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Foreword by  
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# LOCAL *and* UNIVERSAL

*A Free Church Account of Ecclesial Catholicity*



STUDIES IN  
CHRISTIAN  
DOCTRINE  
AND  
SCRIPTURE



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## Biblical Warrant for the Doctrine of Catholicity

**H**ERE WE TAKE UP the foundational enterprise of determining whether there is biblical warrant for the creedal confession of the church's catholicity. To show that the church's catholicity is grounded not only in tradition but ultimately in Scripture is not only *proper* according to the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura*; it is also *wise* given the contested nature of the doctrinal content down church-historical stream. This chapter thus seeks to heed, first and foremost, God's very own words in Scripture as the *norma normans* of theology. To do so is nothing less than an attempt to do theology "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3).

### THE NEED FOR BIBLICAL WARRANT

Though every exercise in systematic theology ought to begin (and end) with the Word of God, it is all the more critical when it comes to the doctrine of the church's catholicity and the parameters of this book. This is for three primary reasons. The first, as we have already mentioned, is the contested nature of the doctrine. Catholicity could represent the quintessential case study of ecclesial division and doctrinal disagreement, quite ironic given the fact that catholicity concerns the whole church and justifies an understanding of the church as having a diversified nature. Due to conflicting claims regarding the content of catholicity, each ecclesial tradition is obligated to account for its understanding of the doctrine, be open to the insights of other traditions, and be willing to have its account evaluated in light of Scripture.

The second reason is that, simply put, the biblical basis for this creedal attribute is vastly understudied. That studies of the church's catholicity abound, especially post-Vatican II and amid the rise of the ecumenical movement, is clear. But a closer examination of these studies reveals one key oversight: biblical warrant is rarely a primary concern. In fact, very little work has been done developing a *biblical* notion of the church's catholicity.<sup>1</sup> Clowney can say "the burning issues of church unity or division, apostolicity or apostasy, holiness or worldliness, universality or sectarianism—all hinge on an understanding of the biblical doctrine of the church. . . . Only as the church stands under the Word of God can it discover its own nature and calling."<sup>2</sup> We thus need to better articulate the biblical warrant for, and content of, catholicity.

Third, establishing biblical support for the doctrine is especially important for the Free Church tradition. Indeed, if large swaths of this tradition are to retrieve catholicity and even contribute toward a fuller-orbed expression of the doctrine, we must make clear that such a doctrine has biblical support.<sup>3</sup> This is particularly true of the tradition's more evangelical manifestations, which have been characterized (not without basis) as often being apathetic, suspicious, or even outright hostile regarding any notion of the church's catholicity. Indeed, Timothy George's observation regarding evangelicals at large is perhaps even truer of Free Church evangelicals. He notes that "most evangelicals are happy to confess that the church is one, holy, and apostolic. These are, after all, not only biblical concepts but also New Testament terms. But . . . many contemporary evangelical churches have long abandoned the word 'Catholic,' and would even consider it an insult to be called such."<sup>4</sup> If we are seeking to spur those in the Free Church

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<sup>1</sup>For example, there is no monograph-length biblical theology of catholicity to date; such a lacuna is not only astonishing but also speaks to the relative lack of emphasis on *biblical* (vs. creedal) foundations for rightly understanding the church's catholicity.

<sup>2</sup>Edmund P. Clowney, *The Doctrine of the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 2, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup>The Free Church tradition has earned the reputation of posing a central question in evaluating doctrinal proposals: "Where stands it written?" For example, see the way the Evangelical Free Church of America understands this question as stemming from a right understanding of the Scripture's authority in matters of faith and practice in *Evangelical Convictions: A Theological Exposition of the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America* (Minneapolis: Free Church Publications, 2011).

<sup>4</sup>Timothy George, "Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 41, no. 2 (April 2017): 112.

tradition on in retrieving the doctrine of the church's catholicity and contributing to its fullness, we must demonstrate Clowney's affirmation to be true: catholicity "flow[s] from the more fundamental teaching of the Bible regarding the nature of the church."<sup>5</sup>

### THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING BIBLICAL WARRANT

But we also must ask, *How* do we go about establishing this all-important biblical warrant? It is one thing to want to "be biblical" in establishing a doctrine of the church's catholicity; it is quite another to actually *demonstrate* that biblical basis, especially given the fact that there is no passage we can turn to for a face-value exposition of the church's catholicity. Graham Cole helps us face this challenge by reminding us that proper interpretation of Scripture requires moving from micro to macro, examining specific texts within their immediate contexts within their distinctive literary units within their particular books within the larger canon and in light of the entire flow of redemptive history from Genesis to Revelation.<sup>6</sup> We thus approach the biblical text less as a storehouse to be mined for propositional content (in this case, propositions affirming the church as catholic) and more as a unified narrative of God's redemptive-historical ways with and for his people, looking for distinctive themes and motifs that emerge across the entire canon. In this case we'll explore the biblical warrant for catholicity by examining how the *nature* of God's people as a *unified diversity* and the *scope* of that people *through the whole of all times, peoples, and places* develop over the course of the whole redemptive narrative.

But before we proceed, we must also deal with one other concern: Should we *really* use the term *catholic* to describe the church if the Bible never does so? Two comments can be made here. First, we must recognize that terms such as *catholic* or *catholicity* are not required to speak about the church's universal scope and nature; other nouns such as *fullness* and *wholeness* and other adjectives such as *all* and *whole* function in much the same way. But second, we must remember that *catholicity* is

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<sup>5</sup>Edmund P. Clowney, "The Biblical Theology of the Church," in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 16.

