themelios

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Themelios 42.2 (2017): 255–58

EDITORIAL

On Knowing When to Resign

— D. A. Carson —

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

Certain kinds of questions come my way by email fairly regularly—every few weeks, every couple of months. One of these regulars runs something like this: "How do I know when it is time to resign?" If this is being asked by a pastor who is still young, it is usually prompted by a difficult situation that he longs to flee. Circumstances of that sort are so diverse that I won't attempt to address them here. What I have in mind is the pastor who poses this question at the age of 55, or 60, or 65, or 70. This pastor is wondering when it is time to lay down the burden of local church ministry, and consider something else—itinerant ministry, perhaps, or teaching overseas for a while, or working with a mission agency, or half-time pastoral work, perhaps as someone else's associate. Are there any biblical and theological principles that should shape our reflection on these matters?

(1) In one sense, this is the right question to ask. Here is not someone who has reached some long-awaited ideal retirement age and is looking for an excuse to withdraw from ministry in favor of buying an RV to spend the next couple of decades alternating between fishing lakes and visiting grandchildren. After all, there is no well-articulated theology of retirement in Scripture. Rather, this is a serious question from someone who has borne the heat of the day, and who, for various reasons, wonders if it is not only permitted but right to ask if it is time to move on.

(2) In recent years, I've been passing on what I've picked up from a few senior saints who have thought these things through. The most important lesson is this: Provided one does not succumb to cancer, Alzheimer's, or any other seriously debilitating disease, the first thing we have to confront as we get older is declining energy levels. Moreover, by "declining energy levels" I am referring not only to the kind of declining physical reserves that demand more rest and fewer hours of labor each week, but also to declining emotional energy without which it is difficult to cope with a full panoply of pastoral pressures. *When* those energy levels begin to fall is hugely variable (at age 45? 65? 75?), as is also *how fast* they fall. But fall they will! It follows that if one attempts at age 85 to do what one managed to accomplish at age 45, a lot of it will be done badly. Frustrations commonly follow: old-man crankiness, rising resentments against the younger generation, a tendency to look backward and become defensive, even an unwitting destruction of what one has spent a lifetime building up.

Three things follow:

a. As long as God provides stable energy levels, one should resist the glitter of common secular assumptions about retirement—e.g., that there is (or should be) a universal retirement age, that somehow your work entitles you to a retirement free from all service, that the end of life should be dominated by pleasurable pastimes emptied of self-sacrifice

and service. This is not to argue there is no place for, say, time devoted to creative tasks of one sort or another; it is to argue that it is sub-Christian to imagine that our service across the decades *entitles* us to a carefree retirement.

b. Once energy levels start to decline (whenever that might be), then, assuming that neither senility nor some other chronic disease is taking its toll, the part of wisdom is to stop doing some things so that with one's remaining energy one can tackle the remaining things with enthusiasm and gusto. I can think of two or three senior saints who have become wholly admirable models in this regard. In their late 60s, they slowly started to put aside one task after another, with the result that, now in their early 90s, they can still do the one or two remaining things exceptionally well. One of them, for instance, will still preach, but never more than once a day. And he won't fly anywhere: travel to the place he is to preach is either by car (with someone driving him), or by train. But when he does preach, you can close your eyes and listen to a man thirty or forty years younger.

c. There is another element in such decisions that is partly subjective, partly temperamental, partly a reflection of one's sense of call—and of the ways these various factors interact with one another. John Calvin died on May 27, 1564, at the age of 54. All his life he held himself to the most rigorous, punishing schedule. That stunning self-discipline, a reflection of his passion for the glory of God and for the promotion of the gospel, was used by God to make the man astonishingly productive. On the other hand, all the biographies I have read of him speculate that if in his latter years he had slowed down a little, he might have lived a good deal longer—and had he lived another decade or two, still with stable health, he may well have produced a great deal more. But who are we to tell John Calvin what he should have done? Human motives are usually mixed. On the one hand, there is something hauntingly exemplary about a person who wants to burn out for Christ, to waste no time, to serve others, "… fill the unforgiving minute / With sixty seconds' worth of distance run" (Kipling); on the other hand, there may be a wee touch of workaholism in such a stance, in which our very self-identity is tied to the number of hours we put in or the number of things we produce. On the one hand, it might be a careful and thoughtful stewarding of our declining energies that makes a wise calculation about dropping certain responsibilities so as to maintain more important priorities; on the other hand, who is to deny that there may also be a touch of entitlement, or a cooling of youthful ardor, a dangerous love of mere ease? Each of us will have to give an answer to our own beloved Master, who knows us better than we do. It is probably not too much to suggest that if we are temperamentally drawn to one or the other of these extremes, we should be especially diligent to explore our motives most carefully.

(3) All things being equal (and of course, they never are), one should not leave one's ministry until one or more of the following conditions is met:

a. One has to leave for moral reasons. Sadly, such failures are not restricted to young pastors. The older one gets, the more one should pray for grace to finish well.

b. Serious health issues mean that one can no longer discharge one's pastoral duties fruitfully, with no realistic hope of returning to full strength (e.g., What is the prognosis after a serious stroke?).

c. One is clearly called by God to some other ministry. All of the usual complex factors have to be borne in mind.
d. One judges that it would be a good thing for this ministry if the baton were passed to a younger leader in an orderly way. There is no absolute rule, but the rule of thumb is that the longer a person has stayed in one ministry, and the more fruitful that person has been, the wiser it is for that pastor to help arrange the transition to a successor before bowing out. It is not hard to think of exceptions, of course: e.g., an old man merely trying to deploy a bit of nepotism or control the future while neither consulting anyone nor using the transition to train church leaders. Generally, however, the rule of thumb proves valuable.
e. One senses one's energy levels are declining, and it seems wise to let go of some responsibilities so that one can the more faithfully discharge remaining responsibilities. In some cases that can most easily and fruitfully be worked out by taking on a reduced load in the church, while someone else steps up to the primary leadership; in other cases, the only way to opt for reduced responsibilities is by resigning from that charge and taking on a smaller and different assignment.
f. Sometimes one must relinquish one's position and work because of the declining health of a spouse. I have known several pastors who reduced their work dramatically, and finally resigned, to look after a spouse suffering from advanced dementia.
g. The final condition that may justify leaving one's ministry is precipitated by a developing crisis. In some instances pressures build up among the elders that reflect differences in vision and priorities. These disparate visions may harden into deeply opposed camps. One may argue that the situation should not have been allowed to develop so far—but there it is. At their worst, such situations are extraordinarily difficult for outsiders to analyze accurately. Has the problem arisen primarily because one or two elders are power-hungry and are wanting to become ecclesiastical bosses—people who, quite frankly, need to face discipline? Or because a senior pastor has become entrenched in the conviction that he is always right and has nothing to learn from anyone? Or is it a case of a Barnabas and a Paul unable to reach an amicable agreement on a pastoral issue where both sides feel strongly and can marshal compelling arguments? In some instances of this sort, one should *not* leave, but try and sort it out before stepping down and leaving a potential mess to a successor; but in other instances, one *should* step down, conscious of the fact that the differences of opinion, while deep, are not about orthodoxy or morality, and the strong action that would be necessary to restore unanimity among the elders is likely to split the church for little if any gospel gain. It may be best simply to step aside with humility and grace, committing the elders and the church to the grace of God.

(4) Finally, the frequency with which pastors move from local church ministry to itinerant ministry is a topic that deserves more study than it has received. Clearly this can be a wise move. I know former pastors and professors who "retire" into carefully selected teaching ministry in the Two-Thirds World, where their years of accumulated experience benefit many people who do not otherwise have ready access to excellent teaching. Others very fruitfully take on a series of interim ministries, where the fixed end of the interim period greatly reduces the stress but provides an opportunity to provide strategic help. Many others set up independent non-profit organizations that specialize in niche ministries—

on the family, for instance, or on repentance and holiness. Many of these non-profits solicit funds to support the ministry. The former pastor becomes a niche guru on the selected topic.

It would be both uncharitable and mischievous to suggest that all of this is intrinsically bad. But it would be naïve not to perceive that there are some dangers to these developments. Some forms of itinerant ministry generate indolence: you preach the same "package" wherever you go, with the result that you quit studying and growing in your knowledge of holy Scripture, and in your ability to teach parts of it you've never taught before. Being a guest preacher tends to garner thanks and commendations without the criticism and rebukes that regular ministry in a local church or seminary tend to provide as a counterbalance—and an exclusive diet of praise is not good for anyone. In short, sometimes itinerant ministry appears to be green grass on the other side of the fence, with too little awareness of the rattlers lurking in the undergrowth. As always, there is great value in testing our motives.

What all of this boils down to is that there is no formulaic answer for pastors who pose the question, "How do I know when it is time to resign?" Nevertheless there are some guidelines that many find helpful, guidelines bound up with the glory of the gospel, the primacy of the local church, the honesty to admit when we are aging, the urgency of training up the next generation, the passion to glorify Christ in our senior years, and the hunger to teach the whole counsel of God.

Themelios 42.2 (2017): 259–62

STRANGE TIMES

The 'Only' Option

— Daniel Strange —

Daniel Strange is acting principal and tutor in Culture, Religion and Public Theology at Oak Hill College, London.

If the global echo-chamber at Social Media HQ is to be believed, Public Theology has never had it so good. Unless you've spent the last six months in a cave, or cloistered away with some ecclesiastical order (pun intended), you won't have been able to miss the response to Rod Dreher's latest offering: *The Benedict Option*. My own feelings are as mixed as the opinions expressed via the rustling of electronic pages all over the evangelical world, but Dreher has got us talking. Even, if you haven't read the book you will doubtless have read a review. What you may have missed, however, is the stirring it has caused in the UK mainstream media. 'Keeping the Faith' was the headline of April's *The Spectator* magazine featuring an article by Dreher with a response by the gay atheist political journalist Matthew Parris entitled 'Give me the Anglican option.' Parris, who is often critical of an anaemic Anglicanism, on this occasion critiques more separatist solutions like Dreher's as 'self-indulgence, a kind of petulance' siding with the Church of England's 'often perplexed but ever hopeful struggle to carry on liking the century it's in.'[1] What a rare opportunity to engage the secular press on the subject of Christian cultural engagement.

However, the sheer volume of comment and opinion is pretty overwhelming and compounds, what in our community, have the potential of becoming wars and rumours of wars about culture wars – often with more heat than light. Wasn't it simpler when all we had to do was plump for one of Niebuhr's types in *Christ and Culture?* The world is bewildering enough without the bewildering array of 'engagement options' now open to us. So is it to be something like the Benedict Option? Is it to be 'faithful presence', or 'subversive fulfilment'? Is it to be this or that 'reading' of Augustine, of Calvin, of Kuyper, of Carson, Keller and Piper? We all say we believe in inaugurated eschatology, but is it to be more 'now' than 'not-yet' or vice versa? Is so-called post-Christendom an opportunity to be relished, or a state of affairs to be mourned. Is it to be one kingdom, two kingdoms or (what some of my students call for) one-and-half kingdoms?

Now on the one hand, I don't want to minimise the complexity and sweat-of-the-brow work needed here. What is becoming increasingly clear is that cultural engagement can't be sorted out by a couple of proof texts, a blog post and some off-hand remarks. The danger of seeing complexity exclusively as a problem that can be easily overcome is that evangelical engagement takes a simplistic short cut that really misses the heart of the arguments in play. The discussion at hand calls us to draw upon a full gamut of disciplines within theological studies and beyond into history and the social sciences. The best

[1] Matthew Parris, "Give me the Anglican option," *The Spectator* (15 April 2017): 14, https://reader.exacteditions.com/issues/55884/.

responses are going to have to engage this complexity and offer a way to navigate positively through the cross currents of our time, not necessarily 'solve' them. This reflects the cultural moment in which we exist.

On the other hand, however, there are times recently when I feel as if I'm so far down this rabbit-hole that I'm getting disorientated. Is there a way to be pulled back out to gain some perspective and to see the wood for the trees: to be re-orientated, whilst recognising there remains a healthy and necessary intra-familial debate?

I would like to suggest that our 500th birthday celebrations are just such an opportunity. A recent invitation to give a series of conference talks this summer on the five *Solas* of the Reformation would, I thought, bring some welcome distraction and relief from all this 'culture stuff'. To my surprise, I've been struck by how relevant these slogans are to the whole cultural engagement topic giving us a distinctively Reformational 'shape' around which we can rally. These precious truths are touchstones and act as foundations, fences and flags. I'm not proposing that the *solas* offer us yet another methodological framework (which would just add to the confusion). Rather they are a useful test or filter through which we can run our existing frameworks. Amidst all the complexity and chatter surrounding our cultural engagement (and notwithstanding the crucial question of how the Reformation itself has been interpreted and (mis)appropriated by modern, late-modern and 'secular' narratives), I've been encouraged by being able to re-focus with a new clarity. *The 'Solas' are our 'only' option.*

Sola Scriptura impresses upon me the most fundamental epistemological asymmetry in matters of authority. I am to interpret the world through the Word and not the other way around. Certainly, I am to recognise God's revelation of Himself in all that he has created, including common grace insights from the world of social sciences and cultural studies. But when methodologically I'm urged to 'reverse the hermeneutical flow', or when analyses drift towards a historicist reductionism (or any other kind of reductionism), I must strongly resist. We are just as 'old and bleary-eyed' now as when Calvin spoke of his 'two books' and the need for Scriptural spectacles to 'disperse our dullness'.[2] To understand my culture more, I need to understand the Bible more for it brings both sight and light. With it, and within trusting, charitable and critical ecclesial communities, we have in our hands the most powerful and perfect scalpel to dissect anything and diagnose anyone with the greatest of care and expertise.

Solus Christus measures my expectations as I engage with my culture and its social imaginary. My biblical anthropology tells me that we are creatures made in the *imago Dei*, made for transcendence. Although we supress the truth of our existence by arguing that 'life under the sun' is all that there is, we can never eradicate our *sensus divinitatis*, it always has and always will pop up in all that we fashion. We see this all over the place when we look hard enough. Analyses like that of Charles Taylor and Jamie Smith who speak of the secular being 'haunted' only confirm this. Despite the rhetoric, we know it's never been easy to be a naturalist, materialist or nihilist.

However, we mustn't get carried away. Yes, my culture and your culture will be dissatisfied with a 'closed universe' worldview and will always be looking for something else, searching for meaning and transcendence. But unless the search finds its fulfilment in the Jesus Christ of the Scriptures then it remains stuck in a world of idolatry. In Acts 17, the apostle Paul recognises the religiosity of the Athenians but still claims they are ignorant. The 'seeking' that Paul talks about is that of the blinded Cyclops who groped for Odysseus and his men. Against any form of vague sense of 'transcendence', 'faith', 'spirituality' and even 'theism' (together with cherished religious pluralism that inevitably follows), *solus*

[2] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.6.1.

Christus reinforces the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ and the criticality of faith *in Him alone.* What encourages me and give me hope, is that for two thousand years those in the vanguard of culture have often been magnetically drawn back to Jesus and the questions he poses to humanity concerning who he is (themes of transcendence and immanence) and what he has done (themes of sacrifice and forgiveness in the cross and resurrection). In every cultural manifestation, there's always a point of contact for us to connect and confront. Jesus Christ is relevant –yesterday, today and forever.

Taken together, *Sola Gratia* and *sola fide* make a wonderful couple that force me to take a step back from my theology of culture, and to ask myself some uncomfortable and radical questions, in the sense of returning to the roots of Reformation soteriology. Grace *alone* impresses on me the need to make some theological distinctions, which far from being irrelevant, abstract or abstruse, make *all* the difference in the world. So, I must distinguish between imputation and impartation; justification and sanctification; monergism and synergism. I might even want to go finer, distinguishing between definitive sanctification and positional sanctification.

And the reason for this inspection? I want my motivation for cultural engagement or cultural withdrawal to be *gospel* focused. Let me just get it out there: Christian traditions with synergistic and semi-Pelagian roots (like those of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) end up producing synergistic and semi-Pelagian fruit. We experience this bitter taste as follows. First, however much I want to say a hearty 'Amen' to the focus on cultivating intentional ecclesial communities, I should be worried and wary about any rationale for cultural withdrawal that put imperatives (e.g. the pursuit of holiness) before indicatives (our holiness in Christ). This order matters, for as someone once said, it's the difference between a standing or falling church. Second, something doesn't quite sit right when tonally what comes across is a real existential angst about the survival of the church, or even one's personal faith. Underlying this lack of confidence and assurance can be sub-biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God which believes we need to take control of the wheel and do something urgently because God has somehow drifted off.

Sola Fide, reminds me of the instrumental cause through which I am united to Christ and receive all his benefits at once. These benefits include what Calvin calls the 'double grace' of first, our reconciliation to God through Christ's blamelessness, 'and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.'[3] Far from instilling in me a quietist passivity (sometimes an accusation against *sola fide*), our regenerated new nature and living faith always spurs us to good works, works which start within our churches but which inexorably spill out into our communities and across our countries bringing individual, familial and societal blessings. And accompanying our good works comes an evangelistic zeal for we know that faith comes from hearing, and that without faith men and women are separated from Christ and lost forever. A decision to turn inward is to effectively turn our backs on what God might be doing around us and through us *into* the surrounding culture. Faith in Christ *alone* insists that the Christian must go, that the non-Christian must come, and that behind it all the sovereign Lord is at the helm protecting and preserving his Church militant.

Finally, *soli Deo Gloria* is the glue which sticks all the *solas* together and sums them all up: there's nothing we bring, it's all about the Triune God his excellencies, his fame, his renown in which he glorifies Himself first before manifesting his work in us and through us. Paradoxically this is both the easiest *sola* to relate to cultural engagement, and the *sola* that most clearly demonstrates some outstanding theological differences between Reformational siblings.

[3] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.1.

Now as a convinced cultural transformationalist, it's hard not to get overly excited here and wax lyrical about the furthering of cultural mandate, the reform of society, the church as 'political' and the state as 'religious,' the importance of calling and vocation, and the taking of every thought captive for Christ. All the above seems pretty obvious to me but I know that not all of us are as convinced and excited about the prominence of such themes. So I'll try and control myself and note the need to complement my passionate '*SDG*' battle-cry with two challenges given to us by David Van Drunen (he of 'two kingdoms' fame), in his recent treatment of *soli Deo Gloria.*[4] First, we must cultivate habits of prayer and worship in an age of distraction; second we must expel the culturally fashionable ugly sisters of narcissism and vain-glory by fostering reverent fear of the Lord. I take on board these edifying exhortations especially if it tempers what can become an overly adversarial, bordering on the aggressive, dismissal and attack on those with whom we disagree. While I believe there is much theological justification to talk about culture 'wars', *soli Deo Gloria* does prescribe some rules of engagement. In my activistic zeal for God's glory, I must make sure my confidence is not understood as arrogance and entitlement. I want to win people for Christ, love my enemies, pray for those who (perhaps, maybe) persecute me. I want to contest the public square with boldness and win both the people and the issues.

In this anniversary year, let's take the opportunity to take stock and return to these Reformation slogans as touchstones and foundational building blocks. Let's make sure our own theology of culture and of cultural engagement is *sola* shaped and then let's convince others that it is the 'only' option.

[4] David VanDrunen, *God's Glory Alone* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

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Confession of a Reformed Philosopher: Why I Am a Compatibilist about Determinism and Moral Responsibility

— John C. Wingard Jr. —

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Abstract: It is not fashionable among Christian philosophers today to be a compatibilist about morally significant freedom and determinism. This essay sketches a case for the reasonableness of embracing compatibilism that involves both theological and nontheological considerations. This is followed by a critique of the most widely recognized challenge to compatibilism, the consequence argument against compatibilism, that attempts to show why such an argument cannot succeed. The essay concludes by noting several implications of the sort of compatibilism defended here for developing a satisfactory moral psychology.

****

I, an evangelical Christian philosopher, am a compatibilist about morally significant free agency and determinism. There, I've said it. I've fessed up. Compatibilism is currently not in vogue among Christian philosophers. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration, I think, to say that within the community of Christian philosophers, incompatibilism in its libertarian form is the generally recognized norm. Within our community, especially among those who self-identify as evangelicals, the libertarian view is all but taken for granted, with the consequence that much of the effort these days is spent teasing out the implications of that view for any number of other philosophical and/or theological issues. Even many philosophers whose roots are in the Reformed tradition and who otherwise generally align themselves with that tradition are happy to jettison the compatibilist part of the tradition and join the ranks of the libertarians.[1] So, a philosopher like me who is both a Christian and a compatibilist seems a bit out of step with the Christian philosophical community at large. It doesn't help that a majority of

[1] The conventional view that Reformed theology entails determinism in its compatibilist form has been challenged recently in Willem J. van Asselt, J. Martin Bac, and Roelf T. de Velde, eds., *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010) and Oliver D. Crisp, *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), ch. 3 ("Libertarian Calvinism"). I shall not attempt to address the issue of whether compatibilistic determinism is entailed by Reformed theology *per se* in this essay. Regardless of the answer to that question, it seems clear that there is a long and prominent compatibilist strand in the Reformed theological tradition.

non-Christian philosophers are allegedly compatibilists of some sort or other. So, why would any conscientious Christian philosopher today embrace compatibilism?

In this essay, I wish to begin to address that question by sketching my own compatibilist view of the relation between morally significant freedom, moral responsibility, and causal determinism, and something of why I embrace it. It is not my intention in this essay to give an exhaustive treatment that interacts with all the current players in the debate or to delve into all the technical issues involved. I'll touch on some of those issues, of course; but my aim here is simply to give a general overview of compatibilism and why I hold it. It has seemed to me that given the dominance of the libertarian position in the Christian philosophical community for some time now, it might be helpful to go back to the basics in defending the compatibilist view, and that is largely what I intend to do here. After reviewing the basic issue, I'll briefly lay out my positive (and largely traditional) case for compatibilism. Then we'll turn to a critical consideration of what is widely regarded to be the most important challenge to compatibilism today. Finally, I'll conclude the essay by drawing a few implications of this discussion for developing a satisfactory theory of moral responsibility.

1. The Basic Distinction between Compatibilism and Incompatibilism

First, let's be clear about what the problem is for which compatibilism is supposed to be the solution. The problem of freedom and determinism, as it is often called, is at bottom the issue of whether morally significant freedom (or free agency), and the moral responsibility of which such freedom is supposed to be a necessary condition, are compatible with causal determinism with respect to the acts of human agents. By "morally significant freedom" I intend simply that freedom that an agent must possess to be morally responsible for any particular act that he or she performs.[2] So the question is this: can we be free in the morally significant sense if all our acts, including our choices, are causally determined by antecedent events and/or states? Compatibilists say "yes"; incompatibilists say "no."

We may compare and contrast the basic positions on the problem of freedom and determinism in terms of the different attitudes people might take with respect to the following pair of claims:

> (D) All of our acts, including our choices, are causally determined by antecedent events and/or states of affairs.
>
> (F) We human beings are free in the morally significant sense with respect to at least some of our acts, including our choices.

Incompatibilists maintain that (D) and (F) are incompatible—that is, they affirm:

> (I) It is impossible for both (D) and (F) to be true.

Note that the incompatibilist is claiming that (D) and (F) are contraries, not contradictories. That is, it can't be that both (D) and (F) are true, but it might be that both are false. In other words, from (I) it does not follow necessarily that (D) and (F) have to have opposite truth values so that it has to be the case that one of the two propositions is true and the other false. All that's being claimed by the incompatibilist is that the conjunction of (D) and (F) cannot be true.

[2] Note that so construed, "freedom" is primarily a characteristic of a person or agent. In this essay, I shall take application of "freedom" to acts (including choices) and the will (i.e. the agent's power to choose) to be secondary uses of the term—perhaps elliptical for freedom with respect to the agents whose acts and wills they are.

There are various kinds of incompatibilists, but the most prominent kinds (and the ones who are most relevant to this essay) are *libertarians* and *determinists*. Libertarians are those who, in addition to accepting (I), take (F) to be true. Since indeterminism, the denial of (D), is entailed by the truth of the conjunction of (I) and (F), libertarians are indeterminists. On the other hand, incompatibilists who take (D) to be true are determinists (sometimes called "hard determinists"[3]). Determinists of this sort are logically forced to deny (F), the thesis that we have morally significant freedom, because of their commitment to both the determinist thesis, (D), and the incompatibilist thesis, (I).

Contrary to incompatibilists of either the libertarian or deterministic stripes, or any other stripe for that matter,[4] compatibilists hold that (D) and (F) are compatible. They affirm the following proposition:

(C) It is possible for both (D) and (F) to be true.

Obviously, (C) is the contradictory of (I). It is impossible for both (C) and (I) to have the same truth value. Necessarily, one is true and the other is false.

A further distinction is sometimes drawn here. The *simple compatibilist* is only committed to the truth of (C). But some compatibilists are committed not only to the truth of (C), but to the truth of (D) and (F) as well. Call compatibilists who affirm (C), (D), and (F) *substantive compatibilists* to distinguish them from simple compatibilists, who might deny either (D) or (F) or both. My own view is a version of substantive compatibilism.

There are other views than the four so far enumerated, of course, but for the purpose of this essay, this will suffice. Before proceeding, I should make one more comment about my formulations of (I) and (C) above. I have used the words "impossible" and "possible" without qualification in those formulations. One might wonder precisely what sort of modality (possibility or impossibility) I have in mind.

Let me begin by saying what is not intended by "possible" and "impossible." I take it that the issue here is not whether the conjunction of (D) and (F) is epistemically possible—i.e. possible so far as we know or so far as we can tell. Nor is the issue that of whether the conjunction of (D) and (F) is causally (or physically or nomologically) possible. That is, the issue is not whether, given the natural laws of our particular space-time universe, it's possible for both (D) and (F) to be true.

It seems clear that the issue between compatibilists and incompatibilists is either one of metaphysical possibility or logical (conceptual or semantic) possibility.[5] If the issue concerns *metaphysical* possibility,

[3] William James introduced the term "hard determinism" in his essay, "The Dilemma of Determinism," in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Dover, 1956), 145–83 (The essay first appeared in print in the September, 1884 issue of *Unitarian Review and Religious Magazine*). James distinguished between "hard determinism"—the incompatibilistic sort of determinism—and "soft determinism," which is a combination of determinism and compatibilism (what I shall be referring to shortly as "substantive compatibilism").

[4] For example, there is a third form of incompatibilism that is sometimes called "hard incompatibilism." The hard incompatibilist is agnostic about (D) but denies (F). According to the hard incompatibilist, morally significant freedom is incompatible not only with determinism, but with indeterminism as well. Thus, since necessarily either determinism or indeterminism is true, we cannot be free in the libertarian sense. For defense of this sort of view, see Derk Pereboom, "Defending Hard Incompatibilism," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 29 (2005): 228–47; and Derk Pereboom, "Hard Indeterminism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, ed. John Martin Fischer et. al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 85–125.

[5] Obviously I take it that there is a substantive difference between logical possibility/impossibility and metaphysical possibility/impossibility—i.e. that metaphysical possibility is not merely a matter of logical consistency. For more on that distinction, see Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1–2. Plantinga uses the term "broadly logical possibility" for the concept of metaphysical possibility that I have in mind.

we can usefully think of it in terms of possible worlds.[6] The question in that case is whether there are any possible worlds in which both (D) and (F) are true. Their conjunction is metaphysically possible if and only if there are some such possible worlds, whether or not the actual world is one of them. The question of *logical* or *conceptual* possibility, on the other hand, is whether the conjunction of (D) and (F) constitutes or entails a contradiction. That conjunction is logically possible if and only if it neither constitutes nor entails a contradiction.

Now, logical possibility is more extensive than metaphysical possibility. That is, anything that is metaphysically possible is *ipso facto* logically possible. Conversely, logical impossibility entails metaphysical impossibility. The entailment does not go the other way, however. From the fact that something is logically or conceptually possible (i.e. is not self-contradictory) it does not follow necessarily that it is metaphysically possible. Nor does metaphysical impossibility strictly entail logical impossibility.

We need do no more than distinguish these kinds of modality here. The sort of compatibilism that I'm interested in takes it that the conjunction of (D) and (F) is metaphysically possible, hence logically possible. In other words, the version of the central compatibilist thesis, (C), that I embrace is one that involves more than merely saying that the conjunction of (D) and (F) does not violate the law of noncontradiction.

2. Why I Am a Compatibilist

Why think that compatibilism is true? I'm a compatibilist for a variety of reasons. In this section, I wish to rehearse briefly some of those reasons. Again, my aim is not to offer as exhaustive or rigorous treatment as possible. My aim here is simply to give the reader some idea of why I am convinced that compatibilism is true and reasonable to accept or believe.

Before proceeding, it might be helpful to say a little something about my own more general metaphysical and epistemological commitments. My methodological orientation as a philosopher is generally that of the Scottish common sense school of philosophy. While my view of the relation between morally significant freedom and causal determinism differs from that of many common sense philosophers (for example, that of Thomas Reid, the father of the Scottish common sense school), nevertheless, I think that this general approach to doing philosophy is superior to the alternatives.

[6] A possible world is simply a possible sum total of reality. The actual world—the sum total of all that is in fact real, including everything that has actually existed or occurred, everything that is currently existing or occurring, and everything that will actually exist or occur in the future—is itself a possible world. However, it seems that reality could have been different in a number of ways. For example, presumably the chair that I'm currently sitting in didn't have to exist, though it does in fact exist. We would say that it exists in some possible worlds (including the actual one) and not in others. Furthermore, there are a number of ways in which this chair might have existed, but been different than it is. In some possible worlds this chair is black, in other possible worlds it is red, while in still others (including the actual one) it is brown. In some possible worlds this chair is owned by someone other than me. And we could go on and on. Similar things can be said with respect to you and me. Presumably God didn't have to create you or me. He might have created no universe at all, or a universe very different than ours, or even a universe very similar to ours in which either you or I or both of us do not exist. We would say that you exist in some possible worlds (including the actual one), but not in others. The same is true of me. Things are different with respect to God, however. Since God necessarily exists, God is in all possible worlds, all possible ways that all of reality could be. So, whatever is genuinely possible other than God must be compatible with God's nature. On my view, compatibility with God's nature is crucial to metaphysical possibility.

Even more significant to my own reasons for accepting compatibilism is the fact that I am a thoroughgoing theist and an evangelical Christian. I believe that God, as traditionally understood in Christian theism, exists, and that he has spoken, both in "the book of nature" (or "general revelation") and in Scripture ("special revelation"). My belief about Scripture is especially significant for my inquiry. I embrace the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as not only humanly authored, but also divinely authored or God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16).[7] One particularly significant implication of this view of Scripture, of course, is that it has special authority not possessed by any writings that are the products of merely human authorship.[8] Indeed, because it is God's revelation, it is absolutely authoritative for our thinking and conduct. That is, its normativity with respect to belief and conduct is such as to be nonoverridable. Nothing can trump the authority of Scripture. Thus, in forming my own views about freedom and determinism, I take Scripture to be normative in whatever it says that is relevant to our theorizing. In what follows, though I shall not go into much detail, it will be evident that the data of Scripture as I understand it and traditional Christian doctrines that are derived from or based on Scripture crucially shape my thinking.

So, why am I a compatibilist? I am a compatibilist for both theological and nontheological (merely philosophical) reasons. In what follows, I shall offer some reasons of each kind.

2.1. Theological Reasons for Compatibilism

I'll begin with some of the theological reasons that motivate my acceptance of compatibilism. In general, it seems to me that compatibilism comports better with traditional Christian doctrines than does incompatibilism. For example, I think that compatibilism is logically compatible with a robust doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty (including strong doctrines of divine foreordination and providence), while incompatibilism is not.[9] The witness of Scripture throughout seems to be (a) that God has from eternity foreordained, and throughout history has and continues to providentially govern (in an active,

[7] Yes, I am a compatibilist about this, too! I embrace an organic view of inspiration, which entails that the words of Scripture in the *autographa* are the words of the human authors and at the same time the very words of God to us. On my view, Scripture is a fully human book and a fully divine book as well.

[8] Another important implication of the divine authorship of the whole of Scripture is that the unity and coherence of Scripture taken as a whole are guaranteed. That is, the testimony of Scripture will not be contradictory or such as to entail contradictions.

[9] Laying out the case from Scripture for the claims that I am making here would require too much space for this essay. Thus, I shall simply state briefly what I believe the witness of Scripture as a whole to be. For some helpful discussions of these matters that are relatively recent, see D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*, reprint ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1994); Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994); James S. Spiegel, *The Benefits of Providence: A New Look at Divine Sovereignty* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005); John Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), especially Parts One and Four; and Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds., *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000). It should be noted that Carson, in his *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, defines "compatibilism" in a way that not only differs significantly from the way I and other compatibilists typically define it, but that is logically consistent with incompatibilism as ordinarily construed, as has been highlighted by Thomas H. McCall in *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 70–71. Nevertheless, much of the biblical material considered by Carson does seem to me to have relevance for compatibilism in the metaphysical sense, as well as in Carson's weaker sense, and can be used (perhaps with additional argument to mollify McCall's concerns) in the service of a defense of metaphysical compatibilism.

not passive, way), *everything* that occurs[10]—not just some things, but everything, including the acts of human beings—and at the same time (b) that human beings are (quite often) morally responsible for their acts.

By the way, it is because of this latter point—i.e. that the Scriptures clearly indicate that human beings bear real moral responsibility—that I have no truck with theological versions of incompatibilistic determinism, such as hyper-Calvinism. Any view that does not recognize human beings to be morally free and responsible agents is simply inconsistent with the claims of Scripture. With respect to theological categories, I am a Calvinist, not a hyper-Calvinist.

But even if one balks at the claim that God has foreordained and providentially controls everything that comes to pass in this world, surely one should admit that Scripture seems to record some specific instances of human choices and action that God foreordained and was actively engaged in bringing about and for which the relevant human agents were nevertheless morally responsible. Consider just one particularly notable example: the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In the record of Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2, we find Peter saying the following about Jesus's crucifixion:

> This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to a cross. (Acts 2:23, NIV)

We find something similar in the prayer recorded in Acts 4 of the Christians who had just heard Peter and John report on their meeting with the Sanhedrin.

> Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. (Acts 4:27–28, NIV)

These early Christians seem clearly to be thinking of Jesus's crucifixion as both something that was planned (hence determined[11]) by God himself *and* something for which the humans involved are morally blameworthy. This idea that Jesus's crucifixion was the result both of the foreordination and providence of God, on the one hand, and the sinful actions of men, on the other hand, certainly squares with the witness of the four New Testament gospel accounts and indeed the rest of Scripture. Note that even this one instance alone is enough to show that significant moral agency is compatible with determinism.

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[10] My view is often referred to as the doctrine of *meticulous providence*.

[11] McCall in his critique of Carson (*An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology*, 72) claims that in order to serve as a demonstration of compatibilism, use of passages like the ones adduced above must assume that "the only and exclusive options are these: an event must be either determined or unplanned." I think McCall overstates the case here. Surely his target is the assumption that divine planning entails determinism. Yet he has formulated the supposedly required assumption in such a way as to be equivalent not to that claim, but to the much stronger claim that divine planning and determinism are *mutually* entailing (i.e. logically equivalent), for he claims that the options are supposed to be exclusive. That's problematic, for a compatibilist might well think that these are not exclusive options at all. In other words, she might think that an event could be determined even though not planned by God. All that is really required here is that we assume that the options of being a determined event and being an event that is not divinely planned constitute an *inclusive* disjunction, one that allows for an event's being unplanned by God yet determined, but not for its being undetermined yet divinely planned. Furthermore, contra McCall, I'm inclined to think that given certain biblically grounded claims about God as well as certain other assumptions (some of which will emerge later in this essay), the entailment of determinism by divine planning is true.

There are other instances of this coupling in Scripture as well (e.g., in the Joseph story of Genesis 37–50, the account of Pharaoh's hardened heart in Exodus 7–14, etc.), any one of which is sufficient to establish the truth of the compatibilist's central claim, and with that, simple compatibilism.[12] That in itself is an exceedingly significant point, for if there is even one instance of morally significant human action that is causally determined, then the rug is pulled out from under incompatibilism.

Furthermore, compatibilism is clearly consistent with the traditional doctrine of divine omniscience (or more particularly, the doctrine of divine foreknowledge), whereas incompatibilism in its libertarian form is not—or so it seems to me, at any rate.[13] According to the traditional doctrine, God knows all things, including the morally significant acts of human agents, *before* they occur.[14] Such knowledge entails that there is a truth of the matter about what any agent does before he or she does it, and that in turn entails that the act is pre-determined.[15]

It seems to me that there is an inherent instability in the combination of libertarianism about morally significant freedom and traditional Christian theism. While I shall refrain from developing and defending this claim here, suffice it to say that it seems to me that theistic libertarians ultimately face a dilemma of either (a) giving up their incompatibilism or (b) displacing the traditional doctrine of God's omniscience with a thinner doctrine of God's foreknowledge—one that does not affirm that God knows absolutely everything before it exists or occurs.[16] Even if that is not the case, however, it certainly seems on the face of it that the compatibilist view, at the very least, fits more readily with the traditional

[12] The evidence from specific instances of both causal determination and moral responsibility would not be sufficient to establish substantive compatibilism, of course. All I am claiming is that such evidence is sufficient to establish the central claim of compatibilism, (C). We might pause here to note that compatibilists often attempt to make the case for (C) and against (I) by using a kind of fanciful thought experiment known as a Frankfurt-style case, named for Harry Frankfurt who first introduced such cases in his "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 829–39. A Frankfurt-style case is concocted by thinking up a scenario, supposed to be metaphysically possible, in which an agent is morally responsible for an act even though that act is determined (in the sense that the agent has no alternative possibilities to doing what she actually does). Unfortunately, use of such examples as counterexamples to incompatibilism (or more specifically to the incompatibilistic "principle of alternate possibilities" or "PAP" that takes it that moral responsibility requires the unconditional possibility of doing other than one actually does) often gets bogged down in controversy concerning whether they are really possible or whether they are question-begging. By offering actual historical examples from Scripture, we circumvent such controversy altogether.

