

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon March 8, 2020  
Luke 15: 11 - 32 "Parable of the Prodigal Son – Part 2"

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. 25 Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' 28 But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "

I. Introduction

- a. Sproul "Every Christian has lived this wonderful story of the prodigal son in one way or another. The essence of conversion is the experience of forgiveness, the experience of the grace of God. The great tragedy is that there are so many people still wandering in a far country, afraid to come home. But our God is like this father, who, when he sees us in the distance, runs towards us, and falls upon our necks and hugs us and kisses us. He doesn't make us go over all the lurid details of our lostness and wastefulness, but he welcomes us into his family and forgives us. That's grace. No-one will ever get into the Father's house by pleading their own worthiness. Only those who acknowledge their unworthiness will get there."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sproul, R. C. (1999). *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (pp. 309–310). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

- b. Henry “It represents the children of men as of *different* characters, though all related to God as their common Father. He had *two sons*, one of them a solid grave youth, *reserved* and *austere*, sober himself, but not at all *good-humoured* to those about him; such a one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it; but the other *volatile* and *mercurial*, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and, if he fall into ill hands, likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virtuous education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom Christ is endeavouring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, to whom the apostles were to be sent forth to *preach repentance*. The former represents the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavouring to reconcile to that grace of God which was offered to, and bestowed upon, sinners.”<sup>2</sup>
- c. Our Lord continues His words of instruction, **directed primarily to the pitiful Pharisees and scribes**, standing aloof from Him, criticizing Him for having joyful table fellowship with sinners and tax collectors. How sad. God has come out to these leaders stuck in their pride, seeking them, reassuring them that all He has belongs to them, but they reject Him as God, spurn His kindness, generosity, mercy and joy, and continue in their anger and disgust toward Jesus and the “sinners” whom they should regard as siblings in God’s family.
- i. Henry “We have here the *repining and envying of the elder brother*, which is described by way of reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, to show them the folly and wickedness of their discontent at the repentance and conversion of the publicans and sinners, and the favour Christ showed them”<sup>3</sup>
  - ii. Calvin “For we know that this is pointed at the haughtiness of the scribes, who did not think that they received the reward due to their merits, if Christ admitted publicans and the common people to the hope of the eternal inheritance. The substance of it therefore is, that, if we are desirous to be reckoned the children of God, we must forgive in a brotherly manner the faults of brethren, which He forgives with fatherly kindness.”<sup>4</sup>
- d. But, don’t forget, **the sinners and tax collectors listen amongst Christ’s hearers as well**. What joy for these returning prodigal souls, to have their current joy with God Himself set within the story of this foolish younger son who repents and comes home to find his father’s love unchanged. These sinners see themselves as the recipients of a love fixed upon them, the Divine Love. Kind,

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<sup>2</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1878). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>3</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>4</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [\*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 349). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

patient, generous, merciful, forgiving, joyful. “God loves me like this?”, they must have thought in wonder and joy.

- i. Henry “We have here the parable of the prodigal son, the scope of which is the same with those before, to show how pleasing to God the conversion of sinners is, of great sinners, and how ready he is to receive and entertain such, upon their repentance; but the circumstances of the parable do much more largely and fully set forth the riches of gospel grace than those did, and it has been, and will be while the world stands, of unspeakable use to poor sinners, both to direct and to encourage them in repenting and returning to God.”<sup>5</sup>
- e. And, finally, **the audience would also contain the disciples and followers of Christ**. As observers and learners, would they believe and live out these critical truths about Christ? Would they learn of God’s love and become ambassadors of Love Divine? Would they identify with the broken and repentant son, brought safe into the Father’s embrace and joy, or would they stiffly settle in amongst the lost older brother Pharisee club?
- f. In the first two parables in this chapter, we have learned of God’s joy in one repentant sinner. We have seen God’s heart to seek and save the lost. The shepherd pursued the lost sheep until he found it. The woman searched for her lost coin until she found it. The shepherd and the woman threw parties with their friends, celebrating the recovery of that which had been lost. These parables bring us to the high point of the Gospel: eternal, unbroken joy in the presence of God and His people and His angels. These parables set the stage for a more vivid and touching story of a family broken apart by sin and selfishness, but brightly set right by repentance and forgiveness, yet still with the lingering shadow of separation as the story closes. Eternal joy with God or the pitiful path of the prideful?
- g. Today’s sermon: Luke 15: 11 – 32 “Parable of the Prodigal Son – Part 2”
  - i. The prodigal son’s journey v11-24 – last week
    1. The father’s love and forgiveness v22-24
  - ii. The older brother’s anger v25-32 - today
    1. The father seeks his older son v31,32
  - iii. Questions to know, love and obey God
- II. The prodigal son’s journey v11-24 – last week
  - a. The younger son has returned from his riotous life of sin and waste, humbled and broken, acknowledging he has shredded any right he once had as son; yet, his father runs to him, affectionately receives him, fully restores him and immediately mobilizes all his resources in order to merrily celebrate his son’s return. He proclaims, “This my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.” And a feast of rejoicing is underway, occupying the entire household, when the older brother enters the scene.

