John A. Wind, **ADV.M.DIV., PH.D.**
Foreword by Stephen J. Wellum

Do Good to All People as You Have the Opportunity

A Biblical Theology of the Good Deeds Mission of the New Covenant Community

REFORMED ACADEMIC DISSERTATIONS

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Do Good to All People as You Have the Opportunity

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Do Good to All People as You Have the Opportunity

A Biblical Theology of the Good Deeds Mission of the New Covenant Community

John Anthony Wind

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To Rachel,
A wife whose life and character beautify the gospel

Contents

Series Introduction xi
Foreword by Stephen J. Wellum xiii
Preface xix

1. Introduction 1
   Debating the Mission of the Church
   Good Deeds Mission Proposal
   Defining Terms
   Scope of Research
   Presuppositions for Doing Biblical Theology
   Overview of Argument
2. Review of Equal Priority Literature Since 1974 33
3. Review of Evangelistic Priority Literature Since 1974 53
4. The Good Deeds Responsibility of Humanity in Genesis 1–2 79
   Man as the Image of God
   The Responsibilities of the Image
   Representational Rulership
   Image Multiplication
   Dependent Sonship
   Priestly Worship in God's Presence
   Covenant in Genesis 1–2
   Good Deeds Responsibility
5. The Good Deeds Responsibility of Humanity in Genesis 3–11 106
   The Effect of Sin on Humanity's Good Deeds Responsibility in Genesis 3–7

Responsibilities Impossible as Originally Intended
Responsibilities Possible in an Altered Sense That Ultimately Produces Judgment
Responsibilities Possible in an Altered Sense That Ultimately Accompanies Salvation
The Good Deeds Responsibility of Humanity in Genesis 8–11
Humanity's Good Deeds Responsibility
Summary of Humanity's Good Deeds Responsibility

6. The Good Deeds Mission of the Old Covenant Community 139
Good Deeds Mission of Abraham and His Descendants until Possession of the Covenant Land
Good Deeds Mission of Abraham's Descendants from Possession of the Covenant Land until the Exile
Good Deeds Mission of Abraham's Descendants from the Exile until Christ
Interrelationship of Israel's Good Deeds Mission and Humanity's Good Deeds Responsibility

7. The Good Deeds Mission in the Gospels before New Covenant Inauguration 174
Good Deeds Mission of Christ Pre-New Covenant
Good Deeds Mission of Disciples Pre-New Covenant
Light of the World, City on a Hill, Salt of the Earth
Summary of Pre-New Covenant Good Deeds Mission

8. The Good Deeds Mission of the New Covenant Community 206
Good Deeds Mission of Christ in the Inaugurated New Covenant
Good Deeds Mission of Disciples in the Inaugurated New Covenant
The Church as the Light of the World
Good Deeds Responsibility of Christ and His Disciples in the Consummated New Covenant

9. Conclusions 243
Defining Debated Terms
Biblical Dualism Requires Evangelistic Priority
Doing Good through Macroeconomics and Politics
Summary of the Good Deeds Mission of the New Covenant Community

Bibliography 277
Index of Scripture 309
Index of Subjects and Names 315

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John J. Hughes
Series Editor

Foreword

What is the mission of the church? Given that the church is God's new covenant community—God's elect people whom our Lord Jesus Christ has secured and built by his glorious person and work—this question is vitally important to answer correctly. If we, as the church, are confused regarding who we are as Christ's people and what our mission is in the world, we will inevitably fail to live out what the Lord of the church has called us to be and do.

No doubt, the question regarding the church's mission is not new. For centuries, Protestants and now evangelicals have debated it, especially regarding the relative priority of the responsibilities of evangelism and social action. No one wants to dichotomize these responsibilities too much, and both are needed; yet it is crucial to think through which one has priority. Otherwise, our focus may blur, practical decisions regarding the church's allocation of time and resources may go awry, and, most significantly, the gospel may be redefined.

If this question has been debated for centuries, then why another book on it? Many reasons could be given, but probably the best is that although the debate about the church's mission is not new, in recent days it has returned in full force. In the last decade, in various books, at conferences, and on social media a debate is raging once again over the mission of the church, much of it cast in terms of "social justice." Is social justice the gospel or an entailment of it? Is the church's primary calling evangelism and discipleship, or is it to see society "transformed" by our evangelism and to take on various social causes? Are we to bring God's "kingdom" to this world by our social and political involvement in the world? In light of these recent

developments, centuries-old questions are here again, requiring careful thought, reflection, and a return to Scripture. As in any other era, especially today we need a renewed look at what exactly the church *is* and *how* we ought to fulfill our mission as the church in a growing post-Christian, secular world, especially we who live in the West.

For this reason, *this* book is so greatly needed today. As serious questions are being asked about the church's mission, we need to return again to Scripture to answer the questions of the day in light of God's Word. What is unique about John Wind's book, and why I commend it so highly, is that John answers the crucial question about the mission of the church from Scripture, but not in a piecemeal way. This is not to say that previous books on the subject have been selective in their use of Scripture. Yet it is to say that what has often been missing in previous discussions of the subject is a larger biblical theology of the church, her mission, and how we ought to live in the world as God's new covenant people. The volume's subtitle nicely signals what the book is about and why it is so important: "A Biblical Theology of the Good Deeds Mission of the New Covenant Community." But what exactly does John mean by *biblical theology*, and why is it important?

In recent years, biblical theology as a discipline has grown in evangelical theology, but the term *biblical theology* is still misunderstood. At the popular level, most Christians think of biblical theology as being "true to the Bible," which obviously is vitally important! Yet this is not what biblical theology is in the disciplinary sense of the word *biblical*. So what is it? To best grasp the concept, it may be helpful to see how *biblical theology* has been understood since the Reformation, especially contrasting a nonevangelical use of the term with an evangelical, orthodox use.

In and after the Reformation, biblical theology was often identified with systematic theology as the church sought to understand the entirety of Scripture and to grasp how the whole canon is put together in light of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, there was a tendency to read Scripture in more logical

and atemporal categories rather than to think carefully through the Bible's developing covenantal storyline. With the rise of the Enlightenment, however, biblical theology began to emerge as a distinct discipline. Yet it is crucial to distinguish the emergence of biblical theology at this time along two different paths: one an illegitimate path tied to Enlightenment presuppositions, and the other a legitimate path tied to the Bible's own self-attestation and presentation of itself.

Regarding the illegitimate path, there was a growing tendency to read Scripture *critically* and uncoupled from historic Christianity. The Bible was approached "as any other book," subservient to historical-critical methods that operated within the confines of a *methodological* naturalism. The Bible was not approached on its own terms, i.e., as God's Word written. In fact, the idea that Scripture was God-breathed through human authors—a text that authoritatively and accurately unfolds God's redemptive plan centered in Christ—was rejected. The end result of this approach was a denial of Scripture's authority and an increasingly fragmented reading of Scripture, given that the practitioners of this view did not believe Scripture to be a unified, true revelation. Biblical theology as a discipline became merely "descriptive" and governed by *critical* methods and unbiblical theological assumptions. Ultimately, as a discipline, it failed to help the church because at its heart, it denied biblical authority.

Contrary to the Enlightenment approach, a legitimate approach to biblical theology emerged. It was grounded in orthodox Christian theology, a high view of Scripture, and reading Scripture along its unfolding covenantal storyline. Probably the best-known twentieth-century pioneer of this approach was Geerhardus Vos, who developed biblical theology at Princeton Seminary in the early part of the century. Vos sought to do biblical theology with a firm commitment to the authority of Scripture. In contrast to the Enlightenment view, Vos argued that biblical theology, as an exegetical discipline, not only must begin with the biblical text but also must view Scripture as God's own self-attesting Word, fully authoritative and reliable.

Furthermore, as one exegetes Scripture, Vos argued, biblical theology seeks to trace out the Bible's unity and multiformity and find its consummation in the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the new covenant era. Biblical theology must follow a method that reads the Bible on its own terms, following the Bible's own internal contours and shape, in order to discover God's unified plan as it is disclosed to us over time. The path that Vos blazed was foundational for an evangelical understanding of biblical theology in the disciplinary sense.

