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DESCRIPTION

Themelios is an international evangelical theological journal that expounds and defends the historic Christian faith. Its primary audience is theological students and pastors, though scholars read it as well. It was formerly a print journal operated by RTSF/UCCF in the UK, and it became a digital journal operated by The Gospel Coalition in 2008. The new editorial team seeks to preserve representation, in both essayists and reviewers, from both sides of the Atlantic.

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The book review editors generally select individuals for book reviews, but potential reviewers may contact them about reviewing specific books. As part of arranging book reviews, the book review editors will supply book review guidelines to reviewers.

EDITORIAL

— D. A. Carson —

D. A. Carson is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.

Welcome to the first issue of the new digital *Themelios.* Like the old print version, we will for the time being aim to produce three fascicles a year. Because this venture is nevertheless in some respects new, we have decided to begin with a new volume number (vol. 33)—and, unlike the old print version, changes in volume number will coincide with changes in the calendar year.

Other changes, though relatively minor, are more substantive. The new *Themelios* aims to serve both theological/religious studies students and pastors. There will be no print version. Our hope is to become increasingly international in representation: take a look at the list of Book Review Editors and their addresses on the previous page. We will accept and publish contributions in either the English of the United Kingdom or the English of the United States—though not a mix of the two in any one piece! The Managing Editor, Charles Anderson, lectures at Oak Hill College, Southgate, London. Submissions should be sent to him, preferably in digital form. In this issue we are still living off essays and reviews that had been submitted to the old print journal, but we are eager now to receive fresh contributions.

Many readers of the old journal have indicated that their favorite piece each issue was the editorial by Carl Trueman—as much for its wit, verve, and independence as for its substance. We are grateful to Carl for agreeing to serve as Consulting Editor and to continue writing a column each issue, now under the heading "Minority Report." We are also thankful to Robbie Castleman for the faithfulness and thoughtfulness of her column during the last years of the print version. With the slight shift in orientation of our readers, we have decided to replace her column with a new one, "Pastoral *Pensées,*" but hope she will herself contribute to it from time to time.

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MINORITY REPORT

Why Should Thoughtful Evangelicals Read the Medieval Mystics?

— Carl Trueman —

Carl Trueman is Academic Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Westminster Theological Seminary.

In a recent class on the medieval church, I did my traditional two hours on medieval mystics, covering such personages as Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart, Hildegard of Bingen, and Julian of Norwich. I also included Thomas Aquinas to make the point that mysticism, at least in a medieval context, does not exclude solid theological discussion, biblical exegesis, and propositional truth. Anyone who has read Aquinas's prayers can scarcely doubt that this was a man with a deep knowledge of the transcendent mystery of God and of the fragility and inadequacy of his own language to express that.

Indeed, that is an important connection to make today. We live in a time when mysticism has become really rather trendy for a whole variety of reasons. When language is so often under suspicion as being something manipulative and deceptive, the symbolic and apocalyptic genres used by medieval mystics exert a certain appeal—genres that apparently place so much stock in the creative and/or emotional response of readers to the texts. Further, in a cosmos of consumerised commodities, where everything seems to be reduced to a mere cash transaction, the desire for mystery and transcendence is potentially satisfied by the very otherness of the mystics' writings. Like the increasingly fabulous special effects of movies, or the intricate, kaleidoscopic plots of fantasy novels, these works strike a chord with some basic elements of the human craving for something more than the mundane, the banal, and the easily accessible. Finally, there is the whole notion of religious experience, as something separable from or prior to religious belief, that has opened up a place for mysticism within the modern religious marketplace. Whether this comes as a result of the tradition of analysis of religious experience pioneered by men like William James or Rudolph Otto, or writers such as Aldous Huxley and Herman Hesse, or through the pop culture impact of stars from The Beatles, with their interest in TM, to Madonna and her fascination with the Kabbalah, is irrelevant: for many, mystical experience is more important than dogmatic belief (whether theological or philosophical) and, indeed, frequently stands in opposition to the very notion of the possibility of such dogmas.

In such a world, the medieval mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen and Julian of Norwich have proved popular. Their highly symbolic and visionary manner of expression appeals to a world tired of propositions. Their emphasis upon experience appeals to a world where experience is the hallmark of authenticity. Their frequent and positive allusions to the natural world (particularly the case with Hildegard) appeals to a world where environmental issues have come to the forefront of ethical discourse. And, of course, the fact that both Hildegard and Julian were women adds to their significance, making

them obvious candidates for anyone who wants to focus on the role of women theologians in the medieval church and find there precedent for something similar today. Indeed, one could hardly do better than zoom in on the writings of these two ladies if one were looking for precedential figures for so much of the mystical experientialism which seems to underlie certain strands of modern evangelicalism.

Now, anyone who has read anything I have written or ever heard me speak will know that I have little sympathy with much of this stuff. I am committed to theological propositions, to truth, and, while I am, as it happens, something of an amateur environmentalist, I do not see that as an integral part of my theology, being more of a Lutheran Two-Kingdoms man than a Christian culture warrior. And, needless to say, I am no feminist nor ever likely to be plausibly accused of being one. Nevertheless, I think the medieval mystics should form a staple of the literary diet of all thoughtful Christians. Why? Well, several reasons spring to mind:

First, there is a sense of God's holiness and transcendence in these works that is significantly absent from much modern writing and thinking about God. Of course, such can be misplaced—there are right notions of God's transcendence and holiness and wrong notions of the same; but I would dare to say that a wrong notion of such is better than no notion at all. We live in a casual age when we stroll flippantly in and out of God's presence. The mystics did not do so. Indeed, what makes them mystics is their sensitivity to their very smallness and insignificance before the vastness of God who, in himself, is unknowable and who has chosen to reveal himself in the fragile forms of human words and human flesh. If the theology often leaves much to be desired, it would seem that the answer is not to reject the ambition of the mystics but to combine this ambition with appropriate theology. For example, our theology should be shot through with reflection, for example, on the law of God in all of its terrifying demands upon us and on the mysterious—and sometimes disturbing—passages of the Old Testament that underscore that God's ways are not our ways. The loss of a sense of God's mysterious and awesome holiness surely lies at the root of much of today's shambolic theology. Medieval mysticism is a sharp corrective to this, a reminder that when we have dealings with God, we should be aware that we tread on holy ground.

Second, for the medieval mystics, experience is not a separate category of religious life that can be isolated from the larger doctrinal concerns of the church. On the contrary, it is ineradicably doctrinal and connected to distinct beliefs. Take, for example, the mystical devotion to the Mass. Now, as an evangelical, I certainly want to protest the theology that underlies the Mass: the real presence of the whole Christ according to both natures is unbiblical; and the sacrificial connotations of the whole thing are equally unacceptable. But the point is that the mystical/experiential/affective dimension of devotion to the Mass presupposes doctrine. The Mass is not some noumenal thing that defies linguistic definition. It is precisely because it is defined and understood in a certain way that the medievals related to it as they did and came to offer their mystical reflections upon it. Today's mystics, whether of the pagan or Christian kind, too often fail to make this connection. They buy in to the trendy soundbites about language, propositions, and truth, and offer a form of mystical experience that, in effect, stands prior to, and is more basic and real than, linguistic expression. In so doing, they therefore reverse the relationship of truth to experience.

Third, medieval mysticism is sometimes closer to our theology than we realize. Much of Christian mysticism has been preoccupied not so much with experience as with apophaticism. This is theology that speaks about God by denying things about him, so-called negative theology. By definition, this

kind of theology cannot be 'experienced' in any usual sense of the word. Conservative evangelicals, of course, will often instinctively react against this idea. After all, has God not *revealed* himself to us so that we might *know* him in a positive way? Well, yes; but when you reflect upon the standard language of orthodox Christian theology, it is interesting how many words that we think are positive affirmations about God are, more properly, denials about him. *Infinite* means *without* limits. *Simple* means *without* parts or composition. *Impassible* and *immutable* mean *without* suffering or change. We are tricked into thinking that our theology makes assertions about God; but in fact we often stand in the same linguistic and conceptual tradition as the mystics, building our idea of God by statements that are really negative.

Given all this, I hope the case for reading the medieval mystics is clear. But there is one more significant reason why they are useful to contemporary evangelicals. When I look at the editions of Hildegard and Julian and Thomas on my bookshelf, I am struck by the publisher's mark: they are published by Penguin. Now, as far as I know, Penguin does not publish Luther or Calvin or Warfield or Stott or Packer. These latter are published by specialist presses that serve the narrow evangelical community. That's because few, if anyone, outside of that narrow constituency reads these authors. To be published by Penguin, however, a lot of people must be buying and reading them. In other words, in an age that craves for transcendence and mystery to lift it above the banality of a bankrupt consumerism, these authors seem to have struck a chord. You can bet your life that most who read them do not read them aright: they are looking for precisely the kind of contentless, mystical experientialism that I have argued above they do not actually represent; in other words, the reception of these works in our culture involves a deep subversion of the piety and theology that they originally represented. But that is not the point: these are the books that many read and that shape their spiritual aspirations and provide the grid through which they will critique contemporary church life. If you are doing your job properly, these are the kind of people with whom you will be striking up conversations, inviting to church, talking about spiritual things. An acquaintance with the medieval mystics will not just enhance your knowledge of the Middle Ages; it may also equip you better to reach out to the lost souls of the current generation.

Blondel Remembered:
His Philosophical Analysis of
the "Quest for the Historical Jesus"

— **Paul Hartog** —

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Ankeny, Iowa. He is the author of* Polycarp and the New Testament,
WUNT 2.134 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

Readers of the *Expository Times* were recently encouraged to pull up a chair and eavesdrop as James Dunn and Robert Morgan dialogued concerning faith and history and the "quest for the historical Jesus."[1] Although the discussion centered upon James Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*, both contributors acknowledged those who had plowed the same field before them.[2] This backward glance caused Morgan to comment on "how confused this nineteenth-century debate about faith and history has become."[3] The Morgan-Dunn debate often seemed to highlight the ideas and influence of Martin Kähler (1835-1912) in particular.[4] While Dunn appreciates much of Kähler's basic line of reasoning, he rather chooses to accentuate the impression of Jesus upon the "*first* faith" of the disciples, as witnessed by their willingness to forsake all and follow him prior to his crucifixion.[5] This modification of Kähler's

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[1] Robert Morgan, "James Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*," *ExpTim* 116 (2004): 1–6; James D. G. Dunn, "On Faith and History, and Living Tradition: In Response to Robert Morgan and Andrew Gregory," *ExpTim* 116 (2004): 13–19; Robert Morgan, "Christian Faith and Historical Jesus Research: A Reply to James Dunn," *ExpTim* 116 (2005): 217–23; James D. G. Dunn, "A Letter to Robert Morgan," *ExpTim* 116 (2005): 286–7.

[2] James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, vol. 1 of *Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[3] Morgan, "Christian Faith and Historical Jesus Research," 217.

[4] Morgan, "James Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*," 2, 5, 6; Dunn, "On Faith and History," 13, 15; Morgan, "Christian Faith and Historical Jesus Research," 217, 220. Cf. the appearances of Kähler in Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*, 49–51, 65, 71–2, 77–8, 80, 84, 99, 101, 126–8, 130, 184–5. Martin Kähler's most famous work, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, was first published as *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* (Leipzig: Deichert; 1892; 2d ed., 1896). "While there has been much debate about what precisely Kähler did or did not mean to accomplish, he contributed greatly to the dichotomy between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith' which since then has been a hallmark of so much New Testament study and systematic theology" (Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus* [London: T & T Clark, 2004], 21–2). For his part, Bockmuehl notes how "ironic" it is that "historical scholarship has meticulously investigated and stripped down the texts" only to acknowledge that "even in the very earliest sources" there is no "Jesus without christology of *some* kind" (22). "In the mouths of even his earliest witnesses, Jesus is already the one who died and was raised" (22). Thus, "what we must equally recognize is that for those who first saw him and were called by him, Jesus of Nazareth and the 'historic biblical Christ' of their faith were one and the same person" (23).

[5] James D. G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 33–4. Michael Bird agrees that "it is presumptuous to assert that the early church had an entirely kerygmatic faith focused exclusively on the death and resurrection of Jesus divorced from any concern for his earthly life" (Michael F. Bird, "The Purpose and Preservation of the Jesus Tradition: Moderate Evidence for a Conserving Force in its Transmission," *BBR* 15 [2005]: 6).

emphasis allows Dunn to examine not only the "kerygmatic Christ" who was preached "post-Easter" but also the impact of the "*pre*-Easter Jesus": "the Jesus we want to find is the Jesus who *was* significant, the Jesus who made the impact he did, the Jesus who was the fountainhead from which Christianity flowed, the Jesus who transformed fishermen and toll collectors into disciples and apostles."[6] "Thus reformulated, Kähler's argument is even more effective," contends Dunn.[7] By contrast, "To discount the influence that Jesus actually had, to strip away the impact that Jesus actually made, is to strip away everything and to leave an empty stage waiting to be filled by some creative amalgam of the historian's own imagination and values."[8]

Overview of Maurice Blondel

Although Kähler's younger contemporary Maurice Blondel (1861–1949) never appears in Dunn's one-thousand-page tome *Jesus Remembered*, his critical insights may be especially relevant to the discussion. Blondel was a French philosopher who flourished at the turn of the last century and whose dissertation, *L'Action* (1893), already set the foundation for his scholarly career. He wished to shift philosophical attention from abstract thought to personal commitment and action, and he desired to demonstrate the ultimate and inevitable transcendence of human action. He forcefully denied any rigid distinction between the intellect and the will, and he insisted upon the philosopher's role as a participant in the acquisition of knowledge rather than as a mere spectator. For Blondel, action was the link between thought and being. "Action is that synthesis of willing, knowing and being, that binding force of the human *compositum* which cannot be broken up without destroying what one has disunited; it is the precise point at which the world of thought, the moral world and the world of science converge; and if they are not united there, all is lost."[9]

Blondel applied his "philosophy of action" to the academic field of biblical studies in *Histoire et dogme* in 1903.[10] Blondel's impact upon subsequent "historical Jesus" research, however, was hampered by his credentials set against the backdrop of contemporaneous New Testament scholarship. He was neither a German by birth nor a liberal Protestant by adherence nor a historical-critical scholar by profession. Furthermore, the title of Blondel's work (with its mention of "dogma") was an immediate affront to many modern academic sensibilities. As Morgan quips, historical "questers" do not like the word "dogmatic," and they do not consider "Christology" their business.[11]

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[6] Ibid., 32.

[7] Ibid., 34.

[8] Ibid., 34. Dunn also differs from Kähler by his attentive examination of Jesus within the context of Second Temple Judaism. For an analysis and critique of Dunn's program, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Of Professors and Madmen: Currents in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship," 13–17. http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/pdf/professor_madman.pdf (accessed March 21, 2008).

[9] Blondel, *L'Action*, 28; English translation in Trethowan's introduction to Maurice Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 86–7.

[10] See John Simons, "Maurice Blondel: Philosophy and Christianity," *CJT* 13 (1967): 254–65; Jean Jacques D'Aoust, "The Significance of Maurice Blondel's treatise 'History and Dogma' in the French Modernist Crisis," Ph.D. dissertation (New Haven: Yale University, 1968).

[11] Morgan, "Christian Faith and Historical Jesus Research," 218.

Finally, much of the scholarly neglect is Blondel's own fault, since he remained "a somewhat remote and inaccessible figure" until his death.[12] More to the point, he wrote in an extremely demanding style. Paul Janet, one of Blondel's Sorbonne thesis examiners, notified him, "Your thought is obscure; your way of writing obscures it still more. It takes me an hour to read one of your pages and then I fail to understand it; I calculated that it would take me forty-five days to read your thesis."[13] When T & T Clark published a new imprint of an English translation of Blondel's *History and Dogma* in 1995, readers of the *Expository Times* were subjected to a rather unhelpful review.[14] The reviewer never evaluated or even summarized Blondel's actual insights, but only lamented Blondel's "tortuous" reasoning and his "opaque" style.[15] The piece ended with a mere whimper, as the critic threw up his hands in full surrender, simply concluding that Blondel's work "is not easily grasped at a first reading." The author did manage to sound one clarion note concerning Blondel: "As a thinker he stood quite outside the Anglo-Saxon tradition."[16] I suggest that Maurice Blondel's feet have yet to move, and I propose that we invite him into our humble Anglo-Saxon abode and welcome him to our conversation table, to be seated next to Dunn and Morgan. Blondel's analysis of the relationship between "history and dogma" and his philosophical critique of the limitations of "historicism" may be relevant to contemporary discussions of "faith and history," including the scholarly "quest for the historical Jesus."[17]

"Extrinsicism" and "Historicism"

Blondel wished "to achieve the synthesis of history and dogma while respecting their independence and solidarity, which are both equally necessary."[18] He desired to discover "the authority proper to each" by examining how "history and dogma still continue and will continue to verify and vivify one another."[19] He therefore sought for common ground and fertile contact between them. On the one hand, he dismissed "extrinsicism" or interest in the "historical facts" merely for an apologetic use. He referred to "the disillusioned obstinacy of men who imagined that they knew everything without having examined anything" and who sought to buttress a previously accepted theological structure which is already superimposed upon the data. On the other hand, he dismissed "historicism" or the call to

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[12] Alexander Dru's introduction to Maurice Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 13.

[13] Ibid., 40.

[14] Bernard M. G. Reardon, review of Maurice Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma,* in *ExpTim* 107 (1995): 29. Reardon reviewed the 1995 reprint (Edinburgh: T & T Clark) of the 1964 English edition, translated by Alexander Dru and Illtyd Trethowan. Dru translated *History and Dogma*, and Trethowan translated *The Letter on Apologetics*. Both Dru and Trethowan composed introductory materials for the comprehensive volume. The English translations of *History and Dogma* throughout this present article come from this Dru and Trethowan edition.

[15] Cf. Kenneth L. Schmitz's reference to Blondel's "tortuous thought" in the foreword to *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma,* 8.

[16] Similarly, Dru's introduction remarks that Blondel "is still completely ignored in English-speaking countries, and if mentioned is usually misrepresented" (9; cf. 15). See also Trethowan's reference to "the present state of astonishing ignorance" concerning Blondel's thought (82). For a recent French study on Blondel and Jesus, see René Virgoulay, Pierre de Cointet, et al, *Le Christ de Maurice Blondel*, Jésus et Jésus-Christ 86 (Paris: Desclée, 2003). The work is reviewed by James Le Grys in *TS* 65 (2004): 649–50.

[17] See Alexander Dru, "The Importance of Maurice Blondel," *DRev* 80 (1962): 118–29.

[18] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 224.

[19] Ibid.

postpone faith until one has reconstructed a historical foundation through critical methods.[20] Instead, he proposed a progressive and synthetic movement between history and dogma.

Blondel tried to demonstrate the philosophical lacunae of "historicism" through critical means. He conceded that at first glance it may seem legitimate to consider "the facts for their own sake" by placing theology aside. It would seem that the apologist should "take up his position . . . face to face with the facts, as though he neither believed nor knew anything of Christianity."[21] Yet Blondel countered that the critical spirit does not consist solely in criticizing our knowledge (through a rigorous examination of texts and testimonies); it also consists in the foundational critique of critical knowledge itself.[22]

The scholar is only master in his or her own domain by virtue of a clear consciousness of its limitations. The manifold sciences view reality from various angles, and none can make a totalitarian claim to provide a complete picture of reality. Blondel emphasized that certain important and relevant tasks fall beyond history's field of competence, and these limitations lead to precautionary reminders. History is neither self-sufficient nor a total metaphysic. History, like all the sciences, does not produce a universal vision nor answer ultimate questions.[23] "The moment a science concludes from its independence within its own field of research to a sort of self-sufficiency, it becomes guilty of fraudulently converting a simple method of work into a negative and tyrannical doctrine. Willy-nilly it is led into the subtly crude illusion that because it is legitimate and necessary to divide the work of the mind, the divisions subsist in the reality."[24]

Real History and Reconstructed History

Within the *Expository Times* debate highlighted above, Robert Morgan muses, "There may be more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our empiricist philosophies."[25] Blondel actually *insists* that every self-critical historian *must* recognize that "real history" includes things beyond the scope of empirical investigation, even if he or she denies the possibility of "supernatural elements" out-of-hand. Real history is mediated through human beings in all their sundry complexities that lie beneath the external manifestation available as historical "facts." "What the historian does not see, and what he must recognize as escaping him is the spiritual reality, the activity of which is not wholly represented or exhausted by the historical phenomena."[26] Even spectators contemporaneously watching events unfold cannot entirely reconstruct matters as they actually are, because much that pertains to "whole persons" lies beyond the empirical examination of others.

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[20] Regarding the terms "extrinsicism" and "historicism," Blondel confessed, "I shall make use of certain barbarous neologisms with a view to fixing attention and throwing into relief the exclusive character of each thesis" (ibid., 225).

[21] Ibid., 232–3.

[22] As Marcellino D'Ambrosio explains, "Critical history which forgets it own limitations in this egregious fashion oversteps the boundaries of its competence and thus violates an important canon of truly scientific method" (Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "Henri de Lubac and the Critique of Scientific Exegesis," *Comm* 19 [1992], 376). D'Ambrosio maintains that Henri de Lubac sought "to identify those hidden and arbitrary presuppositions which have been bound up with historical criticism from its inception" and which "prejudiced" the results of its "positivist pretensions" (ibid., 373). D'Ambrosio rightly notes that de Lubac leaned heavily upon the work of Maurice Blondel, his fellow French thinker (ibid., 367, 373–6).

[23] Blondel uses "sciences" in the broad sense of "fields of academic inquiry."

[24] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 238.

[25] Morgan, "Christian Faith and Historical Jesus Research," 219.

[26] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 237.

On the other hand, "technical and critical history" is "scientific history," which examines and links the empirical evidences of past events as one empirically investigates objects in a scientific laboratory. But one must diligently remember that critical-historical reconstructions differ from the "real history," that is, events as they actually occurred.[27] A simple example is any important decision that markedly affected the course of history. The modern historian may try to reconstruct the motivations and discursive thought processes behind the decision, but in truth one cannot reach full epistemological certainty on such crucially relevant "internal" matters. Nevertheless, they *really* did happen and therefore are "real history." Obviously, "internal" or "spiritual" matters such as motivations, purposes, emotions, decisions, and thoughts greatly influenced the historical chain of events at almost every link. But history by itself cannot know a fact that would be more than a fact. That is, the historian cannot go beyond and behind the external manifestations of such internal workings.[28]

The danger of "historicism" lies in confusion between "technical and critical history" and "real history." There is always an insurmountable abyss between these two histories, one resulting from a phenomenological method and the other representing genuine reality. When one substitutes the one for the other, "an ontology, purely phenomenological in character, will be extracted from a methodology and a phenomenology."[29] When this happens, several confusions result. "Historicism" tends to mistake the external act for the entirety of the event itself. It substitutes "the fact for the actor, the testimony for the witness, the portrait for the person."[30] "Historicism" tends to register not so much the initial operations of real persons as the subsequent influences of its own reconstructions of those initial operations. Blondel maintains that these historical "phenomena" are only partial images of the life of humanity. As Dunn comments, "A past event is not a thing, an object, a datum. The historian can never witness it in his or her own experience, can never experience it at first hand. All that the historian can have to hand is the data resulting from the past events, as you might say, the residue, the detritus of the past."[31]

"Historicism" also tends to look for the whole subject matter of history in the evolution of the unfolding of the series of events. But this "logical development" is really a mechanistic view that cannot take into account the personal nature of all the specific moments. If each link of the "critical historical" chain is made up of the available empirical evidence tied to a specific event, then the entire "critical historical" chain of such events still concerns only a total conglomeration of such empirical evidence. But in "real history" each link involves psychological, mental, and volitional actions implied by even the least personal action, because "real history" is mediated through human lives in their full complexity. Since personal events include more beneath the external level, then the entire "critical historical" chain only partially recreates the "real history" of successive events as they actually unfolded.

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[27] This differentiation is, of course, now common fare. Dunn explains the contrast ("On Faith and History," 14), and Morgan considers the distinction to be an "important point" (Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 5).

[28] Perhaps one could counter that diaries and autobiographies personally reveal the inner workings of historical figures, but this rejoinder is not relevant in "historical Jesus" studies.

[29] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 240.

[30] Ibid., 241.

[31] Dunn, "On Faith and History," 14.

"Whole Persons" As Agents in History and Its Investigation

The historian studies the empirical residues of the observable manifestations of humanity's inward, invisible work that modify one another into a coherent whole, "though without supplying a total and satisfying explanation of the smallest detail."[32] The natural continuity of history does not prove that history itself can provide a full explanation of itself. The historical chain comes to the "critical historian" as a "given," and therefore is routinely analyzed as a logical necessity. Certainly the historian has to make his or her determinist explanation "as intelligible and complete as possible."[33] Nonetheless, it remains equally true that the historian's duty is "to leave the issue open or even to open it as widely as possible to the 'realist' explanation which lies always beneath."[34] The various "moments" actually involved "whole persons" reacting to previous events (mediated through other "whole persons") and in turn affecting subsequent events (mediated through other "whole persons"). Thus the historian as historian cannot completely attain or explain the antecedent cause, the accompanying cause, and the final cause.

Blondel's analysis of "whole persons" goes beyond the original actors to the first spectators/recorders/interpreters.[35] Since "critical and scientific history" cannot capture the "whole person," it also tends to confuse the "testimony" of a "witness" (which is available to empirical scrutiny) with the "witness" himself or herself (who is a "whole person" affected in numerous ways beneath the observable surface). Even the most faithful witness cannot verbally explain the full impact of an influential person in its complete equivalence. Every disciple is transformed by his or her master in ways that cannot be entirely transmitted in writings. Verbal explanations (which are the material evidence available to others) rarely capture the full influence. Moreover, not only are individuals normally affected in ways they cannot fully explain to others, they are often affected in ways they do not fully understand themselves. Children, for example, are shaped by their parents in a manner that they themselves do not entirely comprehend.

Blondel examines the role of the historian as a "whole person" as well. The historian makes rational judgments about the historicity of individual pieces of evidence, often based upon an appeal to analogous experience. The scholar sifting historical evidences is not a lifeless sieve similar to an ordinary kitchen utensil. The historian "with his beliefs, his metaphysical ideas, and his religious solutions conditions all the subordinate researches of science as much as he is conditioned by them."[36] The observer or narrator is always imposing interpretations, relations, analyses, and syntheses. To claim to constitute the science of history without any wider human preoccupations or interpretive schemas, or even to suppose that the humblest details of history could be a simple matter of observation is to be influenced by prejudices on the pretext of attaining an impossible neutrality. Blondel concludes, "In default of an explicit philosophy, a man ordinarily has an unconscious one."[37]

Historians may attempt to limit the discussion to what is visible on the surface and not probe below to a composite philosophy. But while concentrating on the external aspects of the facts, one

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[32] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 237.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] The terminology of "whole persons" is not explicitly found in Blondel, but I have chosen to coin and employ this heuristic rubric in order to manifest Blondel's philosophical insights into the historical endeavor.

[36] Ibid., 238.

[37] Ibid., 237. Dunn similarly asserts, "There is no objective historian pursuing the Quest, whether in faith or in non-faith or in anti-faith" ("On Faith and History," 14).

cannot abstract an ideology from them. Blondel opposed the prevalent "historicist" thesis that "the determinism of successive facts is really self-explanatory, and historical phenomena provide a real and sufficient history,"[38] "as though to understand what has happened were to know what produced it."[39] In order to pass from "historical facts" to a full explanation, even the most exact analysis of the texts and the effort of individual thought are not sufficient. Metaphysical and ontological questions are never entirely excluded from the historian's mind, because they are antecedent, concomitant, and subsequent to any positive research concerning humanity. On the pretext of "relying on facts alone," "the most dubious hypotheses" can result, "so as to avoid *a priori* the only hypothesis that accounts for the facts themselves."[40]

"Tradition" As a Living Synthesis

Blondel acknowledged that "One cannot hope to remedy the lacunae of extrinsicism by showing up the inadequacies of historicism."[41] In his perspective, the positive synthetic force and link between history and dogma (without compromising their relative independence) is the living synthesis of "Tradition."[42] People normally imagine "tradition" as an oral transmission of received facts, accepted teachings, or ancient customs. In this view, "tradition," as it reports things explicitly said or deliberately performed, is simply a substitute for written teaching. Such a notion of "tradition" possesses "little authority" and "little usefulness," argued Blondel, when one considers the passage of time and the inadequacies of popular recollection.[43]

Authentic "tradition," however, is not a fixed deposit of "mere facts" or an accumulation of superimposed novelties. "It preserves not so much the intellectual aspect of the past as its living reality."[44] "It presents the conscious mind with elements previously held back in the depths of faith and practised, rather than expressed, systematized or reflected upon."[45] Blondel's emphasis does not fall upon *what* was handed down, but rather on *how* it was handed down.[46] In the passing from historical facts to developed dogma, more than texts were involved.[47] For example, "the mediation of collective life" and "the slow progressive labour of the Christian Tradition" were also essentially at work.[48]

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[38] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 262.

[39] Ibid., 249.

[40] Ibid., 242.

[41] Ibid., 263.

[42] This present article highlights how Blondel's notion of "tradition" can illumine the debate at hand (the "quest for the historical Jesus"). In order to do so, I have narrowed Blondel's notion of "Tradition" to its role in the earliest Christian movement. For a discussion of Blondel's broader concept of "Tradition," see William A. Scott, "The Notion of Tradition in Maurice Blondel," *TS* 27 (1966): 384–400.

[43] Ibid., 266.

[44] Ibid., 267.

[45] Ibid.

[46] See Dru's prefatory note in *Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma,* 214.

[47] See Maurice Nédoncelle, "Les rapports de l'histoire et du dogme d'après Blondel," *Journées d'études* 9–10 (1974): 91–107.

[48] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 269.

"Historicists" fail to realize that developed dogmas are not only "the result of dialectical exercise upon the texts" but also "the expression of a perpetuated and experienced reality."[49] There is an enlightenment gained through piety, prayer, commitment, and obedient action. Active performance of religious practices is essential in attaining the fullness and profundity of religious ideas.[50] Action penetrates into the very depths of a "whole person," so that practiced truths are grasped more immanently, completely, and accurately than those examined at arm's length.[51] "The thought that follows the act is infinitely richer than that which precedes it."[52] By putting Christ's teachings and spirit into practice, claims Blondel, the church has been continuously enriched. Moreover, the Christological development of the earliest church was not a foreign accretion to the religion of Jesus himself, but the outworking of his original historical impression.

For his part, Dunn also tips his hat to "tradition": "Through the impact Jesus made we discern Jesus, not Jesus who might be something different from what the Jesus tradition recalls, but the Jesus-who-made-the-impact still visible in the Jesus tradition."[53] Dunn concludes, "All this is a reminder that the earliest tradition, whether oral or written, had a living quality."[54] In the context of Dunn's comments, however, the "living quality" of the earliest tradition seems to refer to its variability and malleability, and his division of "tradition" into either oral transmission or literary transmission still concerns the passing on of information ("mere facts"). Blondel's point concerns an impact beyond the mental comprehension, retention, and transmission of facts. The earliest generations of Christians, those who witnessed Jesus' life and ministry and those who first preached the kerygma and initially implemented his teachings, were privileged recipients of the historical impact of Jesus of Nazareth. The "whole person" of these witnesses and transmitters (including affective and volitional tendencies) was transformed within the sphere of the "living reality" of the earliest movement rooted in Jesus, and they in turn impacted other "whole persons" united in those original communities which embodied Jesus' teachings.

Application to the "Jesus Quest"

Blondel's *History and Dogma* applies his philosophical analyses to the origins of Christianity.[55] The difference between "critical history" and "real history" should be "carefully noted and remembered

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[49] Ibid., 278.

[50] Henri de Lubac argued that "if one hopes to understand, one must stop 'playing the spectator' before the Bible" (Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "Henri de Lubac and the Critique of Scientific Exegesis," 378). D'Ambrosio, borrowing from de Lubac, agrees that "the text can only be fully understood by someone who has put it into practice" (ibid., 385). Thus "application or appropriation is an integral part of the traditional process of exegesis rather than some subsequent operation tacked on only after interpretation has been successfully completed" (ibid., 385). Cf. the role of volition within understanding as found in the maxim of John 7:17.

[51] By contrast, a "reductionist" exegesis "can only progressively dissect its object, thereby destroying it" (D'Ambrosio, "Henri de Lubac and the Critique of Scientific Exegesis," 380–1). "Actually, when the critical function alone is active, it succeeds rather quickly in pulverizing everything" (Henri de Lubac, "The Church in Crisis," *TD* 17 (1969): 317).