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<sup>5</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1878). Peabody: Hendrickson.

III. The older brother's response: v25-32

- a. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' 28 But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "
- b. "Now his older brother was in the field"
  - i. The older brother has missed his brother's return. He was working in the field. He was far enough away to have completely missed the reunion and all the celebration preparation and the initial phase of the happy gathering.
    1. Henry "It seems he was abroad *in the field*, in the country, when his brother came, and by the time he had returned home the *mirth was begun*"<sup>6</sup>
    2. Bock "Apparently a son who always did his duty, he had been laboring in the field during his brother's return. The party was going on when he returned."<sup>7</sup>
- c. "And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing"
  - i. The older brother notes something unusual is underway. An unscheduled celebration is underway.
  - ii. Bock "As the elder brother approaches the house he hears the revelry of music and dancing.... [music] refers to band music and perhaps singing Flute players probably supply the music, but the term does not refer to a single instrument. ... Something is happening, but the elder brother does not know the cause of the celebration."<sup>8</sup>
  - iii. God emphasizes the fullness of this celebration: splendid, new attire. The entire family household involved. (fatted calf) Music. Dancing. Detailed planning and extensive effort combined for the purpose of mutual enjoyment in one another's presence, enjoying the good things God has given.
    1. Music: The sound of joy. Instruments. Voices. Skill. Practice.

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<sup>6</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>7</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [\*Luke: 9:51-24:53\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1316). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>8</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [\*Luke: 9:51-24:53\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1316). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

2. Dancing: the movement of joy. Skill. Practice. Smiles.
- d. "So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant."
- i. He does not go inside. He stays outside and asks a servant what is going on inside. Instead of joining in, he scrutinizes. You can almost imagine his furrowed brow of criticism.
  - ii. Henry "How *foolish* and *fretful* he was upon occasion of his brother's reception, and how he was disgusted at it...*When he drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing*, either while the dinner was getting ready, or rather after they had eaten and were full, v. 25. He enquired *what these things meant* (v. 26)"<sup>9</sup>
  - iii. The older brother is naturally curious, and yet his cold heart emerges. He stays outside. He (anonymously) seeks to discover the meaning of the party, as if he already suspects his father wouldn't have a good reason for a celebration. His distrust toward his father emerges.
- e. "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'"
- i. The servant shares the good news. Your brother is safe and sound! Your father's joy at his return is overflowing, so he's having a great feast to rejoice and celebrate and give thanks!
  - ii. Bock "The servant explains the reason for the party: the father has killed the calf because the younger brother has returned healthy. The verse provides a second explanation for the father's joy, reinforcing the reason given in 15:24. The safe return of a healthy son was a time for celebration, and the father has taken him back with joy."<sup>10</sup>
  - iii. Henry "It is but one word in the original, ...*in health*, well both in body and mind. He received him not only well in body, but a penitent, returned to his *right mind*, and well reconciled to his father's house, cured of his vices and his rakish disposition, else he had not been received *safe* and *sound*."<sup>11</sup>
- f. "But he was angry and would not go in."
- i. The older brother's anger surges forth. He feels offended by his father's actions. He refuses to join in with the celebration. He is outside alone with his anger.
  - ii. Henry "Now this offended him to the highest degree: *He was angry, and would not go in* (v. 28), not only because he was resolved he would not himself join in the mirth, but because he would show his displeasure at it,