<sup>6</sup>Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 28.

not alone in this regard. Many of the great terms of the Christian tradition, including *Trinity* and *homoousios* (“of the same substance,” used to defend the claim that Christ was equally divine with the Father), are not found in Scripture. It is important, as David Yeago has claimed, to distinguish between judgments and the conceptual terms in which those judgments are rendered. In his “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma,” Yeago argues convincingly that Nicaea’s judgment that the Son was *homoousios* says “the same thing” as Paul’s judgment that Jesus had “equality with God” in Philippians 2:6.<sup>7</sup>

Here we follow a similar line of argumentation regarding the credal confession that the church is catholic, namely that the creeds synthesize and express the same judgment as Scripture, but in slightly different terms. Specifically we will follow and adjust Yeago’s argumentation to insist that the term *catholic* “is neither imposed *on* the New Testament texts, nor distantly deduced *from* the texts, but rather describes a pattern of judgments present *in* the texts, in the texture of scriptural discourse.”<sup>8</sup> The present chapter is thus an attempt to discern the pattern of judgments in the text of Scripture that warrants and orients our confession that the church is catholic. It is an attempt to show, in the words of Jason Hallig, that “the story of the catholic church is a *biblical* story. . . . It is a story of God’s redemptive history—rescuing men and women from sin . . . [and intending] to create a people for himself—a community not only of one nation but of many nations, who would serve as the kingdom people . . . [and as] a catholic community.”<sup>9</sup> The warrant for the doctrine is thus derived from one of the most central themes of Scripture: God’s covenantal intention to call a people to himself.<sup>10</sup> An inquiry regarding the biblical basis for the doctrine of the church’s catholicity is thus an inquiry into a particular characteristic of this people, especially as it manifests in God’s *new covenant* people, the church.

<sup>7</sup>David Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *Pro Ecclesia* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 160.

<sup>8</sup>Yeago, “New Testament and the Nicene Dogma,” 153.

<sup>9</sup>Jason Valeriano Hallig, *We Are Catholic: Catholicity, and Catholicization* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 56, emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup>See Gen 17:7; Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 7:6; Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:28; Zech 8:8; Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:3.

## REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL CONTEXT: GENESIS 1–11

In inquiring about the catholicity of God’s people, we might ask why we should begin by examining Genesis 1–11, long before the covenant made with Abram and ages before the New Testament speaks of the *ecclesia*? We might answer that this is because, as Cornelius Plantinga has argued, these foundational chapters on creation and the story of humanity prior to Abraham are vital to properly understanding the redemptive-historical narrative that follows them. Particularly, it is important to grasp God’s design and intention for creation and for humanity set forth in Genesis 1–11 in order for the remainder of the biblical narrative to make sense.<sup>11</sup> Properly understanding the biblical story that flows from creation to new creation also requires understanding why our world is now “not the way it’s supposed to be” due to sin’s devastating effects and the creational context for God’s solution to this problem: calling a covenant people to himself ultimately by the work of a promised redeemer (Gen 3:15).

Here we seek to apply Karl Barth’s insight that “creation is the external basis of the covenant” while “covenant is the internal basis of the creation.”<sup>12</sup> Specifically we should see that there is no covenantal content (in this case, the catholicity of God’s people) without creational context (in this case, the unified diversity of the created order). Because catholicity relates more directly to God’s *covenantal* purposes, we look to Genesis 1–11 to establish the creational context that will give covenantal catholicity meaning. That is to say, because catholicity is properly an *ecclesiological* category, one that describes the nature of God’s redeemed people, it belongs to the realm of *soteriology* rather than *protology*. But soteriology presupposes protology; we can’t speak of humanity redeemed without first speaking of humanity created (and fallen). Here we seek to isolate the part of the creational context most relevant to the covenantal content of catholicity, namely that the created order exhibits an inherent unity-in-diversity and has the capacity to demonstrate increasing amounts of unified diversity as time

<sup>11</sup>Plantinga summarizes this design under “shalom” defined as “the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight . . . universal flourishing, wholeness . . . the way things ought to be.” Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 10.

<sup>12</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley, ed. T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 51.



goes on.<sup>13</sup> Recognizing this allows us to see how God’s creational design of unified diversity sets the stage for the covenantal catholicity of God’s people displayed in redemptive history; particularly we see Genesis 1–11 set forth creational “raw material” that develops into the catholicity of God’s people according to God’s wisdom and grace in his administration of the gospel (Eph 3:1–11).<sup>14</sup>

**Genesis 1–3.** We can only offer here the briefest of surveys of this creational context. In this survey we must not neglect the fact that it is God’s own life that is the fount for this creational unified diversity. There is a unity, a oneness, that characterizes God’s being.<sup>15</sup> In Genesis 1 this is seen in the way God implements a well-ordered creation with no hint of challenge or inner division. What God wills comes to pass with nothing to hinder his plan: God creates the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1); God sees that his creation is good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31); God orders his creation (Gen 1:4, 7); God names portions of his creation (Gen 1:5, 8, 10); God commissions elements of his creation (Gen 1:6, 14–18, 26, 28); and God delights in his completed creation (Gen 1:31–2:2).

And yet even within the first chapter of the Bible there are hints that this unity of God’s being is of a diversified type. The Christian tradition (based on NT witness) will come to identify this using the language of *trinity* or *Trinity*, and here it manifests most clearly in a delineation of roles in the act of creating. So while in Genesis 1:1 we are told that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” in only the next verse we hear that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” And then in Genesis 1:3 we are introduced to the means of God’s creating: his word, which will eventually be identified as the Word of God (who is also the Son of God, Jn 1:1–14; Col 1:16), distinct from and yet one with both God (the Father) and the

<sup>13</sup>This is not because of some determinative element in the order of creation itself, but because of God’s good pleasure in enacting the covenant of grace to make it so. At most, then, we can say that there is a creaturely *analogy* to the church’s catholicity, namely the unified diversity of all creation: every element of creation is united in its creatureliness and yet every element is diverse in the particulars of its creaturely identity and role.