[52] *L'Action*, 403; the English translation is my own.

[53] Dunn, "On Faith and History," 15.

[54] Ibid., 19.

[55] For an examination of Blondel's work in its historical context, see "Exégèse, théologie et philosophie dans la réflexion christologique," *RSR* 88 (2000): 561–78; Xavier Tilliette, "Maurice Blondel et la controverse christologique," in *Modernisme*, ed. Pierre Colin, Jean Houssaye, and Stanislas Breton (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1980): 129–60.

when we come to the relationship between the historical Christ and the real Christ."[56] Christianity claims to be founded upon a person (a "real history") rather than merely upon a historical portrait (a "critical history"). One cannot confuse the original life in all its fullness and the later reconstructions of historians. Moreover, Christianity claims that Jesus of Nazareth, who was a real, historical figure, impacted those earliest disciples who *both* followed the "pre-Easter" Jesus *and also* proclaimed the "post-Easter" kerygma.

In addition, Christianity recognizes that this amazing person influenced the first followers in ways that were not completely captured by their literary texts.[57] One cannot confuse Jesus' full "afterlife" or "impact" (in the terms of Morgan and Dunn) and our extant texts alone. Blondel's insights nuance Dunn's explanation of the transformative effect of Jesus. Dunn claims, "From the impression in the wax we can discern the shape of the seal. From the impression left on the disciples we can discern the 'shape' of the one who made that impression."[58] But Dunn's analogy, of course, should not be accepted as a complete equivalence. Soft wax can fully receive and clearly manifest the impression of a signet. But human persons cannot so simply and lucidly reveal the transformative, personal impact of other individuals. "The personal and unexpressed influence of the Saviour inaugurated a tradition of devotion and adoration which Christian literature neither exhausts nor fully represents, even when closest to its source."[59] The modern critical attempt to get to the "objective facts" behind the earliest extant testimonies of Jesus deprives him "of the influence which every master communicates to his immediate disciples, although they themselves are incapable of [fully] transmitting it in their writings."[60]

Furthermore, "orthodox" Christianity claims that the Christian historian can, in some sense, still experience this living person as risen Lord. This is especially done within the context of Christian worship, prayer, community, and practice. The moment one concedes that Jesus was the revelation of God and sole mediator of salvation, and that the contemporary believer can relate to him, and that in having to do with him we have to do with God himself who is saving us, one's understanding of the sea of reality (within which the bare facts of historicism's reconstructions float) has also changed.[61] In Blondel's terms, the ontology behind the phenomenology is different. Whether in the context of mediated tradition in community or immediate relationship in personal devotion, one has moved beyond "what Christ contributed to the determinism of history" and "the repercussions of his actions on the machinery of facts."[62]

Through a logical abstraction, the Christian historian can relate to the risen Christ by faith one moment and not allow this experience to affect his or her historical reconstruction the next. Morgan labels this the "outsider" perspective, which Dunn calls "a spectator perspective, as though we were watching through the eyes of a passing bystander."[63] However, the Christian historian as an integrated

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[56] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 240.

[57] The Gospels themselves acknowledge that written texts could not capture the fullness of Jesus' life (Jn 20:30; 21:25).

[58] Dunn, "On Faith and History," 15.

[59] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 247.

[60] Ibid.

[61] See Morgan, "Christian Faith and Historical Jesus Research," 220–1.

[62] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 245.

[63] Dunn, "On Faith and History," 19.

"whole person" with a unified life cannot so simplistically separate such matters. As a "whole person," the believer is definitely not "disinterested" in the topic and person of Jesus, even while engaging in scholarly, historical studies. The Christian does not affectively and volitionally approach the death of Jesus as she or he does the death of Socrates. The believer sees the "mere facts" of Jesus' death within the context of a redemptive interpretation. Believers may even intuitively sense that they possess means (beyond critical reconstruction) of "knowing" the reality of the risen Christ, of participating in his life, and of linking historical facts to Christological dogma.[64]

The Appeal to "Whole Persons"

Blondel insists that there can be no final divorce between history and theology, and no antithetical polarization between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ. "What I am criticizing is the thesis of the water-tight compartment between history and dogma, and of the incommensurability of assertions of faith and of truths of fact; and still more, of course, the thesis of an opposition between them which results in double-thinking."[65] Critical history, constructive theology, and Christian practice do not develop and cannot be analyzed in isolation. Because of the "living unity in Christianity" (since it addresses the whole field of experience and life as a whole), the various sciences (or fields of inquiry) "can only be split up by a provisional abstraction."[66] Early Christological dogmas were not only the result of a dialectical exercise upon texts but also the expression of a perpetuated and experienced reality, a unity of life and worship.[67] Moreover, "the synthesis of dogma and facts is scientifically effected because there is a synthesis of thought and grace in the life of the believer."[68]

As a result, a truly Christian apologetic holistically appeals to the entire person.[69] "Christian knowledge does not disdain the support of history (for the facts in this instance are both the redemptive reality and the revelatory message)."[70] Yet a purely "historical apologetic" does not conform to the concrete exercise of thought and the real history of faith, since it claims to restrict itself to elements which by themselves are not linked with an interpretive scheme. The Christian should recognize the "relative autonomy" of the diverse fields of inquiry (including history), but also recognize that their "legitimate independence" derives from their actual solidarity.[71] "A conception which isolates the sciences without making them autonomous must be replaced by a view which grants them their autonomy all the more

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[64] Cf. Phil 3:8–10.

[65] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 258 n.1

[66] Ibid., 286.

[67] Scholars often emphasize the role of the church's worship in the developing articulation of early Christology. See, for example, the numerous works on this subject by Larry W. Hurtado: *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998); *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); *How On Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

[68] Ibid., 287.

[69] "A proof which results from the total movement of life, a proof which is the whole of action, this will have, on the contrary, that constraining force" (Blondel, *L'Action*, 341; English translation in Trethowan's introduction to *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma*, 93).

[70] Blondel, *History and Dogma*, 287.

[71] Ibid., 283.

readily because it never allows them to be isolated."[72] Thus a "Christian" historical inquiry cannot disregard full Christian knowledge and "the results methodically acquired by the collective experience of Christ verified and realized" in the first and subsequent believers.[73]

Conclusion

Certain limitations exist in Blondel's presentation, and these require further critical reflection. For example, "tradition" (even if it is a thoroughly "living synthesis" of committed action in community) may not bear the full epistemological weight Blondel has foisted upon its shoulders. And Protestants attuned to their Reformation heritage will naturally contend that Blondel's apologetic seems to ignore the self-attestation of Scripture, and to de-emphasize the centrality and normativity of the inspired, written text.[74]

Nevertheless, Blondel—as a philosopher of religion who stood outside the "guild" of biblical scholars—articulated some insights into the historical endeavor worthy of thoughtful consideration. For example, Blondel's philosophical critique of the "historicism" of the "quest for the historical Jesus" is both vigorous and astute, and much of Blondel's critical analysis applies as equally to more recent "quests." His apologetic insistence upon a logical continuity between the "Jesus of History" and the "Christ of Faith," based upon a fuller understanding of the nature of personal influence and impact, is also compelling. Unfortunately, current discussions of the "Quest for the Historical Jesus" have forgotten Maurice Blondel, and they are certainly the poorer for this lack of remembrance.

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[72] Ibid., 286.

[73] Ibid., 287.

[74] Blondel himself emphatically insisted, "Need I observe, yet again, that I do not in any way throw doubt upon the absolute value and the total inspiration of the Bible, nor even upon the method which proceeds from that *de fide* thesis: I shall attempt to show *how* that global affirmation is in effect necessary and justifiable. May I beg the reader never to confuse the criticism of methods and justifications with the criticism of the truths themselves, the proofs of which it is my purpose to strengthen?" (ibid., 229 n.1).

Nonviolence in the Ancient Church and Christian Obedience

— **Kirk R. MacGregor** —

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I n the course of Christian history, nowhere has the tension between the teachings of Jesus and valid application of those teachings in postbiblical socio-cultural circumstances manifested itself more clearly than surrounding the issue of violence. Stemming from the sixteenth-century divide between pro-statist Magisterial and anti-statist Radical Reformers,[1] most scholarship on this issue may straightforwardly be split between "hawks" and "doves," with each side open to the charge of reading the sacred text through the respective lenses of either the Protestant appropriation of Augustinian just war theory or the Anabaptist denouncement of the post-Constantinian alliance between church and state.[2] Amidst the contemporary discussion, one important set of voices is often unwittingly silenced: the ante-Nicene Church Fathers, who, as the first New Testament exegetes and inhabitants of a Roman imperial climate continuous with the atmosphere experienced by the apostles, arguably stand in a better position to correctly interpret the message of Jesus as pertaining to violence than their early modern and modern successors.

From the accumulated literature of the ante-Nicene church, three facts emerge as relatively noncontroversial. First, from the close of the New Testament era until 174 C.E., no Christians served in the military or assumed government offices.[3] Second, from 174 until the Edict of Milan (313), the ancient church treated those Christians who played such roles, including previous office-holders

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[1] "Magisterial" refers to the top-down approach to religious change, adopted by the Protestant reformers, through conversion of magistrates, who in turn impose the new beliefs upon their subjects—this approach is encapsulated by the principle *cuius regio eius religio* (lit. "whose region, his religion"). By contrast, "Radical" denotes the bottom-up approach to religious change, adopted by the Anabaptists and other evangelical reform theologians, through evangelism of individuals. For a thorough discussion of this nomenclature see Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis of Radical and Magisterial Reform* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), 1–4.

[2] For a representative sample of modern just war advocates see John C. Bennett, *Foreign Policy in Christian Perspective* (New York: Scribner, 1966); William R. Stevenson, *Christian Love and Just War: Moral Paradox and Political Life in St. Augustine and his Modern Interpreters* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988); Richard J. Regan, *Just War: Principles and Causes* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996); Darrell Cole, *When God Says War Is Right: The Christian's Perspective on When and How to Fight* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2002); and J. Daryl Charles, *Between Pacifism and Jihad: Just War and Christian Tradition* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005). Conversely, representative modern exponents of nonviolence include Ronald V. Sampson, *The Discovery of Peace* (New York: Pantheon, 1973); John Lamoreau and Ralph Beebe, *Waging Peace: A Study in Biblical Pacifism* (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 1980); Gerard A. Vanderhaar, *Beyond Violence: In the Spirit of the Non-Violent Christ* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998); John D. Roth, *Choosing Against War: A Christian View* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2002); and Dale W. Brown, *Biblical Pacifism* (2d ed.; Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 2003).

[3] Guy F. Hershberger, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1944), 57–59.

who converted, with great suspicion.[4] Third, underlying this ecclesiastical antipathy to state positions exerting compulsion stood a theory of nonviolence hermeneutically derived from Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God. According to the ante-Nicene Fathers, the kerygma necessitated that Jesus constituted the Christian's only commander, such that placing oneself under any other commander would spell treason.

To explore the historical development of this theory of nonviolence, we must proceed chronologically, in the process focusing upon the writings of Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen, the three Fathers chiefly responsible for its exposition, along with brief references to the topic by other pre-Constantinian church leaders.[5] The soundness of this strategy is borne out by the fact that, as C. John Cadoux observes, this trio of thinkers provided a representative depiction of the prevailing sentiments among ante-Nicene church leaders:

> [T]he conviction that Christianity was incompatible with the shedding of blood, either in war or in the administration of justice, was not only maintained and vigorously defended by eminent individuals like Tertullian of Carthage, Hippolytus of Rome and Origen of Palestine and Egypt, but was widely held and acted on in the Churches up and down Christendom.[6]

Thus we shall extensively delineate this nonviolent ethic from the primary sources, closing with a brief assessment of its strengths and weaknesses in light of historical Jesus studies and the ensuing course of Christian history.

Justin Martyr: Apologia I (c. 150 C.E.)

The first Patristic references to the issue of Christians and violence sprang from Justin Martyr (110–165), the early church's foremost Greek apologist. Refuting the charge of sedition, which the Romans saw latent in the Christian proclamation of the Kingdom of God, Justin apprised Emperor Antoninus Pius that believers lived as citizens not of an alternative human kingdom governed by anti-imperial politicians but of an already inaugurated divine kingdom, presently ruled by Christ from the heavenly realm and soon to be physically implemented when Christ returns.[7] When the Kingdom is manifested on earth, Justin insisted, it will be a kingdom of peace fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 2:4, as people "will beinat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks" since nations will never again train for or engage in war. Since Christians find their citizenship in God's Kingdom, Justin

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[4] This point is nicely made by W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 420, who ironically displays open criticism toward the third-century church for its so-called "inconsistent" and "impractical . . . inability to think out any positive evaluation of the soldier's role."

[5] I have translated all primary source quotations directly from the *Patrologia graeco-latina* [hereafter *PG*], 161 vols., ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1857–64) and *Patrologia Latina* [hereafter *PL*], 221 vols., ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1841–80). Along with each quote I have, for the convenience of readers desiring further interaction with the sources, listed the corresponding page numbers from the standard English series *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to 325 A.D.* [hereafter *ANF*], 10 vols., ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885).

[6] C. John Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War* (rep. ed.; New York: Gordon Press, 1975), 127–28. This general summary of the position of various churches is not negated by the fact that, as one stream of contemporary Patrology has inferred from late antique Mediterranean sociological analyses and epigraphic evidence, various individual Christians within those churches may have disobeyed their leaders by joining the military or assuming magisterial positions.

[7] Justin Martyr, *Apologia I*, 11, in *PG* 6 (*ANF* 1:166).

informed the Emperor that this prediction was starting to find fulfillment through the church and its missionary expansion: "That it is so coming to pass, let me convince you. . . . We who once murdered each other indeed no longer wage war against our enemies; moreover, so as not to bear false witness before our interrogators, we cheerfully die confessing Christ."[8]

The phrase "we who once murdered each other" proves all the more poignant when we realize that the first mass conversions from paganism to Christianity occurred publicly in the Roman army, as soldiers, risking life and limb, abandoned their posts to join the church.[9] Consequently in Pauline fashion, Justin reinterpreted martial language by announcing that Christians are warriors but of a special kind, namely, peaceful warriors. This apparent oxymoron is warranted because, on the peaceful side, Christians refused to practice violence and, on the warrior side, they excelled everyone, including Antoninus Pius' own soldiers, in showing fidelity to their cause and courage in the face of imminent death. Such excellence stemmed from the fact that Christians, via the general resurrection, awaited a reward ontologically superior to the money earned by Roman soldiers: "But if your soldiers, who have taken the military oath, choose allegiance over their own lives, parents, countries, and families, although you cannot offer them anything incorruptible, then it would be absurd if we, who fervently long for incorruption, do not endure all things, so that we will receive what we desire from the One with the power to impart it."[10] Therefore, from his complementary exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the dominical message, Justin regarded non-violence as an essential attribute of discipleship, such that converts whose prior occupations featured violence as their *modus operandi* must abandon those occupations.

Authors during the Reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–80)

We now turn to indirect evidence for the early Christian repudiation of warfare provided by the anti-Christian satirist Celsus (*fl.* 170–80) and the apocryphal *Acts of Paul* (*c.* 175). A staunch patriot and leading representative of Roman bureaucracy, Celsus rejected Christianity in large part due to its nonviolent stance. Repeatedly attacking Christians for their refusal to fight in defense of the Roman Empire, Celsus sneered that if everyone behaved like the church, the emperor would be virtually isolated, and the empire would soon be conquered by the unruliest and fiercest barbarians.[11] Based undoubtedly on firsthand knowledge of Christian behavior, Celsus' objection corroborates our observation that the church of his day would not permit believers to serve in the military.

This impression is further substantiated by the presbyter of Asia Minor who penned the novel-like *Acts of Paul*. Here Jesus, the King of the Ages, is contrasted with Caesar, the earthly king, and Christians are portrayed as soldiers exclusively of Christ. In one notable scene, Nero accuses Paul of stealing soldiers from his army: "My prisoner, why did it seem good to you to sneak into the Roman Empire and enlist soldiers from my region?" Paul replies: "Caesar, we enlist soldiers not only from your region but from the whole world. . . . For we march not for an earthly king, but only for one who comes from heaven . . . to judge the world. . . . Thus I will never desert Christ, as a faithful soldier of the living

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[8] Ibid., 39 (*ANF* 1:175–76).

[9] Adolf von Harnack, *Militia Christi: The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries*, trans. David McInnes Gracie (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 24.

[10] Justin, *Apologia I*, 39 (*ANF* 1:176).

[11] Celsus, quoted by Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 8:68–73, in *PG* 11 (*ANF* 4:665–68).

God."[12] The author then draws a sharp dichotomy between Jesus' Kingdom and the kingdoms of the world: "Shall Christ, therefore, be King of the Ages and overthrow all earthly kingdoms? . . . Yes, he overthrows all earthly kingdoms and he alone shall live forever, and no earthly kingdom will escape him."[13] Such "either-or" martial depictions make sense only on the assumption that, in the presbyter's time, the church perceived military service and following Jesus as mutually exclusive, a choice which Roman soldiers attracted to the gospel were forced to make.

The Works of Tertullian (197–212)

Our earliest evidence for Christians serving in the military dates to 174 C.E., when a sizeable number of Christians in the eastern Cappadocian region of Melitene joined the Roman *Legio Fulmata* to fight against the central European Quadi tribe that was invading the region.[14] Although the evidence renders it uncertain whether these soldiers were chastised by their local congregations, the incident appears to have received little notice by either Christians or pagans outside Melitene.[15] Such an assessment is evidenced in the pre-Montanist writings of Tertullian, who in his early period showed categorical opposition to the military profession, notwithstanding that his father was a Roman centurion. Hence Tertullian articulated a position in *Apologeticum* (197) identified by Edward A. Ryan as "pacifism"[16]: "We are equally forbidden to wish evil, to do evil, to speak evil, and to think evil toward all people. . . . So if we are commanded to love our enemies, whom have we to hate? If injured, we are forbidden to retaliate, lest we become as evil as our attackers. No one can suffer injury at our hands . . . since we do not bear arms nor raise any banner of insurrection."[17] This remained true despite the fact, as Tertullian provocatively pointed out, that in certain provinces Christians were sufficiently numerous and powerful to unite and stage an uprising: "For what wars, granted these unequal forces, would we not be prepared and eager to fight, we who so willingly surrender ourselves to death by the sword, if in our religion it were not better to be killed than to kill?"[18] But since the Kingdom of God belongs not to this world, Tertullian insisted that Christians could not, without forfeiting their citizenship in the Kingdom, defend themselves by earthly weapons but must accept death when under attack. In his treatise *De idololatria*, written between 198 and 201,[19] Tertullian explicitly answered the central questions of whether a believer may join the military and whether a soldier, once converted, can stay in the military.

> But now inquiry is being made concerning these issues. First, can any believer enlist in the military? Second, can any soldier, even those of the rank and file or lesser grades who neither engage in pagan sacrifices nor capital punishment, be admitted into the

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[12] *Acta Pauli aus der Heidelberger koptischen Papyrushandschrift*, ed. Carl Schmidt (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1904), 10:3–4; for English translation see Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963–65), 2:385–86.

[13] Ibid., 10:2 (Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 2:384).

[14] Cadoux, *Early Christian Attitude*, 229.

[15] Ibid., 231–32.

[16] Edward A. Ryan, S.J., "The Rejection of Military Service by the Early Christians," *Theological Studies* 13 (March 1952): 14.

[17] Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 36–37, in *PL* 1 (*ANF* 3:45).

[18] Ibid., 37 (*ANF* 3:45).

[19] Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 55, 326–28.

church? No on both counts—for there is no agreement between the divine sacrament and the human sacrament, the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot serve two masters—God and Caesar. And yet some people toy with the subject by saying, "Moses carried a rod, Aaron wore a buckle, John the Baptist girded himself with leather just like soldiers do belts, and Joshua the son of Nun led troops into battle, such that the people waged war." But how will a Christian engage in war—indeed, how will a Christian even engage in military service during peacetime—without the sword, which the Lord has taken away? For although soldiers had approached John to receive instructions and a centurion believed, this does not change the fact that afterward, the Lord, by disarming Peter, disarmed every soldier.[20]

Several features of this speech emerge as noteworthy. First, we find that around the turn of the third century North African Christians began to inquire as to the compatibility of belief and military service. This probably transpired because the Roman military presence in North Africa was considerably small, faced little threat of war, and featured garrisons staffed predominantly by local inhabitants; consequently, Christians there regarded soldiering as a relatively innocuous occupation.

Second, notwithstanding the present tranquility, Tertullian left no doubt as to the intrinsic ungodliness of the military profession itself: one cannot serve both God and Satan; one cannot serve both God and the Emperor. For Tertullian, no Christian may be a soldier and vice versa, a rule applying during war and peacetime alike.

Third, as Jean-Michel Hornus observes, Tertullian's prohibition against military service was not based simply on avoiding idolatry but also on avoiding bloodshed and violence.[21] For this prohibition served as a corollary of Tertullian's earlier verdict that Christians could not hold governmental offices due to the responsibility of such posts to preside over matters of life and death.[22] Christians, in Tertullian's estimation, would arrogate to themselves divine prerogatives if they took the lives of persons God purposed to redeem.

Finally, Tertullian maintained that Jesus ushered in a new era marking a radical break with the former salvific program: God no longer employs the nation of Israel nor any violence associated with its protection to achieve his goal for humanity; rather, God now uses the peaceful fellowship of the regenerate in the final unveiling of his previously veiled will. Echoing this sentiment was Tertullian's contemporary Clement of Alexandria (c. 200), who acknowledged the restful simplicity in Christ's new commandment of love: "For we are trained not in war but in peace. War requires tremendous scheming, but peace and love, simple and quiet lives, require neither weapons nor tremendous scheming."[23]

But the simple solution lauded by Clement soon gave way to a more sophisticated model, as the third-century dominance of the *pax Romana* led congregations to increasingly perceive peacetime military protection as relatively, though not entirely, innocuous. This was especially true among the progressive Montanist sect, which was already admitting noncombatants into its ranks. Not surprisingly, this new perspective found its way into the later writings of Tertullian following his conversion to Montanism in

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[20] Tertullian, *De idololatria*, 19, in *PL* 1 (*ANF* 3:73).

[21] Jean-Michel Hornus, *It Is Not Lawful for Me to Fight* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), 158.

[22] Tertullian, *De idololatria*, 17–18, in *PL* 1 (*ANF* 3:71–73).

[23] Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 1:98–99, in *PG* 8 (*ANF* 2:234–35).

202. Even so, Tertullian continued to display personal ambivalence toward the military profession. In his *Corona* composed c. 208, Tertullian somewhat reluctantly applied Pauline thinking on such matters as circumcision and slavery (1 Cor 7:17–24) to the military profession. Here he argued that, on the one hand, baptized Christians could under no circumstances join the military, but on the other hand, soldiers and public officials could become converts without renouncing their posts so long as they refused to enjoin violence.

> Is it lawful for a human promise (*sacramentum*) to displace one divine, namely, for a person to promise himself to another master after Christ. . . . Shall it, in this case, be regarded lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who takes the sword shall die by the sword? Shall the child of peace join in the battle when he is not even permitted to sue at law? . . . Shall he carry a flag, despite its hostility to Christ? Shall he request a command from the Emperor who has already received one from God? . . . The very transporting of the Christian name from the camp of light over to the camp of darkness constitutes a violation of God's law.
>
> Of course, if faith comes later and finds any already enlisted in military service, their case is different. This is evident from the soldiers whom John baptized and the faithful centurions, namely, the centurion who believed in Christ and the centurion instructed by Peter. However, it needs to be emphasized that when someone becomes a believer and his faith is sealed, there must either be an immediate abandonment of military service (as has been the course with many) or all sorts of finagling must take place so as not to offend God (a strategy which scarcely works outside of the military). . . . Military service neither absolves one from punishment for sins nor exempts one from martyrdom. Nowhere may a Christian change his character. . . . If we were to make an exception for the Christian as soldier, when the command to openly live out the faith is binding on all Christians even in the face of mortal danger, one would overturn the essence of the *sacramentum* of baptism in such a way as to remove any obstacle even to voluntary sins.[24]

From this quotation we can deduce several important points. First, when Christianity spread to the African army, many converts left the military service while others remained as soldiers.

Second, congregations tacitly afforded converted soldiers exceptional treatment as pertaining to Christian discipline: soldiers were permitted to obey the commands of their superiors and carry out the demands of military discipline insofar as those obligations did not contravene the dominical prohibition against violence.

Third, the fact that baptism constituted a sacrament, where the forensic Latin term *sacramentum* originally denoted an unbreakable promise or military vow,[25] spelled a palpable tension between the imperial vows taken by soldiers and the rite of Christian initiation. Hence, as Tertullian stated, soldiers trying to balance both *sacramenta* may well find themselves lost in hopeless wrangling. But notwithstanding his personal doubts, Tertullian allowed converted soldiers to attempt this balancing

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[24] Tertullian, *De Corona*, 11, in *PL* 2 (*ANF* 3:99–100).

[25] Francis J. Hall, *Theological Outlines Volume III: The Doctrine of the Church and of Last Things* (Milwaukee: The Young Churchman, 1895), XXVI.141.2.

act of avoiding contamination with pagan coercion while serving as state representatives expected to implement such coercion.

The Works of Hippolytus (199–217)

As the latter sentiments of Tertullian evolved into mainstream Christian thought, they received reinforcement and amplification by the Roman presbyter Hippolytus. In the first decade of the third century, Hippolytus penned the *Traditio Apostolica*, one of the earliest church orders appearing to express the Christian consensus of his day. Several articles in the document delineate occupations forbidden to baptismal candidates, including brothel keepers, male and female prostitutes, actors, gladiators, idol manufacturers, magicians, and astrologers. Three succeeding articles address the question of the church's attitude toward the military profession.

> A soldier, being inferior in rank to God, must not kill anyone. If ordered to, he must not carry out the order, nor may he take an oath (*sacramentum*) to do so. If he does not accept this, let him be dismissed from the church.

> Anyone bearing the power of the sword, or any city magistrate, who wears purple, let him cease from wearing it at once or be dismissed from the church.

> Any catechumen or believer who wishes to become a soldier must be dismissed from the church because they have despised God.[26]

Here we again note the underlying subtext that baptism remains the *sacramentum*, a Christian's military oath, with allegiance owed to Jesus as the *imperator* (commander and emperor).[27] Since purple garments designated an *imperator*, any Christian holding political or military position who dared to wear the royal color blasphemed Christ and exposed the disingenuousness of his faith. For Hippolytus, moreover, the Pauline maxim, "Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called" (1 Cor 7:24), could be applied to the soldier, but it must be counterbalanced by the Petrine dictum, "We must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29), through disobedience of all orders to exert deadly force. Such disobedience comprised the inevitable consequence of a Christian profession, which believing soldiers must accept even if, in the most extreme case, it cost them their own lives via martyrdom at the hands of their superiors or slaying at the hands of their enemies.

In a linguistically primitive section of the *Canones Hippolyti*, which most Patrologists trace back to its namesake,[28] Hippolytus underscored the applicability of these observations to Christian soldiers and magistrates alike and, for the first time, expanded the treatment of nonviolence to the penitential requirements which must be undertaken by soldiers and magistrates who violate the dominical command against bloodshed.

> Rulers entrusted with the authority to take life and soldiers must not kill anyone, even if they are commanded to do so. . . . Anyone holding a prominent position of leadership or a ruler's authority who does not keep himself disarmed, as the gospel necessitates, must

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[26] Hippolytus, *Traditio Apostolica*, ed. Dom Gregory Dix (London: Alban, 1937), 16:17–19; for English translation see Dom Gregory Dix and Henry Chadwick, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr* (3d ed.; London: Alban, 1992), 26–27.

[27] Ibid., 21:9–11 (Dix and Chadwick, *Treatise*, 34–35); the same points would be asserted later in the third century by Cyprian, *Epistolae*, 15:1, 31:4–5, 54:1, in *PL* 4 (*ANF* 5:295, 313–14, 335–36).

[28] Allen Brent, *Hippolytus & the Roman Church in the Third Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 185–91.

be dismissed from the flock. Let no Christian become a soldier. Any official obligated to carry a sword must not bring bloodguilt upon himself; if he does, he must not participate in the mysteries until he is purified through correction, tears, and groans.[29]

Here a significant distinction is drawn between soldiers, who were legally bound to bear the sword, and magistrates, who found themselves under no such compulsion. While Hippolytus refused any disciplinary leniency to magistrates, expelling them from the church for simply carrying the sword, he extended a great deal of flexibility to soldiers by mandating that they not be dismissed from the flock even if they killed but only suffer banishment from the Eucharist (i.e., "the mysteries" of Christ's body and blood) until they completed a process of rehabilitation. This process consisted of "correction," or receiving individual Scriptural instruction on the satanic nature of violence from the bishop or presbyter, followed by "tears and groans," or publicly demonstrating contrition for the lives taken before the congregation.[30] Only when all members of the community accepted the genuineness of such repentance would the bishop or presbyter, acting on the community's behalf, absolve the soldier of his crimes and readmit him to the Lord's Supper.[31]

To understand this reasoning, we must call attention to two features of Hippolytus' thought delineated in his earlier exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount. First, commenting upon Jesus' identification of anger with murder and lust with adultery, Hippolytus stipulated the equation of thought and act in determining the gravity of any sin.[32] Second, from the *Pater Noster*'s statement on tempting circumstances, Hippolytus argued that sins committed under inescapable temptation deserve little punishment, while sins committed under no such duress deserve severe punishment.[33] From these two sentiments, it logically follows that for Hippolytus, the magistrate who voluntarily takes the sword commits the functional equivalent of premeditated murder and hence merits ecclesiastical expulsion, whereas the soldier who sheds blood on the battlefield commits the functional equivalent of manslaughter and so warrants disciplinary mercy from the church.

The Works of Origen (240–48)

Taking a much harder line than either the late Tertullian or Hippolytus was Origen, who returned to the stance of the second-century church. For Origen, the army of Caesar was diametrically opposed to the army of Christ, which would ultimately stand victorious despite the Roman outlawing of Christianity and persecution against the church. As he wrote c. 240,

The kings of the earth, the Roman senate, the Roman people, and the imperial nobility have banded together in order to vanquish at once the name of Jesus and of Israel,

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[29] *Canones Hippolyti*, in H. Achelis, *Die ältesten Quellen des orientalischen Kirchenrechtes, Erstes Buch* (Berlin: Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1891), 13–14; for English translation see Paul F. Bradshaw, ed., *The Canons of Hippolytus*, trans. Carol Bebawi (Nottingham: Grove, 1987), 19.

[30] H. B. Swete, "Penitential Discipline in the First Three Centuries," in Paul Finney, *Christian Life: Ethics, Morality, and Discipline in the Early Church* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 256–62.

[31] On the same score, Basil the Great significantly ruled during the post-Constantinian period that those who shed blood in war should abstain from the Eucharist for three years: see *Epistolae*, 188:13, 217:56–57, in *PG* 32; English translation available in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, 14 vols., ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1890), 8:228, 256.

[32] Brent, *Hippolytus*, 520.

[33] Ibid., 166.

for they have established in their laws that there shall be no Christians. But under the leadership of Jesus, his soldiers will always triumph; hence we too say what is written in Ezra, "From you, Lord, is the victory, and I am your servant."[34]

Therefore, in an Isaianic vein, Origen's classic *Contra Celsum* (248) absolutely forbade Christian military participation, such that soldiers must abjure their posts to become followers of Jesus:

> We must delightfully come to the counsels of Jesus by cutting down our hostile and impudent swords into plowshares and transforming into pruning-hooks the spears formerly employed in war. So we no longer take up the sword against nations, nor do we learn war anymore, since we have become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader, instead of those whom our ancestors followed.[35]

Perhaps the most erudite biblical interpreter of his day, Origen supported this conclusion with two significant exegetical advances. Employing the technique of canonical synthesis, Origen first contended that the *mitzvoth* within Torah and the constitutional *halakhah* could not have remained unchanged if Israel had collectively embraced the gospel: "For Christians cannot slay their enemies or, as Moses commanded, condemn to be burned or stoned those who had violated the law."[36] Notice that, contrary to the allegorical interpretation one might expect from Origen, this argument depends on the presupposition of Hebrew Biblical literalism.