[13] Obviously, there would be no problem of compatibility for divine omniscience and incompatibilistic (or "hard") determinism.

[14] Whether that is a temporal or atemporal "before" need not concern us here.

[15] Strictly-speaking, the sort of determinism that is directly entailed by the traditional doctrine of God's foreknowledge is logical determinism, not causal determinism. Logical determinism is, roughly, the thesis that there is a truth of the matter about whatever happens before it happens. That is all that is directly entailed by the traditional doctrine of divine foreknowledge. However, I am inclined to think that logical determinism entails causal determinism of some kind. If so, then divine foreknowledge indirectly entails causal determinism.

[16] The latter move is precisely the move made by open theists, of course. I am well aware of the attempts of evangelical libertarians to avoid this move by adopting Molinism or a simple foreknowledge view. Unfortunately, it seems to me that neither of these strategies can succeed, each tending to teeter unstably between falling into Calvinism on one side and falling into open theism on the other. Again, since in this essay I am merely sketching my theological reasons for accepting compatibilism, I shall refrain from developing my case against the Molinist and simple foreknowledge views here.

Christian doctrine of God's omniscience, according to which God foreknows even the future contingent acts of human agents, than does the incompatibilist view.

Compatibilism also seems to me to square better with a traditional Christian anthropology. The biblical portrait of human nature over the span of redemptive history seems to me clearly to favor a compatibilist view. As theologians have noted through the centuries, Scripture seems to indicate that the fall in sin brought about a significant change in our agency, specifically with respect to our ability to obey or disobey God. Whereas before the fall, human beings were able either to sin or to refrain from sinning,[17] after the fall we were unable to avoid sinning. In our fallenness we are dead to God and to true righteousness. By God's grace, redemption brings about another major change in those of us who are redeemed that significantly affects our agency. Regeneration renders the agent alive to God and true righteousness, hence able not to sin. Moreover, I think that Scripture supports the claim that those who are regenerate are ultimately incapable of falling away from God again. Finally, in a future event that evangelical and Reformed theologians call "glorification," the regenerate will be confirmed in righteousness. That is, we who are through faith united to Christ will be made personally fully holy and impeccable—incapable of sinning—by God in his grace.[18] This is part of the Christian's eschatological hope. We look forward to being forever completely free from sin—not just its penalty, but also its pollution and power. Indeed, we eagerly look forward to being perfectly virtuous and unable to sin. In other words, we look forward to being morally perfect free agents, confirmed in a personal righteousness that can never be lost.

My point here is simply that compatibilism seems to accord quite well with the biblical data concerning human nature, while incompatibilism does not. The incompatibilist, to be consistent, must take the effects of the fall and redemption on human nature to be less radical than what I've suggested above (which I take to be the teaching of Scripture). In our fallenness, we must still be able to avoid sinning, according to the incompatibilist. Christians (the regenerate) must be capable of rejecting God and returning to a state of fallenness in sin as they were prior to regeneration. Even in the New Heaven and New Earth, Christians must still be really able to sin, if incompatibilism is true and if we are still to be morally responsible beings. That is, incompatibilism seems to entail that impeccability is utterly impossible for us, even in the life to come after the resurrection, *if* we are to continue to exist as moral agents. The alternative to denying the eschatological impeccability of Christians for the incompatibilist who believes in an afterlife for Christians would be to concede that we who are Christians will be

[17] The exceedingly baffling question of why Adam and Eve sinned in the first place, given that they were created good, is bound to arise at this point in the minds of some readers. That issue is beyond the scope of this paper. For a recent treatment of the first human sin by a fellow Reformed compatibilist, see James N. Anderson, "Calvinism and the First Sin," in *Calvinism and the Problem of Evil*, ed. David E. Alexander and Daniel M. Johnson (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 200–32.

[18] Jerry L. Walls in his *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 61–62, has proposed that incompatibilists also can admit the future impeccability of glorified Christians. Walls suggests that the character of Christians in their glorified state will be formed in such a way that, while their precise choices will not be determined, the *kinds* of choices that are possible for them will be. While I find such a proposal intriguing, I do not find it plausible for reasons that should become evident in the next section of this essay. Furthermore, it seems to me that indeterministic impeccability of the sort Walls proposes significantly undermines much of the initial motivation for indeterminism and incompatibilism. At least it's far from clear to me how an incompatibilist can take such indeterministic impeccability to be morally significant. Isn't the incompatibilist conceding too much to the compatibilist here?

transformed so that we can never again sin, but along with that deny that we are moral agents from the moment we lose the real possibility of sinning. In other words, the price of accepting impeccability for the incompatibilist is that we lose our status as moral agents. On that alternative, not only can we no longer be morally vicious; we can no longer be morally virtuous, either. Neither the denial of impeccability for Christians in the afterlife nor the denial of morally significant freedom for Christians in the afterlife seems to me to square with the witness of Scripture.

There are other traditional Christian doctrines—that of the impeccability of Jesus Christ in his earthly life, for example—that are consistent with compatibilism but not with incompatibilism, or at the very least seem to me to fit much better with compatibilism than with incompatibilism. However, I trust that I have offered enough already to indicate something of the way in which I would contend that compatibilism is more reasonable to accept than incompatibilism on specifically theological or biblical grounds. It's time to turn to some of the more generally philosophical (nontheological) reasons for my acceptance of compatibilism.

2.2. Nontheological Reasons for Compatibilism

The first nontheological reason I would give for accepting compatibilism and rejecting incompatibilism is that, while I am quite convinced that we are moral agents, I am inclined to think that specifically libertarian freedom[19]—the sort of freedom insisted on by the incompatibilist—is not really possible. It is at least far from clear to me that such freedom is really possible. According to incompatibilists, morally significant freedom requires ultimate indeterminacy of the act (or, according to some incompatibilists, indeterminacy of some relevant prior act[20]) by antecedent events and/or states of affairs, even if those antecedent events and/or states of affairs render the act probable in some way. The problem is that a causally undetermined event, such as an act of choice that is free in the sense required by the incompatibilist, would be ultimately inexplicable.[21] There is, we might say, a certain "chanciness" about such an act. It is in some sense the "product" of chance or happenstance, an event that "just happened," an act that was "just done." In particular, a genuinely free act, on any incompatibilist construal, could not be explained sufficiently by the agent's dispositions, affections, desires, intentions, beliefs, motives, reasons, etc.[22] Such psychological factors cannot have necessitated or brought about

[19] The sort of freedom I call "libertarian freedom" in this essay is sometimes called "liberty of indifference." This is in opposition to the sort of freedom that compatibilists typically espouse, "liberty of spontaneity." The differences between libertarian freedom and compatibilist freedom will become clearer in section 3, but put roughly amounts to this: libertarian freedom requires that the agent have an unconditional ability to choose or act differently than she actually does, whereas compatibilist freedom does not.

[20] For an example of this sort of incompatibilism, see Robert Kane, "Free Will: New Directions for an Ancient Problem," in *Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 222–46. See also Robert Kane, "Libertarianism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, ed. John Martin Fischer et. al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 5–43.

[21] Note that this is the case for all forms of libertarianism, whether noncausal theories (such as those developed by Stewart Goetz and Carl Ginet), event-causal theories (including those proposed by Peter van Inwagen and Robert Kane), or agent-causal theories (such as those of Timothy O'Connor and Roderick Chisholm, following Thomas Reid).

[22] I recognize that many current libertarians maintain that free agents may have motives, reasons, and inclinations to act in certain ways rather than others, even in cases in which they act freely. They want to admit that such psychological facts about agents make a difference with respect to their choices, perhaps even making it more likely that agents will do certain things rather than others. However, for such agents to act freely in the incompati-

the act if it was truly free in the morally significant sense, according to the incompatibilist. The idea that something—especially something as significant as an act for which the relevant agent is morally responsible—could "just happen" with no sufficient explanation defies common sense, to say the least, and I am inclined to think that such is impossible.[23]

Even if libertarian freedom is possible, however—and this is my second nontheological reason for embracing compatibilism—libertarian freedom would not be morally significant. There are really two problems here. First is *the problem of luck* (or *randomness* or *chance*). If an act is genuinely free in the libertarian sense, then as I noted in the previous paragraph, there is no ultimate explanation for the agent's performing the act in question rather than refraining from it and/or performing some alternative act. The agent acts in a way that is ultimately *not because of* any motive or reason at all, even if that act accords with, and is made to some degree likely by, some particular motive(s) or reason(s). The agent's beliefs, desires, and the like might limit his or her real or live options, to be sure; but within those boundaries, the agent's actual act, if free in the incompatibilist's sense, is in the end an event for which there is no sufficient explanation. All that can be said is that the agent did the act in question. The agent acted, and he or she did such-and-such. That's all that can be said. There can be no further explanation as to why the agent performed that particular act rather than something else. But if that is the case, then how can the agent be morally responsible for the act? It would seem that indeterminacy of an act by potentially act-determining psychological facts about the agent cannot support moral responsibility, even if the agent is somehow the indeterminate cause of the act. If I am the agent in question, it is true that I might be said to cause the act in some sense; but the "I" who causes the act is not a moral "I." Potentially act-determining psychological facts about the agent must ultimately be divorced from the act if it is to be truly free in the libertarian sense. Yet it is at least some of those very psychological facts that ordinarily enter into, and form the bases for, our moral judgments about acts and the agents who perform them.

Perhaps it would help to think about a concrete case, which I'll call *the Case of Chuck's Choice to Cheat*. Chuck, a college student, is tempted and thus faced with a choice: to cheat on Dr. Morris's biology exam or not to cheat. Chuck struggles with the temptation as he goes through a process of deliberation during the final twenty-four hours prior to the exam. The following are some of his considerations. On one hand:

- He wants to make a good grade on the exam to keep his biology grade and his GPA in good shape.

bilist (libertarian) sense, those acts must not be determined (i.e. necessitated) by antecedent states and/or events, including motives, reasons, inclinations, and the like. This is essential to any libertarian view of freedom. And it is this ultimate indeterminacy of acts by antecedent states and/or events that entails the ultimate inexplicability of acts performed freely in the libertarian sense. Genuine freedom, in the incompatibilist sense, results in acts that are explanatorily brute facts—i.e. events that have no sufficient explanation. As I say above, there is a certain "chanciness" about them.

[23] Note that it isn't necessary to assume here anything as general as the principle of sufficient reason—i.e. the principle that for anything that exists, occurs, or obtains, there is a sufficient explanation for its existence, occurrence, or obtaining. While I think that that principle is true, it is controversial, especially in the light of quantum mechanics, and isn't necessary for this argument. All that is needed here is a sort of common sense recognition that any morally significant action of an agent must have a sufficient explanation, whether or not we can ascertain what that explanation is.

- He believes that he is in grade trouble in the biology course, and that there is little other opportunity to improve his grade.
- He believes that it is highly improbable that he would be caught if he were to cheat on the exam.
- He believes that he would have a significantly better chance of getting a good grade on the exam if he were to cheat.

On the other hand:

- He believes that cheating is morally wrong.
- He believes that he would fail the course if he were caught cheating.
- He believes that certain people whom he loves—e.g., his parents and sister, his pastor, his best friend, etc.—would be horribly disappointed were they to know that he cheated on an exam, and that they would be disgraced were he to be caught.
- He would prefer to make a good grade legitimately rather than by cheating.

And of course there are other considerations that come into play in his thinking as he stews over this decision on the day before the exam. But we have enough here to get a good sense of the situation. Unfortunately, after much torment and vacillation, Chuck finally succumbs to the temptation, choosing to cheat on the exam.

Now, assuming that Chuck is morally responsible for his choice in this case, why did he choose to cheat? What if the explanation is that in the end, after considering the risks and so forth, Chuck preferred the potential benefits of cheating more than the potential benefits of not cheating? While he wanted the benefits of not cheating, he wanted the potential benefits of cheating even more; and it's precisely *because* he wanted the potential benefits of cheating even more that he chose to cheat. What he wanted most in this case moved him to choose as he did.

This would not be at all surprising. In fact, it does not seem at all out of the ordinary. Ultimately, Chuck's choice to cheat in this case reflects morally misplaced affections and priorities on his part. This seems on the face of it to be deeply significant from a moral point of view. Given the way I have set up the case, Chuck's choice is not merely sad; it's morally deplorable. We are inclined to assign blame to the agent in this sort of case. However, note that in this case as I have constructed it, Chuck was not free in the libertarian sense in his choosing to cheat. His choice was a function of who he really is.

Now modify the case slightly. What if we sever the causal tie between the psychological facts about Chuck and his choice to cheat so that he just chooses to cheat, but is not causally determined to so choose by his desires, beliefs, commitments, and the like. His choice to cheat is, in that case, a matter of chance. He happened to choose to cheat, but his choice is not because of any motive(s) or reason(s) he had. He might just as well have chosen not to cheat under precisely the same conditions. The only explanation for his choice to cheat is that, well, he just did.

Now, in this case, is the choice morally significant? It seems clearly to me that it is not. If his choice to cheat was not because of misplaced affections or something of that sort here, then that choice is not truly reflective of Chuck's character. If his choice is not because of some reason or motive ultimately, he cannot rightly be blamed for acting for the wrong reason or for a morally bad motive. Chuck's chance choice to cheat is no more than a sad, pitiable choice, as far as I can tell—a case of bad luck. It is not a deplorable choice. It is not a morally significant one at all. In this case, there is no basis for moral evaluation. Chuck just did it, and that's just too bad.

The point here is that moral responsibility for an act is crucially linked to the explanation of the agent's performance of the act. Some such explanations are morally praiseworthy, others blameworthy. Some are damning, others exculpatory. The "why" we do what we do matters. Dispositions, motives, affections, beliefs, and the like—the stuff of psychological determinism[24]—are the sorts of things that matter when it comes to moral evaluation. "I just did" doesn't qualify as a morally significant explanation. Such an "explanation," if true, would relieve the agent of moral responsibility and would constitute reason to pity the agent, no matter what he or she had done. Severing the causal tie of action to psychological determinants renders the agent out of control in some morally significant sense; the agent in such a case is a kind of loose cannon. Such could never qualify for moral praise or blame. Some psychological facts that are determinative of our acts, then, far from preventing moral responsibility, seem *necessary* to it![25] Unfortunately, the incompatibilist's notion of freedom won't allow such psychological determinacy for morally significant choices.

We should pause to note the irony for the libertarian here. Traditionally the typical motivation for incompatibilism on the part of the libertarian has been to secure moral freedom and responsibility. Unfortunately for the libertarian, it seems that the very thing that he or she was hoping to save is lost because of the demand for indeterminacy (including psychological indeterminacy). In the attempt to save morally significant freedom, the libertarian severs the very artery that supplies the life blood to moral responsibility. Or to employ a different metaphor, the libertarian is, regrettably, hoist with his own petard.

The second problem under the point that libertarian freedom would not be morally significant is what I call *the problem of moral indifference*. Even if freedom in the libertarian sense is possible *and* we actually have it on occasion, are the options in such cases ever really significant from a moral point of view? Think about those "six-of-one and half-a-dozen-of-the-other" cases like a case of which of two

[24] By "psychological determinism," I simply mean that our acts are causally determined by antecedent psychological states and/or events. To avoid possible confusion, it might be helpful to distinguish between strong and weak forms of psychological determinism. Strong psychological determinism would be the claim that any act by an agent is causally determined by a causal chain of psychological states and/or events within the agent that spans the history of that agent. Obviously, this version of psychological determinism leaves no room for miraculous divine action, such as regeneration, that psychologically alters the agent in ways that are significant to that agent's character and actions. Weak psychological determinism, on the other hand, involves no commitment to there being a deterministic chain of psychological states and/or events within the agent that runs through the history of the agent, hence does not conflict with the possibility of morally and spiritually significant supernatural activity in the psyche of the agent, such as regeneration. The weak version of psychological determinism is simply the thesis that any act on the part of an agent is causally determined by antecedent psychological states and/or events within the agent. Such psychological states and/or events might or might not themselves be the results of antecedent psychological states and/or events within the agent in question. This leaves wide open the possibility that, in at least some cases, psychological states and/or events that are causally antecedent to certain acts by the agent are the results of special divine activity. It should be obvious that I reject strong psychological determinism and am committed only to the weak version of psychological determinism as I've described it here. I am grateful to my colleague, Bill Davis, for suggesting this distinction to me in conversation.

[25] Note that I am not claiming that there are no psychological determinants of choices and acts that would prevent or undercut moral responsibility. Some kinds of insanity, for example, yield psychological determination of choices and acts that preclude moral responsibility. Note also that this point about the necessity of psychological determination of acts for moral responsibility was made with particular force decades ago by Dickinson S. Miller under the pseudonym "R. E. Hobart" in his "Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable without It," *Mind* 43 (1934): 1–27.

streets to take to walk home, where the two options are equidistant and equally qualified in terms of comparative advantages and disadvantages;[26] or a case of choosing between several quarters in your pocket which one to put in the vending machine; or a case in which your friend wishes to pay for your dessert and coffee at a restaurant one evening, and you find yourself having to choose between a piece of pecan pie and a piece of key lime pie, both of which are favorites of yours. The sorts of cases I have in mind here are cases in which the particular choice that one makes from the available options is not a matter of great importance to the agent. It doesn't matter to the agent which street he or she ends up taking, or which quarter is selected for the vending machine, or which kind of pie is ultimately chosen. In such cases, either option will do just fine.

Assume with the libertarian that in such cases we really do have libertarian freedom. We don't have a determinative reason or motive for the particular choice we make; nothing in us or in the situation causally necessitates our making the choice that we make. But note that while there is some plausibility in thinking that such choices as these are free in the libertarian sense, they are morally indifferent. Neither option is morally better than the other in any of these cases. The question that I want to raise is this: are there any cases of choices that are plausibly taken to be cases of libertarian freedom *and* that are at the same time morally significant—such that the agent would be either in the right or in the wrong in what he or she chooses; such that the agent's choice would either accord with or violate some moral duty; such that the agent's act would manifest some moral virtue or some moral vice? I am doubtful that there are. Genuinely moral choices seem to me unlikely to be of the sort of choice that would or could ever be a "toss-up," so to say, or a "six-of-one and half-a-dozen-of-the-other" sort of case. In fact, I suspect that we would consider one who took a significant moral choice in such a manner to be morally and/or cognitively defective in some way. Furthermore, if there are any such cases, they will inevitably run aground on the problem of chance as discussed above.

I have suggested in the last several paragraphs that at best, the sort of freedom envisioned by the incompatibilist—libertarian freedom—would allow morally insignificant choices. In cases that are potentially morally significant, such freedom would actually preclude moral responsibility. This brings me to the last reason that I shall mention here for accepting compatibilism, and that is that compatibilism accords with our ordinary experience and the way we actually live our lives. That is, we ordinarily act as if compatibilism is true, which suggests that, at the pretheoretical (i.e. common sense) level at least, we already recognize compatibilism to be true. For example, we take people to be fairly predictable. If we know Sally well, we feel confident that we can predict what she will do under certain circumstances. When Sally does something that surprises us and goes contrary to what we would have predicted, our tendency is to think either that there is some mitigating factor (i.e. that there is more to the story—e.g., she was drugged, or suffering brain damage from an injury or lesion, or …) or simply that we didn't know Sally as well as we thought we did. The truth is that we just do not assume that her surprising act was a random or chance occurrence, free from causal determinants.

In morally significant cases, we want to know *why* agents do what they do, and we are particularly concerned with their motives. We take character, motives, desires, and the like to make a difference in moral evaluation of acts and agents. We praise people for their strength of character which is manifested in good deeds. We do not praise people for "just happening" to be good or "just happening" to act rightly. When we act badly, we don't take it that we "just happened" to act badly. We don't take sin to be

[26] An example along these lines was famously considered by William James in his "The Dilemma of Determinism," 155–57.

a truly random or chance occurrence. Rather, we recognize a sinful act on our part as having exposed a flaw or weakness in our character. That is, we understand action to reflect the character of the agent. Parents and teachers concern themselves with the moral formation of their children, striving to cultivate character traits in children that will ultimately determine their actions for good rather than for ill. In these and many other areas of our lives, it seems to me that our attitudes, expectations, commitments, and activities presuppose a sort of psychological determinism along with a robust sense of moral significance and responsibility. As such, compatibilism seems very natural—a matter of common sense.

These, then, are some of my own reasons, simply stated and relatively undeveloped here, for taking compatibilism to be true. I think that we have good reasons to think that compatibilism is true and good reasons to think that its contradictory, incompatibilism, is false. We might not be able to give anything like a sufficient explanation of how human agents can be free in the morally significant sense and morally responsible for their choices and acts when at the same time those choices and acts are causally determined by antecedent events and/or states of affairs. Yet, it is reasonable to believe both that we are morally free agents and that our choices and acts are causally determined.

Our situation here is similar to our situation with respect to the rationality of embracing certain essential Christian doctrines concerning the Trinity and the person of Christ. Take, for example, the traditional Christological doctrine of the one person and two natures of Christ. We can't explain it, but we have sufficient reasons to justify our belief that Jesus Christ is one person who is both fully human and fully divine. He is truly God and he is truly a human being. Yet he is one person, not two. It is rational for us to believe this even though we don't know how it works, so to say. We have enough information to justify both our acceptance of the traditional Christian doctrine and our rejection of the skeptical claim that that doctrine is logically incoherent and utterly impossible. Analogously, if we have good reasons to believe that both the deterministic thesis, (D), and the thesis of morally significant freedom, (F), are true, as I think we do, then we have good reason to think that they are compatible.

3. The Consequence Argument against Compatibilism

In this section, I want to critically consider what many take to be the most important kind of argument against compatibilism.[27] The argument, developed in various forms by several contemporary philosophers, is widely known in the philosophical community as *the Consequence Argument against Compatibilism* (or *Consequence Argument* for short).[28] In this section, I shall critically consider a generic form of the argument which I take to be representative of all such arguments in the relevant respects. Nonphilosophers might find parts of the following analysis tough-going, but my hope is that the attendant benefits of conceptual clarity and argumentative rigor will make the difficulty of working through this worth it.

[27] This is not to suggest that there are no other interesting or important challenges to compatibilism. For a recent example of a different sort of case against compatibilism, see Jerry L. Walls, "Why No Classical Theist, Let Alone Orthodox Christian, Should Ever Be a Compatibilist," *Philosophia Christi* 13 (2011): 75–104. Steven B. Cowan and Greg A. Welty provide an insightful response to Walls in their "Pharaoh's Magicians Redivivus: A Response to Jerry Walls on Christian Compatibilism," *Philosophia Christi* 17 (2015): 151–73.

[28] For some early and influential formulations of the Consequence Argument, see Carl Ginet, "Might We Have No Choice?" in *Freedom and Determinism*, ed. Keith Lehrer (New York: Random House, 1966), 87–104; Peter van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism," *Philosophical Studies* (1975): 185–99.

Taking "S" to stand for just any human agent, "A" for any particular act of S, and "*t*" for any particular time, we can begin formulating the argument as follows:

> (1) If determinism is true, then S's doing A at *t* is a necessary consequence of some set, C, of states and/or events that are antecedent to S's doing A at *t*.

Since I am treating determinism generically here, I am intentionally formulating the Consequence Argument in a way that leaves open the question of what specific kinds of things constitute the causal antecedents of S's act A. To apply premise (1) to any specific kind of determinism, the precise content of C—i.e. the specific types of causal antecedents to A that are involved—will depend on the sort of determinism that is in question. For example, if the kind of determinism in question is physical determinism (the kind, incidentally, that most philosophers who employ the Consequence Argument seem to have in view), then the relevant antecedents will be physical states and/or events plus the relevant laws of nature. For psychological determinism, the causal antecedents will be psychological events and states along with the relevant laws of nature. In the case of theological determinism, God's eternal decrees and acts of providence will be the relevant antecedents. Whatever particular kind of determinism a compatibilist might recognize or have in view, that determinism will entail that our acts, including our choices, are causally determined by, hence the necessary consequences of, some antecedent states and/or events. That is what is important in the context of the debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists. Thus, it is acceptable here to leave the particular kind(s) of determinism, and with that the contents of set C, unspecified.

The next premise of the argument is an expression of a principle that we may call the *Principle of Powerlessness with Respect to Antecedents* or *PPA* for short.

> (2) S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that those antecedent states and/or events that constitute C are other than they in fact are.

This principle is intuitively appealing, regardless of which particular kind(s) of determinism the compatibilist might have in mind. The relevant causal antecedents of S's act A will be states and/or events in the past and the laws of nature if the brand of determinism in question is either physical or psychological determinism. The past is cemented for S, utterly unalterable by S at *t*. So are the laws of nature. S has no control over those laws—no power whatsoever to change them. On the other hand, if the relevant sort of determinism is theological, then the eternal decree(s) and providence of God will constitute the antecedents of S's act at *t*. Whether the eternality of God's existence and acts is atemporal or temporal, the point here will be the same; for either way, the relevant antecedents to S's act A at *t* are immune to alteration or prevention by S at *t*.

Here is another principle that is crucial to the argument:

> (3) If (a) there is nothing that S can do at *t* to bring it about that something, *x*, is not the case, and (b) something else, *y*, is a necessary consequence of *x*, then S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that *y* is not the case.

This is the *Principle of the Transfer of Powerlessness* or *PTP*. Like premise (2) above (PPA), PTP might well seem *prima facie* plausible.

Now, if we substitute "C," the set of antecedents to A, for "*x*" and "S's act A at *t*" for "*y*" in (3) above, we get the following instance of PTP:

> (4) If (a) S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that C is not the case and (b) S's act A at *t* is a necessary consequence of C, then S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that S does not do A at *t*.

Principle (4) is a straightforward instantiation of PTP. Thus, if PTP is true, so is (4). That is, given the truth of PTP, if C is fixed and unalterable to S at *t* and C necessitates S's doing A at *t,* then S cannot refrain from doing A at *t*.

From (1), (2), and (4),[29] we can derive the following:

> (5) If determinism is true, then S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that S does not do A at *t*.

In other words, if determinism is true, then S cannot refrain from doing A at *t*.

So far, so good. But note that it is not yet clear how this is supposed to be a problem for compatibilism. The next step is crucial for doing just that.

> (6) If S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that S does not do A at *t,* then S is not significantly free in doing A at *t*.

That is, morally significant freedom on the part of our agent, S, with respect to act A at time *t* requires that S be able at *t* to refrain from doing A at *t*. Premise (6), like premise (1), is definitional. (6) simply expresses an implication of a particular definition of "significantly free."

With this definitional claim in place, it should now be clear how (5) is supposed to constitute a problem for compatibilism. In fact, we are now ready to draw the conclusion of the extended argument that is supposed to deliver the death-blow to compatibilism. From (5) and (6), we have the premises for a chain argument with the following conclusion:

> (7) If determinism is true, then S is not significantly free in doing A at *t*.

Since "S," "A," "C," and "*t*" are being used generically here to signify just any particular human agent, act, set of causal determinants, and time respectively, the argument is generalizable over all cases of human agency. If this argument is sound, then it turns out that we are never significantly free if determinism is true. In other words, morally significant freedom and determinism are not compatible after all.

How good is this argument? Does the Consequence Argument constitute a fatal objection to compatibilism? Can compatibilism be rationally defended in the face of this argument? I believe that compatibilism can be satisfactorily defended against the Consequence Argument. In fact, it seems to me that the Consequence Argument suffers from a fatal flaw that prevents it from rationally getting off the ground.

Let's start by considering carefully premise (4). As we shall see, there is a problem with (4), and *a fortiori* with (3), the *Principle of the Transfer of Powerlessness*. That problem, in turn, affects (5) and (6) as well. Here again is premise (4):

> (4) If (a) S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that C is not the case, and (b) S's act A at *t* is a necessary consequence of C, then S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that S does not do A at *t*.

[29] These three propositions would be used, along with a provisional assumption (for conditional proof) that determinism is true, for the derivation of (5).

According to (4), if the causal antecedents to S's act A at *t* are unalterable by S at *t* and S's doing A at *t* is causally determined by those antecedents, then S cannot refrain from doing A at *t.* S cannot do other than he or she does. But it is important to note a significant ambiguity here.[30]

The ambiguity that I have in mind lies in the final clause of (4), the consequent of the conditional constituted by (4): "S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that S does not do A at *t.*" To see the ambiguity clearly, consider a distinction (suggested by Jonathan Edwards[31]) between two kinds of ability and inability: natural and moral.

S has the *natural ability* to do A if and only if S can do A if S wants to. If S cannot do A even if he or she wants to, then S lacks the natural ability to do A. For example, I have the natural ability to eat a serving of cockroach cobbler.[32] I could eat some cockroach cobbler (provided some is available to me, of course) if I wanted to. It is the sort of thing that I can do in the sense of having the natural ability. I also have the natural ability right now to drive my car to the store if I want to do so. I don't want to at the moment, but I could if I wanted to. I have the natural ability.

On the other hand, I do not have the natural ability to turn a cockroach cobbler into a blueberry cobbler merely by snapping my fingers. Although I might well want to (especially if I were hungry and cockroach cobbler was the only thing available to me at the time!), I could not do that no matter how hard I tried. Transforming a cockroach cobbler into a blueberry cobbler is a matter of natural inability for me. So is preventing an airplane from crashing in Australia while I'm sitting at my computer in north Georgia (USA) writing this essay; or leaping to the moon from my backyard, even with a running start. Only things that I could do if I wanted to do them qualify as things which I have the natural ability to do—things that are naturally possible for me, we might say.

What about *moral ability*? S has the moral ability to do A provided S can want to do A—i.e. only if it is possible for S to want to do A.[33] If S cannot want to do A, then S is morally unable to do A, even if S has the natural ability to do A. I can order a bouquet of flowers for my wife. That is something that I have both the natural ability and the moral ability to do. Not only do I have the ability to order

[30] The critique I develop here is not the first to note a problem of ambiguity in the consequence argument. The most well-known and influential is surely David Lewis's essay, "Are We Free to Break the Laws?" *Theoria* 47 (1981): 112–21. While my critique of the argument differs substantially from Lewis's (and indeed from all such critiques that I've seen so far), his recognition that the argument involves a crucial ambiguity seems to me to be on the right track.

[31] In his magisterial treatise, *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Prevailing Notions of That Freedom of the Will, Which Is Supposed to Be Essential to Moral Agency, Vertue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame* (usually referred to more briefly as *Freedom of the Will*), Edwards actually draws a slightly different, but related distinction than the one I am making here—a distinction between natural and moral *necessity* to perform a particular act. See Part I, Section IV: "Of the Distinction of Natural and Moral Necessity, and Inability," *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1, Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957), 156–62.

[32] This example was inspired by my mentor, Prof. Wynn Kenyon, who used to talk about "maggot pie" when discussing the problem of freedom and determinism. As it turns out, I have a much greater aversion to cockroaches than to maggots, plus I like alliteration; hence my reference to cockroach cobbler.

[33] The word "moral" here, as with Edwards, should not be understood in a normative sense as having to do with the moral law or with moral character. Rather it should be understood in a merely psychological sense as having to do with conation or volition. The issue of moral ability is the issue of what one can *want* to do or bring about given one's actual psychological makeup. In this sense, one might well have the moral ability to choose to do something that is immoral or morally indifferent.

flowers if I want to, but it's also quite possible for me to want to do so, and at times I do. It is also quite possible for me to want to practice playing the piano—to practice, say, Chopin's first Ballade, or one of Rachmaninov's Preludes—something that I enjoy immensely. It is even possible for me to want to practice playing the piano to such a high degree that I end up doing that instead of grading philosophy exams that are sitting in a stack on my desk.

On the other hand, I do not have the moral ability to intentionally cut off one of my hands, although I have the natural ability to do so. (For one thing, losing a hand would severely curtail my ability to play the piano, and with that, a great deal of the joy that I derive from playing the piano.) Nor do I currently have the moral ability to eat a serving of cockroach cobbler if one is offered to me. While I have the natural ability—I could eat some if I wanted to—given my current psychological makeup, cockroach cobbler seems so disgusting to me that I simply could not want to eat such a thing. Similarly, I could stage a hoax, misleading my dear father into thinking that I had died, if I wanted to. I have the natural ability to do such a thing. But given my affections, beliefs, commitments, and the like, I could not want to do such a thing. I simply lack the moral ability in that case.

The distinction between moral and natural ability is important, because the compatibilist need not be committed either to the claim that determinism restricts both kinds of ability for the agent or to the claim that morally significant freedom requires that the agent have both the natural and moral abilities to act differently than he or she actually does at the time of the act.[34] For example, my own view as a compatibilist is that lacking the moral ability to do otherwise than one actually does—i.e. lacking the ability to want differently than one does, we might say—is compatible with morally significant freedom and responsibility. In fact, in some cases such moral inability is a virtue—deeply significant and valuable from a moral point of view! I especially have in mind cases of impeccability, such as that of Jesus, for example, or that of resurrected and glorified Christians after the consummation of Christ's kingdom. Being morally unable to sin (i.e. unable to want to sin), while having the natural ability to do so, is a morally excellent state in which to be. It was crucial to our redemption that Jesus was so virtuous, and it is a state of character which I, as have most Christians historically, eagerly look forward to exemplifying by God's grace in the eschatological future. The point here is that the compatibilist need not take ability to refrain from performing a particular act to be a necessary condition for morally significant freedom, especially if the sort of ability in view is moral ability. While compatibilists disagree among themselves about whether natural ability to act otherwise than we do is a necessary condition for moral responsibility, they generally agree that moral ability to do otherwise is not necessary. In other words, compatibilists generally hold that moral inability to do otherwise than we do is compatible with morally free agency.

Let's return to our consideration of premise (4) in the Consequence Argument. Applying the distinction between moral and natural ability/inability to (4), it will become evident how that premise is ambiguous. According to the consequent (i.e. the final clause) of (4), "S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that S does not do A at *t.*" But in what sense is this supposed to be the case? Is the "cannot" here supposed to express moral inability or natural inability?

Note first that to be consistent with the inability expressed in premise (2) and part (a) of the antecedent of (4)—"S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that C is not the case"—the "cannot" in the consequent of (4) must be intended to express natural inability. Certainly one might want to change

[34] This latter claim is closely related to the principle of alternative possibilities ("PAP"), referred to in an earlier footnote.

some of the causal antecedents of one's action—some of one's relevant dispositions, for example, or a relevant law of nature, or a relevant divine decree—even if one is naturally unable to do so. The problem is that we are unable to change those facts, even if we wanted to do so. But we still might want to change some of them, if only we could. Our inability to alter C is a natural inability. So, the "cannot" both in (2) and in part (a) of the antecedent of (4) is best taken in the sense of natural inability.

But notice that if we take the "cannot" at the end of (4) in the same way, (4) turns out to be false. For certainly, even if S's doing A at *t* is causally necessitated by C in the sense that S is morally unable to avoid choosing to do A at *t,* S might still have the natural ability to avoid doing A at *t.* That is, S could do other than A in the sense that S would do other than A *if* some of his or her affections, tastes, values, desires, intentions, etc., were relevantly different than they actually are. If natural inability is what is intended in (4), then (4) is false, and so is premise (3), the principle (PTP) of which (4) is an instantiation. Moreover, if (4) is false, then so is (5).

Well, what if "cannot" in the final clause of (4) is taken to express moral inability rather than natural inability? Construed that way, (4) seems to me to be quite true (although the equivocation on the word "cannot" within the sentence taken as a whole might leave one a bit queasy). Moral inability to do otherwise than one actually does, or to refrain from doing what one actually does, does appear to be an implication of determinism—at least of the psychological and theological forms of determinism that I take to be true. And it is quite possible that S be morally unable to avoid doing A, even though naturally able to do so. Frankly, I think this describes the sort of situation in which actual human agents often find themselves.

But how is this supposed to be problematic for the compatibilist? All that I have conceded here is perfectly consistent with compatibilism. So far, the compatibilist has no cause for worry. The implication of determinism for agency so far derived is precisely what the typical compatibilist already recognizes and is prepared to embrace. I, as a compatibilist, am indeed committed to the claim that if determinism is true, the agent lacks the moral ability to avoid doing what he or she actually does, whether or not the agent has the natural ability to do so.

Left with nothing but propositions (1)–(5), the proponent of the Consequence Argument would face something of a dilemma at this point. As we have seen, for the argument to be sound up to this point and possibly convincing to the compatibilist, the "cannot" in the consequents of (3), (4), and (5) must be understood in the sense of moral inability. But again, that is a kind of inability that the compatibilist is quite happy to accept. So, to expose moral inability as a consequence of determinism will get no traction with the compatibilist, unless it can be shown somehow that this is problematic to moral responsibility. On the other hand, taking the "cannot" in the consequents of (3), (4), and (5) to express natural inability might be able to get some traction with some compatibilists—viz., those who take natural ability to do otherwise than one does to be a necessary condition for morally significant freedom. However, on this interpretation, (3), (4), and (5) turn out to be false. So, again, there is no real cause for worry for compatibilists.

Now, all of this affects the way we are to understand (6), which is crucial for connecting determinism's implications for agency with morally significant freedom and responsibility. It is at this step that it should become clear how the reasoning represented in (1)–(5) is supposed to spell trouble for compatibilism. Here again is premise (6):

> (6) If S cannot do anything at *t* to bring it about that S does not do A at *t,* then S is not significantly free in doing A at *t.*

Note that the antecedent of (6) is the same proposition as the consequents of (4) and (5). Thus, to succeed in connecting the implication of determinism for agency that has been derived at step (5) with morally significant freedom, the antecedent of (6) must mean the same thing as is intended by the consequents of (4) and (5).