<sup>14</sup>For a different framing of the same concept, see Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 48–67. Dulles has labeled these creational foundations the “depth dimension of catholicity” or “catholicity from below.”

<sup>15</sup>This will be driven home again and again throughout God’s covenantal dealings with his people. See Deut 6:4; Mk 12:29; 1 Cor 8:6; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Rev 11:17.



(Holy) Spirit of God. The significance of this trinitarian fount from which all unified diversity in the created order flows should not be overlooked.<sup>16</sup> God's trinitarian life, marked by a unified diversity, is the source of all; that unity-in-diversity shows up in every aspect of creation and in the very nature of the church in God's redemptive program should be no surprise.

Indeed, Genesis 1 goes on to showcase a unified diversity in the created order itself: all the things God creates are united in their creatureliness and God-glorifying capacity, and yet there is manifold diversity in what is created. Each day of creation unfurls new and varied forms of being, each of which contains the seed for seemingly infinite variety. Again and again we are told that God created "according to their kinds": seed-bearing plants (Gen 1:12), fruit-bearing trees (Gen 1:12), sea-dwelling creatures (Gen 1:21), flying animals (Gen 1:21), beasts of the earth (Gen 1:25), livestock (Gen 1:25), and even "creeping things" (Gen 1:25). We are told that when God surveyed *all* of what he had made, the heavens and the earth "in all their *vast array*," (Gen 2:1) he concluded that it was all very good (Gen 1:31).<sup>17</sup> God rejoices in creational diversity unified under his creative provision and care. David Smith thus doesn't exaggerate when he proclaims, "At the very outset of the biblical narrative we are presented with a God who revels in diversity, in rich creativity."<sup>18</sup>

But there is a particular segment of God's creation where we see unified diversity particularly manifest, and that is in human beings, who alone are made in the image of the triune God (Gen 1:26-27). There are many dimensions of unified diversity found in humans. The earliest mentioned, and the one given the most emphasis in Genesis 1–2, is the fact that we image God in distinct yet complementary ways as male and female. Genesis 2 fleshes this out by drawing attention to the fact that uniformity

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<sup>16</sup>On this, Allison says "[The] trinitarian nature of God is not uniformity, but unity in diversity. . . . They are diverse persons enjoying different eternal relationships and being principally responsible for different kinds of trinitarian works in which they inseparably share. Yet they are not diverse in terms of being three different gods; rather, they are three diverse persons of the one eternal Godhead. Theirs is unity in diversity." Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 169.

<sup>17</sup>Emphasis added. Any italics in biblical quotations in the remainder of this work are my addition. Any italics added to nonbiblical quotations will be indicated.

<sup>18</sup>David Smith, "What Hope After Babel? Diversity and Community in Gen 11:1-9; Exod 1:1-14; Zeph 3:1-13 and Acts 2:1-3," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 18, no. 2 (December 1996): 169-70.

of the male form was incomplete, the first “not good” arising in the created order (Gen 2:18). God then moves to remedy the insufficiency by creating the woman out of the man, demonstrating their unified status as equally imaging the divine (Gen 2:22). Adam’s poetic celebration of God’s goodness in creating the woman recognizes both her similarity to, and distinctness from, him (Gen 2:23).

Other forms of unified diversity within human beings are visible here, one of which surrounds geographical expansion: human beings will always dwell on the earth (unity, established in Gen 1:26) and yet will inhabit a myriad of places and climates within it (diversity, hinted at in Gen 2:10-14). Again Smith is helpful here, noting that in the commission to be fruitful and increase in number, filling the earth and subduing it (Gen 1:28), “the command to subdue is preceded by a command to fill. The move out of the garden which follows the fall is already implicit in the dynamic initiated by this command. The garden is a place *from* which . . . people are to spread, bringing blessing. . . . Spreading, like diversity, is rooted in creation prior to the fall.”<sup>19</sup> In short, we see a multifaceted unity-in-diversity at the beginning, in seed form; unified diversity, particularly in God’s image bearers, is being prepared to go through the whole (earth).

But the creational unity-in-diversity that marks the shalom of God’s good creation is shattered in the account of humanity’s fall and its aftermath set forth in Genesis 3 and following. Indeed, the rebellion of human beings manifests in their alienation from God, one another, and the created order (seen in God’s rebuke and curse of Gen 3:14-19). The unified diversity that once defined the created order in terms of manifold expressions of God-glorifying creatureliness is now broken. The unity of the human race has now splintered into blame shifting and resentment (Gen 3:12-13); the diversity once so beautiful is now a primary source of division, marginalization, and abuse (Gen 3:16).<sup>20</sup> Mysteriously God promises to address the tragedy by initiating a plan of redemption (hinted at in Gen 3:15, 21). Even

<sup>19</sup>Smith, “What Hope After Babel?,” 170.

<sup>20</sup>But Udo Middellmann is correct to note that “Adam and Eve’s original mandate to subdue the earth and to have dominion was to continue after the fall in pursuit of a more varied, creative, and righteous life. Both creation before the Fall . . . and after the Fall . . . were never to be embraced as final, repetitive, unquestioned, and without change.” Udo W. Middellmann, *The Innocence of God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2007), 201-2.

as Adam and Eve are banished “east of Eden,” the creational pattern of unified diversity remains, with humans still united in dependence on God while continuing to demonstrate greater degrees of diversity.

