

PERSPECTIVES ON THE AUGUSTINIAN/ NEOCENE-AQUINIAN/BAM DISCUSSION

A RESPONSE

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Richard Chewning, in his thought-provoking article, “Augustine and Aquinas: Their Theological Progeny Come Face to Face with ‘Business As Mission,’” (AA&BAM) indirectly highlights an important question that will shape the CBFA. That question is: How will diverse theologies embraced by various members impact the project of integrating faith with vocation in the CBFA? Of course, more specifically the purpose of his paper is to focus on a particular issue: the theological underpinnings of BAM initiatives. However, in a broad sense, both our biblical faithfulness and the collegiality (not to mention the kindness) that characterize discussions of this sort may be equally as important in the long run as a specific theological issue. Thus, it is with some trepidation and a great deal of prayer that I approach the task of responding.

I cannot agree more with Dr. Chewning that the theological presuppositions we hold, sometimes unconsciously, inevitably drive our assumptions about personal conduct, proper ministry, vocational service, and, as in this case, missional activity. Although we all will draw erroneous conclusions from time to time because of our fallen nature and therefore diminished spiritual perception and reasoning capacities, our responsibility is to meditate on God’s Word and seek to understand His perspective on a multitude of important themes. We must make a concerted and genuine attempt, even if the process proves controversial, to discover a true biblical perspective, because the truth of God demands respectful commitment. As one well-respected theologian reminds his students: “Faith is what you believe.” To seek earnest understanding that we may believe correctly and consequently know Him and obey is, in fact, our greatest responsibility as Christians.

There are three topics pertaining to AA&BAM that I will address in this response. Unfortunately, these are

topics with which the author and I will respectfully disagree. I hope that my comments will be construed in the light of academic critique with a view toward promoting discourse rather than as a personal attack, as I have great respect for Dr. Chewning. Thus, I will make every endeavor to choose my words responsibly.

First, I will argue against the idea of presenting the categories of Augustinian and Neocene-Thomistic theological systems as collectively exhaustive. Relatedly, I question whether the distinction is meaningful in a significant way with respect to how one formulates and conducts BAM. Secondly, I must question the characterization of spiritual gifts with respect to BAM. And, finally, I comment on issues of hermeneutics, especially as the exegesis of New Testament Greek is treated in AA&BAM.

IS IT EITHER/OR?

I have no objection to Dr. Chewning’s broad-brushed characterization of the Augustinian or Neocene-Aquini-an theologies as he presents them. I believe that he would readily acknowledge variation of opinion *within* either of these theological systems as well as between them. Rather, I am concerned by the notion that one seems compelled to choose between only these two theological positions.

This forced choice is represented by such statements as “Stop and choose one!” (p. 73) as well as the contrasts between the two systems in the section following. No mention is made of alternative theological positions. These alternatives may not be the dominant positions in evangelical Christianity today; however, they are viable alternatives to the exclusivity of Augustinianism versus Neocene-Thomism.

For example, the discussion of *predestination* and *election* is characterized as: one believes in predestination

and election as defined by the Augustinians or one does not believe in them at all (pages 74-77). That the Scripture teaches predestination and election is undeniable; thus, one who objects to election as construed by the Augustinian definition is placed in the untenable position of being charged with denying what the Scriptures teach.

My purpose herein is not to argue another position *per se*, but simply to object to the presentation of Augustinianism and Neocene-Thomism as the only options and to demonstrate biblically the plausibility of other views. To illustrate, I will give one example of an alternative interpretation of a key “election” passage, one example of a key “irresistible grace” passage, and one example of an alternative view of an “eternal security” passage. Each example addresses controversial passages of Scripture over which people have been arguing for years, yea centuries. These examples will not be covered in sufficient detail as to present *comprehensively* an alternative position nor to persuade definitively others of it, as that is not my intent. They are offered as evidence that alternative positions are biblically viable, and that it is possible, even plausible, that an alternative understanding of these passages does a better job of reconciling apparent conflicts than the historic battles between the Augustinians and Neocene-Thomists of “my verse beats your verse.” Thus, our goal should be to search out biblical harmonization of the evidence that God has chosen to reveal to us in His Word, because whatever theological system one chooses, the foremost criterion for truth is congruence with the text of the Scriptures.