Similarly, as a bridge to his next insight, Origen remarkably proceeded to maintain that it was necessary for God to give Israel the right to use violence and capital punishment, since God knew in his omniscience the counterfactual truth that if Israel were not permitted to employ deadly force, then they would have quickly been vanquished by enemy nations. However, this same divine providence now elected to supplant the model of Jewish nationalism and install a new form, in light of God's apprehension of the counterfactual truth that if Christ's followers did not wield the sword, then paradoxically the church would become stronger the more it were persecuted.[37]

Given this background, Origen made his second stride with a distinctive exegesis of Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 2:13–17, two texts which have since functioned as the centerpiece of many just war arguments. Here Origen insisted that, indeed, Christians must obey the governing authorities; but the highest form of such obedience is to do whatever comprises the best interest of the authorities even if it contravenes their commands. Since underlying every physical battle is a greater spiritual one, when commanded to fight, Christians render obedience superior to the command itself by praying for the state, thus serving as warriors who fight the real battle of which the authorities are unaware: "Accordingly, no one fights better for the emperor than we do. We do not indeed fight under him, although he requires it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army—an army of piety—by offering our prayers to God."[38] Origen cited as proof of this exegesis its ability to harmonize the texts under investigation both with 1 Timothy 2:1–3, which mandates prayer for the authorities so that believers may live peaceful lives, and with the *logia Jesu*. Reasoning by analogy from Roman religious *praxis*, Origen attempted to persuade

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[34] Origen, *Homilia in Jesu Nave*, 9:11, in *PG* 12 (no English translation available).

[35] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4:82, in *PG* 11 (*ANF* 4:558).

[36] Ibid., 7:25, in *PG* 11 (*ANF* 4:621).

[37] Ibid., 7:26, in *PG* 11 (*ANF* 4:622).

[38] Ibid., 7:73, in PG 11 (*ANF* 4:668).

the authorities that, while initially counterintuitive, his model of genuine obedience through formal disobedience proved ultimately compelling.

> We render assistance to the emperor by means of spiritual protection through our prayers. So we remind those who order us, ostensibly for the common good, to proceed into battle and to kill, that even their own priests are not allowed to be soldiers, because the Divine must be worshiped with pure hands. If that is reasonable, how much more reasonable is it that we, while others go to war, preside as priests and servants of God in the campaign by keeping our hands pure and praying for the lawful side and its victory. Consequently, we render a far greater service to the kings than the warriors in the field, because by our prayers we overcome the demons that provoke the war and destroy the peace.[39]

After his martyrdom in 254, Origen's unconditional ban against violence emerged as the official position of the Alexandrian church until 381,[40] when Theodosius I decreed Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. Moreover, this Alexandrian interdiction received acceptance among some Latin Fathers, even as late as the first decade of the fourth century. Thus writing c. 307, Lactantius, the traditionally styled "Christian Cicero," declared that no just person could take the life of another, whether through combat or through capital punishment: "Before God it is unlawful for a just person either to engage in warfare, since warfare is injustice itself, or to judge anyone guilty of a capital charge, since it makes no difference whether you put someone to death by word or by sword—it is the act of putting to death itself which is prohibited."[41] Likewise, in the anonymous *Acta Maximiliani*, the early fourth-century novelist portrays Maximilian, the son of a veteran who is thus obliged to serve in the army, declaring repeatedly, "I am a Christian, and therefore I will not serve."[42]

Concluding Reflections: Evaluating the Patristic Nonviolent Ethic

Prior to the Edict of Milan, the ancient church leadership's aversion to civic occupations invested with the sword, including magistracy and military, could be summarized in three observations. First, Christianity on principle rejected war and the shedding of human blood. Second, magistrates under certain circumstances were obliged to pass the death sentence, and soldiers were obliged to carry out all acts of violence ordered by their military commanders. Third, the unconditional imperial oath or *sacramentum* required of the civic official stood in direct conflict with the baptismal *sacramentum* to God.

On this threefold basis, church leaders universally denounced the practice of baptized civilians serving in either the government or the military from the New Testament period to the reign of Constantine. Furthermore, while some segments of the post-174 church leadership permitted converted

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[39] Ibid., 4:82, in *PG* 11 (*ANF* 4:187).

[40] Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 630–42, 699–701. As previously suggested in n. 6, assessing how widely this official position was obeyed by the laity depends upon one's interpretation of highly equivocal epigraphic evidence and the degree to which one believes sociological analyses remedy the shortage of textual evidence as to the behavior of lay Christians in late antiquity. For an excellent discussion of this problem see Virginia Burrus, ed., *Late Ancient Christianity: A People's History of Christianity*, Vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 1–25, 213–33.

[41] Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, 6:20,16, in *PL* 6 (*ANF* 7:186–88, 181).

[42] *Acta Maximiliani*, in D. R. Knopf and G. Krüger, *Ausgewälte Martyrerakten* (3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1929), 86–87; for English translation see Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 248–49.

magistrates and soldiers to retain their positions insofar as they practiced civil disobedience when their duties violated the precepts of the gospel, other segments maintained the earlier ecumenical standard of not allowing converts this luxury.[43] With this ethic expounded, we shall now critically examine its validity against the absolute standard of Scripture, in order to reveal both our "blind spots" and those of the ante-Nicene church on the matter of nonviolence so that we may learn to emulate their successes and avoid their failures.

Among recent historical Jesus scholarship, there has emerged something of a consensus (despite sharp disagreement on other points) that one of Jesus' central aims in giving the Sermon on the Mount was to promote a countercultural program of nonviolent Jewish resistance against the oppressive Roman occupying forces. Through a series of real-life Palestinian examples, Jesus attempted to teach his Jewish contemporaries how to respond to the Romans in such a way as to not overcome evil with evil but to conquer evil with good, thereby proving to be the light of the world.[44] In sum, Jesus declared that any appropriate response to evil must refuse to let the evil define the sufferer (so the sufferer does not stoop to its level) and must poignantly expose the evil for precisely what it is to the one committing the evil.[45] Refraining from reading either pro- or anti-statist presuppositions into the text, an even-handed exegesis would therefore point out that, without demanding an exceptionless pacifism, the Sermon indeed compels believers to display extreme reluctance on matters of war and to exercise discernment toward political agendas by measuring them against Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Insofar as the ancient church correctly stressed this often underdeveloped aspect of Christian obedience, the contemporary church would do well to follow its lead by thoughtfully and prayerfully reconsidering the ethical viability of situations where believers take the acceptability of engagement in potentially violent government-sponsored causes for granted.

To the contrary of the Patristic ethic, however, New Testament scholarship has reached something of a consensus as to the meaning of Jesus' hallmark antithesis between the kingdom of the world (or, more simply, the world) and the Kingdom of God. On the one hand, the kingdom of the world denoted the philosophical system of self-centeredness, tribalism, domination, and oppression according to which the world operates and ultimately ruled by Satan.[46] On the other hand, the Kingdom of God conveyed the dynamic of God's kingship being increasingly applied over all earthly affairs, whether social, political, economic, aesthetic, or religious, in a world that is not yet fully under his authority. But the way God rules is quite different from the "top-down" imposition of power over others endemic to the world; rather, God's Kingdom functions as a "power-under" or "bottom-up" transformative system

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[43] Early in the fourth century this situation became otherwise, as the Council of Arles (314), meeting one year after the Edict of Milan, demanded that Christians consent to being drafted into the military and forbade current Christian soldiers from deserting the military. As Harnack demonstrated (*Militia Christi*, 88–90), Arles marked a fundamental revision of the church leadership's position concerning the army and war.

[44] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 530–31; Dale C. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1999), 27–40; John Dominic Crossan, *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007), 116–18.

[45] Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 10–15; Wright, *Jesus*, 446.

[46] Marcus Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006), 225–35; Wright, *Jesus*, 608; Crossan, *God and Empire*, 78–82; cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; 6:12; 1 John 5:19; Rev 9:11; 11:15; 13:14; 18:23; 20:3, 8.

that works for the sole purpose of replicating agapē to all people at all times in all places unconditionally, carrying out the will of God at the probable cost of self-interest.[47]

Now where in this scheme did the state fall? Understandably, because of their persecution by the Roman Empire, the second and third-century church conflated the world with the state. But although the state can become wrongly allied with the world, even to the degree of serving as the chief instrument of the world (as seen in the cases of the Babylonian and Roman Empires), no New Testament evidence indicates that the state in and of itself is identical to the world (or, conversely, the Kingdom of God). Rather, the biblical writers regarded the state as a *tertian quid*, providentially used by God for the protection of the good and the punishment of the wicked. We may also validly discern from Jesus' relentless preaching against the blasphemy of conflating Judaism (whose redeemed community he was inaugurating) with nationalistic ambitions that church and government must remain separate since their divinely ordained roles are fundamentally distinct; confusion of one with the other inevitably destroys the purpose and structure of both.[48]

Conjoining these insights with the testimony of the Hebrew Bible, it follows that the answer to whether Christians may serve in government seems to be yes, as long as they do so counterculturally. In other words, Christians in government must disregard the worldly standards permeating politics and instead govern by distinctly Kingdom-of-God standards.

The classic example of Kingdom people so serving is Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego), who were pressed into service by the Babylonian Empire, the very government which had taken the Israelites captive and consequently became the paradigm of an anti-God and anti-Christian government throughout the remainder of Scripture.[49] Without trusting in the Babylonian Empire to accomplish God's purposes, Daniel and his friends lovingly and responsibly served as "resident aliens" in this foreign juggernaut and thereby advanced the salvific plan of God. The fact that these Hebrew Biblical figures displayed obedience to God by serving in a state lying firmly within the world's clutches further substantiates the fundamental distinction between these two concepts, a distinction that is not evaporated even when the world powerfully manifests itself through the state.

Throughout church history, when Christians have disregarded this distinction and isolated themselves from participation in government, as seen in the separatist branch of sixteenth-century Anabaptism and in its contemporary descendants (e.g., Amish, Hutterites, Old Orders, conservative Mennonites), the case can be made that believers invite unnecessary suspicion of treason by the state[50] and, even worse, shirk their dominically assigned social responsibilities. Such criticisms were not only levied against the separatist Anabaptists by Magisterial reformers like Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin,

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[47] N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 36–37; Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007), 275–77; Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 32.

[48] MacGregor, *Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology*, 295.

[49] E.g., Ps 137:1, 8; Isa 43:14; 47:1; 48:14; Jer 50:13–14, 18, 23–24, 29; 51:7–24; Ezra 5:12; 1 Pet 5:13; Rev 14:8; 16:19; 18:2–21.

[50] Here I am not arguing against suspicion of treason *per se*, as many times the state will exhibit such suspicion precisely as the result of believers living out their Kingdom vocation (e.g., the life of Jesus and the New Testament church), but rather against believers needlessly inciting such suspicion.

but also by evangelical Radical reformers like Balthasar Hubmaier.[51] For tolerating society through nonresistance is a far cry from Jesus' mandate to change society through nonviolent resistance.

We close by pointing out that our historical investigation, although furnishing the necessary background to informed decision-making, leaves unanswered a series of controversial questions which immediately transpire from this discussion. For instance, are Christians allowed to take up arms in self-defense? Is there ever such a thing as a just war? Can Christians ever validly serve in the military? Since these questions fall outside this piece's historical domain of interpretation and within the pastoral realm of application, we shall make no attempt to adjudicate them here. Rather, we shall note that these are precisely the questions Christians need to continually ask and wrestle with, always being sure to demonstrate a charitable openness toward, and an eagerness to learn from, solutions proposed by sisters and brothers in Christ outside their own faith communities. By so shining multiple lights on this ethical prism from the widest spectrum of angles, the church procures the best chance of authentically living out the social implications of the gospel and thereby displaying obedience to Jesus in both word and deed.

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[51] MacGregor, *Central European Synthesis*, 11–12, 227, 240–41.

Truthfulness in Usefulness:
Stanley Fish and American Literary Pragmatism

— **Dane C. Ortlund** —

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"For to freedom you yourselves were called, brothers; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." —Gal 5:13[1]

This paper explores the contemporary hermeneutical[2] approach of literary pragmatism, analyzing both the benefits and the potential dangers therein, particularly with regard to interpreting the text of Scripture. To this end, I will examine the pragmatism of Stanley Fish and use (no pun intended) his position as an entry point into this discussion. I will suggest that literary pragmatism does to texts what Paul calls Christians to avoid: the use of a good gift from God—in Galatians, freedom; in pragmatism, a text—for self-directed, parasitic purposes. The antidote, in both cases, is to "through love serve one another."

Two initial points of clarification are in order. First, in what follows I am interacting primarily with *American* literary pragmatism. This is not to say features here discussed do not exist in other cultures. It is rather to set pragmatism off from other poststructuralist approaches more pervasive on the Continent, the main example of which has been deconstruction, set forth in the twentieth century preponderantly by the French writer Jacques Derrida.[3] Deconstruction and pragmatism are agreed that determinate textual meaning is a myth, yet while the former seeks to pull the text apart to discern the power struggles at work in the words, the latter employs the text for its own purposes. More to follow on this distinction. For now we simply recognize that we are dealing in this paper not with "undoers" but "users."[4]

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[1] All Scripture quotations are the author's translation.

[2] For the purposes of this paper I am operating on the definition of hermeneutics suggested by Kevin J. Vanhoozer: "the reflection on the principles that undergird correct textual interpretation" (*Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], 19).

[3] See, e.g., "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in Richard Macksey and Eugene Donato, eds., *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 247–265; *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism," in Chantal Moufe, ed., *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (London: Routledge, 1996), 77–88.

[4] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* 20, 158, respectively.

Second, the object of our study is American *literary* pragmatism. We are dealing with pragmatism as an attitude toward neither business ethics nor automobile mechanics nor grocery shopping strategies, but *texts*. The object in view is not objects but words. How does pragmatism affect reading?

I. What is Literary Pragmatism?

Three pillars of thought form the edifice of the literary pragmatism of Stanley Fish. These will form the skeleton of Part I. All three serve to answer the question, How does one find textual meaning? Is there such a thing as "meaning" in a text? These pillars are: (1) textual meaning is determined *by the reader*; (2) textual meaning is determined by its *usefulness* to the reader; and (3) textual meaning is determined by its usefulness to the reader *in the context of communal consensus*. Our progression through these three assertions will increasingly sharpen our understanding of pragmatism, each point serving as a foundation for the next. What starts more broadly will gradually become more clearly defined.

Pillar #1: Textual meaning is determined by the reader

Pragmatism proceeds on the understanding that whatever meaning may emerge from the act of reading resides not in the sender of the communication but in the receiver. With this pillar we are not yet divorced from other postmodern[5] approaches to texts; deconstruction dwells in complete harmony with the contention that the reader ultimately determines "meaning." Though deconstruction dismantles the text while pragmatism employs it, both view the reader as the primary semantic authority in these tasks.

By referring to the *reader's* interpretive authority, we are identifying pragmatism (and deconstruction) as lying squarely in the flow of postmodern thought, since we are setting forth the reader as the determiner of meaning in distinction from either the *author* or the *text* itself. Set in the context of the stages of intellectual thought that have come into view since the Enlightenment burst onto the scene in the late eighteenth century (and to shamelessly oversimplify), Pre-Modernism can be seen as the age of the author, Modernism as the age of the text, and Postmodernism as the age of the reader. Authorial intent was once generally agreed to be the key factor in determining an objective meaning. This was the interpretive rubric under which, for example, the Reformers of sixteenth-century Europe operated. With Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and the rationalism born out of the Enlightenment, the *text* came to be seen as definitive in discovering the (still objective) meaning. The Postmodernism of the late stages of the twentieth century has completed the interpretive orbit: neither the author nor the text but the reader establishes meaning.

It is not hard to see the connection between postmodernism's subjectivism and the authority of the reader in determining meaning. If the author or text establishes meaning, that meaning is impenetrably fixed. Though ambiguity is still inevitable to some degree, meaning cannot change. In Pre-Modern and Modern reading, interpreters may disagree as to what that meaning is, but everyone will agree that they cannot *all* be correct. Someone is right and someone is wrong. Postmodern readers, however, generally

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[5] On the use of this term, I agree with David Clark: "Postmodernism is a broad and nebulous concept. Part of the problem is that diverse fields like literature, politics, architecture, philosophy, economics, theology, and photography exhibit trends that some call postmodern. How could an architectural style and theological theme both count as postmodern in one tight sense of that word?" (*To Know and Love God: Method For Theology* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2003], 141–142). In spite of this admitted difficulty, by *postmodernism* I here refer to "fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all universal or 'totalizing' discourses" (David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* [Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990], 9).

have little difficulty ascribing validity to various interpretations. This is consonant with the kind of pluralism currently *en vogue* which affirms any truth as legitimate so long as it is sincerely held, and held in a way that is tolerant of the views of others—of which some postmodern interpreters are quite intolerant.

How, according to Fish, does the reader determine the meaning of a text? "The reader's response," he writes, "is not *to* the meaning; it *is* the meaning."[6] "Meaning" is not something I come to a text to discover but to create. Until I read, no meaning exists. As Fish looks back on his early days, he sees that he had been falling into the same trap into which others now fall: "I did what my critics always do: I 'saw' what my interpretive principles permitted or directed me to see, and then I turned around and attributed what I had 'seen' to a text and an intention. What my principles direct me to 'see' are readers performing acts."[7]

What a mirror is to a window, then, indeterminacy is to determinacy. Reading a text, according to poststructuralism, is ultimately reading oneself, insofar as one only apprehends the text in the context of one's own environment, experiences, limitations, and pre-understandings. Reading is therefore like looking in a mirror: one sees merely a reflection—albeit a sophisticated or even indiscernible reflection— of oneself. Determinate textual approaches, on the other hand, trust in an objective "other" to which the text points. One looks not into a mirror and thus back at oneself but through a translucent window at reality. Just as some windows, moreover, may be more stained than others, some texts are closer to truth than others. It is precisely to this, of course, that the poststructuralist objects: there is no such thing as "closer to truth." Such language is blind to its own pre-conditioning and experiential influence of one's interpretation.

The following chart illustrates the fundamental difference between determinate approaches to texts and poststructural, indeterminate approaches. Determinacy reads with the understanding that it is possible for the text to speak of transcendent, objective reality. Indeterminacy reads with the understanding that whatever one gleans from a text is, in the end, only a reflection of the reader's own personal history and environment. There are therefore as many potential interpretations as there are readers. A correspondence to external reality is exchanged for a cul-de-sac of self-generated reality.

Determinate Reading

Reader

Text

Objective Reality

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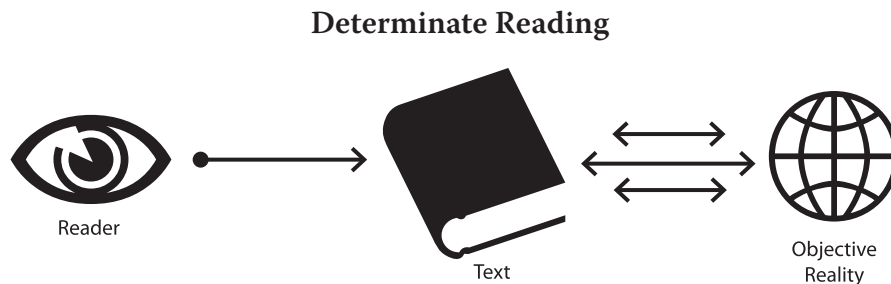
[6] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 3. "Meaning is a product of the way it is read" (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Spirit of Understanding: Special Revelation and General Hermeneutics," in Roger Lundin, ed., *Disciplining Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Christian Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 146). "Meaning is located not in some inert objective entity (the text), but in the dynamic experience of reading" (Vanhoozer, *Meaning?* 56). See also Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1995), 127–129.

[7] Fish, *Text?* 12.

Indeterminate Reading

Reader

Text

Reader's
Own Reflection
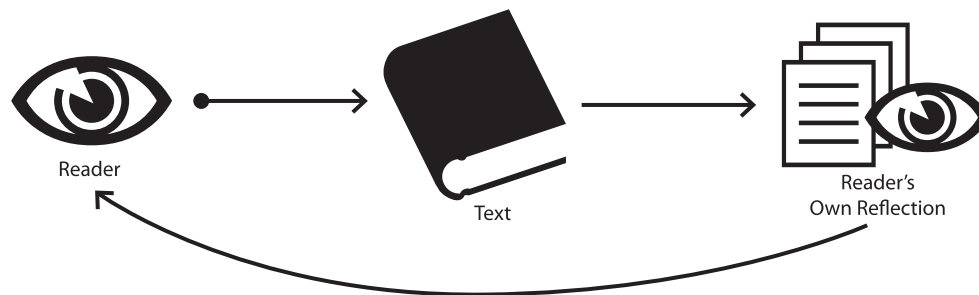
Pillar #2: Textual meaning is determined by its usefulness to the reader

Here we narrow down our understanding from that which is generically reader-oriented to the common criterion by which specifically pragmatic readers come to textual meaning: usefulness.[8] And we are now in a position to propose a general definition of literary pragmatism: it is *a textual approach in which "cost-benefit analysis" trumps all other criteria of meaning such that the locus of textual meaning lies not in fixed objectivity (external to oneself) but in self-directed "problem-solving capability"*[9] *(internal to oneself).*

The motto of such an approach is "as long as it works." One asks not, Is it objectively true? Do I have a responsibility to it? Rather the questions are, Is there personal usefulness in this text? Does it work? If so, need anything else really factor in to identify meaning? According to Anthony Thiselton, Fish believes it is "operationally justifiable, and even necessary if confusion is to be avoided, to *replace* the question 'What does this *mean*?' by the question 'What does this *do*?'"[10] One asks not if a text possesses truth-correspondence but if it is effective. "*Pragmatic* theories of truth operate simply in terms of supposed instrumental success."[11]

Richard Rorty, another pragmatist, further elucidates the distinctiveness of literary pragmatism. Reading, says Rorty,

> may be something too weird and idiosyncratic to bother with. . . . Or it may be exciting and convincing. . . . It may be *so* exciting and convincing that one has the illusion that one now sees what a certain text is *really* about. But what excites and convinces is a function of the needs and purposes of those who are being excited and convinced. So it

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[8] I thus disagree with Mark Allan Powell, who states, "Reader-response criticism is a pragmatic approach to literature that emphasizes the role of the reader in determining meaning" (*What is Narrative Criticism?* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 16). The reverse is more accurate: rather than reader-response being "a pragmatic approach," pragmatism is a breed of reader-response criticism (along with, for example, deconstructionism).

[9] Jeffrey Stout, "A Lexicon of Modern Philosophy," *RelSRev* 13 (1987): 20.

[10] Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 538. Emphasis original.

[11] Roger Lundin, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 200. Charles Peirce describes pragmatism thus: "Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings you conceive the objects of your conception to have. Then, your conception of those effects is the whole of your conception of the object" (Andrew McMurry, "The Possibility of Literary Meaning: A Peircean Suggestion for Derrida and Rorty," *Sound* 79 [1996]: 484).

seems to me simpler to scrap the distinction between using and interpreting, and just distinguish between uses by different people for different purposes.[12]

Thus this essay is entitled "Truthfulness *in* Usefulness" rather than "Truthfulness *or* Usefulness." The Pragmatist does not negate meaning in a text. Truthfulness does, in a manner of speaking, exist—but it is discovered not *before* the utilization of a text but *in it.*

With Rorty stands Fish. The attempt to distinguish between interpreting a text and using it is in vain. Meaning is established in the reader's practical employment of the text rather than in a truth value external to the reader. "The text as an entity independent of interpretation drops out," writes Fish, "and is replaced by the texts that emerge as the consequence of our interpretive activities."[13]

The purchase of a computer supplies a helpful analogy both of the goal of pragmatism and its distinction from deconstruction. One may buy a new computer in order to take it apart to better understand how it was assembled and by what biases. For example, how is the hard drive laid out? What types of disk drives exist? How much storage space is there? What is the screen resolution? Once such questions have been investigated, one understands that the computer is actually a series of technical decisions based on predispositions that are a result of the technicians or computer company's environment.

A computer may also be purchased, however, to be used. One needs a device by which one can check email, compose documents, and schedule activities. It is of little interest what decisions went into the assembly of the computer so long as it serves its purpose and helps daily living in a practical way.

The former computer-purchasing method represents deconstruction and the latter pragmatism. Both see interpretation as finally dependent on one's own ingrained tradition. Yet while the aggressive pessimism of deconstruction halts at this point and seeks to disassemble such ideological motives, the benign optimism of pragmatism lets sleeping dogs lie and goes on to employ the text anyhow. The suspicious scowl of deconstruction is replaced with a contented shrug as the reader simply employs an otherwise meaningless text. Thiselton defines the pragmatic approach this way: "Truth claims rest on socio-pragmatic hermeneutical criteria internal to the persuasive techniques of given communities."[14] To use a text is to interpret it; to interpret it is to use it.

Yet what does Thiselton mean by referring to "the persuasive techniques of given communities"? Clarification of this lies in Fish's third assertion.

Pillar #3: Textual meaning is determined by its usefulness to the reader in the context of communal consensus

With this assertion Stanley Fish offers a contribution distinct from his fellow pragmatists. With the first assertion—that textual meaning lies in the experience of the reader—Fish finds himself not only with other pragmatists but also with deconstructionists. With assertion number two, the erection of usefulness as the ultimate criterion of meaning, deconstructionists drop out. Here in our third assertion we further narrow down literary pragmatism and come to the main point of contribution in the work of Fish which sets him off from other pragmatists such as Rorty.

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[12] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin, 1999), 144. Emphasis original.

[13] Fish, *Text?* 13.

[14] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 474.

What is this assertion, and what might prompt Fish to make it? The two questions are closely connected.

Fish holds that not only is interpretation reader-centered and governed by practical usefulness, but also that what provides an overarching framework by which one can avoid interpretive anarchy is the consensus of the community. That is, while usefulness determines meaning, the corporate body determines usefulness. Yet how can we apply the verb "determines" to someone like Fish who argues that meaning is indeterminate? "Meaning for Fish," explains Vanhoozer, "is determinate only in the sense that readers always read within particular contexts with specific interpretative rules. In short, while texts may be indeterminate, social contexts are surely not."[15] No interpreter is a hermeneutical island. Interpretive isolation is a myth. Rather, says Fish, one is always reading, always understanding, always interpreting, always using, in "social and institutional circumstances"[16] that not only fuel but govern interpretation. Fish's pragmatism is not totally stricture-free.

These two criteria—that community both determines and delimits interpretation—comprise the two hands of Fish's pragmatism. On the one hand, he retains reader-oriented interpretation with reader-generated meaning. Yet on the other hand, he prevents interpretive chaos with communal delimiting of meaning. In this way Fish strives to walk the narrow ledge between the twin precipices of literary absolutism and literary anarchy. Vanhoozer perceives the same difficulty, but while he provides as a third alternative adequacy as a middle road between absolutism and anarchy (maintaining author-centered, determinate meaning),[17] Fish maintains his reader-centered, pragmatic stance by postulating communal consensus as that which prevents frenetic interpretive free-for-all.

Herein one smells the motivation for such a significant addendum to pillars one and two. With his focus on social context Fish is able to have his interpretive cake and eat it too. Meaning cannot make a claim on one, so long as one can find corporate support for one's understanding. The search for textual meaning has become the search not for a prescriptive standard to which I conform but a potential source we may or may not choose to heed, depending on its benefit to us.

II. Where Has Literary Pragmatism Come From?

The literary pragmatism of Stanley Fish views interpretation, then, as reader-centered, governed by usefulness, and communally delimited. Before assessing this view, is it possible to suggest possible roots from which it has grown? I believe it is, and I will do so by briefly commenting on pragmatism's rise in the wake of the Enlightenment. The relationship of literary pragmatism to the Enlightenment is one of both continuity and discontinuity, with an emphasis on the latter.

Pragmatism has shown brief glimpses of life throughout the last three centuries. While it has always been part of human nature to a degree, it has surfaced in conspicuous manner at a few points along the way. The suspicious attitude with which G. E. Lessing and Ernst Troeltsch approached the text was certainly mirrored more recently by such literary pessimists as Derrida, Rorty, and Fish. Indeed, the

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[15] Vanhoozer, *Meaning?* 168. See pp. 168–174 for a full delineation of Fish's position. See also Hart, *Faith Thinking*, 128.

[16] Fish, *Text?* 371.

[17] The terms "absolutism" and "anarchy" are Vanhoozer's (*Meaning?* 139). Anthony Thiselton similarly refers to this middle way as "the need to steer between the Scylla of Cartesianism and the Charybdis of radical postmodern polyvalency" (Lundin, Walhout, and Thiselton, *Promise of Hermeneutics*, 156; see also Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 541).

way in which the Enlightenment encouraged readers to place themselves over the text has been carried down to us today. We might also see interesting connections between Fish's communal consensus and Catholicism's Tradition Criticism, in which community determines meaning.[18]

In short, the autonomy and normativity of human reason which ascended academia's throne two hundred years ago—with Kant, Semler and Lessing tending to the train of its royal robe and heralding its new sovereign decree—is cousin to contemporary literary pragmatism, in which "there has been a powerful desire in American pragmatic philosophy to cede to the self an autonomy, an ability to produce its own personal truth regardless and even in spite of its environment."[19] The Enlightenment erected Self as sovereign. Pragmatism continues this race and, though it may run in a slightly different direction, carries the same baton.

Yet the central way in which postmodern pragmatism has been birthed is not in continuity with but as a *reaction to* Enlightenment thinking. European rationalism is preponderantly concerned with understanding; pragmatism is concerned with usefulness. Both want to figure it out on their own, but whereas children of the Enlightenment seek to find an external meaning on their own, pragmatism's offspring use the text and that *is* the meaning. Both place Self at the center. But pragmatic reading not only cedes to Self final determinate power, but Self becomes the only one in whom such meaning can truly be said to reside. The reader is authoritative not only in finding meaning but in creating it. We do not come to meaning; we produce it.

III. What Are the Strengths and Weaknesses of Literary Pragmatism?

While aspects of literary pragmatism demand our attention and even agreement, other elements— and, I will assert, the interpretive system as a whole—ought to be rejected.

Strengths

Two strengths in Fish's pragmatism stand out. First, the world of academia, which I love and of which I am a part, could doubtless benefit from a good shot of pragmatism. It is easy to fail to have one's study of Scripture and theology percolate down through the finer academic questions into everyday living. The crucial task of *doing something* with what we read must not be neglected. So I applaud pragmatism's engaged reading. Casting one's eyes over pages of words—especially those of Scripture—is always *unto* something. The pragmatist, quite rightly, reads with a purpose. We might even note a correlation between pragmatism and the New Testament epistle of James. Here we learn of the crucial relationship between faith and works: faith never stands alone but is always accompanied by righteous deeds (2:14–26). Similarly, pragmatism is concerned to see something happen: fruit, effects, benefit. Mere understanding is not enough. For James, even the demons believe; for Fish, even the unsophisticated and naïve read. Both see action as the appointed consummation of faith/reading.

Yet even here we must note the crucial difference between James' active faith and Fish's active pragmatism. While the former sees fruit as the natural product of an objective, determinate reality (God's

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[18] The significant difference between the two, however, is that Catholicism looks to the *history* of tradition for guidance, whereas this is just what Fish seeks to avoid: he is concerned with *contemporary* communal consensus. Indeed, for Fish, unlike for Catholicism, if a community today sees a textual meaning that a community of yesterday rejected, it is the present community whose validity trumps all others.

[19] McMurry, "Possibility of Literary Meaning," 478.

Word: 2:10–11; 4:11; truth: 3:14; 5:19), the latter sees fruit as the product of subjective, indeterminate (albeit communal) reading of the text. I part ways with Fish by observing that pragmatism operates on the basis of essentially self-directed goals. Yet James is after other-directedness. The very meaning of faith, for him, is that it does not stay at the level of what benefits oneself. Rather it seeks the good of others (1:27).

The communal focus of Fish's pragmatism is a second strength. This is particularly helpful in distinguishing the reader-centered approach of Fish from that of deconstructionism. While it may appear that Fish emphasizes this communal focus merely to salvage his literary approach from utter anarchy, the point stands that his advocacy of corporate agreement takes a huge step toward meaningful interpretation. With his corporate focus Fish admits to the fallibility of human understanding executed in isolation.

Weaknesses

What, then, are literary pragmatism's weaknesses?

First—to use a previous metaphor—there is such a thing as a computer. One can deconstruct or one can use, but the fact remains that computers exist independent of how any particular consumer—or community of consumers—implement them. One does not create a computer by walking into Best Buy; one comes to Best Buy to see what computers are there. One does not create meaning by opening a book; one comes to the book to see what meaning is there. Reading does not *construct* textual meaning but *contemplates* it.

Second, pragmatism corrupts the text by making it a means instead of an end. Texts are vehicles for pragmatic travels in which the destination is dictated by the reader rather than allowing the author to determine the destination. Fish mutinies against the text rather than humbly letting the text lead where it will. To put it most bluntly, reader-determined interpretation is, by definition, prideful; author- or text-determined interpretation is, by definition, humble. For the former proceeds on the conviction that Self is best suited to exercise power as evaluative agent; the latter proceeds on the conviction that one must stand under something outside oneself in order for responsible understanding to occur. Exegesis must not become exploitation.