**Genesis 10–11.** But the portion of Genesis 1–11 that does the most to highlight how God’s creational design of unified diversity lays the foundations for the glories of covenantal catholicity in redemptive history is undoubtedly Genesis 10–11; indeed, it is the material known as the “Table of Nations” (Gen 10) and the “Tower of Babel” (Gen 11:1–9) that most directly sets the context for the catholic nature of God’s covenant people. This is seen when we recognize that Genesis 10–11 has been designed with a “deliberate dischronologization,” which Smith explains by saying, “[The] linguistic uniformity in Genesis 11:1 is [not] in conflict with the references to the [prior] linguistic diversity in Gen 10:5, 18 and perhaps 25. . . . [And thus] it is quite clear that Gen 10–11 are not arranged chronologically. Genesis 10 presents three successive historical sweeps with vague time-scales before returning in summary to the time of Noah in verse 32 (and again in 11:10!).”<sup>21</sup> In other words, it makes sense to understand Genesis 11 as *preceding* Genesis 10 chronologically (providing an explanation for the cultural/linguistic diversity on display in the previous chapter) even as it *follows* Genesis 10 in the narrative. This raises an important question: What motivated this chronological reversal? Answering this question will go a long way in helping us see the unified diversity of God’s creational order affirmed within.

We begin with the Tower of Babel narrative. While there are multiple interpretations of the account,<sup>22</sup> here we will briefly engage the interpretation offered by Theodore Hiebert.<sup>23</sup> On his reading the primary issue that Yahweh responds to is not a swelling hubris but rather a commitment to homogeneity and permanence of locale as a source of safety in the postdiluvian world. Hiebert says, “The story of Babel . . . [describes] the human

<sup>21</sup>Smith, “What Hope After Babel?” 172.

<sup>22</sup>By far the most pervasive is the traditional interpretation, what Theodore Hiebert has labeled the “pride-and-punishment” interpretation. On this reading the builders of the tower are motivated by pride, and Yahweh’s response is primarily to punish them for their ambition in order to prevent a repeat of Genesis 6.

<sup>23</sup>See Theodore Hiebert, “Cultural Diversity: Punishment or Plan? Two Interpretations of the Story of the Tower of Babel,” in *Toppling the Tower: Essays on Babel and Diversity*, ed. Theodore Hiebert (Chicago: McCormick Theological Seminary, 2004), 2.

longing for homogeneity in conflict with the divine plan for cultural diversity. The human problem is not pride but the fear of spreading out into a multicultural world. And God's response . . . [enacts] a divine plan that the world after the flood be filled with diverse languages and peoples and cultures."<sup>24</sup> On this reading Babel marks the auspicious advance of human diversity, especially in language and geographical distribution, despite human effort to the contrary.

Hiebert's reading helps us further grasp the creational context for the church's catholicity down redemptive-historical stream when we return to our question: Why did the author of Genesis 1–11 reverse the chronological order of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11) and Table of Nations (Gen 10)? Clines's answer has tremendous payoff:

If the material of chap. 10 had followed the Babel story, the whole Table of Nations would have to be read under the sign of judgment; where it stands it functions as the fulfillment of the divine command of 9:1 "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth," which looks back in its turn to 1:28. All this means that the final author of the primeval history understands that the dispersal of the nations may be evaluated both positively (as in chap. 10) and negatively (as in chap. 11).<sup>25</sup>

That is, according to Clines the author decided to reverse the order so that continuity with what preceded in Genesis is evident: God's creational intention for and blessing on increasing degrees of diversity precede its corruption by human sin and remain despite that corruption.

Indeed, when we look back at Genesis 10 from this perspective we recognize that the Table of Nations is framed not as *consequence* of human sin but rather as an *outworking* of God's good creational design for increasing degrees of diversity among human beings united in their common image bearing. This is the first place we get a large-scale picture of humanity as exhibiting a unified diversity through the whole (earth).

<sup>24</sup>Theodore Hiebert, "Babel: Babble or Blueprint? Calvin, Cultural Diversity, and the Interpretation of Genesis 11:1-9," in *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity II: Biblical Interpretation in the Reformed Tradition*, ed. Wallace M. Alston Jr. and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 139.

<sup>25</sup>D. J. A. Clines, "Theme in Genesis 1–11," in *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 296.

While the Table of Nations is difficult to interpret,<sup>26</sup> we know that the chapter provides us with an account of how seventy “nations” relate to Noah’s three sons after the flood. Daniel Hays helpfully orients us to four significant terms in the chapter, noting that “Genesis 10 described the division of the world according to the family/tribe/clan, language, land/country/territory, and nation (Gen 10:5, 20, 31).”<sup>27</sup> B. Oded points to these same verses and concludes that the table is thus a conglomerate of “ethnopolitical (after their families, nations), linguistic (after their tongues) and geographic (in their countries)” divisions.<sup>28</sup> The layers of *diversity* on display in light of this recognition are staggering. But Elizabeth Sung helpfully observes that the table does just as much to emphasize *unity*, reminding us that “Genesis 10 begins by reaffirming that humankind in the postdiluvian era fundamentally comprises a single extended family that stems from Noah and his household (v. 1; cf. 9:18-19).”<sup>29</sup> It thus portrays humanity as a unified diversity through the whole. The fact that this is on display *prior* to Babel enables us to see, in Bill Arnold’s words, that “the Table of Nations in its current location fulfills the divine command to ‘be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’ (9:1, reflecting also 1:28), and is therefore predominantly a positive appraisal of human dispersion. . . . Had it been placed after 11.1-9, the Table of Nations in Gen 10 would of necessity be transformed into a sign of God’s judgment.”<sup>30</sup> As it stands, it is a sign of God’s blessing on the cultural, linguistic, political, geographic, and familial diversity that is nevertheless united by a common lineage and a common calling to bear God’s image and to live in conformity to his creational intentions. The Babel narrative drives home that things have gone awry and that a much deeper remedy than even a worldwide flood will be required. But for now we see that the foundational chapters of Genesis 1–11, far from being irrelevant to developing a biblical theology of catholicity, are actually quite significant in setting the covenantal

<sup>26</sup>For a helpful orientation see B. Oded, “The Table of Nations (Genesis 10): A Socio-Cultural Approach,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 98, no. 1 (1986): 14-31.