So what, then, is biblical theology in this understanding? Biblical theology is the hermeneutical discipline that seeks to do justice to what Scripture claims to be and what it actually is. Regarding its claim, Scripture is *God's* Word written, and as such, it is a unified revelation of his gracious plan of redemption. In terms of how it has come to us, God has given us his Word over time, as a *progressive* unfolding of his plan, rooted in history, and unpacked along a specific redemptive-historical plotline primarily demarcated by the biblical covenants. As a discipline, biblical theology attempts to exegete texts in their own context and then, in light of the entire canon, to examine the unfolding nature of God's plan and carefully think through the relationship between *before* and *after* in that plan, which culminates in Christ. Thus, biblical theology provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of the Bible relate to all other texts so that they will be read correctly, according to God's intention, which is discovered through human authors but ultimately at the canonical level. Biblical theology, then, is the attempt to grasp the "whole counsel of God" and "to think God's thoughts after him."

Now, it is *this* understanding of biblical theology that *this* book follows to answer the crucial question about the mission of the church. Why is this significant? Because ultimately we cannot answer the question in a biblical way apart from thinking through the entire canon of Scripture according to the Bible's own covenantal progression. Biblical theology is the discipline that allows us to grasp all that Scripture says, and therefore it is the basis, underpinning, and warrant for our theological conclusions from Scripture.

To answer the question "What is the mission of the church?" is to give a theological answer. But to give a correct theological answer, we must first think through the biblical-theological framework of Scripture as unpacked by the progression of the biblical covenants. Only after we have done so will we be able to answer the question in a biblical way from the entirety of Scripture.

We can state it another way: a biblical missiology (the focus of this book) is really a systematic theology in practice. But for it to be fully warranted missiology from Scripture, its theological proposal must be warranted not only from all that Scripture says but also in the way that Scripture says it. This is what John Wind's study aims to do and, in my view, he does masterfully. By carefully working from Genesis to Revelation, by especially following the Bible's own intrasystematic structures—namely, the progression of the covenants—John clarifies what it means for the church, as God's new covenant people, to be the church in our place in redemptive history. In this careful work of biblical theology, John labors hard to understand texts in their context and then place these texts in their covenantal location, before he draws theological conclusions about what it means for the church to be the church today. After John is done, he has not only answered the question regarding the church's mission, but also painted a beautiful portrait of what the church is as God's new covenant community in Christ, and how we ought to live as God's redeemed image-bearers and sons as we await the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ and the consummation of the ages.

In my view, the church (especially in the West) is struggling to know who she is and how she ought to live in the world. So this book is greatly needed today. If read, understood, and applied, it will help the church to be all that we are called to be as Christ's people, for the glory of our great Redeemer, for the good of his people, and indeed for the benefit of those outside the church as we learn anew to do good to all people as we have opportunity.

Stephen J. Wellum

Preface

As I reflect back upon the journey of this book, the dominant theme of my heart is thanksgiving. Thank you to my supervisor, David Sills, for seminars and colloquiums filled with academic insight and for helping guide this project to completion. Thank you to my other committee members, Steve Wellum and George Martin, whose seminars, at the beginning and end, respectively, of my classroom program, providentially helped first to set me on the course of this book and then brought my research to its final focus. Thank you to Tim Beougher, Greg Allison, and Jim Hamilton, each of whose seminar also left a significant mark on the structure of this book. Thank you to Ken Magnuson for your leadership of The Commonweal Project on Faith, Work, and Human Flourishing, which not only provided me a job but which also stimulated so much of my thinking as represented in the book that follows. Thank you to Tom Schreiner for your generous encouragement of my writing and for your ongoing inspiration as a model of Christian scholarship. Thank you also to John Sailhamer (1946–2017) for your seminal influence on how I both trust and read the Bible.

Thank you to my colleagues at Colorado Christian University who, after the completion of my formal academic studies, have continued to stimulate my ongoing education in all matters biblical and theological. It is my distinct honor and pleasure to labor with you in the work of academic ministry. Thank you to President Don Sweeting for your wise leadership of our institution, including keeping clearly before us the vision of uniting our academic research with cultural engagement. Thank you to Dean of the School of Theology

David Kotter for your mentoring of me as a rookie teacher, including your own steady example of combining scholarly depth with pastoral concern. Thank you to my other colleagues in the School of Theology, David Bosworth, Ian Clary, Megan DeVore, Matt Jones, Michael Plato, Seth Rodriguez, and Kevin Turner, for your friendship in Christ and for your partnership in the ministry of the Word.

Thank you also to John Hughes for your interest in bringing my research and writing to a wider audience. Thanks for shepherding me through the publishing process. May the Lord Jesus continue to use P&R Publishing to equip his church and to advance his kingdom.

Thank you to my father and mother, Charles (1924–94) and Ann Wind, whose foundational love, training, and example is intimately connected to all I have ever accomplished, including this book. Thank you to my parents-in-law, Jim and Jan Roelofs, for your love and kind support over the last quarter century (and for allowing me to marry your daughter!) To my dear wife, Rachel, and to our five daughters, Clara Anne, Chloe, Christin, Charis, and Catherine, I owe a whole different level of gratitude. You have each happily borne the impact of my research and writing on our family over the course of producing this book, providing unfailing encouragement and faithful love. Each of you is woven into the fabric of this book in a way more profound than the words on the page or the arguments presented. Finally, I offer up this book to my Lord Jesus Christ as a sacrifice of praise: may it serve your church and glorify your name.

John Wind
Lakewood, Colorado
February 2019

1

Introduction

Debating the Mission of the Church

Evangelicals[1] have debated the relative priority of the responsibilities of verbal proclamation and social action in the church's mission for centuries.[2] In the 1800s, urban poverty in Europe and

[1] The term "evangelical" is an increasingly disputed designation today. See Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen, eds., *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). Traditionally, the term "evangelical" was used to describe those who (among other things) shared a commitment to the centrality of the Scripture, the importance of proclaiming the gospel message in evangelism, and the necessity of individuals being born again by the Spirit. This book presupposes these "evangelical" convictions and speaks primarily to those who share them. See Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 49, for a slightly expanded list of six evangelical core doctrines.

[2] One early, post-Reformation individual who might (anachronistically) be labeled an "evangelical" missionary is seventeenth-century New England pastor and missionary to the Algonquian Indians, John Eliot (1604–90). He generally followed the understanding of his day that the Native Americans first needed to be "civilized" before they could be "christianized." Though different in many ways from the present verbal proclamation versus social action debate, in other ways the debate over the relative priority of the civilizing mission versus the christianizing mission is the analogous debate within that time and place. Jon Hinkson, "Mission among Puritans and Pietists," in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, eds. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 25–29. During the

America (accompanying the onset of the Industrial Revolution and rapid urbanization), as well as Protestant missions expansion into impoverished lands abroad, prompted evangelicals to debate this question with new intensity. Some in missions, like Rufus Anderson (1796–1880), head of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions for forty years, believed that the church's primary responsibility is verbal proclamation and the planting of churches.[3] Others, like John R. Mott (1865–1955), a leader in the Student Volunteer Movement and a national secretary for the YMCA for fifty years, held that the church has a more equal responsibility for both verbal proclamation and social action.[4] With the growing prominence of the "social gospel" in the early 1900s, followed by the outbreak of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in the 1920s, the evangelistic priority side of the debate became solidly fundamentalist in its theology and the equal priority side increasingly embraced the modernist theology of the social gospel. After World War II, theologian Carl F. H. Henry, in his book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, began questioning fundamentalists' (some began to prefer the title "evangelicals") lack of engagement in social action along with their evangelism.[5] Yet, even as some evangelicals answered Henry's call to become more socially involved in the post-war period,

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eighteenth century, the revivals of the First Great Awakening challenged the chronological priority of the civilizing mission over the christianizing mission, with "the flames of revivalism demonstrat[ing] from that 'civilization' need not precede salvation, but rather could proceed out of it," (ibid., 32). This same debate continued within the Scottish church between the years 1750 to 1835. Ian Douglas Maxwell, "Civilization or Christianity? The Scottish Debate on Mission Method, 1750–1835," in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 123–40.