Third, it is to be questioned whether Fish has successfully avoided interpretive anarchy. While he has put some limit on interpretive polyvalency by employing the authority of the community, this does not ultimately solve the dilemma, for even communal consensus is free to fill the text with whatever meaning is useful in its own social context. Is Fish not trading individual anarchy for group anarchy?

Indeed, if group consensus consists of agreed upon *evil*, this will be even more difficult to overcome than individual evil, bringing us to pragmatism's fourth weakness. It is a small step to take pragmatism from the world of literary interpretation to that of ethical discernment. The disastrous result is that the group is not able to be corrected from outside their own communal agreement. There is room for neither personal nor group transformation from an "other." "There can be no prophetic address 'from beyond.'"[20] Evil comes not only through individuals but through groups—which ought not to surprise us due to sin's universality. World history is littered with examples of corporate evil that was unwilling to

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[20] Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 531. "If all the weight in reader-oriented hermeneutics is placed on prior expectations, codes, conventions, horizons, *out of which meaning is determined and constructed* it is difficult to see how the text can transform or correct the horizons of reading communities 'from outside'" (537; emphasis original).

be corrected from the outside. We must therefore be careful, as Vanhoozer pithily puts it, not to "reduce the apostolic confession in Acts 15, 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' to Fish's abbreviated, User-friendly formula: 'It seemed good to us.'"[21]

Fifth, Fish fails to see the impact texts can make on people, whether as individuals or as groups. If the community establishes meaning, ever standing over the text to use it and never under the text to receive it, how did a smattering of first-century Jews come to equate a nomadic teacher with Yahweh? How did Augustine, Luther and the Wesleys have their lives turned upside-down on the reading of an ancient letter (Romans)?[22] How did Jonathan Edwards approach life in a wholly (and permanently) new way after a single reading of 1 Timothy 1:17? Such textual intrusion into one's native community go unaccounted for by Fish.

IV. Literary Pragmatism in Action: Romans 11:6 As a Test Case

> But if it is by grace, it is no longer from works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. —Rom 11:6

What does literary pragmatism look like in action, specifically in approaching a biblical text? For this brief concluding exercise we consider Romans 11:6. Speaking of the remnant of Israel that is to be saved, Paul appeals to *the crucial importance of retaining verbal significance in words*. Grace is only grace if it is not from works. How might pragmatists treat such a verse?

The answer to this question may best be seen in distinguishing a pragmatic approach to this verse from that of a deconstructionist. Applied to Romans 11:6, the deconstructionist asks what Paul was striving to do with these words, then seeks to lay bare the hidden motivation driving the verse. What was the latent agenda? What in Paul's experience made him so afraid of "works"? Why is he so adamant that works be excluded? What can I learn about him and the atmosphere in which he wrote, undressing all the ideological cover-up of the statement?

The pragmatist queries the verse differently, not asking how the *writer* was attempting to use the words but how *we* might profitably use them. Does Romans 11:6 help me in my day-to-day existence? Do I feel more at ease with myself knowing that this salvation Paul speaks of is not by works but by grace? Do I sense as I read it that I do not need to try as hard as I thought to feel accepted? If so, I have created the meaning of the text. The text has not approached me as a separate, meaningful entity, but as an empty vessel with potential for meaning. I fill the vessel as I use it, and the end product is "meaning." The text is not living; it comes to life when I read it and use it.

Fish would, moreover, delimit the impression of Romans 11:6 upon the reader with the criterion of communal consensus. I cannot give "grace" any meaning I want: the community in which I operate must be recognized as that which informs my understanding and thus stands behind even my own experience of reading the text. In this way the community establishes certain limits on the meaning of grace—limits which, according to Fish, can never quite be nailed down.

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[21] Vanhoozer, *Meaning?* 412.

[22] Vanhoozer mentions Augustine and Luther in this regard (ibid., 170–171).

V. Conclusion

In the final analysis, literary pragmatism's approach to Romans 11:6 must be rejected for the reason C. K. Barrett gives in his comment on this verse: "If you confuse such opposites as faith and works, then words will simply lose their meaning."[23] Barrett's unforeseen prophecy has come true in the latter decades of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Meaning has indeed been largely abandoned, replaced by the impregnated authority of the reader himself.

Yet God's Word stands, to be emptied of meaning to one's everlasting destruction or received to one's everlasting joy. "It is refreshing," writes John Stott of Romans 11:6, "in our era of relativistic fog, to see Paul's resolve to maintain the purity of verbal meanings."[24] With the humble quest for objective meaning, this fog begins to lift and Truth stands forth on the pages of the text, as once he did on the waves of Galilee, not beckoning for seekers to fill his words with meaning but revealing a meaning already there, freely offered to all who receive it: "I am the way and the truth and the life." No one comes to meaning but by him.[25]

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[23] *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Black, 1962), 209.

[24] *The Message of Romans* (Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 293.

[25] I am grateful to Dr. Hans Bayer for his comments on an early draft of this paper.

An Augustinian Mindset

— Peter Sanlon —

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One of the most eminent spin doctors of the fourth century, Augustine bemoaned that he was merely a *vendito verborum* (a peddler of words).[1] After he became a Christian he gave up what he perceived as arrogant rhetoric designed to impress, instead cultivating what he called *sermo humilis* (humble speech).[2] The secular spin doctor became a Christian preacher.

De Doctrina Christiana

De Doctrina Christiana (*On Christian Teaching*) is the book Augustine wrote to train preachers. He composed three chapters on how to understand the Bible, then after thirty years of regular preaching, added a final chapter on how to communicate what has been understood.

De Doctrina Christiana is a remarkable work for many reasons. It is our earliest text on the theory of preaching and drew on secular thought as well as Christian theology. Augustine was willing to utilise helpful hermeneutical principles developed by Tichonius, whom he regarded as a heretical Donatist. The fourth chapter set the agenda, to the present day, for Christian thinking on the relationship between secular and Christian learning. In 1465 *De Doctrina Christiana* became the first authentic writing of Augustine to be printed on a printing press.[3] Peter Lombard's *Sentences* began by quoting it[4] and Kannengiesser thought it the theoretical foundation of Augustine's doctrine.[5] *De Doctrina Christiana* has been one of the main texts studied by academics after better known works such as *Confessiones*.[6]

In light of its importance and brevity, it is surprising that the significance of the first chapter goes unacknowledged. It is usually viewed as simply an introductory chapter summarising points of doctrine[7] or outlining the basic content of Christian education.[8]

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[1] *Confessiones* IX.v.

[2] *De doct. Christ* IV.xviii.35.

[3] Thérèse Sullivan, *S. Aureli Augustini Hipponiensis Episcopi De Doctrina Christiana Liber Quartus: A Commentary, with a Revised Text, Introduction and Translation* (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1930), 1.

[4] Lombard, *Sententiarum Quatuor Libri* I.i.1.

[5] Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2:1149.

[6] Hubertus R. Drobner, "Studying Augustine, an Overview of Recent Research," in *Augustine and His Critics*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London: Routlege, 2000); Frederick Van Fleteren, "Comments on a Recent Edition of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Augustinian Studies* 34 (2003): 126–37.

[7] "The first book is divided into four parts dealing with the contents of the faith." Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, ed. John Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, vol. 1.11, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century (New York: New City Press, 1996), 12.

[8] Eugene Kevane, "The Prooemium of St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," Augustinian Studies 1 (1970): 153–80.

However, *De Doctrina Christiana I* has its own purpose of immense value to scholars, students, and preachers. This purpose fits with the structure of the work as a whole and meshes with Augustine's theological outlook. The original contention of this article is that Augustine intended the first chapter of his book to promote a mindset conducive to understanding the Bible. The hermeneutical principles outlined in the following chapters would be worse than useless to the student who did not first foster an appropriate posture and mindset. The work follows a logical order—first develop the mindset appropriate to the reading of the Bible, then learn the principles of interpretation and lastly study how to communicate what has been learnt to others.

To understand the Bible today we enjoy unparalleled resources. We have computer search engines, we have linguistic guides and we have subtle hermeneutical principles. But do we have what Augustine believed was the prerequisite to use these gifts—do we have the appropriate mindset for theology?

Our Journey

The first component of the mindset Augustine encouraged as necessary for understanding the Bible is an appreciation that we are on a journey. Postmodern hermeneutical theory readily accepts that a reader is on a journey. Augustine would have us embrace something more profound: we are not merely on a journey as readers in a text, we are on a journey as creatures in the world.

The journey metaphor is introduced with an amusing anecdote of a person traveling and failing to reach home, having become captivated by the agreeable experience and familiarity of the mode of transport.[9] Augustine encourages his readers to laugh at the foolishness of such a situation.

Augustine himself had been on a spiritual journey, recorded in *Confessiones*, written shortly after the opening books of *De Doctrina Christiana*. The idea of a journey was deeply embedded in Augustine's conscious experience. *Confessiones* was written for "All who accompany me on this pilgrimage, whether they have gone before or are still to come or are with me as I make my way through life."[10]

De Doctrina Christiana suggests that to understand the Bible one must view life as a journey travelled not by physical movement, but by, "Honest commitment and good behaviour."[11] Augustine later remarks, "We are still on the way, a way however not from place to place, but one traveled by the affections."[12]

Augustine wishes all who study the Bible to appreciate that the task is moral. The reader is becoming a certain type of person. The type of person that the reader is becoming affects their ability to understand what the Bible says. The unfinished nature of the journey we are all on demands a posture of humility before the Bible. The person who reads without the mindset Augustine demands, that of being on a moral journey, will not be open to the meaning of the text. For the text itself is about a journey and has no place in its metanarrative for those who are merely academic spectators. To be a student of Scripture without joining in the journey is to foreclose the possibility of reading with understanding. Postmodernity has made us sensitive to the way we bring our assumptions to the text. Augustine wants us to accept a related insight: we bring our moral persons to the text. We are not completed self-sufficient beings who

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[9] *De doct. Christ.* I.iv.4.

[10] *Confessiones* X.iv.

[11] *De doct. Christ.* I.x.10.

[12] *De doct. Christ.* I.xvii.16.

process hermeneutical principles; we are dependent creatures on a moral journey. To the extent that we appreciate the reality of the journey we are on—our direction, dangers, means of transport, and ability to travel—we are able to study the Bible with understanding.

Being Lost

Much of academic success depends upon knowing the answers. We are graded according to the knowledge we have acquired. The sensible student avoids drawing attention to his or her ignorance.

Augustine believed not only that we are on a journey, but that we are lost. Our modern emphases on success make it difficult for us to live with an appreciation of our lostness. Yet Augustine maintains that an existential awareness of our moral lostness is foundational to understanding the Bible.

We are lost because we were created by God to dwell in heaven with him. Instead we find ourselves wandering through a world which desires distance from God. We are on "a kind of voyage toward our home country."[13] The question is, as we journey, are we aware we are travelling? Are we like the foolish traveller in Augustine's story? He forgot where he was going because he enjoyed the movement of his horse and cart so much!

We cannot afford to travel in our own strength, for there are dangers that assault us: "People are beaten back from their home country, as it were, by the contrary winds of crooked habits, going in pursuit of things that are inferior and secondary to what they admit is better and more worthwhile."[14]

We are ourselves torn and divided, our own habits and desires making us wander obsessively away from our home. For some the control exerted through shiny electronic toys distracts from the journey. For some the forgetful ecstasy of sexual relationships enthrals off the path. For some the study and teaching of the Bible itself becomes an arid wind that blows us off course. Whatever the specific means by which we get lost, in every case the result is the same: spiritual, inner blindness. Our "inner eyes are weak and unclean."[15] So we find that when we try to study the Bible, it no longer makes sense. Those who fail to approach the Bible with the correct mindset—a due sense of being on a moral journey and being lost—find that their ability to understand fades.

We need to be purified and guided home. Thankfully, this too is part of a journey that can be made and ought to become part of the mindset for approaching Scripture. "We should think of this purification process as a kind of walk."[16]

The Map of "Enjoyment" and "Use"

Augustine offers a map that gives us a way of orientating ourselves. It is a theological insight which sheds light on the core truth of Scripture, our experience of a journey and our lostness. The map is a pair of concepts: "enjoyment" (*frui*) and "use" (*uti*). This map was a central part of Augustine's theology: "We may reasonably say that in the early to mid 390s the contrast of use and enjoyment has become a locus upon which many elements in Augustine's thought converge."[17]

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[13] *De doct. Christ.* I.x.10.

[14] *De doct. Christ.* I.ix.9.

[15] *De doct. Christ.* I.xi.12.

[16] *De doct. Christ.* I.x.10.

[17] Oliver O' Donovan, "*Usus* and *Fruitio* in Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana I*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 383.

Frui-uti introduces a hierarchy. God is to be enjoyed for his own sake and all other things are to be used as means to the end of enjoying God. This view has troubled modern readers, for it appears to violate Kant's moral imperative that one should, "Always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end."[18] One must remember that *De Doctrina Christiana* is an exploratory use of the terms. Further, Augustine allowed a certain freedom in how one ought to love people: "All people are to be loved equally; but since you cannot be of service to everyone, you have to take greater care of those who are more closely joined to you by a turn, so to say, of fortune's wheel."[19]

Hence the *frui-uti* distinction is not intended to be the sole guide to how one should love others. Rather Augustine intended it to provide a fundamental orientation to the universe. Understanding where we are, why we are lost and where we are headed, depends to a large degree upon grasping Augustine's insight that some things are to be used as a means and others are to be loved in themselves. In other words, God is not to be reduced to the same level as the creation, and creation is not to be enjoyed without due reference to God:

> Living a just and holy life requires one to be capable of an objective and impartial evaluation of things; to love things, that is to say, in the right order, so that you do not love what is not to be loved, or fail to love what is to be loved, or have a greater love for what should be loved less, or an equal love for things that should be loved less or more, or a lesser or greater love for things that should be loved equally.[20]

Thus the hierarchy introduced by *frui-uti* is intended to enable us to see clearly, so that we can love rightly. In *De Trinitate* it is argued one cannot love that which is misunderstood or unknown, in *De Doctrina Christiana* it is argued one cannot love rightly if one cannot see clearly.

This map of enjoyment and use can then be used to assess the reality and cause of humanity's lostness. We are lost and have "preferred," gone "in pursuit of," and tried to "enjoy" the wrong things.[21] Our passions, enthusiasms, and energies have become entangled in things unworthy of them and unable to bear their full weight. We enjoy the means of creation apart from the end of God. If we refuse to acknowledge the desires and longings that pull us through life and shape our decisions, we fail to avail ourselves of Augustine's map which could begin to alert us to the reality of our position before God. Our journey through this world is one in which we wilfully and culpably lose ourselves. We are unable to find our way home. We need another to make the journey for us.

Wisdom's Journey

Lost people need to find their way home: "Of this we would be quite incapable, unless Wisdom herself had seen fit to adapt herself to such infirmity as ours."[22]

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[18] Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 428.

[19] *De doct. Christ.* I.xxviii.29.

[20] *De doct. Christ.* I.xxvii.28.

[21] *De doct. Christ.* I.x.9–10.

[22] *De doct. Christ.* I.x.10.

Augustine knew from his Platonic background that love of goods other than God could distract one from the love of God. After his conversion he realised, "The incarnation was necessary to empower the Christian to return."[23]

Augustine presents Jesus as the figure of Wisdom. He is both the goal of our journey and the means of reaching our destination: "She herself is our home, she has also made herself for us into the way home."[24]

In a bold theological move Augustine conceives both the experience of sin and salvation as a journey. Since we could not find our way home, Wisdom made a journey to us. The reason for the journey of the incarnation was to heal blindness. The map of *frui-uti* shows that people are blind internally; preferring the means of creation to the end of God. Augustine reasons that this explains why it was necessary for Wisdom to present herself to our external eyes in a physical human incarnation: "She is present everywhere, indeed, to inner eyes that are healthy and pure; but to those whose inner eyes are weak and unclean, she was prepared to be seen by their eyes of flesh as well."[25]

The external incarnation is necessary because inner eyes are blind—the possibility of external sight appears as a concession or accommodation to the lost. This raises the question of how one's internal eyes benefit from an externally seen incarnation. A clue to Augustine's answer is found in his focus on love of God and neighbour as the fruit of good interpretation;[26] the external incarnation heals the internal sight as it teaches us to reorder our loves. We learn from Wisdom how to *frui* and *uti* the right objects in the right proportion. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see the journey that we could not make for ourselves. Wisdom made the journey on our behalf and invites us to follow and learn how to love God afresh.

A merely intellectual grasp of this journey is however not enough to acquire the Augustinian mindset. It is not sufficient merely to understand the Christian story of sin and salvation. Augustine takes considerable pains in *De Doctrina Christiana I* to foster a sense of the beauty of Wisdom's healing journey: "Just as when doctors bind up wounds, they do not do it untidily, but neatly, so that the bandage, as well as being useful, can also to some extent have its proper beauty, in the same sort of way Wisdom adapted her healing art to our wounds by taking on a human being."[27]

Augustine invites us to explore the nature of Wisdom's beauty. He focuses on two aspects of what to him constituted beauty: likeness and dissimilarity. He sees a beauty in the likenesses and continuities of Wisdom's healing: as humans were led astray by a woman, so they are healed by one born of a woman and the dead are healed by a death. In the area of dissimilarity, Augustine includes the issue of Wisdom appearing foolish and our bad use of immortality contrasted with Christ's good use of mortality.[28] Augustine meditated on the shape of Biblical salvation and his reflections amounted to far more than merely intellectual observations; the beauty of the shape of Wisdom's gracious journey stirred up excitement, passion, and joy in God. Thus the work of theology becomes a re-embracing of our first

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[23] J. M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 159.

[24] *De doct. Christ.* I.xi.11.

[25] *De doct. Christ.* I.xi.12.

[26] *De doct. Christ.* I.xxxv.39–xxxvi.40.

[27] *De doct. Christ.* I.xiv.13.

[28] *De doct. Christ.* I.xiv.13.

love. In order to read Scripture fruitfully, we need the mindset of conscious existential appreciation of the beauty of God's gracious journey to us in Jesus. To lose sight of Wisdom's journey (and our journey as it is caught up in Wisdom's) is to lose the hope of participating in worthwhile theology. Augustine hopes that those who read on to his hermeneutical principles will have the mindset to observe many more praiseworthy and useful aspects of God's journey: "Those who are not held back by the necessity of completing a work just begun, from reflecting on many other instances of the sort, will appreciate how well furnished the Christian medicine cupboard is with both contrary and homeopathic remedies."[29]

This approach to beauty is consistent with Augustine's earlier exploration of the topic of beauty in *De Musica*, in which he portrayed a universe where "Every creature has a specific rhythm and seeks to ever more occupy itself as it truly is. Music is part of our temporal striving towards ever greater exactitude."[30] Augustine saw a beauty in music as it formed part of our striving and journeying. The beauty of music is surpassed by the journey of Wisdom to give us sight and bring lost people home. Augustine's vision of Wisdom's healing journey as a beautiful, well composed medicine cabinet forms his invitation to modern theologians. The question is, Will we approach the medicine cabinet with the appropriate mindset?

A Much Needed Mindset

Those of us who study and teach theology today have much we can learn from Augustine's presentation of a mindset suitable for the approach to Scripture. The very idea that there is an appropriate mindset for the task of theology is not one that sits happily with the modern academy. The recovery of an appropriate mindset for the study of theology can, however, be seen in the lives of individual students who resolve to have Jesus as their teacher and accept that the student is not above that teacher. True theology is experienced when one makes the move from knowing facts about the Scriptures to wondering at the beauty of the one to whom the Scriptures testify.

The urgent need to foster an Augustinian mindset in our approach to the theological task may be emphasised by considering the horror of people attempting to live out the lessons of the other three chapters of *De Doctrina Christiana* without the mindset demanded by the first chapter. Imagine scholars adept in handling the Bible as a work of ancient literature, interpreting with academic precision, but lacking the mindset to do so for the reasons God gave us the text: no appreciation for the beauty of Jesus' saving work, no thirst to know him better, no value judgement passed on intellectually weak rejections of him. A horror indeed, but it gets worse. If a person masters chapters two and three of *De Doctrina Christiana* without the first, then he or she has sterile principles of interpretation without the necessary mindset. If a person attempts to use the fourth chapter without the first, such a person has the power of persuasion without the healing grace of God's wisdom. The voice of such a teacher can be persuasive, but its power may be only one of the winds that seek to blow off course and waylay those who would otherwise be homeward bound. Augustine was surely right to insist that his students develop a healthy mindset for approaching Scripture. We embrace interpretation and persuasion without it at our peril.

Such a mindset will show itself in at least two important areas: love and humility. We have seen that our lostness can be mapped as disordered loves, preferring to enjoy that which should be only used and

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[29] *De doct. Christ.* I.xiv.13.

[30] Catherine Pickstock, "Music: Soul, City and Cosmos after Augustine," in John Millbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy* (London: Routledge, 1999), 249.

neglecting the great goal of life: the love of God. Often as children of the enlightenment we suffer from a theological tunnel vision. We focus on details and miss the big picture. We analyse individual facts apart from the central reference point, rightly ordered love for God and our neighbour.

It is sobering for any theologian to ask the following: Am I holding back from following through on the natural trajectory of this thought? Was the idea created by God to foster love for him, yet do I hold back from that goal, satisfied with something less? Essays, books, marks, promotions, languages, and computerised lexicons should not be enjoyed in and of themselves. God created them to be used as means for enjoying Him. If we prematurely foreclose our thoughts by resting happily on the means of academic study, we are in danger of becoming infatuated with the transport. We should be obsessed with getting home to the one we love. Such an obsession will develop a mindset that leads to fruitful theology.

There is a false humility that secular theology appreciates. This is the false humility of polite openness to other perspectives. A certain degree of this is healthy, but it ought not to be the constituent nature of true Christian intellectual humility. The humility that an Augustinian mindset engenders is resolutely committed to the uniqueness of Jesus—only he could journey from heaven to the cross for us. As such the Christian mind is not indefinitely open to alternative views. Rather the humility of an Augustinian mindset flows from a conscious awareness of the lostness of sin. Plunged into a fallen world through Adam's fault, we nevertheless accept God's charge: we wilfully plunged ourselves into loves that entranced and misled. The Christian scholar sees that the very things used for the theological task can be great temptations; the love of them as ends rather than means can easily supplant the love of God. Scripture offers the self-knowledge that such a tragedy lies all too close to our secret desires.

True humility arises not only from our awareness of fallen lostness, but also from God's grace. Humility is the intellectual posture of a person who realises that he or she is on a journey that Jesus made for us. The grace of God overcomes our self-sufficiency and invites us to love one worthy of our love. The modern academy is unlikely to preface its hermeneutical and communication lectures with a challenge to develop an appropriate mindset. The modern academy is not overly concerned about what sort of mindset you have as you approach Scripture. Augustine was intensely concerned about his students' mindsets; in this respect he was closer to the mindset of our Lord.

Mission:
A Problem of Definition

— Keith Ferdinando —

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Whatever We Want It To Mean?

It must by now be questionable whether the word "mission" retains any residual value for missiology. Humpty Dumpty's approach to language—"When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less"[1]—perhaps reflects his creator's diagnosis of a degenerative disease that afflicts some words, a sort of linguistic entropy or inflation. If so, this pathological condition seems to have caught up with "mission," and perhaps with terminal effect. The opening sentences of Bosch's *Transforming Mission* point this way: "Since the 1950s there has been a remarkable escalation in the use of the word 'mission' among Christians. This went hand in hand with a significant broadening of the concept, at least in certain circles."[2] If words are defined by their use, then the variety and breadth with which "mission" is used suggest that Neill's prophecy may have been fulfilled: "If everything is mission, nothing is mission."[3]

However, perhaps ambiguity in the meaning of "mission" may not matter so much. What is important is not precise definition of the term, but informed and biblical reflection on the various dimensions of Christian activity and ministry to which it might refer. Substance is far more important than the words used to represent it. Nevertheless, it does still matter in that confusion over the meaning of words is likely to produce uncertainty about such questions of substance as well. In this case there is agreement about the central importance of mission—whatever it is—and the obligation under which it places churches and individual Christians. To quote Brunner's well-known observation, "The Church exists for mission as a fire exists for burning. Where there is no mission, there is no church."[4] However, it is problematic to call people to engage in mission when the meaning of that engagement remains elusive. Similarly, if missiology is a branch of theological study, definition of the field of knowledge with

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[1] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, ed. Roger Lancelyn Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 190. Quoted also by John Stott in his discussion of mission in *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Falcon, 1975), 12–13.

[2] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 1.

[3] Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension: The Duff Lectures, 1958* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1959), 81.

[4] Emile Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: SCM, 1931), 108.

which it should be concerned is essential for its practitioners, but in reality "the quest for an agreed definition of *missiology* remains elusive."[5]

The dilemma may arise partly because the noun, mission, is not a biblical one, which makes it difficult to define on exegetical grounds. This is not necessarily a problem: incarnation and Trinity are not biblical words either, but there is wide consensus regarding their respective fields of meaning. In the case of mission, however, if there ever was such a consensus it has been largely eroded. Of course the noun has its roots in the notion of sending, and derives particularly from the New Testament use of the Greek verb ἀποστέλλω via the Latin *mitto*. Over recent centuries it has thus been understood to refer to the *sending* of the church into the world to make disciples of Jesus Christ—the human dimension of the mission of the triune God. And it can certainly be argued that the meaning of "mission" should be determined by analysing New Testament use of the verbs ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω.[6] However, while such an approach might restore precision if accepted, in practice the meaning of a word is determined by its use rather than its origin, and for "mission" contemporary usage has moved beyond such exegetical origins as might once have married it to a particular biblical content.

Several factors have produced the present ambiguity. First, there has been the recognition that communicating the gospel is not the only thing Christians are sent into the world to do. Among evangelicals there is renewed recognition of the implications of the doctrine of creation, including the cultural mandate, coupled with revived awareness of the significance of social and economic issues for Christian discipleship. Second, increasingly widespread pluralist and inclusivist approaches to non-Christian religions imply that evangelism is not a necessary, perhaps not even a desirable, function of the church. Accordingly, the focus of mission is located elsewhere—in the physical care of the suffering, for example. McCahill is representative of this stance: "As my faith teaches, so I believe: Muslims are not lost; they have the same chance as do Christians to be saved by their goodness of life and concern for others. I seek out the physically lost."[7] A third factor is increasing secular use of the term as in organisational "mission statements." Such a usage impacts the word's meaning in general speech, and so in theology too where it is likely to be used in less specific ways than formerly. Finally, and highly significant in recent years, has been the impact of distinguished missiologist David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*.

David Bosch

Transforming Mission is an immensely important scholarly work. However, the underlying argument tends towards agnosticism regarding the possibility of an agreed meaning for the word and concept of mission. This is explicit early in the book: "Ultimately, mission remains indefinable. . . . The most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about."[8] Thus, first, he argues that the Bible itself does not offer a single mission theology but several, and he distinguishes the approaches of Jesus, Matthew, Luke-Acts, and Paul. Consequently he suggests that it is impossible to construct a single biblical theology of mission on which to base contemporary practice.

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[5] J. A. Scherer, quoted by Michael Raiter, "'Sent for this purpose': 'Mission' and 'Missiology' and Their Search for Meaning," in R. J. Gibson, *Ripe for Harvest: Christian Mission in the New Testament and in our World* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 138.

[6] Which is the approach taken by Raiter, "'Sent for this purpose.'"

[7] Bob McCahill, *Dialogue of Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 96.

[8] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 9

Second, stressing the historical and cultural distance between the present era and that of the New Testament, Bosch argues that even if a single biblical mission theology could be identified, we still could not apply what was going on then to ourselves. Rather we must "prolong the logic of the ministry of Jesus and the early church in an imaginative and creative way to our own time and context,"[9] and he implies that this is what has always happened. This leads to the heart of his argument, in which he draws on Kuhn's thesis, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Bosch suggests that approaches to mission have varied from one epoch to another, reflecting the changing situation of the church and the prevailing worldview. Accordingly, at critical moments there have been elemental paradigm shifts in the practice of mission, and Bosch identifies six distinct mission paradigms, the most recent of which—"Mission in the Wake of the Enlightenment"—is ending. He suggests that we now face another paradigm shift, and discusses thirteen "Elements of an Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm."[10]

Bosch's approach has been profoundly influential, but it moves towards a relativist and subjectivist approach to mission. This is essentially due to his pessimism regarding the possibility of a unified biblical theology of mission. However, while the diversity of the biblical testimony cannot be disputed, that need not entail scepticism about the basic unity of its witness, either with respect to mission or anything else. One could argue that the Bible offers a fundamentally coherent picture of the mission of a God who, from Adam's first disobedience, pursues rebellious humanity to redeem a people, a purpose whose realisation is portrayed in John's vision of "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev 7:9). That mission he now carries out through his church as it makes disciples of Jesus Christ.

Further, Bosch's hermeneutical approach allows great latitude to the human interpreter, prolonging "the logic of the ministry of Jesus and the early church."[11] This hermeneutic alongside the emphasis on biblical diversity risks cutting mission free from any control by the biblical text and surrendering it to the creativity of interpreters. Thus Bosch moves towards an endorsement of the various paradigms he identifies—each of them an appropriate expression of mission for its time—his thesis making it difficult to bring a coherent biblical or theological critique to bear on them. To be fair, he seeks to retain a strong emphasis on the centrality of Christ and the cross: "The *Missio Dei* purifies the church. It sets it under the cross—the only place where it is ever safe."[12] However, mission risks becoming whatever the church in any historical period understood it to be. Bosch's thesis thus provides a theoretical justification for the loss of consensus with reference to "mission"; indeed it makes a virtue of ambiguity, for mission becomes a term constantly seeking a meaning. "Mission is never something self-evident, and nowhere—neither in the practice of mission nor in even our best theological reflections on mission, does it succeed in removing all confusions, misunderstandings, enigmas and temptations."[13]

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[9] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 181.

[10] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 367.

[11] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 181.

[12] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 519.

[13] Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980), 9.

Four Approaches

At the risk of massive oversimplification, four principal contemporary understandings of mission may be identified. They can be visualised as concentric circles, ranging from approaches which are broad and inclusive, to those which are increasingly narrow in definition.

1. The *Missio Dei*

The broadest approach of all is that sometimes identified as *missio Dei*. In its literal sense the Latin expression simply draws attention to the fact that all Christian mission is God's: he alone initiates, empowers, directs, and blesses all true mission. Thus, insofar as human beings engage in mission, they do so as co-workers with God, as is explicit in Paul's commendation of Timothy: "We sent Timothy, who is our brother *and God's fellow-worker* in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith" (1 Thess 3:2).

However, as it is used in contemporary missiological debate, the term means rather more than this, identifying mission as everything God wills to do in the world, whether through the church or outside it. This in turn implies that non-Christians may be positively involved in God's mission without knowing it; they may, for example, unconsciously advance his purposes in the world through endeavour motivated by purely humanistic considerations. And this entails a potential marginalisation of the role of the church, which is not the unique human vehicle of the *missio Dei*. Approaches of this type are expressed in different ways. One such is the idea that the kingdom of God advances as people of any religion or none seek to do good in the world. Thus, the pursuit of justice, the furthering of human dignity, the reconciliation of hostile groups, the care of the environment, all reflect God's will for his creation and so all are part of his mission whoever the agents may be. Such an approach was evident at the ninth assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in 1968, with its tendency to identify revolutionary social movements as the work of God in the world, and to "let the world set the agenda." It is seen similarly in liberation theology's rejection of a dichotomisation of history into "sacred" and "profane": "The historical destiny of humanity must be placed definitively in the salvific horizon."[14] From an evangelical perspective, Sugden has argued that we should see "God at work in society beyond the church applying the effects of Christ's victory on the cross through social change."[15] A contrasting but essentially similar approach emphasises the Spirit's mission within creation and not just within and through the church—even perhaps independently of Christ himself. Such a view found expression at the 1991 Canberra gathering of the World Council of Churches—"Come, Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation"—and in *Gaudium et Spes*:

> This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance. An improvement in attitudes and abundant changes in society will have to take place if these objectives are to be gained.
>
> God's Spirit, Who with a marvelous providence directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth, is not absent from this development.[16]

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[14] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (London: SCM, 1974), 153.

[15] Chris Sugden quoted in Melvin Tinker, "Reversal or Betrayal? Evangelicals and Socio-political Involvement in the Twentieth Century," *The Churchman* 113.3 (1999): 266–267.

[16] "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), chapter 2, section 26.