<sup>27</sup>J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 61-62.

<sup>28</sup>Oded, “Table of Nations,” 14.

<sup>29</sup>Elizabeth Yao-Hwa Sung, “‘Race’ and Ethnicity Discourse and the Christian Doctrine of Humanity: A Systematic Sociological and Theological Appraisal,” PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2011, 263.

<sup>30</sup>Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 119.

scene by portraying (1) God's design that humans exhibit a God-glorifying unified diversity through the whole of creation and (2) how such a design was corrupted (but not eradicated) by human sin.

### REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL COMMENCEMENT:

#### GENESIS 12–MALACHI 4

While in Genesis 1–11 we saw the *creational context* for catholicity, with Genesis 12 we move to the *covenantal content* of catholicity: by God's grace he calls a people to himself marked by increasing degrees of unified diversity over the course of redemptive history as the scope of this people continuously works through the whole of all times, peoples, and places. The catholicity of God's people is thus a covenantal glory on greater and greater display as we move from Genesis 12 to Revelation 22.<sup>31</sup> God's covenantal intention to call a people has a particular focus: calling a *diverse* people to be his *unified*, special possession. The catholicity of this people is anticipated in the old covenant, climaxes with the new covenant, and comes to consummate expression only at the end of redemptive history as *all* of God's people from *all* times, peoples, and places finally dwell together in Christ by the Spirit for all eternity.

**Genesis 12.** It is this larger redemptive-historical perspective that allows Yoder to proclaim that catholicity “is a reality . . . flowing down through human history, ever since Pentecost, or if you will ever since Abraham.”<sup>32</sup> Why make *Abraham* a distinctive focus when speaking of the church's catholicity? Because the calling of Abraham and the promise given to him in Genesis 12:1-3 (especially that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through [him]”) is the answer to the cosmic problem as it has been portrayed in Genesis 3–11, even as this covenantal promise to graciously provide a redeemer comes only after the scope has significantly narrowed from Genesis 10–11. Indeed, we move from Babel and a broad concern with how Noah's sons became the ancestors of the “seventy nations” of the world to a particular concern with Shem's line (Gen 11:10) and then to a narrow branch of his family tree: Terah and his three sons (Gen 11:27).

<sup>31</sup>God's creational design of unified diversity also continues to develop through the whole of human history. Here see David Bruce Hegeman, *Plowing in Hope: Toward a Biblical Theology of Culture*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2007).

<sup>32</sup>John Howard Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 302.

It is only when we are told of God's call of *one* of those sons to go from "Ur of the Chaldeans" (the land of the Babelites) to the land of Canaan (the land given to God's people) that we see the redemptive promise emerge: God's original intention to dwell with his image bearers, disturbed by the fall, will be restored through the calling of one man who will become the father of one nation and also the father of many peoples. The fact that the language of "peoples" and "nations" is so pervasive in the promises to Abram is no coincidence; it establishes a definitive link back to Genesis 10–11. Hays nicely summarizes this:

Genesis 10 described the division of the world according to the family/tribe/clan, language, land/country/territory, and nation (Gen 10:5, 20, 31). The call of Abraham picks up on these terms. . . . The term "families" in 12:3 provides a tight connection . . . for this term occurs not only in the summary statements (10:5, 20, 31) but also in 10:18 and 10:32. . . . In Genesis 18:18 . . . God restates the promise with a slight change. He promises that all the *nations* of the earth will be blessed through Abraham, referring back to the *fourth* element in the fourfold list of Genesis 10. The two promises, taken together, imply that the totality of the fourfold list is to find blessing through Abraham.<sup>33</sup>

In short, a proper reading of the promises given to Abraham recognizes the intentional connections to the Table of Nations, connections that help us understand that Abraham's covenantal call is God's answer to the corruption of his creational intentions seen at Babel.

Indeed, on a canonical reading of Genesis 12 it is impossible not to see the promise that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through [Abram]" as anticipating the *catholic* nature of God's people as their scope comes to include all peoples in all times and all places. The reality that Israel ultimately existed for the sake of the nations is only hinted at in the OT, with the missional calling of God's people on behalf of the nations being more veiled and centripetal in the old covenant and becoming more explicit and centrifugal in the new.<sup>34</sup> But this ultimate missional trajectory is evident amid

<sup>33</sup>Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 61–62.

<sup>34</sup>So Wright can observe that "beginning with the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 . . . Israel came into existence as a people with a mission entrusted to them from God *for the sake of God's wider purpose of blessing the nations*. . . . Arguably God's covenant with Abraham is the single most important biblical tradition within a biblical theology of mission. . . . It generates a vast, arching, trajectory that carries us from Genesis 12 to Revelation 22." Christopher J. H. Wright, *The*



indications that the nations will be blessed by their proximity to, and even their inclusion within, the people of God traditionally restricted to Israel. This is made clear by Jesus himself in Luke 24:44-47, where he says, “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. . . . [And] this is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name *to all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem.” The fact that Jesus says that the missional scope including all nations was *already attested* in the OT gives us permission to investigate where this “proto-catholic vision” is attested there. Though each segment of the OT bears this out, space constraints prevent us from examining the Law<sup>35</sup> or the Writings.<sup>36</sup> Here we focus on how the Prophets testify to this redemptive-historical development and thus to the increasingly catholic identity of God’s covenant people.

