



# By Good and Necessary Consequence

**Explorations in  
Reformed Confessional Theology**

*Editors*

Daniel R. Hyde and Mark Jones

Daniel R. Hyde, *In Defense of the Descent: A Response to  
Contemporary Critics*

Ryan M. McGraw, *By Good and Necessary Consequence*



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REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

Grand Rapids, Michigan

*By Good and Necessary Consequence*

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**Reformation Heritage Books**

2965 Leonard St. NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0889 / Fax 616-285-3246

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

Printed in the United States of America

12 13 14 15 16 17/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

[CIP info]

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*To Dr. Joseph A. Pipa*

*father, mentor, professor,  
counselor, and friend*



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## Series Preface

The creeds of the ancient church and the doctrinal standards of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed churches are rich theological documents. They summarize the essential teachings of Scripture, express biblical doctrines in meaningful and memorable ways, and offer pastoral guidance for the heads and hearts of God's people. Nevertheless, when twenty-first-century readers pick up these documents, certain points may be found confusing, misunderstood, or irrelevant for the church.

The Exploration in Reformed Confessional Theology series intends to clarify some of these confessional issues from four vantage points. First, it views confessional issues from the *textual* vantage point, exploring such things as variants, textual development, and the development of language within the documents themselves as well as within the context in which these documents were written. Second, this series views confessional issues from the *historical* vantage point, exploring social history and the history of ideas that shed light upon these issues. Third, this series views confessional issues from the *theological* vantage point, exploring the issues of intra- and inter-confessional theology both in the days these documents

were written as well as our day. Fourth, this series views confessional issues from the *pastoral* vantage point, exploring the pressing pastoral needs of certain doctrines and the implications of any issues that cause difficulty in the confessions.

In exploring our vast and deep heritage in such a way, our ultimate goal is to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).

—Daniel R. Hyde and Mark Jones

## Author's Preface

Some have noted that systematic theology has fallen on hard times.<sup>1</sup> Systematic theology is often contrasted with or set in opposition to biblical theology and to exegesis. Some accuse systematics of presupposing a theological grid that imposes itself on the text of Scripture, thus twisting the Scriptures and relying upon “proof texts” that have been violently wrested out of their proper context. What does that have to do with this little book on the principle of “good and necessary consequence” in a series titled *Explorations in Reformed Confessional Theology*? A close relationship exists between the widespread distrust of systematic theology and the neglect or denial of the statement found in Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 1:6: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good

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1. For a treatment of contemporary criticisms of theology, see J. I. Packer, “Is Systematic Theology a Mirage? An Introductory Discussion,” in *Doing Theology in Today’s World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McKomisky (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 17–37.

*and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture*" (emphasis added). Exegesis and biblical theology tell us what the words of Scripture mean or what distinguishes a particular biblical author from others, yet both often stop short of drawing theological conclusions from Scripture that show us what the Bible teaches as a whole. This is the task of systematic theology, which depends heavily on deducing divinely intended consequences from the text of Scripture. Without such deductions and the conclusions that are based upon them, we lose the ability to ask important questions of the Bible, such as what it teaches about the relationship between the persons of the Holy Trinity.<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, I was enthusiastic when Reformation Heritage Books asked me to expand the first chapter of my ThM thesis from Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary into a small book.<sup>3</sup> I have long believed that this subject is more important to the life and theology of

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2. An illuminating example of this is found in Andreas Kostenberger's treatment of the Trinity in his work on the theology of John's gospel and letters. He presents the biblical data concerning the unity of the Godhead and addresses relevant passages in John relating to each of the three persons. Yet without drawing inferences from and systematizing the biblical data that he has collected, major questions such as whether each person possesses a distinct personality and whether the persons of the Godhead are subordinated to one another remain unanswered. Andreas J. Kostenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 355–402.

3. Ryan McGraw, "The Consequences of Reformed Worship: The Call to Worship, Baptism, the Offering, and the Benediction in Corporate Worship" (ThM thesis, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2008).

the church than many people realize. In this principle, as the Westminster Assembly of Divines stated it, lies not only a crucial justification of the importance and method of systematic theology, but also a key to understanding New Testament uses of the Old Testament, a solid connection between exposition and application in preaching, personal assurance of salvation, and the manner in which Jesus Himself interpreted the Scriptures.