As we have seen already, taken in one way, so that "cannot" indicates natural inability, (4) and (5) turn out to be false, leaving the argument unsound. So, again, the sort of inability to refrain from performing a particular act that is in view as an implication of causal determinism in this argument must be moral inability. Assuming that is the sense intended in (4) and (5), then to serve its bridging purpose in the argument, (6) must be understood in that sense as well. However, in that case the argument clearly begs the question against compatibilism. On the moral-inability interpretation of "cannot," (6) clearly reflects a libertarian—i.e. incompatibilistic—understanding of what is involved in morally significant freedom. Compatibilists can (and presumably will) simply reject this construal of the notion of freedom. That is, they can deny that morally significant freedom requires the sort of ability on the part of the agent that (6) stipulates—i.e. the moral ability to refrain from doing what one actually does at a particular time. Whether such moral ability is required for morally significant freedom and responsibility is precisely what is at issue in the argument. The only way to avoid begging the question against compatibilism would be to provide good independent reason(s) for taking (6) to be true. However, such justifying reason(s) for (6) would render the Consequence Argument rhetorically superfluous. It would be the independent argument(s) for (6) that would be doing the work of rationally establishing incompatibilism, not the Consequence Argument. Thus, whether or not one has good independent reason(s) for taking (6) to be true, the Consequence Argument cannot do what it is designed to do. It cannot justify rejection of compatibilism.

My conclusion, then, is that the Consequence Argument does not, and indeed cannot, succeed as a refutation of compatibilism. Either premises (3), (4), and (5) are false, or the argument begs the question against compatibilism by smuggling in an incompatibilist notion of morally significant freedom—a notion of freedom that a compatibilist can and will simply deny. Unless there is a formulation of the Consequence Argument that avoids both questionable claims about the implications of determinism and begging the question against compatibilism (and I must confess that I have yet to see one that does), the argument presents no serious threat to the rationality of embracing compatibilism.

4. Conclusion: Toward a Satisfactory Compatibilist Moral Psychology

I hope that I have provided enough to see not only that compatibilism is eminently defensible, but that it is compatibilism rather than incompatibilism that rationally ought to be accepted, especially by evangelical Christians. The Reformed compatibilist need not be ashamed. There is, of course, much more to be considered, but it is time to take stock and draw this discussion to a close. In this final section, I want to make some brief observations based on what we have seen so far in this essay with an eye to the development of a satisfactory compatibilist theory of morally significant freedom and responsibility.[35]

[35] There are, of course, other interesting and important implications of the sort of compatibilism I'm recommending here that it would be good to flesh out—e.g., implications for the rational defense of theism in the face of the problem of evil; implications for the development of a satisfactory theory of modality (especially the relation of God to what's metaphysically necessary, possible, and impossible); etc. But here I'll confine my consideration to a handful of implications for moral psychology.

Early in this essay, I stipulated that by "morally significant freedom" I intend simply that freedom that an agent must possess to be morally responsible for any particular act that he or she performs. This is obviously very general—schematic and relatively empty of content—but sufficient for our purpose of considering the issue of compatibilism. However, a satisfactory theory of moral psychology must ultimately yield a more specific definition. It will need to provide an analysis or account or explication of the concept of morally significant freedom that specifies the conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for an agent's having such freedom. While I have not attempted to supply those details in this essay, our reflection on the case for compatibilism has suggested several implications for the project of filling out precisely what morally significant freedom requires.

In this essay I have given theological and nontheological reasons for thinking that compatibilism is true. In considering those reasons, two different kinds of causal determinism have come into view. First, it seems to me that we have strong theological (biblical) support for theological determinism, the view that God determines all contingent events and states of affairs. Traditional Reformed theologians think of this in terms of the doctrines of divine foreordination and providence. Theistic philosophers might unpack this in terms of God's acts of selecting and actualizing one of the infinitely many possible worlds.[36]

Second, we have both theological and nontheological reasons to think that psychological determinism—i.e. the thesis that all the acts of human agents are causally determined by psychological facts about those agents—is also true. Given our circumstances, and especially certain psychological facts about us, in any case of action we are morally unable to do otherwise than we actually do. Thinking about this in terms of possible worlds, we might say that an act is psychologically determined for an agent, S, if in any possible world in which everything that is psychologically relevant to S's act (e.g., S's character, reasons and/or motives, perceived options, etc.) is precisely the same as it is in the actual world, S does precisely the same thing that he or she does in the actual world.[37]

It seems to me that any satisfactory theory of moral psychology must at least be compatible with both theological and psychological determinism, given that we have good reasons to accept both. Any theory of morally significant freedom and moral responsibility that is incompatible with either theological or psychological determinism will be less than acceptable.

Furthermore, I have suggested that not only are some psychological determinants of choices and acts compatible with morally significant freedom, but that some such determinants are actually *necessary* to moral responsibility. If this is correct, as I think, then to develop satisfactory theories of moral freedom and responsibility we shall need to try to pinpoint precisely which psychological factors are relevant either to facilitating morally significant action or to precluding or undercutting it. On my view, a robust sort of self-determination of choices and acts is necessary for moral responsibility.

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[36] As noted earlier in this essay (see footnote 5), a possible world is a way that all of reality, including God and anything else that God might create and sustain, could be from a metaphysical point of view. On the Reformed view suggested here, the particular possible world that is actual is in fact the actual one because God has voluntarily determined it to be so.

[37] Putting it more precisely, to say that an act, A, of an agent, S, at time t is psychologically determined for S at t means that S does A in every possible world in which S exists *in every case* in which all the conditions that are relevant to S's doing A at t in the actual world are satisfied in those other possible worlds. In other words, in each possible world in which at some time, t_p, (a) S's character (including his or her affections, loves, hates, tastes, dispositions, etc.), (b) S's reasons and/or motives with respect to A, (c) S's options (or perceived options)…, and so forth, are precisely identical to what they are in the actual world at t, S does A at t_p.

However, that cannot be self-determination of an indeterministic variety. In developing a satisfactory theory of moral psychology, then, it will be important to identify the psychological conditions that deterministically enable the sort of self-determination of acts that renders them morally significant—the factors that make the "I" who chooses and acts a moral "I." Some such factors have been suggested in this discussion, but I have largely left this matter undeveloped.

Recognizing that both theological and psychological determinism are true and compatible with moral responsibility has a further interesting implication for reflection on human agency—and with this, I close. In any case of human agency, there will be, not one, but two sufficient explanations for the act of the agent, from a logical point of view—one in terms of God's foreordination and providential governance of the act in question; the other in terms of other relevant facts in the actual world, including the psychological facts about the agent prior to and at the time of the act in question. Interestingly, each explanation is a sufficient explanation of the agent's act in the sense of yielding an entailment of the act, and both are true. Moreover, the two kinds of explanation are very different, though compatible. That is, the two kinds of explanation are not redundant, but complementary. Because of this, in any case of creaturely free agency, while either an explanation in terms of God's causal role or one in terms of the causal role of the agent's own psychology and circumstances will be sufficient from a logical point of view to account for the fact of the agent's performing the act, neither by itself gives a complete or whole account of the act. For that, we need both explanations and some account of how the two are related. It seems to me that an implication of this is that to be comprehensive, a theory of moral psychology must take into account both theological and psychological determination of our acts, showing (to the extent that we can) how each works and how they work together in such a way as to render us morally responsible in many cases. Obviously this is no small task, but perhaps not completely insurmountable.[38]

[38] I am deeply grateful for helpful criticism of various drafts of this essay from three colleagues at Covenant College, Bill Davis, Hans Madueme, and Don Petcher, and from the managing editor of *Themelios*, Brian Tabb, along with two anonymous referees for *Themelios*. An ancestral version of this essay written for a different audience (my students at Covenant College) was previously published online as "Morally Significant Freedom, Moral Responsibility, and Causal Determinism: A Compatibilist View," in *Testamentum Imperium* 2 (2009).

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Natural Selection and an Epistemology of Evil: An Incompatible Pair

— J. Daniel McDonald —

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Abstract: Underlying the atheistic naturalist's argument from evil against God's existence is an assumed knowledge of evil—they know what evil *is*. For atheistic naturalists, Darwinian evolution serves as the framework of their worldview with natural selection as the blind agent of change. Assuming natural selection is true, how can one who holds to natural selection know *what* evil is and *that* something is evil—what the author calls an "epistemology of evil"? This article argues that the beliefs in natural selection and in the existence of evil are contradictory, undermining the argument from evil against God's existence.

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1. Introduction

One mode of attack by atheistic naturalists to undermine Christianity is to appeal to the problem of evil. Underlying their arguments, however, is an assumed knowledge of evil—they know what evil *is* and use that knowledge to disprove the existence of God. For atheistic naturalists, evolution serves as the framework of their worldview with natural selection as the blind agent of change that drives the evolutionary process.

Assuming natural selection is true, what makes the actions of a person evil as opposed to non-evil?[1] Further, what leads one to label natural disasters as evil if such events are typically the result of natural forces? In short, how can one who holds to natural selection know *what* evil is and *that* something is evil—what the author calls an "epistemology of evil"?

[1] The term "non-evil" is used because there seems to be little by way of atheists to argue for the existence of "good" as if it was something in and of itself. Rather, the discussion of "good" is subsumed in the larger discussion of the problem of evil.

1.1. Thesis

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the beliefs in natural selection and in the existence of evil are contradictory, undermining the argument from evil against God's existence. The first section surveys arguments from prominent atheists (particularly Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins) that appeal to the reality of evil as undermining the existence of God—appeals that imply an epistemology of evil. The next section explores these thinkers' discussion on the role and nature of natural selection as it applies to daily life, particularly in events commonly deemed "evil." The paper then synthesizes the two previous sections by demonstrating the inconsistency of holding to natural selection and a knowledge of evil. This section is developed by incorporating discussion on the lack of cohesiveness within evolutionary thought regarding natural selection and exposing the metaphysical leap taken by the New Atheists to arrive at objective moral values. Finally, the paper concludes with a word on the implication that the atheist's inability to employ the problem of evil as an argument against the existence of God.

1.2. A Brief Qualification

In the years following the tragedy of 9/11, the problem of evil—though never absent from philosophical and theological discussion—dominated the attention of not just Christian thinkers, but that of non-Christian thinkers as well, particularly atheists. Though many focused on the evil actions of the Islamic jihadists as the ultimate manifestation of evil, others broadened the scope of their critical eye to that of religion in general as the impetus behind all evil. Four thinkers in this camp rose to prominence—Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris—all of whom represented what is now commonly referred to as New Atheism.

The New Atheists garnered attention from not only theistic thinkers—from whom many books were written to counter the New Atheists claims about religion—but also from scholars of a wide array of disciplines and—more significantly—from the general public. However, though the Four Horsemen of the New Atheist movement quickly appeared to be a formidable foe to religion, their impact resembled that of a Louisiana summer day's thunderstorm—a brief period of intense rain, booming thunder, and gusty wind, only to peter out with little to show for its efforts. In fact, so short was the New Atheists's impact, Paul Copan could quip: "They're so 2006!"[2]

If Copan's observation was true in 2011, then why beat the proverbial dead horse now? To avoid veering off topic, I provide a reason for one more paper against New Atheism. Perhaps one of the most significant reasons for the popularity and influence of the New Atheists—particularly in their heyday—is the accessibility of their writings. Though highly-educated and well-versed in their fields, each of the "Four Horseman" communicate their thoughts on weighty subjects in a manner that appealed to an audience beyond their respective fields. Aside from their Trump-like approach to their religious opponents, the literary breadth of Hitchens, the passion and focus of Harris, and the approachable scholarship of Dennett and Dawkins make them easy to read and understand. Their ability to communicate heady issues in relatable prose make it deceptively easy for one to grant credence to their conclusions. As such, if the works of these men continue to garner attention, Christian thinkers must anticipate and refute their arguments for the sake of the Church and the defense of the Truth.

[2] Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 20.

2. Natural Selection

Everyone operates within a worldview, whether they do so consciously or unconsciously. Entailed in one's worldview is some narrative that provides an explanation for how the world has come about. Germane to the current discussion are two competing narratives in Western culture today, particularly in the United States. The first narrative, historically held by Christians and by most conservative Christians today, is that Genesis 1–2 provide the basis for our understanding of how the world was created by God. The second narrative stands in stark contrast to the first, and that is of Darwinian evolution—that the universe came about through the slow, blundering, and purposeless process of evolution.[3] Darwinian evolution removed the need for any appeal to a creator, for the world as we know it has evolved over billions of years from simple organisms to a complex, rich, and diverse system of plants, animals, insects, and heavenly bodies to microscopic bacteria, viruses, and microorganisms. Though there are variations and combinations of the two narratives, the two stated above represent the opposite sides of a rift that has widened between Christianity and secular culture.

The New Atheists appeal to Darwinian evolution as a basic principle within their overall worldview. Though they assert that science evidence proves the truthfulness of evolution,[4] the works of Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, and Hitchens presuppose Darwinian evolution as a basic belief. Because evolution is true, the New Atheists go about arguing that God and religion are relics of pre-scientific days gone by.

Essential to their evolutionary framework is the Darwinian concept of natural selection. Without natural selection, Daniel Dennett asserts that Darwin would have been unable to "assemble all the circumstantial evidence that [evolution] had actually occurred."[5] But by demonstrating how evolution occurred, Darwin systematized the previous findings of naturalists and his own observations into a cohesive, powerful explanation of the world that did not necessitate an appeal to God.

Much has been written by theologians and Christian thinkers about the relationship between evolution (and essentially science) and faith (theology). Perhaps the most significant of these works are those that seek to demonstrate how evolution does not replace or disprove the existence of God. Recently Philip Rolnick, professor of science and theology at the University of St. Thomas, published *Origins: God, Evolution, and the Question of the Cosmos* in which he illustrates how Darwinian evolution *en toto* is compatible with Christianity. Another, and more significant, work is Alvin Plantinga's *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*, in which he argues that Darwinian evolution only makes sense within a theistic framework.[6] A running theme throughout these and other works is Christianity's contention with natural selection—it is the hinge upon which the debate turns.

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[3] From this point forward, "Darwinian evolution" is also referred to as "Darwinism." Any occurrence of "evolution" in the article implies "Darwinian evolution."

[4] Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 282–283. For example, "By contrast, what I, as a scientist, believe (for example, evolution), I believe not because of reading a holy book but because I have studied the evidence.…We [i.e. scientists] believe evolution because the evidence supports it."

[5] Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 39.

[6] Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

For the New Atheists, natural selection is the explanatory factor for how the world has evolved to where it is today, and how we are able to recognize evil in the world. This section provides a brief discussion on how the New Atheists define and explain natural selection.

Daniel Dennett likened Darwinian natural selection to an algorithmic process. In an algorithm, if certain conditions are met, then a particular outcome is "assured."[7] According to Darwin, given ample time and varying "conditions of life," given each species' ability to increase "at some age, season, or year, a severe struggle for life," then variation naturally, and necessarily, occurs within each species.[8] Dennett provides three characterizations of algorithms that directly apply to natural selection: 1) substrate neutrality—the power of the algorithm is in its logical structure. The procedure will work as long as the prescribed steps are followed; 2) underlying mindlessness—each step, and the transition between each step, is "utterly simple" such that it is "simple enough for an idiot to perform--or for a straightforward mechanical device to perform"; and 3) guaranteed results—if the process is performed correctly, it will always produce the expected result.[9]

In *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins defines natural selection as "a process of trial and error, completely unplanned" and "can be expected to be clumsy, wasteful, and blundering."[10] Anticipating any appeal to design in nature, Dawkins asserts that natural selection is the only known driving force behind evolution that is "capable of producing the illusion of purpose."[11] If there is any appearance of design in nature, it can only be a result of one of two things: 1) a designer, or 2) chance.[12] The appeal to a designer complicates everything by raising other questions. Natural selection is the "only workable alternative to chance that has ever been suggested."[13] What we have, then, is a process that bumbles through time, discarding what fails to work while the fittest survive to carry on the torch.

Though natural selection is a mindless, necessary process that gives rise to our complex and majestic universe, our world has been "bought at huge costs in blood and the suffering of countless antecedents on both sides."[14] Even Darwin understood that "blindness to suffering is an inherent consequence to natural selection."[15] For Dawkins, despite the carnage left in the wake of natural selection, evolution is neither kind nor evil; rather, it is indifferent.[16] On one hand, "natural selection favors the tendencies to remember obligations, bear grudges, police exchange relationships, and punish cheats who take but

[7] Ibid., 48.

[8] Ibid., quoting from Charles Darwin, *Origin of Natural Species*, 127.

[9] Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 50–51.

[10] Richard Dawkins, "A Devil's Chaplain," in *Skeptic* 10.3 (Fall 2003): 8.

[11] Ibid., 38.

[12] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 119. Elsewhere Dawkins states: "Evolution by natural selection produces an excellent simulacrum of design, mounting prodigious heights of complexity and elegance. And among these eminences of pseudo-design are nervous systems which … manifest goal-seeking behavior that, even in a tiny insect, resembles a sophisticated heat-seeking missile more than a simple arrow on target" (79). Dawkins' language strongly implies that the world looks as if it were designed, but what appears is not the case—it is but "pseudo-design."

[13] Ibid., 120.

[14] Dawkins, "A Devil's Chaplain," 38.

[15] Ibid., 38.

[16] Ibid., 38.

don't give when their turn comes."[17] What we as humans view as evil in the world is par for the course with natural selection

On the other hand, though, is evidence of altruism in the world. Species show altruism toward close kin because "of the statistical likelihood that kin will share copies of the same gene."[18] Thus, altruism was selected as a feature that contributed to the survival of a species. Today, however, humans tend to not live in close-knit communities among kin, but we still practice kindness toward another and practice altruism. For Dawkins, though we no longer have the "restriction" to act altruistically toward kin, it still exists as a "rule of thumb" and we can't help but to feel compassion toward a stranger. This is "a Darwinian mistake: blessed, precious mistake."[19]

The theme of evil and suffering is one that the New Atheists expound upon in their critiques and attacks against Christianity. How they are able to make the connection between the mindless process of natural selection and the existence of evil and suffering is an issue that will be addressed later; what follows is how the New Atheists attempt to describe the nature of evil.

3. The New Atheists and the Reality of Evil

Ironically, there is one issue that Christians can be in agreement with the New Atheists, and that is the reality of evil. For the "Four Horsemen," evil is so prevalent in the world, they seek to expose the root of all kinds of evil (past and present)—religion—and to convert the religious to a life of reasoned atheism.[20] The force of their argument is carried by the examples of evil sprinkled throughout their books.

3.1. Richard Dawkins

Dawkins, in an article titled "A Devil's Chaplain,"[21] points to the suffering of animals at the hand of other animals as an example of evil that questions the existence of God. Dawkins favorably quotes Darwin as stating: "I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ickneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars."[22] Senseless evil is also seen in the example of digger wasps, who sting their prey the grey worm segment by segment in order to paralyze it. As the grey worm lies paralyzed, the digger wasp larvae are able to feed upon live meat.[23] How could there be a God with such senseless suffering even among insects?

In *The God Delusion,* Dawkins recounts the 2003 murder of an abortion doctor and his bodyguard by Paul Hill. Hill's motive for the murder was to protect the lives of the unborn, claiming that he would do it again if he had the chance. Moments before his execution, Hill proclaimed that by executing him,

[17] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 217.

[18] Ibid., 216.

[19] Ibid., 221.

[20] For Sam Harris, at least, atheism does not entail one to live an unspiritual life. In the last chapter of *The End of Faith*, Harris promotes some form of mysticism (Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* [New York: Norton, 2004]).

[21] Not to be confused with his book with the same title.

[22] Dawkins, "A Devil's Chaplain," 38.

[23] Ibid., 38.

the state would make Hill a martyr. Dawkins notes that Hill's perception of himself is deeply misguided because of his religious faith.[24] For Dawkins, Hill's actions illustrate the lasting pain of evil, for he caused "real, deep, lasting suffering."[25]

Dawkins's abhorrence for evil may parallel that of theologians, but he reserves no respect for Christian thinkers and their attempts to explain the existence of evil. For example, Dawkins recalls a debate in which Richard Swinburne "justified suffering" as an opportunity for one to "show courage and patience," to "show sympathy and to help alleviate my suffering." Though God "regrets" humanity's suffering, his greatest concern is that each person shows "patience, sympathy, and generosity," thereby developing a "holy character."[26] Dawkins recoils at Swinburne's response, labeling it a "grotesque piece of reasoning" and "damningly typical of the theological mind." For Dawkins, there can be no justification for the existence of evil; it is a problem that must be answered.

3.2. Sam Harris

Sam Harris's works abound with examples of evil that pervade the world. In a letter to the editor titled "The God Fraud," Sam Harris reacts to Karen Armstrong's claim that equating fundamentalism with the totality of religion misconstrues the essence of religion. Harris mockingly recounts examples of religiously-motivated evil occurring on the continent of Africa:

> But in Kenya elderly men and women are still burned for casting malicious spells. In Angola, unlucky boys and girls have been blinded, injected with battery acid, and killed outright in an effort to purge them of demons. In Tanzania, there is a growing criminal trade in the body parts of albino human beings—as it is widely believed that their flesh has magical properties.[27]

If Armstrong's claims are true, then how does one factor in witchcraft? Are such examples of evil "perversions of the real witchcraft—which is drenched with meaning, intrinsically wholesome, integral to our humanity and here to stay"?[28] Rather, Harris asserts that such manifestations of evil are the natural end to religion. Harris's analogy clearly implies his disdain for Armstrong's claim, for no matter how one slices it, all violence in this world is religiously motivated.

Elsewhere, Harris claims that we are in a universe "that seems bent on destroying us…it is a good thing to understand the forces arrayed against us. And so it is that every human being comes to desire genuine knowledge about the world."[29] History demonstrates that it is "an insufficient taste for evidence [that] regularly brings out the worst in us."[30] Concessions made to religion in the realm of politics has

[24] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 296–297.

[25] Ibid., 297.

[26] Ibid., 64. Dawkins quotes Richard Swinburne from a response to the Great Prayer Experiment. Dawkins does not cite the source where he obtained the quote. Swinburne's response can be found on his web-based Curriculum Vitae: Richard Swinburne, "Response to a Statistical Study of the Effect of Petitionary Prayer," http://users.ox.ac.uk/~orie0087/framesetpdfs.shtml.

[27] Sam Harris, "The God Fraud," *Foreign Policy* 177 (January/February 2010): 14

[28] Ibid.

[29] Harris, *The End of Faith*, 23.

[30] Ibid., 26.

prevented us from speaking out against "the most prolific source of violence in our history"—religion.[31] It is "reckless and disingenuous" to ignore the role of religion in violence.[32] It is "self-evident" that "ordinary people" are not moved to commit acts of violence in the name of religion.[33]

Harris has published two articles based upon research in neuroscience where a link was sought between brain activity, and belief and disbelief. Related to this research is the question of where religion's source is in the brain, of which little is known today. According to Boyer, "religious beliefs and concepts must arise from mental categories, and cognitive propensities that predate religion.… [These] underlying structures might determine the stereotypical form that religious beliefs and practices take."[34]

For Harris, "a rational approach to ethics becomes possible once we realize that questions of right and wrong are really about the happiness and suffering of sentient creatures."[35] We do not get our rudimentary sense that cruelty is wrong from the pages of the Bible; rather, "our ethical intuitions must have their precursors in the natural world, for while nature is indeed red in tooth and claw, it is not merely so."[36] We need a scientific understanding of the link between intentions, relationships, and states of happiness, which will lead us to a better understanding of the nature of good and evil, as well as a "proper response to the transgressions of others."[37]

3.3. Christopher Hitchens

Finally, Christopher Hitchens, in his biting literary style, minces no words in *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Like Harris and Dawkins, Hitchens lays the blame for violence at the feet of religion. In a chapter titled "Religion Kills," Hitchens provides anecdote after anecdote of religiously-motivated or related evil. Though he gives no formal argument to support his claim, his claim is carried by the sheer force of disgust and unease created by the accounts of senseless and unnecessary suffering and pain. Following Hitchens's lead, one can only conclude that there is no redeeming factor to religion; one can either wallow in the irrationality of religion, or thrive in the rationally of atheism.

The preceding examples of evil do not exhaust the numerous other examples provided in the New Atheists' works, much less those of others who see the problem of evil as evidence against God's existence. Nevertheless, they provide a clear enough picture of how the New Atheists recognize the existence of evil in the world and see it as a problem that requires an answer.

4. An Incompatible Pair

Two distinct features of the New Atheists thought have been presented. First, natural selection is the mindless, algorithmic process that has served as the engine of evolution. Though our world has suffered through much bloodshed and suffering to be where we are, evolution is indifferent to what

[31] Ibid., 27.

[32] Ibid., 28.

[33] Ibid., 31

[34] Sam Harris, Jonas T. Kaplan, Ashley Curiel, Susan Y. Bookheimer, Marco Iacoboni, and Mark S. Cohen, "The Neural Correlates of Religious and Nonreligious Beliefs," *Plus One* 10.4 (October 2009): 3.

[35] Harris, *The End of Faith*, 170–71.

[36] Ibid., 172.

[37] Ibid., 186.

humans consider to be evil, likewise in regard to any examples of altruism. Death and suffering are just a natural effect of the evolutionary process.

A second feature of the New Atheists's thought is the reality of evil. Each thinker—particularly Sam Harris—devote much energy decrying the evil evident in our world, specifically manmade evil. Evil is an objective reality such that one would have to be irrational to not recognize its manifestation in current politics and world affairs. So passionate are Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, and Hitchens about eradicating evil in our world that they have isolated the root cause of all suffering—religion—and make it their mission to evangelize the world (particularly America) with the truth of modern science. Are the New Atheists consistent, though, in utilizing Darwinian evolution as the lens of their worldview and in recognizing objective evil in the universe? On the surface, there appears to be no disconnect between belief in evolution (natural selection) and in the reality of evil. However, upon further analysis, the two beliefs are mutually exclusive.

4.1. Natural Selection: Redux

Joshua Moritz notes that Darwin saw no inconsistency between suffering and natural selection.[38] According to Darwin, "suffering is quite compatible with the belief in natural selection, which is not perfect in its action."[39] In fact, pain, self-interest, and competition (which are entailed in suffering) are inherent in the "*very process* by which organisms were created"; competition and struggle to survive are an "inherent evil."[40] No doubt, as shown earlier, the New Atheists agree with Darwin on this point. Yet, at certain points throughout their work, they say otherwise.

4.2. An Inconsistency in Dawkins and Harris

Though the New Atheists recognize suffering as a natural result of natural selection Chad Meister identifies Richard Dawkins as a moral realist who admits that on the face of it, natural selection is ill-suited to explain goodness.[41] Sam Harris in *The End of Faith* claims that to say that the happiness and suffering of humans (and animals) concerns us is to recognize that there is a possibility "that much that is 'natural' in human nature will be at odds with what is 'good.'[42] Evolution and natural selection can only take us so far in our development: "Appeals to genetics and natural selection can take us only so far,

[38] Joshua Moritz, "Evolutionary Evil and Dawkins' Black Box: Changing the Parameters of the Problem," in *The Evolution of Evil*, ed. Gaymon Bennet et. al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 146.

[39] Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809–1882: With the Original Omissions Resotred*, ed. Nora Barlow (London: Collins), 90, accessed May 7, 2017, http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?viewtype=text&itemID=F1497&pageseq=92.

[40] Moritz, "Evolutionary Evil and Dawkins' Black Box," 147 (emphasis original).

[41] Chad Meister, "God, Evil, and Morality," in *God is Great, God is Good: Why Believing in God is Reasonable and Responsible*, ed. William Lane Craig and Chad V. Meister (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 112–13. According to Dawkins: "On the face of it, the Darwinian idea that evolution is driven by natural selection seems ill-suited to explain such goodness as we possess, or our feelings of morality, decency, empathy and pity" (*The God Delusion*, 214–15). Dawkins does try to provide an explanation for how, through the "selfish gene," we have come to have morality. However, Joshua Moritz rightly points out that Dawkins and others of his ilk presuppose a geno-centric view of biological evolution, giving "priority and sufficiency of natural selection alone" to the evolutionary process (Moritz, 144). Moritz provides four current molecular biologists who have provided a fuller picture of the evolutionary process apart from the geno-centric approach.

[42] Harris, *The End of Faith*, 186.

because nature has not adapted us to do anything more than breed. From the point of view of evolution, the best thing a person can do with his life is have as many children as possible."[43] In short, Harris, like Dawkins, recognizes that our morality—our ability to recognize objective evil and suffering—is not a result of the mindless process of natural selection. At best, natural selection selected us to procreate, and this, by implication, out of instinct alone (negating any motivation of love, commitment, desire, etc.).

Perhaps more than Dawkins, Dennett, and Hitchens, Sam Harris has written extensively on our sense of right and wrong. Harris's book *The Moral Landscape* expands upon a theme addressed in his first bestseller *The End of Faith* where he begins exploring the question of the root of human morality. Implicit in his works is the inadequacy of evolution (in general) and natural selection (in particular) to explain our sense of morality. In *The Moral Landscape*, Harris distinguishes between a scientific account of human values and an evolutionary account. Any discussion of human well-being "escapes any narrow Darwinian calculus. While the possibility of human experience must be realized in the brains that evolution has built for us, our brains were not designed with a view to our ultimate fulfillment."[44] If this were so, we'd just be concerned with procreation. As it stands, we know that our minds do not "merely conform to the logic of natural selection." Our understanding of "good" and "bad" cannot be "directly reduced to instinctual drives and evolutionary imperatives … our modern concerns about meaning and morality have flown the perch built by evolution."[45]

Harris continues. Indeed, it may be that "some level of predatory violence is innate in us", and that evolution has selected for us some type of territorial violence toward others as a strategy to propagate one's genes, "but our collective well-being clearly depends on our opposing such natural tendencies."[46] No longer are we constrained by evolutionary structures; rather, we are "poised" to soon engineer our own further development.[47]

Harris claims that acting ethically toward others is to do so out of concern for their happiness and suffering. When we experience happiness and suffering, we can know that others do so as well. Thus, we "soon discover that 'love' is largely a matter of wishing' that others experience happiness and suffering; and most of us tome to feel that love is more conducive to happiness, both our own and that of others, than hate."[48] Love entails to some degree the "loss of self-absorption."[49] We can "easily imagine evolutionary reasons for why positive social emotions make us feel good … but this would be beside the point. The point is that the disposition to take the happiness of others into account – to be ethical – seems to be a rational way to augment one's own happiness."[50] "We are bound to one another. The fact that our ethical intuitions must, in some way, supervene upon our biology does not make ethical truths reducible to biological ones."[51] For Harris, examples of human goodness and evil are caused by natural

[43] Ibid., 186.

[44] Harris, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 13.

[45] Ibid., 13–14.

[46] Ibid., 100–1.

[47] Ibid., 102.

[48] Harris, *The End of Faith*, 186–87.

[49] Ibid., 189.

[50] Ibid., 192.

[51] Ibid., 226.

events; they are "borne of unconscious processes that were shaped by natural selection. But this does not mean that evolution designed us to lead deeply fulfilling lives."[52]

Dawkins likewise asserts that natural selection is to be understood in reference to the biology of life—how the universe came to be what it is today. In light of human politics and how humans conduct our affairs, though, we are to be passionate anti-Darwinians.[53] We alone can rebel against the "tyranny of the selfish replicators"—what Dawkins calls the "selfish genes" that seek to reproduce at the expense of other genes.[54] It is not inconsistent for one to appreciate Darwinism as a science while "opposing it as a human being." Like cancer, a doctor can scientifically appreciate cancer while fighting against it as a practicing doctor. Humans are "the only potential island of refuge from the implications of the Devil's Chaplain: from the cruelty and the clumsy, blundering waste."[55] Humans alone have evolved such that we have the ability to understand the "ruthlessly cruel process" of natural selection as well has have the "gift of revulsion against its implications; the gift of foresight—something utterly foreign to the blundering short-term ways of natural selection."[56]

A tension exists within Dawkins's and Harris's accounts of evil and their evolutionary framework. Both hold to Darwinian natural selection as the process by which the universe has evolved to where it is today. Though much has been bought by blood and suffering, natural selection has led to a complex, dynamic, and majestic universe, in particular the evolution of the human being. Yet, at some point (when and how?), humanity reached a point at which it seeks to oppose evolution. The New Atheists (at least Dawkins and Harris) mirror the words of T. H. Huxley well over a century ago: "Let us understand, once and for all, that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but combating it."[57] Absent in the works of the New Atheists is adequate explanation, evidence, or support for their claim that we have evolved such that we can now combat the hand that fed us. With no appeal to science, evidence, or argument, they take a leap of faith—a shot in the dark—to claim a higher status of man as grounds for morality and combating evil.

One can take Moritz's argument further, for an even deeper problem lies at the New Atheists' moral realism. For the sake of argument, let us say that the evolutionary account of natural selection is true. How, then, can one even know what evil is, much less ask why it exists? That is, if it is inherent in natural selection that the less fit die off (whether it be at the hands of more fit species, environmental causes, or the inability to survive on its own), then is it not "natural" that there be competition, bloodshed, and struggle? And if it is natural for such suffering to occur, then how are we—products of evolution as well—able to even say that such things are evil, much less know what evil is?[58]

Joshua Duntley and David Buss, in their essay "The Evolution of Evil," assert:

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[52] Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 49.

[53] Dawkins, "A Devil's Chaplain," 38.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] T. H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics: T. H. Huxley's* Evolution and Ethics *with New Essays on Its Victorian and Sociobiological Context*, ed. James Paradis and George C. Williams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 141.

[58] Moritz succinctly asks: "What exactly is the dilemma at hand? So nature destroys nature—why is that God's problem?" ("Evolutionary Evil and Dawkins' Black Box," 147).

> Evil has no direct analogue in the formal structure of evolutionary theory. Evolution by natural selection operates by the simple process of differential gene reproduction as a consequence of differences in heritable design…the process of selection leads to the evolution of adaptations that exist solely because they contributed, either directly or indirectly, to the reproductive success of their bearers…the process of selection leads to the evolution of adaptations that exist solely because they contributed, either directly or indirectly, to the reproductive success of their bearers.[59]

Therefore, natural selection is value free. "Whatever qualities lead to increased replicative success are those that evolve."[60] What we view as evil are those actions that "result in a massive imposition of fitness costs on another individual or group."[61] That is, evil is not a moral issue in nature; rather, it is the economics of fitness costs for an individual or group.

Paul Copan claims that moral atheists "make a massive intellectual leap of faith. They believe that somehow moral facts were eternally part of the 'furniture' of reality but that from impersonal and valueless slime, human persons possessing rights, dignity, worth, and duties were eventually produced."[62] The atheist, then, logically should not be able to appeal to any problem of evil; rather, they can only, in the words of Richard Dawkins, say that "the universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference."[63] If we are just products of evolution, then why should we trust our conviction? How do we know if we're right about anything?[64]

According to Copan, the issue is not that of knowing good and evil; rather, it is that of being "rights-bearing, valuable persons."[65] Naturalistic moral realists confuse the order of knowing with the order of being. In order for the moral atheist to appeal to the problem of evil, they must first provide the metaphysical grounds for evil.

The problem of emphasizing the order of knowing without a metaphysical foundation is easily illustrated from an essay by Roy Baumeister and Kathleen Vohs in which they describe a gulf that exists between the thinking of perpetrators and of victims regarding what is labeled "evil."[66] The victim of an act of harm may view the perpetrator as evil because he violated that individual's right or took something away from the victim that was rightly theirs. However, if the situation is viewed from the perspective of the perpetrator, one may realize that he was doing what he perceived to be good. For the authors, "the discrepancy points to an important gap in understanding. The perpetrator's motives are

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[59] Joshua Duntley and David Buss, "The Evolution of Evil," in *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*, ed. Arthur G. Miller (New York: Guilford, 2004), 103.

[60] Ibid., 103.

[61] Ibid., 104.

[62] Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?*, 210.

[63] Ibid., 210; quoting Richard Dawkins, *A River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 132–33.

[64] Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?*, 212–13.

[65] Ibid., 210–11.

[66] Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Vohs, "Four Roots of Evil," in *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*, ed. Arthur G. Miller (New York: Guilford, 2004), 85.

often opaque to the victim."[67] The questions "Why are some people evil?" or "Why do people do bad things?" should change to "Why do some people do things that others will regard as evil?"[68] The question of why there is evil is "stated badly," and "is almost unanswerable, because very few people perform what they themselves regard as evil."[69]

If the problem of evil is not firmly planted within a metaphysical foundation, the New Atheists' moral realism dissolves into moral subjectivism, and the force of their arguments against God and religion are reduced to a whisper. As Chad Meister asserts, if objective evil exists—as Dawkins and Harris claim—then "there exists objective moral values, moral values which are binding on all people."[70]

5. Conclusion

The thrust of the New Atheists' arguments is that the problem of evil serves as conclusive evidence against the existence of God. Further, they root the problem of evil within religion; as Sam Harris claims, "That religion may have served some necessary function for us in the past does not preclude the possibility that it is now the greatest impediment to our building a global civilization."[71] The problem of evil is a major weapon in the New Atheists' arsenal against what they view as the evil and irrationality of religion. [72]

This article does not seek to provide a once-and-for-all argument against New Atheism. Rather, it attempts to add one more argument against the validity of atheistic naturalism and, by extension, the coherence of theism (particularly Christianity). Brief mention of Jerry Walls's recent essay sums up this paper quite nicely: the problem of evil—long a favorite of the atheists against Christianity—assumes that there *is* such a thing as evil and that it is a problem.[73] Our judgments and beliefs about evil "only make sense given certain convictions about ultimate reality."[74] Given the New Atheists' Darwinian framework, they do indeed have a problem of evil—they are unable to have an epistemology or metaphysics of evil.