An Alternative from Ephesians 1. Although predestination and election are both discussed in Ephesians 1:3-14, this text should not be used as a proof text for *either* conditional or unconditional election. Nevertheless, it is a frequently cited text for just such purposes (cf. Cottrell, 1975; Demarest, 1997; Schreiner, 2000; Ware, 2000) predominantly by Augustinians but also by non-Augustinians.

A closer look at this key passage reveals an entirely different focus. Ephesians 1:3-14, a single sentence of 202 words, is considered so unwieldy that most translators divide the passage into several sentences (Lincoln, 1990). Nevertheless, Ephesians 1:3 is regarded as the main clause of the entire passage, which scholars take as a eulogy or extended blessing in typical Old Testament or Jewish style (Hoehner, 1999). God is introduced and blessed in this verse as the originator and source of all spiritual blessings that are enumerated in the following verses. These blessings include, among others: the promise of sanctification

(“holy and blameless before Him,” v. 4), adoption as sons (v. 5), His favor toward us in the beloved (v. 6), redemption (v. 7), forgiveness (v. 7), knowledge of the mystery of His will (v. 9), an inheritance (v. 11), and a destiny to be to the praise of His glory (vv. 11-12).¹ Further, believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit, having been given a pledge or down-payment with reference to what God has foreordained for those in Christ (vv. 13-14).

In Ephesians 1:4, “ekselektato,” is an aorist middle indicative translated “chose.” The most common usage of the middle voice in the New Testament is as an indirect middle in which the subject of the verb acts for himself or herself and in his or her own interest (Wallace, 1996, p. 419). As suggested by the middle voice, God (the subject of the verb) chose for His benefit and in His interest. This verbal aspect is borne out in verse 6, which declares that the results He would achieve by His plan for believers would be “to the praise of the glory of His grace.” Again in verse 12, one finds that all these blessings are “to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.” Finally, verse 14b reads, “. . . to the praise of His glory.” Clearly, a believer’s being chosen in Christ and the blessings ordained therein are designed to glorify God and highlight His plan for salvation. The emphasis throughout Ephesians 1:3-14 is on the plan the Father has selected and on the sure outcomes of His predestinating will. God the Father is said in verse 4 to have chosen those who are in Christ for this plan. However, the text says *nothing about the Father’s having chosen which individuals would be in Christ* other than that they are believers in Christ. What it does *not* say is that they were elected to believe.

In fact, one of the most conspicuous motifs in Ephesians 1:3-14 is the constant refrain of “in Him” (vv. 4, 9, 10, 13), “in whom” (vv. 7, 11, 13), “in the Beloved” (v. 6), and “in Christ” (vv. 3, 10). If Paul’s primary objective was to emphasize that only those who are in Christ will experience these wonderful blessings, he could not have been more forceful.

Hoehner, though a subscriber to the interpretation of Ephesians 1:4 as unconditional election to salvation, does acknowledge that the “in Him” phrase could be regarded as a dative of sphere, “which connotes the idea that we are chosen in Christ as the head and representative of the spiritual community just as Adam is the head and representative of the natural community” (Hoehner, 1999, p. 177). Hoehner also allows that the phrase could be relational or instrumental, thus indicating the connection of believers with Christ through redemption. In either case,

Paul's distinctive repetition of the "in" phrases in Ephesians 1:3-14 strongly suggests a set of outcomes applied to a collective of individuals defined by a unique and exclusive "umbrella" relationship or sphere of existence, and this interpretation can be supported grammatically.