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<sup>9</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>10</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [\*Luke: 9:51–24:53\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1316). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>11</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

and would intimate to his father that he should have kept out his younger brother.”<sup>12</sup>

- iii. What do we learn from the anger of the older brother?
  1. Selfish motives driving outward obedience before our parents breed the vice of relational jealousy toward our siblings. The work done is meant to set self above the other siblings.
    - a. Henry “Those who have always been a comfort to their parents think they should have the monopoly of their parents’ favors, and are apt to be *too sharp* upon those who have transgressed, and to grudge their parents’ kindness to them.”<sup>13</sup>
  2. Selfish motives driving outward obedience before our parents breed the vice of material greed. The work done is meant to ensure we get our fair share from our parents.
    - a. Bock “he regards his father’s action as a sign of favoritism, especially in light of his own faithfulness to his father. Perhaps this son fears a further paring away of his estate.”<sup>14</sup>
- g. “Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.”
  - i. The father doesn’t stay inside. The father could have thought, “Why allow the older son’s ugliness to ruin this beautiful day? He will either come around or not.” Instead, the father parts from his newly recovered younger son and leaves him inside to go outside and plead with his older son.
    1. Henry “When he would not come in, his *father came out, and entreated him*, accosted him mildly, gave him good words, and desired him to come in. He might justly have said, “If he will not come in, let him stay out, shut the doors against him, and send him to seek a lodging where he can find it. Is not the house my own? and may I not do what I please in it? Is not the fatted calf my own? and may I not do what I please with it?” No, as he to meet the younger son, so now he goes to court the elder, did not send a servant out with a kind message to him, but went himself.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>13</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>14</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [\*Luke: 9:51–24:53\*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 1316–1317). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>15</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1881). Peabody: Hendrickson.

- ii. No mention of the father correcting the older son who clearly deserves correction. Instead, the father “pleaded with him.” Note the father’s humility.
  - 1. Henry “Let us now see how *favourable* and *friendly* his father was in *his carriage towards him* when he was thus sour and ill-humoured. This is as surprising as the former. Methinks the mercy and grace of our God in Christ shine almost as brightly in his tender and gentle bearing with *peevish saints*, represented by the elder brother here, as before in his reception of prodigal sinners upon their repentance, represented by the younger brother.”<sup>16</sup>
- iii. Note the goodness and gentleness of God toward such a cruel hearted brother. Paul was also like this.
  - 1. 1 Thess 2:6-9 “Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. <sup>8</sup> So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. <sup>9</sup> For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.”
- h. “So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'”
  - i. The older son refuses his father’s appeal and instead justifies his anger and separation.
    - 1. Henry “Those who are comparatively *innocents* seldom know how to be compassionate towards those who are manifestly *penitents*. The language of such we have here, in what the *elder brother* said (v. 29, 30), and it is written for warning to those who by the grace of God are kept from scandalous sin, and kept in the way of virtue and sobriety, that they sin not after the similitude of this transgression.”<sup>17</sup>
  - ii. “Lo, these many years I have been serving you”
    - 1. Self-focused. Feels as though his work obliges his father to him.
  - iii. “I never transgressed your commandment at any time”
    - 1. Self-focused. He believes he is without fault.