[67] Baumeister and Vohs, "Four Roots of Evil," 88.

[68] Ibid., 90–91.

[69] Ibid., 99.

[70] Meister, "God, Evil, and Morality," 109.

[71] Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 91.

[72] Jerry Walls, "Atheists Have No Problem of Evil, But They Have a Bigger One," in *The City* (Winter 2015): 49.

[73] Ibid., 49.

[74] Ibid., 50.

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Wendell Berry's "Risk": In the Middle on Gay Marriage?

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Abstract: Wendell Berry's influence has grown in recent years as many people, Christians or not, have found his agrarian vision a compelling corrective to various modern problems. However, Berry publicly took what we might call a "middle road" on gay marriage. This position surprised (and disappointed) many evangelicals that do not agree. But how does Berry's position on gay marriage stand up to Berry's own criticism? Does he agree with himself?

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In Wendell Berry's most recent collection of essays, *Our Only World*, he "risks" arguing that there should be no law either for or against homosexual marriage.[1] This "risk" explains his feeling of being "caught in the middle" (as the essay's title puts it) of the current political atmosphere. In other words, Berry's "risk" is alienating both conservatives—who often appreciate his writing but would disagree on marriage—and liberals—who would find his statements not stretching far enough. Berry seems quite comfortable taking this "risk," since he does not identify closely with either group.

But what else is at risk here? Is Berry not only "caught in the middle" of the typical sides of the debates, but also "caught in the middle" of his own arguments—or, perhaps more bluntly, does he actually risk contradicting himself? How does this position on gay marriage line up with his own earlier essays related to marriage and sexuality?

In this article I explore Berry's "risk" in connection with specific arguments from his previous essays on marriage, family, and sexuality in order to provide the overall context necessary for making sense of his current position. Is Berry's "risk" consistent with his other positions? Is it not only consistent but a logically necessary step? Looking behind simple statements to the broader arguments that undergird and support them will help us understand what to make of Berry's statement as well as Berry's continued relevance to evangelical discussions of marriage.

[1] I originally drafted this article for a session on Wendell Berry at the 2015 Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting. Many thanks to Richard Bailey and Paul House for their outstanding leadership of Berry studies in ETS.

1. Five Previous Arguments Related to Marriage and Sexuality

1.1. Argument 1: Industrial Economies Destroy Home Life

In a 1980 essay entitled "Family Work," Berry bemoans the way that the industrial economy has destroyed the bonds of interest, loyalty, affection, and cooperation that bind families together. Public life preys on private life by forcibly drawing attention away from home.[2] Berry draws on three examples: food, television, and education.

A family who grows their own food improves their quality of life by working together and producing better food than they can buy. The industrial economy, however, encourages that family to see work as something done outside of the home (often at great distances traversed by automobiles) and the home as a place of consumption.

This notion grows with Berry's second example: television. According to Berry, the TV's cord is a "vacuum line, pumping life and meaning out of the household,"[3] suggesting that consumption is better than production, buying is better than making, and "going out" is better than staying home.

And third, industrial economies destroy home life through public education. Berry notes that such education's quality is suspect. Yet, the real problem isn't quality but the quantity of time public education keeps children away from their homes and parents. Days range from nine to eleven hours, depending on extracurricular activities. In opposition to these three causes, families must "try to make our homes centers of attention and interest."[4] Berry acknowledges that parents cannot completely control what influences their children—outside influences are inevitable—but they must not give in to making the home a center of entertainment and consumption rather than a place where the mind and body are nourished and developed. Good home life forms people in certain ways.

But what does this have to do with marriage? On a more obvious level, healthy marriages are the foundation of the "family work" that Berry advocates. It is clear in the essay that he envisions a mother and father working together to raise and guide their children in light of societal pressures. But beyond this implicit connection to marriage, we must pay attention to the way Berry builds his argument. He doesn't assert that television is bad because of particularly offensive content, or that public education is troubling because of atheist teachers or drug-peddling classmates. In other words, the problems are not rooted in specific moral violations but in the way that the industrial economy frames and influences family life. It is this concern with the orienting power of the economy that marks Berry's treatment of the family. Industrial economies destroy home life because they remake the home life to serve the logic of consumption.

1.2. Argument 2: Industrial Economies Revise Sexuality

Home life—and its connection to marriage—is not the only thing to fall prey to the shaping power of the industrial economy's formation. In his 1990 essay "Feminism, the Body, and the Machine," Berry responds to critics of his dependence on his wife's editing and typing skills for his writing. This issue leads him to deal with notions of technological progress and gender roles. He argues that our sexual

[2] Wendell Berry, "Family Work," in *The Gift of the Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2009), 156.

[3] Ibid., 158.

[4] Ibid.

revolution is an "industrial phenomenon," by which he means, "the body is used as an idea of pleasure or a pleasure machine with the aim of 'freeing' natural pleasure from natural consequence."[5] Diseases are bad, an affront to sexual freedom, and technological solutions solve the problem. While masquerading as liberating, this position is actually a hatred of the body and its life in the natural world.[6]

This argument bears on our present topic in a similar way to the first one: the industrial economy and its way of being in the world influence and alter the logic of other aspects of human flourishing. Our dependence upon technology and machines leads us to understand other aspects of life in similar ways, even when doing so misleads us.

Berry explains the way industrial economies revise sexuality in another way in "Men and Women in Search of Common Ground," an essay from 1987. Treating the notion of individualism, he explains that bonds give individuals worth. On the other hand,

> In our industrial society, in which people insist so fervently on their value and their freedom "as individuals," individuals are seen more and more as 'units' by their governments, employers, and suppliers. They live, that is, under the rule of the interchangeability of parts: what one person can do, another person can do just as well or a newer person can do better.[7]

Now let us consider the notion of heterosexual marriage in light of this industrial obsession with the interchangeability of individuals. Governments, in particular, view people as isolated "units." This view applies to gay marriage in two ways. First, why would the government care what two units decide to do together? And second, it is highly offensive to this notion that one unit and another unit might not be interchangeable. For instance, the fact that one cannot exchange the bride in a wedding ceremony with a male flies in the face of this notion of interchangeability, a notion that revises sexuality, and one that we owe to our industrialized economy and its formation of our imaginations as a society.

1.3. Argument 3: The Community Adjudicates These Matters, Not the Public Government

Who has the authority to define marriage? For Berry, there is a difference between community and public that illuminates this issue. The community has authority: "The common ground between men and women can only be defined by community authority."[8] This notion is related to what Berry calls "authorship":

> We are *not* the authors of ourselves. That we are not is a religious perception, but it is also a biological and a social one. Each of us has many authors, and each of us is engaged, for better or worse, in that same authorship. We could say that the human race is a great coauthorship in which we are collaborating with God and nature in the making of ourselves and one another.[9]

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[5] Wendell Berry, "Feminism, the Body, and the Machine," in *The Art of the Commonplace: Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, ed. Norman Wirzba (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2002), 75.

[6] Ibid., 76.

[7] Wendell Berry, "Men and Women in Search of Common Ground," in *Home Economics* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1987), 140.

[8] Ibid.,135.

[9] Ibid., 137.

Membership in a community defines relationships in a deep and complex way, including the very nature of the marriage relationship.

A community is different than a public. First, "public" simply means "all the people, apart from any personal responsibility or belonging," while a community has first to do with belonging: "a group of people who belong to one another and to their place."[10] Both are founded on respect; the community, on respect for the family and the public, on respect for the individual. Second, communities and publics require different sorts of law. The moral law has to do with community life. Its aim is integrity and the longevity of the community. The public law, on the other hand, aims at the integrity and longevity of the political body.[11] Third, these differences lead to different sorts of freedom, two types that are at odds. "A community confers on its members the freedoms implicit in familiarity, mutual respect, mutual affection, and mutual help; it gives freedom its proper aims; and it prescribes or shows the responsibilities without which no one can be legitimately free, or free for very long."[12] A community must be free from outside pressure for this to work; any change must come from within, not without. The freedom of the individual on the other hand, is "a license to pursue any legal self-interest at large and at will in the domain of public liberties and opportunities."[13] Public laws serve individual freedom, while the moral law serves community freedom.

For Berry, this would mean that the legalization of gay marriage, for instance, as an issue of public law must serve the notion of individual freedom. However, moral law and particular communities must be free to move in their own directions as well. Individual Christians and individual churches should seek to be good members of their communities rather than crusading voices of the public. However, in a society where the autonomy and authority of communities have been framed as stifling and limiting, most people consider the constraints of the government the only constraints necessary, and thus Christians interested in guiding society find themselves concerned with the laws of the land more than the strengthening of particular communities. (Now, to be fair, I do not want to imply that this is anything more than a practical strategy by many Christian activists. I'm sure they would speak highly of strong communities and the moral law. However, since by and large these communities are powerless, most seek governmental influence as a larger priority.)

1.4. Argument 4: The Basic Sexual Unit Is More Than You Might Think

In "Men and Women in Search of Common Ground," Berry states:

> We need a broader concept yet, for a marriage involves more than just the bodies and minds of a man and a woman. It involves locality, human circumstance, and duration. There is a strong possibility that the basic human sexual unit is composed of a man and a woman (bodies and minds), plus their history together, plus their kin and descendants, plus their place in the world with its economy and history, plus their

[10] Wendell Berry, "Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community," in *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community: Eight Essays* (New York: Random House, 1993), 161.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 163.

[13] Ibid.

> natural neighborhood, plus their human community with its memories, satisfactions, expectations, and hopes.[14]

Here Berry is attempting to broaden our thinking about sexuality and what a married couple is. Some of these aspects might be shared by a homosexual couple, but others cannot be so shared. Since in this particular essay Berry isn't even considering gay marriage, we can only speculate on whether such a couple could count as this "basic sexual unit." Just because this basic unit is more than the biological coupling of two sexually compatible bodies, can it be all of those other things without the male and female bodies?

1.5. Argument 5: Marriage Is a Limiting and Liberating Form

In a 1982 essay entitled "Poetry and Marriage; The Use of Old Forms," Berry provides perhaps his most illuminating metaphor for marriage: *poetry*. Forms involve definitions, or limits. Marriage is "the mutual promise of a man and a woman to live together, to love and help each other, in mutual fidelity, until death."[15] Furthermore, "It is understood that these definitions cannot be altered to suit convenience or circumstance, any more than we can call a rabbit a squirrel because we preferred to see a squirrel."[16] Forms don't only limit, however. They also liberate, providing an opening, a generosity, a possibility. As Berry puts it, "The forms acknowledge that good is possible; they hope for it, await it, and prepare its welcome—though they dare not *require* it. These two aspects are inseparable. To forsake the way is to forsake the possibility. To give up the form is to abandon hope."[17]

But Berry has more to say about forms like marriage. Most important for our exploration are the notions of inconvenience and changeability. Forms can obstruct us, deflecting our intended course. But we must remember that "the mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings."[18] In other words, the very limitations posed by the form, marriage, open up new possibilities, opportunities for growth and change, that would not be present if the limitations were simply discarded. On the other hand, Berry argues that such forms are both artificial and arbitrary.[19] However, "Arbitrary in the choosing, these forms, once chosen and kept, are not arbitrary, but become inseparable from our definition as human beings."[20] For Berry, the authority of the community founds and secures these forms: the individual "genius" cannot simply change them, but they can change over time based on the community authority. He specifically names personal freedom, personal fulfillment, and sexual fulfillment as problematic in seeking the change of forms.[21] In fact, "Individual attempts to change cultural form—as to make a new kind of marriage or family or community—are nearly always shallow or foolish and are frequently totalitarian. The assumption that it can be otherwise comes from

[14] Berry, "Men and Women in Search of Common Ground," 139.

[15] Wendell Berry, "Poetry and Marriage," in *Standing by Words* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1983), 93.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 97.

[19] Ibid.,94.

[20] Ibid., 95.

[21] Ibid., 100–101.

the faith in genius."[22] He goes on to say, "Individual genius, then, goes astray when it proposes to do the work of community."[23]

Thus we see how marriage as a form both limits and liberates. It limits because it is a form; it has a definition. But it liberates because in these very limits we are shaped and grow. Even though the limit, for Berry, relies on the authority of the community, it does seem that the community authority stands up over time against "genius" modifications. (As a side note, the Supreme Court's 2015 *Obergefell* decision doesn't quite fit neatly into Berry's categories here. SCOTUS doesn't quite represent a "genius" or a "community." But if we had to force it into one category, I think it is closer to the individual genius category than community.)

1.6. Summary of Earlier Arguments

These five arguments can be placed in two categories and linked together. The first two deal with the way the industrial-capitalist economy has damaged traditional families and communities. The last three focus on the fact that the government is not capable of upholding morality; asking it to do so is wrongheaded. These five arguments are linked because it is the destruction of the family and community that have led to the focus on the government to step in and do what those groups used to be responsible for doing. Thus, Berry's treatment of marriage and sexuality has not focused so much on particular actions or legislation, but on the structures necessary to uphold and pass on a sexual ethic that contributes to human flourishing.

Now that we have explored these five arguments that Berry has used in the past relating to marriage and sexuality, we can turn to his most recent book of essays, *Our Only World*, and specifically the piece entitled "Caught in the Middle," wherein Berry takes his "risk."

2. The Logic of "Caught in the Middle"

Originally written in 2013, the essay "Caught in the Middle" refers to the present political atmosphere in America, which assumes that everyone must be on one of two sides, liberal or conservative. Berry notes that, depending on the issue, he often finds himself in disagreement with both of these sides. In a lengthy but central statement, Berry explains why, saying:

> I am especially in disagreement with them when they invoke the power and authority of government to enforce the moral responsibilities of persons. The appeal to government is made, whether or not it is defensible, when families and communities fail to meet their prescribed moral responsibilities.… The middle ground is the ground once occupied by communities and families whose coherence and authority have now been destroyed, with the connivance of both sides, by the economic determinism of the corporate industrialists. The fault of both sides is that, after accepting and abetting the dissolution of the necessary structures of family and community as an acceptable "price

[22] Ibid., 102.

[23] Ibid., 103.

> of progress," they turn to government to fill the vacancy, or they allow government to be sucked into the vacuum.[24]

We see the two main issues here that we noticed in his earlier arguments: the community is the proper level for moral responsibilities to be dealt with, and industrial economies have destroyed the community to such a degree that we're asking the government or the public to do more than it should be asked to do. As Berry puts it, "I do not think a government should be asked or expected to do what a government cannot do. A government cannot effectively exercise familial authority, nor can it effectively enforce communal or personal standards of moral conduct."[25] Our so-called "sexual politics" produce conflicts that are not politically resolvable.

Berry turns to homosexual marriage as one of his examples of irresolvable sexual politics. He makes three points: first, the so-called "right to marriage" is a new idea, and one that there is no reason for. Second, the process of establishing a "right to marriage" seems to base itself on the idea that rights originate in government. Third, it doesn't make sense for a government to establish a right just to withhold it from some people.[26] Berry expands this third argument by explaining why "There is no good reason for the government to treat homosexuals as a special category of persons."[27] He spends much of the rest of the essay denouncing Christians' attempts to categorize and exclude homosexuals. Rather than exclusion, Christians should focus on *kindness*, which connects to notions of community membership and love.

If we break this essay down, we see three dominant arguments. First, the government or public cannot adjudicate moral issues such as marriage. Second, the family and community are no longer strong enough to deal with such issues, because of the influence of industrial capitalism. Third, since there shouldn't even be a right to marriage, it can't be denied of certain categories of persons—and such categories probably aren't worth focusing on anyway. With these arguments in mind, let's return to what Berry has said in the past. First, the consistencies.

3. Consistencies in Berry's Arguments

Most of Berry's thoughts in "Caught in the Middle" flow as logically necessary from his earlier work on marriage and sexuality. His position in "Caught in the Middle" shouldn't surprise us, in other words. If we recall the five arguments from earlier in his career, we see the same concerns. The family has been damaged because of industrial capitalism and its demands. Thus it is unable to pass along the values that it once did. While some may be tempted to ask the government to step in, as we saw earlier, Berry does not believe in the public's ability to adjudicate moral matters that must be done in a community of belonging. He has been consistent on this perspective. In the past, conservatives have been happy when this position has served our purposes, but Berry is only being consistent in applying it to moral positions conservatives don't agree with. For Berry, the issue is not the content of a public moral law,

[24] Wendell Berry, "Caught in the Middle," in *Our Only World: Ten Essays* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2015), 74.

[25] Ibid., 75.

[26] Ibid., 87–88.

[27] Ibid., 89.

but the fact that "public moral law" is a confusion of categories, because it attempts to extend the moral nature of the community of belonging to the public.

In other words, Berry's position in "Caught in the Middle"—at least the position that the government should *not* make gay marriage illegal—is not only consistent with his earlier work but is a logical necessity of his earlier work. Disagreeing with this position of Berry's does not mean simply disagreeing on one issue; rather, it means disagreeing on a foundational point of Berry's worldview, a point that carries a lot of structural weight in his critique of modern culture.

4. Contradictions in Berry's Arguments

The latter part of "Caught in the Middle," however, does not seem as consistent with Berry's earlier work. In particular, Berry seems to misapply the notion of "category" when he builds his position on why Christians should stop singling out homosexuals to deny them marriage. He states: "A marriage, by contrast, is the *making* of marriage, by daily effort to live out the vows until death. The vows may be taken seriously or not, broken or not, but there is no way of withholding them from homosexuals. You cannot copyright the vows, which a homosexual couple is perfectly free to make. The government cannot forbid them to do so, nor can any church."[28] This statement contradicts Berry's earlier work in at least two ways.

First, it contradicts what he earlier said in "Marriage and Poetry" about the form of marriage. As we learned from that piece, marriage is "the mutual promise of a man and a woman to live together, to love and help each other, in mutual fidelity, until death."[29] He admits that the form is limiting, but finds liberating power in that very limitation. Yet in "Caught in the Middle," he seems to have given up entirely on the gender aspects of this earlier definition, gender aspects that impose a limitation. He gives no explanation for this change. And in fact, Berry's diatribe against "categories" seems to misunderstand the way many conservatives seek to "limit" marriage. It isn't that homosexuals are a special category of people who cannot marry. Homosexuals have the same right to marry as any human being does. However, *marriage* as a concept limits the partners. Homosexuals aren't being put into a special category by those against gay marriage. In fact, it is proponents of gay marriage who are trying to create the special category. Berry's position here is logically inconsistent and out of step with his own earlier statements.

Second, the statement that "the government cannot forbid them [from marrying], nor can any church" is inconsistent—or at least confusing—in relation to his earlier statements (even in the same essay) about the authority of the community. The first part—the government can't forbid—makes sense and follows.[30] The government can't forbid because of its existence as a public, not a community

[28] Ibid., 93.

[29] Berry, "Poetry and Marriage," 93.

[30] Some scholars, however, have criticized Berry for failing to account for the fact that the government has a role to play. As Kimberly Smith puts it, "Nevertheless, some sort of authority must lie behind such basic and critical institutions [such as marriage]. Custom and tradition may serve this role to some extent but custom and tradition seldom work alone; laws give them crucial support. And, more importantly, a rationalized, democratic government has many advantages over custom and tradition—not the least of which is that, like the institution of marriage, it provides a means for citizens to consciously ratify their decision to live together" (*Wendell Berry and the Agrarian Tradition: A Common Grace* [Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003], 201).

of belonging. But the church? How does Berry define the church here? Isn't the point of his family/community versus public/government split that Christians and the church shouldn't try to make the government do what it shouldn't do and should instead focus on being faithful witnesses in community? Thus isn't the church, as a community of belonging itself and as a part of broader communities, the very place that *can* and indeed *must* make moral statements and forbid immoral actions? In "Caught in the Middle" Berry does not acknowledge or develop why he makes this exception to the community's authority on such matters.

5. Conclusion

When we analyze Berry's recent comments on gay marriage in light of his earlier work, we shouldn't be surprised—for the most part. Berry has throughout his career emphasized the moral authority of the family and community. Asking the government to rule on moral matters is just asking it to fail—or, worse, inviting it to become totalitarian. However, Berry does seem to have shifted in his own views on whether gays can marry, especially considering he had earlier defined marriage quite clearly and also argued for the right of the community to regulate the form of marriage. Perhaps in future essays he will draw out this shift in more detail so that we can identify the root of the argument. In "Caught in the Middle" it is not very developed or explained in connection with his earlier, explicit statements about the male-female nature of the marriage form. Berry seems "caught in the middle" not only of conservatives and liberals, but between conflicting emphases in his own arguments.

In the end, however, Berry has one piece of wisdom that conservative evangelicals neglect, to our peril. So-called "sexual politics" in our culture cannot be dealt with apart from economic reality and the way economic systems shape our imaginations and our way of being in the world. We can see this in one of Berry's positive statements about marriage: "Heterosexual marriage does not need defending. It only needs to be practiced, which is pretty hard to do just now. But the difficulty is mainly rooted in the values and priorities of our industrial-capitalist system, in which every one of us is complicit."[31] Even if we disagree with Berry's inconsistencies on the issue of gay marriage, we do well to dig deeper on the ways that we are complicit in the logic by all-too-often championing the industrial-capitalist system without paying equal heed to its deformations and attendant problems. Perhaps he has some wise warnings for us, even from the "risky" middle.

[31] Berry, "Caught in the Middle," 92.

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The Preeminence of Knowledge in John Calvin's Doctrine of Conversion and Its Influence Upon His Ministry in Geneva

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Abstract: John Calvin believed that the mind served as the "citadel" to the soul, commanding the seat of conversion whereby God first remedied the noetic effects of sin before liberating the bound will. Therefore the Reformer consigned particular importance to human knowledge in the process of conversion that reverberated throughout his entire Genevan ministry. It is the aim of this article to examine Calvin's developed hierarchy of faculties, particularly the chief functional status ascribed to the mind, and how this preeminence of knowledge influenced his view of sin, salvation, and Christian homiletics respectively.

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There is perhaps no greater polarity of persons to illustrate the breadth and diversity of the Reformation than the flamboyance of Martin Luther and the reservation of John Calvin. Juxtaposed with the likes of a German Reformer who proudly narrated his own flatulence and drinking, Calvin's reticence to discuss his own personal affairs can border on the seemingly misanthropic. As a result, we know remarkably little of the personal life of John Calvin, the man who insisted upon being buried in an unmarked Genevan grave. Even more astounding in light of Calvin's vast corpus of writings is the fact that only once did he ever care to share his own conversion narrative.[1] Yet, despite his sustained silence on such an important personal experience, Calvin wrote prolifically on the subject in general. In fact, subsequent generations of Calvinists have been molded around his clear, concise teachings concerning the doctrines of sin, Christ, and the corollary doctrine of conversion.

Interestingly, Calvin never articulated his theology of conversion without careful attention to the human faculties. His emphasis upon the sinfulness of the human will, for example, has become so well known in modern theological circles that, for better or for worse, the doctrine of "total depravity"

[1] This occurs in the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms* (1557).

occupies the first letter in the famous acronym "TULIP" now synonymous with the name of Calvin.[2] This attention given to the will, however, does not indicate any voluntarism on Calvin's part. On the contrary, Calvin consigned particular importance to knowledge in the process of conversion. While no less marred by the Fall, in Calvinistic soteriology the mind commands the seat of conversion by which God first remedies the noetic effects of sin and then penetrates his illuminating grace into the deepest recesses of the soul. It is the aim of this article to examine Calvin's developed hierarchy of faculties, particularly the chief functional status ascribed to the mind, and how this preeminence of knowledge influenced his view of sin, salvation, and Christian homiletics respectively.

Before dissecting Calvin's psychology of conversion, however, it is first necessary to define terms, especially as the French Reformer defined them. After all, Calvin's conception of conversion is not seamlessly congruent with the seventeenth century scholastic notion of an *ordo saludis* by which so many contemporary Calvinists have been educated.[3] For example, his doctrine of union with Christ and its "double grace" prevented him from making hard and fast boundaries between justification and sanctification that many (including Luther) are prone to accept. Moreover, for Calvin, regeneration and conversion were *not* synonyms. The latter he identified more with the idea of repentance, which he defines as a "real conversion of our life unto God, proceeding from sincere and serious fear of God; and consisting in the mortification of our flesh and the old man, and the quickening of the Spirit."[4] Therefore, as opposed to the unilateral, initiating nature of regeneration, conversion for Calvin denoted the sinner's response to regenerating grace, though no less monergistic. In some sense, for Calvin, regeneration and conversion were two sides of the same soteriological coin, regeneration designating the exclusively divine aspect of grace, and conversion denoting the human dimension.[5] Like regeneration, conversion is both an event *and* a process.[6]

Due to this durative view of salvation, Calvin's doctrine of conversion is perhaps not as punctiliar as that of a twenty-first century evangelical. This seeming paradox has prompted many modern scholars to doubt whether John Calvin held a formulated doctrine of conversion in the way that most conceive

[2] Ironically, the doctrines formulated in TULIP are derived from those codified at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), held 54 years after Calvin's death.

[3] William Ames, who Perry Miller called "the father of New England church polity" (*Errand into the Wilderness* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956], 58), advocated a staunchly voluntarist view of conversion inside of an explicitly covenantal framework. His textbooks *Medulla Sacrae Theologiae* (1623) and *De Conscientia* (1630) became standard theological textbooks both in England and in the colonies. Ames was the most famous disciple of William Perkins, who developed the Puritanical theme of the *ordo saludis* as outlined in his *A Golden Chaine* (1591).

[4] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 3.3.5.

[5] For this reason, Calvin often speaks of regeneration, repentance, and conversion as if they are synonymous. Yet, at other times, they are distinct. Pete Wilcox, "Conversion in the Thought and Experience of John Calvin," *Anvil* 14.2 (1997): 113–28.

[6] Calvin defines the "sole end" of regeneration as being "to reform in us the image of God, which was sullied and almost obliterated through the transgression of Adam." This restoration "does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples, renewing their minds to true purity that they might practice repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death" (*Institutes*, 3.3.9).

of it today.[7] What is often lacking is not an explicit doctrine of conversion from Calvin, but a proper understanding of Reformed epistemology on the part of the reader. Sixteenth century Geneva was, in so many ways, a far theological and social cry from the decisionistic American pulpit. Calvin defined faith in gradual terms, as a "special gift of God in both ways – in purifying the mind so as to give it a relish for divine truth, and afterward in establishing it therein. For the Spirit does not merely originate faith, but gradually increases it, until by its means he conducts us into the heavenly kingdom."[8] Due to the preeminence of knowledge in Calvin's doctrine of conversion, the imagery of light is consistently employed to depict the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. According to Calvin, this illumination was a process. In his interpretation of Colossians 1:8–9, Calvin maintains that "the mental eye remains shut, until it is opened by the Lord. Nor does Scripture say that our minds are illuminated in a single day, so as afterward to see of themselves. The passage, which I lately quoted from the Apostle Paul, refers to continual progress and increase."[9] Therefore one cannot begin to distill Calvin's epistemology without a closer look at his pneumatology as well.

Lastly, it will prove fruitful for the reader to also understand how Calvin defined our redemptive task: knowledge lay at the very foundation and aim of Christianity. Ever the humanist, Calvin defined wisdom exclusively in terms of knowledge. In the very first sentence of the very first chapter of the *Institutes*, wisdom is described as binary: knowledge of God and knowledge of self.[10] This is, in many regards, the overarching goal of the *Institutes*: an apologetic and catechetical attempt to inculcate the principles of the Christian faith and restore knowledge of God and self. However, for so much emphasis upon gnosis, Calvin's sapiential knowledge is far from Gnostic. Both kinds of knowledge have been clouded and perverted by sin. By God's grace, only a "remnant" of the *imago dei* is residual in fallen man. Therefore, in order to correct our idolatry and ignorance, God graciously discloses Himself to sinners in the Holy Scriptures.

Interestingly, Calvin's famous metaphor likening the Bible to spectacles is derived primarily in his cerebral view of wisdom and salvation. According to Calvin, sinners, "when aided by glasses, begin to read distinctly, so Scripture, gathering together the impressions of Deity, which, till then, lay confused in our minds, dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly."[11] In the ancient sense, Calvin was very much a philosopher: a lover of wisdom. However, unlike the pagan philosophers and humanists of his day, Calvin held to an acute view of human sin, and this carried profound effects upon his doctrine of conversion. His view of the human faculties, while reflective of Greek philosophy, was not altogether continuous with it. It is to this subject that we now turn.

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[7] A. N. S. Lane, "Conversion: A Comparison of Calvin and Spener," *Them* 18 (1987): 20. Lane understands Calvin to define conversion as a process that leads to regeneration, rather than one concomitant with it; D. C. Steinmetz, "Reformation and Conversion," *ThTo* 35 (1978–1979): 30. Making reference to *Pilgrim's Progress*, Steinmetz suggests that Calvin's view of conversion is nothing like passing through the little wicket gate but rather is similar to that of the pilgrimage.

[8] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.33.

[9] Ibid., 2.2.25.

[10] Ibid., 1.1.1.

[11] Ibid., 1.6.1.

1. The Image of God

In order to demonstrate John Calvin's elevation of the role of the mind in conversion and its place among the human faculties, one must look both to history as well as theology. We begin with theology. In the *Institutes*, before addressing sin or salvation or the church, Calvin first examines the doctrine of creation, which informed almost every aspect of his theology. According to Emil Brunner, "The concept of the *imago dei* is fundamental to Calvinistic anthropology."[12] The image of God, which Calvin also equated with the Hebrew word "likeness," was for him far less concerned with the outward appearance of man than with his soul, "the proper seat of the image."[13] Calvin explicitly identified the "primary seat of the divine image" as the human mind and heart.[14] However, when describing the *imago dei* functionally, Calvin clearly favored its rational, cognitive dimension. In describing the image of God before the Fall, Calvin maintains the ruling authority of human reason: "Man excelled in these noble endowments in his primitive condition, when reason, intelligence, prudence, and judgment not only sufficed for the government of his earthly life, but also enabled him to rise up to God and eternal happiness … the will being thus perfectly submissive to the authority of reason. In this upright state, man possessed freedom of will, by which, if he chose, he was able to obtain eternal life."[15] From the beginning, the mind was supreme.

True to his clear style, Calvin never equivocated when charting the hierarchy of faculties and the chief place allotted to the mind. He describes the intellect as "the guide and ruler of the soul" and human reason as "one of the essential properties of our nature" and the authority to which the will was "perfectly submissive." For Calvin, the will "always follows its beck, and waits for its decisions, in matters of desire."[16] While the entrance of sin into the cosmos perverted man's desire and corrupted his reason, it did not alter the mind's preeminent position over the will. In *John Calvin's Ideas*, Paul Helm explains, "Thus the understanding leads and governs the soul, with the will following its judgment.… Sense is included in understanding. Does understanding include reason, for Calvin? Understanding 'in intent and quiet study contemplates what reason discursively ponders'. Reason denotes the faculty which 'embraces universal judgment', as well as the capacity to distinguish between good and evil."[17] While remaining conceptually distinct, intellect and reason are often for Calvin near-synonyms in his examination of human psychology.

The "remnant" of the *imago dei* in fallen humanity still contains a capacity for reason. In fact, Calvin defines this iconic remnant as "nothing less than the entire human, rational nature, the immortal soul, the capacity for culture, the conscience, responsibility, the relation with God, which – though not redemptive – exists even in sin, language, the whole of cultural life. And upon it he bases considerable

[12] Emil Brunner, "Nature and Grace," in *Natural Theology*, ed. John Baillie, trans. Peter Fraenkel, reprint ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 40. Brunner's assertion is juxtaposed with a Barthian assault on natural theology. Brunner himself wished not to dispense with the orthodox notion of natural theology altogether, even if abused by many. His appeal to Calvin is a counter to Barth's particular brand of Neo-Orthodoxy and an attempt to call upon a figure both men (he and Barth) claimed in their tradition.

[13] *Institutes*, 1.15.3.

[14] Ibid., 1.15.3.

[15] Ibid., 1.15.8.

[16] Ibid., 1.15.8.

[17] Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 135.

portions of his ethics."[18] These sin-stained faculties, especially the human conscience, are perhaps our best indications of human immortality. The *imago dei* is that which distinguishes us from irrational brutes, and the mind's command of the appetite (what Calvin equated with the will) is unique to humanity and angels alone. Therefore, according to Calvin, the human will's primary role is to "choose whatever reason and intellect propound."[19]

Calvin also remained conversant with ancient thinkers with whom he found both continuity and discontinuity. For this reason, Calvin's psychology of conversion must be contextualized against the historical backdrop of Greek philosophy and patristic Christianity. As John Ball observes, "From his intellectual heritage, Calvin inherited the conception of the human being as a hierarchy of faculties, with the mind as the chief commander."[20] Calvin's humanism ensured that he was familiar with the writings of Plato, in whom he found the most agreement among the ancient philosophers. He insists, "It were vain to seek a definition of the soul from philosophers, not one of whom, with the exception of Plato, distinctly maintained its immortality.… Plato, however, advanced still further, and regarded the soul as an image of God."[21] Calvin finds a measure of validity in Plato's five "organs" or senses (sense, imagination, reason, judgment, intellect), his three cognitive faculties of the soul (intellect, fancy, and reason), and his three appetite faculties (will, irascibility, concupiscence). Still, despite giving these categories his approbation, Calvin dispenses with them in order to offer his own version of the human faculties. Instead of dividing the human soul into appetite and intellect, as Calvin observed most philosophers to do, and rather than subdividing each respectively, the French Reformer contended that "the soul consists of two parts, the intellect and the will – the office of the intellect being to distinguish between objects, according as they seem deserving of being approved or disapproved; and the office of the will, to choose and follow what the intellect declares to be good, to reject and shun what it declares to be bad."[22] It was Calvin's belief that, due to their ignorance of sin, philosophers confounded two states of man that are in fact very different from one another. In turn, Calvin's bipartite view of the soul also compelled him to reject Augustine's psychological analogy of the Trinity that featured a tripartite soul of intellect, will, and memory.[23]

Therefore, while Calvin certainly inherited an elevated view of reason and the mental faculties from the likes of Plato and Augustine, his view of the soul was his own. His view of human sin, however, while forging his greatest departure from classical philosophy, also became the bond that united him with Augustine. According to Calvin, "the doctrine which I deliver is not new, but the doctrine which of old Augustine delivered with the consent of all the godly, and which was afterward shut up in the cloisters of monks for almost a thousand years."[24] Calvin's facultative doctrine of conversion thus had a profound influence upon the way he interpreted hamartiology and its effects upon the human psyche.

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[18] Brunner, "Nature and Grace," 41.

[19] *Institutes*, 1.15.7.

[20] John H. Ball III, *Chronicling the Soul's Windings: Thomas Hooker and His Morphology of Conversion* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 88.

[21] *Institutes*, 1.15.7.

[22] Ibid., 1.15.7.

[23] Ibid., 1.15.4.

[24] Ibid., 2.3.5.

2. The Want of Faculties

In a fallen cosmos, sin has vitiated the use of man's faculties, and for Calvin, this severely complicated the task of self-knowledge. What ensues is something he compares to wandering in a labyrinth, searching for God. Calvin makes explicit that part of the initial step in conversion is the acknowledgement of one's compromised faculties. A sinner ought "to consider his faculties, or rather want of faculties, a want which, when perceived, will annihilate all his confidence, and cover him with confusion."[25] Calvin thus took exception with Peter Lombard (a common target of his) who taught that only a part of the soul was opposed to grace, as opposed to the whole man. Sin was all-encompassing, and this included the mind. Therefore humanity was plunged into utter darkness and death, completely unable to save themselves or to come to God of their own power. When theologians contended for humanity's free will, Calvin saw their empty claims as "delusions of the devil, by which he bewitches the minds of men, so that they come not to God, but, on the contrary, precipitate themselves into the lowest deep, where they seek to exalt themselves beyond measure."[26] Conversely, when the Spirit declared that all sinners were under "darkness," Calvin interpreted this to mean that God "declares them void of all power of spiritual intelligence."[27] This of course does not connote the complete loss of all human faculties, only the proper and righteous use of them.

Calvin affirmed Augustine's teaching that humanity's natural gifts were corrupted by sin but only their supernatural gifts altogether removed. Therefore the French Reformer balanced a high view of the *imago dei* with an especially high view of sin. According to the former law student, "although there is still some residue of intelligence and judgment as well as will, we cannot call a mind sound and entire which is both weak and immersed in darkness."[28] This particular hamartiology forms the backdrop for Paul Helm's disagreement with Thomas Pink over the nature of Calvin's natural theology. According to Pink, Calvin did not necessarily claim that practical reason vanished from humanity, however, he did teach that practical reason was rendered completely ineffective, or "eclipsed." Pink basically contends for the "outright denial" of practical rationality in Calvin's facultative psychology.[29] Helm, on the other hand, rejects this view when he asserts, "Reason was not completely wiped out but it was partly weakened and partly corrupted, so that its misshapen ruins appear.… We shall see that while Pink's view of Calvin may be plausible in the case of heavenly things, it is less plausible in the case of the earthly."[30]

The "darkness" of sin imprisoned both the intellect and the will in rebellion against God. Yet, in discussing sin's damaging effects upon the soul, Calvin maintains the priority of the mind. "For not only did the inferior appetites entice him, but abominable impiety seized upon the very citadel of the mind, and pride penetrated to his inmost heart."[31] When discussing the nature of sin and its damaging effects upon humanity, Calvin consistently accentuates its noetic effects. In his chapter on the bondage of the will, Calvin also explores the bondage of the human mind: "But such is the proneness of the human

[25] Ibid., 2.1.3.