It is noteworthy that Paul links so closely the notion of believers being chosen with being "in Him" in the Ephesians 1 passage. One explanation may be found in the need to emphasize Christ's primary role as the One elected, with believers being, as it were, secondarily elected as members of Christ's body. Paul, as always, presents Jesus Christ as the central figure in God's origination and execution of the redemptive plan. Christ is the One who was elected to be Sacrifice, Redeemer, Savior, Judge, and King over all (cf. Best, 1955). As Barth states, ". . . the divine predestination is the election of Jesus Christ" (1955, p. 103). He adds, "Thus the simplest form of the dogma may be divided at once into the two assertions that Jesus Christ is the electing God, and that He is also elected man . . . It is true, of course, that even as God He is elected: the Elected of His Father" (p. 103). Barth further elaborates (p. 116):

In this function this man is the object of the eternal divine decision and foreordination. Jesus Christ, then, is not merely one of the elect but the elect of God. From the very beginning (from eternity itself), as elected man He does not stand alongside the rest of the elect, but before and above them as the One who is originally and properly the Elect. From the very beginning (from eternity itself), there are no other elect together with or apart from Him, but, as Ephesians 1 tells us, only "in Him."

Therefore, He is the One whom God chooses to honor and glorify, in fact to sum up all things in Him (Ephesians 1:10). Those who are in Christ are destined to share in His privileges, having become partakers of His inheritance (v. 11) as well as God's own possession (v. 14).

Thus, one possible thesis, supported by the grammar of the text, is that believers are chosen to a number of gifts and blessings; they are predestined to these by virtue of being "in Christ." However, the Ephesians passage is literally silent on the controversy of unconditional election of individuals to salvation. Instead, the passage focuses on the overwhelming blessings God has ordained for those who are "in Christ."

Some have even suggested the notion that election may take on a corporate rather than individual meaning

within the New Testament (e.g. Klein, 1990). O'Brien notes that such a view introduces an unnecessary "either-or" to the text (1999, p. 99). In either case, those who are predestined in Ephesians 1 are predestined to adoption, redemption, forgiveness, knowledge of God, and many other gifts. They have been chosen to receive God's beneficent blessings, but nowhere does the text state that God chose *who* would believe. This is a different view of the meaning of election from the traditional Augustinian view, but it certainly does not deny the fact of election. Nor does it challenge God's sovereignty in determining His eternal plan.

The point of examining this passage is to illustrate the legitimacy of questioning exactly what it is that God predestined and chose. There are other legitimate options that deserve consideration besides the Augustinian view of election. In this passage, God has predestined believers to adoption, favor, redemption, and destiny, among others. The passage explicitly states that these blessings were predestined for those who are "in Christ." However, it says nothing about how it is that believers come to believe.

Lest we get off track, I should briefly mention here that the Scriptures unequivocally teach that no one comes to Christ "unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). Moreover, "no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father" (John 6:65). Our fallenness has alienated us from God (Ephesians 2:12; 4:17-18), and we cannot approach Him without action on His part (John 1:13). Nevertheless, these facts say nothing about unconditional election. That such action on the part of the Father is restricted to some people and not offered to others is reading something highly questionable into these passages (e.g. John 1:9, 16), though clearly most people will reject the Father's offer, and some have more opportunity than others.

An Alternative from Acts 13. As a proof of irresistible grace, Acts 13:48 is often cited: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; *and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*" But who are these Gentiles?

Feldman marshals archaeological evidence (1986), that the term for "proselytes" is not limited to Gentile sympathizers but also includes Jews by birth or full converts. Moreover, he presents findings to indicate that the "sympathizers" are likely to have included a significant number for whom Christianity might have had special appeal. As supporting evidence, Strauss (1993) argues

for a widespread hope for a coming Davidic deliverer, which would help explain Paul's summarization of the history of Israel up to the reign of King David in his sermon at Pisidian-Antioch in Acts 13. Paul reminds his hearers of their belief in a Davidic Messiah and presents Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of that expectation.

We find in Acts 13:43 that "many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, *were urging them to continue in the grace of God.*" On the next Sabbath when the city assembled, we have every reason to believe that many of these "God-fearers" were in the crowd (Acts 13:42, 44).

Note that the God-fearers had already believed in what they knew; they were proselytes who had believed the Jewish Scriptures and the promised Messiah. Now they were hearing the specifics of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for the first time. They were "appointed to eternal life" because they had already believed the Old Testament Word of God. As believers who had to go through the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, they were in need of updated information. As a result of the teaching of Paul and Barnabas, they believed the good news of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection for salvation. Nothing here suggests that they were chosen to believe; they had already believed and so were appointed to eternal life. Because of this, naturally they believed the Christological message that Paul and Barnabas were there to impart.