In accord with the purpose of the Explorations in Reformed Confessional Theology series, I have sought to address “textual, historical, theological, and pastoral issues” as well as matters of contemporary significance in connection to Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6. However, I have inverted this order slightly by beginning with the biblical foundations of the principle of “good and necessary consequence,” followed by a section that addresses the principle in its historical context. I have done this largely because many readers may immediately recoil from the idea that anything other than what is “expressly set down in Scripture” is a proper means of discerning “the whole counsel of God.” Such readers will not likely be interested in how the Westminster divines understood and used the principle until they are convinced that such a principle is demanded by Scripture. Therefore, I begin in chapter 1 with a short definition and illustration of the principle, followed by the relevant scriptural data, relying heavily upon the indispensable necessity of the principle from the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Next, in chapter 2, I draw attention to textual and historical issues, including the use

of the principle by contemporaries of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Catechisms. On the heels of this discussion, I treat the need for “necessary consequence” in four major areas of theology in chapter 3. Given the many objections to this principle, I address some of the more significant ones in chapter 4. Finally, in chapter 5 I draw some practical conclusions that affect the life of the Reformed church in relation to her confession of faith, her Bible reading, and her preaching.

I would like to thank Jay Collier for suggesting that I write this book, and Danny Hyde for officially inviting me to do so. Mark Jones deserves hearty thanks as well, not only for his labors on this series but also for going above and beyond the call of duty as a mentor for my PhD project at the same time. I cannot adequately express the thanks that Dr. Jones deserves as a diligent servant of the Lord. This work would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of Dr. Joseph A. Pipa, who supervised my ThM thesis. My mother-in-law, Sylvia Stevens, read the entire manuscript as well and made indispensable stylistic suggestions. I am grateful to Brian Pendelton for helping me to complete some final references. My wife, Krista, always encourages me to stay on top of my many projects, especially when I am overwhelmed and discouraged. Her help has been a great comfort to my soul. Lastly and most importantly, I bless the triune God for counting me faithful and putting me into the ministry, as well as for giving me opportunities to be useful in His kingdom.



## Biblical Foundations

Like the church at Berea, all godly Christians desire to test what they read and hear by the Word of God. This is an indispensable necessity for our Christian growth, for our maturity in the faith, and for guarding against error. We should call no man father or teacher, since our Father is in heaven and Christ is our true Teacher (Matt. 23:8–10). When believers in the Lord Jesus hear teachings and doctrines unfamiliar to them, they demand, properly, “Show me in the Bible!” Yet a biblical answer to this mandate will not always come by citing chapter and verse. There are some doctrines (such as the doctrine of the Trinity) that are dear to Christians, but that cannot be proved by any single passage of Scripture. Such doctrines must be inferred and pieced together from several passages of Scripture. For this reason the Westminster Confession of Faith asserts, “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by *good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture*: unto which

nothing at any time is to be added, whether new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men" (1.6, emphasis added).

Many have accused this principle of "good and necessary consequence" set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith of being esoteric, taking the Bible out of the hands of the average believer, and doing violence to the Scriptures. However, the teaching and example of the Bible itself necessitates this principle: it has been recognized as indispensable in the theology of the church, and it is biblically sound in spite of the various objections leveled against it. Without the appropriate use of good and necessary consequence, it is impossible to establish vital biblical doctrines, to apply the Reformed or regulative principle of worship to the extent intended by God, to discern some necessary applications that flow from biblical teachings, and to understand the manner in which the New Testament authors used the Old Testament. While it would make sense to delve into the history of this principle in the context of the Westminster Assembly first, I have chosen to delay a full discussion of the historical background until the next chapter in order to convince the reader that this subject is of interest primarily because it is rooted in Scripture. For these reasons, it is vital to establish the principle of good and necessary consequence from Scripture first and then to proceed to the historical setting of the Westminster Confession of Faith.<sup>1</sup>

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1. In addition to the sources that I have cited below, two recent articles explain and defend the use of good and necessary consequences. See C. J. Williams, "Good and Necessary Consequence in the

## Defining the Phrase

A definition of good and necessary consequence is already implicit in the first chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Good and necessary consequence is distinguished from matters concerning God's glory, man's salvation, and faith or life that are "expressly set down in Scripture." This includes direct precepts, prohibitions, statements of truth, and clearly approved examples. According to this statement, the term "good and necessary consequence" refers to doctrines and precepts that are truly contained in and intended by the divine Author of Scripture, yet are not found or stated on the surface of the text and must be legitimately inferred from one or more passages of Scripture. As the phrase indicates, such inferences must be "good," or legitimately drawn from the text of Scripture. In addition, they must be "necessary," as opposed to imposed or arbitrary.<sup>2</sup>