[26] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets: Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, trans. John Owen, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 78.

[27] Ibid., 2.2.19.

[28] Ibid., 2.2.12.

[29] Thomas Pink, "Reason and Agency," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 97 (1997): 276.

[30] Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 139.

[31] *Institutes*, 2.1.9.

mind to go astray, that it will more quickly draw error from one little word, than truth from a lengthened discourse."[32]

Interestingly, however, while Calvin's anthropology and theology of conversion feature the preeminence of human knowledge, his hamartiology places the will as the primary vessel for sin:

> We are all sinners by nature, therefore we are held under the yoke of sin. But if the whole man is subject to the dominion of sin, surely the will, which is its principal seat, must be bound with the closest chains. And indeed, if divine grace were preceded by any will of ours, Paul could have said that "it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do" (Phil. 2:13).[33]

For Calvin, the mind was the "citadel" to the soul, however the will, as the lower faculty, was the entrance of sin into the human heart. This helped him to reconcile the question of original sin in the Garden. In Genesis 3, the original source of Adam's rebellion was his own free will, not his mind.[34]

This explanation for original sin accords well with Calvin's view of the effaced *imago dei* as well as his elevated view of the mind in conversion. According to Calvin, human reason became a "shapeless ruin" in light of sin. However, it was not annihilated after the Fall. Calvin insists, "in the perverted and degenerate nature of man there are still some sparks which show that he is a rational animal, and differs from the brutes, inasmuch as he is endued with intelligence, and yet, that this light is so smothered by clouds of darkness that it cannot shine forth to any good effect."[35] The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. For this reason, Calvin's view of natural law as defined in Romans 1 in addition to his belief in a rational "remnant" of the divine image bring him to reject Plato's claim that wrongs are committed only through ignorance.[36] While Calvin's aim for godliness comes through knowledge, a purely intellectualist ethic does not account for a thoroughly Reformed doctrine of sin. After all, the human will is "so enslaved by depraved lusts as to be incapable of one righteous desire," including the desire to learn righteousness.[37]

3. Renewing of the Mind

The preeminence that John Calvin afforded the mind is perhaps never more evident than in his doctrine of conversion. By preeminence what is meant is that, for Calvin, the intellect is functionally superior to the will in the process of conversion. In other words, Calvin believed that no sinner could be moved volitionally to desire and seek after Christ unless his mind was first illumined by the Holy Spirit to see and contemplate the glory of God in Christ Jesus. He explains,

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[32] Ibid., 2.2.7.

[33] Ibid., 2.2.27.

[34] Ibid., 2.3.10. For many, this would seem to indicate the will's control over the mind in Adam's pre-Fall state (cf. Dewey Hoitenga, *John Calvin and the Will* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997]). However, Calvin did not appear to see the incongruity. While he never rejects the influence of the will upon the mind (e.g. we think what we want to think), never does this influence indicate the mind's general subordination to the will.

[35] *Institutes*, 2.2.12.

[36] Ibid., 2.2.22.

[37] Ibid., 2.2.12.

> The next thing necessary is, that what the mind has imbibed be transferred into the heart. The word is not received in faith when it merely flutters in the brain, but when it has taken deep root in the heart, and become an invincible bulwark to withstand and repel all the assaults of temptation.… Hence the Spirit performs the part of a seal, sealing upon our hearts the very promises, the certainty of which was previously impressed upon our minds.[38]

As will be shown, John Calvin believed that the gateway into the soul of the unbeliever was through the mind.

Calvin's balance of human dignity and depravity demanded that the mind remain the "citadel" of the soul, especially in conversion. Reason is the commander of the will. However, since the mind is no less marred by sin, the Spirit must work to enlighten the intellect to the same degree that it straightens the will (Eph 4:23; Phil 2:13). For this reason, Calvin is particularly fond of comparing the Spirit's illumination of human reason to that of the sun and the human eye. His theology of creation provides the foundation for this epistemology. The human faculties are part of the *imago Dei*, and as so, are extant in all human beings, saved and unregenerate alike. Therefore Calvin can claim that "in conversion everything essential to our original nature remains: I also say, that it is created anew, not because the will then begins to exist, but because it turns from evil to good."[39] Calvinistic soteriology was about renewal. Echoing Paul's theology in Romans 12, Calvin believed that this renewal began with the mind: "it is only when the human intellect is irradiated by the light of the Holy Spirit that it begins to have a taste … previously it was too stupid and senseless to have any relish for them."[40] Calvin believed there to be more distrust in the heart than blindness in the mind, indicating his noetically inclined soteriology.[41] By faith, sinners were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of their own will, but of a God who opens the eyes of the spiritually blind (John 1:5; Eph 1:18).

God accomplished this through the unilateral work of regeneration. Just as man had no choice in his own birth, so God alone dictated the time and terms of one's rebirth (John 15:16). God's providential control over his own creation was something that Calvin not only felt was lucid in Scripture; it was a self-evident truth to any sentient being. "That your mind depends more on the agency of God than the freedom of your own choice, daily experience teaches," Calvin opined.[42] Calvin never found his particularly high natural theology to be at odds with a high view of God. In fact, as Calvin saw them, the intelligence and power of the human mind only exalted the majesty of its benevolent Creator.

Still, Calvin was especially careful to distinguish his noetic view of conversion from the bare intellectual faith of Christian rationalism. He warned, "The knowledge of God which we are invited to cultivate is not that which, resting satisfied with empty speculation, only flutters in the brain, but a knowledge which will prove substantial and fruitful wherever it is duly perceived, and rooted in the heart."[43] For Calvin, faith went beyond apprehension or mere speculation. It was certitude, or as Calvin explained, "a sure and certain knowledge of God's good will towards us which, being founded upon the

[38] Ibid., 3.2.36.

[39] Ibid., 2.3.6.

[40] Ibid., 3.2.34.

[41] Ibid., 3.2.36.

[42] Ibid., 2.4.7.

[43] Ibid., 1.5.9.

promise freely given in Jesus Christ, is revealed to our understanding and sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Francois Wendel, in his historical and systematic theology of Calvin, avers, "This did not represent any falling-back upon a more intellectualist position. The knowledge of faith is not directed to any given doctrinal truth, but to God's good will. Nor is this a matter of rationally understanding God's attitude towards us, but of having a full and certain certitude about him."[44] Calvin meant to distance himself from the implicit faith of the scholastics, meanwhile retaining a noetic view of conversion. In his chapter "Of Faith," Calvin takes note of faith's many names in Scripture, namely *understanding* (Col. 2:2) and *knowledge* (1 John 3:2).[45] Through the enlightening of the Spirit, the eyes of the mind could be opened and the sinner could find knowledge of God in the glory of Christ. Without this particular Spirit-imparted knowledge, the future of the church was no more. Speaking of the doctrine of justification by faith, Calvin warns, "Wherever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the Church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly unknown." Calvin's noetic view of conversion dictated that he sees the work of the Spirit as spiritual illumination first and foremost. As Calvin reminds his readers, "we are all naturally blind; and hence the word cannot penetrate our minds unless the Spirit, that internal teacher, by his enlightening power make an entrance for it."[46]

4. Calvinistic Homiletics

John Calvin considered the human intellect "the guide and ruler of the soul."[47] As the noblest of faculties and that which separates man from beast, it serves as the "authority" to which the will is "perfectly submissive."[48] For Calvin, this order of faculties had significant theological and practical implications, beginning with the natural human longing to learn with the mind. Calvin believed that the human mind, though subjected to a sinful fog, was not robbed of its propensity for truth:

> We see that there has been implanted in the human mind a certain desire of investigating truth, to which it never would aspire unless some relish for truth antecedently existed. There is, therefore, now, in the human mind, discernment to this extent, that it is naturally influenced by the love of truth.[49]

As image bearers of God, the saints and the unregenerate alike are gifted with a profound epistemic desire, and this had discernible effects upon Calvin's approach to his Genevan ministry. When he ascended the pulpit at St. Pierre Cathedral, Calvin believed that his sermons should meet the necessary human longing for truth. This was part of the essence of preaching: a proclamation of the truth. Sinners were, to one degree or another, *rational* sinners, and "the more a man studies to approach to God, the more he proves himself to be endued with reason."[50]

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[44] Francois Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 241.

[45] *Institutes*, 3.2.14.

[46] Ibid., 3.2.34.

[47] Ibid., 1.15.7.

[48] Ibid., 1.15.8.

[49] Ibid., 2.2.12.

[50] Ibid., 1.15.6.

Due to this elevated view of the human mind, Calvin placed a theological premium on brainpower in the process of conversion. In order to find salvation in Christ, Calvin expected a sinner to use his or her head. There was no room for dumb faith or fideism in Calvin's catechized Geneva. His noetic view of conversion influenced Calvin's own homiletics to the point that his sermons at St. Pierre Cathedral were extremely didactic. According to Herman Selderhuis,

> Calvin's preaching had a strong teaching element, and he frequently spoke of the church as the school of God (*l'escole de Dieu*). God was the pedagogue or teacher, the Bible was 'the school of the Holy Spirit,' and the believer was a 'student in God's church.' As mother the church not only gave birth but also nourished and educated her children. Instruction was a life-long affair, and even at the edge of the grave 'God calls us to his school.' Human beings, after all, have a short memory, forget quickly and have a constant tendency to seek out all kinds of new things. Frequent repetition of the curriculum was best.[51]

For Calvin the pastor, preaching and teaching were inextricable, precisely due to the didactic nature of Gospel ministry. After all, pastors are called to teach their disciples all that the Lord has commanded them. For this reason, Calvin's preaching was also expository. If the Scriptures were graciously given to the church to be studied and absorbed, it was incumbent upon the preacher to ensure that they were properly managed and taught. After three years exiled in Strasbourg, and true to his practice of *lectio continua*, it is little wonder that Calvin returned to the following text in Romans without skipping a beat![52]

Calvin believed that conversion came principally through the seat of the mind. Therefore he preached relentlessly *to* the mind. This was Calvin's psychology of conversion at work in his homiletics. Because salvation came through knowledge of God and of self, sinners needed to be educated and not simply exhorted. Faith was a certainty of the promises of God built upon proper knowledge, not feelings or sentiment. However, before a sinner can properly exercise his or her mental capacity, the Spirit must first act upon the mind in order to allow sinners to receive a knowledge of the truth. Of the preacher Calvin boldly insists that "nothing is accomplished by his preaching unless the inner teacher, the Spirit, open the way into our minds."[53] In order for the biblical teacher to fulfill his task to inculcate the truth of the Scriptures to his disciples, the Spirit must prepare minds for learning. This is why Calvin called the Scriptures the "school of the Holy Spirit."[54] Education meant illumination.

Calvin's psychology not only buttressed his doctrine of conversion; it cemented his ecclesiology as well. For example, in his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, Calvin outlines his four offices for the church: pastor, doctor, elder, and deacon. The role of doctor, an office perhaps unfamiliar to most contemporary

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[51] Herman J. Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* ((Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 115.

[52] In a letter to William Farel, Calvin wrote, "When I preached to the people, everyone was very alert and expectant. But entirely omitting any mention of those matters which they all expected with certainty to hear … I took up the exposition where I had stopped—by which I indicated that I had interrupted my office of preaching for the time rather than that I had given it up entirely." Cited in T. H. L. Parker, *The Oracles of God: An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 1947), 34.

[53] *Institutes*, 2.2.20.

[54] Ibid., 3.21.3.

evangelicals, was "the instruction of the faithful in true doctrine."[55] The *Ordinances* also stipulate that there was to be at least one lecturer in theology in Geneva. In fact, the *Ordinances* themselves stand as a grand testament not only to Calvin's penchant for order but also for systematic education. Williston Walker explains that Calvin viewed the office of teacher as of divine appointment, having as its highest duty that of educating "the faithful in sound doctrine" from the Old and New Testaments. But he felt no less strongly that before the learner "can profit by such lessons he must first be instructed in the languages and worldly sciences." Calvin therefore sought to develop the Genevan school system under this ecclesiastical conception of the teachership.[56]

Calvin prized education of all kinds, and each area of study was under the umbrella of the church. Sinners needed more than encouragement or admonishment. They needed learning, and that by the Spirit of Christ.

Due to his esteem for education and the exercise of the Christian mind, Calvin also founded his famous Academy, an institution of theological learning that would greatly influence Reformed Christianity on the continent as well as Scottish Presbyterians and Elizabethan Puritans alike. If nothing else, John Calvin was a teacher. Therefore it should come as no surprise that Calvin, a committed Christian humanist, viewed the mind as preeminent in the learning of eternal things. Remarkably, when John Calvin became pastor in Geneva in 1536, he still lacked an official degree in theology from an academic institution. Neither had he submitted to any kind of ecclesiastical examination. Nevertheless, in addition to his studies in logic, languages, and civic law, the French Reformer was a man fixed with educating the world in the Christian faith. Therefore Calvin's psychology of conversion is but an outworking of the preeminence he ascribed to the mind in all areas of learning.

Calvin engineered Geneva to suit his particularly noetic view of Christianity and conversion. What remains to be seen, however, is exactly *how* he wielded this unique faculty psychology in the classroom and behind the pulpit. How did Calvin's homiletic correlate with his cerebral approach to ministry?

Fortunately, thanks to the litany of John Calvin's writings available to us, the modern reader is able to encounter multiple evidences of Calvin's didactic strategy. For example, in his commentary on Habakkuk 2:4 ("Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith"), Calvin takes note of the antithetic parallelism and insists that "this truth will with more force penetrate into our minds; for we know how much such comparisons illustrate a subject which would be otherwise obscure or less evident."[57] From this brief word the reader can deduce two helpful hints about Calvin's delivery of the Gospel. First, Calvin's homiletic is founded in his hermeneutic. In other words, because the Scriptures are God-breathed and Spirit-authored, the believer has confidence and license to absorb its theology as well as its methodology.[58]

Secondly, Calvin regards verbal devices such as contrast and illustrations as potent tools in the task of inculcating biblical truth to the mind. According to Calvin, "The unerring standard both of thinking and speaking must be derived from the Scriptures: by it all the thoughts of our minds, and the words

[55] John Calvin, *The Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1953), 2.

[56] Williston Walker, *John Calvin: Revolutionary, Theologian, Pastor* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2005), 213.

[57] Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets: Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, 74.

[58] For further study of Calvin's homiletics see Ralph Cunnington, *Preaching with Spiritual Power: Calvin's Understanding of Word and Spirit in Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2015).

of our mouths, should be tested."[59] His high view of Scripture led Calvin to treat them as the ultimate source of truth, and his humanism urged him to scrupulously examine them as the basis for his ministry. Therefore Calvin not only exegeted the Scriptures faithfully; he also employed strong contrasts and illustrations in his own writing and preaching—akin to those he found in the Bible itself. For instance, Calvin was particularly fond of using the imagery of a "labyrinth" or an "abyss" to describe the hopeless wandering and confusion of a life without Christ. Calvin was also prone to dichotomize the "pollution" or "contagion of sin" endemic to the seed of Adam with the righteousness freely offered to those in Christ, the better Adam.[60] For Calvin, proper delivery of biblical truth meant that a Gospel message must be packaged in such a way as to capture and draw the intellect. His conversionism dictated his unique homiletic.

Calvin's rhetorical skill also extended to the very words he used and how he used them. His style of writing was so fluid that many scholars have even identified him as the inventor of modern French sentence structure. For Calvin, brevity and clarity were the two premiere attributes of a good communicator who desired to connect with the mind of his readers. He believed that the "chief virtue of an interpreter lies in clear brevity."[61] Calvin once wrote to Heinrich Bullinger, "I have always loved simplicity; and never cared much for cleverness."[62] It was not Calvin's tendency nor his personality to engage in ostentatious wordiness. According to T. H. L. Parker, his "greatest quality as a commentator was his self-disciplined subordination to the text."[63] Calvin's reticence to discuss personal matters was a perfectly complement to his indefatigable biblicism. In order for sinners to absorb and comprehend the Word of God, it was the expositor's task not to obscure its meaning with recondite language.

In a letter to William Farel, Calvin discusses his writing and reveals his opinion of the modern reader:

> I am afraid that the involved style and tedious discussion will obscure the light truly contained therein. I know with delight that nothing other than excellence is expected of you. I do not flatter. Your book seems to me to deserve a place among works of that rank, but because readers today are so fastidious and do not possess great acuteness, I believe the language needs to be crafted so as to attract them by fluency of expression.… This is my candid judgment.[64]

Here is Calvin's ministerial *modus operandi* laid out explicitly. His belief in the noetic effects of sin brought him to adjust his language and syntax in order to accommodate the acute mental blindness of his hearers or readers. Moreover, Calvin's pneumatology and his belief in the sovereignty of God were never compromised, even when he labored strenuously to capture the intellect of his audience. Calvin's particularly noetic view of conversion and the strategy he implemented in recognizing the preeminence of the mind should not be confused with, for example, the prop-laden tactics of many modern preachers who empty the Word of its power by assuming sinners come to faith by human craftiness or creativity. Calvin was never so shrewd as to negate the sovereignty of God in conversion, nor too high in his

[59] *Institutes*, 1.13.3.

[60] Ibid., 2.1.5.

[61] Calvin to Simon Grynaeus, 18 October 1539 (CO 10.403).

[62] Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 32.

[63] T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 101.

[64] Calvin to Farel (1 September 1549) in Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 152.

doctrine of providence to forget the responsibility of the pastor to stimulate the minds of the converted and unconverted alike. In a letter to Martin Bucer, Calvin stated plainly, "Openness is of more use than craftiness, and so I prefer simply to say what I mean."[65] There was no room for verbal prolixity in the task of the preacher.

Lastly, for all his robust insights into the doctrine of human depravity, Calvin still remained strangely optimistic when it came to human common sense. Therefore, like his Renaissance and later Enlightenment counterparts, his natural theology helped him to esteem the capacity for logic and reason inside each sinner. According to Bruce Gordon, "One of Calvin's principal strategies was to appeal to his readers' common sense. Idolatry need not be proved wrong, for that is self-evident. What is required is for readers to be called to their senses, to be reminded of what they already know to be right."[66] Calvin consistently navigated his view of natural and special revelation between the Scylla of human indignity and the Charybdis of deified humanity. Dignity and depravity were carried hand in hand, and Calvin used his hierarchy of faculties to balance them theologically. The mind, as the noblest of faculties, still reflected the glimmer of Psalm 8 majesty for which we were created. However, without the work of Christ through His Spirit, the human intellect is nothing more than a vessel for sin. Critiquing his favorite scholastic target yet again, Calvin asserts, "It is less strange that Lombard was blind to the light of Scripture, in which it is obvious that he had not been a very successful student."[67] It was Calvin's belief that every sinner is a student of something; it is the goal of the teacher to excite his or her God-given mind to the things of God, namely the Scriptures.

As Calvin's elevated view of the mind in conversion has been adequately demonstrated, what remains is a test case of sorts. In short, did Calvin's perspective of his personal conversion align with his own psychological and soteriological principles? Is the preeminence of Calvin's mind in his own salvation ostensible from the account he gives us in the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms* (1557)? Not surprisingly, Calvin's brief account of his own conversion verifies his faculty psychology. After describing the act of God's regenerating grace, Calvin recounts,

> Having consequently received some taste and knowledge of true piety, I was forthwith inflamed with so great a desire to reap benefit from it that, although I did not at all abandon other studies, I yet devoted myself to them more indifferently.[68]

From this autobiographical excerpt, the reader is able to view the dynamics of Calvin's conversionism in a unique way. In his own "sudden conversion" as well as in his doctrine of conversion, knowledge of the mind clearly preceded the desire of the will, effectively reversing the predominantly voluntarist Fall of Adam. According to Helm,

> the basic question is not one of the subordination or superordination of each of a pair of faculties but of the respective roles played by faculties with inherently differently capacities. For Calvin, the will was subordinate to the understanding as mankind was

[65] Calvin to Bucer, in Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 32.

[66] Gordon, *Calvin*, 188.

[67] *Institutes*, 3.15.7.

[68] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 1:xl–xli.

> created, but it was, unlike the understanding, inherently unstable if left to itself. It *was* left to itself, and perversely and irrationally turned aside from its subordinate position.[69]

In this sense, Calvin viewed conversion—including his own—as a restorative ordering of the faculties to their originally good hierarchy.

5. Conclusion

While John Calvin refused to operate under identical psychological categories as his classical and patristic predecessors, he was no less structured in his view of the human faculties. The French Reformer from Geneva simply found a simpler view of the soul that accommodated his Reformed view of sin and his equally robust doctrine of conversion. Calvin was unequivocal in the preeminence he ascribed in conversion to human knowledge when he described the intellect as "the guide and ruler of the soul" and human reason the "authority" to which the will was "perfectly submissive."[70] For Calvin this preeminence, as indicated by his own brief conversion narrative, was not necessarily essential but functional. The will was not an inherently inferior human faculty. However, Calvin believed that no sinner could be moved volitionally to desire and seek after Christ unless his mind was first illumined by the Holy Spirit to see and contemplate the glory of God in Christ Jesus. The effort with which Calvin balanced his severe definition of sin with his high natural theology indicates his commitment to a soteriological framework that never compromised human agency nor the dignity of the effaced *imago dei*. Therefore, when God saved man, He saved man in a particular way. This included the human mind, something Calvin valued very highly.

In turn, Calvin's particularly noetic doctrine of conversion had significant implications for his Christian homiletic. His preaching at St. Pierre Cathedral exhibited a heavy didactic and cerebral element precisely because, in Calvin's view, conversion and sanctification both came through sapiential knowledge of God and self, and these preeminently through the mind. Likewise, Calvin's writings indicate that he employed linguistic devices in order to capture and stimulate the intellect. Salvation was, in a very real sense, biblical education. Therefore the fingerprint of Calvin's theology of conversion could be found in his Academy as well as in his own ecclesiology with its heavy emphasis upon the teachership.

Nearly two hundred years after Calvin's conversion, Jonathan Edwards published his *Freedom of the Will* (1754), a title that seemingly belies its congruity with the theology of Calvin. Nevertheless, in the famous work the Northampton theologian also advocated two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of God and knowledge of self. According to Edwards, "The knowledge of ourselves consists chiefly in right apprehensions concerning those two chief faculties of our nature, the understanding and will."[71] With acute undertones of Calvin, Edwards insists, "The will always follows the last dictate of the understanding."[72] Two centuries after Calvin developed his simplified faculty psychology, the premiere Reformed theologian of the American Enlightenment was carrying the same epistemological tune, with

[69] Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 146.

[70] *Institutes*, 1.15.8.

[71] Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1, Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957), 133.

[72] Ibid., 148.

a similar preeminence ascribed to knowledge. While it would be difficult to trace an immediate link to Calvin, the French Reformer's cerebral legacy no doubt lived on in the endemic intellectualism of his scholastic forbears and in the broader movement that today bears his name. Calvinists, for better or worse, have maintained an emphasis upon rational religion as the theological scions of a Reformer who believed that the power of the Word came first through the mind.

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Redeeming Edwards's Doctrine of Hell: An "Edwardsean" Account

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Abstract: Jonathan Edwards provides subsequent generations of theologians and ministers with one of the most influential versions of the traditional account of hell. However, his account of hell has its detractors. Those who oppose Edwards's account argue that it is morally appalling and philosophically problematic. As such, I attempt to defend Edwards's account by addressing one of its most philosophically pressing objections: the issuant account objection. In order to do this, I turn to Edwards's doctrine of the blessed state of the redeemed in heaven. This is a doctrine the resources of which can help provide a redeemed "Edwardsean" account of hell, one that is both traditional and issuant.

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Among recent trends in evangelicalism, one of the most prominent has been the resurgence of interest (especially within the "young, restless, and reformed" segment of the church) in all things Jonathan Edwards. One sees this in the vast quantity of recent books,[1] blogs,[2] and conferences[3] dedicated to Edwards's life and thought. These works have done much to lift him up as a pastoral, homiletical, and theological example to be emulated.[4] The result is that certain Edwardsean themes and

[1] Some of these books include Sean Michael Lucas, *God's Grand Design: The Theological Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Dane Ortlund, *Edwards on the Christian Life: Alive to the Beauty of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); John Piper, *God's Pasion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006); John Piper and Stephen Nichols, eds., *A God Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004). Perhaps the most influential recent work on Edwards has been George Marsden's biography of Edwards, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2004).

[2] Largely trafficked websites which have devoted significant attention to Edwards over the years include Desiring God, The Gospel Coalition, The Cripplegate, Mortification of Spin, and Ligonier Ministries.

[3] For instance: 1) The 2003 Desiring God National Conference, "A God-Entranced Vision of All Things," 2) The Jonathan Edwards for the Church Conference Series in the UK, 3) The Jonathan Edwards Lecture Series at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and 4) The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards Lectures at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[4] For example: Patricia Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religion and Society in Eighteenth-Century Northampton* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006); Douglas Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the*

theological views have begun to exert greater influence upon evangelicalism, for instance: the importance of revival, preaching in order to change religious affections, the New Testament use of the Old, and even Trinitarian theology. One can certainly appreciate the positive influence that Edwards the exemplar has had upon the contemporary evangelical church. However, one aspect of Edwards's theology that we may want to question the value of following his example is his account of the doctrine of hell.

Many Americans are familiar with Edwards's account of hell through his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in which he depicts one of the most horrific, ghoulish, and even terrorizing portrayals ever presented. In particular, his depiction of hell in this sermon is cited by many as evidence why we ought to abandon the traditional account.[5] It has been said that Edwards's doctrine is morally intolerable and that we should abandon it.[6] Those who are interested in defending the traditional account and more specifically Edwards's account have reasons for mining his works in order to find resources within it to defend not only his account but the traditional doctrine of hell as well. This essay aims to accomplish those two tasks.

In this essay I will show that Edwards's account of hell, which is one of the most influential versions of the traditional account of hell, suffers from not being an "issuant account" of hell.[7] I will proceed to argue that there are resources within Edwards's theology which will allow us to formulate an "Edwardsean" account of hell which is issuant.[8] By doing this I hope to show that an Edwardsean account of hell is not simply a topic of historical interest, i.e. an interesting but irrelevant account. Instead, I will argue for the defensibility of the traditional account by taking one the most influential understandings of the traditional account, modifying it, and making it defensible. Further, I will show that we can continue to follow Edwards even when it comes to his doctrine of hell. But before we begin a defense of the Edwardsean account, and by implication the traditional account, we shall begin by defining terms. What is the traditional account of hell?

1. Edwards and the Traditional Account of Hell

In *The Problem of Hell* Jonathan Kvanvig presents one of the clearest and most concise definitions of the traditional account of hell. He summarizes the traditional account (at times he also calls this the

Word: A Model of Faith and Thought (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2009); Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford, 2011).

[5] For what constitutes the traditional account see section 1 below.

[6] Jerry Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 58. Although he attempts to present an account which is sympathetic to the traditional account Walls objects to Edwards's account of hell because it embodies what he calls "traditional Calvinistic view."

[7] Briefly, an "issuant account" of hell is one in which the characteristic of God's nature which motivates the generation of hell is the same characteristic which generates heaven. For a detailed discussion see section 2 below.

[8] Here the term Edwardsean is used in a similar way to how Oliver Crisp uses the term in his chapter "John McLeod Campbell and Non-Penal Substitution," in *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 92–115. In this essay, he distinguishes between Edwards's doctrines and Edwards-inspired doctrines (termed Edwardsean). He adds a *caveat lector* in which he says, "This is not to suggest Edwards endorsed this doctrine, only that it is consistent with his reasoning" (p. 101) I will be using the "Edwardsean" in this same manner.

"strong account") by saying, "it maintains that hell is a place where some people are punished eternally with no possibility of escape."[9] He then separates this account into four separate components:

> (H1) The Anti-Universalism Thesis: Some persons are consigned to hell.
>
> (H2) The Existence Thesis: Hell is a place where people exist, if they are consigned there.
>
> (H3) The No Escape Thesis: There is no possibility of leaving hell, and nothing one can do, change or become in order to get out of hell, once one is consigned there.
>
> (H4) The Retribution Thesis: The justification for and purpose of hell is retributive in nature, hell being constituted so as to mete out punishment to those whose earthly lives and behavior warrant it.[10]

Kvanvig stresses the fact that there are many different pictures of hell which may comport with this particular account. For instance, one could hold to the view that retribution comes by means of active torment by fire or that retribution is simply the separation from the blessings of heaven. One could hold that the scriptural language of fire and darkness literally refers to fire and darkness or one could hold that such language is figurative. Holding on the the traditional account does not commit one to a particular picture of hell, rather it means that one is committed to these four theses. One theologian who holds to a distinctive, and particularly strong, version of the traditional account is Jonathan Edwards. In what follows I will give a brief account of Edwards's version of the traditional account.

The first thesis of the traditional account is the Anti-Universalism Thesis, according to which there are some persons who are consigned to hell. Neither universalism nor hypothetical universalism obtain. It is guaranteed that some persons will be in hell at the eschaton. That Edwards holds to this position is made clear in several of his sermons on hell. In the application of sermon on John 8:44, "That Wicked Men Are the Children of the Devil," Edwards warns his congregants that if they are the children of the devil, they will doubtlessly be involved with their father in his destruction. He says, "The devil and his children God will put together. They will have the same habitation. They shall be one miserable company. They shall be treated alike at the day of judgement. They shall stand together and they shall be turned away together in the same everlasting fire…"[11] In another sermon, titled "The Wicked Hereafter Will Be Cast Into a Furnace of Fire" (Matthew 13:41–42), Edwards makes his case even more explicitly. He says that the wicked will be gathered out of Christ's kingdom and shall be cast into a furnace of fire. Not only does Edwards argue that hell obtains for some, it obtains for many. He says, "There are many men that are gone to hell. There are many of all sorts: kings and beggars, rich and poor, old an young, wise and unwise, bond and free."[12]

In addition to holding to the Anti-Universalism Thesis, Edwards also holds to the Existence Thesis. Once again, the Existence Thesis states that given the fact that hell is populated, people are

[9] Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Problem of Hell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 19.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Jonathan Edwards, "Wicked Men Are the Children of the Devil," in *The Torments of Hell: Jonathan Edwards on Eternal Damnation*, ed. William C. Nichols (Ames, IA: International Outreach, 2006), 14.

[12] Jonathan Edwards, "They That Are Gone to Hell," in *The Torments of Hell: Jonathan Edwards on Eternal Damnation*, ed. William C. Nichols (Ames, IA: International Outreach, 2006), 206.

consigned there. More specifically, we ought to say that those in hell exist forever in that state, they are not temporarily consigned to hell. Using Revelation 9:6 and 22:11 Edwards makes the case that all change after death is "expressly denied" and that there will never be any end or death by annihilation."[13] However, Edwards does not simply believe that the reprobate's existence in hell is miserable and eternal, that is unceasing, but he also believes that this miserable existence will never be diminished, rather the misery will increase.[14]

Besides targeting opponents who argue in favor of annihilation Edwards also targets those who believe "the punishment of the wicked shall consist in sensible misery, yet it shall not be absolutely eternal, but only of a very long continuance."[15] In other words he argues against those who believe that hell will not be an eternal state for some, i.e. those who deny (H3). Now this claim that hell will "not be absolutely eternal, but only of a very long continuance" can be read in various ways. One way to read this is to read it as saying that the reprobate will endure a time of sensible misery then this misery will end and they will no longer be in a state of torment because they have repented and turned to God. Edwards emphatically denies this possibility. Speaking of those in hell Edwards says, "There never will be an end to their torment by any change or alteration in their state. Their state will never be changed for the better."[16] He also says, "there shall be no end to their misery by their being brought into a more happy state and condition, for their remains no more sacrifice for sin, as 'tis appointed to men once to die, so Christ is but once offered, Hebrews 9:27, 28."[17] The possibility of a change that will lead a person out of hell is unthinkable in Edwards's mind for according to him "all change after death is expressly denied."

Finally, Edwards also affirms the Retribution Thesis. Much has been written showing that Edwards understands the justice of hell lies in the fact that it is retributive.[18] Thus I will not spend much time arguing for the fact that Edwards sees hell as being retributive. It suffices to say that Edwards believes that it is consistent with the God's justice to inflict eternal punishment[19] and that there is a proportion between evil committed and the punishment inflicted.[20] Furthermore, he believes that hell "was made and prepared by God on purpose that it might be for … the infliction of his wrath,"[21] the wicked

[13] Ibid., 207.

[14] Edwards makes a stronger case against the possibility of annihilation in his sermon "The Eternity of Hell Torments," in *The Torments of Hell: Jonathan Edwards on Eternal Damnation*, ed. William C. Nichols (Ames, IA: International Outreach, 2006), 111–12.

[15] Ibid., 112.

[16] Jonathan Edwards, "That the Torments of Hell Will Be Eternal" in *The Torments of Hell: Jonathan Edwards on Eternal Damnation*, ed. William C. Nichols (Ames, IA: International Outreach, 2006), 101.

[17] Edwards, "They That Are Gone to Hell," 207.

[18] See Bruce W. Davidson, "Reasonable Damnation: How Jonathan Edwards Argued for the Rationality of Hell," *JETS* 38 (1995), 47–56; John Gerstner, *Edwards on Heaven and Hell* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983); Stephen R. Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 199–240; Jonathan Kvanvig, "Jonathan Edwards on Hell," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 1–11; William Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Doctrine of Hell," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 13–26

[19] Edwards, "The Eternity of Hell Torments," 112.

[20] Ibid., 114.

[21] Edwards, "That the Torments of Hell Will Be Eternal," 232.

experience retributive punishment in two forms,[22] and the biblical language of fire in hell may be either figurative or literal.[23]

Thus far we have seen that Edwards firmly holds to all four theses of the traditional account. However, there are some significant philosophical problems with Edwards's account of hell, the biggest being that it is not an issuant account of hell.

2. The Problem of Hell

In recent years there have been various philosophical treatments of Edwards's conception of Hell. Most of these have attempted to show that his doctrine of hell, especially (H4), suffers from some major problems. Jonathan Kvanvig has argued that Edwards does not sufficiently justify his understanding of retribution. Kvanvig points to Edwards's use of the "status principle" as the primary means for justifying the infinite punishment of hell, yet argues that the status principle is unsatisfying.[24] Kvanvig also attempts to make sense of the infinite punishment of hell in Edwards's account by making use of Edwards's claim that all sin is against God, but he argues that this claim also suffers from some serious difficulties.[25] William Wainwright is more optimistic about Edwards's account of the fittingness of retributive punishment but does not think that Edwards has sufficient reasons for rejecting annihilation as the means proper form of eternal punishment.[26] These objections need not detain us for they have been addressed elsewhere.[27] However scholars have not sufficiently addressed the objection that Edwards's account of hell is not an issuant account.

2.1. An Issuant Account of Hell

What is an issuant account of hell? In *The Problem of Hell* Jonathan Kvanvig begins his description of an issuant account of hell by presenting what he takes to be a problem with the traditional account. He says,

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[22] Ibid., 232, 235. These two forms are the *sensus poena* and the *poena damni.* For an in-depth discussion of how these two forms of punishment play out in Puritan theology of hell see Carl R. Trueman, "Heaven and Hell: 12 in Puritan Theology," *Epworth Review* 22 (1995), 75–85.

[23] He concludes that while it is orthodox to believe that it may be figurative, "tis very probably that wicked men after resurrection shall be cast into a furnace of fire in a literal sense." See Jonathan Edwards, "The Wicked Hereafter Will Be Cast into a Furnace of Fire," in *The Torments of Hell: Jonathan Edwards on Eternal Damnation*, ed. William C. Nichols (Ames, IA: International Outreach, 2006), 29.

[24] Kvanvig, "Jonathan Edwards on Hell," 2–4.

[25] Ibid., 4–11. Kvanvig concludes: "For even if it could be shown that all sin is against God, and sinning against God is the most serious wrong that could be committed, there is still the issue of mitigating factors in the theory of punishment to be considered … the strong view of hell ignores such mitigating factors, and is problematic for that reason" (p. 11).

[26] Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Doctrine of Hell," 17.

[27] On the appropriateness of the Status principle see William J. Wainwright, "Original Sin," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas Morris (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), 31–60. On why annihilation is not fitting we must remember that Edwards is not simply making a philosophical case for a doctrine of hell rather Edwards is trying to provide a doctrine of hell which he takes to be the doctrine explicitly laid out in Scripture.

> [The] traditional Christian accounts of hell begin by characterizing God's fundamental desire in relation to humanity as a desire for union with human beings, but in the discussion of hell, this portrayal is abandoned. No longer does love seem to be a part of the picture at all; instead God's dominant motive is portrayed in terms of justice (at best) or vindictiveness (at worst).[28]

According to Kvanvig the problem with this is that it offers a segregated account of God's action and motivations. God's primary motivation when talking about God's goals for humanity is love, but God's primary motivation when talking about hell is something other than love (i.e. justice). This position, that God's justice can be a more fundamental motivation than love when it comes to hell, seems to be in direct opposition to the heart of Christianity, which claims that love is God's primary motivation, thus making it an inadequate account of God's action.[29] Kvanvig believes that the solution to this problem would be to offer an "issuant conception of hell," in which heaven and hell both flow from one motivation generated by God's loving nature.[30] Thus we may say that an issuant account of hell is an account in which,

> (IH): The characteristic of God's nature which motivates the generation of hell is the same characteristic which generates heaven.[31]

Although, Kvanvig wants to say that God's loving nature is the characteristic which generates both heaven and hell, an issuant account as we have defined it need not be explained by appealing to love as that primary characteristic. We may say that God's motivation to love might be that characteristic which motivates an issuant account or we may decide that any one of God's characteristics (justice, benevolence, beauty, glory) may be the motivation for it. All we are required to say is that heaven and hell flow from the same motivation. Having defined what an issuant account of hell is, we may now ask, does Edwards holds to an issuant account? Consider the following account of God's motivations regarding heaven and hell which use commonly accepted Edwardsean premises:

1. God's primary motivation is love to "being in general."[32]
2. God manifests his love to being in general by the communication of his glory *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

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[28] Kvanvig, *The Problem of Hell*, 110.