An Alternative from Hebrews 6. On pages 75-77 of AA&BAM, Neocene-Thomists are credited with the belief that Christians may lose their salvation in contrast to Augustinians who believe that Christians cannot lose their salvation. However, as one may believe in election and predestination and still reject the traditional Augustinian definition of these doctrines, so also one may embrace individual choice to believe along with the impossibility that Christians could lose their salvation. Although Hebrews 6:4-6 has frequently been cited (as illustrated in AA&BAM, p. 75) as a proof text for losing one's salvation, the passage is actually a strong statement to the contrary.

The writer of Hebrews begins to discuss the unique, priestly role of Christ in 5:1-10; however, he stops short in 5:11 because "it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing." His (or her) readers were sluggish in their understanding (Radmacher et al., 2000, p. 1642), and the force of the perfect verb leads one to conclude they had been slow to hear for some time (Gleason, 2007,

p. 355). By now, they ought to be teachers (5:12), showing maturity and understanding. Instead, they need to learn again — it seems they were once well-taught — the "elementary principles of the oracles of God." They "have come to need milk and not solid food" (5:12). They have to go back to kindergarten, because they not only failed to grow to maturity, they have failed to retain a basic understanding of beginning doctrines. They have regressed to the status of spiritual babies (5:13). Apparently, they are not getting a steady diet of the meat of the Word, because solid food is only for those who have practice in discerning good and evil, or truth from error (5:14). At any rate, they are in woeful spiritual condition, which accounts for what must be viewed as strange behavior on the part of Christians: going back into the temple to observe Jewish sacrifices and rituals in order to secure their spiritual wellbeing and gain favor with God.

In 6:1, the writer begins an exhortation to correct this appalling state of affairs. Hebrews 6:1-8 is fundamentally a passage to readers about pressing on to maturity and recognizing the inappropriateness and negative consequences of continuing in their current slothful and disobedient ways.

As they press forward, what are they to leave behind? They are to quit trying to lay again "a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God" (6:1). The elementary principles are basic truths, the foundation upon which everything else in the Christian life is built, "the elements out of which everything else develops" (Radmacher et al., 2000, p. 1643). Quite simply, this is salvation. "Repentance from dead works and faith toward God" are precisely the actions that result in salvation. The recipients' practice of revisiting Judaistic rituals represents the motions of repeatedly trying to acquire, or perhaps ensure, salvation. Getting "re-saved" is, of course, impossible, because Jesus Christ is "able to save forever" (7:25), "once for all" offered Himself up (7:27), and "once for all" obtained eternal redemption (9:12). This emphasis throughout Hebrews supports the notion that readers were unclear about eternal security.

Verse 6:2 lists some other elementary principles associated with salvation to which these believers were also clinging. The principles include instruction on washings, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment (6:2). "Washings" may refer to baptisms or, more likely in this case, Jewish ritual cleansings, while laying on of hands could refer to receiving the Holy Spirit (Radmacher et al., 2000, pp. 1643-44). The resurrection of the dead and the eternal judgment are topics that one

expects to accompany the good news of salvation as they are outcomes directly impacted by salvation.

Thus, the author optimistically states in 6:3 that “we” shall press on to maturity if God permits. A great deal has been said about the conditional clause, “if God permits.” Since it is unquestionably God’s will that His children press on toward maturity, the most likely meaning for this phrase is equivalent to today’s “God willing,” which is uttered as an acknowledgment that no one knows what will happen tomorrow. This practice was probably common in the early Christian community, since it is advocated in James 4:13-16.

Verses 4 and 5 describe genuinely saved people (cf. France, 2005). The extensive description used — “enlightened,” “tasted of the heavenly gift,” “made partakers of the Holy Spirit,” and “tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” — is a powerfully vivid description of believers. It is difficult to imagine how the writer could be more explicit.

And yet they have “fallen away” (6:6). The verb “*parapipto*” only appears here in the New Testament, but in the LXX it is used for those who “act faithlessly” and turn against God (Ezekial 15:8; 18:24; 20:27) (France, 2005, p. 83). Much discussion revolves around just how apostate those who fall away have become, but apart from the eternal security debate, these nuances would assume only minor importance.