[3] Fred W. Beuttler, "Evangelical Missions in Modern America," in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 114.

[4] Ibid., 116.

[5] Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

the mainstream of evangelicalism continued to give priority to the task of verbal proclamation, as evidenced by the reaffirmation of evangelism as "the supreme task of the church" at the 1966 Berlin World Congress on Evangelism.[6]

The 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland marked something of a turning point in this ongoing debate within evangelicalism. The "Lausanne Covenant" that emerged from the congress affirmed the "Christian social responsibility" to "share [God's] concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. . . . express[ing] penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive," when in fact they are "both part of our Christian duty."[7] Yet, even in affirming the duty of social action, the covenant continued to assert that "evangelism is primary" in the church's mission.[8] The chair of the drafting committee for the Lausanne Covenant, John Stott, who as recently as the 1966 Berlin Congress had held an "evangelism only" position concerning the church's mission, was the key influence behind this recognition of the church's social action responsibility.[9] Some within

[6] Quoted in Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 134.

[7] International Congress on World Evangelization, "The Lausanne Covenant," in *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974–1989*, ed. John R. W. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 24.

[8] Ibid., 28. This book likewise presupposes that both tasks are legitimate Christian responsibilities. Concerning social action, Tennent observes, "It is difficult to find evangelicals who do not acknowledge the importance of social action." Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 391. Concerning the ongoing responsibility of Christians to proclaim the verbal message, see Robert L. Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006).

[9] John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove,

the Lausanne Movement were still unhappy with the covenant's language designating evangelism as "primary," leading Stott to convene the 1982 International Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The report produced by this consultation sought further to clarify the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, agreeing that evangelism has a "logical" priority in that people must first become Christians before they can become socially responsible Christians and that evangelism has an eternal priority since "a person's eternal, spiritual salvation is of greater importance than his or her temporal and material well-being." But the paper also claimed that "seldom if ever should we have to choose between" these two responsibilities, as "the choice . . . is largely conceptual," with the dual responsibilities inseparable in practice.[10]

While the second International Congress on World Evangelism in Manila in 1989 ("Lausanne II") continued explicitly to affirm the primacy of evangelism in "The Manila Manifesto," the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa, conspicuously avoided any overt affirmation of evangelistic priority in "The Cape Town Commitment"—though the document began with a claim to "remain committed to" and to "stand by" the Lausanne Covenant and the Manila Manifesto. In spite of the claim, the Cape Town Commitment is best seen as promoting an equal priority between evangelism and social action, a position referred to in the document as "integral mission" (also known as "holistic mission").[11] Christopher Wright, the chair of the

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IL: IVP, 2008), 37.

[10] International Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility, "The Grand Rapids Report on Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment," in *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974–1989*, ed. John R. W. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 183.

[11] Rose Dowsett, *The Capetown Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action—Study Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), 1, 43.

working group that drafted the Cape Town Commitment (notably, a protégé of John Stott as well as the International Ministries Director at an organization founded by Stott, Langham Partnership), is in fact perhaps the most prominent contemporary *opponent* of the evangelistic priority position and *proponent* of integral or holistic mission. Wright believes that the evangelism and social action responsibilities have equal priority and "should never have been separated in the first place," nor one given priority over the other.[12]

David Hesselgrave characterizes the position held by Wright as "revisionist holism," making "evangelism and social action full and equal partners."[13] Hesselgrave labels the original position of the Lausanne Covenant as "restrained holism," which "attempts to preserve the traditional priority for evangelism, while elevating social action," making evangelism and social action "more or less equal partners."[14] Hesselgrave himself holds to evangelistic priority, the position he labels "traditional prioritism."[15] This position affirms the legitimacy and necessity of a broad range of social action by Christians while preserving a distinct, operational priority for evangelism and church planting by the institutional church. These differing positions demonstrate that in spite of decades of discussion, the debate over the relative priority of the responsibilities of evangelism and social action remains unresolved, as "evangelicals committed to the primacy of proclamation in Christian mission have been accused of 'reductionism' by their counterparts, whereas the latter have been charged with 'expansionism' by the former."[16] Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert describe this debate as "the most confusing, most

[12] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 276.

[13] David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 120.

[14] Ibid., 121.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Christopher R. Little, "What Makes Mission Christian?" *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 66.

discussed, most energizing, and most potentially divisive issue in the evangelical church today."[17] Perhaps now is the time to end this divisive discussion since nothing more remains to be said? On the contrary, Hesselgrave believes "it is imperative that discussions such as this one continue."[18] In fact, Hesselgrave is convinced that "nothing could be more obvious than the fact that the entire future of Evangelical missions/missiology rests upon" correctly answering the question, "What is the mission of the church?"[19]

While the existing literature in both missiology and biblical theology contains numerous biblical-theological arguments supporting either the evangelistic priority or the equal priority side of the debate, one crucial interpretive issue within the larger discussion is the question of the proper biblical-theological framework for examining the relevant biblical data. More specifically, this book will explore how one's conception of the overall covenantal macro-structure of Scripture impacts one's answer to this debated question.[20] As Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum argue, "Every loci

[17] Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 25.

[18] David J. Hesselgrave, "Conclusion: A Scientific Postscript—Grist for the Missiological Mills of the Future," in *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, eds. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 293.

[19] Ibid., 272.

[20] The covenantal framework of the biblical story is crucial for determining *where* believing readers are within the storyline (i.e., what time is it within the story) and, therefore, what is the readers' proper mission in response. Vanhoozer calls this storyline the "theodrama," within which believing readers must take up their role by answering key questions: "1. Where are we in the theodrama? What kind of scene are we playing? 2. Who are we? In what kind of plot are our lives entangled? 3. What time is it? What act and scene of the drama of redemption are we playing? 4. What is happening? What is God doing? 5. What should we say or do? Together, these five add up to a single, comprehensive question: Why are we, the church, here? The answer to that question takes the form of a mission statement: we are here to participate rightly in God's triune mission to the world." Kevin Vanhoozer, "A Drama

of theology is affected by one's understanding of the relationship between the biblical covenants, given the fact that the covenants form the backbone of Scripture's story line."[21] While Gentry and Wellum explore the impact of one's covenantal framework on theology proper, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology, this book will further explore its impact on missiology.[22]

Wright, in arguing for the equal priority position, also recognizes the crucial role of one's larger biblical-theological framework, seeing his own overall academic project as "develop[ing] an approach to biblical hermeneutics that sees the mission of God (and the participation in it of God's people) as a framework within which we can read the whole Bible."[23] Timothy Tennent, another proponent of the equal priority position, agrees with Wright's emphasis: "It is important . . . that the relationship between [evangelism and social action] are [*sic*] clearly understood by those in missiological training and flow [*sic*] out of a proper biblical and theological framework."[24] Mark

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of Redemption Model," in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*, ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 162–63. One way to describe the purpose of this book is as an attempt to discern the parameters of how God's people are to participate rightly in God's triune mission through doing good deeds on behalf of those outside the New Covenant.

[21] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 653. According to Gentry and Wellum, "[C]rucial theological differences within Christian theology, and the resolution of those differences, are directly tied to one's understanding of how the biblical covenants unfold and relate to each other . . . . correctly 'putting together' the biblical covenants is central to the doing of biblical and systematic theology and thus to the theological conclusions we draw from Scripture in many doctrinal areas. If we are going to make progress in resolving disagreements within Christian theology . . . then how we understand the nature of the biblical covenants and their relationship to each other much be faced head on and *not* simply assumed" (ibid., 21, 23) [original emphasis].

[22] Ibid., 653–716.

[23] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 17.

[24] Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 393.