[29] Ibid., 118.

[30] Although Robin Parry does not use the term "issuant account" and does not give a philosophical case for why we should purse such an account, he makes a similar point in arguing that our account of hell ought to make sense in light of the plotline of the Bible and in the context of the God of the gospel. He says that in articulating our doctrine of hell, "We have to show how it is a manifestation of the loving justice of the God who cares for unworthy sinners. If your theology of hell is not compatible with God's love for the damned, then your theology of hell is wrong." For more on his reasoning, see Robin Parry, "A Universalist View" in *Four Views on Hell*, ed. Preston Sprinkle (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 101–27.

[31] The way Kvanvig articulates IH can be problematic for those who desire to hold to divine simplicity. In order to make IH plausible for those who hold to divine simplicity we may reformulate IH as (IH*): God's aim which motivates the generation of hell is the same aim which generates heaven.

[32] It should be noted that throughout the paper is use the term "Being" (capitalized) to refer to what Edwards would refer to as the ground of all being, i.e. God. I use the term "being" (lower cased) to refer to existence and things which exist. For discussion of "God as Being in General," see William Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Palo Alto, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University: 2016), §2.3, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/edwards/#2.3.

3. God's glory is communicated *ad extra* when his attributes (love, justice, majesty, goodness, etc.) are manifested before his creatures.
4. God manifests his love towards creatures by sending some persons to heaven where they will have a greater sense of God's love and grace.
5. God manifests his justice towards creatures by sending some persons to hell.[33]
6. God's glory is communicated to persons through sending some to heaven and some to hell.
7. Therefore, God's primary motivation, love to being in general (through the communication of his glory), is achieved through assigning some to heaven and hell.

Does this account satisfy the conditions of being issuant? At first glance it certainly seems to do so. Here the characteristic of God's nature which motivates the generation of both heaven and hell is God's desire to communicate his glory *ad intra* and *ad extra*. However, upon closer examination it fails to be issuant. Wainwright says that permanent exclusion from God's presence might obscure the saint's grasp of an equally important divine attribute other than justice, namely God's benevolence, or love to being in general. Wainwright suggests that the saints' sense of God's goodness would be tainted by their pity for the damned and horror at their fate. If this is the case, as Wainwright certainly believes, then "God won't have succeeded in fully manifesting his love and goodness in which (according to Edwards) his glory principally consists."[34] Should this objection be taken as conclusive? Does the damnation of the wicked really obscure the saints' sense of God's benevolence? Edwards would say that it does not. In fact, Edwards argues that it increases the saints sense of God's benevolence. In his sermon, "the End of the Wicked Contemplated by the Righteous,"[35] Edwards reasons that when the saints in glory see the wrath of God executed upon the ungodly it will be no occasion of grief to them, rather it will be the cause of their rejoicing and praise. Why will the saints rejoice? Holmes suggests that when they see what they have been saved from, the saints will have a "greater sense of their own happiness and a greater sense of God's love and grace."[36] So it seems, given Edwards's account of God's self-glorification, that the objection that the permanent exclusion of the damned from God's presence obscures the saints' sense of God's goodness is off base, the saints seem to "see" God's goodness towards them in the presence of the damned in hell. However, we may want to strengthen Wainwright's argument regarding the saints' sense of God's benevolence. We may wonder whether the Edwards's account of hell is compatible with God's benevolence, or love to being in general. If Edwards's account of hell has God denying benevolence to those in hell, then we would have God glorifying himself in two equal and opposite ways, one which displays his justice and lacks love towards being and another which displays his grace and is grounded

[33] For a clear explanation of Edwards's rationale behind this position see Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, 222 in which Holmes states that "God's justice is glorified in that he does not shrink from delivering the damned to what they deserve." Elsewhere Edwards says, "But this one way wherein God will glorify himself, as in the eternal destruction of ungodly men, he will glorify his justice" ("The Eternity of Hell Torments," 126).

[34] Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards and the Doctrine of Hell," 17.

[35] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards,* vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 207–10.

[36] Ibid., 214. Holmes also suggests that the saints will rejoice at the sight of hell first because they have no love and no pity for the damned, namely because they love only what God loves and God does not love the damned. Second because, God glorifies himself in the punishment of sinners and saints will rejoice in any display of his glory manifested in his justice against the damned.

his love towards being. And if this is the case, then Edwards's account is not really issuant because heaven displays God's fundamental characteristic of love towards being whereas hell does not.

2.2. Does God Love the Damned?

If Edwards is to overcome the issuant objection it will have to be shown that God in some way continues to show love even towards those in hell. Can this be shown? Quite simply the answer is no. Anyone familiar with Edwards's doctrine of hell is familiar with the fact that Edwards thoroughly believes that God hates the damned. In his sermon, "The Eternity of Hell Torments," Edwards argues that if God were overcome by the misery of his creatures in hell and decided to express a hint of mercy towards them (even in reducing their misery), God would not be just. Thus God cannot show a hint of mercy towards those in hell. Yet a lack of mercy need not need be interpreted as God lacking any love for those in hell. One could say God loves those in hell but cannot show mercy because it would be unjust. However, this is not what Edwards says. He explicitly states that God hates those in hell. Consider the following sections of Edwards's sermons on hell:

> See and own therefore, that it would be just with God to hate and loath you, and curse you, and damn you for all you are or have done.[37]

> They receive these testimonies of the hatred of God as assurance that he never intends to deliver them. They know that God is not only angry with them, but hates them; that he hates them with perfect hatred. They know his hatred from what they feel – from the misery that he inflicts.… They know that he hates them with an eternal hatred.[38]

> If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favor, that instead of that he'll only tread you under foot: and though he will know that you can't bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he won't regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he'll crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet, to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.[39]

Given what he says in these and other sermons, it is clear that there is no love whatsoever for those who are in hell. Because this is clearly the case we cannot say that Edwards's account of hell is motivated by, or even includes, the notion of love towards being in general (which is central to the notion of God's communication of his glory), whereas Edwards's account of heaven clearly is motivated by this notion. Thus, given what we have seen we must conclude that Edwards's own account of hell does not meet the requirements necessary to call this an issuant account of hell.

Edwards's failure to provide an issuant account should be seen as problematic for those who desire to hold on to the traditional account and view Edwards's account as a paradigmatic account of the

[37] Edwards, "Wicked Men are the Children of the Devil," 13.

[38] Edwards, "They That Are Gone to Hell," 211–12.

[39] Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards,* vol. 22: *Sermons and Discourses, 1739–1742*, eds. Harry S. Stout, Nathan O. Hatch, and Kyle P. Farley (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 414.

traditional account. Yet we may wonder, does the fact that Edwards fails to meet the issuant account requirements mean his account of hell should be abandoned? I suggest that we can in fact redeem Edwards's doctrine of hell, even though it is not an issuant account. There are resources elsewhere within Edwards's theology which can help us say that God's tendency towards love to being in general is displayed in the existence of both heaven and hell. To see how this is the case we must briefly look at Edwards's doctrine of the blessed state of the redeemed in heaven.

3. An Edwardsean Account of Hell

An Edwardsean account of hell begins with Edwards's account of heaven, and central to Edwards's account of heaven is the concept of *the blessed state.* Edwards's understanding of the blessed state has recently become somewhat of a hot topic.[40] However perhaps more than anyone else, Kyle Strobel has helped make clear what makes Edwards's doctrine of the blessed state distinctive. In his essay, "Jonathan Edwards's Reformed Doctrine of *Theosis*," Strobel argues that the *theosis* tradition has two strands: the first emphasizes the communication of divine attributes, whereas the second focuses on a participation in the relationship among the divine persons. Strobel argues that what is distinctive about Edwards's account of *theosis* is that in Edwards's account it is impossible to pull these two notions apart. "To partake in the divine attributes simply is to partake in the relationship of the divine persons."[41] Thus in Edwards's schema we ought not ask "how is the human 'nature' divinized" rather we should ask "how is the human person ushered into the life of God?" According to Strobel the answer to this question is that "the saints ascend in the person of Christ."[42] He goes on to say that "the union and communion they share with God entails a partaking in his personal attributes of understanding and will (i.e., the divine nature). The saints share in the same beatific gazing that defines the inner (uncreated-life) of God."[43] This experience of the beatific vision is how the saints experience a finite participation in the life of the infinite God. Through this experience of the beatific vision the saints are infinitely united with God and ascend further into the life of God. This is what Edwards seems to indicate in his sermon,

[40] See Michael McClymond, "Salvation as Divinization: Jonathan Edwards, Gregory Palmas and the Theological Uses of Neoplatonism," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver Crisp (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 142–55; Oliver Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 275–85; Kyle Strobel, "Jonathan Edwards and the Polemics of *Theosis*," *HTR* 105 (2012), 259–79; and Kyle Strobel, "Jonathan Edwards's Reformed Doctrine of *Theosis*," *HTR* 109 (2016): 371–99. In recent literature Edwards's doctrine of the blessed state of the redeemed in heaven has been equated with the doctrine of *theosis.* Whether or not Edwards held to a proper doctrine of theosis is a controversial topic. Some have even argued that calling Edwards's doctrine of the blessed state *theosis* is misleading. In order to avoid this controversy, which is beyond the scope of this paper, I will use the terms *theosis* and *blessed state* interchangeably. In addition to addressing the doctrine of *theosis* there is an increasingly large amount of literature on the topic of union within Edwards's theology. For two examples, see Robert Caldwell, *Communion in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit As the Bond of Union in the Theology of Jonathan* Edwards (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006) and W. Ross Hastings, *Jonathan Edwards and the Life of God: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Participation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

[41] Strobel, "Jonathan Edwards's Reformed Doctrine of *Theosis*," 390.

[42] Ibid., 396.

[43] Ibid.

"The Excellency of Christ." There he says that the saints being, in Christ shall, partake with Christ in the infinite intimacy that occurs between the Father and the Son.[44]

For the purposes of this article it is important to stress the fact that Edwards envisions participation in the relationship among the divine persons and the communication of divine attributes as asymptotic; "in eternity glorified creatures eternally increase in union and communion with God but never arrive."[45] Although this becomes clear in his sermon, "The Excellency of Christ," it is even clearer in *The End for Which God Created the World*.[46] For instance, Edwards says that the union experienced between the saint and God becomes more firm and close while the saint becomes more conformed to the divine nature. There is an increasing union and conformity through eternity, one of infinitely strict and perfect nearness, which "will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and Son."[47] Edwards summarizes his understanding of the infinite, progressive, asymptotic understanding of the state of those in heaven as follows:

> Both regards are like two lines which seem at the beginning to be separate, but aim finally to meet in one, both being directed to the same center. And as to the good of the creature itself, if viewed in its whole duration and infinite progression, it must be viewed as infinite and so not only being some communication of God's glory, but as coming nearer and nearer so the same thing in its infinite fullness. The nearer anything comes to infinite, the nearer it come to an identity with God. And if any good, as viewed by God, is beheld as infinite, it can't be viewed as a distinct thing from God's own infinite glory.[48]

At this point one may wonder, what does the infinite, progressive, asymptotic character of the blessed state of the saints in heaven have to do with an Edwardsean doctrine of hell? From what we have seen above, it seems as though God's intended end for the saints is union (a union in the divine nature and divine life) which is eternally progressive. But we may wonder, what is the future for those who have rejected God's intended end for them? It seems reasonable to suppose that the rejection of God's intended end would actually be the opposite of that intended union.

In the Edwards's scheme one may think about heaven in the following way: Heaven is a post-mortem state in which a person comes nearer and nearer to an identity with that which is God, that is,

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[44] See "The Excellency of Christ," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards,* vol. 19*: Sermons and Discourses, 1734–1738*, ed. M. X. Lesser (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 591, in which Edwards says, "The exaltation and honor of the head is not to make a greater distance between the head and the members; but the members have the same relation and union with the head they had before, and are honored with the head; and instead of the distance being greater, the union shall be nearer, and more perfect. When believers get to heaven, Christ will conform them to himself; as he is set down in his Father's throne, so they shall sit down with him on his throne, and shall in their measure be made like him."

[45] Hastings, *Jonathan Edwards and the Life of God*, 314.

[46] In Appendix III of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards,* vol. 8: *Ethical Writings,* ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) Paul Ramsey argues that Jonathan Edwards believed that heaven is a progressive state in two sorts of ways. First, the happiness of heaven is progressive, that is the joys of heaven are ever increasing. Second, the perfection of the saints is progressive. That is, there is an eternal increase of the knowledge and love of God and joy in him in heaven.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 459.

if a person is "in heaven" then that person is on an infinite trajectory being conformed more and more with Being itself.

If we reverse this conception of heaven, then it seems logical to define hell as the opposite: Hell is a post-mortem state in which a person moves further and further away from union with Being itself.[49] As the person moves away from being they progressively lose some of their being which comes in virtue of being united to the source of all being. However, because the trajectory away from Being itself, or away from God, is infinite, that person will never actually completely lose being.[50] The reversal of the Edwards's own understanding of heaven gives us an Edwardsean doctrine of hell, that is an understanding of hell in which the person who is "in hell" or is on the infinite trajectory away from God, never in fact loses communion with Being itself.[51] The person in hell never experiences complete separation from God.

Thus far we have defined an issuant account of hell and have seen that Edwards's own account of hell does not meet the conditions necessary to be called issuant. At the same time, I have suggested that there may be a resource within Edwards's theology which may help us formulate an Edwardsean account of hell which is an issuant account. This "resource" is Edwards's infinite, progressive, asymptotic account of heaven in which heaven is the eternal progression of the saint into the very life, or being, of God himself. I have suggested that it is reasonable to believe that hell might be the very opposite of this notion, namely that hell is an infinite, progressive, asymptotic movement by the reprobate away from the very life, or being of God himself. This seems like a plausible account of what hell might be in an Edwardsean scheme. However, we have yet to see whether this account is issuant and whether it allows us to maintain the traditional account of hell that Edwards and the majority of the church throughout history has affirmed. These two issues will be the focus of the next section.

4. A Defense of the "Edwardsean" Account of Hell

4.1. An Issuant Account

The first object of our concern for this Edwardsean account of hell is whether or not this account meets the condition for being an issuant. Earlier we defined an issuant account as one in which,

> (IH): The characteristic of God's nature which motivates the generation of hell is the same characteristic which generates heaven.

[49] This Edwardsean position has many affinities with Kvanvig's position on hell. Kvanvig says "The choice of heaven or hell is not a choice of residence, as if one were picking between two new countries in which one might wish to reside. The choice of heaven or hell is rather a choice between ultimate union with God and ultimate independence from God. Choosing to aim against ultimate union with him is choosing ultimate independence from him, which is to choose nonexistence" (*The Problem of Hell*, 148).

[50] Once again Kvanvig is helpful for seeing how hell may be an infinite trajectory away from being. In *The Problem of Hell,* he distinguishes between the teleological character of hell and the mechanical character of hell. According to him, the teleological character of hell is properly described as annihilation. Since to choose against heaven is to be headed for nonbeing. However, the teleological character of hell tells us little about implementation, i.e. the mechanical character of hell. Unlike this Edwardsean account of hell Kvanvig believes that some, though very few, may possibly complete there move towards the destination of nonbeing.

[51] In addition to Kvanvig, there are others who hold that hell may be a progressive state, e.g. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, reprint ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001); N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2008), 182–83.

Thus in order for this Edwardsean account of hell to be called an issuant we would have to show that the motivation which generates hell is the same motivation which generates heaven. When examining Edwards's account, we discovered that it was impossible for Edwards's account to meet this criterion. The motivation which generates heaven in Edwards's account is God's love to being in general, manifested as God's desire to communicate his glory. Edwards's motivation for hell is also rooted in God's desire to communicate his glory. However, this desire to communicate his glory is only directed towards those who "see" the damned in hell. Those who are in hell do not experience God's love toward being, rather the damned in hell are the objects of God's hate. So in Edwards's own account the motivation which generates heaven is love, but the motivation which generates hell is hate.[52] This clearly does not meet the necessary conditions posed by IH. However, we may ask, "Does the Edwardsean account fair better?" I believe it does. Consider the following premise, which we can call the "Being Thesis":

> (E) Existence (or being), all things being equal, is always a good, especially when compared to non-being.

This is a premise which has a long history within the theology of the church. Consider Anselm's work in the *Monologion.* Anselm argues that there are various degrees of existence, with the supreme being possessing maximal existence being God himself. He says that "a nature's comparative existence is the comparative similarity of its essence to the supreme essence, in just the same way as its comparative excellence is its comparative proximity, through its natural essence, to superlative excellence."[53] Anselm goes on to say that "for any essence to exist more, and to exist more excellently, is precisely for it to be more similar to that essence which exists and excels supremely."[54] He concludes this section about degrees of existence in relation to the essence of being itself by saying that "it would seem that every created nature stands at a higher stage of essence and worth the more it approximates to the Word."[55]

What Anselm says in this section of the *Monologion* is very similar to what we have seen in our Edwardsean account of heaven and hell. Existence, or being, which infinitely approaches the Being of God, as manifested in union with the Word of God is the ultimate end for created being. This is the ultimate good. However, in the Edwardsean account of hell we know that there will be some humans who do not approach the ultimate good. These people will be moving away from Being. This means that they are moving further and further away from the ultimate good. However, because this is an infinite trajectory, they never will actually lose the good of possessing being or existence. To use Anselm's language, "for any essence to exist less, and to exist less excellently, is precisely for it to be less similar to that essence which exists and excels supremely." Those who are in hell exist less, and less excellently, because they are moving away from Being. However, it should be noted that they still possess the good of existing, or possessing being, even though it is in an impoverished manner. So how does this Anselmian understanding that possessing being, even in an impoverished manner, is a good make for an issuant account of hell? It makes for an issuant account because it is based upon Premise 1—God's primary motivation is love to being in general—and Premise (E)—existence or being is always

[52] In one sense, he can still say that hell is generated by love, however this love is only directed at the saints. The damned are objects of hate.

[53] Anselm of Canterbury, "Monologion," in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and Gillian Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 47.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

a good, especially when compared to non-being. Given (1) and (E) we may say that even in sending some persons to hell, and even though they may experience an infinite trajectory away from being, they are always experiencing the good of existence, which finds its source in its relation to God, the source of all being. To summarize this position, we may say that since possessing being is always a good, even though the person is on an infinite asymptotic trajectory away from Being, this person still has being. In other words because this person will always posses existence, there will never be a time when they will not experience God's loving benevolence towards them.[56] This is clearly an issuant account of hell.

We have said that God's motivation for heaven is based upon God's love toward being in general. Our Edwardsean account of hell is based upon the same motivation, namely that even in hell the damned continue to experience God's love toward being in general. The reason why hell exists in this account is because the damned have separated themselves from God, i.e. they have rejected his intended end of union, yet God in his love towards their being maintains their existence. Hell in this account is a way for God to show love even towards those who have rejected his loving end of union with them. Thus, heaven and hell are motivated by God's love; this Edwardsean account of hell is an issuant account. But does this account meet the conditions for being a legitimate expression of the traditional account?

4.2. The Traditional Account

This Edwardsean account meets each of the four criteria of the traditional account. First, it can affirm the Anti-Universalism Thesis and still claim that hell will be populated. Second, it can also affirm the Existence Thesis. However, the way the Existence Thesis is explained in the Edwardsean account differs from Edwards's account in that Edwards's account says nothing about diminishing being. This is actually a strength of the Edwardsean account. To those who argue that eternal suffering is a cruelty not befitting to God and thus the Non-existence Thesis should not be affirmed,[57] the Edwardsean may reply that even though the damned may suffer eternally she still has being. Given the Being Thesis we can say that God is actually more compassionate by subjecting them to eternal punishment as opposed to annihilation because the damned still possess a good, namely being or existence. To remove the property of existence from the damned would be to remove the final good thing which they possess.[58]

[56] For a similar position, motivated by the existence thesis and other slightly different considerations see Eleonore Stump, "Dante's Hell, Aquinas's Moral Theory, and the Love of God," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16 (1986): 181–98. There she says: "To annihilate them is to eradicate their being; but to eradicate being on Aquinas's theory is a prima facie evil, which an essentially God God could not do unless there were an overriding good which justified it. Given Aquinas's identification of being and goodness, such an overriding good would have to produce or promote being in some way, but it is hard to see how the wholesale annihilation of persons could produce or promote being. In the absence of such an overriding good, however, the annihilation of the damned is not morally justified and thus not an open option for a good God."

[57] This argument goes something like this: 1) Eternal suffering is cruel, 2) To inflict eternal suffering would make God cruel, 3) God is not cruel, therefore 4) God would not inflict the cruelty of eternal suffering.

[58] Assuming the Being Thesis, it is indisputable that those in hell experience a good. However, it could be argued that this account still has a major shortcoming, namely that it is an asymmetrical account of hell. By this I mean that existence in heaven is not only a good, but it is *good for* that person, whereas existence in hell is merely a good and not *good for* that person. One can certainly give some sort of account how being in hell is more than just a good, it is actually *good for* a particular person. For example, consider someone who is so depraved that they have absolutely no conception of what justice is. Being in hell may be *good for* them in that it is only through the firsthand experience of retributive justice that they come to understand what justice actually is. In that case, existence in hell would not only be a good but it would be *good for* them.

In addition to these two thesis of the traditional account we can also easily affirm the No Escape Thesis. Finally, in regards to the Retribution Thesis, not only can we affirm it, but we can affirm it in such a way that is more compelling than Edwards's own account. Much like Edwards's account we can affirm that those in hell still suffer an active punishment at the hands of God and they also suffer passively, that is, they are shut out from experiencing God's glorious presence. However, this account avoids some potential objections to Edwards's account because maintaining that God grants existence even to those in hell allows us to affirm that God retributively punishes the damned all while maintaining that God's character is still gracious even towards the damned. In Edwards's own account of hell grace is replaced with hatred, but in the Edwardsean account God is always a God of grace, even in relation to the damned.

5. Conclusion

For various theological and philosophical reasons Jonathan Edwards's account of hell is often seen as something repulsive by many theologians, pastors, and laypersons. This does not bode well for those who follow Jonathan Edwards's lead in this particular doctrine. However, in this essay we have seen that resources exist within Edwards's own writings to counter some of the objections to the traditional account. By capitalizing upon these resources, we have ended up with an account of hell which is not necessarily Edwards's own account, but is Edwardsean in spirit. Thus, those who desire to follow Edwards's lead in doctrinal issues and are also concerned with contemporary objections to the traditional account have good reason for adopting the constructive account put forth in this essay.

However, those desiring to follow Edwards's lead in doctrinal issues may wonder, "Is this truly Edwardsean?" In other words, "Would Edwards himself affirm this account?" How one answers this question depends on what we mean by saying that Edwards would have affirmed it. If we mean that Edwards would have affirmed it as his own, then the answer would certainly be no. This is not Edwards's own position. However, if by this question we are inquiring into whether Edwards would have recognized it as attempting to affirm his same core ideas, then yes, Edwards may have affirmed it.[59] In fact, it is likely Edwards would have seen this sort of account as a legitimate expression of the traditional account he strongly believed in. It is likely he would have applauded the fact that this account allows us to affirm that in both heaven and hell God is simultaneously a God of glory and a God of grace. And if this is the case, as we have argued it is, then we have provided a redeemed account of the Edwardsean doctrine of hell.[60]

[59] There is precedent for making this claim. Consider the relationship between Edwards's theory of atonement and that proposed by his protégé, Joseph Bellamy. There are significant differences between their accounts, yet as Oliver Crisp points out, "It would appear that Edwards thought that there was sufficient similarity or family resemblance between his doctrine and that of Bellamy for him to endorse Bellamy's work…. He was willing to do so [endorse Bellamy's work] because he saw Bellamy's work as a Reformed cousin to his own, with the same aims and equivalent outcomes, but different accounts of the mechanism by which atonement obtains" (*Jonathan Edwards Among the Theologians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015], 141). I am suggesting that if Edwards would recognize this account of hell as a "cousin" to his own, having the same aims and equivalent outcomes, yet a different mechanism for explaining the character of hell.

[60] I would like to thank Fuller Theological Seminary's Analytic Theology for Theological Formation team (Oliver Crisp, James Arcadi, J. T. Turner, Jordan Wessling, and Jesse Gentile) for their helpful feedback on this essay.

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A Missiology of Excluded Middles: An Analysis of the T4T Scheme for Evangelism and Discipleship

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Abstract: This article analyzes the theological premises of the popular T4T model for evangelism and discipleship. The analysis argues that the T4T scheme largely depends on several false dichotomies that do not engage the Scriptures except in order to proof text and it regularly excludes the middle area that conveys the biblical balance. The result is an overly rigid methodology that undervalues the influence of context in cross-cultural communication. Rather than a theological vision that holds in biblical tension both truth and context, T4T sanctions an inflexible evangelism scheme that is more conducive to receptive audiences and a discipleship model that is more conversant with what is expedient than what is biblical.

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Keller recognizes two kinds of missiological models that represent contrasting shortcomings.[1] On the one hand, there are missionary paradigms that are thoughtful to theological fidelity, but negligent concerning contextual application. On the other hand, there are practical "how-to" models that "implicitly or explicitly" make "near absolutes out of techniques and models that had worked in a certain place at a certain time."[2] They are unduly casual about "laying biblical theological foundations, though virtually all of them cite biblical passages."[3] These practical "how-to" models are deficient both theologically and contextually. Whereas, the evangelical community generally recognizes the problem of models that overstate the importance of context, the danger of schemes that undervalue the influence of context to the spiritual vitality and longevity of the church often go unrecognized.[4]

[1] Timothy Keller, *Center Church*: *Doing Balanced, Gospel Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 14–18.

[2] Ibid., 15.

[3] Ibid., 14.

[4] For the danger that contextually conservative models represent, see Ruth Julian, "Ground Level Contextualization," in *Local Theology for the Global Church: Principles for an Evangelical Approach to Contextualization*, ed. Matthew Cook, Rob Haskell, Ruth Julian, Natee Tanchanpongs (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2010).

When missionary models inadvertently demean the influence of context, the outcome is not dissimilar to the more theologically liberal ones.[5] Without negating the propositional value of Scripture, there is the need for a renewed appreciation of the rich plurality of cultural contexts that requires a robust diversification of approaches exhibited in Scripture. As Keller asserts, "The gospel is not less than a set of revealed propositions (God, sin, Christ, faith), but is *more.* It is also a narrative."[6] In Scripture there is more than one way the gospel is conveyed, and context is a key consideration. Acknowledging the full authority of Scripture entails not only recognizing the content of divine revelation, it also involves appreciating how God conveys his truth to various audiences.

Thus, Keller calls for models founded on theological vision—i.e., models that are biblically sound and contextually adept.[7] Given the extant danger of proof texting and the difficulty of objectivity in interpretation, Christopher Wright cautions, "Rather than finding biblical legitimation for our activities, we should be submitting all our missionary strategy, plans and operations to biblical critique and evaluation."[8] Uncovering the underlying and frequently concealed hermeneutical premises is the first step toward assessing missionary strategies and practices and correcting missiological paradigms that shape and are shaped by shallow or flawed theologies.

To show the importance of the dialogical and requisite relationship between theology and missions and the foundational nature of hermeneutics, this paper examines one recent model of missions that has garnered substantial attention in the contemporary scene—the model known as "Training for Trainers," or "T4T."[9] Rather than offering a comprehensive evaluation of the T4T scheme, this article focuses on four core values that establish the practical agenda for evangelism and discipleship.

I argue that the foundational theological weaknesses of T4T translate into an excessively narrow paradigm that oversimplifies God's vision and the church's calling to the nations and, consequently, constrains the church's ongoing effectiveness in cross-cultural and resistant contexts.[10] This article contends that T4T's approach to the Scriptures at key points is characterized by proof texting and that it depends on a series of false dichotomies that regularly exclude the middle area that conveys the biblical balance.

The goal is fivefold: (1) to demonstrate the integral relationship of theology and missions and the foundational nature of hermeneutics; (2) to expose the subtle but real threat of contextually conservative

[5] Jackson Wu argues that CPM practitioners run the risk of syncretism by unwittingly importing foreign methods ("The Influence of Culture on the Evolution of Mission Methods: Using Church Planting Movements as a Case Study," *Global Missiology* 1.12 [October 2014], http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/1712/3797).

[6] Tim Keller, "The Gospel and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World," in *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 110.

[7] Keller, *Center Church,* 17. For the idea of "theological vision," see Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

[8] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 37.

[9] The T4T scheme is published in Steve Smith, *T4T: A Discipleship ReRevolution* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2011).

[10] Wu has a similar concern to develop biblically faithful and contextually sensitive missiologies. His astute assessment exposes CPM's unsound use of Scripture. See Jackson Wu, "There are No Church Planting Movements in the Bible: Why Biblical Exegesis and Missiological Methods Cannot Be Separated," *Global Missiology* 1.12 (October 2014), http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/1711.

models like T4T to the spiritual vitality and longevity of the church; (3) to reverse the faulty assumption that there exists a universal method adequate for every context; (4) to substantiate the need for fuller reflection on context and for new models that are more conversant with the deeper and more formative issues related to worldview; and (5) to contend for models that are both faithful to Scripture and informed by context.

The intent is not to disparage the T4T model altogether or to imply that there are no positive contributions the model has contributed to the missiological field.[11] Rather, I seek to encourage healthy and honest dialogue and to offer corrective suggestions that will hopefully advance the cause of Christ for the nations.

1. T4T's Theology of Evangelism

Influenced by David Garrison's "Church Planting Movement" (CPM) scheme and its successful application in an urban area in Southern Asia, missionary Steve Smith employed the paradigm to his context in another part of Asia.[12] This experience led to the systemization of the T4T process.

In Smith's own words, "T4T is an all-inclusive process of training believers over the course of 12–18 months to witness to the lost and train new believers to form reproducing discipleship communities by generation."[13] Smith affirms that T4T is "a return to the original discipleship revolution of the New Testament."[14] The emphasis is on process, which is focused on "training believers to witness and to start reproducing discipleship communities."[15] The complete process is sequential and ongoing and encompasses four areas, commonly referred to as the "Four Fields."[16] These four fields became the headings for the major components of the process: evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and leadership development.[17]

T4T's core values define both the direction and theology of the entire process. This paper will focus on four of these: broad and indiscriminate seed sowing, the gospel as the filter for finding receptivity, obedience-based discipleship, and the ministry of the Spirit as Teacher. The first two values are reciprocal

[11] In his appreciative and critical assessment of CPM, John Massey lists seven strengths of CPM, five of which apply to T4T: (1) the emphasis on reaching unreached people groups protects against complacency; (2) it avoids an unhealthy dependence on the missionary; (3) it contends for theological systems of delivery that are appropriate to the context; (4) it calls for the mobilization of all believers; (5) it calls for greater intentionality in engaging the lost ("Wrinkling Time in the Missionary Task: A Theological Review of Church Planting Movements Methodology," *SwJT* 55 [2012]: 101–2).

[12] See David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Monument, CO: WIGTake, 2003). For other works on CPM methodology, see Steve Addison, *Movements that Change the World: Five Keys to Spreading the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), and the collection of CPM articles in *Missions Frontiers* 33.2 (March–April 2001) entitled, "Church Planting Movements: Rapidly Multiplying Faith Communities."

[13] Smith, *T4T,* 36.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 44.

[16] See: Steve Smith, "The Basic CPM Plan and T4T," http://t4tonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/1-The-Basic-CPM-Plan-and-T4T.pdf. Nathan Shank has popularized the Four Fields concept in "Four Fields Strategy Handbook," https://noplaceleftworld.com/2016/02/07/four-fields-strategy-handbook/.

[17] Smith, *T4T,* 91–92.

and relate to the field of evangelism, while the latter two deal with the discipleship field. Thus, this paper will interact with these four core values in order to assess T4T's basic theology of evangelism and discipleship.

1.1. Broad and Indiscriminate Seed Sowing

"How many people will hear the gospel today?"[18] That question drives the T4T evangelism scheme. If any single value epitomizes T4T's concept of evangelism, broad seed sowing is it. Although everyone should agree on the objective of establishing the church extensively, whether or not this necessarily implies the practice of broad scale evangelism will depend on the theological conception of evangelism. The concern here is T4T's unique construal of the practice of evangelism as *indiscriminate* seed sowing.

T4T deduces from the shared common goal of establishing the kingdom extensively the priority of broad and undifferentiating or uncritical evangelism. Smith affirms, "Share with everybody, because you never know whom God will choose."[19] Again, "We typically choose whom we want to share the gospel with. We try to pre-judge who might accept it. But God said to share with everyone. *We cannot predict who will accept the gospel and whom God will use to birth a movement.*"[20]

However, the fact of the unpredictability of the Spirit does not logically infer the need for indiscriminate evangelism. Man's incapacity to discern God's sovereign plan is not an argument for random seed sowing. Paul's clear pattern of going to strategic cities along the Roman roads in Asia Minor argues otherwise.[21] Although the apostle was flexible and open to the Spirit, he had a discernible strategy for sowing.[22]

Jesus instructed his disciples to exercise discernment concerning the receptivity of their audience (cf. Matt 7:6). Concerning this passage, R. T. France asserts, "There may nonetheless be times and situations when a responsible assessment of the likely response requires the disciple's instinctive generosity to be limited, so that holy things are not brought into contempt."[23] Thus, even if rejection of the Word is a major factor in our discernment, Brunner's assessment is insightful:

> There is a form of evangelism that urges Christians to use every opportunity to share the gospel. Unfortunately, insensitive evangelism often proves harmful not only to the obdurate whose heart is hardened by the undifferentiating evangelist, but harmful also to the gospel that is force-fed.... Aggressive evangelism gets converts and counts them,

[18] Ibid., 47.

[19] Ibid., 96.

[20] Ibid., 35. The emphasis in practice is looking for the "man of peace." He is found through sharing the gospel.

[21] Although Schnabel argues that it is a significant overstatement to say, "Paul's passion was the planting of churches in metropolitan centers or in 'strategic cities' of the Roman Empire," he affirms, "Paul certainly focused on cities rather than on villages." Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 281–82.

[22] For Paul's prioritization of cities, see David Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 97.

[23] France, Gospel of Matthew, 277.

> but we are never able to count those turned away from the gospel for the numbers of the offended are never tallied.[24]

The biblical basis for T4T's practice of indiscriminate seed sowing is deduced essentially from two passages: the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20 and the parable of the seed and the sower in Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23. The Great Commission is interpreted as a command to take the gospel to "*everyone*."[25] Thus the strategy of "indiscriminate seed sowing" is grounded in an interpretive tactic that involves the subtle shifting of Matthew's wording "*all nations*" in the original to "*everyone.*" The gloss helps build a better case for the urgency of getting the gospel out quickly and randomly. This cursory reading "*everyone*" for the Greek πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (all nations) overlooks an important aspect related to Matthew's version of the Great Commission.

The two primary interpretive options for "*all nations*" are either "Gentiles" or "peoples," with the latter being equivalent to ethnic groups.[26] The former would be understood as a direct confrontation to the extreme ethno-centricity of the Jewish people in the first-century and would highlight the surprising distinction of the church as God's new covenant people. The second option, however, is preferable since Matthew uses the Greek term ἔθνη to include Jews (cf. 24:9, 14; 25:32).[27] Thus, France argues

> In each case we have seen that the emphasis falls positively on the universal scope of Jesus' mission rather than negatively on "Gentiles" as opposed to Jews. Some have argued for such a restrictive sense here, and have suggested that Matthew has reached the point of giving up on the Jewish mission and urging the church to go instead to "all the Gentiles." But nothing in the text indicates that; the suggestion depends on the fact that *ta ethne* can mean Gentiles as opposed to Jews (as in 6:32; 10:5, 18; 20:19), but that is a specialized use which does not apply to all Matthew's uses of *ethnos*, and is most unlikely when *ta ethne* is qualified by *panta.*[28]

The essential function of "*all nations*" is to clarify the *worldwide* scope of the church's mission. The biblical theology conjoined to the phrase is too important to be cursorily translated "*everyone*." The Great Commission in Matthew is not the first time or the last time Scripture defines God's vision for his world's host of ethnicities. The original expression occurs in the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:3. There, God covenanted with Abraham to make him a blessing to "*all nations*."[29] France sees in Jesus's

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[24] F. D. Brunner, *The Christbook* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 275–76, cited by Blomberg, *Matthew*, 129. Similarly, R. T. France asserts, "There may nonetheless be times and situations when a responsible assessment of the likely response requires the disciple's instinctive generosity to be limited, so that holy things are not brought into contempt" (*The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 277).

[25] Smith, *T4T,* 48–49.

[26] Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 431.

[27] Ibid. Cf. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 99, 104.

[28] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1114. D. A. Carson also refers to the echo of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, that in him all nations would be blessed, and that blessing in no way excluded Israel itself ("Matthew," in *Matthew and Mark*, ed. Tremper Longman, III and David E. Garland, Revised Expositor's Bible Commentary 9 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 667).