Thinking of mission in such terms tends towards a collapse of categories traditionally distinguished from one another. Belief in humanity as created in the *imago Dei* and in the notion of common grace has in the past provided sufficient basis for affirming that God is active outside the church, within the structures and organisation of human society for example, in order to preserve them from decay, to further justice and order, and thereby to facilitate the disciple-making mission of the church (cf. 1 Tim 2:2). All of this reflects his providential rule in history, but it is quite distinct from the sort of apostolic mission that is described in the Acts of the Apostles, whose purpose lies in calling men and women to become disciples of Jesus and members of God's people. Of course, in that the meaning of a word is defined by its use, and that words change in sense over time, the word mission might indeed be employed to denote this much broader area of God's activity. However, at the very least that would mean a drastic expansion of the meaning of mission, and a consequent loss of terminological precision. Thus, harking back to Neill, if *all* that God does in the world is indeed mission, a new terminology is required to categorise his specifically redemptive activity—assuming the notion of redemption is retained.

It is at this point that the more serious consequences of the notion of *missio Dei* emerge, when God's activity in bringing about the just society may be *equated* with redemption and the establishment of his kingdom. The issue is then not simply that of increasingly loose terminology, but of fundamental change in the concepts of salvation and the kingdom of God. However, this involves an understanding of God's kingdom substantially different from that which Jesus proclaimed. For him it was not primarily the reconstruction of human societies within history, but God's sovereign intervention to save and to judge, reconciling sinners and creating a new community: "It is the abstract idea of God being king, his sovereignty, his control of his world and its affairs. . . . We may seek it, pray for it, preach it, enter it, but men do not create or achieve it."[17] Thus, "salvation does *not* exist in history beyond the church and . . . the kingdom of God comes *only* as Christ is acknowledged as king."[18] There is indeed a distinction between history and salvation history, between world and church, between God's providential rule over the earth and his redemptive intervention within it: the notion of *missio Dei* as used by some collapses these pivotal distinctions, and thereby not only loses a word but also the very distinctiveness of God's work in Christ.

2. The Cultural Mandate

A second approach defines mission more narrowly: "the church's mission, then, encompasses everything that Jesus sends his people into the world to do."[19] In contrast with the first approach, mission here is understood more restrictively as the *church*'s action in the world, rather than all that *God* does in the world: "For God the Creator is constantly active in his world in providence, in common grace and in judgement, quite apart from the purposes for which he has sent his Son, his Spirit and his church into the world."[20] Nevertheless, it is still very comprehensive in scope and may come close to equating mission with what has traditionally been termed the "cultural mandate," which is rooted in the words of God in Genesis 1:26–28:

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[17] R. T. France, "The Church and the Kingdom of God: Some Hermeneutical Issues," in D. A. Carson, ed., *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualisation* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 32, 41.

[18] Tim Chester, *Good News to the Poor: Sharing the Gospel through Social Involvement* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), 74.

[19] Andrew Kirk, "Missiology," in Sinclair Ferguson and David Wright, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Leicester: IVP, 1988), 434.

[20] Stott, *Christian Mission*, 30.

"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." . . . God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Significant is the idea that humans are *sent* into the world to fill it and rule over it as God's image, exercising authority over his realm. "Men and women imitate God in their work of harnessing the powers of the created order, serving his creatures, and enabling the earth to bloom."[21] Thus, there is a certain notion of "mission"—"their mission on the planet"[22]—which parallels Christ's commission to his disciples: in Genesis human beings are sent to rule over the earth, and in the New Testament renewed human beings are sent to make disciples of its inhabitants. In this sense one might argue with Bosch that "the missionary task is as coherent, broad and deep as the need and exigencies of human life."[23]

Among evangelicals a major factor driving this understanding of mission has been a justified reaction against a dualistic—and very influential—approach to discipleship, which has tended to disparage the "secular" realm. In opposition to this there has been a recovery of the Reformed vision of glorifying God in all legitimate "callings," and not just in supposedly "spiritual" roles. Such an approach is rooted in an affirmation of Christ's Lordship over all creation and means that any notion of a division of work into "secular" and "spiritual" categories should be abandoned since all work may be carried out for God's glory. This was Paul's vision: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31), and it is expressed in the poetry of George Herbert: "who sweeps a room as for Thy laws makes that and the action fine."[24]

It is, nevertheless, a recent departure to define such engagement with the world as mission. As one example, Kirk sees mission not only in terms of the proclamation of good news, but also the pursuit of justice for the poor, of peace, and of care for the environment—reflecting the cultural mandate.[25] However, on this view there is no reason to confine it to those categories. The implication must be that mission would embrace all areas of human life and work—every realm in which God's people live for the glory of their Creator by consciously exercising stewardship over his Creation—including commerce and government, industry and agriculture, service and education, and indeed with no legitimate sphere excluded. This in turn means that missiology as a theological discipline will embrace Christian life to its fullest extent as it is lived within the world God has made.

Such an understanding of mission suffers from the terminological problems of the first approach, if not from its theological weakness. A renewed accent on serving God in the whole of life is wholly desirable, a vital correction to forms of spirituality that lost sight of the doctrine of creation and its implications for discipleship. Nevertheless, the broadening of the term, mission, still entails a loss of verbal precision and one that is not required to secure the theological gains being pursued. Centuries before mission was used in anything like this comprehensive sense, the Protestant reformers reacted

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[21] Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission* (Leicester: IVP, 2003), 45.

[22] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Truth with a Mission: Reading Scripture Missiologically* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2005), 12.

[23] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

[24] George Herbert (1593–1633), "The Elixer."

[25] Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission?* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999).

against similar dualistic approaches to Christian faith and life—expressed in medieval notions of church and priesthood—and insisted on the priesthood of all believers and the legitimacy of "secular" callings.

> A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and everyone by means of his own work and office must benefit and serve every other that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.[26]

What is happening, then, is an inflation of the concept of mission and, in consequence, of the discipline of missiology; indeed, the latter risks absorbing much of the theological agenda in rather totalitarian fashion.

3. Social Action

A third approach limits the missiological agenda more narrowly still to what is termed "social action," along with proclamation and the making of disciples. Some might argue that there is little distinction here but, as the expression is used, "social action" does have a narrower compass than "everything" God sends his people to do. While social action is rarely given precise definition, it refers to the alleviation of human suffering and the elimination of injustice, exploitation, and deprivation. It is thus specifically remedial and transformative, in a way not necessarily true of all that Christians do to glorify God in his world.

Such action has invariably had a place in missionary activity over the centuries, and is implicit in the request addressed by James, Peter and John to Paul: "All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do" (Gal 2:10). Stott quotes Pierce Beaver who referred to the "social action" in which missionaries of earlier generations engaged:

> Social action in mission can be traced from the time of the apostles. Concern was never limited to relief. The itinerating missionary carried with him a bag of medicines, new or better seeds and plants, and improved livestock. Nevius introduced the modern orchard industry into Shantung. The Basel missionaries revolutionized the economy of Ghana by introducing coffee and cocoa grown by families on their own land. James McKean transformed the life of Northern Thailand by eliminating its three major curses—smallpox, malaria and leprosy. . . . They fought fiercely for human rights in combating opium, foot-binding and exposure of girl babies in China. They waged war against widow-burning, infanticide, and temple prostitution in India.[27]

Nevertheless, the issue is the extent to which social action is a necessary and integral dimension of mission. In the early part of the twentieth century, various factors produced a retreat from the social engagement that characterised evangelicalism through the nineteenth century, including evangelical reactions against liberalism and the "social gospel," and a profound pessimism generated by the carnage of the First World War and dispensational theology. The later twentieth century, however, has seen renewed awareness of the social dimension of discipleship, as expressed in the Wheaton Declaration

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[26] Martin Luther, quoted by Paul Helm, *The Callings* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), 57–58.

[27] R. Pierce Beaver, quoted by John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1999), 7.

(1966) which urged "all evangelicals to stand openly and firmly for racial equality, human freedom, and all forms of social justice throughout the world."[28] A few years later the expression of repentance for neglect of "socio-political involvement," contained in the Lausanne Covenant, was a critical moment in evangelical thinking on the subject—"a watershed year in Western evangelicals' interest in social concerns."[29]

> Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty.[30]

Major contributory factors were an increased awareness of injustice and human pain fostered by the mass media; the challenge of radical analyses of poverty by theologians of liberation; and the critique of western evangelical missiology from some in the Two-Thirds World, notably Escobar and Padilla who both contributed forcefully at Lausanne. As a result there has been serious reflection regarding the relationship that should exist between social action and mission.

There are numerous approaches to the issue.[31] What is particularly in focus here is the viewpoint which understands social action as a necessary partner in mission alongside disciple-making, both being required components in a "holistic" approach. Thus evangelism and social action have been represented as equivalent to the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird.[32] Stott has been associated with this approach, to which he refers in *The Contemporary Christian*[33] and elsewhere, arguing that "the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility."[34] To support this approach he lays much weight on the Johannine form of the great commission—"the crucial form in which the Great Commission has been handed down to us": "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).[35] Thus, if believers are sent as Jesus was, that must entail doing all that he was sent to do: there is no "vague parallel" between the two, but Jesus' mission is "the *model* of ours." Nevertheless he also argues—somewhat at variance with the scissors and wings analogies—that evangelism should retain a primacy: "I think we should agree with the statement of the Lausanne Covenant that 'in the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.'"[36] In this he distances himself from those who give to social action a place of importance equal with that of

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[28] *Study Papers: Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission, April 9–16, 1966, Wheaton, Illinois* (Glen Ellyn, IL: Scripture Press Foundation, 1966), 24.

[29] Edward R. Dayton, quoted by David M. Doran, "The Task of the Great Commission: The Method of Discipleship," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 6 (2001): 6.

[30] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, *The Lausanne Covenant*, "Paragraph 5: Christian Social Responsibility."

[31] Cf. A. Scott Moreau, "Mission and Missions," in A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids and Carlisle: Baker and Paternoster, 2000), 637–638.

[32] Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), 23.

[33] John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester: IVP, 1992), 340.

[34] Stott, *Christian Mission*, 23.

[35] Stott, *Christian Mission*, 23.

[36] Stott, *Christian Mission*, 35.

evangelism: "sometimes referred to as the radical discipleship group . . . [it] considers social justice to be mission just as evangelism is, and does not give priority to either."[37]

4. Making Disciples of All Nations

The innermost of the four concentric circles emphasises the making of disciples as the essential, exclusive content of mission. Terminology is again important here. In view of some evangelistic strategies, seeing this approach simply in terms of evangelism risks serious distortion, as if what is in view is just the making of converts—the eliciting of decisions or commitments. The mandate of the great commission is that of making disciples, which in the context must surely indicate something closely parallel to Jesus' own practice in the discipling of the twelve. Similarly, perceptions of Pauline mission sometimes risk seeing him as a peripatetic preacher moving quickly from place to place to make converts in evangelistic "missions," whereas in reality he remained in places for extended periods wherever possible, establishing churches and discipling individuals, his aim being to communicate "the whole will of God" (Acts 20:27). His early exits were most frequently due to local persecution which made it impossible for him to stay, and which were in any case followed by the dispatch of apostolic envoys and letters to encourage the continued development of the churches. "The fact that Paul lived and worked in Corinth for two years and in Ephesus for over two years proves that the term "journey" does not offer a helpful analytical concept for a description of Paul's missionary praxis."[38] Consequently the preferred term here—rather than evangelism—would be discipling, or making disciples, which signifies the process not only of bringing people to faith but of fostering their spiritual growth in terms of relationship with God and his people, and of obedience in all areas of life: "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19). Such an understanding of mission has been prevalent until recently, and is the presupposition of Schnabel's study of New Testament mission, which he identifies as "the activity of a community . . . that is convinced of the truth claims of its faith, and that actively works to win other people to the content of faith and to the way of life of whose truth and necessity the members of that community are convinced."[39]

An approach such as this can moreover be misunderstood in other ways. First, it need in no way imply that Christian engagement with the world in general (the second circle) and social concern (the third circle), are invalid. It does not entail a return to Gnostic neglect of the world and its pain. Rather it is compatible with a biblically *holistic* discipleship—living to God's glory and seeking his will in all of life. Among other things that will imply the pursuit of justice in the distribution of the fruits of the earth and of righteousness in the ordering of society, as well as the relief of the destitute and sustained efforts to bring about a transformation of their condition. The oppression of the poor is sin, and the church should never be the bastion of an evil *status quo* or the "opium of the people." Thus, Dewi Hughes has rightly emphasised the imperative of Christian concern for the poor: "the God who has revealed himself in Jesus makes it very clear in his Word to those who welcome his revelation that our response to poverty is a crucial test of the reality of our faith. It is impossible to really know Jesus and be indifferent to the

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[37] Moreau, "Mission and Missions," 638.

[38] Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Volume Two, Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove and Leicester: IVP and Apollos, 2004), 1445.

[39] Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Volume One, Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove and Leicester: IVP and Apollos, 2004), 11.

plight of the poor."[40] The point here is not to deny the importance of Christian social commitment, but to maintain distinctions in the interests of clarity, and to reserve the word mission for the discipling of the peoples. For those who respond to the gospel and are effectively discipled, social engagement then becomes an integral part of their Christian life and obedience.

Second, distinguishing mission from social action does not mean that missionaries will not engage in the latter. Christian love and faithful discipleship may emphatically demand that missionaries—precisely as disciples—would respond to human need and injustice wherever they may encounter it, just as any Christian should do. The verbal communication of the gospel must necessarily be accompanied by a life that corroborates the message, which in certain circumstances means "social action." Such an approach characterised those referred to by Pierce Beaver in the passage quoted above, men and women whose primary objective was the making of disciples but who responded to the needs and suffering which existed among those to whom they carried the gospel.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the provisos above, mission in the sense of proclamation and the making of disciples retains a distinctive and, it is argued here, primary place in the life of the church. The basis of such a position has often been articulated. First, there is a distinctive apostolic mission taking place in Acts which is an expression of explicit obedience to the great commission. Its focus is on winning people to the faith and to the way of life which that faith produces, and its method is proclamation of the word of Christ. It is also true that Acts portrays believers engaging in social action—caring for widows, for example—but that is a consequence of apostolic mission rather than its substance: it is one of the forms—albeit a vitally important form—which faithful discipleship takes among those who have responded to the gospel. Nevertheless, it does not have the same place as the making of disciples itself, and this relates to the obvious fact that Christian social engagement depends on the existence of Christians, and there would be none if disciples were not made. Howard Marshall makes the point in his review of Bosch's *Transforming Mission*: "I am a quite unrepentant advocate of the priority of evangelism, since that is quite clearly central to the NT, and I cannot follow J. Stott in arguing that the Great Commission is about this [justice] as well as evangelism. . . . Where evangelical evangelism is at fault is when it confines its attention to certain sins and ignores others."[41] So, while Stott stresses the significance of the Johannine form of the great commission and understands it in "incarnational" terms as inclusive of "social action," in its context the text is explicitly associated with the message to be communicated, one of forgiveness of sins, rather than with any sort of recapitulation of Jesus' own unique and unrepeatable works: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:21–23).[42] The disciples' mission is centred on the proclamation of forgiveness, the provision of which was the focus of Jesus' mission. "The mission of the Messianic community is that of extending to unbelievers the forgiveness of sins made possible through Jesus' completed work."[43] Accordingly, the

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[40] Dewi Hughes, *God of the Poor: A Biblical Vision of God's Present Rule* (Carlisle: OM Publishing, 1998, 1).

[41] I. Howard Marshall, "Review of David Bosch: *Transforming Mission*," *EQ* 67 (1995): 188–189.

[42] See the discussion in Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 212–217. It is not the purpose of the present discussion to engage in depth or breadth with the debate over "incarnational" mission and the various implications of the term.

[43] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Challenge of a Systematized Biblical Theology of Mission: Missiological Insights from the Gospel of John," *Missiology* 23 (1995): 449, quoted by Raiter, "'Sent for this purpose,'" 118.

initial phrase of the Johannine commission—*as the Father has sent me, I am sending you*—is about the continuity of the disciples' mission with that of Jesus, rather than its identity with his: being sent as he was, they are to carry out their mission in obedience to and dependence on the Son, just as he, being similarly sent by the Father, came to carry out his mission in obedience to and dependence on him (John 4:34; 5:19; 7:16; 8:42, etc.).[44] Thus, to summarise, the Johannine form of the great commission and even, according to Köstenberger, Johannine missiology as a whole, cannot be read as teaching a mission of social action alongside proclamation:

> The notion of the disciples' mission as "service to humanity" founded on the model of Jesus' mission appears, contrary to Stott's assertions, to be inconsistent with the Fourth Gospel's teaching on mission. A focus on human service and on human need, though often characteristic of contemporary mission practice, is not presented in the Fourth Gospel as the primary purpose of either Jesus' or the disciples' mission.[45]

Second, if men and women are alienated from God and face eternal judgement, then communication of the message of reconciliation must have precedence over social action. Again, this is not to deny the necessity of social engagement. However, the thrust of the New Testament is that eternal realities have immeasurably greater significance than temporal ones. We may feed the hungry, heal the sick, release the oppressed, but if they remain alienated from God then their gain is *relatively* small, for the eternal reality has a significance that infinitely surpasses the circumstances of the present (cf. 2 Cor 4:17). Chester makes the same point in the context of a work in which he argues strenuously for Christian social involvement: "the greatest need of the poor, as it is for all people, is to be reconciled with God and escape his wrath."[46] Of course, this argument makes fundamental assumptions about the seriousness of the human condition and the nature of the remedy. One major reason for a tendency to move away from a focus on mission as disciple-making and towards broader definitions has been a loss of belief in the eternal consequences of human lostness and in the uniqueness of Christ's work as the means by which human beings are restored to the Father. Under those conditions the emphasis necessarily moves away from the spiritual and eternal and towards the physical and temporal. Nor is this to argue that all of those who favour seeing mission in terms of social action are necessarily reasoning in this way; however, it is to claim that the loss of those doctrinal certainties about sin and hell and Christ that fostered missionary endeavour in previous generations, has been a major factor at both popular and scholarly levels in changing definitions of mission.[47]

Third, mission may take place in the absence of social action, but never in the absence of discipling. The making of disciples is the *sine qua non* of authentically Christian mission; it is, after all, what Jesus explicitly commanded at the end of his earthly ministry, to which the New Testament bears abundant testimony. When confronted by physical need and suffering those involved in mission will necessarily seek to respond. However, there may be circumstances in which social action is not called for. Apart from the exhortation addressed to Paul by the Jerusalem leaders in Galatians 2:10, there is

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[44] See Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Leicester and Downers Grove: Apollos and IVP, 2001), 221–222.

[45] Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 215.

[46] Chester, *Good News to the Poor*, 65; cf. 52. Tim Chester's book is excellent, but he would probably not agree with all that I am arguing here.

[47] See the discussion of this issue in Stan Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), 42–52.

little evidence that he engaged in social ministry among those to whom he took the gospel. Indeed, there is rather clearer evidence that on his initiative social action was directed *from* the new churches *towards* Jerusalem, the place of origin of the church's mission—"the relatively backward and poor Israel"[48]—although there may also have been theological reasons for that.[49] It is indeed striking that the mission of the New Testament church, certainly within the Roman empire, generally moved from poorer to richer regions, a pattern about to repeat itself as churches of the Two-Thirds World engage in mission.[50] "The poor of the world are the great missionary force of the present stage in mission history."[51] This may in turn suggest that emphasis on social action as an *integral* aspect of mission itself reflects an outmoded paradigm, according to which mission is carried out by rich Western churches among materially poorer peoples. In such circumstances the issue of Christian responsibility for those in material need necessarily imposes itself, as relatively rich missionaries encounter people living in comparative poverty. However, the question does not arise, or not in the same form, when mission takes place in the opposite direction. So, as Christians from comparatively poor Asian countries seek employment as domestic servants in prosperous parts of the Middle East, with the intention (at least in part) of sharing the gospel, social action is unlikely to be part of their missionary agenda—or at least not in the sense in which it is conceived by Western missiologists.[52]

Fourth, the making of disciples of Jesus Christ constitutes in itself a major step towards social and economic change. The causes of poverty are complex and disputed, and it is beyond the scope of this discussion to debate them. A major contributory factor, however, is culture and, more specifically, the worldview that underlies it. The significance of culture for economic welfare has been increasingly recognised during the 1990s, and not only in a Christian context, although it is also the subject of hot debate.

> A growing number of scholars, journalists, politicians, and development practitioners are focusing on the role of cultural values and attitudes as facilitators of, or obstacles to, progress. They are the intellectual heirs of Alexis de Tocqueville, who concluded that what made the American political system work was a culture congenial to democracy; Max Weber, who explained the rise of capitalism as essentially a cultural phenomenon rooted in religion; and Edward Banfield, who illuminated the cultural roots of poverty and authoritarianism in southern Italy, a case with universal application.[53]

Thus fatalism, belief in the notion of limited good, the prevalence of corruption and of the attitudes which foster it, animistic thinking, and bondage to a fear of occult powers, may each contribute to a worldview which sustains poverty and injustice: "Physical poverty is rooted in a mindset of poverty, a set of ideas held corporately that produce certain behaviours"[54] or, more succinctly, "Underdevelopment is a

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[48] Martin Goldsmith, *Get a Grip on Mission: the Challenge of a Changing World* (Leicester: IVP, 2006), 72.

[49] Raiter, "'Sent for this purpose,'" 121–122.

[50] Martin Goldsmith, *Get a Grip on Mission*, 72.

[51] Samuel Escobar, *A Time for Mission: The Challenge for Global Christianity* (Leicester: IVP, 2003), 64.

[52] Cf. Martin Goldsmith, *Get a Grip on Mission*, 77.

[53] Lawrence E. Harrison, "Introduction," in Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xxi.

[54] Darrow L. Miller, *Discipling Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures* (Seattle: YWAM Publishers, 1998), 67.

State of Mind."[55] This is not to deny the significance of other causal elements, including unjust structures of trade. However, poverty arises not only from factors external to the poor and over which they have no control, but also from powerful but debilitating beliefs that shape their societies. Consequently, measures to alleviate poverty are frequently unlikely to yield lasting success if they do not address critical cultural issues. However, by its nature the gospel should produce radical worldview change that will positively impact society as truth replaces falsehood through the renewing of minds (Rom 12:2). Escobar makes the point in discussing the social impact of South American Pentecostalism: "They [Pentecostals] do not have a social agenda but an intense spiritual agenda, and it is through that agenda that they have been able to have a social impact."[56] He quotes Martin's verdict on Pentecostalism:

> Above all it renews the innermost cell of the family and protects the woman from the ravages of male desertion and violence. A new faith is able to implant new disciplines, reorder priorities, counter corruption and destructive machismo, and reverse the injurious and indifferent hierarchies of the outside world.[57]

Mangalwadi makes a similar point in reflecting on Carey's approach to social ills in India:

> Carey struggled against specific social evils, just as his friends in England were continuing their struggles against evils. But Carey's confidence was not in his social protest or social action, but in the gospel. This is the very opposite of those Christians who put their hope for change in their "social action." . . . [Carey] believed that if we disciple nations, we will increasingly see God's will being done here on earth.[58]

Social change occurs through those who have been transformed by the gospel—through transformed communities of God's people who become salt and light in their societies. It is fruit rather than substance of mission. Communication of the gospel in its richness is the most significant "social action" that missionaries can undertake.

Conclusion

Does the issue of definition really matter? One can, after all, adopt a broad definition of mission while retaining a place for evangelism as one dimension of it—perhaps the most important dimension. This is the approach many would take, including Bosch, for whom evangelism remains one element of the emerging mission paradigm.[59] Certainly the extent of Christian engagement with the world is not limited to disciple-making but includes involvement in every area of life—all for the glory of God. The problem, however, is that if the making of disciples is subsumed under a category of mission which is much broader and far more inclusive, its absolute importance risks being compromised. Stott makes something of an allusion to this concern: "The main fear of my critics seems to be that

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[55] The title of another book by Lawrence Harrison, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books), 2000.

[56] Samuel Escobar, "The Global Scenario at the Turn of the Century," in William Taylor, ed., *Global Missiology for 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 42.

[57] David Martin, quoted by Samuel Escobar, "The Global Scenario at the Turn of the Century," 42.

[58] Vishal Mangalwadi, quoted by Miller, *Discipling the Nations*, 180–181.

[59] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 409.

missionaries will be sidetracked."[60] However, the issue is rather that churches in general would lose sight of the primary importance of making disciples and see such activity as simply one of many things that they are called to do. This is the more so in that the media constantly broadcast harrowing images of the human victims of crisis—refugees, victims of conflict, drought, and disease—which seize the imagination and rightly demand a compassionate response. However, the eternal lostness of those who are without God and without hope cannot be visualised in this way, nor be so readily *felt*, although in reality their state is *infinitely*—and that in a literal sense—more serious. There is a danger of the marginalisation of disciple-making if its distinct and unique nature is not specifically recognised and singled out as *the great work* of the people of God—the work that they alone can do. Nor is fear of such marginalisation merely the reflection of an obsessive paranoia, as history bears out:

> One generation of Mennonites cherished the gospel and believed that the entailment of the gospel lay in certain social and political commitments. The next generation assumed the gospel and emphasized the social and political commitments. The present generation identifies itself with the social and political commitments, while the gospel is variously confessed or disowned, it no longer lies at the heart of the belief system of some who call themselves Mennonites.[61]

Mennonites are not alone in theological drift. There is a tendency for mission in the disciple-making sense to be eclipsed, even swallowed up, by other concerns, and that tendency is enhanced if it is seen as simply one "missional" responsibility among many others. Of course, a simple return to a narrower definition of mission is not on its own likely to halt such a process; indeed, the inflation of the concept is probably more a symptom than a cause of what is already going on for other and more profound theological reasons. However that may be, if the concept and centrality of mission after the manner of the apostles is to be retained, its distinct identity must be secured through a vocabulary, specific words, that names it. This is what is being lost in the present confusion of definition. The appropriate response may be loudly to reaffirm a disciple-making definition of mission; perhaps more realistically it may be to accept the irreversibility of the process of "lexical entropy" and to develop new expressions—*apostolic mission* perhaps—to assert the church's primordial and unconditional responsibility to make disciples. The importance of the issue can scarcely be overstated. The great theme of Scripture is God's redemptive mission to call a people for his own glory among whom he will dwell; and those he calls are in their turn to engage in mission as his co-workers by making disciples of Jesus Christ. Definitional ambiguities must not be allowed to obscure the absolute centrality of that vital task.[62]

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[60] Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 342.

[61] D. A. Carson, quoting a Mennonite leader, in Tinker, "Reversal or Betrayal?" 271.

How a Mega-Church is Rediscovering the Gospel

— Joe Coffey —

Joe Coffey is lead pastor of Hudson Community Chapel.

Hudson Community Chapel is a suburban church in the Midwest that averages a little over three thousand people each weekend. We were ranked as one of the top one hundred fastest-growing churches in 2007. I think we have done some things well, and I don't think our growth was the result of preaching a prosperity gospel or appealing to the felt needs of people. But in the last year there have been some notable changes—and most of them have been in me.

During a mission trip to India in 2006, I was having extended time with God. I had an epiphany. I do not think many original thoughts, so this got my attention. The epiphany was that the incarnation was not hard for Jesus. I am sure that I had preached differently in the past about the great kenosis when Jesus "made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." But I suddenly realized that since Jesus still had an *unbroken relationship* with the Father, it was not all that difficult for him. The man who has God and nothing else has no less than the man who has God and everything. Jesus still had God, so it wasn't hard.

But there was a second part to the epiphany. As Jesus approached the appointed hour, each passing moment became progressively more difficult because he knew he was going to lose God at the cross. When Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" the shock of separation was unimaginably intense. Jesus experienced absolute agony because God had been torn away from him. He experienced infinite pain because he was devoid of God, deprived of God, and truly had nothing at all. Seeing this, I held my breath, wondering if I had ever really understood the depth of the love of Jesus for me or the extent of his sacrifice. The reality of his suffering had never struck me quite like it did that morning. It was the beginning of a rediscovery of the Gospel.

At the end of the mission trip one of the team members gave me a CD of a sermon called "What is the Gospel?" by Tim Keller. I put it on my desk and thought to myself, "If I don't know what the Gospel is by now, I am in sad shape." Indeed.

A couple weeks later, I met with a man who had been attending our church for four years. He said he needed to ask me a theological question before he could join our church. I never like those kinds of conversations since the question is usually about a distinctive rather than about something central. We met for breakfast, and his question was the best theological question I had ever been asked. He simply asked me how people grow. He said that he knew people were saved by grace, but he wanted to know if

I thought people were sanctified through their own sweat equity. I thought for a moment and then told him that the only thing that ever really changed me was love. Ever since the mission trip, I had been feeling that it was more important for me to understand how much Jesus loved me than it was for me to figure out how to love Him. I watched in amazement as relief spread across my friend's face. He said he had tried for twenty years to be sanctified through his own effort; it had ground him to powder, and he would not go back.

A couple of months went by and I finally picked up the Keller CD and listened to it as I drove. Before long, I found myself sitting alone in my car, fighting back the tears. Keller was connecting the dots: Christ's relationship with his Father was shattered *so that mine might be made whole*. I suddenly realized that I had undervalued the Gospel by treating it as merely the starting point of the Christian life, instead of as the all-encompassing source of truth and grace that empowers all of the Christian life.

The Bible came alive over the months that followed. When I read in the Old Testament about the wrath of God, the frustration of God at the Israelites in the desert, or the mercy seat in the Tabernacle—it would *all* take me to the cross. Everything everywhere was about cross-centered redemption: the Bible, relationships, even creation itself. The over-arching story of salvation became more clear to me than ever—beginning with creation, moving to the fall, and then redemption, and finally restoration. What I learned, I preached. Almost overnight it became the Gospel every week displayed in a different passage.

It has been a year of great growth inside my soul. And it has been a year of intense battle as I discovered the unplumbed depths of my depravity. My sins are not isolated incidences of weakness. There is an infection of idolatry in the core of my being where will-power is impotent and the only thing in the entire universe powerful enough to cure me is the blood of Christ.

To be specific, I have found it to be incredibly challenging to give up the belief system that has sustained me so long, one built on an initial forgiveness and then fed through a powerful combination of pride and fear. This pride stemmed from the performance of spiritual disciplines, pointed to the obvious signs of success (we were, after all, named in the fastest-growing one hundred churches!), and most of all was fueled by the approval of others. But fear may have been an even greater motivator: fear of being exposed as less than what people expect; fear of not being as smart, spiritual, or competent as I should be; fear of not measuring up; and fear of Luke 12:48, "to whom much was given . . . much will be required."

The belief system of a pastor is bound to come out in his preaching at least in subtle ways. My emphasis was always on grace, but it was also laced with the discipline of effort and inner strength to be what God called us to be. The result was either pride or defeat. My preaching has changed as a result of the Gospel going deeper inside of me.

The truth is I have existed as a pastor with gods in my closet. There were times when these gods sustained me. Giving them up has caused more death this year than I would like to admit. The closet is still not empty, but the death of these gods has made me ravenous. Without the Gospel as my source of security and significance, I would die. So as one who has vacillated between self-sufficiency and depression, Gospel-driven transformation is both liberating and terrifying.

There are some in our church who have not yet rediscovered the Gospel this way. There are others who hear the terrifying part but not the liberating part, and they sit on pins and needles. Many of them

will leave soon, I think. But there are many others who have felt the shackles start to fall off, and, like me, they are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

Rediscovering the Gospel is an ongoing process. Our church is a big ship to turn. I would never attempt to turn it if the approval of others was as vital to me now as it was a year ago and if I hadn't been changed by love, by Good News. In the midst of news this good, there is no better place to be—even if I am rejected by some and even if attendance falls. As a sinner-pastor, I stand in dependence on grace to plant and water Gospel seeds, recognizing that God himself gives the growth. In 2008, I will endeavor to preach an ever-clearer message that is faithful to the Scriptures—and woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel. Indeed.

Book Reviews

— OLD TESTAMENT —

— NEW TESTAMENT —

— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Sidnie White Crawford and Leonard J. Greenspoon. *The Book of Esther in Modern Research.* London: T&T Clark, 2003. xii + 267 pp. £70.00.

The Book of Esther in Modern Research does what its title states: it explores via thirteen essays aspects of the book of Esther available to scholars today. A bonus is that every essay includes some historical treatments of Esther.

Eleven contributors come from the United States, and one each from Canada and the United Kingdom. Notably lacking are scholars from Asia and Africa. A cumulative bibliography (242–57) serves all the authors. The articles, well written and edited but bereft of heavy citation, present a thoughtful study of a controversial book that was included in the canon, includes multiple versions, and continues to ignite interest worldwide.