Russell sounds a similar note, stating, "Much of my contention with missiologists who support the priority of proclamation is with the framework they use to draw their conclusions."[25] Russell believes, "As long as our framework is wrong, the longstanding debate will not come to an end and unfruitful debates will continue *ad nauseum*."[26] Those on the other side of the debate, such as DeYoung and Gilbert, agree that consensus can only be achieved by first addressing fundamental, structural questions, such as identifying "the right categories and the right building blocks" for building a biblical theology of mission.[27]

As this book's literature review in chapters 2 and 3 will demonstrate more fully, many evangelicals have already addressed the question of what this book is calling the "good deeds"[28] mission of the church. Some of the more recent biblical-theological works which include a treatment of the good deeds mission while both arguing for an equal priority position and also addressing to some degree the covenantal structure of Scripture are Christopher Wright (*The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 2006), Arthur Glasser (*Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible*, 2003), Roger Hedlund (*The Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology*, 1985), and William Dyrness (*Let the Earth Rejoice!: A Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission*, 1983). But each book falls short of a more comprehensive analysis

[25] Mark L. Russell, "A Brief Apology for Holistic Mission: My Response to 'The Universal Priority of Proclamation' by Kurt Nelson," *Occasional Bulletin* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 3.

[26] Ibid., 4.

[27] DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 16.

[28] Two phrases in the Greek NT can be translated as "good deeds": καλος εργον and αγαθος εργον. Matthew uses καλος εργον in Matt. 5:16, Peter uses it in 1 Peter 2:12, and the author of Hebrews uses it in Heb. 10:24. Luke uses αγαθος εργον in Acts 9:36, and Paul uses it in Eph. 2:10. Paul uses these two phrases interchangeably in 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:10, 25; 6:18 and in Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14; demonstrating that in general usage, these two phrases are synonymous.

of the covenantal structure and its impact on our understanding of the good deeds mission.

From the evangelistic priority side, DeYoung and Gilbert (*What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*, 2011) provide detailed biblical argumentation written at a popular level supporting their position but spend limited time either examining the covenantal structure of Scripture or developing a positive vision of the church's good deeds mission. Writing at a more academic level, the authors of a collection of essays, edited by William Larkin and Joel Williams (*Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, 1998), also advocate evangelistic priority while only giving passing attention to issues of covenantal structure (or to the Old Testament [OT] as a whole) and leave the good deeds mandate largely unaddressed. This same critique applies to works of biblical theology by Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O'Brien (*Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, 2001) and by Eckhard Schnabel (*Early Christian Mission*, 2004). Two older works of biblical theology by George Peters (*A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 1972) and by J. Herbert Kane (*Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective*, 1976) likewise give scant attention to either covenantal structure or the good deeds mission. A more recent collection of essays edited by Bruce Riley Ashford (*Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, 2011) takes a distinctly biblical-theological approach to examining the church's mission, spending significant time developing a vision of the church's good deeds mission. Nonetheless, while highlighting the creation-fall-redemption structure of Scripture and prioritizing evangelism, the essays do not give focused attention to issues of covenantal structure. Books by Michael Horton (*The Gospel Commission: Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples*, 2011) and David VanDrunen (*Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture*, 2010) emphasize Scripture's covenantal structure and address the good deeds responsibility, all while promoting evangelistic priority in the

church's mission—though neither book is focused more narrowly on the question of the church's good deeds mission.

Good Deeds Mission Proposal

As this book will exhibit more comprehensively in the literature review, both the missiological and the biblical-theological literature lack a thorough and focused treatment exploring how one's conception of the overall covenantal macro-structure of Scripture impacts one's interpretation of the good deeds mission of the church, including its relationship to the church's evangelism responsibility. As well, while those taking an equal priority position have written more extensively about the church's need to do good deeds, those who have argued for an evangelistic priority position have tended to neglect the development of their own detailed, alternative proposal for rightly understanding the good deeds mission of the church. Also, though much has been written on this topic, a review of the literature demonstrates that much disagreement and lack of clarity remains within the discussion, highlighting the need for additional contributions which aim further to clarify the fundamental issues of the debate and thereby potentially produce a greater resolution in the ongoing disagreement. Since evangelicals generally agree that theological debates are to be resolved by reference to the authoritative text of Scripture, a study taking a distinctly biblical-theological approach[29] and narrowly focusing on an examination of Scripture's positive portrayal of the church's good deed's responsibility is a needed contribution to the debate. And yet, as briefly noted above and as more comprehensively demonstrated in the literature review of chapters 2 and 3, no such narrowly-focused study presently exists.

Therefore, this book will propose a biblical theology narrowly focused on the "good deeds" mission of the church. In particular,

[29] This book's specific "biblical-theological approach" will be examined in detail below in the "Presuppositions for Doing Biblical Theology" section.

this book will explore the impact of one's conception of the overall covenantal macro-structure of Scripture upon how one interprets the Bible's good deeds mandate, demonstrating that covenantal framework heavily determines one's conclusions concerning this mandate. This book will also remedy the lack of a more comprehensive, affirmative portrayal of the church's good deeds mission from the evangelistic priority side of the debate, seeking to present accurately Scripture's positive mandate for Christians to "do good to all people as you have opportunity" (Gal. 6:10).[30] In doing so, this book will also seek to clarify the fundamental issues of disagreement in the larger debate by providing an overall template for exploring the key biblical-theological questions that each evangelical must address when developing his or her own biblical theology of the good deeds mission of the church. Beyond clarifying the impact of macro concerns of covenantal structure, this book will also seek to explore additional micro questions about the good deeds mission, such as: How extensive is this responsibility? What are the purposes of the good deeds mission? Are good deeds inherently glorifying to God, regardless of their connection to verbal proclamation? What goals and expectations should Christians have for their good deeds mission? Should the institutional church carry out this responsibility or is it merely the responsibility of individual Christians? If the good deeds mission is the institutional church's responsibility, how much of its limited resources should the church allocate to this mission?

Defining Terms

Because of the complex, and at times contentious, nature of the debate over the good deeds mission, precision in defining key terms used in this book's argument is crucial. The terms in particular need of definition include *biblical theology*, *mission*, *good deeds mission*,

[30] Author's translation.

verbal proclamation mission, *evangelistic priority*, *equal priority*, and *New Covenant community*.

Biblical theology can be defined in various ways.[31] The detailed working definition of *biblical theology* for this book is borrowed from Gentry and Wellum:

> [T]he hermeneutical discipline which seeks to do justice to what Scripture claims to be and what it actually is. In terms of its claim, Scripture is nothing less than God's Word written, and as such, it is a unified revelation of his gracious plan of redemption. In terms of what Scripture actually is, it is a progressive unfolding of God's plan, rooted in history, and unpacked along a specific redemptive-historical plot line primarily demarcated by covenants. Biblical theology as a hermeneutical discipline attempts to exegete texts in their own context and then, in light of the entire Canon, to examine the unfolding nature of God's plan and carefully think through the relationship before and after in that plan which culminates in Christ. As such, biblical theology provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of the Bible relate to all other texts, so that they will be read correctly, according to God's intention, which is discovered through the individual human authors but ultimately at the canonical level. In the end, biblical theology is the attempt to unpack the "whole counsel of God" and "to think God's thoughts after him," and it provides the basis and underpinning for all theology and doctrine.[32]

Some of the key elements of this definition include hermeneutical discipline, unified revelation, progressive unfolding,

[31] For one recent attempt to categorize different versions of "biblical theology," see Edward W. Klink and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

[32] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 33–34.

demarcated by covenants, divine and human authorial intent, and underpinning for all theology and doctrine. These and other aspects of this book's approach to *biblical theology* will be described in greater detail in the "Presuppositions for Doing Biblical Theology" section below.

