christ within the believers constitutes their own sonship. *Risen* does acknowledge that “the adoption in Romans 8 is both ‘already’ (v. 15) and ‘not yet’ (v. 23)” but it interprets our present “adoption” as implying merely “intimacy” with God (43-44). The “not yet” part of our sonship is understood to be the blessings of a carefree life in the coming kingdom. Ultimately, the sonship for which the believers long in Romans 8:23 is interpreted as “an earthly existence in God’s restored creation” (44), and their being conformed to the image of Christ is understood to extend no further than their glorified bodies, which will be like His (64).

The sonship that we presently enjoy is no mere “intimacy” with God, and the consummation of that sonship

for which we long is not merely a human existence free from corruption and misery. The deep longing within God and the deep longing within the spirit of every believer are that we might “know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil. 3:10). This experience is not an imitation of Christ’s pattern but a reality effected by the operation of the “Spirit of Jesus Christ” (1:19) and constituting the believers’ sonship (Rom. 8:28-29), a process that will consummate in the age to come but is substantially operative already in this present age.

## Conclusion

*Risen’s* use of scriptural passages and its attention to a broad range of these passages help to push the constraints of traditional theological commitments and touch upon some of the greatest mysteries contained in the Word of God. The book’s failure, however, to move much beyond its emphasis on the eschatological aspects of resurrection as a source of present-day encouragement leaves the reader with empty-sounding slogans that render little help in the living of the Christian life. A deeper understanding of the Spirit and His role both in the historical resurrection of Christ and in the believer’s appropriation of its effects would help bring *Risen’s* project to a fuller stage of development, one more in line with the biblical revelation of the significance of Christ’s resurrection.

by Mitchell Kennard

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For a fuller account of the Spirit’s incorporation of the Son’s operation in the church, see “The Johannine Jesus as Bridge and Model for the Incorporation of the Believers into the Divine Trinity (2),” *Affirmation & Critique* IX.2 (Oct. 2004): 14-33, particularly pages 15 through 19.

<sup>2</sup>Adoptionism was a second-century Christological error that held that Jesus was only human until made the Son of God at some time after His human conception in the womb of Mary.

## Failing to See the Divine Life in John 19:34

*Seeing Blood and Water: A Narrative-critical Study of John 19:34*, by Sebastian A. Carnazzo. Eugene: Pickwick-Wipf, 2012. Print.

Sebastian A. Carnazzo’s *Seeing Blood and Water: A Narrative-critical Study of John 19:34* (hereafter *Seeing*) is intended as a comprehensive narrative-critical

analysis of John 19:34 that evaluates how the sign of blood and water relates to and can be understood in the context of John's Gospel (8-9). Even though *Seeing* presents a compelling case for understanding John 19:31-37 in the context of Zechariah 12 through 14, it misses the revelation concerning the life-imparting aspect of the Lord's death in John 19:34.

### A Loose Discussion of the Word *Life*

There is a major lack in *Seeing's* study due to its loose discussion of the word *life*. Although *Seeing* explains that both blood and water in John's Gospel indicate life, it never actually defines *life* according to its scriptural usage. In the New Testament three Greek words, each with a different denotation, are translated "life": *bios*, which denotes the biological life (cf. Luke 8:43; 21:4); *psuche*, which denotes the psychological life (John 15:13; Matt. 16:25-26; Luke 9:24); and *zoe*, which mainly denotes the divine life, the eternal life of God (John 1:4; 3:16; 1 John 5:12). It is this latter term, *zoe*, that is the strong and repeated focus of the Gospel of John. This can be seen in John 1:4: "In Him was life [*zoe*], and the life [*zoe*] was the light of men." This indicates that the divine life in Christ and the receiving of this divine life by the believers are the focus of the Gospel of John. Without a clear statement concerning its understanding of the word *life*, *Seeing* deprives its readers of a clear understanding of the role of the divine life as it relates to the flowing out of blood and water in 19:34. Moreover, the lack of a clear definition of the term suggests an inadequate understanding of *life* as it is used in the New Testament, and it explains some of the undue complications that *Seeing* introduces to its study of John's Gospel.