**Prophets.** It is with the Prophets that we see hints of missional inclusion of the nations accelerate and the redemptive-historical development toward a more catholic scope for God’s people become increasingly evident. The Minor Prophets offer a concentrated expression of this. For one example, Zephaniah is told (in Zeph 3:9) that one day God “will purify the lips of *the peoples*, that *all of them* may call on the name of the LORD and serve him shoulder to shoulder,” thus hinting that a linguistic/cultural diversity would one day mark God’s covenant people even as they were united in common worship of him. This striking vision of unified worship in diverse expression is also signaled in Zechariah 8:23 where we hear that in the last days “ten people *from all languages and nations* will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God

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*Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 65, 187, emphasis added.

<sup>35</sup>Particularly noteworthy is how Deuteronomy, though it recognizes that Israel’s relationship to the nations is complicated and at times full of animosity (see Deut 7:1, 15:6, 33:17), presents Israel’s vocation as ultimately to be a light unto the nations, who would observe their wisdom and way of life as an attractive force and source of blessing (Deut 4:6).

<sup>36</sup>The reference in Luke to the “Psalms” is likely to the Writings as a whole, with the book of Psalms standing as its representative head. The Psalms make for an enlightening case study since the book offers several “hints” of multiethnic inclusion in the covenant people of God. Examples include Ps 47:8-9; 50:1; 65:2; 72:17; 87:4-6; 148:14; and 150:6 along with the entirety of Ps 62. We could say that it is the *hope* of the Psalms that the nations will ultimately join with Israel in giving praise to Yahweh and experiencing the blessing of being part of his covenant people.

is with you.” In contrast to an ethnocentric vision of God’s people, Zechariah sees a day when “*many peoples and powerful nations* will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him” (Zech 8:22). The animosity that once existed between the nations and Israel will be no more (Zech 14:16). These passages indicate the Lord’s intention to one day expand the scope of his covenantal people to include all nations.<sup>37</sup>

But the fullest expression of this proto-catholic vision no doubt comes from the book of Isaiah; nowhere else in the OT do the hints of multinational inclusion become more frequent and explicit. For instance, Isaiah 2:2-4 envisions “all nations” streaming into Zion that “many peoples” might be taught God’s ways, walk in his paths, and turn their swords to plowshares. In Isaiah 11:10-12 we encounter the promise that the Root of Jesse will stand “as a banner for the peoples” and a rallying point for “the nations”; so inclusive is this vision that it includes a remnant from the despised Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon and even representatives from “the islands” (Is 11:10-12). The vision in Isaiah 19:19-25 of a future where there is “an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt” and where “the LORD will make himself known” to Israel’s long-standing foes leads Clowney to say, “So unthinkably great will be God’s sanctifying blessing . . . that Israel’s position as the covenant people will be shared by Egypt and Assyria, the former enemies!”<sup>38</sup> Isaiah 25:6-8 demonstrates a staggering scope of redemption in the image of a feast prepared by Yahweh himself “for all peoples,” saying that God

will destroy  
     the shroud that enfolds *all peoples*,  
 the sheet that covers *all nations*;  
     he will swallow up death forever.  
 The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears  
     from *all faces*;  
 he will remove his people’s disgrace  
     from *all the earth*.

<sup>37</sup>Amos 9 and Obadiah 1 also provide examples worthy of consideration. A study of the book of Micah, especially through the lens of a remnant brought out from both Israel and the nations, would also be illuminating in developing a biblical theology of catholicity from the Minor Prophets. Thanks to Eric Tully for this observation.

<sup>38</sup>Clowney, *Doctrine of the Church*, 26.

In many ways the proto-catholic vision crescendos in Isaiah 40–66 as the focus of the book turns from pre-exilic concerns (Is 1–39) to the trajectory of God’s people in an exilic (Is 40–55) and post-exilic (Is 56–66) context. Perhaps the greatest expression of Gentile inclusion in God’s covenant purposes comes in Isaiah 49:6, where the Lord says,

It is too small a thing for you to be my servant  
to restore the tribes of Jacob  
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.  
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,  
that my salvation may reach *to the ends of the earth*.

Indeed, this serves as a wonderful summary of what God has been doing with Israel throughout the old covenant stage of redemptive history: preparing a people (and a Person) to be a light to the nations. Isaiah 56:6-8, a text that becomes quite significant in light of Jesus’ appropriation of it at the cleansing of the temple (cf. Mk 11:17), goes on to promise that

foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord  
to minister to him,  
to love the name of the LORD,  
and to be his servants . . .  
these I will bring to my holy mountain  
and give them joy in my house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
for my house will be called  
a house of prayer for *all nations*.

The text then affirms that the Lord who gathers the exiles of Israel “will gather still others to them besides those already gathered,” a sentiment picked up in John 10:16 where Jesus says there are “other sheep . . . not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”

The book ends with the stunning promise of Isaiah 66:18-23. Most astonishingly perhaps is the fact that God himself declares in Isaiah 66:18 that there will be a day when he will “gather the people of *all nations and languages*, and they will come and see my glory.” Isaiah 66:19 is as good a

candidate as any for Jesus' claim in Luke 24 that the Old Testament proclaimed ahead of time that repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, for in this verse we are told that God will direct his people "to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians . . . to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory" and thus that his people will "proclaim [his] glory among the nations." James Scott comments that Isaiah 66:18-19 "stands out among OT texts [by] containing a positive eschatological expectation for the nations. . . . By alluding to [the Table of Nations tradition], the partial list of nations in v. 19 . . . provides concrete examples of God's intention to gather 'all nations' in v. 18."<sup>39</sup> This intention is reinforced in the following verses, for while the promise is made that Israelites will return from "all the nations" (Is 66:20), that promise is now set within the much larger frame of Isaiah 66:23: "From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, *all mankind* will come and bow down before me," says the LORD." That Isaiah particularly, and the Prophets collectively, testify that the scope of God's people will ultimately come to include representatives from all times, all peoples, and all places is quite clear.