Therefore, 4-6a describes a set of individuals, genuine believers who have fallen away. One notes that the writer moves from first person plural in previous verses to third person plural in 6:4-6, effectively distancing himself from the hypothetical he is about to propose.

Hebrews 6:4-6 is a hypothetical of sorts. This is a hypothetical in order to provide explanatory power as to *why* this scenario is impossible. The reason it is impossible to renew again to repentance those who have fallen away is because, if true, the renewal would require that the Son of God once again be crucified and put to shame. The writer uses this hypothetical to highlight forcefully the futility of his readers’ continuing to sacrifice and to observe Jewish rituals they believed would secure salvation. It shows *why* the time for dwelling on the elementary principles of the faith is over. Such spiritual mileposts were passed long ago for these believers when they placed their faith in Christ. Their continued drifting back toward Judaism is futile and spiritually debilitating, because it is impossible — even if they fall away from their faith and return to practicing Judaism — to be saved all over again.

In fact, 6:6 states that it is impossible to renew these individuals again to repentance. One key to the interpretation of this passage is to examine what it means to renew them again to repentance. The phrase “repentance from dead works” was used in 6:1 as a clarification of what the writer means by “elementary principles” and “milk” (baby food) (5:12-13). In 6:6, the phrase is a synecdoche, the rhetorical or literary practice of using one item of a group to stand for the entire group or part to stand for the whole (Zuck, 1991, p. 151). Repentance is a part of the “milk” that represents the whole set of elementary principles that the writer makes explicit in 6:1-2.

That is, it is “impossible” for those who have been saved to lose their salvation, needing subsequently to be saved all over again and once again exercise the elementary principles of salvation beginning with repentance. The reason that such a scenario is impossible is given in the text: those who do so would “again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.” For that reason, such a scenario could never happen.

Hebrews 6:4-6 should not be used as a proof text by those who wish to disprove eternal security. It is a strong, definitive statement of precisely *why* it is impossible for believers to lose their salvation and then repeat the process of repenting of dead works and demonstrating faith toward God. It is the writer’s rationale for his exhortation to his readers. Accordingly, it is a hypothetical, so Hebrews 6:6 vividly describes what would have to happen if this were the case: Christ would have to be crucified again. Hebrews 9:24-26 actually reinforces this point once again to fix firmly the important point made in 6:6.

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. *Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world;* but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself [emphasis mine].

Therefore, these readers should rejoice in the security of their salvation and focus on growing to maturity in order to produce fruit that has the blessing of God. Revisiting the salvation experience once again is not only undesirable — it is impossible!

The foregoing three examples are provided not necessarily to *prove* a particular position apart from a

strictly Augustinian or Neocene-Thomist position, but to demonstrate that responsible exegesis can lead one to an alternative position that does not violate any biblically orthodox doctrines. Alternative positions are possible that are responsible with the text and that provide reconciliation between seemingly opposing biblical passages.

Thus, to present a dichotomous view of soteriology and to force people to choose one or the other is an unnecessary theological restriction. Some members of the CBFA may be extremely uncomfortable with aligning unequivocally with either camp. As the theological underpinnings and implications of integration are considered with respect to BAM, it seems that it would be more fruitful to focus on those theological issues that actually impact how BAM is taught, strategized, and implemented. Moreover, a good *starting* point would entail theological issues with which most members can agree. It seems as if that is the intent of AA&BAM; my point is that I do not believe the paper Dr. Chewning presents is successful in providing a framework for moving forward.

DOES THE DISTINCTION MATTER?

That said, does the distinction between Augustinianism and Neocene-Thomism matter in the execution of Business as Mission? I would argue that the distinction matters in very general terms because whatever one believes about God, man, salvation, and sin always matters. However, as discussed above, the notion of imposing a forced choice between two theological systems that are presented as collectively exhaustive raises questions that must be addressed before the implications of theological differences can be reasonably explored with respect to BAM. Nevertheless, now that the question of limiting possible theological systems has been raised, let us consider what happens when “Augustinians and Neocene-Thomists come face to face with ‘Business as Mission.’”