Missiologists have debated the term *mission* extensively in the last fifty years, a term typically distinguished from the plural *missions*. As a result of these discussions, *mission* is often used to denote everything that God is doing in the world and *missions* signifies the varied human expressions of their participation in God's larger *mission*.[33] While recognizing the conceptual value of this distinction, this book will use *mission* more narrowly than either of these usages, instead designating this term as signifying the responsibilities of Christians, members of the New Covenant community, toward those who are not members of the New Covenant. Describing the church's responsibilities out to the world as a *mission* in no way implies that this narrower *mission* is equivalent to the fullness of God's own *mission*. As well, the New Testament (NT) also clearly portrays God giving an internal *mission* to the church, mutual responsibilities *within* the church, likewise a legitimate use of the term *mission*.[34] Nonetheless, within this book, *mission* will refer to the responsibilities entrusted by God to the New Covenant community toward those *outside* the New Covenant.

The *good deeds mission* will refer to a wide range of acts of love by Christians, not including the act of verbally proclaiming the gospel message,[35] an act which this book will label the *verbal proclamation*

[33] Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), xv.

[34] For a book helpfully arguing that the Great Commission responsibility of the church includes a mission of both verbal proclamation to non-Christians ("reaching") and ongoing training of disciples ("teaching"), see M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody, 2010).

[35] In chap. 7, this book will further examine the definition of "gospel" and

mission. The *good deeds mission* describes much of what this book referred to above as *social action*, *holistic mission* or *integral mission*, encompassing the mission of meeting human needs and promoting general human flourishing through relief ministry, community and cultural development, and working for structural transformation in society, in particular on behalf of those who are weak, exploited, and marginalized.[36] This book will use the term *good deeds* rather than *holistic* since *holistic* is not an explicitly biblical term, is typically associated with the equal priority position, and includes an unhelpful polemical connation (i.e., those who do not embrace the positive label, *holistic*, are instead categorized under the negative label, *dualistic*). As an explicitly NT term and category, the phrase *good deeds* overcomes some of the weaknesses of the term *holistic*, including the avoidance of biased terminology (though some would argue that even the act of clearly distinguishing the two missions inevitably leads to the prioritization of *verbal proclamation*).[37] Though this book will employ the term *good deeds mission*, alternative phrases also rooted solidly in NT categories include the *Great Commandment mission* (distinguished from the *Great Commission mission*), *mercy*

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whether the biblical term should be defined as strictly a verbal message or if the meaning of the term also includes the results of the verbal message (i.e., the "gospel" *is both* the verbal message about what Christ does *and* the transforming actions that Christians do in response). One's answer to this definitional question is one of the issues that often divides the equal priority and evangelistic priority positions.

[36] Christians certainly have a "good deeds mission" and responsibility toward those *within* the New Covenant community, but "good deeds mission" here will refer exclusively to the good deeds that those *within* the New Covenant community perform towards those *outside* the New Covenant community. Of course, many of those good deeds done out to the world will also have positive benefit for those within the New Covenant community. In this sense, many broader good deeds done by Christians out to the world can be understood as being done for "society" or the "human community"—which includes New Covenant members—rather than just being done for non-New Covenant members.

[37] For example, see Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 393.

mission, and the *common* or *universal grace mission* (distinguished from the *special* or *particular grace mission*).

In distinguishing the verbal proclamation mission from the good deeds mission, the question of whether either mandate has relative priority inevitably arises (as discussed above). *Evangelistic priority* will refer to the position that gives the verbal proclamation mission operational priority over the good deeds mission in the institutional church's allocation of resources of personnel, time, prayer, money, and other capital. *Equal priority* will refer to the position that attempts to give equal operational priority to the verbal proclamation and good deeds responsibilities, including those who would acknowledge a "conceptual" or "logical" priority for verbal proclamation even while making no significant distinction of priority in the church's actual practice (such as Hesselgrave's category of "restrained holism").

This book will use the term *New Covenant community* as synonymous and interchangeable with the word *church*. Since some also use *church* to refer to the OT people of God and since this book emphasizes the missiological significance of the overall covenantal structure of Scripture, including the impact of covenantal shifts (such as from the OT to the NT), using the phrase *New Covenant community* clarifies the argument of this book by explicitly describing its goal as a biblical theology of the good deeds mission of the *New Covenant community*. This distinction implies recognition that the good deeds mission of the *New Covenant community* is not necessarily the same thing as the good deeds mission of the *Old Covenant community*. Though this book will use the terms *New Covenant community* and *church* interchangeably, using *New Covenant community* helps clarify the intended meaning of *church*.

Scope of Research

As mentioned at the outset, in one form or another, the debate over this mandate has been taking place for centuries. Surveying

the whole of this historical debate is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, the literature review in chapters 2 and 3 will be limited to written works from 1974 to 2014. While representing a somewhat arbitrary starting point in the midst of an already long-standing conversation, 1974, as the year of the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, does mark a significant point in the modern debate among evangelicals. Beginning with the first Lausanne meeting and exploring all the literature stimulated by it provides a forty year window within which to orient this book to the contemporary debate.

Because of its limited length, this book will not attempt to interact exhaustively with all the data of Scripture or of Scripture's extra-textual historical backgrounds but will necessarily select and focus on the parts of the Bible and the interpretive questions which this book identifies as most crucial in constructing a biblical theology of the good deeds mission of the New Covenant community. This book will give particular attention to the parts of Scripture that reveal the Bible's over-arching covenantal structure.

Finally, the scope of this book will be restricted by the presuppositions upon which it will build its biblical-theological proposal. Different presuppositions in theological method inevitably lead to different theological conclusions. Rather than focusing on the debate over the proper presuppositions for doing biblical theology, this book will instead state its presuppositions for biblical theology up front and then quickly proceed to do biblical theology within those confines. This approach will necessarily limit this book's interaction with those who approach Scripture with fundamentally different presuppositions.

Presuppositions for Doing Biblical Theology

This book will take a distinctly biblical-theological approach that agrees with Köstenberger that "the church's mission—in both belief and practice—should be grounded in the biblical theology of

mission."[38] Most self-identified evangelicals would affirm this statement. The more debated question among evangelicals is "Which approach to biblical theology?" Ed Stetzer responds to Köstenberger's own arguments for a particular biblical-theological understanding of the mission of the church by noting that other evangelicals disagree with Köstenberger because they have different "method[s] for biblical theology" and varying approaches to "how [one] applies and integrates [the] discipline of biblical theology with another discipline, such as missiology."[39] Stetzer correctly recognizes that one's presuppositions and methodology for doing biblical theology have a determinative effect on the missiological conclusions one reaches. While such differing fundamental assumptions in theological method cannot easily be overcome when seeking to reach theological consensus, this book will nonetheless seek clearly to identify its own biblical-theological presuppositions and methodology in advance. Those who disagree significantly with this book's biblical-theological presuppositions and methodology will understandably have greater cause to disagree with this book's conclusions. Even so, increased and explicit "epistemological self-consciousness" for all participants in this ongoing debate is necessary in order to help clarify the areas of fundamental disagreement, even if those disagreements continue.[40]

Theological method in general can be understood as "the entire range of assumptions that control the way in which theological conclusions are reached."[41] As well, "hermeneutics" is essentially

[38] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Twelve Theses on the Church's Mission in the Twenty-First Century: In Interaction with Charles Van Engen, Keith Eitel, and Enoch Wan," in *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, eds. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 63.

[39] Ed Stetzer, "Responding to '"Mission" Defined and Described' and the Four Responders," in *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, eds. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 76.

[40] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 24.

[41] Don J. Payne, *The Theology of the Christian Life in J. I. Packer's Thought:*

"synonymous with theological method" for those who understand the biblical text as the ultimate source and authority for formulating theology.[42] Biblical theology is a fundamentally hermeneutical discipline, and the roots of the divide between the evangelistic priority and equal priority sides of the good deeds mission debate are hermeneutical in nature.[43] In addressing this same debate forty years

Theological Anthropology, Theological Method, and the Doctrine of Sanctification (Bletchey, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 9. Goldsworthy says, "How we refine our definition of biblical theology and develop our practice will largely depend on the doctrinal assumptions we make about the Bible. For this reason we need to be aware of our presuppositions and how we have arrived at them." Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 38.