### Blood and Water from *Seeing's* Perspective

In chapter 1, "Preliminary Issues," *Seeing* presents a survey of previous interpretations of blood and water in John 19:34. It asserts that

from the patristic to the modern era, there has been a growing mass of exegetical literature related to John 19:34...However,...there has not yet been a thorough and comprehensive literary analysis of this key verse, showing how the rich and complex symbols it contains, particularly those of blood and water, can be more fully understood and appreciated by relating them to the remainder of the Gospel's narrative. (8)

Thus, it sees the need for a comprehensive narrative-critical analysis of John 19:34. In the remainder of the chapter *Seeing* establishes that John's Gospel was composed sometime between the late 60s and A.D. 150

by John the son of Zebedee to an audience of Greek-speaking Christians who were knowledgeable concerning the Old Testament and other major Jewish customs (12-13, 16, 18).

In chapter 2, "John 19:34 in Its Literary and Cultural Context," *Seeing* examines the textual tradition and literary structure of John 19:31-37 and explains the significance of blood and water according to the cultural context of the Gospel of John. In its evaluation of the textual tradition, *Seeing* provides the Greek text of John 19:31-37 and a translation to match. It concludes that "the text of John 19:31-37 is remarkably stable in the extant manuscript tradition and manifests only two noteworthy variants," one of which can be accepted as original, based on the audience to whom the Gospel was written (21-22). In its exploration of the significance of blood and water in the cultural context of John's Gospel, *Seeing* argues, based on Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17:11 and 14, and Exodus 24:3-8, that blood was viewed in relation to life and the purification of sin, a view that was later adopted into Christian literature (24-26). It further suggests, based on Exodus 29:4, that water was associated with the sustenance of life and the purification of uncleanness (27-28). In this reference to *life*, the word *sustenance* suggests that life here may be physical rather than spiritual.

In chapter 3, "Blood in the Gospel Preceding John 19:34," *Seeing* examines two portions in John's Gospel that refer to *blood* prior to 19:34, namely John 1:13 and 6:53-56. *Seeing* argues that whereas *blood* as used in 1:13 refers to a natural birth (32), it is used in 6:53-56 to refer to the "life-giving blood of Jesus" as a source of life and to direct the reader's attention to His death (39-40, 66). In this reference to life, the meaning of the word *life* is ambiguous at best, for there is no clear statement that *life-giving* refers to the giving of the divine life or to simply the giving of an everlasting physical life.

In chapter 4, "Water in the Gospel Preceding John 19:34," *Seeing* explores the use of water prior to 19:34. Specifically, it considers water in 1:26, 31, 33; 2:7-9; 3:5, 23; 4:7-15; 7:37-39; and 13:5 in order to show that in these portions the use of water falls into two main categories—cleansing and sustenance of life (60). *Seeing* asserts that the Lord's baptism by John in 1:26-33 sets the precedent for the subsequent use in this Gospel of water as it relates to ritual purification and subtly hints at "a relationship between purification by water and purification by the Spirit" (43-44). Thus, *Seeing* relates water in 2:7-9, where the Lord Jesus turns water into wine, to ritual purification since the pots filled with water were designated for rites of purification (v. 6) and to the blessings of the Messianic kingdom (48). It further suggests that water in 3:5, where the Lord spoke to Nicodemus

concerning birth from above, may hint at ritual purification and baptism (49). *Seeing* suggests that in 4:7-15, where a Samaritan woman who comes to draw water from a well encounters Jesus, water is related to drinking for the sustenance of life and that the narrative is intended to bring to mind the image of water flowing out of the eschatological temple in Zechariah 14 and Ezekiel 47 (52-53). *Seeing* uses John 7:37-39, where Jesus cries out to the thirsty ones at the festival of Booths, to reinforce the image of water flowing out of the temple indicated in John 4, to denote the Spirit, and to compare Jesus to the rock in the wilderness out from which water flowed (57-58). Finally, *Seeing* suggests that in 13:5, where Jesus washes the feet of His disciples, water is used to indicate a spiritual cleansing that will come with the death of Jesus (60).