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Westminster Confession," in *The Faith Once Delivered: Essays in Honor of Wayne R. Spear*, ed. Anthony T. Selvaaggio (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2007), 171–190; and Richard A. Muller and Rowland S. Ward, *Scripture and Worship: Biblical Interpretation and the Directory for Worship* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2007), 59–82. The former article defends the principle from Scripture in brief and provides valuable illustrative material from George Gillespie. The value of the latter article is that it demonstrates in detail the manner in which the Westminster divines themselves used the principle in their annotations on Scripture. This latter point is addressed in the following chapter.

2. Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 159–60. This is one of the few relatively contemporary manuals on biblical interpretation that includes a section on the "theological" reading of Scripture.

The nineteenth-century Scottish Presbyterian James Bannerman (1807–1868) has provided a useful illustration of what this principle entails in practice. Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The inferences that may (and must) be drawn from this passage are: (1) that God and nature are distinct (as opposed to pantheism); (2) that matter had a beginning and that only God is eternal (as opposed to various forms of materialism); and (3) that God created matter out of nothing without using any preexisting materials (as opposed to various theories of emanation).<sup>3</sup>

To ensure that the conclusions obtained by use of this principle are truly biblical, the premises must be biblically certain. In the first part of the example given from Genesis 1:1, it is certain that God is the Creator of heaven and earth. Nature is included in the “heaven and the earth” that God made. Therefore, it is a necessary (and clear) conclusion that God and nature are distinct. Additionally, the proper way to use inferences from Scripture can be clarified by illustrating their abuse. For example, in the book of Joshua, God commanded the sun to “stand still” in the sky. During the time of the Reformation, men such as Martin Luther insisted this proved that the sun revolved around

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3. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Power, Ordinances, Discipline, and Government of the Christian Church* (1868; repr., Birmingham, Ala.: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2009), 2:410. I have prepared an abridgement, outline, and study guide for Bannerman’s magisterial work on ecclesiology, which is forthcoming through Solid Ground Christian Books.

the earth and not vice versa. They declared any other theory to be contrary to Scripture. Yet the text simply describes the sun from man's earthbound perspective, just as today people still speak of the sun "moving" across the sky or "rising" and "setting." Even with knowledge of modern science, we do not speak of an "earthrise" or "earthset" because these terms do not accurately describe our visual perspective. The Bible neither denies nor requires that the sun revolve around the earth—it bypasses the question. The only sort of necessary conclusions that can be derived from this passage is that God is sovereign over the natural progression of day and night and that He is able to alter its course whenever and however He pleases. Moreover, the principle of good and necessary consequence is not a license to allegorize our interpretations of Scripture or to impose the ideas of men upon the Word of God.<sup>4</sup> Rather, its purpose is to recognize unavoidable implications from the text of Scripture. These inferences ordinarily reflect the theological framework that the texts of the Bible assume and merely reveal these underlying assumptions by making them explicit.

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4. One of the most illuminating treatments of how the Reformed tradition developed careful rules of biblical interpretation in order to avoid allegory is found in Henry Knapp, "Understanding the Mind of God: John Owen and Seventeenth-Century Exegetical Methodology" (PhD diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2002), 282–93.

## How Jesus Used This Principle

The question of primary importance is whether or not the Bible permits the church to use good and necessary consequence, and whether the Scriptures are sufficiently clear with respect to this matter. The biblical authors used the principle of good and necessary consequence, particularly in New Testament citations of the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup> This is most notable in the practice of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, but it is prevalent in the writings of the apostles as well. The following examples demonstrate that this hermeneutical principle is not only permissible, but that it is mandated.

### *Matthew 22:29–32*

The most commonly treated example of good and necessary consequence is Jesus' reply to the Sadducees concerning the truth of the resurrection of the dead as recorded in Matthew 22:29–32.<sup>6</sup> In the beginning of the chapter, the Lord Jesus Christ told a parable that condemned the

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5. I will explore this point in more detail below. The same observations are in order with respect to how the Old Testament authors used earlier portions of the Old Testament, but as O. Palmer Robertson observes, very little study has been devoted to this question. See O. Palmer Robertson, *Prophet of the Coming Day of the Lord: The Message of Joel* (Durham, UK: Evangelical Press, 1995), 12.