I accept the contention in AA&BAM that BAM’s mission is to foster discipleship and evangelism in the context of planting new, for-profit businesses in foreign countries. Obviously a formal definition of BAM is far more encompassing (Childs, 2012; Rundle, 2012), but I adopt AA&BAM’s definition for the sake of discussion. The issue, as I understand it from AA&BAM (pp. 79-82) is whether one’s propensity toward Augustinianism or Neocene-Thomism affects the legitimacy of calling one’s business a mission.

I would argue that these theological systems undoubtedly affect the content of what is communicated on the mission field. That is, how one expresses the good news

message certainly will be affected by one’s theological system. The priorities one places on various teachings as he or she disciples another would be affected by the disciple-maker’s theology. These things seem obvious.

But BAM is simply one approach to carrying out the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). And the Great Commission is for everyone. There is no indication that the Lord’s injunction to make disciples is restricted only to those who have special qualifications (e.g. AA&BAM, p. 79). In Matthew 28:19, “Go” is non-specific. It is an aorist participle of attendant circumstance (Wallace, 1996, p. 645) and indicates the greater emphasis on the action of the main verb (in this case: “make disciples”). The main verb is an aorist imperative (command) in the verse, commanding the Lord’s followers to make disciples. And the means for accomplishing such a task is specified as “baptizing” them and “teaching” them, both present tense participles suggesting the ongoing nature of such endeavors. Wallace (1996, p. 645) points out that for Jews, ethnocentric in outlook during this period of their history, to “go” would not be a natural response. Thus, it is not until the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 7 and subsequent persecution that the impetus to “go” actually gets the church moving out from Jerusalem.

This is definitively missionary work. Go forth and make disciples by baptizing them (after they have believed the Gospel) and by teaching them the whole counsel of what the Lord has revealed. The people of the Church are to be on-mission wherever they go, and this would include business. Christians do not check their mandate to love God and love others when they walk into a business setting, nor when they go into a foreign culture and start a business. Admittedly, whether they can do a good job of faithfully administering their business while fulfilling evangelistic and discipleship goals simultaneously suggests a complicated balancing act. But there is nothing inherently unbiblical about such an endeavor. Quite the reverse, in fact. Moreover, there is nothing inherent in Augustinianism or Neocene-Thomism that precludes making the attempt. So I’m at somewhat of a loss here to understand the conflict AA&BAM has in view, though it seems to have something to do with spiritual gifts (pp. 79-82).

WHAT ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

Let’s examine what we know about spiritual gifts from the text. First, spiritual gifts are important; they have been given for the common good of the Church, and each gift is a manifestation of the Spirit of God, sov-

erightly bestowed as the Spirit wills (1 Cor 12:7, 11). All spiritual gifts are important and useful (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). We are not sure what all the gifts are as the lists do not match, thus suggesting that they are only representative lists of possible gifts (compare Romans 12:6-8 with 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28). We do recognize that there is a difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents, but we do not have definitive instructions on how each of the gifts operates, thus giving rise to much conjecture. However, it seems more reasonable that believers who are walking in the Spirit and behaving in ways that are faithful to the Lord will find themselves exercising gifts beneficial to the body without necessarily requiring a conscious intention to practice a specific gift. Note that we are never told to discover what our gifts are or even that gifts are permanent or impermanent.

In fact, the information we have on spiritual gifts is quite sketchy, which is surprising in some ways, given the importance one would logically attach to them. However, it seems that a faithful walk in obedience to the Lord is likely to engender just the kind of gift expressions that the Spirit intends (as per Ephesians 3:14-4:13) without believers needing to conduct extensive self-analysis.

Note that the text gives no indication that only certain gifts are appropriate for carrying out Matthew 28:18-20. Nor from reading the text would one expect that any believer be barred from missional activity on the basis of not having certain explicit gifts. Rather, one would expect that in a missionary endeavor God would supply the personnel and gifting necessary to carry out the task to which He has called His people. Moreover, in the course of conducting business and developing outreach, one would expect that a variety of gifts will emerge as instrumental in success but there may be situational variation in needed gifts.