[42] Payne, *The Theology of the Christian Life in J. I. Packer's Thought*, 9. Sailhamer agrees, "Far from being the mere starting point or presupposition of a [biblical] theology, hermeneutics and hermeneutical decisions are the material out of which it is made." John Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 17. Tate also states that every hermeneutical approach is "anchored to a set of underlying presuppositions that determine the questions to be put to the text; and the answers are those expected in advance." W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 173. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard likewise declare, "No interpretation begins without presupposition. As evangelical interpreters we approach the Bible with commitments. We affirm the Bible's uniqueness, and we acknowledge this commitment before we begin the process of interpretation." William W. Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 96. Vanhoozer similarly posits, "The serious student of Scripture needs to develop an epistemology (theory of knowledge) and hermeneutic (theory of interpretation)." Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 9.

[43] Important to note is that both sides of the debate seem to recognize the hermeneutical orientation of the differences between the two sides. For example, one who recognizes the hermeneutical root of the debate from the equal priority side is Christopher Wright, "Christ and the Mosaic of Pluralisms," in *Global Missiology For The 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, ed. William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 75. An example from the evangelistic priority side of someone who identifies theological method as determinative in the debate is J. Robertson McQuilkin, "An Evangelical Assessment of Mission Theology of the Kingdom of God," in *The Good News of the Kingdom:*

ago, Donald McGavran posited that progress in the debate is only possible if it begins with

> A clear statement of whether or not the speakers believe in the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. But more must be said than this. Most Christians claim to believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, but they believe it in different ways. Consequently, their clear statement must also describe *the way in which* [emphasis added] they believe in the Bible. Their doctrines of revelation and inspiration must be stated before their pronouncements can be evaluated.[44]

John Stott agrees that the "greatest need" in the debate is to "find an agreed biblical hermeneutic, for without this, a broader consensus on the meaning and obligation of 'mission' is unlikely ever to be reached."[45] Hesselgrave likewise recognizes the relationship between the different "understandings of the nature of revelation [and] hermeneutics" and the different positions in this debate.[46] Keith Eitel concurs, "Theological methodologies are of utmost importance. Presuppositions regarding the integrity and reliability of the biblical text set in motion interpretive mechanisms that build one's theology into a set of strategic initiatives and practices."[47]

This section will therefore seek clearly to lay out this book's methodological presuppositions for biblical theology, expressed in ten propositions: first, God's revelation is the locus of authority for doctrinal truth; second, the inspired and unique locus of

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Mission Theology for the Third Millennium, eds. Charles Van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland, and Paul Pierson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 175.

[44] Donald A. McGavran, *The Clash between Christianity and Cultures* (Washington, DC: Canon, 1974), 52.

[45] Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 17.

[46] Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 334.

[47] Keith E. Eitel, "On Becoming Missional: Interacting with Charles Van Engen," in *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, eds. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 37.

God's revelation is the written text of Scripture; third, the inspired written text is the canonical text; fourth, the locus of inspired and authoritative canonical textual meaning is author-encoded meaning and significance; fifth, the larger canonical structures of the Bible reflect both divine and human authorial intention; sixth, interpreters can know author-encoded textual meaning and significance with increasing (though always limited and imperfect) clarity on the basis of a "Christian critical realist" epistemology (and the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit); seventh, biblical theology is the foundation, authority, and guide for systematic theology; eighth, biblical theology is a universally-valid revelation of divine truth while systematic theology is a contextualized expression and application of universal biblical truth, including some aspects of application that are only valid in certain contexts; ninth, biblical theology begins with a careful description of the diachronic diversity of Scripture (paying special attention to textual forms and genres) but also includes a synthesis which recognizes the synchronic unity of Scripture; and tenth, themes in biblical theology (such as the good deeds mission of the New Covenant community) must be traced out along the progressively unfolding covenantal structure of the canon. Together, these ten methodological presuppositions set the stage for the possibility of developing a sufficiently clear, unified, and authoritative biblical-theological understanding of the good deeds mission of the New Covenant community which applies at all times and in all places.[48]

First, God's revelation is the locus of authority for doctrinal truth. As Richard Lints notes, "The evangelical theological vision begins with God's revelation."[49] This book therefore first presupposes

[48] Lints discusses the concept of "plausibility structures." Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 117–21. In some sense, these ten propositions for doing biblical theology can be called the "plausibility structures" within which the particular focus and conclusions of this book will be most persuasive. One implication is that the more a reader embraces these same "plausibility structures," the more "plausible" or convincing the book's conclusions are likely to be.

[49] Ibid., 65.

God's self-revelation—God has spoken. The task of this book is not merely creative human thought but an attempt carefully to listen, correctly to understand, and accurately to communicate what God has authoritatively revealed concerning the good deeds mission of the New Covenant community. Though this presupposition is embraced by most self-identified evangelicals, we must nevertheless begin by stating with Köstenberger, "Reflections on the church's mission should be predicated on the affirmation of the full and sole authority of Scripture."[50]

Second, the inspired and unique locus of God's revelation is the written text of Scripture. Not only does this book presuppose that God has authoritatively spoken, it also presupposes that he has spoken in a unique way in the written text of Scripture. Though this book affirms that God did reveal himself in the events of history, the written text is the only authoritative access to and interpretation of those events which God has given. The written text is therefore "text-revelation" (in contrast to "event-revelation"), a written revelation which alone the NT describes as "breathed out by God" (2 Tim. 3:16). To repeat, this presupposition in no way denies the reality and importance of God's event-revelation, fully embracing the fact that the Bible is what it claims to be, a true and trustworthy record of historical events.[51] As theologians informed by "speech-act theory" often emphasize, God's speaking in history is always connected with God's acting in history.[52] Nonetheless, our only inspired access to God's event-actions and speech-actions in history are the

[50] Köstenberger, "Twelve Theses on the Church's Mission in the Twenty-First Century," 64.

[51] Even though the task of biblical theology here proposed is a pursuit of text-revelation rather than event-revelation, this text-oriented approach still must use the tools of the historical method, in particular, the methods of textual criticism and philology. See Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 225.

[52] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 88. Also see, Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 126–39.

written text-actions of Scripture.[53] Therefore, this book presupposes that the written text of Scripture is the inspired and unique locus of God's revelation.[54] One implication for the methodology of this book is a primary focus on explicit textual data in developing a biblical theology of the good deeds mission and not on extra-biblical historical data.[55]

[53] For one of the earliest and best treatments of the distinction between text and event, see Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1974). For two more recent cases made for the fundamental importance of this distinction for biblical theology, see Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology* and Robert H. Stein, *Playing by the Rules: A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). In the pre-critical era of biblical studies (roughly, pre-1750), Protestants typically took the text at face value as an accurate and trustworthy presentation of historical events. Later, Protestants who accepted the Enlightenment-influenced presuppositions and conclusions of historical criticism began to doubt the simple connection between text and event, doubting the historical reality of miracles. But how could a "historically embellished text" function as authoritative special revelation? In response, some, like Schleiermacher, responded with an understanding of authority not in the textual meaning but in the reader's religious experience. Authority moved from text to experience, from author to reader. Others moved authority from text to historical event, with the fallible text merely being a witness to God's authoritative revelation in historical events (see Karl Barth and Neo-orthodoxy for a similar view of revelation). According to Scalise, in emphasizing event-revelation instead of text-revelation, "The Bible formally preserves its authority, but its relation to revelation changes." Charles J. Scalise, *Hermeneutics as Theological Prolegomena: A Canonical Approach* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1994), 11. Schleiermacher moved authoritative revelation "in front of the text" (reader's experience), others moved authoritative revelation "behind the text" (historical events).

[54] Schnabel argues (as many have) that the uniqueness of Scripture requires us to approach it with unique presuppositions: "The inspiration of Scripture forces us to recognize that theology is a discipline *sui generis* in which humans can participate only on the basis of adequate presuppositions. This implies that a specific *hermeneutica sacra* is necessary for the interpretation of Scripture." Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Scripture," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 41.