As we complete our survey of these redemptive-historical developments in the OT, we are left with an unresolved tension when it comes to the scope of God's people and their nature as one marked by unified diversity. On the one hand, there is a clear animosity toward the nations, particularly heard in the call for Israel to be separate from them and the consistent drumbeat that the nations will be judged. And yet there are also hints that point in the direction of an ever-increasing catholic scope. Throughout Israel's history, in a way that echoes the promise to Abraham, representatives from the nations are blessed in their encounter with Abraham's descendants. We could cite Rahab (Josh 2), Ruth, the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17), Naaman (2 Kings 5), and the Ninevites (Jonah) as examples. These encounters prove to be prophetic, especially with the proclamation of a new covenant (cf. Jer 31 and Ezek 36). This new covenant promise, though it centers on a renewed Israel, ultimately makes clear that this renewal is for the sake of gathering in the

<sup>39</sup>James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 14.

Gentiles. Indeed, the trajectory of the new covenant promise brings the catholic scope of God's people more clearly into view. Not only is the covenant itself described as an "everlasting covenant" (all times, Ezek 37:26), but in light of other OT passages we can conclude that it is inclusive of "all the nations" (all peoples, Is 56:7), proclaimed in "all languages" (all tongues, Is 66:18), and understood as spreading "to the ends of the earth" (all places, Is 49:6). At the end of the Old Testament it is clear that "in the future all nations will be blessed by Abraham's seed. Torah, history, and prophecy . . . point to this glorious future. The day is coming when . . . the light of Israel will shine upon the nations, and the Lord's salvation will reach to the ends of the earth."<sup>40</sup> The question that remained: *How* was this going to happen?

### REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL CLIMAX: THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

The answer to that question becomes clear only when we arrive at the New Testament and see the veiled previews give way to a full-orbed vision of God's covenant people as a unified diversity through the whole of all times, peoples, and places. The catalyst for this movement is the Christ event: the coming of the long-awaited Messiah who fulfills God's intention to call a people to himself. This is the climax of redemptive history, and with it comes the replacement of Israel's ethnocentric, centripetal orientation with the church's multiethnic, centrifugal one.<sup>41</sup> The catholic scope of the church is established definitively with the risen Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19) and giving of the Spirit for that mission (Acts 2).

But prior to this crescendo in redemptive history, we see in Jesus' ministry an initial continuity with Israel's anticipatory role. Jesus explicitly limits the scope of his ministry ("I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel," Mt 15:24) and the ministry of his disciples ("Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel," Mt 10:5-6) to the people of Israel. But amid these restrictions, Christ's ministry is sprinkled with Gentile encounters that are revelatory of the catholic

<sup>40</sup>Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27, no. 2 (November 1992): 223.

<sup>41</sup>Indeed, Hagner sees "a clear distinction between the time of Jesus' earthly ministry and the time following the resurrection . . . [as] a movement from particularism to universalism." Quoted in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 93.

scope which will emerge as a result of his ministry. For instance, in examining Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well (Jn 4), the demoniac (Mk 5), the centurion (Mt 8), the Syrophenician woman (Mt 15), and the Samaritan leper (Lk 17), not only do we learn much more about the nature of Jesus' ministry (particularly that it is *not* ultimately restricted to the nation of Israel), but we also see that these exchanges are *anticipatory* in nature, "unusual events that were harbingers of the things to come."<sup>42</sup> Thus we can speak of the "catholicity of the gospel" already on display in the four Gospel accounts. It is worth examining how John and the Synoptics bear this out.

**John.** John's presentation joins the Synoptics in presenting Jesus and his work as having massive implications for the scope of God's covenant people, but the nature of this presentation is distinctive. For one, John focuses much less on the "nations" and much more on the "world." This leads Hallig to describe John's unique presentation of Jesus as "the Word for the world,"<sup>43</sup> noting that "the evangelist's presentation of the life and ministry of Jesus is more theological than historical. . . . [As such] it is more explicit than implicit . . . that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not exclusively for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. It is a gospel for the world."<sup>44</sup> As evidence we could cite the inclusiveness of the vision found in John 1:9 ("the true light that gives light to *everyone* was coming into the world"), John 1:12 ("yet to *all* who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"), John 1:29 ("Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of *the world*"), John 3:16 ("For God so loved *the world* that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life") and John 8:12 ("I am the light of *the world*. *Whoever* follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."). John presents Jesus as teaching that the mission (commencing at Pentecost) involves "other sheep that are not of this fold" (i.e., the Gentiles) and promising that "I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice" (Jn 10:16). In fact, heading to the cross, Jesus anticipates that his cross work will bring about salvation

<sup>42</sup>Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 438.

<sup>43</sup>We recognize that the term *world* in Johannine literature does not just have positive connotations and indeed can be used to describe forces in opposition to Christ (for example, Jn 17:9). Here we are simply isolating those particular contexts where *world* has positive value based on God's redemptive love.

<sup>44</sup>Hallig, *We Are Catholic*, 52.

on a global scale: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw *all people* to myself” (Jn 12:32).

But perhaps the greatest contribution of John’s Gospel to a biblical theology of the church’s catholicity comes in its vision of God’s people as exhibiting unified diversity. In many ways John focuses more on the mission of Jesus than the mission of his people, but, significantly, in John’s version of the disciples’ commissioning (Jn 20:21-23) these two are intrinsically linked.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Jesus says, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And just as Jesus’ mission had a universal scope ultimately in view, so there is a universal scope inherent in the church’s mission: “If you forgive *anyone’s* sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” But Köstenberger and O’Brien bring out the most distinctive Johannine contribution when they say: “The evangelist maintains an overlap between Jesus’ shepherding and witnessing functions and that of his chosen representatives . . . [an overlap that] accentuates the believers’ need to be knit together in love, unity and mutual service, *modeled closely after Jesus’ relationship with the Father.*”<sup>46</sup> Indeed, for John the catholic scope of the mission is wrapped up in the way God’s people imitate God, particularly the unity-in-diversity that marks his life (especially as seen in the relationship of the Father and the Son).