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<sup>16</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1881). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>17</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

2. Henry “It is too common for those that are better than their neighbors to boast of it, yea, and to make their boast of it before God himself, as if he were indebted to them for it. ...yet, he had not been so disobedient as his brother had been. ***O what need have good men to take heed of pride, a corruption that arises out of the ashes of other corruptions!*** Those that have long served God, and been kept from gross sins, have a great deal to be humbly thankful for, but nothing proudly to boast of.”<sup>18</sup>
- iv. “and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.”
  1. He accuses his father of being stingy and ungrateful. He has set his angry eyes upon his own obedience and his father’s foolishness, now fully in a fit of foolish rage.
    - a. Henry “Those that think *highly* of themselves and their services are apt to think *hardly* of their master and meanly of his favors. We ought to own ourselves utterly unworthy of those mercies which God has thought fit to give us, much more of those that he has not thought fit to give us, and therefore we must not *complain*.”<sup>19</sup>
  2. He imagines a festive gathering with his own friends, not with his family. All his heart’s inclination is now infected with disdain for his father’s entire household. This shows us how pride separates us from God’s people.
    - a. Henry “He would have had a kid, to *make merry with his friends* abroad, whereas the *fatted calf* he grudged so much was given to his brother, not to *make merry with his friends* abroad, but *with the family* at home: the mirth of God’s children should be with their father and his family, in communion with God and his saints, and not with any *other friends*”<sup>20</sup>
- v. “But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.”
  1. He rejects his brother as his brother. He rejects his familial attachment even to his father.
    - a. Henry “He would not call him *brother*; but *this thy son*, which sounds arrogantly, and not without reflection upon his father, as if his indulgence had made him a prodigal:

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<sup>18</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>19</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>20</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1880). Peabody: Hendrickson.



“He is *thy son*, thy darling.” Note, Forgetting the relation we stand in to our brethren, as brethren, and disowning that, are at the bottom of all our neglects of our duty to them and our contradictions to that duty. Let us give our relations, both in the flesh and in the Lord, the titles that belong to them.”<sup>21</sup>

2. He falsely accuses his brother with anger and demeaning words. His anger causes him to see only the evil and to exaggerate the evil done.
  - a. Henry “that he had devoured *all his father’s living* was false; the father had still a good estate. Now this shows how apt we are, in censuring our brethren, to *make the worst* of every thing, and to set it out in the blackest colors, which is not doing as we would be done by, nor as our heavenly Father does by us, who is not extreme to mark iniquities.”<sup>22</sup>
3. He mocks his father’s stupid kindness to this boy who is the friend of harlots and who wasted his father’s inheritance.
  - a. Henry “He *grudged* him the *kindness* that his father *showed him: Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf*, as if he were such a son as he should be. Note, It is a wrong thing to *envy* penitents the grace of God, and to have our eye evil because he is good.”<sup>23</sup>
- i. “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’ ”
  - i. The father kindly reminds the older brother that he is his “Son”.
  - ii. He reminds his older son that he is always with the father, not apart.
  - iii. He reminds the older son that all his possessions belong to him.
    1. Henry “If he had not *given him a kid to make merry with his friends*, he had allowed him to eat bread at his table continually; and it is better to be *happy with our Father* in heaven than *merry with any friend* we have in this world.”<sup>24</sup>
  - iv. He defends his actions to celebrate the younger son’s return

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<sup>21</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1881). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>22</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1881). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>23</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1881). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>24</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1881). Peabody: Hendrickson.

1. Your brother – her reminds the older son of his familial connection
  2. Was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found
    - a. How can one be so self-focused and blind? Unable to celebrate rescue and resurrection?
    - b. Henry *“It was meet, and very becoming, that we should make merry for the return of a prodigal son, more than for the perseverance of a dutiful son; for, though the latter is a greater blessing to a family, yet the former is a more sensible pleasure. Any family would be much more transported with joy at the raising of a dead child to life, yea, or at the recovery of a child from a sickness that was adjudged mortal, than for the continued life and health of many children.”*<sup>25</sup>
  - v. The Lord God always has the final Word. The elder son makes no reply to this gentle word from the father. Who could be so cruel as to continue in mockery after such a joyful reply. “your brother is alive!”
    1. Henry *“Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and all flesh shall, sooner or later, be silent before him. We do not find that the elder brother made any reply to what his father said.”*<sup>26</sup>
- IV. Questions to know, love and obey God

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<sup>25</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1881). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>26</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1881). Peabody: Hendrickson.