6. Virtually all defenses that I have found of "good and necessary consequence" begin with a discussion of this passage. For examples, see Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 159; Bannerman, *Church of Christ*, 412; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1992), 1:39; Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "The Westminster

Pharisees by likening them to the invited guests of a wedding feast who, when the time came to attend the feast, rudely rejected the invitation. As a result, the master of the feast invited strangers in their place. By this parable, Jesus condemned the Pharisees, who ought to have welcomed Him with joy as their long-awaited Messiah. Consequently, the offended Pharisees “went...and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk” (Matt. 22:15). However, the Lord Jesus, who is the only wise God and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3), soundly refuted their assault in such a manner that even his enemies “marveled” at his answer (Matt. 22:22). The Sadducees, who said that “there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit” (Acts 23:8), immediately seized the opportunity to do better than their rivals and posed a question to Jesus that they believed to be unanswerable. In the guise of asking Jesus an honest question, they began by citing the biblical principle that when a man died his brother had the duty to marry his widow and beget children on behalf of his brother (Deut. 25:5). After presenting a scenario in which seven brothers all died successively after marrying the same woman, they asked, “Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her” (Matt. 22:28). In their minds, this scenario created an insurmountable problem, making the resurrection of the dead a logical absurdity. Since it was

unthinkable that a woman should have seven husbands in this life or in the life to come, and because each husband died having the right to call her his wife, then the resurrection of the dead must be a farce.<sup>7</sup>

In reply, Jesus asserted that the Sadducees were in error at two points: “Ye do err [lit., are “deceived” or “led astray”], *not knowing the scriptures*, nor the power of God” (v. 29, emphasis added). The accusation that they were ignorant of the Scriptures is particularly relevant when considering the question of good and necessary consequence. Jesus noted that the Sadducees had excluded a vital option from their reasoning: “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage” (Luke 20:35).<sup>8</sup> He proceeded to demonstrate that the resurrection was clearly and convincingly taught in the Scriptures. Those who are familiar with the Old Testament may express surprise that Jesus did not attempt to prove the resurrection from one of the nearly

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7. Ironically, the Sadducees assumed the principle of good and necessary consequence in this line of argumentation. Jesus’ answer simultaneously illustrates both the improper use of this principle by the Sadducees and its proper use by Jesus Himself.

8. “The resurrection life in which the Sadducees did not believe was being conceived of as marked by strong continuity with the arrangements of the life of the present. However, the view of the resurrection life that is rejected by the Sadducees as *more* than possible (thus the conundrum) is to be rejected by Jesus as *less* than is to be anticipated.” John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 904.

express statements contained in such passages as Psalm 16, Isaiah 26, or from a few relevant texts in Job. Instead, Christ chose to cite the Exodus passage about the burning bush (Mark 12:26; Ex. 3:6, 15), in which God said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."<sup>9</sup> Jesus concluded, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:32).

It is vital for us to grasp the import of Jesus' line of argumentation in this passage. Jesus did not respond with a simple and direct proof text for the doctrine of the resurrection. Instead, He drew a conclusion from a well-known passage, which Bannerman described as "an inference the force of which it may be fairly said to require a certain amount of thought and spiritual insight to fully perceive."<sup>10</sup> Jesus rested His argument primarily on the fact that God had said "*I am* the God of Abraham," etc., as opposed to "*I was*." If God was currently the God of the patriarchs when He spoke to Moses, and if "God is not the God of the dead but of the living," then the patriarchs must still have been alive at that time (which the Sadducees denied), even though they had died physically.

However, modern readers will likely sense that there is a missing piece in the argument. The continuing existence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob certainly proves the immortality of the *soul*, but how is this relevant to the

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9. It is probable that Jesus chose to answer with a passage from the Pentateuch because that was the only part of the Old Testament that the Sadducees held to be authoritative.