The “Fifth Question” (p. 80) seems to hint that only some gifts would be useful in the BAM enterprise. Perhaps this is a misunderstanding of the author’s intent and only clarification is needed. However, the sentence, “The *spiritual gifts* most commonly identified in the Scripture as being associated with the work of *disciplining* and *evangelizing* are *teaching* and *evangelism*” coupled with “A person does not designate him or herself as either an evangelist or as one who disciples” is strongly suggestive of such an understanding. On the contrary, Matthew 28:18-20 tells us that we are all to be engaged in evangelism and discipleship.

GREEK ISSUES

Dr. Chewning asks whether verse 12 or verse 13 is the “controlling” verse in John 1:12-13. The answer to this question is fairly straightforward Greek. “As many as received him” is functioning as a pendent nominative (Wallace, 1996, 52), which is *the logical rather than the syntactical subject* of the sentence. (Actually, “As many as” is the true pendent nominative, but it is meaningless without knowing what they did first, which is “received him.”) The pendent nominative appears at the beginning of the sentence (Wallace, 1996, p. 51) and is picked up by the dative “to them” in the following clause.

So, the logical progression begins with those who received him and the rest of the passage elaborates on who they are and the implications of their having received him. That is, God gives them authority or the right to become His sons based on that receiving. This interpretation is reinforced by the dative participial clause “to the ones who are believing on His name.” So, the ones who receive Him are the ones who are believing on His name, and they are the ones who are becoming the sons of God.

The logical subject and the main verb are at the beginning of John 1:12; everything following in verses 12 and 13 is an explication of the subject. That is, since the logical, though not the grammatical, subject is the pendent nominative, the “they” in 13 *must* refer back to the ones who received Him. The ones who are reborn are the ones who have already received Him and believed on His name and who have also been given the authority for adoption.

Verse 12 is in contrast to verse 11. Because His own did not receive Him (generally), they did not receive the benefits, but those who did receive Him did receive the benefits. The contrast, then, in verse 12 from verse 11 necessitates the use of the pendent nominative in verse 12 to clarify who is the subject. This is a fair interpretation of the grammar and shows that in Diagram 1 (p. 73), the Neocene-Thomist position is more closely aligned with the text than the Augustinian position. This conclusion is not drawn according to personal preference; it is according to the grammar and syntax, how the language actually works.

In a similar vein, another grammatical correction is in order. On page 82 of AA&BAM is the introduction of the Greek words for “knowledge.” However, the explanation given is faulty. *Gnosis* is a noun, as is *epignosis*. *Ginosko* and *epiginosko* are verbs.

Let us consider the two nouns. BDAG (Bauer, Danker, Arndt & Gingrich, 2000), the leading lexicon

for New Testament Greek, lists similar glosses for *gnosis* and *epignosis*. Glosses for *epignosis* include “knowledge” and “recognition” (BDAG, 2000, 369). Glosses for *gnosis* include “comprehension or intellectual grasp of something,” “knowledge,” and “what is known” (BDAG, 2000, pp. 203-4). There are simply no meaningful distinctions between the two words.

CONCLUSION

The structure of the language, for which much of this paper is devoted, is essential for drawing plausible conclusions from the text. The language does not answer all our questions, but it certainly helps us rule out interpretations that are questionable or impossible and rule in interpretations that easily may have been dismissed otherwise. For critical theological questions about such topics as election, predestination, eternal security, the outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit, and the Great Commission, a more technical approach is necessary in order to bring clarity to our discussion and to focus our attention on the most germane issues.

I have chosen a technical approach to the topics contained herein that are extracted from AA&BAM for several reasons. First, these issues seem to warrant more in-depth theological scrutiny. Second, theological questions demand theological responses based on work in the text. The Bible is our final authority for faith and practice; what it actually says is the criterion for truth on any theological question. Though technical analysis can be off-putting for non-clergy, we can hardly arrive at responsible conclusions absent the information contained in the text.

Finally, my impression, is that AA&BAM is intended to provide a theological foundation for further theological development of BAM. If so, whatever is the basis for theological discussion going forward is important and likely to drive conclusions. For all these reasons, I cannot find the historical Augustinian/Neocene-Thomist dichotomy a sufficient theological foundation for ongoing discussion.

ENDNOTES

1. All Scripture references are from the NASB

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