The greatest manifestation of this is found in Jesus’ “high priestly prayer” of John 17.<sup>47</sup> There Jesus prays in a way that both rehearses the universal scope of his mission (“For you granted [the Son] authority over *all people* that he might give eternal life *to all those* you have given him,” Jn 17:2) and grounds the universal mission of the disciples in his mission (“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world,” Jn 17:18). Jesus goes on to pray for *all those* who would believe the message proclaimed by the disciples, that “all of them may be one, Father, *just as you are in me and I am in you.* May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, *that they may be one as we are one*—I in them and you in me—so that

<sup>45</sup>Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 203.

<sup>46</sup>Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 204, emphasis added.

<sup>47</sup>For an attempt to show how the offices of Christ align with the creedal attributes of the church, see Tom Greggs, *Dogmatic Ecclesiology: The Priestly Catholicity of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019).



they may be *brought to complete unity*” (Jn 17:21-23). Here Jesus prays that this flock of ever-increasing diversity will be unified in a way that is patterned after the unity-in-diversity of the Father and the Son, all with vast missional implications.<sup>48</sup> In other words, the unity and catholicity of the church go together because it is the triune God who has constituted them as a people. Since John’s Gospel was written that *whoever* reads it “may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing . . . have life in his name” (Jn 20:31), we see that the type of unity God’s people will exhibit (modeled on the relationship of the Father and the Son) is one of unified *diversity*.

**Synoptics.** Each of the Synoptics emphasizes the *continuity* between the promises of the old covenant and their fulfillment in Jesus. Beginning with Matthew, it is thus not insignificant that the very first words of the book make explicit connection back to Genesis 12 with its messianic promise for all nations. Indeed Matthew 1:1 presents us with “the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, *the son of Abraham*.” Here we see redemptive history climaxing with the coming of the Messiah, the seed that was promised from those earliest chapters of Genesis (Gen 3:15; 9:9; 12:7). Matthew’s unique presentation of the “magi from the east” (Mt 2:1) shows us early on the scope of redemption that Christ will usher in. But Jesus’ interaction with the centurion in Matthew 8 is perhaps the most revelatory of his Gentile encounters in Matthew. After all, Jesus’ commendation of the soldier (“I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith,” Mt 8:10) comes with a promise expanding the scope of God’s people far beyond Israel: “many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 8:11). Though the promise is framed in centripetal versus centrifugal terms, it spotlights the inclusion of the nations in a manner reminiscent of OT promises. We also see a proto-catholic scope inherent in Jesus’ promise that “I will build my church” (Mt 16:18) and the promise given to this

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<sup>48</sup>Allison notes here that church unity “is grounded most fundamentally in the perichoretic harmony enjoyed by the triune God. . . . [For] this mutual indwelling of the three distinct persons in one another portrays and prompts a church unity that is not uniformity, nor union, but unity in diversity.” Gregg Allison, “Holy God and Holy People: Pneumatology and Ecclesiology in Intersection,” in *Building on the Foundations of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Gregg R. Allison and Stephen J. Wellum (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 253.

*ecclesia* that “Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Mt 18:20).<sup>49</sup>

It is only at the end of Matthew’s Gospel that the church’s centrifugal mission is made explicit and the scope of God’s people is portrayed as encompassing all times, peoples and places. Köstenberger summarizes how this is all in fulfillment of OT promises: “Jesus, the ‘son of Abraham,’ fulfills the Abrahamic promise—that God would bless all nations through his descendent—by sending out the representatives of this new messianic community to take the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.”<sup>50</sup> In short, the Great Commission is the christological means by which the Abrahamic commission will finally be fulfilled.<sup>51</sup>

Many similar things could be said regarding Mark’s Gospel.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, though it is clear in Mark that Jesus’ work is still constrained to Israel *during* his ministry, it is also clear that Mark is the Gospel most interested in stressing the implications of Jesus’ work for the scope of God’s people *after* his ministry. As Köstenberger and O’Brien have claimed, Mark specifically emphasizes the inclusion of all nations where other Gospels neglect it.<sup>53</sup> For instance, during the cleansing of the temple episode of Mark 11:17, Mark includes the reference that the temple would be a house of prayer “for all nations” in the quotation of Isaiah 56:7, where both Matthew and Luke exclude that portion of the reference. And when we recall that Mark powerfully places the greatest confession of the whole book in the mouth of a Gentile centurion standing at the foot of the cross (Mk 15:39, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”), we conclude that Mark believes the gospel has vast implications for who can be included in God’s covenant people.

<sup>49</sup>For a compelling discussion of the interrelated foundational ecclesial promises of Matthew 16 and 18 from a Free Church vantage point, see Jonathan Leeman, *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ’s Rule* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

<sup>50</sup>Andreas Köstenberger, “The Church According to the Gospels,” in *The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church*, ed. Kendell H. Easley and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 38.

<sup>51</sup>Yoder discerns multiple catholic elements in this text, including the ascending Lord’s claim of all authority *in heaven and on earth* (all places), the fact that the eleven were to make disciples *of all nations* (all peoples), and the promise that Christ would be with them *always* (all times). See Yoder, *Royal Priesthood*, 309.

<sup>52</sup>This is especially true in light of shared material with Matthew, such as the stories of the demoniac (Mt 8 and Mk 5) and the Syrophenician woman (Mt 15 and Mk 7).

<sup>53</sup>Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 84.

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