[55] According to Richard Hays, "Extrabiblical sources stand in a hermeneutical relation to the New Testament; they are not independent, counter-balancing

Third, the inspired written text is the canonical text. Related to the previous proposition concerning the locus of revelation in event or text, this proposition answers the question, "Which text?" In other words, even if one believes the locus of revelation is in the text, one must still decide whether this text is the canonical text or a critically-reconstructed version of the text(s) at an earlier point in textual history before the consolidation of the canon.[56] This book presupposes that the canonical text is the inspired text, and the biblical theology developed here will make no attempt to interact with or speculate about a reconstructed, pre-canonical text.[57]

Fourth, the locus of inspired and authoritative canonical textual meaning is author-encoded meaning and significance. Even if one agrees that the canonical text is the inspired locus of God's revelation, still debated is whether inspired textual meaning is found in the author's intent, the reader's response, or a combination of the two, with some doubting that these two aspects of "meaning" can even be distinguished. (As in the previous proposition, some also believe authoritative meaning is found in the historical event itself or in the interplay between text and event.) This book will adopt E. D.

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sources of authority. In other words, the Bible's perspective is privileged, not ours." Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 296.

[56] For an extensive discussion of this issue, see Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 86–113.

[57] Some recent books which grapple with the canon's process of development include Timothy H. Lim, *The Formation of the Jewish Canon* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2013); Lee Martin McDonald, *Formation of the Bible: The Story of the Church's Canon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012); Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); Craig A. Evans and Emanuel Tov, eds., *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008); Craig D. Allert, *A High View of Scripture? The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

Hirsch's distinction between the categories of meaning and significance when interpreting texts.[58] In this view, textual meaning is an unchanging, determinate reality as intended by the author.[59] Significance, on the other hand, is changing and indeterminate, depending upon the particular response of a particular reader(s).[60] This book uses the term "author-encoded meaning" instead of the more commonly used "author-intended meaning" in order to distinguished between the author's intent as explicitly encoded in the text and the author's intent as speculatively imagined behind the text (a view labeled the "intentional fallacy"[61]). As well, the author-encoded textual meaning includes both author-encoded textual concepts and author-encoded textual significance, both what the author says and how the author intends for his readers to respond. But author-encoded textual concepts must be differentiated from reader-understood textual concepts, and author-encoded textual significance must be differentiated from reader-responded personal significance. A reader may or may not understand (or understand the fullness of) the conceptual meaning encoded by the author, and a reader may or may not respond personally in a way consistent with the author-encoded textual

[58] E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1967).

[59] This book presupposes that the category "biblical authors" includes both inspired original authors and, in the case of the OT, inspired later author-editors who amplified and extended the meaning of the original authors but in no way contradicted their original meaning.

[60] Hirsch later nuanced this distinction by describing "implications" that are also rightly understood as part of textual meaning, even if they go beyond what the author consciously intended. This is because these implications are in keeping with and fall legitimately under the umbrella of the author's intended meaning and therefore are not merely a part of the reader's personal significance but ought to still be understood as part of textual meaning. See E. D. Hirsch, "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted," *Critical Inquiry* 11, no. 2 (December 1984): 202–25; idem, "Coming with Terms to Meaning," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1986): 627–30; idem, "Transhistorical Intentions and the Persistence of Allegory," *New Literary History* 25, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 549–67.

[61] Stein, *Playing by the Rules*, 23–24.

significance. But regardless of the reader's personal, contextualized response, the author-encoded textual concepts and intended significance remain unchanged, determinate, and universal.[62] Biblical theology as framed by this book seeks to understand and communicate the author-encoded textual meaning (both intended concepts and intended significance)—an unchanging reality as originally intended by the author(s) and communicated via the text.

A significant implication of this presupposition for a biblical theology of the good deeds mission concerns where one looks for a divinely authoritative answer to the question, "What good deeds mission has God given to the New Covenant community?" Christopher Wright believes that Christians "need a broader understanding of revelation."[63] As well, he argues, Christians should embrace a more flexible and "dynamic understanding of the authority and role of the Bible in a post-modern world."[64] Wright is convinced that the church exhibits a "misleading tendency to equate the terms 'revealed and authoritative' too exclusively with the category of command."[65] Wright wants to expand the idea of biblical authority "beyond merely direct, positive textual commands."[66] Instead of biblical authority attached more strictly to author-encoded textual meaning, Wright

[62] This understanding can also be correlated with Vanhoozer's work using speech-act theory, allowing us to understand author-encoded textual meaning as roughly equivalent to "locution," author-encoded textual significance as equivalent to "illocution," and reader-responded contextual significance as equivalent to "perlocution." See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* for further consideration of speech-act theory. Another author who upholds the necessity of a distinction between the author's meaning and the reader's response is Hays who calls the idea that "texts do have determinate ranges of semantic possibility" and that "a text's world of signification can be meaningfully distinguished from the tradition's construal of it" a "commonsense acknowledgment." Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 8.

[63] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 451.

[64] Wright, "Christ and the Mosaic of Pluralisms," 76.

[65] Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 450.

[66] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 52.

argues, "The authority of the Bible is that it brings us into contact with reality—primarily the reality of God himself"—as well as other realities.[67] These realities, portrayed in the text but also transcending the text, in turn "generate authority that governs our responsive behavior."[68] So, for example, even if a clear NT command for Christians to be responsible for environmental stewardship is lacking, the historical reality of OT Israel's responsibilities toward their covenant land "authorizes" the Christian responsibility for creation care. But Wright subtly shifts the locus of authoritative meaning from strictly the author-encoded textual meaning to a mixture of textual meaning and the actual historical realities referred to in the text. This broadened understanding of the Bible's authoritative meaning allows Wright to claim biblical warrant and authority for greatly expanding the church's mission into a broad range of good deeds. This book's presupposition that the locus of inspired and authoritative textual meaning is more strictly limited to author-encoded textual meaning (including both intended concepts and significance) means that this book will answer the question "what good deeds mission has God given to the New Covenant community?" in a more limited and cautious way than Wright, believing that "only what is directly taught in Scripture is binding on the conscience."[69]

Fifth, the larger canonical structures of the Bible reflect both divine and human authorial intention. This book presupposes that author-encoded textual meaning is not only available at the level of individual books (often associated with one author) but is also available at the macro-level of canonical structures. Many evangelicals agree that canonical level meaning is intended by the divine author, but this book also presupposes that (at least some) canonical level meaning is simultaneously intended by the divine author *and* human authors—including later inspired editor-authors whose editorial

[67] Ibid., 53.

[68] Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, 469.

[69] Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 204.

work was responsible for the shape of the OT canon as it existed in Jesus' day.[70] Understanding God's work of inspiration as operative throughout the compositional process, including the development of canonical macro-structures, only further undergirds the importance of considering those structures (in particular, covenantal structures) when developing biblical theology. A biblical theology of the good deeds mission must seek author-encoded textual meaning not only at the micro-level of exegesis but also at the macro-level of canonical framework.

Sixth, interpreters can know author-encoded textual meaning and significance with increasing (though always limited and imperfect) clarity on the basis of a "Christian critical realist" epistemology (and the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit). Even if one accepts textual meaning as an unchanging reality intentionally embedded by human authors at both the micro and macro levels of the biblical text, is clear knowledge of that textual meaning possible for sinful and finite humans, particularly across the "ugly ditch" of time and culture that separate contemporary readers from the biblical authors? This question rightly captures two key obstacles to human knowing and to communication of that knowledge between persons—our finitude and our fallenness. These two obstacles were not always recognized adequately by Enlightenment and modernist theologians, who were instead characterized by a "non-critical" and "naively realist" epistemology, approaching the Bible with "historical positivism." Post-modern theologians reacted with an epistemology of "non-realism" and "radical skepticism," ultimately approaching Scripture with epistemologically relativistic presuppositions. Today among believing biblical scholars, both the modern and post-modern voices are acknowledged, with many scholars finding epistemological consensus around some form of "critical realism."[71] Lints describes this

[70] For further development of this argument, see Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 239–52.