[29] Concerning this verse Walter C. Kaiser affirms, "The expression 'all peoples' did not mean that every person on earth would universally believe in the Messiah, but that every ethnic group would receive this blessing" (*Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], 8).

commission an echo to Daniel 7:14: "To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him."[30] Revelation 7:9 indicates the future historical fulfillment of this covenant: "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every *nation*, … standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

It is interesting that in both God's prospective looking ahead through the Abrahamic covenant and in his retrospective view from the vantage point of the fulfillment of this covenant in Revelation, he sees people in association with their ethnic identities—i.e., he views them corporately, without overlooking their individuality. The superficial reading "*everyone*" disregards this important biblical theology related to πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. From the beginning of the canon to its end, God's vision has been for the nations of the world.

The phrase connects the universal scope of the commission to the nations. This subtle nuance supports an essential aspect of a biblical theology of missions—i.e., the need for the contextualization of the gospel. The commission is concentrated on people as part of the nations, not as isolated individuals. This is not to say we are not concerned for individuals; rather, our concern for individuals recognizes their unique history and context. In this way Scripture affirms the decisive influence of all of the socio-cultural beliefs and values of the world's ethnicities in the fulfillment of the Commission. These underlying cultural beliefs, values, and presuppositions constitute an indispensable consideration in the implementation of evangelism. Since the ethnicities define the scope of God for the establishment of his kingdom, evangelism should be anything but indiscriminate.

The second primary text to which T4T appeals for its theology of indiscriminate seed sowing is the parable of the sower and the soils in Matthew 13. Based on the parable Smith affirms: "It is impossible to predict where the good soil will be—only God knows. We only discover the good soil by sowing the gospel message to a lot of people!"[31] Similarly, "We need methods that enable us to sow the gospel to a great number of people, not pre-judging who will respond, so that we find the fruitful ones."[32]

The flaw of the argument is hermeneutical. The parable's teaching is that comparatively few people will become spiritually fruitful for the kingdom.[33] Concerning this context, Blomberg affirms that "the parables appear here as an important explanation of why the response to Jesus is becoming increasingly polarized and as a prediction of how that polarization will continue to grow."[34] The purpose was that Jesus wanted to expunge the faulty existing Jewish expectation that when the Messiah comes, the entire nation of Israel will join him in his reign. This parable "describes how the crowds hear and respond to his teaching."[35] Even though the ultimate power is in the seed, the soil is nevertheless a critical factor. Rather than teaching about the method or practice of seed sowing, it is a lesson about the variant responses to the gospel. The T4T model undervalues the importance of context in evangelism and proof texts this parable to support its indiscriminate approach.

[30] See France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1112. He sees here the culmination of the theme of kingship, which runs throughout the gospel (Ibid., 1113).

[31] Smith, *T4T,* 68.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Although scholarship has generally rejected the rigid view that parables teach only one point, Blomberg argues that parables are "limited allegories and that we may usually associate one main point with each main character" (*Matthew*, 211–12).

[34] Ibid., 212.

[35] Ibid., 214.

My argument against T4T's emphasis on indiscriminate seed sowing requires three qualifications. First, although T4T is not against relational evangelism *per se,* my contention is that relationship is more important in the early stages of cross-cultural situations than T4T implies. In short, T4T's strong emphasis on indiscriminate evangelism devalues the need for establishing trust and for learning how to communicate effectively in *cross-cultural* situations. This is especially important in the initial stages of crossing cultures and in more resistant places. Although God can give favor without a relational foundation in culturally distant areas, good strategy should not assume it.

Second, it is important to affirm that indiscriminate seed sowing can be contextually sensitive. Thus, I am not arguing against all forms of "cold calls" in evangelism. I am arguing primarily for a slower model in the early stages of cross-cultural evangelism.[36] Indiscriminate evangelism becomes less of an issue in near- or same-cultural contexts. T4T does not make this distinction clear and its emphasis on rapidity and getting quickly to the gospel is an underestimated problem in cross-cultural and more resistant contexts.[37]

The third qualification relates to the conception of the nature of evangelism itself, and that leads us to the theological premise of T4T's value of indiscriminate seed sowing—i.e., the gospel as the filter for receptivity.

1.2. The Gospel as the Filter for Receptivity

The theological premise of T4T's random methodology of evangelism is its core belief that the gospel is the filter for receptivity. If the gospel is the filter for receptivity, then it follows that it should be sown indiscriminately. Smith affirms, "It is impossible to predict where the good soil will be—only God knows. We only discover the good soil by sowing the gospel message to a lot of people!"[38] Again, "You cannot predict which kind of lost people will prove to be people of peace. So, you just sow the gospel a lot to find them."[39] The assertion is that gauging the openness of the listener is not possible and consequently not the responsibility of the evangelist. The gospel alone determines his level of receptivity. The gospel as the filter for receptive people is the basic premise of the recommended witnessing tool "Any-3."[40]

In order to substantiate the premise that the gospel is the filter, Smith constructs a dichotomy between bold and indiscriminate witnessing on the one side, and on the other side, timid and passive witness in the context of long-standing relationships. He writes:

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[36] Even though Jerry Trousdale's scheme mirrors T4T in its pragmatism, its faulty hermeneutic, and, as we will see below, its flawed conception of discipleship, it at least differs in the early stages of evangelism. Trousdale indicates a greater appreciation for the complexity of cross-cultural communication. He suggests, "go slow at first in order to go faster," and "focus on a few in order to win many" (*Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012], 40).

[37] Recognizing the vagueness of the term "resistant peoples," Timothy Tennent proposes four basic categories of resistance: cultural, theological, ethnic, and political. Summarized in Stan Guthrie, "Global Report: Just Saying No," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (April 1998), https://www.emqonline.com/node/1440.

[38] Smith, *T4T,* 68.

[39] Ibid., 116.

[40] Mike Shipman, *Any-3: Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime: Win Muslims to Christ Now!* (Monument, CO: WigTake Resources, 2013); cf. Smith, *T4T,* 209.

> We don't build relationships with just a few lost people and then months or years later finally reveal to them that we are believers and begin to share the gospel. Rather, we use a gospel witness to filter our relationships, looking for the people whom the Holy Spirit is already attacking. Then we build relationships with them as we guide them into the kingdom.[41]

Smith leaves out an entire middle area between the two extremes—i.e., sharing Christ boldly, sometimes early, and with cultural acuity in the context of relationships. It is possible to be intentional and active in sharing, but to do it in a more relational and culturally conversant manner. Rejecting a passive and lethargic witnessing scheme does not automatically infer an indiscriminate and aggressive one.

Although Smith affirms the need to adapt the witness to the context, his suggested variations are perfunctory. For instance, regarding the Any-3 model, Smith writes, "This bridge has also been used with Hindus, Buddhists, and atheists. With little adjustment it works well in a number of contexts."[42] Smith affirms addressing the basic worldview of the context, but he oversimplifies it.[43] T4T unintentionally discounts the reality that some people who reject an abrupt and uniform presentation of the gospel may nevertheless be open to the gospel when it is conveyed in a more culturally informed manner and in the context of a relationship of trust.

To depict T4T's evangelism approach as abrupt and uniform is fair. The Any-3 approach is about getting to the gospel quickly and a core value of T4T is *rapidly* reproducing disciples.[44] Smith affirms that most CPMs are uniform in "the use of ONE simple gospel presentation and a call to commitment that any new believer can reproduce. Not three. Not two. One."[45] I recognize the strategic value of mastering a proven approach, especially for new believers. The point is, however, that the T4T approach portrays evangelism as a methodologically unvarying endeavor and insufficiently recognizes the importance for contextual diversification.

Good contextualization requires more than translating terms into another language or transferring the same scheme into a wholly different context based on a dissimilar worldview. Jackson Wu shows that contextualization entails more than finding a redemptive analogy or a contextually appropriate way to do church. He develops a holistic view of contextualization that aims for the transformation of worldview and views the process as more than a tool for communication and the gospel as more than a series of propositions.[46]

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[41] Smith, *T4T*, 76.

[42] Ibid., 209.

[43] Smith writes, "What is good news for animists? Jesus' power over the spirits. What is good news for Buddhists and Hindus? Jesus' power to break the cycles of rebirth and bring them to heaven. What is good news for Muslims and Jews? Jesus has the ability to break the system of their futile attempt to gain salvation through good works and give true salvation. What is good news for post-moderns? Jesus offers true, eternal relevance" (ibid., 217).

[44] For the T4T value of rapidity and how it drives the process, see Massey, "Wrinkling Time in the Missionary Task," 100–37.

[45] Smith, *T4T,* 218.

[46] Jackson Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015).

This T4T premise underestimates the formative influence of worldview and discounts a major anthropological factor related to decision-making. The principle is referred to in the sociological realm as the "sociology of knowledge."[47] People do not make decisions, especially life changing ones, in a vacuum, as isolated individuals, completely disconnected from the sociology of their environment. Choices people make are filtered through the network of all the informative presuppositions, beliefs, and values of a worldview that has been shaped by life experience, by culture, and by their social context. Life changing decisions normally occur in the context of relationships of trust.[48]

We need to recognize the tension in the concern for appropriate contextualization. On the one hand, we can overestimate the importance of culture in our approach, thereby minimizing the principal issue of man's sinful rejection of God. "This would imply," as Van Engen rightly affirms, "that a missiological discussion of 'receptivity/resistance' should deal primarily with issues of spirituality, theology and reconciliation with God, self, others, and the world, and secondarily with matters of worldview, sociology, contextualization or strategy."[49] However, without disaffirming this priority, we need to recognize the other side of the tension. As Van Engen correctly asserts:

> Just because there is a negative response to my particular approach or message may not necessarily mean the receptor group is 'resistant' in the sense of saying 'no' to God. Their negative response to my instrumentality may, in fact, be more a commentary on my own ineffectiveness, sinfulness, foreignness, or inappropriate-ness as a bearer of the Good News. My church or agency and I may be bad news, rather than Good News.[50]

Hiebert has conclusively shown the problems inherent with undervaluing context.[51] Also, Keller affirms, "Every culture hostile to Christianity holds to a set of 'common-sense' beliefs that automatically make Christianity seem implausible to people." Thus, our proclamation of the gospel must be "hooked into the baseline cultural narratives" to be effective.[52]

Trousdale's scheme, though similar to T4T in its excessive pragmatism, invalid hermeneutic, and shallow contextualization, recognizes the force of this sociological factor for evangelism across cultures.[53] Trousdale recommends sharing

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[47] See Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1967).

[48] This is not to deny extraordinary examples; rather, it is to argue that good strategy should not assume the extraordinary.

[49] Charles Van Engen, "Theological Reflection with Regard to the Resistant," cited in Guthrie, "Global Report," https://www.emqonline.com/node/1440.

[50] Ibid.

[51] See Paul Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle." *Missiology* 10 (1982): 35–48. Moreover, he explicates how cultures differ in categorizing people into sets and how that influences our orientation toward evangelism and discipleship. See *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 107–36; *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 33–37, 308–10.

[52] Tim Keller, "Deconstructing Defeater Beliefs," *Evangelicals Now* (October 2007), https://www.e-n.org.uk/2007/10/features/deconstructing-defeater-beliefs/.

[53] For a critique of Trousdale's hermeneutics, see: Jeff Morten, "Book Review: Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus" in *Biblical Missiology* (October 2012), http://biblicalmissiology.org/2012/10/08/book-review-miraculous-movements-how-hundreds-of-thousands-of-mus-

> only when and where people are ready to hear.... *Selective exposure* is a problem; people don't listen to what they don't want to hear. *Selective perception* is a problem; people reinterpret what they do hear to align with their presuppositions. And *selective memory* is a problem; people often forget what they know but don't agree with."[54]

Although the gospel is the power of God and the Spirit is free and sovereign to override the powerful influence of culture, a comprehensive evangelistic strategy should not assume culture. God normally chooses to work through the means of culture in order to turn it toward Christ. The issue here is the definite article in the premise—i.e., "the gospel is *the* filter." Although it cannot be denied that the gospel functions as a filter for receptive people, the claim begs the question of contextualization, since not every presentation of the gospel will filter for every context.

While T4T affirms varying the approach according to context, my argument is that its emphasis on getting quickly to the gospel undervalues the importance and meaning of contextualization in evangelism across cultures and in resistant areas. Furthermore, whether the gospel is the *only*, or even the best filter in every context is problematic. I am arguing for a broader conception of the nature of evangelism itself than what T4T suggests.

Although the goal in evangelism is confession of faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, there are many ways to establish the plausibility of that message. Moreover, the process of evangelism may include preliminary work that moves the listener incrementally toward that understanding.[55] Keller lays out four stages that people go through to come from complete ignorance of the gospel to full embrace and affirms that the problem with modern evangelism programs is that they tend to jump through the stages too quickly.[56] The problem with this approach, according to Keller, is that "until people's minds and worldviews have been prepared, they hear you say 'sin' and 'grace' and even 'God' in terms in their own categories. By going too quickly ... you guarantee that they will misunderstand what you are saying."[57]

Jesus portrayed the process as inclusive of the stages of sowing and reaping, and he described the sowing process as the "hard work" (John 4:36–38). T4T's theology of the gospel as *the* filter conflates both stages into one and implies an exclusive concern to be the reapers.

Scripture indicates this view of evangelism as a process. The parables in Matthew 13 were spoken to the crowd (v. 2), but did not state the gospel explicitly or in confessional terms. Jesus used parables as filters for receptivity (cf. Matt 13:10–12). France explains why parables are an appropriate medium for the proclamation of the message:

> It is because people are so different, and react so differently. A parable is a story or epigraph which does not carry its meaning on the surface. It challenges the hearer

lims-are-falling-in-love-with-jesus/; Darren Carlson, "Review of J. Trousdale: Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus," *Journal of Global Christianity* 1.2 (2015): 95–99, http://trainingleadersinternational.org/jgc/august-2015.

[54] Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements*, 41.

[55] Similarly, Wu argues that the CPM paradigm "overlooks the profound influence of culture and context," and that "people need time to see the big picture" ("The Influence of Culture on the Evolution of Mission Methods").

[56] Tim Keller, "The Gospel and the Supremacy of Christ," 115. He labels the stages: (1) intelligibility, (2) credibility, (3) plausibility, and (4) intimacy, with the latter representing conversion.

[57] Ibid.

> to engage with it in an educational process which, if the hearer brings to it the right attitude and openness, will result in their perceiving and responding to the truth. But it can equally be resisted, and dismissed as a mere story. So parables, given without explanation, are open-ended.[58]

Jesus healed the centurion without giving him the plan of salvation (Matt 8:13). Even the Sermon on the Mount could be considered evangelistic in the sense that though intended as instruction for his disciples, the crowds were eavesdropping (Matt 5:1).[59] It is laced with the gospel throughout, but in an implicit rather than explicit manner.

Three events in Luke 4–5 further demonstrate Jesus's conception of the evangelism process as incremental. At the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30), Jesus deliberately provoked the wrath of his audience, thereby declining a prime opportunity to explain the gospel explicitly to what appeared to be a receptive audience. Then, in successive accounts Jesus disallowed the disclosure of his identity as the Messiah because of the false expectations attached to the concept (cf. 4:34, 42; 5:14). Regardless of the reasons for quelling testimony about his identity, Jesus discerned the need for a more discrete approach.[60] In short, he knew the people needed time before they could receive the message of his identity. In each of these incidents, the filter was not a gospel presentation, but a culturally-informed response crafted to address important preconceptions and allow for a period of gestation that would lead to a later, more conclusive encounter.

The apostles' concern to contextualize their witness in Scripture affirms their high regard for establishing credibility with their audience. Certainly this can happen quickly, but the fact that there are instances in Scripture where the audience is brought quickly to a point of decision is not necessarily a compelling argument, as T4T suggests, for an indiscriminate approach *in every context*. This is an important hermeneutical oversimplification in the T4T scheme and it concerns T4T's strong disavowal of the natural tendency to discern receptivity.

Paul's practice in Acts of getting to the gospel quickly in his witnessing encounters needs to be qualified in three ways. First, his approach is more contextually conversant than the way that T4T suggests.[61] T4T assumes either exceptional gifting in cross-cultural evangelism or unique cultural acuity. A survey of Paul's encounters with Jews in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (13:13–52), with pagans at Lystra (14:8–18), and with Greeks in Athens (17:16–34) indicates that Paul approached his audiences with greater cultural insight and adeptness than the T4T scheme requires. These encounters also indicate that Paul's message had more force in the culturally near encounter at Antioch than it did in the culturally distant locations of Lystra and Athens.[62]

To deduce that a basically uniform presentation with slight variation is enough to discern those who are receptive is an oversimplification of contextualization. T4T's idea of contextualization is insufficient, dealing primarily with surface level issues and limited to the propositional plane. It is intriguing that

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[58] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 509.

[59] Ibid., 156.

[60] Whether Jesus silences the leper's testimony out of his concern to "quell excessive excitement about his healing ministry" or to wait "until the priest formally declares him clean" is debatable. Darrell Bock, *Luke,* IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 102–3.

[61] See footnotes 41 and 42 above.

[62] Comparing the responses of each encounter makes this explicit.

Paul's earlier proclamations at Athens and at Lystra are misunderstood and required extensive follow-up.[63] Quickly getting to the gospel to discern receptivity may be appropriate in culturally near contexts, but in culturally distant situations it is more vulnerable to misunderstanding and extensive follow-up will be more critical. As we will see below, T4T discounts this altogether. Moreover, given Paul's exceptional gifting and cross-cultural adeptness, as well as other factors such as the common Greek language, Paul's Roman citizenship, and Jewish ancestry, this pattern should not be considered uniform without condition. This leads to the next qualification.

Second, a discernable pattern in Acts does not automatically infer a uniform application. The issue here relates to the functional authority of Scripture, particularly with regard to the narrative portions like Acts. The question is, how can a book that is mostly narrative function authoritatively? The assumption in T4T is that patterns in the narrative suggest uniform application.[64] This is true with certain qualifications. Patterns suggest similar application *in comparable contexts*. Thus, the fact that Paul gets quickly to the gospel in multiple situations in Acts is not sufficient to establish a normative application, unless the contexts are analogous.[65]

Furthermore, Acts is a survey of the initial expansion of the early Church. It is not a comprehensive instruction manual on how to start churches. There are a lot of details that Luke cannot cover in this historical overview. As Gempf astutely notes:

> [P]erhaps the hardest thing to reconcile with the Missionary Primer theory is that there is no case in Acts in which we have an evangelistic 'first contact' sermon to pagan Gentiles. In both Lystra and Athens, as presumably elsewhere, Luke knows that the apostles gave such a message, but he only repeats the follow-up talk intended to clarify misunderstandings.[66]

Principles and practices can be gleaned, but we should be cautious about reading it prescriptively given the enormous amount of information that we do not have about how Paul engaged people in every situation. Based on the "missing evangelistic message" at Lystra, for instance, Gempf concludes that "Luke does not intend his book to be a primer on 'How to Evangelise,' and even for him, language and culture are evidently still barriers that need to be overcome."[67]

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[63] For the argument of methodological development in Paul's approach, resulting in more extended stays in Ephesus and Corinth, See Philip H. Towner, 'Mission Practice and Theology under Construction (Acts 18–20) in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts,* eds. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 417–36.

[64] Similarly, Trousdale's hermeneutical approach errs in assuming that biblical narratives are normative without qualification. For instance, he suggests Jesus's instructions to his disciples in Matthew 10 and Luke 10 should be taken as commands for today (*Miraculous Movements*, 90).

[65] Wu argues that the CPM paradigm underestimates the influence of culture and context. He notes that Paul's ministry among the Gentiles had an advantage of targeting people who were already under the influence of Judaism and that those unexposed were slower to respond ("The Influence of Culture on the Evolution of Mission Methods").

[66] Conrad Gempf, "Mission and Misunderstanding: Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (Acts 14:8–20), in *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*, ed. Antony Billington, Tony Lane, and Max Turner (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 68.

[67] Ibid., 69.

Third, it is not explicit that Paul got to the gospel quickly in every instance, and there is evidence elsewhere the other way. It is noteworthy that Paul's presentation of the gospel at Lystra is not Christological as at Antioch, but theological, "explaining the sovereignty of the one true God in whom they believe."[68] We read that Paul spent three months in the synagogue in Ephesus, "reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:9). Then he "continued for two years," reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus" (19:10). The explanation for the paucity of material for prolonged evangelistic encounters is explained by the fact that writing about them would be problematic for Luke's purposes. The nature of the story lends itself to short, episodal events.[69]

Cultural insiders are able to establish credibility and trust much more quickly than cultural outsiders. Although T4T affirms finding cultural bridges, it devalues the influence of context in communication. The result is an excessively narrow view of evangelism, which constrains the church's ability to translate the message across cultures and especially among more resistant peoples.

2. T4T's Theology of Discipleship

There are two theological premises that drive T4T's practice of discipleship: obedience-based discipleship and the ministry of the Spirit as Teacher. Similar to the dual premises undergirding T4T's evangelism scheme, both of these premises rely on a portrayal of the biblical data as a choice between two extremes, excluding a middle area altogether—what is commonly referred to as "the fallacy of the excluded middle."

2.1. Obedience-Based Discipleship

Smith affirms, "T4T is built on an obedience-based discipleship model," since "obedience is the mark of true discipleship."[70] The obedience to which T4T refers is inclusive of all the commands of Christ, but witnessing becomes the central focus of T4T, since the objective is to train believers to witness to the lost. "Every disciple is to learn how to obey Jesus' commands, including witnessing to others and then training these new believers to repeat the process."[71]

The emphasis on obedience is T4T's rejoinder to what Smith perceives as an over-emphasis on knowledge by the institutional form. The T4T scheme is dependent on the dichotomy between the passivity that characterizes knowledge-based discipleship models of institutional churches and the more active T4T obedience-based model. The dichotomy is seen in several affirmations:

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[68] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 607.

[69] Credit for this idea goes to Tony Woods.

[70] Smith, *T4T,* 71. The concept of obedience-based discipleship is trending. See: The Discovery Bible Study (DBS) approach endorses the same scheme. See David Watson, *Obedience Based Discipleship: Field Testing Guide* (Texas, 2008), http://internationalproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Discovery-Bible-Studies-David-L.-Watson.pdf. Trousdale's core principles move in the same direction. He suggests that Jesus's model of discipleship is concerned with discovering and obeying, not teaching and knowledge. He affirms that "discipleship requires a daily choice to intentionally and consistently obey God's will," and "coach lost people from the beginning to discover and obey biblical truth" (*Miraculous Movements*, 42, 44).

[71] Smith, *T4T,* 35.

- "In some Christian ministry, we assess how mature a believer is based on *how much he knows.* But the New Testament assesses the maturity of a believer based on *how much he obeys.*"
- "Some Christians emphasize Bible study, but not obedience to the Word."
- "Teaching conveys the idea of transferring knowledge, but training conveys the idea of changing behavior."
- "A new believer in a CPM may not know as much of the Bible as the knowledge-based disciple, yet his value is to obey everything he knows."[72]

The devaluation of Bible knowledge, Bible study, and Bible teaching in T4T is subtle, but apparent. For instance, Smith asserts, "He taught, but he taught them how to listen."[73] The content of Scripture is not valued except that which can be directly obeyed.[74] Although Smith makes a couple of passing statements affirming biblical content, they are effectively buried by the avalanche of disparaging statements elsewhere. My argument is that the importance of Bible knowledge and teaching is understated in T4T.

There are three important errors made by this false dichotomy. First, although Scripture does warn against knowledge without obedience, it does not demean knowledge in the way that T4T does. For Paul, correct doctrine is the foundation for practice and knowledge is the ground for hope (Rom 5:3) and spiritual freedom (Rom 6:3, 6, 9, 16). Schnabel notes that Paul uses the phrase "do you not know" fourteen times referring to both theological information and ethical knowledge.[75]

Second, there is a biblical alternative to T4T's obedience-based discipleship model and to the knowledge-based discipleship models that Smith portrays. It is what Zane Pratt calls "Gospel-based discipleship."[76] Pratt rightly argues that the biblical view of discipleship is motivated by grace, not by obedience to his commands. The difference is subtle, but enormous. In fact, the gospel depends on this difference. The stress on obedience in the T4T scheme in effect makes it the driving motive of the Christian life, rather than the grace of God.

Third, this dichotomy demeans all of the content of Scripture that cannot be directly applied or obeyed, and it oversimplifies the process of the application of Scripture.[77] The large majority of Scripture, in fact, is not intended for direct application. The impression T4T gives is that only that which can be directly applied is of value. To abstract behavioral and attitudinal precepts outside of the story of Scripture is in effect to misread it. Correctly applying Scripture is complicated by the fact of the historical gap between its original setting and the contemporary reader. Thus, Strauss rightly cautions

[72] Ibid., 79, 134, 43, 79.

[73] Ibid., 78. The same depreciation appears in David Watson's discipleship material. He writes, "Knowledge of God's Word must translate into obedience, or it is wasted" (*Discovering God Field Testing Guide* [Texas, 2008], 11, http://worldmissionsevangelism.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/2008-Discovering-God-2.0.pdf).

[74] "The goal of the middle third is to give the trainees enough biblical content to obey and pass on." Again, "The goal is to develop a trainer, not simply get through the content." Smith, *T4T,* 135–36.

[75] Rom 6:3, 16; 7:1; 11:2; 1 Cor 3:16; 5:2; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary,* 420.

[76] Zane Pratt, "Obedience-Based Discipleship," *Global Missiology* 4.12 (2015): 10, http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/1811/4017.

[77] The application of Scripture is complicated because "not every direct command found in the Bible is directly relevant for us today" and because "the Bible does not directly address many of the ethical issues facing modern civilization." Andreas J. Kostenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 786.

that a "face value" reading of the text underappreciates the fact that "we are all products of our culture, background and worldview."[78]

2.2. The Spirit as Teacher

The second theological premise for T4T's model of discipleship is the idea of the Spirit as Teacher. The theological importance of this premise is evident in Smith's assertion, "Essentially T4T is a process of helping disciples depend on the Spirit as their Teacher."[79] Smith affirms,

> Many of our current discipleship models *overly* depend on our frequent and continued physical presence with our new disciples. But this neglects a critical teaching about the Spirit. After the Spirit has come, our physical presence is not nearly as essential. Personal involvement is not unimportant. But we need a discipleship process more akin to post-Pentecost that depends less on human intervention. It is a model that takes the great risk of depending on the presence of the Spirit in the life of the new believers.[80]

Smith differentiates between Jesus's model of discipleship that depended on his physical presence and what he calls "post-Pentecost" models of discipleship that relied on the Spirit. He laments that most churches ignorantly follow Jesus's pre-Pentecost model that relies on the physical presence of the teacher, not realizing that they have the Spirit.[81] Paul's teaching in essence was teaching them to rely on the Spirit, and not so much on learning the theological content or the rationale of Christian faith. Smith asserts, "This does not mean that Paul did not teach. But he taught new believers how to listen to the Spirit of God, apply the Scriptures and grow in the faith without Paul's continued presence."[82]

Furthermore, he attributes Paul's proficiency at quickly producing disciples as he moved from place to place to his reliance on the Spirit to be their Teacher, citing 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4–7. This is a classic case of proof texting. Paul is addressing the division of the church caused by an *exclusive* identification with one or the other of the apostles. He is not arguing against human teachers *per se*. In Acts 18:11 we read that Paul stayed eighteen months "teaching the Word of God" among these same Corinthians.

For the practical application of this theology of discipleship, the T4T scheme proposes a "three-thirds" model of discipleship that actually discourages teaching, preferring instead the idea of training.[83] For Smith, "Teaching conveys the idea of transferring knowledge, but training conveys the idea of changing behavior."[84] The worship component includes a time of Bible reading, wherein the individual participants read together and discover together the teaching of Scripture for themselves.

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[78] Mark L. Strauss, "Reflections on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology," in *Four Views: Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology,* ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 280.

[79] Smith, *T4T*, 78.

[80] Ibid., 77.

[81] Smith contends that the scope of Jesus's discipleship was limited because of the absence of the Spirit and that, after the Spirit came, disciples could mature much more rapidly (ibid).

[82] Ibid., 78.

[83] The problem is not with the "three-third" concept, which can be a good scheme for group meetings. The issue is with the proposed model of teaching within the "three-third" scheme. Group discipleship meetings are divided into three components: (1) pastoral care, worship, accountability, vision casting; (2) new lesson; (3) practice of the lesson, setting goals and prayer. Ibid., 106.

[84] Ibid., 43.

Smith affirms, "The goal of the middle third is to give the trainees enough biblical content to obey and pass on. You don't want to give them so much that they can't obey."[85] Three simple questions guide the group discussion: "What is this passage saying? What should we obey from this passage? Who is someone we can share this message with?"[86] Leaders are instructed to facilitate discussion and avoid the role of teacher. They are discouraged from sharing expert knowledge, or knowledge that is not apparent in the passage itself, in order to foster active participation by the group members in reading and interpreting Scripture for themselves.[87]

In T4T, teaching does not qualify as a "bold part"—i.e., the important parts of discipleship needed for reproduction.[88] If pressed for time, Smith recommends, "Just do a half lesson in order to keep the goal of building a trainer.… A rule of thumb is to cut down the amount of content before cutting down anything else. You are just trying to give them enough to obey."[89] So the robustly directive approach in evangelism is now flipped to a resolutely passive model in early discipleship. The rationale for this non-directive approach is that believers have the Spirit and need to learn early to rely on him. The non-directive approach of T4T, it is affirmed, is the way to encourage and cultivate active participation of believers to read and apply Scripture for themselves, thereby circumventing the problem of passive learning.

My contention is that in seeking to avoid one extreme—i.e., passivity—the T4T paradigm has gone to the other—i.e., antipathy toward knowledge or expertise. In T4T's concern to avoid creating dependence on the human teacher, the scheme essentially depreciates the importance of teaching and of human teachers. The reader will discern a clear hermeneutical pattern: the T4T scheme repeatedly takes a legitimate teaching of Scripture and turns it into an illegitimate teaching because it ignores the balance of Scripture. T4T is dependent on a series of dichotomies that do not accurately portray the fuller biblical picture. Here the dichotomy is between either absolute dependence on the Spirit as Teacher on the one side, or on the other side an excessive dependence on human teachers.

This excluded middle is T4T's most puzzling and serious failure. It overlooks the biblical balance in Scripture of God calling and gifting godly teachers to make disciples (cf. Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28), the importance of the role of teaching throughout all of Scripture, and the indispensable role of teaching in the fulfillment of the Great Commission (cf. Matt 28:18–20). Thus, Schnabel argues for teaching as an essential part of the missionary task since it is "inherently educational."[90]

[85] Ibid., 135.

[86] Ibid., 233. This strategy is promoted in Trousdale's scheme and also in the DBS models that are trending today. The DBS model employs the following discovery questions for every passage: (1) What happens in the passage? (2) What does this passage tell us about God? (3) What does this passage tell us about people? The following obedience questions are then asked: (1) How does this passage change how we see God? (2) How does this passage change how we treat others? (3) How does this passage change how we live? (4) What other questions do you have about this passage? See: http://www.movements.net/2011/10/31/more-on-discovery-bible-studies.html; http://worldmissionsevangelism.com/discovery-bible-studies/; http://internationalproject.org/our-vision/resources/discovery-bible-studies/; https://www.missionalchallenge.com/discovery-bible-study/.

[87] Based on my experience of training sessions in the "three-thirds" process.

[88] Smith, *T4T,* 145. He explains that Trousdale's discipleship model is based on "Discovery Bible Studies," which do not require a teacher. He has a similar depreciation of teaching, actually instructing adherents not to preach or teach, but to facilitate discovery and obedience (ibid., 42).

[89] Ibid., 151.

[90] Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary,* 421.

T4T's argument against the necessity of the physical presence of teachers is especially disturbing and altogether unsupported. Paul spent eighteen months teaching in Corinth (Acts 18:11) and two years teaching in Ephesus (Acts 19:9). Kostenberger and O'Brien affirm that for Paul proclaiming the gospel "meant not simply an initial preaching or with it the reaping of converts; it included also ... the bringing of believers to full maturity."[91] Even though he moved from place to place, he regularly left teams, relied on co-workers, revisited, and stayed engaged through his letters and intermediaries. Scripture manifestly does not know of T4T's *docetic* form of discipleship.

D. A. Carson affirms that "the New Testament lays an enormous amount of emphasis on teaching, both conduct and doctrine—both how to behave and what to believe."[92] The prominence in teaching sound doctrine is explicit in the pastoral letters and denotes the primary task of Timothy and Titus.[93] Teaching required learning how to interpret Scripture correctly (2 Tim 2:15), which implies both knowledge and skill. Given the extant threat of all kinds of false teaching, it was unthinkable for the apostle to simply entrust believers to the care of the Spirit.[94] Paul's preferred antidote was making sure their disciples knew "the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim 1:13) and were thoroughly trained in "the words of faith and of doctrine" (1 Tim 4:6). According to Scripture, knowing the content passed down from Christ through his apostles is an essential part of growing up in him and, when conveyed through the lives of godly teachers, it is an indispensable element of the biblical model of discipleship. T4T's depreciation of teaching content is foreign to Scripture.[95]

Finally, T4T's model of keeping the teaching simple is overbalanced. Without denying the need for clarity and for contextualization, T4T's obsession with rapid reproducibility effectively abridges the teaching process in a way that does not sufficiently appreciate the doctrinal depth of the Word and the time needed to ground new believers in it.[96] Nor is the abridged T4T scheme modeled in Scripture.

3. Conclusion

T4T offers a model for how to train believers to do evangelism and discipleship that adherents claim facilitates church planting movements. What drives the process are a series of underlying pragmatic premises about the most efficient way to accomplish this goal. T4T proponents are orthodox, doctrinally speaking, and cite Scripture to support their model, but the importance of theology for defining the process is pushed to the periphery in favor of what works. In this way T4T is analogous to the seeker-driven church model. Thus, Wells's caution concerning seeker-driven churches applies here. He notes:

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[91] *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth,* 184.

[92] D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*: *Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 149.

[93] On the importance of sound doctrine in the pastorals, see: 1 Tim 4:6, 11, 13, 15, 16; 5:2–5; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13–14; 2:2, 15; 3:10, 16; 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:1.

[94] For the pastoral references on false teaching, See 1 Tim 1:3, 10; 4:1–7; 5:3–5; 2 Tim 2:17; 4:4.

[95] Both Jesus and Paul labored at teaching and the content they gave was anything but abbreviated. For instance, the Sermon on the Mount was likely given in one setting. See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 92.

[96] The apostle Peter confessed that some of Paul's teachings were "hard to understand" (2 Pet 3:16). Even though this does not mean Paul's teaching was obscure, it suggests the need for explanation and for time.

> Seeker churches, then, represent a coalition bound together not by a theological vision of the world but by a common strategy for reaching particular segments of society and by a common methodology for accomplishing this.... There is no theological truth upon which the methodology is predicated and upon which it insists, because theological truth, it is thought, is not what builds churches.[97]

The analysis has sought to show that the T4T scheme largely depends on several false dichotomies that do not engage the Scriptures except in order to proof text and that it regularly excludes the middle area that conveys the biblical balance. The result is an overly rigid methodology that undervalues the influence of context in cross-cultural communication. Rather than a theological vision that holds in biblical tension both truth and context, T4T sanctions an inflexible evangelism scheme that is more conducive to receptive audiences and a discipleship model that is more conversant with what is expedient than what is biblical.

This article argues that evangelism and discipleship in more resistant areas and in culturally distant contexts requires more diversity, more dialogue, and often more time. Although the content of the gospel is essentially the grace of God offered through faith in Christ, the approach to communicating that message cross-culturally so that it resonates with the listener, challenges his core beliefs and values, and conveys the true meaning of the message needs to engage people at a deeper level.

[97] David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 281.

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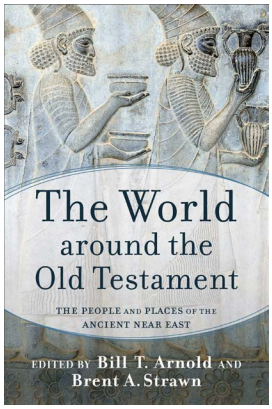
— OLD TESTAMENT —

Bill T. Arnold and Brent A. Strawn, eds. *The World around the Old Testament: The People and Places of the Ancient Near East.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. xxvi + 531 pp. £32.99/$49.95.



Edited by Bill T. Arnold (Paul S. Amos Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary) and Brent A. Strawn (Professor of Old Testament at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University), this book is a superb new resource for understanding the different cultural groups of the ancient Near East. As explained by Arnold and Strawn, this book arose out of the need for an up-to-date survey of the regions and cultural groups that lived around ancient Israel (pp. xv–xvi). Accordingly, it is intended to replace earlier works on this topic, most notably D. J. Wiseman, ed., *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) and Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, eds., *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), which are now dated. The editors and contributors intend for *The World around the Old Testament* to be "as up-to-date as possible and at the same time user-friendly so as to maximize its utility whether in a classroom or a reading room" (p. xvi).

To this end, Arnold and Strawn have assembled a cast of top-notch contributors and have ensured that the book covers as much of the ancient Near East as possible. *The World around the Old Testament* includes thirteen essays spanning the basic cultural groups of the ancient Near East: the Amorites (Daniel E. Fleming); Assyrians (Christopher B. Hays and Peter Machinist); Babylonians (David S. Vanderhooft); Ugaritians (Mark S. Smith); Egyptians (Joel M. LeMon); Hittites and Hurrians (Billie Jean Collins); Arameans (K. Lawson Younger Jr.); Phoenicians (Christopher A. Rollston); Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites (Joel S. Burnett); Philistines (Carl S. Ehrlich); Persians (Pierre Briant); Arabians (David F. Graf); and Greeks (Walter Burkert). Space limitations preclude a detailed analysis of each essay, so in the remainder of this review I will make several general observations regarding the book's strengths and weaknesses, providing specific examples as necessary.