Writing tongue-in-cheek, essayist Carey Moore wishes to be remembered for believing Mordecai supplied the brains and Esther the beauty (8). He had better be careful when, where, and to whom he says that!

Adele Berlin believes American Jews like the book more than do Israeli Jews "because they see themselves in it to a greater extent" (9).

Leonard Greenspoon examines thirty-two commentaries and selects translational differences to highlight.

Starting with modern translations and moving backward to the Persian period, Scott Langston concludes that "Esther is a book supremely concerned with power, its possession and its confrontation" (216).

Judith Neulander shows how the character Esther captures the imagination of Jews, Catholics, and Protestants alike (176). Ori Soltes collected scrolls of Esther (159–75). They look glorious! Too bad the miniature pictures are not in color!

In an interesting article, Barry Walfish points to ways to resolve a predicament present in midrash and Greek traditions that Esther was married to Mordecai before being taken to the king's palace and becoming queen (111–12). For example, one view was that the coupling of Mordecai and Esther, two righteous ones, was a lamp unto God and something worthy and necessary to bring about Israel's redemption (133).

Sidnie White Crawford, contrasting the books of Esther and Judith, finds sexuality predominates both (64). Their most striking difference is the role that religion and piety play. Esther is notorious for a dearth of religious piety, and in the Masoretic Text (MT), God is not mentioned at all (68). In contrast, the text says Judith prays, fasts, fears God, and provides sound theology to Bethulia's leaders (Judith 8:8, 11–27) (68).

Kristin De Troyer notes the book of Esther comes in various sizes. The size that became canonical is the MT; the Hebrew also was translated into Greek (LXX). The LXX is characterized by six additions; the most common addition is in the Alpha Text (AT). These three main texts (MT, LXX, AT) present, in De Troyer's opinion, a good example of how stories were reshaped in Judaism (49).

Timothy Laniak writes that the book of Esther affirms Purim and that Exodus affirms Passover; the event ought to be institutionalized each time God delivers his people (86).

In what to me was the most fascinating essay, Elizabeth Groves, argues strongly that Esther 2:19 ("At a second gathering of virgins") represents a significant decrease in power for the heroine. This verse, which Groves learned has puzzled scholars, presents, in her view, the revelation that Ahasuerus quite possibly had tired of Esther and sought more virgins to deflower. Esther's decision to attempt to thwart Haman's plan to kill the Jews shows her faith and courage in the face of personal danger. Groves writes that should Esther "appear in his court unbidden in direct defiance of Persian law, the penalty for which was death, she would conveniently provide him with the perfect excuse to dispatch her and search for a new queen by gathering virgins a *third* time" (108, emphasis in original).

David Clines in an entertaining essay walks the reader through a cacophony of interpretations and a symphony of readers' voices. He sees the future of the commentary as hypertext in which no one will read every word but everyone who uses it can find more than they thought they wanted (23).

Michael Fox examines three different heroines. The AT Esther is Mordecai's pliant tool (57). The LXX Esther deliberately uses her feminine frailty to give the king confidence (59). The MT Esther shows how an ordinary person, one with little initial promise, rises to a crisis, grows to meet its demands, and becomes a force to be reckoned with (54, 53).

Clearly, the book of Esther offers enough variety for all kinds of literary bents. The selected essays remind the modern reader to see the humor, foolishness, buffoonery, and sexual aspects in the book of Esther as well as its enduring themes of courage and miraculous deliverance.

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Eryl W. Davies. ***The Dissenting Reader: Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible.*** Aldershot, England: Ashgate. viii + 143 pp. £17.99/$29.95.
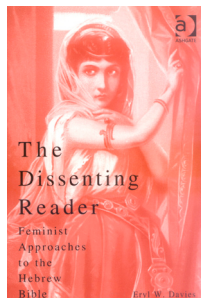
Because this volume provides a summary of feminist scholarship, it is a fine reference tool for a significant avenue of modern biblical scholarship. Written by a self-described non-feminist, *The Dissenting Reader* strongly argues that feminist biblical critics have offered challenges and insights to traditional readings of the biblical text for the last one hundred-plus years.

Because these traditional readings are approached and labeled as patriarchal, the counter-material Davies chronicles may be disturbing, irritating, and anger-producing to some readers. Nevertheless, academic honesty and intellectual integrity require not only a hearing of these non-traditional views and readings but also an examination of them, for these views and scholars will not go away nor be silenced.

Davies offers numerous examples. As a segue into a chapter for instance, he writes that his aims are first to examine the ways in which the biblical authors have contrived to manipulate the reader to accept their own patriarchal agenda and second to suggest how such a manipulation should be resisted (32). One method he suggests is to adopt an adversarial reading of the Hebrew Bible and to apply a "hermeneutic of suspicion" to its content, thereby exploring, challenging, questioning, and if necessary rejecting its patriarchal assumptions (53).

Davies, a fine writer and member of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales, Bangor, argues that "feminist biblical critics have provided a critique of the way in which the discipline of biblical studies is currently being pursued" (112).

Perhaps the most helpful part of Davies' book is his bibliography (113–27) which lists the major, pioneering feminist works; his own research concentrates on materials produced in the 1990s.

Perhaps the most disturbing part of the book for me, as a woman engaged in biblical studies, is Davies' tendency to generalize. He opens by stating that the Bible establishes a woman's inferiority early in Genesis 2–3 and keeps returning to this theme from the legal texts to the narratives to the prophetic texts (1). To me, Davies and feminist scholars as a whole do not consider other major biblical themes like the universality of sin for both genders and the goodness of God to both genders.

In the same chapter, in a section on wisdom literature and Proverbs in particular, he concentrates on derogatory statements about the adulteress and querulous, noisy, foolish women (7), but he does not show that various kinds of men also receive textual condemnation and scrutiny. Perhaps his concentration on negative references reflects what I consider the super-sensitivity of feminist scholars toward negative textual references to women. Wisdom literature and Proverbs in particular should be read broadly, for exaggeration and hyperbole are teaching tools. When I read Proverbs, I find that it is an equal opportunity mudslinger and praise giver, so to speak. In other words, it treats the genders fairly. Granted, present are the adulteress, gossip, and foolish woman, but the drunkard, foolish youth, and sluggard likewise cross its pages.

To me, Davies stands on firmer ground when he explores the potentiality toward male gender bias in commentaries. For example, when many women read that Lot offered to send his daughters out to be gang raped by the neighborhood men of Sodom in exchange for the sexual safety of his male

houseguests, they are aghast with dread, loathing, and disbelief. They personalize Genesis 19 very quickly. When these same women read Genesis commentaries written by men, they also are appalled by how Lot is commended for his hospitality, how his action must not be judged by Western standards, and how he was basically a good man and not a bad man (104). Davies notes that feminist scholars treat Lot's offer negatively, view him as weak, and see his hospitality as an untenable excuse for inappropriate and outlandish behavior (105). An honorable, truthful reading of Genesis 19 probably lies between the views of such male and female commentators, for the narrator simply presents the event without editorial comment.

Davies wisely visits and keeps on visiting the work of Phyllis Trible. I believe this tendency will carry on for decades to come for scholars on all sides. Her work reflects reasoned, thoughtful, scholarly, text-oriented, and confessional insights on the texts she covers. Davies argues that within the biblical text itself, there is an ideology opposed to patriarchal domination. Consequently, "feminist critics can therefore legitimately claim the authority of biblical faith itself to oppose its patriarchal agenda" (105).

The Dissenting Reader continues a healthy trend in biblical scholarship, namely, that those who work with the text both affirm their own gender and acknowledge the subsequent possible biases of their interpretations.

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John Day, ed. ***In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel***. London: T&T Clark, 2004. xvi + 432 pp. £25.00/ $60.00.
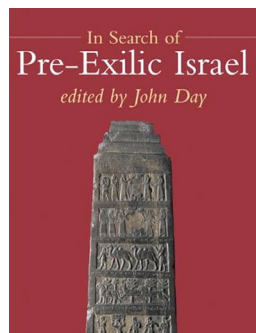
Tolle, lege! Take it and read it! These imperatives press upon the reader of this impressive treatment of issues pertaining to pre-exilic Israel. The book comprises seventeen articles by distinguished scholars. Its purpose is to purvey sustainable evidence about the origin of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, which finds its roots in Israel's pre-exilic times. The articles presume that the HB/OT was edited during the exile.

The volume commences with an article by Nicholson, outlining present revisionism in the field of HB/OT. He neatly sums up views concerning the emergence of the literature, underscoring that on the basis of valuable evidence it is very difficult to maintain the position that the HB/OT was written largely during the Persian period and that is a result of scribal activity serving political propaganda.

Davies focuses on the historicity of the "Exodus event," emphasizing that it is feasible to proffer a positive appraisal of the historicity of "some kind" of "Exodus event." Moreover, some aspects of the Exodus event point back to circumstances familiar to the period of New Kingdom Egypt. The Exodus event can hardly be viewed as an invention if one also takes into consideration the plethora of internal biblical evidence.

Frendo tackles the difficult question of the installation of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. He concludes that early Israel was comprised of various groups of "hill country villagers" initially native to Canaan who were coupled by Hebrews liberated from Egypt and who appropriated Yahwism in the desert.

Dever marshals significant evidence concerning the existence of a tenth century BCE "nascent state of Israel." Barton proposes that there existed a "golden age of Hebrew narrative" before the exile that could have comprised much of the Yahwist and the Succession Narrative. Emerton is concerned with the dating of the Yahwist. Houston tackles the question of a possible social crisis in the eighth century. Knoppers offers a summary of the data concerning Samaria after the fall of Israel. Williamson looks at the pre-exilic features of Isaiah. Reimer offers a treatment of Jeremiah before the exile. Day furnishes new insights regarding pre-exilic psalms. Dell outlines the pre-exilic roots of Proverbs. Levinson proffers an extensive analysis of the question whether the Covenant Code is exilic, providing an informed critique of Van Seters. Mastin deals with the question of Yahweh's Asherah and monotheism. Lambert evaluates the Mesopotamian materials that cast light on the pre-exilic period in Israel. Lemaire lists the Hebrew and West Semitic inscriptions with the question of pre-exilic Israel in view. Fenton concludes by examining Hebrew poetic structures as grounds for dating.

The great strength of this volume is the presentation of serious evidence, which buttress the pre-exilic origins of the Bible.

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Katharine J. Dell. *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. x + 225 pp. £48.00/$85.00.
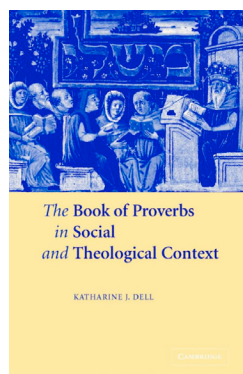
Some of the best textbooks and introductions have an argument of their own, rather than simply giving a run-down of previous research. Katharine Dell's *'Get Wisdom, Get Insight'* did that, arguing for the early and native ancestry of Israelite wisdom. This monograph on Proverbs now performs the same service in closer detail, providing another comprehensive digest of scholarship to the present, and a particular tilt at the idea that the wisdom of Proverbs is separate, international, secular, and, in Bright's judgement, 'only peripherally related' to Israelite faith. The author engages that old assumption on three levels: social context, theology, and literary relationship to the rest of the OT.

Against the view that chapters 1–9 are the product of a narrowly-focused elite court school in the Egyptian style, Dell suggests that the educational context of this material could have been familial as well as formal, and she sees in it a religious purpose just as strong as the educational aim: here as elsewhere in the text, she shows that references to Yahweh are too well-integrated to originate in later reworking. The instructional main body of the book is even more reminiscent of a family or tribal setting: distinguishing between oral and written stages of the material, she proposes that even sections of the book written down later—as by 'the men of Hezekiah', 25:1—have everyday folk origins.

The chapter on the theology of Proverbs traces earlier scholars' rediscovery of creation as a pervasive OT theme, which ushered Wisdom back into the mainstream. Here, though, the author offers more of a reshuffle in the relative importance of different themes than a real reintegration. Readers might be left still hoping for a solution which manages to honour the distinctive emphases of Wisdom without displacing God's saving acts from the theological centre. Some of Dell's own ideas, though, are original and exciting moves in the direction of such a reintegration: her observation of the close nexus between king and Yahweh in Proverbs, and her sense of the impulse towards praise in observational proverbs could both, differently, be fruitfully taken up by biblical theologians.

Other new ideas come in the chapter on echoes of OT literature found in Proverbs. It would be strange if Wisdom, which has been credited with such wide influence on other texts in the Hebrew Bible, was itself impermeable to influence from other Israelite genres. The author suggests that the relationship to the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope* has overshadowed equally important Hebrew influences on Proverbs. She finds prophetic and Deuteronomic elements in, especially, chapters 1–9, though the direction of dependence is hard to determine; and she identifies motifs and concerns from the psalms and the cult in 10:1–22:16, suggesting that the early Israelite wisdom reflected in these chapters began in the nation's worshipping life. Wisdom on this model is more popular, more authentically Hebrew, and more sacred than older accounts have allowed, and its conversation with other biblical traditions begins early, in contrast to the scholarly portrait of the wise adding only a scribal last word to other texts.

With this study Dell wishes 'to join the ranks of scholars who . . . affirm an interest in the nature of early Israelite life and belief' against the tendency to fade out the pre-exilic period. By exposing the home-grown roots of proverbial wisdom and amplifying early (and monotheistic, universalistic) biblical voices present in Proverbs, the present work adds to our picture of pre-exilic Israel, and so will be of

value beyond its own sphere of Wisdom.

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William G. Dever. ***Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel.*** Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. 344 pp. £15.99/£25.00.
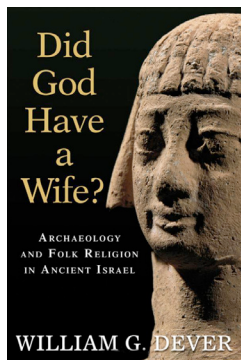
In *Did God Have a Wife?* William Dever distinguishes between 'book religion' (i.e. 'official' orthodoxy) and 'folk religion' (i.e. 'what people actually do'), arguing that 'book religion' seeks to suppress 'folk religion'. Dever argues that the Hebrew Bible was a late development of 'book religion', whereas the cult of the goddess Asherah was an early, important, and widespread part of 'folk religion' in ancient Israel. Dever states that the chauvinistic authors of the biblical text ignored the feminine Asherah cult in order to eradicate the knowledge of her cult's existence (184–85, 294–300). Consequently, Dever alleges that 'all the biblical literature . . . . constitutes what is essentially "propaganda" . . . the writers were "spin doctors". Thus, the Bible is ancient "revisionist history" on a grand scale' (71).

Dever understands the prophets as 'urban elites' who sought to suppress the 'folk religion' practised by the average commoner (282–89). Dever's central thesis is that the creation of the Hebrew Bible and monotheism are the direct results of the theological crisis of the exile and the on-going chauvinist repression of the Asherah cult. Dever argues that the suppression of 'folk religion' by chauvinistic 'book religion' persists to the present day and that 'only archaeology' can redress the bias of the male-dominated authorship and subsequent study of the Hebrew Bible that has existed over the millennia (197). Dever notes that the '*archaeological rediscovery* of the long-lost Goddess' can 'give back to the women of ancient Israel their distinctive long-lost voice, allowing them to speak to us today of *their* religious lives' (306–7). Dever also says that this view of the development of monotheism should help the West leave behind its cultural imperialism, which is the result of 'the dominant influence of "dead, white, Europeanized males"' (311).

Dever's book is well organized, and he does a good job of explaining technical jargon and archaeological data (18–29, 88–89, 220–21, 296) to the 'general audience' for whom the book is intended (ix, xii). Throughout the introduction Dever is refreshingly forthright about his biases and presuppositions. Dever's passion for archaeology shines through on every page, and he correctly assesses that the field of biblical theology, to its own detriment, rarely considers archaeology (38, 61). Dever also helpfully points out some of the problems with postmodern approaches to the biblical text (82–83).

There are some flaws, however, with the work:

1. Dever has created a false dichotomy between 'folk religion' and 'book religion'. Dever argues that all cult-related archaeological data is evidence of normative 'folk religion' but all ancient texts are revisionist 'book religion' (282–89). This approach classifies the quality of archaeological and textual data only on the basis of its type, without analysing its reliability or its range of interpretive possibilities. This approach assumes that archaeological evidence, and its subsequent interpretation by archaeologists, is

complete and unbiased, whereas textual evidence is revisionist propaganda (51, 71). Thus, Dever overly emphasizes the importance of archaeology, and degrades the importance of primary textual sources (74–76).

2. Concerning Dever's interpretation of the Asherah cult, some problems may be noted. First, Dever fails to appreciate the significance of women in the biblical text, relegating such prominent figures as the Matriarchs Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Jezebel, and Esther to the status of the 'disenfranchised and marginalized . . . the invisible' (48, 61). He suggests throughout the book that the real contribution of women in ancient Israel was not in political leadership, but as domestic worshippers of the goddess Asherah. Second, Dever does not provide a convincing understanding of how the Israelite prophets could condemn the royalty and be advocates of social justice while also functioning as 'book religion' elites who suppressed the 'folk religion' of the commoners (70, 190, 282, 286, 288–89). Third, Dever claims that the biblical authors ignored the Asherah cult in order to suppress knowledge of its existence (72, 184–85), but he does not sufficiently explain why other cults, such as those of Ba'al and Chemosh, are condemned by name rather than similarly ignored. Finally, while Dever is right to document the existence of the Asherah cult, he exaggerates its importance.

3. While archaeological data does testify that, at various points in its history, ancient Israel largely failed to be monolatrous or monotheistic, this is in accord with the biblical text. Thus, Israel did not have a polytheistic history in the sense that it embraced polytheism as one stage in its religious evolution. We should not confuse the history of Israel's failures with the history of monotheism.

4. There seems to be a lack of awareness about the recent scholarship concerning the interpretation of various ancient Near Eastern texts. For example, Dever advocates a 'myth-and-ritual' approach to the Ba'al-Mot Myth and erroneously compares the Babylonian Akitu Festival to Yom Kippur (267–69).

5. Dever fails to explain adequately how monotheism could be the result of the combination of crisis management and chauvinistic repression (294–98).

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— NEW TESTAMENT—

Octavian D. Baban. *On the Road Encounters in Luke-Acts: Hellenistic Mimesis and Luke's Theology of the Way.* Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006. 332 pp. £24.99.
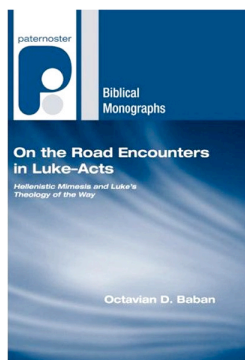
Students of Luke-Acts will be familiar with the way Luke builds his narrative on journeys such as Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem and the numerous missionary journeys culminating with Paul's journey to Rome. In this volume (a revision of his PhD thesis) Octavian Baban probes deeper into Luke's post-Easter narrative, exploring how Luke's journeying motif or theology of the Way is more illuminating for contemporary readers when one understands the influences upon his literary-theological perspective. Thus his review of scholarship in chapter one concludes that to fully grasp Luke's Way motif, one must account for the shorter journey stories in Luke-Acts with their refined literary and pervasive Hellenistic intertextuality.

Accordingly, Baban expounds his methodology in chapter two, explaining the literary concept of 'mimesis' as an 'interpreted representation of reality' (73) first articulated in Aristotelian philosophy. Luke follows the rules of Hellenistic mimesis used in his contemporary literary environment: historiography, novel-writing, tragedy, and the epic genre. For example, Luke's understanding of depicting tragedy is apparently made richer by his awareness of the Aristotelian 'flaw', which is seen in Saul's life before his conversion, Cleopas' disappointment, and the Eunuch's social exclusion. These and other aspects of Luke's literary artistry (e.g. climactic recognitions, reversals of fate, divine intervention) are then filtered through his own theology and literary taste, reinforcing to his readers the credibility of his account.

Before focusing on the post-Easter encounters set on 'the way' (*hodos*), Baban analyses the synoptic *hodos* material (chapter 3). He shows how Luke alters Matthew's and Mark's journeying notes, while including 'journey within journey stories' (179) in Luke 9–19. Each journey is a literary motif with a specific role within the narrative. Whether the Good Samaritan, Zacchaeus, or the prodigal son, each '*hodos*' encounter reflects Hellenistic requirements for a well-written plot: recognition scenes, turning points, reversals of destiny, suffering scenes, and resotrational endings (194).

To prove the complexity of the Lukan motif of journeying, Baban explores the literary anatomy and narrative function of three post-Easter *hodos* encounters (Luke 24:13–34; Acts 8:26–40; 9:1–19). Chapter four demonstrates the real fruit of his study. Baban's ability to spot narrative features is highly illuminating, drawing attention to the way that each encounter contributes to the advance of the overall plot: the gospel's journey from Jerusalem to Rome. Each *hodos* encounter begins with a degree of pathos and ends with recognition and a restoration into fellowship, illustrated by a sacramental act (table fellowship at Emmaus, baptism of the Eunuch, and a commissioning and baptism for Saul).

Finally, Baban reinforces the importance of these *hodos* encounters for the overall thrust of the Lukan narrative. They confirm the presence of a Gentile evangelistic initiative, while also providing illustrations of individual transformation undergone by the Easter kerygma, where the *hodos* motif becomes symbolic of God's initiatives towards the Gentiles. Thus Luke's use of Hellenistic mimesis patterns (his literary representation of the Way) moves the *hodos* motif on from an Isaianic reference to way of the Lord (cf. Luke 3:4b), to a resurrection symbol (an evangelistic symbol), finally to being associated with the essence of Christianity itself.

This book sheds light on what first appears to be an insignificant NT word (*hodos*). Patient, careful reading will be greatly repaid despite the somewhat cumbersome diversion into the world of Hellenistic story telling. It is also important reading for those seeking to expand their understanding of narrative criticism. Baban successfully shows Luke's caliber as an evangelist, an educated writer, a talented story-teller, and profound theologian. Above all he communicates Luke's conviction of his desire that his readers encounter the resurrected Jesus during *their* journey through life.

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Richard Bauckham. ***Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony.*** Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. xiii + 538 pp. £18.99/$32.00.
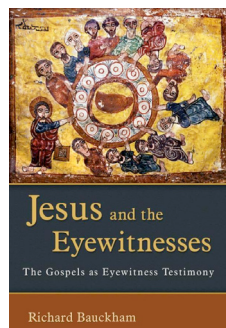
Richard Bauckham, the retiring Professor of New Testament at St Andrews University in Scotland, is one of the best-informed and most original New Testament scholars of this generation. In this remarkable book, Bauckham's thesis is that the gospels should be understood as 'testimony' (as argued before by Samuel Byrskog), testimony being 'a reputable historiographic category for reading the Gospels as history' and also a theological category that is appropriate if we are to 'recognize the disclosure of God in the history of Jesus'. In testimony there is no gap between the events described and the interpretation given: 'there is an inextricable coinherence of observable event and perceptible meaning' (5).

As for the nature of the New Testament's testimony to Jesus, Bauckham seeks 'to present evidence, much of it not hitherto noticed at all, that makes the 'personal link of the Jesus tradition with particular tridents', through the period of the transmission of the tradition down to the writing of the Gospels, if not 'historically undeniable', then at least historically very probable' (7). What this means in practice is that Bauckham argues for an extremely close link between Peter and Mark's gospel, and also that John's gospel was written by a disciple of Jesus. Bauckham recognizes that John is a more meditative interpreted account of Jesus than that found in the synoptics, but instead of seeing this as evidence of greater remoteness from Jesus, he sees it as precisely the freedom that an eyewitness would have had in giving his testimony to Jesus.

Much of Bauckham's book comprises detailed and interesting analysis of the early church traditions regarding the origins of the gospels. Whereas many scholars seem (almost) to bin the comments of the early church fathers, Bauckham takes them very seriously. Thus his first major chapter is on his key witness, Papias. He discusses Papias's preference for 'the living voice' rather than for books, and argues that this reflects not a general preference for oral over written tradition, but the belief, which was widespread in the ancient world, that priority in writing history should be given to the testimony of eyewitnesses, preferably living eyewitnesses.

He goes on to a fascinating discussion of 'names' in the gospels, arguing that the pattern of people named (and not named) reflects accurate recollection of the people concerned (e.g. the women at the cross, Simon of Cyrene and his two sons), and that some of the stories (e.g. that of Zacchaeus or

Bartimaeus) must have come from the individuals concerned. He brings into this discussion some of the recent research that has been done on Jewish names in the NT period (as by the Israeli scholar Tal Ilan), finding that the gospel names fit strikingly well. Bauckham's table of 'the 99 most popular names among Palestinian Jews' is slightly reminiscent of modern newspaper statistics on the most popular names for babies!

Bauckham moves from this into a chapter on the twelve, arguing that they not only have theological significance in relation to Israel, but also that they were 'an official body of eyewitnesses'. He explores differences in the various lists of names in Scripture, making lots of sense of the differences and finding the accounts compatible (with the one exception being the changing of Levi in Mark 2:14 to Matthew in Matthew 9:9, which he sees as the author of Matthew's gospel wanting to associate Matthew as the author of the original Aramaic Matthew with the first disciples). Bauckham goes on to argue that Mark by introducing Peter at the beginning and the end of his gospel, and also Luke and John in different ways, are using a literary device 'the *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony' (found also in Lucian and Porphyry); they are thus claiming to have eyewitness sources.

This leads Bauckham back into Mark and to his argument that Mark's narrative and portrayal of Peter indicate that his gospel derives from Peter. He revives the view of C. H. Turner that Mark's alternation between the third person plural (e.g. Mark 14:32 'they went to . . . Gethsemane') and the third person singular ('and he said to his disciples') is an echo of Peter's first hand narrative ('we did . . . Jesus did'). Bauckham argues that Peter comes over as an individual, not just as a representative figure, and that Peter is honestly, but not negatively, portrayed, as someone who experienced transformation.

Having argued about the significance of named individuals in the gospels, Bauckham also reflects about anonymous individuals, suggesting, for example, that 'protective anonymity' may have been a factor in the failure of Mark to name the woman who anointed Jesus, the young man who fled away naked (was he Lazarus, who was a marked man?) and the man whose ear was cut off.

Bauckham then comes back to Papias and to his testimony about Mark and Matthew, arguing that Papias means to say that Mark was Peter's translator (not just someone who drew on Peter's preaching to compile his own account). Papias's comment that Mark did not compile his account in order derives from his comparison of Mark with John's gospel, which he regarded as an orderly first-hand eyewitness account. Our Matthew was one translation of the original Aramaic account of Matthew.

Bauckham next moves into a general discussion of oral tradition and memorization, looking at scholarly ideas about oral tradition, making trenchant criticisms of form criticism, and then offering a more sympathetic critique of the ideas of the Scandinavian school and Birger Grhardsson and also of Kenneth Bailey and James Dunn. He argues that Bailey and Dunn, for all their strengths, fail to take into account the important community role of official eyewitnesses. He notes the importance of oral tradition for Paul and picks up the arguments of Stanton and Lemcio about the gospel writers distinguishing Jesus' time from their own time, not confusing the two. He notes the importance of memorization in ancient society, drawing on Riesner's work on Jesus as teacher, while allowing that written note-taking may have played a part. He questions the idea that traditions were preserved by communities, rather than by individuals, and also the idea that the gospels were originally anonymous: at least Luke in his prologue and John with his references to the Beloved Disciple assume that the readers know who the authors are.

In case the reader is getting tired of examining all sorts of ancient sources, Bauckham moves next into a interesting chapter on modern studies of the psychology of memory, bringing this finally to bear on the form critical ideas of Nineham and others, and arguing that the gospels do represent genuine memories of Jesus.

Most of the final hundred pages of Bauckham's book are devoted to discussion of John's gospel. He argues, among other things, that chapter 21 is an integral part of the gospel (an epilogue of 496 words matching the prologue of 496 syllables; 496 was a triangular and perfect number, and the numerical value of *monogenes*, only Son, in 1:14!). He argues against the view that the 'we' of 21:24 points to the gospel coming from a Johannine school; rather it is a 'we' of authoritative testimony. He goes on to interact with other scholarly ideas about John's gospel, for example arguing persuasively that there is not rivalry between Peter and John, but that Peter is the pastor and John the witness, with 21:23 pointing to John's testimony as continuing until the parousia.

He returns to Papias for discussion of the identity of the author of the gospel and sides with the not inconsiderable body of scholars who think that Papias distinguishes two Johns: the son of Zebedee and the elder. The Beloved Disciple is the latter and was an original disciple of Jesus, but not one of the twelve. He backs this argument up with study of the Muratorian canon and Polycrates and Irenaeus, making all sorts of intriguing suggestions, including that the tradition that John was a priest, indeed a high priest, existed because the Ephesian church identified him (wrongly) with the John of Acts 4:6.

So Bauckham's case is complete, except for some final comments on historical method and testimony, in which he affirms the proper place for trusting testimony, though not credulity. He offers some very interesting comparisons between testimonies to the horrors of the Holocaust and the testimony of the gospels to the good news of Jesus, in both cases 'uniquely unique events', to quote Ricoeur. He concludes by coming back to the theological point that testimony is the appropriate category for describing events that are a disclosure of God in history. 'It is in the Jesus of testimony that history and theology meet' (508).

This book is very important, calling into question many conventional scholarly opinions and offering many fascinating and largely persuasive observations. Sometimes the judgments are fine ones, involving attractive but uncertain readings of texts, biblical and patristic. (His work on Papias and others reminded me a little of my father, John Wenham, and his *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke*.) My major question about the book relate to Bauckham's view of the authorship of John's gospel, though he is in very distinguished company in identifying the author as a disciple of Jesus other than John son of Zebedee. There is no question that the relevant Papias text may be read in that way. But I remain perplexed as to what has happened on this view to John son of Zebedee in the fourth gospel: he has been almost totally eclipsed by the elusive Elder, although the synoptics are unanimous about his importance within the twelve and about the closeness to Jesus as one of the inner three disciples (could we say that he is one of the 'beloved disciples'?). Paul too identifies him as one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9). Of course, there could have been two Johns who were significant disciples of Jesus, but where has the son of Zebedee gone in the fourth gospel, and what is to be gained by postulating another John who was very close to Jesus and to Peter? Is it likely that the early church references to John mean anyone other than the son of Zebedee?

This particular query does not take away from the importance of the book as a whole. It makes so many shrewd and important points, some of them indisputable, others of them less certain but well

worth exploring by future scholars and research students. I hope the book will be taken as seriously as it deserves.

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Andrew E. Bernhard. ***Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts.*** Library of New Testament Studies. London/New York: Continuum, 2006. xiv + 157 pp. + plates. £65.00.
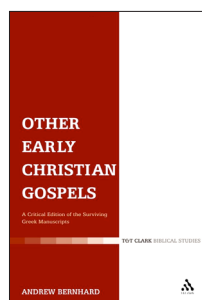
This volume is a useful collection of the Greek texts of apocryphal works and includes the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Peter*, *The Unknown Gospel* (Papyrus Egerton 2), and other fragments. The author defines the scope of the book as including only those works that treat the adult life of Jesus, thus infancy Gospels and post-resurrection dialogues are excluded. This restriction is somewhat arbitrary, but obviously some boundary is necessary; the book is by no means long, however.

In general, the photographs are of reasonable, though not excellent, quality. In the case, for example, of the Egerton Papyrus photos, the original Bell & Skeat edition is more legible. Bernhard's photo of the beginning of the *Gospel of Thomas* is of high quality, although again the photo in the original Oxyrhychus Papyri edition allows more text to be read because of its size. Nevertheless, it is very good to have them, along with the photos of the Akhmim text of the *Gospel of Peter*.

In terms of its slant on the dates of the works, Bernhard is probably optimistic in dating *Thomas*, *Peter*, and *Unknown Gospel* to prior to AD 130. He argues this on the basis of the textual evidence and of the non-relation to the NT Gospels, but there are some problems here. On the former, the second century manuscript P. Oxy. 4009 is not likely to be part of the Gospel of Peter; on the latter, the Gospel of Thomas is very likely to be dependent on the Synoptic Gospels (e.g. Luke's influence on saying 5).

Nevertheless, this is an extremely useful collection, and it is excellent to have texts, translations and photographs of different works available in a single volume. Unfortunately, it will probably be prohibitively expensive for most individuals, and it would be useful for postgraduate students and scholars to have a paperback version available.