[71] D. A. Carson calls this position a uniting of a "chastened modernism" and a "soft postmodernism." D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand

perspective by speaking of both the "realism principle" and the "bias principle." The realism principle affirms the genuine possibility of attaining and communicating true knowledge (revealed by God through both general and special revelation). The bias principle recognizes the inescapable prejudice embedded in human knowing resulting from our creaturely finitude and our sinfulness, a reality requiring us to acknowledge the limits of our understanding and the deception of our hearts.[72] Though God has revealed true knowledge to humanity and has designed us with adequate (though fallen) epistemological tools to receive this revelation, our knowledge is always finally, at best, analogical to God's perfect knowledge.

But is critical realism when studying science and the natural world (general revelation) no different than critical realism when studying the Bible (special revelation), meaning we approach both realms with an equal expectation of certainty and clarity? Millard Erickson cautions us against an "uncritical, superficial transfer of the realism of science to religious belief and to theology."[73] This book therefore presupposes that the verbal and more explicit revelation of Scripture gives us access to a comparatively *greater* certainty and clarity in the areas of knowledge which biblical authors address.[74] This epistemological position is promoted by Wayne Grudem, who believes "it is appropriate for us to be more certain about the truths we read in Scripture than about any other knowledge we have. If we are to talk about degrees of certainty of knowledge we have, then the knowledge we attain from Scripture would have the highest

Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 90. Stewart Kelly describes the position as a form of "modest objectivity." Stewart E. Kelly, *Truth Considered and Applied: Examining Postmodernism, History, and Christian Faith* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 112. Vanhoozer calls it a "middle way between absolutism and relativism." Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 334.

[72] Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*, 20–26.

[73] Millard J. Erickson, "Foundationalism: Dead or Alive?" *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 25.

[74] This position is in keeping with the Protestant Reformers' view of the perspicuity of Scripture.

degree of certainty."[75] Wellum calls this general position "Christian critical realism."[76] Christian critical realism not only embraces the unique revelation of Scripture but also the illuminating work of the Spirit in revealing truth to readers of the text, both factors providing an extra level of epistemological clarity on certain questions of truth which God has revealed in Scripture.[77] Therefore, this book begins with a cautious expectation of epistemological clarity when seeking to understand the good deeds mission of the New Covenant community.[78]

Seventh, biblical theology is the foundation, authority, and guide for systematic theology. This commonly accepted proposition is a basic but important one. In addition, this point lays necessary groundwork for the next proposition.

Eighth, biblical theology is a universally-valid revelation of divine truth while systematic theology is a contextualized expression and application of universal biblical truth, including some aspects of application that are only valid in certain contexts. Proposition four argued that biblical theology seeks to understand and communicate

[75] Wayne A. Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, ed. Jeff Purswell (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 56.

[76] Stephen J. Wellum, unpublished class notes for *Contemporary Issues in Evangelical Theological Formulation*, Spring 2013.

[77] Christian critical realism also embraces the process of the "hermeneutical spiral," a concept recognizing the possibility of a progressively clearer and fuller understanding of the author-encoded textual meaning. Furthermore, Christian critical realism recognizes the importance of a "hermeneutical community" within which this progressively emerging understanding takes place. While an individual reader can legitimately experience a hermeneutical spiral in textual understanding, this process is enriched, accelerated, and regulated by reading the Bible together as a community.

[78] This epistemological expectation differs from David Bosch, who resists even offering a definition of "mission" since he believes, "Ultimately, mission remains undefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections. The most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what missions is all about." David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 9.

the author-encoded textual meaning—a reality that remains unchanged over time or in different cultures. Systematic theology, on the other hand, is a reader's response which applies and contextualizes the unchanging author-encoded textual meaning within a certain time and culture. Norman Geisler seems to agree with this distinction when he states that "there is some truth to [the idea that theology reflects the culture of the theologian], especially in regard to systematic theology, biblical theology is supracultural. It transcends culture."[79] Gentry and Wellum also concur that systematic theology is the application of the right interpretation of Scripture to all areas of life within specific historical and cultural contexts.[80] In making this contextualized application, systematic theology "must stay true to the Bible's own framework, structure, and categories as she draws theological conclusions and constructs a Christian worldview."[81] The importance of maintaining biblical categories is one reason why this book uses the clearly NT category of a "good deeds" mission rather than the biblically ambiguous category of a "holistic" mission. According to this distinction between biblical theology and systematic theology, in doing biblical theology this book will seek to reach conclusions which are universally valid biblical truths rather than merely applications of this truth that may be relevant in only some historical and cultural contexts.

Ninth, biblical theology begins with a careful description of the diachronic diversity of Scripture (paying special attention to textual forms and genres) but also includes a synthesis which recognizes the synchronic unity of Scripture. A diachronic ("through time" or historical) hermeneutical method "approaches the OT in terms of each

[79] Norman L. Geisler, "A Response to Paul G. Hiebert 'The Gospel in Human Contexts: Changing Perceptions of Contextualization' and to Darrell Whiteman and Michael Pocock," in *Missionshift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, eds. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 141.

[80] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 35.

[81] Ibid., 34–36.

of its parts rather than attempting to view it as a whole."[82] In contrast, a synchronic ("at one point in time" or ahistorical) hermeneutical method "attempts to view the whole of the OT as a unit, rather than looking only at the parts."[83] A diachronic approach is more inductive and organic in methodology; a synchronic approach, more deductive and synthetic. Put another way, "Biblical theology is characterized by two distinct but related activities which may be broadly described as analysis and synthesis."[84] Therefore, not only systematic theology involves synthesis, but biblical theology also includes an appropriate level of canonical synthesis.[85] This book will combine diachronic and synchronic approaches, letting the parts interpret the whole and letting the whole interpret the parts. This combination is consistent with the Reformation principle of the "analogy of faith" (*analogia fidei*) which recognizes that Scripture must be allowed to interpret Scripture since the canon is uniquely inspired, authoritative, and unified in diversity. Since diachronic attention to Scripture's diversity includes sensitivity to textual forms and genres, biblical theology in this book will seek to interpret Scripture in keeping with its chronological, historical, and narratival forms and to recognize the importance of identifying and properly interpreting the various literary genres within the text.[86] One specific application of proposition nine to this book is allowing the various parts of Scripture to inform our understanding of the covenantal macro-structure and allowing the covenantal macro-structure to inform our understanding of the various parts.

[82] Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 33.

[83] Ibid., 32.

[84] Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 6.

[85] D. A. Carson, "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology," in *Scripture and Truth*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 70, 90.

[86] See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* for one interpreter who emphasizes the importance of interpreting literary genres in Scripture carefully.

Tenth, themes in biblical theology (such as the good deeds mission of the New Covenant community) must be traced out along the progressively unfolding covenantal structure of the canon. In particular, this book will highlight both the continuity and discontinuity between the various covenants of Scripture and how a careful recognition of both continuity and discontinuity impacts our understanding of the good deeds mission.

Overview of Argument

The last proposition—tracing the good deeds mission along the covenantal structure—describes concisely the approach this book will use in developing a biblical theology of the good deeds mission. After the literature review of chapters 2 and 3, chapters 4 and 5 will propose a biblical-theological understanding of the good deeds responsibility of all humanity first revealed in Genesis 1–11 in both the Creation Covenant of Genesis 1–2 and the Fallen Creation Covenant of Genesis 9, outlining the good deeds task given to all humanity. Next, chapter 6 will argue for a particular interpretation of the good deeds mandate given to Abraham and his descendants during the wandering period before the Mosaic Covenant, during the Mosaic Covenant while possessing the covenant land before exile, and during the Mosaic Covenant after exile and before Christ, concluding by exploring how the good deeds mission of the Old Covenant community relates to the good deeds responsibility of all humanity. Then, chapters 7 and 8 will present a biblical-theological reading of the good deeds mission of the New Covenant community, examining this mission during Jesus' earthly ministry before the inauguration of the New Covenant, during the present Inaugurated New Covenant age, and during the future Consummated New Covenant age. Chapter 8 will also inspect the relationship between the good deeds mission of the New Covenant community and the good deeds responsibility of all humanity. Finally, chapter 9 will summarize the results of the study and explore applications for today.