10. Bannerman, *Church of Christ*, 2:412.

resurrection of the *body*, which was the central focus of this debate? As William Hendriksen correctly reminds us, “The men with whom this immutable Jehovah established an everlasting covenant were Israelites, not Greeks.”<sup>11</sup> In contrast to the Greeks, who viewed the body as the “prison-house” of the soul from which the soul sought liberation, the Jewish people conceived of man as a unit consisting of body and soul. For this reason, redemption must take place in both body and soul, if it is to take place at all. The New Testament reflects the importance of the body by referring to the physical bodies of believers as being the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. Redeemed man was purchased both body and soul with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, man is obligated to serve God with his body as well as his spirit, since both are the Lord’s (1 Cor. 6:19–20). In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul made the striking assertion that if there were no resurrection of the body (and consequently no resurrection of Christ), then those who had already died in Christ would have perished, thus extinguishing the entire substance of the Christian’s hope (1 Cor. 15:18–19).<sup>12</sup> In this lengthy

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11. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 807.

12. For a study on the centrality of the resurrection in Paul’s soteriology, see Richard B. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 1987). See also the comments in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1214–22.

discussion of the resurrection, Paul's underlying assumption was that unless man is redeemed in both body and soul, then he is not redeemed at all. This same assumption underlies Jesus' response to the Sadducees.

The remarkable thing about this passage of Scripture is that by a single argument, Jesus "had put the Sadducees to silence" (Matt. 22:34). In other words, they capitulated under the weight of the Lord's indomitable argument, and they tacitly conceded His point. When the crowd of spectators heard these things, they also "were astonished at his doctrine" (v. 33). Part of the shame of the Sadducees may have been that, although this was such a well-known passage of Scripture, the implicit doctrine of the resurrection contained in it had consistently slipped under their noses. It is important that Jesus refuted His opponents *by their own admission* without demonstrating that the resurrection was "expressly set down in Scripture." The resurrection of the dead was not directly in view in the context in which the burning bush passage appears in this dialogue. Instead, Jesus' argument was deduced and, by good and necessary consequence, drawn from the text. The conclusions that He inferred from the passage were both "good" and "necessary." Some might object that since Christ and His apostles were infallible, they came to their conclusions solely by divine inspiration, and therefore we cannot imitate them in their use of the Old Testament Scriptures in this manner. Yet, as Francis Turretin (1623–1687) observed, the Sadducees did not acknowledge Jesus' authority; it was

His reasoning alone that stopped their mouths.<sup>13</sup> Far from twisting the Scriptures by insisting that there are things necessary for faith, life, salvation, and the glory of God that are not “expressly set down in Scripture” but that are drawn from it by good and necessary consequence, Christ demonstrated that *by failing to do this*, the Sadducees were ignorant of the teaching of Scripture (v. 29). He asked them sarcastically, “Have ye *not read* that which was spoken unto you by God?” (v. 31). Let us take heed not only of Jesus’ example but also of His expectations!

*Luke 24:25–27 and Other Passages*

The example set forth in Matthew 22:29–32 is so decisive that even if it is considered in isolation, it establishes the legitimate use of good and necessary consequence. Yet it is far from being an isolated example. The assumption of this principle by the Lord echoes His expectation in Luke 24:25–27 that His disciples ought to have understood all

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13. Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:39. In the nineteenth century, Patrick Fairbairn (1805–1874) noted that several German scholars had criticized Jesus’ use of this text to prove the resurrection as an example of first-century “Rabbinic hairsplitting” and “cabalistic exposition.” Aside from the irreverence involved in such an accusation, Fairbairn noted the similarity of such critics to Jesus’ original audience: “Most worthy successors truly to those Sadducean objectors whom our Lord sought to confute—equally shallow in their notions of God, and equally at fault in their reading of his written word!” Patrick Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture* (1900; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 1:366. However, the one advantage the Sadducees had over those who have adopted their critical spirit in modern times is that they at least were able to see the force of our Lord’s argument.

that Moses and the prophets had spoken concerning the sufferings of the Christ and the glories that should follow. The name of Jesus is never explicitly named in the Law and the Prophets, yet Jesus expected His disciples to be able to identify Him as the suffering Christ in every part of the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup>

Nearly every New Testament citation of the Old Testament is an application of the principle of good and necessary consequence. When the faith of John the Baptist faltered, Jesus merely pointed to His miraculous deeds and to His preaching. He encouraged John by implying that the Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled in Him and that no other could be the Messiah. In his Pentecost sermon, Peter asserted the necessity of Christ's resurrection as an inference drawn from the fact that not every part of Psalm 16 was applicable to David, since his tomb still remained with them. Peter grounded his line of argumentation, in great detail, on the fact that his assertion was not visible on the surface of the text (Acts 2:25–31). In the first chapter of Hebrews, the author strung together an intricate chain of implications from several Old Testament passages, proving that the Son is both greater than the angels and that He is the God whose throne is forever and ever. By assuming that Psalm 102