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William S. Campbell. *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity.* Library of New Testament Studies 322. London: T&T Clark, 2006. xiv +203 pp. £65.00/$39.95.
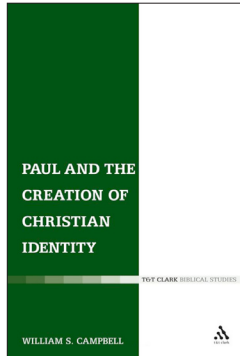
Campbell's analysis of Paul arises from a concern for the treatment of the 'Other' in modern multi-cultural societies. He seeks to counter claims of a uniform, 'universal Christian identity' that not only affords no room for distinctive Christian identities around the world (i.e., Nigerian or Korean) but also fosters a sense of Christian superiority over other world faiths. The logic of the argument works as follows. This universal Christian identity assumes a sameness among all Christians while negating 'the identity of the other who is and remains different' (xi). This erroneous identity in large part stems from a misinterpretation of Paul as one who rejected his Jewish heritage *in toto* in favour of a new and completely different Christian self-understanding. Campbell argues that Paul did not reject his Jewishness nor intend to eliminate either Jewish or Gentile identity in others for the sake of asserting a unitary Christian identity**.** Rather, according to Campbell, Paul sought to preserve existing identities of Jewish and Gentile Christ-followers while promoting a genuine equality that respected differences between them. A combination of situational factors led later Christians to misread his letters and drive Jewish believers from the church, leaving a thoroughly Gentile church in its stead. According to Campbell, recovery of this earlier, true reading of Paul can enable a Christian identity that stands open to the 'Other' today. Although Campbell recognizes that Paul spoke to those within the Church, he believes that Paul's position regarding diversity carries implications beyond the Church as well (although he never explains how this is so).

The book reads more like a collection of essays on particular issues in or sections of Paul's letters than a coherent linear argument. Each chapter quickly returns to the main theme of the book: Paul did not seek to suppress pre-Christian identities but promoted 'diversity' among Christ-followers.

On the whole, I am sympathetic with most of Campbell's reading of Paul. Paul remained a Jew after his encounter with Christ and carried out his apostolic commission as a Jew, seeking to graft the wild gentile olive shoots onto the roots of the Jewish olive tree (Romans 11:17). In addition, at several points, Campbell offers an astute perspective on the pro-Jewish nature of Paul's arguments.

Yet, the book disappoints in numerous ways. Repeatedly, I found Campbell underplaying evidence from Paul's letters that called his own interpretations into question. For example, he believes Romans was addressed to Gentile Christ-followers only. Yet he only deals with the facile arguments to the contrary, ignoring more substantive evidence for Jewish Christ-followers among Paul's addressees.

Furthermore, Campbell frames his categories in such a dichotomized fashion that one cannot help but agree with his conclusions. On his opening page, he contends that one either affirms a universal Christian identity that suppresses diversity, looks down on persons from other faiths, and fosters victimization of others or one opts for the sort of diversity for which Campbell argues. One can imagine other options, but Campbell leaves no room for them. Is this any way to treat an 'other' who might disagree with him?

The shame in all of this is that Campbell is on to something. Misreadings of Paul have indeed produced the kinds of horrific results he rightly deplores. But the manner in which he frames the issues

along with his manner of argumentation leaves one with the impression that Campbell has reached a conclusion and is searching for supporting arguments rather than the reverse.

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David L. Dungan. *Constantine's Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007. 224 pp. $17.00.
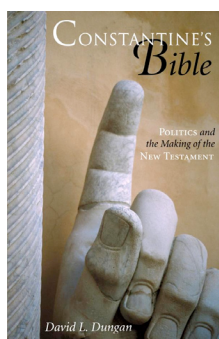
David L. Dungan is Professor of Religion at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville), and this book is the culmination of a course that he has been teaching for thirty-five years entitled, "The Making of the New Testament." His vast knowledge of, and years of reflecting on, early Christianity shines through on every page of this thought-provoking little book.

Dungan's basic argument is laid out in the opening chapter and reiterated throughout the book: "I will demonstrate that the legal imposition of a *kanōn* . . . upon Christian scripture along with a *kanōn* of the correct summary of doctrine (the creed), and the enforcement of both with the full power of the Roman government, was a phenomenon unique to fourth-and fifth-century Christianity" (8). His focus, therefore, as reflected in the subtitle of the work, is on the political atmosphere in which the canon of the New Testament was formed and affirmed. The scripture as a *canon* that Christians today possess is very different from the way scripture functions in other religions. The canonization of scripture reflects the political and philosophical ideology of the early Christian church as it was shaped in the wake of Constantine's conversion in the early fourth-Century. The book is very engaging and provocative. Moreover, it is written in an accessible style, allowing it to be read by a wide range of students interested in the formation of the New Testament canon.

The book is short, only 139 pages of actual text (notes not included) over six chapters and an epilogue. The first chapter ("What a 'Canon' of Scripture Is—and Is Not") clarifies how we should distinguish between the terms "scripture" ("a slowly evolving conglomeration of sacred texts," 2) and "canon" (the imposition of strict boundaries around certain scriptures, 3). A canonization of scripture (as in Judaism and Christianity) is a relatively rare phenomenon in the history of religion.

Chapters two ("The Greek Polis and the Demand for Accuracy") and three ("Greek Polis Ideology within Second Temple Judaism and Christianity") give an astute historical background to the formation of the New Testament canon. Dungan illustrates how the term *kanōn* was originally used in the political arena prior to and contemporaneous with early Judaism and Christianity. It was not until the fourth century when the term *kanōn* would be used of Christian scripture, though the term was in use before then to refer to the "canon of truth," the "canon of holy tradition," etc. (29).

Chapter four discusses "The Influence of Greek Philosophy upon Early Christianity," providing a good overview of events and movements (second-and third-century) leading up the canonization of the New Testament in the fourth-century. Dungan shows that the interest in authentic versus spurious writings reflects the concerns of Greek philosophy and not that of early Judaism.

Chapter five ("Against Pagans and Heretics: Eusebius's Strategy in Defense of the Catholic Scriptures") is fundamental to the book. Dungan examines in great detail Eusebius's discussions in his *Ecclesiastical History* on the criteria used to select which books were to be considered the church's scripture (which in turn led to the canonization of this scripture). The chapter reads almost as a brief commentary on Eusebius's statements in this regard, unpacking key terms and clarifying misunderstood phrases. Eusebius gave us a "minimalist collection of scriptures" where "all regional agendas have been intentionally ignored; all personal preferences of prominent theologians and bishops set aside; every possible evidence of pressure politics and manipulation of the process rigorously suppressed" (92). No official canon was declared, yet the foundation was laid.

Chapter six ("An Emperor Intervenes: Constantine Reshapes Catholic Christianity and Its Scriptures") comprises a well-written and exciting account of Constantine's conversion and the subsequent effects it had on Christianity and the formation of the New Testament canon (this was my favorite chapter!). The influence that Constantine had on Christianity cannot be underestimated—and this is well known. But Dungan shows that this influence trickled down to the formation of the canon: "When the Roman government, in the person of the emperor, powerfully intruded into the church's activities, it irrevocably skewed the whole debate by transplanting it into the state's legal framework, where coercive enforcement of the outcome was routine . . . what nonorthodox Christian would dare publicly to use a non-accepted writing or attack the orthodox collection and propose an alternative selection of scripture" (120–21). Dungan concludes with an Epilogue, which examines how the canon was looked upon by various individuals from the late fourth-century to the Reformation.

The book is highly engaging and well worth the short time it will take to read. Dungan's wealth of knowledge and critical evaluation of early Christianity and politics is admirable. A personal charge is added to the Epilogue, which gives a bit more insight into where Dungan is coming from. Upon reflecting on the formation of the atmosphere surrounding the formation of the canon, Dungan writes: "I would propose this correction to our modern rejection of the scriptural canon: freedom from having a *canon*, i.e., from restriction to a specific set of writings compelled by the use of force, need not and should not extend to jettisoning, at the same time, the valuable results of the original orthodox Christian *scripture selection process* as described by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*" (138–39).

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Margaret Hannan. *The Nature and Demands of the Sovereign Rule of God in the Gospel of Matthew.* London: Continuum, 2006. xiv + 263 pp. £60.00.

In this abridged version of her doctoral thesis, Margaret Hannan presents a literary and theological reading of the various *basileia* logia in the Gospel of Matthew. Hannan draws attention to Matthew's crafting of his material in order to highlight the *basileia* logia unique to his Gospel, placing them at strategic points throughout the Gospel. In doing so, Matthew attempts to "drive home all-important theological motifs" (173). Hannan sees these kingdom-sayings as containing the author's unique voice expressing his conviction that "God's gratuitous saving and liberating presence is a reality in every era of history" (230).

Hannan assumes that Matthew's particular theological understanding of Jesus' mission and proclamation is to be found in the structure and composition of his gospel. This requires the interpreter to take the whole gospel into account rather than isolated units of tradition. Matthew has skillfully crafted a story by interweaving traditional materials with his own unique theological statements. She wants not only to notice what was said (syntax) but also how it is said, the position of a pericope within the narrative. Since Hannan deals primarily with the text of Matthew, there is little interaction with the other Gospels. This is not a redactional study but rather an attempt to develop the theology of the author of the first Gospel.

A study of this kind must develop some sort of an understanding of Matthew's community. This is always tentative work since what may be known about the community is found only in the text of Matthew. For Hannan, Matthew's community is a very limited community of Jewish believers-in-Jesus in a predominately Greek-speaking culture (9). The author of Matthew attempts to maintain continuity with the historic Jesus in the midst of cultural changes precipitated by the fall of the Temple. Matthew's community is one of several Jewish voices that respond to the loss of the Temple as the center of Jewish worship.

Hannan works through the text of Matthew in a series of short chapters that function as a commentary on the kingdom-sayings. Each chapter begins with a survey of the composition of the section followed by explanations of how each pericope contributes to the overall kingdom-theme of Matthew. As Hannan notes, the "preaching of the kingdom of heaven" is the motivating factor for Jesus' Galilean period (45), for the individual instruction of his disciples beginning in chapter 13 (101), and for his final ministry in Jerusalem (193).

Each chapter concludes with theological reflections on the unit examined. Most of these follow from the text and demonstrate the growth of the theme of kingdom in Matthew's Gospel. On occasion these theological observations seem to stray beyond what the text of Matthew seems to be saying. For example, Hannan comments on the preaching of John the Baptist as strongly pointing to God's coming salvation from the oppression of both the religious leadership and "the imperial weight of Rome," citing 4:15–16 in support of this statement (41). That John was critical of the religious leadership of the Jews is clear, but he has virtually nothing to say about Rome, and 4:15–16 is a citation of Isaiah 9 which has little to do with the "imperial weight of Rome." That Jesus challenged the religious authority of his day is clear, but does God's sovereignty as presented in Matthew really challenge "exploitative relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and among the disciples of Jesus"? (172). This seems

more like Pauline theology than what is found in Matthew's Gospel. However, these statements do not greatly detract from the value of this study for students of the first Gospel.

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Carl R. Holladay. *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament: Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2005. xxiii + 609 pp. + CD-Rom. £27.99.
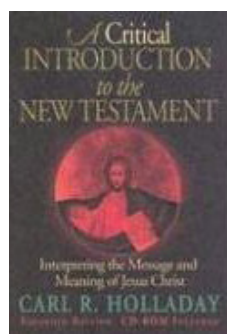
The purpose of this introduction is to provide the reader with basic theological, historical, and literary information on the twenty-seven writings of the NT. This monograph is the culmination of professor Holladay's thirty years of experience teaching the NT to seminary and college students.

The book includes material found in traditional NT introductions. The familiar "W's" are all explored: Who wrote each letter? When? Where? To Whom? Why? However, the distinctive feature of this NT introduction is that Holladay gives greater attention to the social, theological, ethical, and religious dimensions related to the message and meaning of Jesus Christ. Moreover, Holladay explores how the earliest believers interpreted this message. The monograph also gives an overview of how the NT has been read and interpreted throughout the last twenty centuries.

Regarding structure, Holladay treats the writings of the NT in the order in which they appear in modern day Bibles. An added plus is that the book comes in two formats, a 600 page print edition and an expanded CD-ROM version containing a 900 page PDF-based text. The standard print edition contains introductory material that is informative and interesting. The CD-ROM version on the other hand takes the topics to a deeper level and covers them in more detail. The basic bibliographies found at the end of each chapter are supplemented by lengthy annotated ones in the e-version. Holladay also provides helpful evaluations of resources that were used in the writing of the book. The monograph also contains helpful sections on the history of study which may benefit a variety of students. Moreover, the e-version comes with additional diagrams, illustrations, and maps not found in the print edition. In terms of structure, the e-version does have an index that is designed to help readers do simple searches. One can perform a full-text search within individual chapters and print a page or specific set of pages from selected sections.

The book is a valuable resource for students, teachers, and pastors, and I applaud Holladay for his effort. However, the weaker side of this introduction is, naturally enough, the e-version. While Abingdon Press has made a step in the right direction in putting the book in digital format, the e-format which they have chosen has two main weaknesses: research capabilities and user interface.

First, while it is possible to save all twenty eight individual chapters of Holladay's book onto a computer hard drive, the basic search engine works only with the CD-Rom version and is limited to the topics found only in the print version. So, if one wanted to find every place where Holliday discusses a biblical passage, modern author, specific topic, or church father, he or she would have to read the

footnotes of each individual chapter because this material is not indexed or hot linked to the search engine. It is the opinion of this reviewer that the e-version was not intended to be a research tool.

Secondly, the PDF-based text is more difficult to work with in the teaching and preaching setting. Holladay has provided instructors and pastors with excellent maps, tables, and visual aids. However, it is not easy to transfer PDF-based material into another program like MS Power Point or MS Word.

In short, the book is a welcomed edition to NT introductions and those who enjoy reading print editions might seriously think about adding this one to their collections. But to those who enjoy digital libraries, I would suggest waiting until improvements can be made to the e-version.

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Larry W. Hurtado. *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 248 pp. £11.99/$22.00.
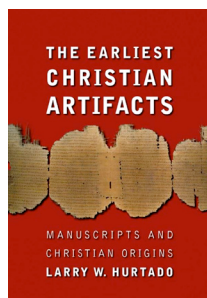
This is a highly significant book by Professor Larry Hurtado on a topic that is becoming an important scholarly issue: how the actual physical texts of the NT in the early centuries reveal the centrality of the NT and its interpretation by early readers.

Hurtado argues that Christian texts, including those that eventually became the NT, were an important feature in Christian communities across the Roman world in the early centuries. He believes that the evidence of the artifacts themselves show that Christians preferred the "codex" book form over the roll, the more traditional form in the early Roman period. It appears that Christians strongly preferred the codex for those writings they regarded as scripture, and that an early edition of Paul's epistles in codex form could have provided an influential precedent.

Hurtado has an intriguing suggestion regarding the ending of Mark. Broadly, it is easy in codex form to envisage that the initial and final leaves are more subject to damage or loss. This implies that any proposal about the putative loss of some portion of a text, like Mark 16, should include an indication of a particular book form and show its specific potential for the kind of damage/loss proposed. Hurtado's argument has substantial implications for the debate about the ending of Mark. It not enough to argue merely from the internal evidence that Mark ends at 16:8 or that a resurrection account has been lost. Either theory needs to account for the actual phenomenon of the codex itself, and how leaves were lost. It would be interesting to see other scholars to put forward proposals concerning the ending of Mark, based upon Hurtado's arguments.

Hurtado then considers the use of the *nomina sacra* in early Christian artifacts (abbreviations of key words for God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, etc.). He shows that while the *nomina sacra* were adapted from pre-Christian techniques of abbreviations, we are dealing with a Christian scribal innovation. They manifest one noteworthy expression of what Hurtado calls "the binitarian shape" of the earliest Christian piety. The other intriguing scribal phenomenon Hurtado deals with is the staurogram, which is a monogram formed by superimposing the Greek letter *rho* upon the Greek letter *tau*. The staurogram

is, for Hurtado, a visual reference to Jesus' crucifixion. It is a visual expression of early Christian piety and reflects the importance given to Christ's death in Christian faith from at least as early as the second century. Hurtado then focuses upon other features such as codex size, columns, margins, lines per page/column, and other reader aids. He believes that many Christian codices show concern for ease of reading to facilitate the public/liturgical usage of texts, especially those texts treated as scripture. This thesis has considerable implications for the idea of a canon and the doctrine of scripture. The widespread public reading of a text is probably the best indication that the text was functioning as scripture. If Hurtado is right, then *contra* some theories, the NT was being treated as Scripture in the second and third centuries.

While Hurtado's fine and well written study is in a specialized area of Christian origins, its significance for our broader understanding of such important topics as the nature of early Christian piety, the centrality of Christ and his death for early Christians, and the place of canon and scripture, is profound. It is difficult for the non-specialist to evaluate Hurtado's proposals in this book. Yet, students of Christian origins are in Hurtado's debt for making his findings on early Christian artifacts accessible to all students in readily understandable format.

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Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch. ***Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul.*** Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006. 417 pp. £13.78/$27.00.
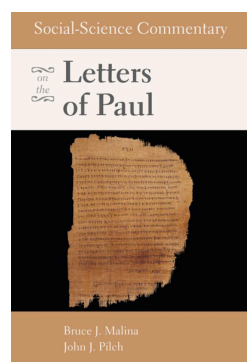
'Of the writing of commentaries there is no end', so the saying goes. Other than new insights that either supplant or support the 'New Perspective on Paul', it seems that recent commentaries on the Apostle rehash the same issues in more or less the same way. Bruce Malina and John Pilch seek to refocus the conversation in Pauline circles through the lenses of anthropology and social psychology for the purpose of establishing the 'most culturally plausible interpretation of Paul's letters' (p. ix). The authors explain the necessity of such an approach by labeling the culture of the Paul's time as 'high context', where a particular group shared knowledge of the context of a discourse with little need for the communicator to make explicit exactly what he or she is talking about. The problem comes, they argue, when modern western readers have to 'fill in the gaps', lacking the same knowledge and assumptions of the original communicator and recipient(s).

The commentary narrows the focus to Paul's undisputed letters, dealt with in a hypothetical chronological order of when they were written: 1 Thessalonians, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, and Philemon. After a brief introduction that lays the foundation for how the authors understand Paul and his context, textual notes on the NRSV text cover about three hundred pages. Subsequently, a section is devoted to 'Reading Scenarios' that provide a sort of dictionary of key concepts derived from social-scientific analysis and specifically relevant to Paul's 'authentic' letters.

The purpose of this commentary is admirable. It takes seriously how people in NT times understood themselves and interacted with the world around them. The 'Reading Scenarios' deal with invaluable topics such as 'Collectivistic Personality', 'Honor-Shame Societies', the 'Patronage System', 'Reciprocity', and 'Social Identity'. Although these issues (and many more) are integrated into the textual comments, the separate descriptions offer further clarity.

The above notwithstanding, several concerns warrant caution. First, Paul is not considered to be the apostle to Gentiles, but apostle to Israelites in non-Israelite locales. In large part, Malina and Pilch base this view on the notion that translating *hellēn* as 'Greek' is anachronistic since there was no Greek nation at the time. They argue, instead, that this word was used in Paul's context to mean 'civilized', or Hellenised. In order to maintain this view, though, Malina and Pilch must read certain passages in such a way that seems overly contrived (e.g. 1 Thess 1:9).

Second, the application of modern anthropological theories to ancient cultures can also seem methodologically suspect, as when Satan is described as a 'cosmic secret service agent' (45). In addition, the handling of 2 Corinthians is disconcerting, splitting the text into as many as five separate letters (or fragments) stitched together and claiming the support of 'most scholars' in this (134). Such an approach to 2 Corinthians betrays the evidence from early manuscripts that demonstrate its unity as well as more recent attempts to understand the epistle in light of ancient rhetorical style.

Finally, on a more practical note, the commentary lacks depth due to its attempt to cover seven epistles. The flow of the comments seems choppy, and because several kinds of comments appear repeatedly in each epistle, there is a good deal of repetition. This project may have been more successful as a series of commentaries on Paul.

In the end, this book will introduce students and NT enthusiasts to the social world of Paul and his readers and provide a fresh picture of how his letters may have been read by the original recipients. Additionally, the 'Reading Scenarios' make the work much more attractive as an ongoing reference resource.

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Mark Reasoner. ***Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation.*** Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005. 192 pp. $24.95.
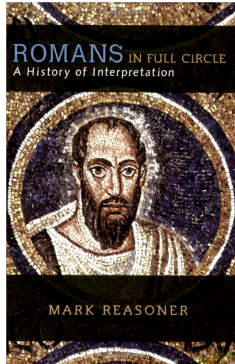
This volume looks at how Romans has been interpreted by those of the *ethnē* ('Gentiles') in the last two millennia. Reasoner focuses on twelve loci in Romans (1:16–17; 1:19–21; 3:21–28; 5:12; 5:18–21; 7:7–8:4; 8:28–30; 9:16–19; 9:20–23; 10:4; 11:25–27; 13:1–7) and describes how Paul's letter has been interpreted by Origen, Augustine, Abelard, Aquinas, Luther, Erasmus, Barth, and post-Barthians (e.g. N.T. Wright) in these loci. I would have included Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, and Calvin, but Reasoner's selection is fairly balanced and sound. One could also quibble over his choice of textual loci, but again one has to appreciate the limitations required by such a project and his selection covers the key points of Romans.

It becomes clear at certain point that Origen and Barth are Reasoner's heroes, and he defers to them often. He also includes some of his own sentiments in places such as the *pistis christou* debate where Reasoner prefers the subjective genitive or 'faithfulness of Jesus Christ' interpretation. Reasoner also leans towards universalism in his analysis of Rom 5:18–21, and he lists Bishop John Colenso as an example of someone who was both a universalist and committed to missionary work. However, Colenso is a poor role model since he was basically a Unitarian, and he denied many Christian doctrines such as the veracity of Scripture and substitutionary atonement.

The volume has certain highlights such as the discussion on Erasmus and Barth on God's faithfulness in Rom 1:16–17 and debates about universalism in Rom 5:18–21. It is genuinely informative, interesting, and thought-provoking. Reasoner successfully imparts to readers an appreciation for the ecclesial context in which Scripture was written and read, the diversity and richness of biblical interpretation through the centuries, and the importance of reception history for biblical studies. This volume is highly recommended for those interested in the theological interpretation of Scripture and reception history, and it will give readers some new things to think over as they work through Romans.

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Sorin Sabou. ***Between Horror and Hope: Paul's Metaphorical Language of "Death" in Romans 6:1–11.*** Paternoster Biblical Monographs. Bletchly: Paternoster, 2005. xi + 159 pp. £19.99/$22.00.
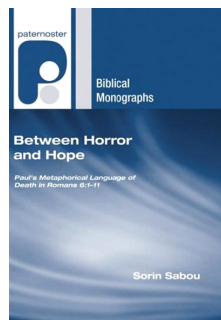
Romans 6 plays an important role in this important letter from Paul, and yet the beginning of this chapter challenges the reader with a number of perplexing questions: *How can one be baptised into Christ's death? In what way are Christians buried with Christ? What does it mean to be 'united' with him in his death? To what does 'our old person/self' (6.6) refer?* Sorin Sabou, in this published doctoral thesis from the London School of Theology, seeks to illuminate this passage anew by concentrating on the origin of Paul's language of death and how it developed. What is central to Sabou's thesis is that previous attempts at grasping the nature and thrust of Paul's imagery have not sufficiently considered how metaphors work. In one sense, then, Sabou's original contribution to the already vast amount of research on Romans 6 is his methodology.

Sabou begins with a lengthy discussion of how various scholars have tried to account for the origin of Paul's metaphorical death language (chapter 1), finding fault with explanations that draw from backgrounds such as Hellenistic philosophy, the teaching of Jesus, the mystery religions, and Paul's own personal experience. In his second chapter, Sabou briefly lays out his understanding of the function and operation of metaphors and their components before moving on to address the *vehicle* of the metaphor, in this case the language of death (chapter 3), and the *qualifiers* of the metaphor (chapter 4), which are those items in the argument that guide 'the readers toward a good understanding of his language' (94). He ends his investigation with a brief conclusion (chapter 5).

This study has much to commend itself. Sabou has put his finger on a pericope loaded with exegetical richness that is far from exhausted. His highlighting of the use of metaphors benefits from a surge of interest in this literary phenomenon from a number of biblical scholars in the last few decades. This allows Sabou to criticise previous discussions from a unique vantage point. He shows a deep level of interaction with both original and secondary literature. One noteworthy highlight from this book includes the explanation of Paul's language of burial (Rom 6:4). Though most commentators simply conclude that burial signifies that one is absolutely dead, Sabou argues that this language is used even more particularly to communicate that one is buried with his or her own kin or dynasty. That means that if believers are buried with Christ, they belong to his family.

However, the reader should be aware of some concerns with this book. First, though it is perhaps a small matter, Sabou's discussion of more recent linguistic and literary scholarship on 'metaphor' does not include the very influential research of the 'conceptual metaphor' theorists (Lakoff, Turner, and Johnson) whose work has been foundational for many biblical literary critics of the last decade or so. Second, a significant piece of his argument depends on Paul's original creation of this metaphorical imagery here, a hypothesis that is very difficult to prove given the frequent allusions Paul makes to other texts (especially the LXX) and the significance of the teachings of Jesus for the early church in general. Third, and this is more a critique of style than content, Sabou's prose is weighed down by a torrent of lengthy quotations that either need not be quoted or certainly not beyond a few lines or verses.

In the end, though, scholars and pastors will find gems of exegetical wisdom here, and Sabou guides the reader well through the various modern interpretations of this passage with skill. For those

interested in metaphor theory, this study serves as a good illustration of how modern literary and linguistic research is being applied to biblical criticism.

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Chris VanLandingham. *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul.* Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006. xvi + 384 pp. $29.95.
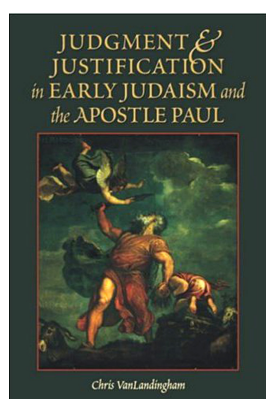
The debate over the so-called "new perspective on Paul" has divided up along fairly predictable lines. There are those who are attempting to preserve the emphases in a more "traditional" reading of Paul—that Paul was critiquing the anthropological optimism inherent in the soteriology of Early Judaism. On the "other side," we can place those who are stressing that much of what Paul is critiquing is the ethnic exclusivism of his Jewish Christian contemporaries. Many on this side of the discussion have claimed that the structure of Paul's soteriology is very similar to that of his Jewish heritage, however broadly conceived. When "traditional" readers of Paul hear this, it begins to sound as if there is little in Paul's gospel that stands over against Judaism or the Law, leading them to wonder why Paul made such a fuss (as he appears to do in Galatians and Romans) and how the gospel of Christ is indeed far different from the Law. Many evangelical scholars who are sympathetic to "new perspective" impulses realize that questioning the traditional Protestant reading of Paul leaves them open to the charge of de-emphasizing justification by faith and placing slightly more stress on the other side of that tension in Pauline theology—that of a future judgment according to works. "New perspective" advocates have worked hard to maintain a proper balance here, though there is certainly more work to be done to articulate this properly.

With this setting in mind, Chris VanLandingham advances the very bold thesis, in direct opposition to E. P. Sanders, that in Early Judaism the criterion for a favorable verdict at the final judgment is obedience to God's commands. Whereas Sanders claimed that God's election of Israel was foundational and prior to Israel's keeping the Law, VanLandingham discerns an emphasis on Abraham's obedience throughout the Jewish literature that has been sorely neglected by Jewish scholars. He then turns to Paul's letters to note that the structure of Paul's thought is much the same. The criterion for ultimate salvation of the individual before God is that of one's deeds. VanLandingham seeks to separate himself from the majority of Pauline scholars at this point, too, in arguing that this obedience is not necessarily one that is empowered by God. God's empowering grace does not come into view, so that those who claim that, in a sense, God's future judgment has reference to the deeds God has produced in believers, is simply false.

In the end, VanLandingham will likely not find many who are in enthusiastic agreement with him. He has staked out some unique ground, some might say "extreme." But he will have certainly provided some fresh fodder for a discussion that has bogged down, to some extent, over the last five or ten years.

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Tommy Wasserman. ***The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission.*** Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2006. xvi + 398 pp. £14.15/$28.36.

It cannot be said of many doctoral theses that they have made a major and permanent contribution to human knowledge, but it can be said of this one. What has been achieved in the course of this published version of a doctoral dissertation at Lund University is quite incredible. The author has examined and collated the text of Jude in 560 different manuscripts, that is, in virtually all the continuous-text manuscripts of the epistle. Thus a work has been done that has considerably advanced our knowledge of the text of the New Testament and will not need to be repeated. Such full collations previously had existed only for the Apocalypse.

Moreover, Jude is acknowledged to be one of the most textually complex books of the New Testament. Wasserman presents in condensed form the results of his collation, together with a critical edition of the text of Jude and a full textual commentary.

The work is divided into three basic sections: *Prolegomena*, *Editio*, and *Commentarius*, each being a little over one hundred pages. The *Prolegomena* consider the history of scholarship, look closely at two very early witnesses (P^{72} and P^{78}), and examine the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude, concluding that Jude is prior. In the course of the monograph, Wasserman reviews the work of many scholars. One of the striking features of the discussions is how many major names seem to have fallen into demonstrable elementary technical errors (readers will have to consult the book itself to compile their own list). The author has also identified three new NT manuscripts and found that what were registered as two separate New Testament manuscripts were in fact merely one.

A significant conclusion relating to the text of Jude is that it has a unique history of textual transmission. This suggests that it was not initially transmitted alongside other books and makes problematic any view that it was first transmitted as part of a Catholic Epistles collection. I am fascinated by the following statement on page 123: 'Interestingly, the genealogical data of the CBGM [Coherence Based Genealogical Method] for the two Petrine epistles suggest that their mutual textual history is more similar than that of the other Catholic Epistles, which suggests that 1–2 Peter were brought together earlier in the history of transmission.' This passing statement, with no further reference, should be developed in full as it could have interesting implications for the reception of 2 Peter. The dissertation ends with sixteen plates of manuscripts.

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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley, eds. *The Cambridge History of Christianity: World Christianities, c. 1815–c.1914.* Cambridge History of Christianity 8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xiii + 683 pp. £100.00/$195.00.
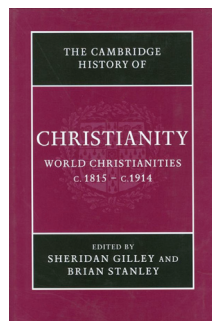
The new nine-volume *Cambridge History of Christianity* will soon be complete, and it is shaping up to be the most authoritative account of the development of the faith over the past twenty centuries. Volume VIII exhibits all the strengths of the series as a whole. Each chapter is rich and concise, distilling a wealth of scholarship. The geographical coverage is exceptionally broad, reflecting the dramatic expansion of the faith beyond the West. The subtitle, *World Christianities,* highlights globalisation and proliferation. Co-edited by a Roman Catholic (Sheridan Gilley) and an evangelical Protestant (Brian Stanley), the volume is even-handed in its treatment of various traditions. (The history of Eastern Orthodoxy from 600 AD to the present has—to the regret of these editors—been hived off into a separate volume of its own).

As Sheridan Gilley notes in his introduction, the nineteenth century was 'the best of times and the worst of times' for Christianity. This was the era that witnessed 'the secularisation of the European mind' (Owen Chadwick) or 'God's Funeral' (A. N. Wilson). Yet it was also an age of Christian revival and expansion: Christianity's 'Great Century' (K. S. Latourette). Christopher Bayly, in his landmark work, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Blackwell, 2004), argues, 'the great religions staged a remarkable resurgence after 1815'. *World Christianities* reinforces that conclusion, though it does not neglect the familiar evidence of crisis and decline.

'Part I: Christianity and Modernity' contains panoramic essays on major themes: the papacy, theology, the free churches, Catholic revivalism, women preachers and female religious orders, church architecture, art, music and literature, Christian social thought, the sciences and biblical criticism.

'Part II: The Churches and National Identities' provides national and regional surveys for most of Europe and the Americas. These chapters are excellent on the relationship between church and state, faith and national identity, and they highlight both the durability of the Christian nation ideal, and the erosion of Western Christendom.

'Part III: The Expansion of Christianity' is the most innovative and revealing. Chapters on African-American Christianity, missions and antislavery, the Middle East, Asia, Australasia, and Africa communicate the findings of a new wave of research on the global diffusion of the faith, especially in its Evangelical and Pietist forms. Indeed, one welcome feature of the volume as a whole is the generous coverage given to Evangelicalism, not least in essays by David Bebbington, John Wolffe, Mark Noll, and Brian Stanley (contributors to IVP's outstanding 'History of Evangelicalism' series).