In chapter 5, "The Interpretation of John 19:34," *Seeing* asserts that in verse 34, "the blood should be understood in relation to life and/or purification from sin and the water should be understood in relation to life and/or purification from uncleanness" (67). *Seeing* further claims that the way in which the imagery in verse 34 is intended to convey the fulfillment of Old Testament symbolism is seen in John's reference to Zechariah 12:10. It argues that the abundance of allusions to Zechariah in John's Gospel and the explicit quotation of Zechariah 12:10 in John 19:37 indicate that in the aspect of purification "the author of the Gospel expected the audience to understand the flow of 'blood and water' in John 19:34 as the fulfillment of Zech 13:1, a verse that follows almost immediately after 12:10" (70-71). It sees sin and impurity in Zechariah 13:1 as corresponding respectively to blood and water in John 19:34. Moreover, *Seeing* proposes that in the aspect of life, verse 34, as it relates to 20:19-23, is the fulfillment of Zechariah 13:1 and 14:8. In other words, "in fulfillment of Zech 13:1, the flow from Jesus' side was shown to be a purifying fountain fulfilling the cultic requirements of the Mosaic Law, but in anticipation of John 20:19-23, it also shows the relationship between this purifying fountain and the flow of the Holy Spirit—the 'living water' of Zech 14:8" (74).

In the remainder of chapter 5, *Seeing* argues that although it is difficult to make a direct connection between the blood and water in John 19:34 and the elements of the

Lord's table and baptism, it is also difficult to rule out that such a relationship may exist.

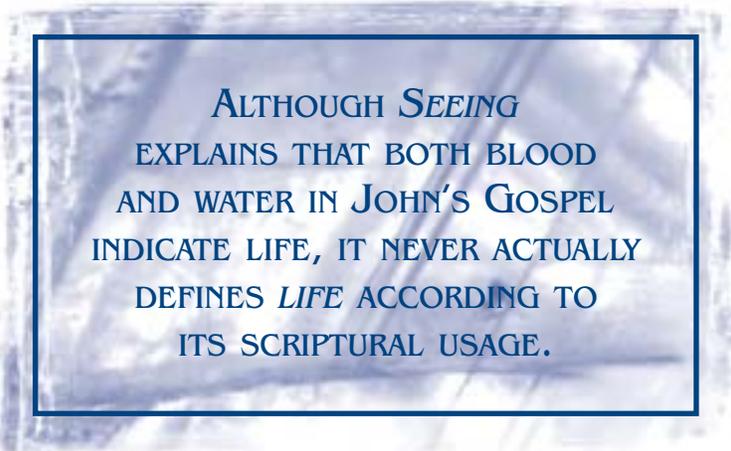
### The Divine Life—the Controlling Principle of John's Gospel

In its consideration of the use of water in John's Gospel, *Seeing* agrees with Wayne A. Meeks that a reader "cannot understand any part of the Fourth Gospel until he understands the whole" (qtd. in *Seeing* 44), implying that the interpretation of any portion of this Gospel must be consistent with the thought conveyed by the whole. Nevertheless, much of *Seeing's* interpretation of the use of water in this Gospel fails to take into account the divine life as the center and controlling principle of John's Gospel (20:31; 3:15-16; 4:14, 36; 5:21, 24, 39-40; 6:27, 35, 40, 47, 51, 57, 63, 68; 7:37-39; 8:12; 10:10-11).

In the cases of baptism recorded in John 1:26, 31, 33; 3:23, and in the case of the divine birth recorded in 3:5, *Seeing* associates water with ritual purification rather than termination and death, which is the prerequisite in the divine economy to the receiving of the divine life. However, baptism in the New Testament is never related to ritual purification. This is

made evident in 1 Peter 3:21, which says that baptism is "not a putting away of the filth of the flesh but the appeal of a good conscience unto God." Baptism implies death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5), and the instances of baptism in John's Gospel refer mainly to the principle of termination for the sake of germination in the divine life in those redeemed by the blood. In this sense, *Seeing's* interpretation of water in these portions stands against not only the controlling principle of John's Gospel but also the biblical revelation concerning baptism.

Regarding the changing of water into wine at Cana in John 2, *Seeing* argues that the water in verses 7 through 9 must refer to ritual purification since the stone pots were related to the Jews' rites of purification (v. 6), and the wine to the blessings of the Messianic era that were now available in Christ. Even though there may be some credence to this understanding, when this sign is considered in light of the governing principle of John's Gospel and the context of John 4, where the significance of the sign is repeated, it is evident that water here also indicates death rather than purification.