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14. Turretin, *Institutes*, 1:39. Incidentally, this demonstrates that even true disciples of the Lord who love Him and whom He loves do not understand many things in the Scriptures. Yet it is humbling to bear in mind that this warranted the statement of Christ that they were foolish and slow of heart (Luke 24:25).

referred to the Messiah rather than God the Father, the author next inferred that it was Jesus who laid the foundation of the earth (Heb. 1:10–12).<sup>15</sup> In Matthew 2:23, the apostle stated, “And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.” However, there is no prophecy in the Old Testament that explicitly mentions that the Christ would be called a Nazarene. Matthew appears to have deduced this from the overall testimony of the prophets.<sup>16</sup>

Good and necessary consequence is used by the authors of Scripture on a much larger scale than that of messianic prophecy. Since Psalm 109:8 petitions that the wicked

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15. The book of Hebrews itself could be used as a case study in the use of Scripture consequences, since they are used so freely and often. Cf. Bannerman, *Church of Christ*, 2:413. For an older, but valuable, treatment of the use of the Old Testament in the book of Hebrews that is sensitive to good and necessary consequence, see B. F. Westcott, “On the Use of the O.T. in the Epistle,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (1892; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 469–95. Westcott states, “A study of the quotations from the O.T. in the Epistle brings light upon the whole relations of the Old Testament in the New, and upon the manner of the divine education of the world” (469).

16. It is possible that this text is designed to be a vague reference to Isaiah 9:1, in which the Messiah was said to bring light first to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, since they were the first to have suffered from the captivity. Yet even if this is the case, Nazareth is not mentioned by name, but only the region in which Nazareth was found. See the insightful article by John Murray, “The Unity of the Old and New Testaments,” in *The Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 23–26.

man should be cursed and be put to shame by means of another man filling his office, the apostles concluded that they ought to find a replacement for Judas in order to complete the number of the apostles prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:20–22). In order to prove that ministers of the gospel have the right to be paid for their labors, the apostle Paul cited Deuteronomy 25:4: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” He extrapolated a broad principle from this text that had no direct relation to oxen, yet was legitimately derived from the passage. He asked his readers this: “Doth God take care for oxen? [i.e., “Is it oxen that God is concerned about here?”] Or saith he it altogether for our sakes?” (1 Cor. 9:9–10). He replied, “For our sakes, no doubt.” Paul boldly asserted that the good and necessary consequence of this passage actually constituted the primary point of relevance to the New Testament church. According to the apostle, the principle lying behind this passage (to borrow the words of Jesus) is that “the labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7). This is equally applicable to a man as it is to an ox. In Paul’s estimation, limiting the meaning of this passage to that which is “expressly set down” in it is to miss the primary lesson of the passage.<sup>17</sup> This conclusion is neither an arbitrary nor an allegorical use of the text.

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17. Partly for this reason, the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie* theologian Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711) warned his readers from being overly dependent upon the context of Scripture. See Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), 1:80.

Rather, it is a means of identifying the broad principles that underlie the passage in a manner that is comparable to the examples cited from Genesis 1:1.

## Conclusion

If we could personally ask Christ and His apostles to prove various doctrines from the Scriptures, we might be surprised by some of the answers that we would receive. Christ and His apostles did not always support biblical doctrines by express statements derived from grammatical historical exegesis. They often established them by implications and deductions. B. B. Warfield summarized the significance of the example of the New Testament authors by stating that “the sense of Scripture is Scripture, and that men are bound by its whole sense in all its implications.”<sup>18</sup> The examples provided illustrate that implications properly drawn from Scripture do not do violence to—but rather enlighten—the true meaning of Scripture as long as the inferences are clearly and legitimately drawn from the passages concerned. We do not have the excuse of claiming that only Christ and His apostles were able to interpret Scripture in this manner, since they expected both their followers and their opponents to be able to do so as well. It is a strong indictment against the church if Christ’s enemies accept His methods of biblical interpretation more readily than His followers often do.

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18. Warfield, “Westminster Doctrine of Scripture,” 226.