I do, however, have one significant complaint. In focusing on the cultural and political impact of religion, *World Christianities* rather neglects the fundamental practices of the Christian faith. Reading it is like using Google Earth: the spectacular aerial overviews are a revelation, but one is left wondering about what goes on inside the buildings. The recent historiographical fashion for the study of 'lived religion' and 'religion in practice' is little in evidence here. Remarkably, there is no index entry for either

prayer or preaching, partly because the index is very sketchy, but also because prayer and preaching are rather marginalised. There are lively descriptions of the new Catholic piety, African-American worship, and Evangelical revivals, but in general the volume is better on politics than on piety, on elites than on ordinary believers. For better and for worse, this is a traditional Cambridge History.

That said, *The Cambridge History of Christianity* is an essential purchase for all good libraries, especially for theological colleges. Although the cost will deter individual buyers, it will be widely consulted by scholars and students of church history. There are rival series in this field, but none can match this one for reliability, balance, comprehensiveness, and cutting-edge scholarship.

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Collin Hansen. ***Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists***. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. 160 pp. $14.99.
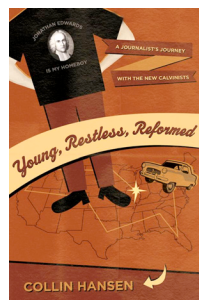
This book reads like Hansen's numerous articles in *Christianity Today:* popular, relevant, well researched, informative, fascinating, penetrating, and enjoyable (both the content and style). The title borrows from Hansen's article in *Christianity Today* in September 2006: "Young, Restless, Reformed." These three adjectives summarize the group that Hansen probes: they are evangelicals (1) in their teens, twenties, and thirties who are (2) passionate about (3) God's sovereignty. Large swaths of the rising generation of evangelicals are enthusiastically embracing Reformed soteriology or Calvinism. Hansen applies his journalism skills to find out why.

Hansen travels all over the United States to interview evangelical leaders inspiring "the new Calvinists" as well as dozens of the new Calvinists themselves. He does not shy away from asking tough questions, nor from interacting with other leaders holding opposing viewpoints. The book divides into seven chapters, each focused on a particularly influential aspect of the Reformed resurgence and loaded with bite-sized historical and theological nuggets along the way.

1. Passion Conference in Atlanta: John Piper's passionate messages at the Passion conferences influence thousands of teens. This chapter also discusses TULIP, the decline of Calvinism in American history, the prevalence of moralism among teenagers, and Hansen's personal testimony, including this gem: "I didn't go looking for Reformed theology. But Reformed theology found me" (25).

2. Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis: "Piper is the chief spokesman for the Calvinist resurgence among young evangelicals" (29). His Calvinism is contagious—certainly not the stale "frozen chosen" variety. This chapter also further discusses TULIP, interviews Roger Olson, explains Arminianism and Pelagianism, and explores the relationship of complementarianism to the Reformed resurgence.

3. Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut: Jonathan Edwards has fueled the Reformed resurgence via his influence on its leaders. Yale is the home of the Jonathan Edwards Center, which possesses ninety percent of Edwards's actual notes and manuscripts and is publishing his complete works. This

chapter considers why Edwards's image waned and became prominent again, interviews J. I. Packer and Josh Moody, and explores the Reformed University Fellowship at Yale.

4. Southern Seminary in Louisville: When Al Mohler became the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1993 at age thirty-three, the conservative resurgence got more than they bargained for in a confessionalist committed to Southern's Abstract of Principles: not only does he staunchly defend the inerrancy of Scripture, he is an unashamed five-point Calvinist. As probably the largest seminary in America today, Southern is training thousands of Calvinists. This chapter wrestles with the implications of Calvinism for evangelism and the Southern Baptist Convention, interviewing Tom Nettles, Timmy Brister, Steve Lawson, Tom Ascol, Tom Schreiner, Steve Lemke, and Fisher Humphreys.

5. Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland: Charismatic Calvinism is becoming increasingly common, largely due to C. J. Mahaney's Sovereign Grace Ministries, headquartered at Covenant Life Church. Mahaney founded Covenant Life in 1977 and pastored it until 2004, when his protégé, Joshua Harris, took over. Like Wayne Grudem, Sovereign Grace is "Charismatic" in a very guarded sense compared to typical Pentecostal excesses. Mahaney's characteristic humility and exaltation of God's sovereignty permeate the Sovereign Grace network. This chapter highlights the 2006 Together for the Gospel conference, discusses Reformed theology as an entire system (including infant baptism), and interviews Michael Horton.

6. New Attitude Conference in Louisville: Founded by Joshua Harris, the New Attitude conference's motto says it all: "humble orthodoxy." Harris exclaims, "If you really understand Reformed theology, we should all just sit around shaking our heads going, 'It's unbelievable. Why would God choose any of us?'" (123). This chapter interviews Eric Simmons and discusses Campus Crusade for Christ, University Christian Fellowship, and blogging.

7. Mars Hill Church in Seattle: Mark Driscoll, a lightning rod for controversy, describes his church as "theologically conservative and culturally liberal" (138). He unambiguously teaches Reformed soteriology, which he paraphrases rather crassly: "people suck and God saves us from ourselves" (139). This chapter also investigates Driscoll's controversial views on women (complementarianism) and culture (noting John MacArthur's critique and Driscoll's humble response) and interviews Tony Jones, Gerry Breshears, Jennifer McKinney, and Wendy Alsup.

I am not aware of any other book quite like this one. It will be especially useful to at least three groups who want to understand the new Calvinists better: (1) evangelical leaders, (2) older evangelicals, (3) and younger evangelicals, especially ones who are passionate about God's sovereignty but are still relatively green on theological terms and history. This book will connect the (Reformed) dots for a lot of people.

As one of the new Calvinists, I concur with Hansen's overall analysis of why so many young evangelicals enthusiastically embrace Reformed soteriology. I have been profoundly influenced by older theologians like Calvin, Luther, Owen, Edwards, Spurgeon, and Warfield as well as contemporary leaders like Piper, Dever, Mahaney, and MacArthur. In particular, Piper's *Desiring God* has been incalculably influential in the resurgence of Calvinism (cf. Hansen, 15, 29, 32). Piper's richly theological and warmly devotional best-seller has been the means for sending countless Christians on a trajectory towards theology that is increasingly joyful, robust, God-centered, Christ-exalting, and gospel-treasuring. It shaped my attitude towards Reformed soteriology, and Hansen demonstrates that my testimony is not

unusual. I joyfully thank God and pray that the new Calvinists will humbly mature and multiply to the glory of God.

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Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo, eds. *The New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 320 pp. £15.88/$19.79.
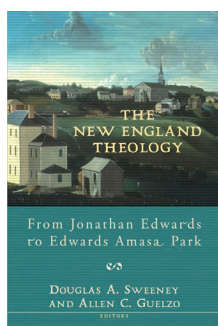
New England Theology is arguably the most significant indigenous theological movement yet to have appeared in the United States. It started with the close disciples of Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), particularly Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, who took various aspects of Edwards' thinking and began to synthesize them into a whole. This process was continued by Edwards' son, Jonathan Edwards Jr., and then through a line of mainly Congregational theologian-pastors whose sphere of influence centred on several prominent theological schools on the eastern seaboard of the US, particularly Yale Divinity School and, latterly, Andover Theological Seminary. In the process of development, the movement changed. In the process of change, the central ideas of Edwards Senior, though still formative for those who took their cue from the New Englanders, were altered, so that what began as an idiosyncratic form of Calvinism was eventually to become a beast of quite a different stripe. Yet, for all that, the central concerns of the movement were still distinctively Edwardsian: the freedom of the will, original sin, soteriology, mission, the morphology of conversion, and true virtue.

There were several textbooks written on the New England Theology as its influence began to wane at the end of the nineteenth century. But since that time, there has been almost no serious account of this important movement apart from several notable scholarly monographs. Moreover, access to the primary texts has been restricted to those able to get hold of Victorian copies of texts like Edwards Amasa Park's *The Atonement.* This seems incredible since this theological movement was a force to be reckoned with in US theology from the latter part of the eighteenth century through to the late nineteenth century. For these reasons Sweeney and Guelzo are to be congratulated for putting into the hands of the public a first class collection of writings by representatives of this group.

The selections made by the editors are judicious, careful, and characteristic of the themes that marked the movement as a whole. Drawing upon Edwards Senior in the first place, as the fountainhead of the movement, the excerpts take in the phases of its development chronologically, to include theologians like Bellamy, Hopkins, Edwards Jr., and Nathaniel Emmons: the first and second generation of 'Edwardeans' as they were often styled.

Then follows several sections on key theological issues for the New Englanders, on the moral government of God (including the New England version of the so-called governmental theory of the atonement), and ethical issues, with particular reference to the question of slavery. The latter portions of the collection highlight the later phases of the movement. So there are selections from the 'New Haven' theology of theologians like Nathaniel Taylor, the appropriation of some of the New England

themes by Charles Finney, and selections from the last of the group, Edwards Amasa Park. There is a final retrospective section including selections from Harriet Beecher Stowe of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fame, herself a critic of the theology of New England and its puritan heritage. The Introduction to the whole project is clear, well-written, and helpful, particularly in charting the rise, fall, and eclipse of the movement in subsequent religious historiography. This is sure to be a very valuable work for anyone interested in the development of theology in the nineteenth century. But it also has much to teach theologians working today (e.g. the material on the atonement). Here is theological meat indeed. Taste it and see.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Petrus J. Gräbe. ***New Covenant, New Community: The Significance of Biblical and Patristic Covenant Theology for Contemporary Understanding.*** Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006. 254 pp. £17.99/$19.99.
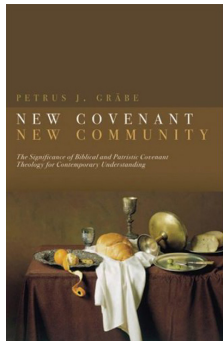
This monograph, tracing the theme of covenant through the Scriptures, is an excellent contribution to the discipline of biblical theology. First published in German, it is now made available to a wider readership. Dr Gräbe, who teaches in the USA, demonstrates a sound grasp of the available material and has clearly read widely in both English and German sources.

Dr Gräbe notes the recent 'renaissance' of studies in covenant theology and uses this to set the scene for a study of the use of the word 'covenant' both in the Jewish and early Christian periods. He begins by looking at its use in the Old Testament and interacts with a number of significant scholars who have written on the theme. He is particularly concerned to trace the concept of the 'new covenant' and does so in both early Jewish literature and the New Testament. His exegetical work on those passages relating to the Lord's Supper (where the concept is most frequently found) is very helpful indeed. He then moves on to consider the theme as it is found in Paul, in the letter to the Hebrews, and in the Johannine literature, before taking the discussion forward into the early centuries of the life of the church.

It is not only his exegetical work which is helpful, however, but also his theological analysis of the material. He demonstrates an awareness not only of biblical theology but also of systematic and historical theology, and this gives depth to his work. It is also interesting to see the way in which he offers practical application of the work, not least to the issue of Christian-Jewish dialogue.

For this reviewer, with an interest in covenant theology, the most interesting element of the book was the discussion on the implications of Dr Gräbe's exegetical insights for covenant theology. In this discussion he engages with two streams of covenant theology: the covenant theology of Karl Barth and the federal theology that is espoused in the later Reformed confessions. Whether or not one agrees with his analysis and conclusions, there is much here to make one think (and re-think).

Many books are currently being published on the various themes related to covenant theology, most of which are in the discipline of systematic theology. Many of these studies are designed to advocate a particular interpretation of the nature and development of covenant theology, usually in opposition to other attempts! It is both helpful and a necessary corrective to some of these studies, to be brought back firmly to the Scriptures in this carefully argued exegetical work.

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Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor, eds. ***Overcoming Sin and Temptation: Three Classic Works by John Owen.*** Wheaton: Crossway, 2006. 462 pp. $19.99.
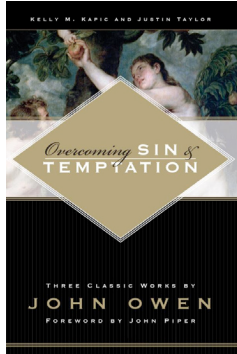
This is a republishing of three works by John Owen: *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers, Of Temptation*, and *Indwelling Sin in Believers.* These three bring together Owen's work on the nature of sin and the Christian's fight against it.

These works have been available as part of the larger publications of Owen's work and in various abridged forms. This new publication aims at re-introducing Owen to a new generation by producing an unabridged but updated and hence more readable version.

The updating includes footnotes explaining difficult words or phrases, modernising of archaic spellings, modernising of punctuation, and the addition of headings and italics to aid the reader in following the structure of the book. All of these make reading Owen a far easier task than the other unabridged versions in print. The only change British readers may not appreciate is the Americanisation of spellings!

There are also introductory essays to each work that provide an overview of the argument. These are not as extensive as one might have expected—only a page or two long each, but are still very helpful.

Reading Owen remains a challenge despite these endeavours, and I for one think that there is still a place for abridgements. However, this new volume is most welcome in allowing readers access to the wonderful insights and spiritual surgery of Owen. He is surely one of the voices of the past that reveals the paucity of modern thinking about sin, and from whom we have so much to learn.

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James K. A. Smith. ***Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church.*** Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 156 pp. $17.99.
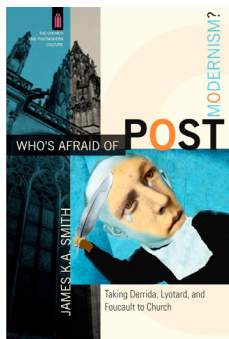
Who's afraid postmodernism? Not James Smith, a sympathetic interpreter of the Radical Orthodoxy movement (or 'sensibility' as advocates prefer to label it). He goes back to the French philosophical roots of postmodernity, exploring three of its famous slogans: 'there is nothing outside the text' (Derrida); 'incredulity toward metanarratives' (Lyotard); and 'power is knowledge' (Foucault). Smith claims they have been routinely misinterpreted. Properly understood, they reveal an affinity with Christian faith and resources for Christian mission.

Derrida's claim that there is 'nothing outside the text', Smith argues, is not a statement of linguistic idealism (nothing exists except text), but that what exists is always interpreted. 'Everything is interpretation' is Smith's version. And, yes, this means the gospel is an interpretation. Objectivity is usually understood to mean universally demonstrable. But not everyone can see the cross as God's saving intervention. Smith appeals to John Owen: the objective provision

of revelatory light is ineffectual without the regeneration of the Holy Spirit to dispel the darkness. We need the interpretation revelation provides through faith. In the end Smith claims that Derrida has reinforced *sola Scriptura:* Scripture is the interpretation through which we understand the world. (He also talks of the church as the context for interpretation, but this idea is undeveloped.)

Likewise Smith believes Lyotard dismisses not metanarratives *per se*, but stories that appeal to universal reason rather than evoking faith. Science's critique of narrative 'fables' is itself a narrative. ('Is there a bigger story than *On the Origin of Species*?') Christianity can boldly proclaim its story without being accused of the bias of faith because now faith presuppositions are everywhere presupposed. As Augustine first claimed, faith precedes understanding. When it comes to 'knowledge is power', Smith questions the assumption that power is necessarily bad (on which Foucault is ambiguous), calling on Christians to exercise truth-power for good through discipleship.

Running through the book is a dismissal of evidentialist apologetics that appeal to the universals of human reason and experience. Instead Smith makes a strong case for the presuppositional apologetics of Francis Schaeffer (the books started life as L'Abri lectures). Smith calls on us to use postmodernism to reveal the presuppositions of everyone, hard-line rationalists included, to create a hearing for Christian proclamation.

This is a stimulating read. The presentation is lively and engaging, often built around films—from *Memento* to *The Little Mermaid*. I recommend it for anyone trying to rethink mission today—especially if you fear postmodernity!

Smith's constructive proposals, however, are more confusing. Both modernity and postmodernity, Smith argues, assume knowledge equals certainty; the one assuming its knowledge leads to certainty, the other assuming its rejection of certainty means a rejection of knowledge. Smith in contrast appeals to Augustine to argue for knowledge without certainty. But this mis-equates Augustine's emphasis on knowledge as gracious gift (revelation) with uncertain knowledge. One reason the book is slippery is that Smith seems (unnecessarily in my view) to equate knowing truth objectively (i.e. without mediation) with knowing objective truth. Rejecting the former, he rejects the latter.

Smith calls for a 'thick' (as opposed to 'thin') confessionality. He warns of a false humility that accepts the 'neutral' claims of psychology and sociology, and then positions theology accordingly when postmodernism has debunked this myth of neutrality. Yet he never misses the opportunity to take a shot at the certainties of evangelicalism. Smith seems to assume true and false interpretations. But also claims the axiom 'everything is interpretation' guards against imperial agendas. But imperialists could (and do) simply assert true interpretations of the world. How do you decide between conflicting interpretations? Smith emphasises the particularity (as opposed to the universality) of the incarnation, leaving the universal claims of mission in an ambiguous position.

What one is left with is the centrality and particularity of tradition. But which tradition? Reformed, Orthodox, Catholic? Or maybe even Maori since Smith uses the affirmation of Maori tradition in *The Whale Rider* as a model for the church. The answer, if the radically orthodox church described at the end of the book is anything to go by, is a rather arbitrary hotchpotch of favoured traditions.

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Kevin J. Vanhoozer. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005. 488 pp. $39.95.
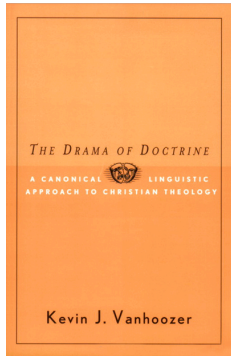
I teach the theology of biblical hermeneutics at an evangelical university, and at the beginning of each semester, I ask students to explain why they affirm the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the word of God. What makes this book that evangelicals defend staunchly as God's word, God's word? What do we mean by this? How does it function differently or distinctly from another truth-telling book by a fine believer? I usually get two distinct reactions. One is a trickle of common words that also beg definition as the dialogue continues: God-breathed, infallible, inerrant, inspired. The other reaction from the majority of students is a poignant silence. Many pastors and church leaders in my graduate class as well as those students in my upper division undergraduate class have simply never been asked to wrestle intelligently with a good assumption.

Kevin Vanhoozer's bright orange book (affectionately dubbed "the Great Pumpkin" by Kevin's wife) does just that through the use of an extended metaphor, scripture as theo-drama. The canon is a divine play script to know, understand, study, and enter into with fitting improvisation. This metaphor is well developed throughout the book and is clear from the sub-headings for the book's four parts. Between a helpful introduction and a final pastoral challenge to the church, the four sections of the book are sequentially set out as Part One: "The Drama," Part Two: "The Script," Part Three: "The Dramaturge," and Part Four: "The Performance."

In "The Drama," Vanhoozer does a masterful job of addressing the work of both Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthazar in transcending the personal vs. propositional dichotomy regarding revelation using the language of speech-act philosophy. He makes the case well that God's truth is borne in both the reality and genre of story and that hone does not truly understand, nor can one participate in, God's truth apart from participating in God's story. To know the story is the grounding for revelatory epistemology.

In "The Script," Vanhoozer deals with the dynamics of Word and Church, reading and living the story as a covenantal community (and he does this without making the community the authority for hermeneutics!), the importance of canonical depth and consistency, and the perichoretic participation of the Trinity as Father, Son, and Spirit in the tri-personal theo-drama that is the biblical canon.

In "The Dramaturge," Vanhoozer challenges the scholars, theologians, laity, and clergy of the Church with what it takes to engage in the *scientia* of scripture study and bear its *sapiential* fruitfulness. Again, Vanhoozer is keen to keep faith and understanding under the same roof and the Gospel of Jesus as the defining center of the stage. From this Christocentric North Star, all the other players, all the story, all the movement, history, and continuing improvisation of the script finds it fitness, its voice, its place.

In the final part of the book, Vanhoozer particularly challenges the pastor-director and the disciple-actor to present the theo-drama of the Gospel well in community life, worship, study, and mission. Again, the conclusion of the book reflects how clearly and even lovingly Vanhoozer reminds the theological academy to be a servant of the Church.

In this third volume (not a series and with multiple publishers) in which Vanhoozer uses the terms and ideas of speech act theory, the enriching evolution of his work is clearly apparent. In this work, in distinction from his first volume, *Is There Meaning in this Text?* and his second volume, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics*, Vanhoozer borrows less terminology from linguistics, and his own particular vocabulary emerges. This is especially helpful in unpacking the trinitarian dynamics of his argument and finds much more resonance in the ear of his intended audience. Like Barth's "Dogmatics," Vanhoozer's work is modified by "Church."

It is the covenant community, the participants in the theo-drama, that is, the theatre of the Gospel. The Church must know the story, study the Script, relate to the Author of the script, rehearse in worship, mission, study, and do all of this in the company of fellow actors, past and present. However, Vanhoozer very clearly and carefully shelters the Church from finding its identity in the performance itself and resists how Lindbeck and others locate hermeneutics and community identity in its own practice and patterns. This religiously well intended self-reference lends itself to the seductions of crowd approval and the motivations of cultural reviews.

For Vanhoozer the locus of Church identity and the bedrock of hermeneutical criteria are grounded in the canon itself, the patterns of God's story, the revelation of God's character through the story, and most particularly in the culmination of God's theo-drama in Jesus Christ. As the community becomes the embodiment and performance of the Gospel, the story is known, understood, manifest, and retold truly.

The canonical foundation of the Church's identity is God's theo-drama to be reenacted in the worship of the church, rehearsed in her creeds, confessed in her theology, and extended in her mission. Reading the *Drama of Doctrine* will also help the Church have an insightful and joyful answer to the question of how the scripture really is the word of God.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski, eds. ***The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics.*** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. x + 546 pp. £75.00/$50.00.
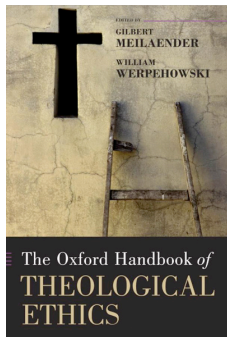
A mature graduate student recently expressed surprise that 'things have really changed in Christian ethics in the last few years!' Having expected ethics to focus on dilemmas, she found instead serious reflection on ecclesiology; having gone looking for moral principles, she discovered detailed engagement with Christian doctrine. The effect was a sense that conceptual approaches that seemed normal a decade or two ago now seem outdated, worn.

For a lively but impressionistic account of these developments by one of its chief architects (an important task in its own right), one is advised to read the first three chapters of the only other serious competing volume, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, which also has the value of discussing a range of practical questions.

For a more scholarly and historically detailed account of recent developments in the discipline, one is advised to turn to *The Oxford Handbook*. In it, Bernd Wannenwetsch's essay on 'Ecclesiology and Ethics' provides an excellent bridge between the two volumes in relation to the new orientation of Christian ethics. Its theological density and erudition give the reader a sense of the difference in tone between the two volumes. *The Oxford Handbook* claims to be neither for beginners nor professionals, but aims at 'those who know a good bit, who would be in position to do advanced work in the field, and who might be helped and stimulated by a survey of the field'. It is a more complex work, and in many ways more rewarding of serious intellectual effort than the *Blackwell Companion*.

The book is organized around Calvin's (and Aquinas') insight that Christian reflection on ethics ought to begin with reflection on God and his works. The clarity of this insight renders sections one ('Dogmatics and Ethics') and four ('The Spirit of the Christian Life') the most elegant and helpful. Section one details the place of the doctrines of creation, redemption, eschatology, ecclesiology, and grace in a Christian ethic, and section four elegantly explores the classic New Testament *topoi* of faith, hope, and love. That this book is organized around and finds its intellectual weight in theological discussion is again evidence of the sharp sea-change in the self-understanding of practitioners of Christian ethics.

Parts 2 ('Sources of Moral Knowledge') and 3 ('The Structure of the Christian Life') begin to lose the clarity of concept and organization of parts 1 and 4. Methodological nuances developed during previous chapters are sometimes retained, sometimes lost in discussions of scripture, divine commands, church tradition, reason and natural law, experience, vocation, virtue, rules, responsibility and death.

The *Handbook* is generally heavy on theory, which is especially disappointing when the theorizing becomes slipshod as it does in Part 5 ('Spheres of Christian Life'), undoubtedly the low point of the book. With the exception of Sondra Wheeler's essay on the family, this section neither interacts well with the tradition of the 'mandates' or 'estates' that the editors suggest it is surveying, nor does it bring the insights of the previous parts into contact with the myriad of practical questions of contemporary life. This is a pity, but it is a deficit that the bulk of the *Blackwell Companion* admirably fills.

The final part of the book, part 6 ('The Structure of Theological Ethics: Books that Give Shape to the Field'), is a helpful if idiosyncratic and patchy backward look over developments in the discipline over the last century. One gets the distinct sense that it is in this section that those authors who were displaced from the critical opening parts fight rearguard actions to defend the continuing relevance of their (now less popular) theological heroes. Perhaps the chapter that best fits with the opening four parts of the book is the final one explicating the social teaching of the modern Roman Catholic encyclicals.

The meat of this book is in the first 320 pages, a substantial enough contribution. But this is the red meat of conceptual theory, the relevance of which may well not be clear on first sight. What this handbook does show, and well, is that Christian ethics has recently become markedly more interested in the conceptual content of calling oneself a *Christian* ethicist. This is a welcome development worth studying in the way the *Handbook* facilitates.

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H. P. Owen. ***The Basis of Christian Prayer.*** Vancouver: Regent, 2006. xx + 159 pp. $18.95.
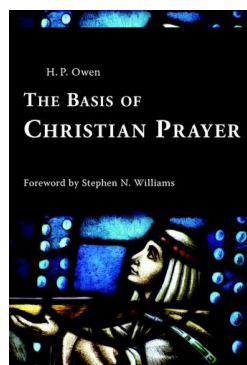
The late H. P. Owen was Professor of Christian Doctrine at King's College, London. A prolific author, Owen died in 1966; the present, posthumous volume reflects the author's mature reflection on the subject of prayer. It is published with a helpful, sympathetic, but not uncritical introduction by Stephen N. Williams, who introduces the reader unfamiliar with Owen to the author.

Although brief in compass and in a style that is succinct and clear, the book offers a quintessential but profound analysis that reflects both the reality of the author's own prayer life and provides what might well appear an outline 'course' on the subject. Owen focuses especially on vocal prayer and, within such self-defined limits, is comprehensive in scope and wide-ranging in the sources upon which he draws. Nevertheless, attention is given to the Lord's Prayer as a model and exemplary prayer and issues such as meditation, contemplation, and mystical prayer.

Discussion is reverential and God-centred, reflecting Owen's conviction that prayer has essentially to do with that which is proper to God rather than human need. His discussion is provocative (in the positive sense) in that it encourages thought and reflection on behalf of those of us that have thought relatively little about our prayers. He addresses critical debates regarding prayer, belief, religious experience, and language and emotion in prayer.

Owen explicitly presents his material for a wide readership and avoids technicalities. At the same time, his approach is theological and philosophical in emphasis and grounded in Owen's conviction that how we think about God will determine how we pray. He emphasises, above all, that Christian prayer arises from its Trinitarian belief system.

Williams' introduction highlights those areas with which the readers of the present journal may well differ from Owen. The author was a classic Theist and in a theological world that moved away from

divine impassibility gravitated in the opposite direction. This, perhaps surprisingly, was linked with a near neo-Platonism and an errantist rationalism in his exegetical method. As such his analysis can sometimes seem sub-culturally defined and, frankly, wrong. His discussion of prayer for the dead may also fail to win over the doubters.

While all this is true and while Owen's style might cause the inattentive reader to miss the deep warmth of the author's spirituality, this is a most useful little book that the reviewer expects to consult regularly. If others need to be convinced of its value, then here is an enticement:

Prayer . . . is a unique and irreplaceable part of our response to God. Most obviously it is so in the sense that in it we are responding to him in ways appropriate to his being and self-revelation. In prayer too we are responding to God in ways appropriate to our own nature as creatures who are made in his image and meant for eternal life with him. Prayer is furthermore a response to God's invitation. God desires us to pray in order that by praying we may enter into communion with him and so fulfil his purpose for us. Prayer therefore is a wholly natural activity because it is in accordance with the nature of God, the nature of human beings, and the nature of that relation that God wills to establish with us. This does not mean that prayer is always easy. . . . Yet it remains a profoundly natural act that, as such, ought to be marked increasingly by spontaneity and joy (14).

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Milton Vincent. *A Gospel Primer for Christians: Learning to See the Glories of God's Love.* Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2008. x + 97 pp. $10.95.
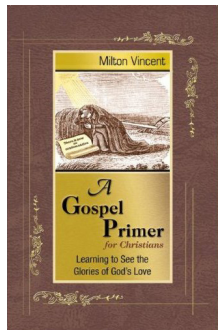
Vincent has pastored Cornerstone Fellowship Bible Church in Riverside, California since 1992, and he formerly taught Hebrew at John MacArthur's The Master's Seminary. His *Gospel Primer* is a concise, inviting, accessible, devotional, penetrating gospel-centered resource for Christians. It is theologically akin to C. J. Mahaney's *Living the Cross-Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing* (2006) and Jerry Bridges's *The Discipline of Grace: God's Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness* (1994), *The Gospel for Real Life: Turning to the Liberating Power of the Cross . . . Every Day* (2002), and "Gospel-Driven Sanctification" (*Modern Reformation* 12.3 [May/June 2003]).

I first heard about this book when my pastor, Mike Bullmore, enthusiastically recommended that the church carefully read it. Bullmore humbly recounts in the foreword how much he has benefitted from Vincent's *Gospel Primer*, and he offers wise advice to readers:

This book was written slowly. It savors of a slow cooking. I believe it will be best read slowly. Take your time with it. Let its truths drip down deep. And return to it often. Let it regularly help you preach the life-giving, soul-reviving, heart-rejoicing gospel to yourself. Keep it close by your bed or the place of your time alone with God. It is, quite simply, one of the most spiritually useful books I've read (4).

I followed Bullmore's advice, thoughtfully reading just a couple pages each morning, and I heartily concur with his seasoned perspective. I also profited by reading this book out loud (as Vincent recommends on page 7).

Vincent testifies in the introduction,

After years of frustration, fits and starts, and exhausted collapses in my Christian walk, I have come back to a focus on the gospel and have found its sufficiency for daily living to be truly overwhelming. After years of church attendance, university and seminary training, and countless hours of Bible study in preparation for preaching many hundreds of sermons, I have found nothing more powerful and life-transforming than the gospel truths affirmed on the following pages. Rehearsing these truths each day has become a pleasurable discipline by which I enjoy God's love and maintain fresh contact with His provision and power for daily living (5–6).

The slim book has four parts, and everything in parts 1–3 is written in the first person singular; 290 footnotes fill about the bottom third of each page in parts 1–3 with nothing but Scripture quotations, mostly from the New American Standard Bible.

Part one presents thirty-one (one on which to meditate each day) biblically informed reasons that Christians should regularly rehearse the gospel to themselves. Reasons include the following: The gospel contains the power and glory of God in their highest density. It "nullifies sin's power over me" by removing its guilt (19). It "reminds me that my righteous standing with God always holds firm regardless of my performance" (20). It stimulates love, forgiveness, evangelism, humility, and obedience. It offers the right perspective of trials, increases my yearning to be with Christ in heaven, satisfies me and inversely mortifies my flesh, enriches my thankfulness by relief, supplies boldness, and glorifies God.

Parts 2 and 3 are stirring prose and poetic versions of a gospel narrative. They start by exulting in God's glory and then meditate on my sin against God and God's work on my behalf. "I don't deserve any of this, even on my best day" (65). "Yet I could not fail God much worse than I've done. / Ignoring His glory, for mine I have run" (72). "My foolish rebellion gives God ev'ry right / To damn me with haste to the mis'rable plight / Of terrible judgments in His Lake of Fire, / Where wrath is most fierce and will never expire" (73). "But wonder of wonders, so great to behold, / My God chose to save me with method so bold. / What I could not render, God fully has done, / And doing, He rendered it all through His Son. / He sent Christ to die on the cross for my sin / To suffer my anguish, my pardon to win" (76). "He shattered sin's chains which had held me before, / And thus made me free not to sin any more" (81).

Part 4 tells "the story behind the primer." Vincent confesses, "I labored for most of my life to maintain my justified status before God, and I was always left frustrated in my attempts to do so" (91). "I guess I treated my justification as some sort of legal fiction that had little direct bearing on the mechanics of how God related to me and how I related to Him. I suppose I would have imagined God saying, '*Yeah, technically you're justified, but I'm angry with you anyway for what you did today!*'" (94–95). The gospel liberated Vincent from his "performance-based relationship," and by God's grace Vincent's *Gospel Primer* will help others do the same.

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