ALTHOUGH *SEEING*  
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John 4:46 speaks of the sign of the Lord Jesus changing water into wine before presenting a narrative of His changing the dying condition of a royal official's son into one of life. Thus, the sequence in which the two signs are presented in John 4 may indicate that in principle these two signs—changing water into wine and healing the sick son of an official—were the same, to change death into life (vv. 46-54). Such an understanding corresponds to the central thought in John's Gospel.

The examination of the water of baptism above does not mean that the sign of water in the New Testament has no aspect of purification. Nevertheless, water in the New Testament does not denote a ritualistic or objective purification but a subjective washing and sanctification by the divine life as indicated in Ephesians 5:26-27. Despite the significant shortcomings detailed above, *Seeing* does interpret water as the Spirit in John 4 and 7, which is crucial to understanding water in John 19:34.

### The Life-imparting, or Non-redemptive, Aspect of Christ's Death

In order to connect *blood* in John 19:34 to *sin* in Zechariah 13:1 and *water* to *impurity*, *Seeing* restricts the application of the Gospel's quotation of Zechariah 12:10 in John 19:37 to verse 34. Consequently, *Seeing* is forced to take a circuitous way to show that water here also indicates life and the Spirit (24, 73-76). Strictly speaking, the opened fountain for sin and impurity in Zechariah 13:1 refers mainly to the sign of blood in John 19:34, which denotes the redemptive aspect of Christ's death. Consequently, *Seeing* misses the crucial revelation concerning the life-imparting, or non-redemptive, aspect of Christ's death presented in this portion of the Word. In particular, the Lord's crucifixion and resurrection for the producing of the church as His bride recorded in John's Gospel is typified in Genesis 2:21-22. In Genesis 2 God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, after which He took a rib out from his side, closed up the flesh in its place, and built the rib into a woman. Adam's deep sleep for producing Eve, his counterpart, typifies Christ's death on the cross for producing the church (Eph. 5:25-27), and the rib taken out of Adam's side typifies the unbreakable eternal life (John 19:36; cf. v. 33), which flowed out of Christ's pierced side for the producing and building up of the church as His counterpart (v. 34). Thus, the rib taken out of the man in Genesis 2:21 corresponds to the unbroken bone as well as the water in John 19:33-36. Moreover, blood is not mentioned in Genesis 2:21, because there was no need for redemption at that time, for the corrupting element of sin had not yet contaminated man.

A succinct, yet accurate interpretation of blood and water in John 19:34 that adequately defines life is presented in

Witness Lee's note on this verse in the Recovery Version of the Bible:

Two substances came out of the Lord's pierced side: blood and water. Blood is for redemption, to deal with sins (1:29; Heb. 9:22) for the purchasing of the church (Acts 20:28). Water is for imparting life, to deal with death (12:24; 3:14-15) for the producing of the church (Eph. 5:29-30). The Lord's death, on the negative side, takes away our sins, and on the positive side, imparts life into us. Hence, it has two aspects: the redemptive aspect and the life-imparting aspect. The redemptive aspect is for the life-imparting aspect. The record of the other three Gospels portrays only the redemptive aspect of the Lord's death; John's record portrays not only the redemptive aspect but also the life-imparting aspect... This death that imparts life released the Lord's divine life from within Him for the producing of the church, which is composed of all His believers, into whom His divine life has been imparted. This life-imparting death of the Lord's is typified by Adam's sleep, out from which Eve was produced (Gen. 2:21-23), and is signified by the death of the one grain of wheat that fell into the ground for the bringing forth of many grains (12:24) to make the one bread—the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:17). Hence, it is also the life-propagating, life-multiplying death, the generating and reproducing death.

The Lord's pierced side was prefigured by Adam's opened side, out from which Eve was produced (Gen. 2:21-23). The blood was typified by the blood of the passover lamb (Exo. 12:7, 22; Rev. 12:11), and the water was typified by the water that flowed out of the smitten rock (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4). The blood formed a fountain for the washing away of sin (Zech. 13:1), and the water became the fountain of life (Psa. 36:9; Rev. 21:6). (Note 1)

### Conclusion

*Seeing* presents a study of blood and water in John 19:34 in order to show how these signs can be understood in the context of the Gospel's narrative. However, its inability to see that the divine life, as signified by water, is the central thought of this Gospel represents a great drawback to the value of the study. Even in areas where it does succeed, such as highlighting the relationship between John 19:31-37 and Zechariah 12—14, its deficiency still diminishes its success.

by Joel Oladele

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