Each of the book's essays aims to address several key topics, including political history (focused especially on the Late Bronze Age through the Persian period, ca. 1550–332 BCE), culture (e.g., society, religion, literature, art, and architecture), and discussion of how knowledge of the cultural group aids understanding of the Hebrew Bible. Naturally, the emphases of each essay depend on the cultural group discussed, and each contributor often writes according to his strengths (e.g., Smith spends much time discussing parallels between Ugaritic literature and the Hebrew Bible whereas Rollston focuses on the Phoenician language and Phoenician inscriptions). Yet, despite the diversity of topics and contributors, *The World around the Old Testament* constitutes a relatively even treatment of the ancient Near East with a fairly uniform approach.

This approach can be characterized by both breadth and depth. The book's attention to political history, culture, and relevance for understanding the Hebrew Bible results in a broad swathe of information on the different cultural groups of the ancient Near East. Yet, these broad topics are addressed in a very thorough and informative manner, with significant attention to detail. The contributors engage well with current research and scholarly debates, as is evident from their nuanced discussion, interaction with various sources in the footnotes, and the "For Further Reading" bibliographies found at the end of

each essay. The essays are very well-written too. The end product is a competent treatment of the details without loss of the bigger picture.

In terms of the cultural groups discussed, *The World around the Old Testament* has an impressive scope. It contains contributions on Arabia and Greece, two noteworthy cultural groups not covered in the book's most immediate predecessor, *Peoples of the Old Testament World*. Nevertheless, some omissions are evident, perhaps due to the book's focus on the Late Bronze Age onward. Some information on the Sumerians can be found scattered in the chapters on the Amorites, Assyrians, Babylonians, but the book lacks a chapter devoted to this significant cultural group. Another unfortunate omission is that, despite its title "The Hittites *and the Hurrians*" (emphasis added), Collins's chapter actually has almost nothing to say about the Hurrians, a cultural group that primarily inhabited northern Mesopotamia but infiltrated Palestine during the latter half of the second millennium BCE.

Some readers of *Themelios* may be troubled by the occasional downplaying of the Hebrew Bible's value as a historical source. For example, LeMon states in his brief discussion of the exodus that "there remain significant and seemingly intractable problems for locating the Egyptian sojourn historically" (p. 190), Ehrlich refers to many of the biblical narratives regarding the Philistines as "folktales" that "cannot be placed in any definite historical context" (p. 357), and Burkert says that "Ezra and Nehemiah are heavily reworked and sometimes contradictory, perhaps supplemented with inauthentic documents" (p. 487). The issues raised by these contributors are complex and cannot, nor should not, be solved in a simplistic manner. Yet, a more positive approach to the Hebrew Bible as a source might reap benefits for the purposes of historical reconstruction.

Despite these critiques, *The World around the Old Testament* is a remarkable collection of essays on the cultural groups of the ancient Near East. It covers much ground while paying close attention to detail and interacting well with current scholarship, thereby providing an up-to-date resource on the ancient Near Eastern world. Both scholars and students will profit greatly from reading this book, and I highly recommend it.

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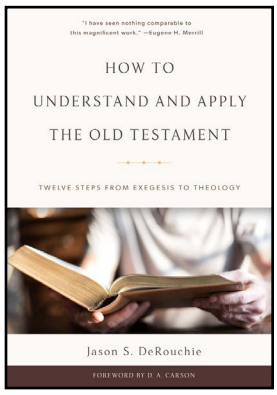
Jason S. DeRouchie. *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017. xxix + 583 pp. £31.14/$39.99.



This book is more than a practical guide on hermeneutical method as it relates to the Old Testament. Rather, this tome is a testimonial to the fact that the OT is Christian Scripture, not simply because it is the precursor of the New Testament, but because it points to Christ. This book is rooted in the evangelical tenet that the Holy Spirit is the Ultimate Author of Scripture who engaged holy men of old (2 Pet 1:21) in an effort to *clearly* communicate the message of hope and redemption as it points to Christ in the OT to the glory of God the Father.

DeRouchie begins by offering his overview (pp. 1–18) of the content and purpose of the book by using the analogy of "a journey of discovery and divine encounter" (p. 1). He explicitly states, "This book is designed to guide

Christians in interpreting the Old Testament" (p. 2). Lest there be any doubt, DeRouchie establishes his presuppositions and convictions as they relate to the task of biblical exegesis that leads to theological reflection and application (pp. 3–11).

Parts 1 and 2 (pp. 21–298), covering the first seven chapters, offer instruction on basic hermeneutical tools required for a faithful interpretation of the biblical text. Starting from matters relating to the literary nature of the text, DeRouchie then acknowledges the need for various translations and touches on interpretive issues related to translation technique and problems. This leads him to provide guidance to readers on crafting their own translations for their exegetical investigations.

Chapters 5 and 6 require a basic working knowledge of Hebrew, as DeRouchie demonstrates how clause and text grammar facilitate exegetical observations and reveal the literary structure of a given passage. Finally, he turns his attention to guidelines for word and concept studies.

In Part 3 (pp. 299–346) the reader is reminded of the basic hermeneutical rules for valid interpretation: "context, context, context." Here DeRouchie first illuminates the benefits of understanding the historical context of the OT, but then cautions against the pitfalls of overemphasis on the material witness from Israel's ancient Near Eastern milieu.

This trajectory leads seamlessly into DeRouchie's ultimate concern as anticipated by the subtitle to the book, *Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*, namely, theology. For his purposes, *theology* is closely related to the greater meaning of a passage, how this contributes to the overall message of the Bible and how that message is expressed in life and ministry. In Parts 4 and 5 (pp. 347–495), DeRouchie demonstrates how all aspects of the exegesis (as explained in Parts 1–3) can and should inform the spectrum of the disciplines of Christian Theology: biblical, systematic and practical theology. This, in turn, betrays DeRouchie's foundational conviction that study of and reflection on the Word is essentially incomplete unless it results in living a God-honoring life and offering God-focused worship (p. 3).

This book was obviously birthed in the seminary classroom, but it is informed by exhaustive research done by a careful scholar. However, this is not to say that this volume will be of use only to a seminary student. On the contrary, any pastor who desires to "rightly handle the word of truth" should secure a copy of this book and carefully study its very clearly articulated principles. The utility of this resource is supported by its pedagogical design. Throughout the book, each of the twelve chapters begins with a "Trail Guide" that consists of (a) an unambiguously stated goal, (b) a section entitled "Steps in the Journey" that provides the context of the individual chapter within the overall framework of the book, and (c) a basic overview of the chapter constituents. This last feature includes one of three icons of a hiker depicting the relative difficulty level: easy, moderate or challenging. These are explained in the Preface (pp. xviii–xix). DeRouchie assures the reader that the bulk of the book is written for the beginning interpreter (with no exposure to Hebrew). The moderate level is also for all readers, but this content interfaces with Hebrew "where beneficial." The challenging level is for advanced interpreters and requires familiarity with the original language.

Another extremely helpful feature is the strategic placement of numerous examples that illustrate how the instruction just elaborated should be put into practice. If there is any doubt in the mind of the reader or any ambiguity regarding the implementation of specific exegetical or hermeneutical skills, these are cleared in the examples. This attribute commends the book not only as an instructional textbook but also as a reference for the pastor's study.

DeRouchie's book shares many of the characteristics of Douglas Stuart's extensively used *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 4th edition (Louisville: Westminster John

Knox Press, 2009). Stuart covers all aspects for "full exegesis" in the first chapter (pp. 5–30). In the second (pp. 33–62) and third (pp. 63–82) chapters he illustrates how these tools are employed in "academic" and "sermonic" exegesis. In contrast to Stuart, rather than introduce exegetical tools in one chapter and then illustrate them in succeeding chapters, DeRouchie forces the reader to become familiar with the tool in the context of a carefully selected text. In further contrast to Stuart, DeRouchie's methodology fundamentally employs discourse analysis with a Christo-centric biblical-theological focus. A final, significant contrast between the two approaches is that Stuart asks exegetes to employ their theological understanding to interpret a text, whereas DeRouchie's book insists that theology is derived from the biblical text.

As for a weakness of the book, the sheer number of pages may make it a "hard sell" to professors in Bible colleges and seminaries to add to their required textbook list. A serious pastor-exegete will, however, recognize the value of this book as a reference text.

In short, do not simply look at the total number of pages in this book to determine whether or not to add this to your library or to recommend it to your faculty. The layout of the book is "comfortable," and as just mentioned, many of these pages are filled with helpful examples that may be consulted. The "Trail Guides" point you to the essentials of the book which make the book even more accessible to the exegete.

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Nathan MacDonald, ed. *Ritual Innovation in the Hebrew Bible and Early Judaism*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 468. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016. 352 pp. £74.99/$140.00.

Ritual theory for the cult of Israel is a complex area of study, especially since its foundation must be textual, relying on the accounts of ritual in the Hebrew Bible, which are embedded within a narrative framework. Moreover, the variety of opinions in scholarship about "priestly" material, whereby ritual accounts reflect either practices of the greatest antiquity or the late innovations of a post-exilic priestly class, convolute the subject further. Why are rituals placed within narrative texts to begin with? What is their *function*—are they meant to be descriptive, preserving ritual instructions for continued use, or are they literary compositions sponsoring theological constructs? Needless to so say, one's view of the nature and development of Israelite religion is reciprocally related to these questions, as exemplified by Julius Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis. *Ritual Innovation in the Hebrew Bible and Early Judaism*, edited by Nathan MacDonald and comprised mostly of papers given for a special unit of the same name at the 2013 Society of Biblical Literature international meeting in St. Andrews, engages diverse issues related particularly to "innovations" in ritual practice.

After MacDonald's general introduction to the topic of ritual innovation, providing an orientation for the essays that follow, Saul M. Olyan ("Two Types of Ritual Innovation for Profit") examines passages that condemn ritual innovation, such as King Uzziah's attempt to present the incense offering in the

Jerusalem temple (2 Chron 26:16–21), as well as accounts where changes in ritual are not challenged. Regarding the former, Olyan offers a standard critical reading: representations of condemned ritual innovations serve to guard priestly structures of power. In relation to unchallenged ritual changes, not all readers will agree that Olyan's examples are relevant as rituals (2 Sam 10:1–5; 16:11; Neh 13:25)—he refers to them as "conventional rites" (15).

James W. Watts ("From Ark of the Covenant to Torah Scroll: Ritualizing Israel's Iconic Texts") argues that, even though the ark of the covenant did not exist at the time of the Pentateuch's final shaping, the Pentateuch describes this ritual object in elaborate detail to lay the basis for Torah scrolls to replace the ark of the covenant as the iconic focus of worship. This innovation, "disguised" as continuity, stems from high priests in Jerusalem who "rode the rising prestige of both temple and Torah to unprecedented heights of religious and political influence" (pp. 33–34).

Reinhard Achenbach ("The Empty Throne and the Empty Sanctuary: From Aniconism to the Invisibility of God in Second Temple Theology") traces the theological development of the presence of YHWH in ancient Israel, arguing for a process of spiritualization, abstraction, and human interiority. In the post-exilic period, for example, purification is described as circumcision of the heart (Deut 10:16), and in the so-called Elohistic Psalter, *Elohim* replaces the divine name YHWH. Achenbach's presentation involves speculative historical reconstruction, aside from being built upon a dating of the biblical material which can no longer be assumed as a consensus.

Nathan MacDonald's essay ("Ritual Innovation and *Shavu'ot*") traces the history of the Feast of Weeks through the different festival calendars, studying the dynamics of ritual innovation through five texts: the Covenant Code's "Feast of Harvest" (Exod 23:18); the book of Deuteronomy, which first uses the designation "Weeks" and restricts the Israelite cult to a single place (16:9–12); the Holiness Code, for which the occasion is no longer a "pilgrimage festival" but a "day" (Lev 23:9–22); the covenant prescriptions following the Golden Calf incident, which depend on both Exod 23 and Deut 16 (Exod 34:22); and the Temple Scroll, which multiplies firstfruits festivals (11QT 18:1–23:01).

In "How the Priestly Sabbaths Work: Innovation in Pentateuchal Priestly Ritual," Jeffrey Stackert explores the divergent views of the Sabbath from what he presumes to be the Pentateuch's two major Priestly strata, the Priestly Source (P) and the Holiness Writings (H). For P, the Sabbath functions much like circumcision, as a reminder to God, and this with a view to agricultural blessing, while H understands the Sabbath rather as a sign for God's people, prompting Israel to reverence YHWH, observing his commandments to achieve their holiness. With some recent studies tending to see the coherence of the Holiness material within the overall logic and comprehensive worldview of the cult (see pp. 185–220 of my *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015]), it becomes likely that sharp distinction between P and H amounts to splitting into two separate coins what are rather two sides of one. Of course, not all scholars assume the existence of a "Holiness School" (see Frevel's comment in this volume, p. 131).

Roy E. Gane's essay, "Innovation in the Suspected Adulteress Ritual (Num 5:11–31)," sets forth the purpose of the highly unusual ritual in question as benefiting a suspected but innocent woman by persuading her husband not to reject her. The main innovation of the ritual is its holy water "litmus test," based upon the dynamics of holiness *versus* impurity. Gane argues convincingly that this passage assumes and builds upon concepts of moral impurity and holiness from the holiness section of Leviticus (18:20).

Christian Frevel ("Practicing Rituals in a Textual World: Ritual and Innovation in the Book of Numbers") offers a thorough analysis of the use of Lev 5 in Num 5–6. Filled with brilliant insights, Frevel's essay demonstrates that these Numbers passages, rather than randomly placed due to the closure of the book of Leviticus (where it is sometimes deemed they actually belong), are well-suited in their current location with regard to content, spatial conceptions, and their function within the larger context of Numbers.

In "Walking over the Dead: Burial Practices and the Possibility of Ritual Innovation at Qumran," Ian Werrett, contrary to popular and widespread assumption, argues that the burial practices at Qumran do not betray the sect's distinctive notions about ritual impurity. Werrett marshals archaeological evidence from other cemeteries in the region to show that Qumran's shaft-style burials were not unique.

As with most collections of essays, *Ritual Innovation* presents a diverse set of approaches and topics (even if generally connected to the idea of changes in ritual). Several of the papers are marked by the circularity intrinsic to source criticism, not to mention a hermeneutic particularly suspicious of post-exilic priests. Moreover, the notion that some of these ritual innovations were subtle enough to have been cleverly disguised from the original audience, may well lead one to wonder if the assured findings of modern scholars who claim to have untangled innovative aspects are somewhat overly clever themselves. Those remarks aside, several essays contribute toward understanding either the biblical text or ritual theory, and the disagreements that inevitably surface nevertheless foster helpful reflection on the subject matter.

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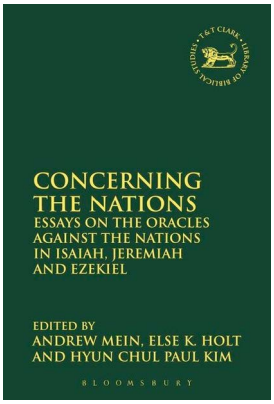
Else K. Holt, Hyun C. P. Kim, and Andrew Mein, eds. *Concerning the Nations: Essays on the Oracles against the Nations in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel*. The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 612. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. xx + 279 pp. £28.99, $39.95.



The essays in this volume, originating mainly in several Society of Biblical Literature groups, examine the major prophets' oracles concerning the nations. The volume emphasizes the diversity of this material, but the editors assume that the reader will see its thematic continuity across the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (p. xiv).

In the foreword, Marvin A. Sweeney surveys recent research. Concerning the theological issues raised by YHWH's use of nations to accomplish his will then and now, he suggests that it is time "to recognize that evil as well as good informs the divine," and that readers of all religious persuasions should therefore seek to bring about "divine love, justice, and deliverance" (p. xx).

Hyun C. P. Kim sets his study of Isaiah 22 in the context of a ring structure that spans chapters 13–23. Its placement shows that "Judah was also under the impending divine judgment," and was calculated to shock the original audience (pp. 9–10). Chapters 20–23 portray "a trustworthy YHWH who works through major empires to act against the hubris of the nations" (p. 17).

J. Blake Couey assumes the literary unity and coherence of Isaiah 15:1–16:12 and argues that it evokes "a palpable sense of disaster" without ever actually portraying that disaster (p. 19). Couey presents Jeremiah 48:11 and Isaiah 16:13–14 (ostensibly later) as potential evidence that Isaiah 15:1–16:12 was not fulfilled by the time of Jeremiah on the assumption that the oracle was composed when "a Judahite prophet might have expected an imminent attack against Moab" (p. 31).

J. Todd Hibbard focuses on the textually problematic phrase often translated "city of the sun" in Isaiah 19:18 in the context of the life of Jewish expatriates in Egypt (p. 33). He concludes that the variants in 19:18 arose as part of "the contested evaluation of a Jewish temple established in Egypt by the displaced high priest Onias IV in the middle of the second century B.C.E." (p. 34). The earliest reading was "city of the sun" (Qumran), followed by the Septuagint ("city of righteousness," transliterated from Hebrew) and finally by the Masoretic text's "destroyed city," an emendation of a scribe who "objected to Onias' actions" (p. 50).

William A. M. Beuken examines links between descriptions of Babylon's fall in Isaiah 13–14 and Jeremiah 50–51. Despite perspectival and other differences between the two books' treatments of Babylon's destruction, these passages "contain a guarantee that YHWH will take action" against Babylon designed to comfort those suffering at its hands (pp. 70, 72).

Rannfrid Thelle takes up "Babylon as Judah's *Doppelgänger*" in Jeremiah. Adopting a synchronic approach, she observes that while the given reasons for it differ, divine punishment is announced against Judah no less than against Babylon and Egypt (pp. 79–88). The contrasting fates of Judah ("return and vindication") and Babylon ("destruction") in Jeremiah 50–51 are due to YHWH's sovereign choice of Israel. Jeremiah contrasts Judah and Babylon primarily on religious and moral grounds (pp. 80–81, 91–94), encouraging a response to YHWH's restoration.

Carolyn J. Sharp argues that the oracle against Moab in Jeremiah 48, which is "emplotted narratologically in a preexilic setting," actually addresses the debated question of "boundaries between insiders and outsiders" in Judah after 586 BCE (pp. 97, 99). While "Jeremiah 48 certainly taunts a bona fide enemy" (p. 105), Moab and Judah also have much in common in Jeremiah. The oracle warns Judah against "Moabite" (quotation marks original) "theopolitical complacency and … illegitimate desire for autonomy" (pp. 105, 108), making otherness a primarily religious and moral issue (pp. 107, 108).

Amy Kalmanofsky interprets Jeremiah's oracles against the nations as "revenge fantasies" that "reflect Israel's experience of conquest and offer strategies for survival as well as a means of resistance" (p. 110). YHWH's involvement in these events is motivated in part by his desire to avenge "his wounded masculinity" (p. 120), arising from his inability "to prevent Babylon from conquering Israel" (p. 121). This essay arguably effaces the oracles' historical and theological facets in favor of an ahistorical, auto-therapeutic endeavor indebted to an artificially gendered representation of YHWH.

Rhiannon Graybill contends that the oracle against Edom (Jer 49:7–22) is defined by "repetition of violence" that is frustrating (because Edom "must be destroyed repeatedly") and "tedious" (because repetitive, p. 129). On this naïve reading basis she asserts that the oracle produces "counterpleasure" that "refuse[s] gratification and resist[s] teleologies" (p. 129) and that its violence resembles that found in the writings of the Marquis de Sade given their use of "repetition, boredom, and impossible pleasure" (p. 140). This interpretation will be unsatisfying to those with more positive evaluations of the function of repetition and intertextuality in ancient Hebrew prophetic literature.

Hugh Pyper employs a postcolonial hermeneutic for Jeremiah's oracles, which presents surrender and waiting for deliverance as the "best way to survive" (p. 149). Proposing authorship by an elite

deflecting attention "from their own deficiencies" and currying favor with Babylon (pp. 150–51), he finds collusion hidden behind "the message that YHWH is in control" (pp. 156–57). This reading depends on the rather un-Jeremian supposition that YHWH does not exist, or at least had nothing to do with Judah's fate.

Madhavi Nevander focuses on royal polemic in Ezekiel's oracles against the nations and argues that the prophet's cool stance toward Judean and foreign rulers alike elevates YHWH "to royal standing" while undoing human "royal legitimacy" (pp. 162–63). Despite his grandiose claims, Ezekiel 28 presents the king of Tyre as "an asinine buffoon" (p. 167), while Egypt's pharaoh, responsible for *maʿat*, is ironically a chaos creature whom YHWH the "victorious king" will dispatch (p. 172). Similarly, the Assyrian "cedar" (31:1–18) "misconstrues its grandeur and is overcome by its pride" (p. 173).

John T. Strong explores why Ezekiel was "the prophet who first took offense at Tyre," dating Isa 23:1–18 and Joel 4:4 later (p. 180). The answer, in short, is that the oracle defends YHWH's status especially for a "future … literati, restored to the land" (p. 180), countering the impression that Tyre was "secure [and] inviolable" (p. 194). Ezekiel asserts that even in 587, Jerusalem alone "housed the throne of the Great King" and that in any case Tyre had no divine king (pp. 187, 193).

Corrine L. Carvalho's argues that Ezekiel "uses metaphors that elicit Egyptian religious practices in order to cast Judah's political interactions onto the cosmic plane" (p. 195). This rhetorical strategy is especially evident in the book's oracles against the nations (chs. 29–32), where she examines the "crocodile" in Ezekiel 29 and 32 in relation to the image of "the reptilian Pharaoh" (pp. 211–14). She concludes that such comparisons undercut Egyptian claims to power and were intended to help Judah avoid compromising its religious identity under Egyptian influence.

The book's final essay, by Steed Vernyl Davidson, sees the volume's essays as a move beyond nineteenth-century German literary and form-criticism (p. 223). He finds that the essays share a desire to make sense of the oracles against the nations "as constituent parts of prophetic literature," with the theme of integration evident "at the level of the prophetic corpus, ancient Near Eastern geopolitics, and the human condition" (pp. 225–38). Davidson highlights the contemporary relevance of these themes for the interpretation and relevance of the oracles.

Some closing impressions. First, while the volume's essays do exhibit an integrative aspect, the variety of methods they deploy reveals that there is limited common ground upon which contemporary (mainly North American) interpretations of the prophetic books can agree or evaluate one another. Second, some essays still employ apparently universal laws of human nature, explanations of violence, and so on that seem to derive from an earlier era and lack adequate theoretical grounding and historical nuance. However, the nineteenth century's strong interest in the historical development of individual pericopae is not carried over in several of the more diachronic essays that refrain from reconstructing a passage's literary development, and is implicitly rejected by several primarily synchronic essays. Third, those essays that limit prophecy's horizon to the near-term by means of the interpreter's reconstruction of the author's sociopolitical setting, interests, and beliefs often ignore the biblical authors' essential confidence that YHWH sovereignly controls history. Overall, this collection of diverse essays offers the reader much that is useful and much that will evoke critical methodological and hermeneutical reflection.

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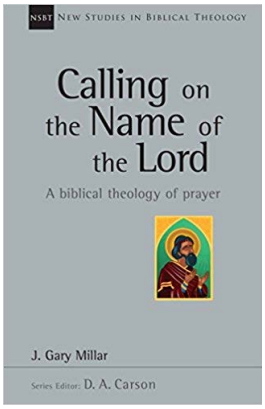
J. Gary Millar. *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 38. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016. 264 pp. £14.99/$24.00.



Who knows the number of books with different approaches that have been written on prayer? Some focus on a biblical writer (e.g., D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014]). Others center on how to pray the contents of the Bible (e.g., Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015]). Some integrate the theology, experience, and methods of prayer (e.g., Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* [New York: Penguin, 2016]). What sets Millar's work apart, even from those that take a whole-bible approach (e.g., James E. Rosscup, *An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communion with God*, 5 vols. [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2007]), is that it surveys each corpus of the Bible, not only to explain each prayer in its context, but also to discover the focus of the prayers from a biblical-theological perspective. Millar shows what unites all the prayers—asking God to come through on his covenant promises.

Millar divides his biblical theology of prayer into nine chapters, with an introduction and an afterword. In the introduction, Millar laments that "*the church in many places has stopped praying*" (p. 15, original emphasis). In most churches prayer has been decentralized, and, not only that, prayers are dominated by mundane requests that "highlight the lack of gospel depth in our view of prayer" (p. 16). Millar aims to instruct and challenge the Church to centralize prayer and pray gospel-informed prayers.

Millar examines all the prayers in the Old Testament and states that "*prayer that asks God to deliver on his covenantal promises*, is the foundation for all that the Old Testament says about prayer" (p. 18, emphasis original). He argues that prayer begins in the Bible with the birth of Enosh: "At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen 4:26). He explains that "To call on the name of Yahweh is to cry to God to come through on his promises, and specifically to rescue and give life to his covenant people…. To put it anachronistically, 'calling on the name of Yahweh' in the Old Testament denotes 'gospel-shaped prayer'" (p. 26). Prayer is predicated on God's covenant initiative, thus in terms of biblical theology, "prayer is made possible only by 'the gospel.' All prayer is *gospel prayer*: It is calling on the name of Yahweh, who is the God of the covenant, the God of salvation" (p. 43, emphasis original)—this is the consistent focus of prayer throughout the Old Testament (pp. 65, 68, 74).

In the Major and Minor Prophets, the privilege of "calling on the name of Yahweh" is withdrawn because of sin (p. 106), but beyond this judgment lies the hope that a day will come when "everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved" (p. 106). Reading the Psalter as a book of prayer, he argues that prayer in the Psalms is more complex and can be more than calling on Yahweh to come through on his covenant promises, but it is not less (pp. 140, 163).

In the New Testament, Millar notes that "*calling on the name of Yahweh* is redefined by Jesus himself, and … after his death and resurrection, the apostles understood *praying in the name of Jesus* to be the new covenant expression of *calling on the name of Yahweh.* Prayer throughout the Bible … is to be primarily understood as asking God to come through on what he has already promised" (p. 18, emphasis original). Miller shows that Jesus taught his disciples that prayer is asking God to do what he has promised (p. 183). As a result, apostolic prayers are shaped by the gospel, praying for what Christ

has achieved which God now holds out for us in the gospel, and focused on the promised progress of the gospel (pp. 200, 205). In the afterword, Millar challenges the church to relearn to pray gospel-shaped prayers.

Millar's thesis is clear, convincingly proven, and richly supported with numerous scriptural citations. The book that charges us to pray Bible-saturated prayers is itself Bible-saturated. I encourage every reader to not skip the citations. The Scripture-saturation can be both a strength and a weakness, since it is impossible to expound every passage in a book of this size. You will benefit more from the book if you read all the citations and try to discern Millar's thesis for yourself. However, Millar does not always make clear how he draws some of his points from cited passages. For example, in Millar's treatment of Nehemiah 9, he asserts that Nehemiah is asking God for a transformation that will only happen through a new covenant (pp. 125–26). While Millar is right in asserting that the issues Nehemiah presents will only be resolved through the new covenant, it is not obvious how he draws that from Nehemiah's prayer itself, given that Nehemiah ends his prayer not with a longing for the new covenant but a covenant with the returnees in Jerusalem—"Because of all this we make a firm covenant" (Neh 9:38).

When I began reading this book, I was curious to know how Miller would tackle the Psalms. To my joyful amazement, he does a great job in making the case that all the categories of psalms should be read as prayers, although only a few are called prayers in the superscriptions (p. 140). Miller argues that his thesis applies to every psalm genre. For example, psalms of thanksgiving offer thanks for God having come through on his covenant promises (p. 155), and psalms of lament express lament over the fact that the state of God's people does not reflect Yahweh's covenantal commitment to bless (p. 126).

The afterword alone is worth the price of the book. In this section, Miller diagnoses the problem behind prayerlessness in the English-speaking evangelical world—"prayer is the great guilty secret of the evangelical church" (p. 233)—and gives helpful suggestions for relearning prayer in our churches.

I recommend this book. Read it. Pray gospel-prayers. Ask God to come through with his blood-bought promises. Pray for God to advance the gospel as he has promised. "And keep doing it, until that day when we no longer need to pray, because we will see our God and King face to face" (p. 240).

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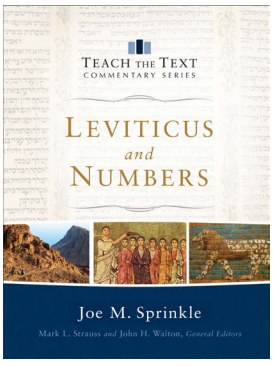
Joe M. Sprinkle. *Leviticus and Numbers*. Teach the Text Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015. xiv + 460 pp. £26.99/$39.00.



In a recent essay, John Goldingay bemoans the "uselessness for theologians and preachers of nearly all scholarly biblical commentaries written over the … [past] two centuries" because they "generated nothing that would preach" ("Hearing God Speak from the First Testament," in *The Voice of God in the Text of Scripture: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, eds. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016], 60). The Teach the Text Commentary Series aims to buck that trend. The series has been designed primarily with pastors and preachers in mind, rather than academics, while at the same time utilising the best of biblical scholarship. Its explicit goal is "to provide a ready reference for

the exposition of the biblical text, giving easy access to information that a pastor needs to communicate the text effectively" (p. ix). This volume by Joe M. Sprinkle, Professor of Old Testament at Crossroads College in Rochester, Minnesota, applies these aims to the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

Following brief introductions to both Leviticus (pp. 1–5) and Numbers (pp. 185–89), the volume pursues a unit-by-unit exegesis of the biblical text. In line with the series's guidelines (see pp. ix–x), each textual unit receives six pages of discussion. A "Big Idea" is offered as a summary of the central message of each pericope and "Key Themes" are listed. The bulk of discussion is then devoted to "Understanding the Text." Here, Sprinkle considers contextual, historical and cultural matters before offering select interpretative insights and discussing problems arising from the passage. The section closes with consideration of theological issues raised by the pericope. To this point the commentary follows the pattern of traditional commentary, albeit not necessarily with verse-by-verse discussion. The next two sections attempt to bridge the divide between commentary and sermon. First, a "Teaching the Text" section distills a selection of application points based on the theological emphases of the passage. Second, an "Illustrating the Text" section offers potential connections between the text and life. The richness and diversity of this final section is increased by incorporating suggestions from a team of consultant pastors and teachers.

Sprinkle is a seasoned scholar when it comes to the legal texts of the Old Testament, and the benefits are evident throughout the commentary. His treatment of the biblical material is judicious and offers numerous insightful observations. At no point was I as a reader left feeling that issues had been fudged or ignored. There are of course many complex matters that the books of Leviticus and Numbers raise that cannot be treated at length due to the space restrictions of the series. Some of these, however, are taken up in "Additional Insights" excurses (e.g., "Atonement" [pp. 30–31] and "On the large numbers in the census" [pp. 196–97]). Footnotes also point readers to further resources at many junctures. This approach has the value of limiting technical discussion, thus ensuring that treatment of the text avoids becoming bogged down. An added boon is the volume's liberal use of color photographs, illustrations and charts throughout. Not only does this shed further light on the text but implicitly develops an awareness of the ancient world for readers, which in turn deepens understanding of historical context.

While Sprinkle's handling of the text is excellent, I was not always convinced that the big idea reflected the central message of a given pericope. Moreover, suggested big ideas tend to be assertions. While the text undoubtedly does make assertions, it is not apparent that asserting facts is always the primary intent. The force of the text may lie elsewhere. For example, the big idea listed for Balaam's first three oracles (Num 22:41—24:13) is, "God's will is to bless the people" (p. 344). While this assertion is true and evidently flows from the text, I wonder whether this fully reflects the illocutionary force of the passage. This section of Numbers seems rather to *ridicule* Balak's "superweapon," Balaam, by highlighting his inability to curse Israel. Thus, the implied readers are *reminded* of God's unchallenged control over all nations, either *inspiring* confidence or *rebuking* them with respect to faith in God's ability to do what he promised, no matter the opposition. That the big idea should reflect the primary illocutionary force of a passage becomes all the more important if, as Sam Chan has persuasively argued, re-illocuting the biblical text is really the fundamental task of the preacher (*Preaching as the Word of God: Answering an Old Question with Speech-Act Theory*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016).

Another issue arises in relation to the breakdown of the books. Leviticus is divided into twenty-eight units and Numbers into thirty-nine. However, no rationale for this division is provided. Thus, at times, I was left wondering why pericopes have been approached in the manner they have. For example,

Leviticus 16 is treated as two units, vv. 1–14 and 15–34 (pp. 100–113). Yet the divine speech formulae appearing in 16:1–2 and 17:1 suggest that chapter 16 should be treated as a single unit. Thus, it is not clear why a split has been made at v. 14, or if the implication is that the chapter is best preached as two units. In fact, this seems to be an issue with the Teach the Text Series more generally. Although the introduction to the series states that units are "of an appropriate length for teaching or preaching" (p. xiii), I am not convinced that the aim of preaching is mere content delivery. Rather, getting to grips with the rhetoric of the biblical text seems essential. Thus, a division into rhetorical units may be more helpful.

Along similar lines, not every preacher will want to spend twenty-eight weeks working through Leviticus. What might a four-week series on the book look like? Or a ten-week look at Numbers? Some guidance on alternative ways to tackle the books, with accompanying rationale, would have been a valuable addition not only for this volume but for others in the series.

These issues aside, Sprinkle has produced a commendable commentary that deserves a wide reading. Those wanting to preach through these theologically vital parts of the Old Testament will derive much help from this volume.

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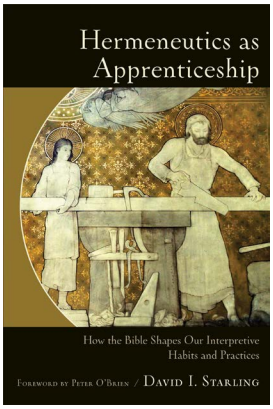
David I. Starling. *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship: How the Bible Shapes Our Interpretive Habits and Practices*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. xvi + 240 pp. £15.99/$24.99.



What if the nature of Scripture is a *snowball* rolling down the "hill of salvation history," with each accumulative layer of understanding providing the weight and direction on which the next layer could be read upon? What if learning the art of interpreting Scripture is *apprenticeship* to the interpretive practices of biblical writers on Scripture? These two interesting metaphors of David Starling (pp. 14, 19), the *snowball* and *apprenticeship*, provide the basic thrust of his book––we can better our biblical hermeneutics by being a student to inner-biblical interpretation.

Beyond the introductory chapter, Starling leads us through fifteen books of the Old and New Testaments (Psalms; Deuteronomy; Ruth; 1–2 Chronicles; Proverbs; Job; Zechariah; Matthew; Luke; John; 1 Corinthians; Galatians; Hebrews; 1 Peter and Revelation). In each of the books that Starling discusses, he begins with a focal issue related to modern interpretation. This is followed by an analysis of how the biblical writer(s) interpret or apply Scripture before concluding with some implications for Christian hermeneutics. The exception is the last chapter, on Revelation, which discusses how the epistle encourages the readers by what they read and experience, as they anticipate what is to come (pp. 194–95). A snapshot of Starling's treatment on the books of Ruth and 1 Corinthians is provided in this review.

The focal issue Starling highlights in the book of Ruth relates to virtue and interpretation. Does virtue affect one's reading of Scripture? In the book of Ruth, Starling views Boaz as the "paradigmatic virtuous interpreter" (p. 49). He argues that Boaz's understanding and application of Mosaic laws concerning the

redemption of land (Lev 25), levirate, and Moabite marriages (Deut 23, 25) and gleaning practices (Lev 19, 23) did not reflect "letter-righteousness" or "scientific jurisprudence" (p. 54). Rather, they expressed the virtue of "love, courage, generosity and humility" (p. 54). At the peril of losing his social status (Deut 23:3) and wealth (Ruth 4:6), Boaz's gracious acts toward the widow and foreigner (Deut 10:18; 24:19–22) expressed the spirit of the law and God's steadfast love. In other words, the author(s) of Ruth has shown us how the Torah was interpreted under a larger rubric of YHWH's character and steadfast love (חֶסֶד), shown not just to his chosen people but also to all who take refuge in him. Through the characters, Naomi and Ruth, the book of Ruth also expressed an inclusiveness, which is read by the "rich and poor, men and women, outsiders and insiders, full and empty, as their lives intersect within the community of God's people and under his sovereign hand" (p. 55).

For Starling, the focal issue in 1 Corinthians is associated with Christian *systematic theology*. He avers, "if there is anywhere in the New Testament where it is worth seeking a warrant for doing theology and some guidance on how to do it, 1 Corinthians is that place" (p. 131). For instance, with regards to food offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8–10, Starling argues that Paul's focus was on the Corinthians' failure to apply food laws to build others up in love rather than on theological misjudgement (1 Cor 8:1; 9:19–22). In developing his response to the issue, Paul also connected the historical event of the exodus (1 Cor 10) to his readership, and assumed "universal relevance and applicability" (p. 139) in his reading of Scripture. Paul's reading provides a helpful case study for formulating Christian theology. Starling shows us how Paul dealt with arising socio-theological issues not by simply quoting Scripture but using it with love (p. 144). Paul also interpreted Old Testament texts through a historical-salvific perspective, connecting his readership to the "larger story that includes the story of Israel and its fulfilment in Christ" (p. 144).

Starling's book is outstanding in at least two ways. First, he has presented the difficult and complex topic of inner-biblical interpretation in a concise way, unhindered by technicalities or jargon, which is helpful to non-specialists. Starling also skilfully integrates whole books' theology and rhetorical features––a feat not easily achieved! Second, by fronting an interesting focal issue at the beginning of a chapter and raising relevant pertinent questions, Starling engages his reader with an interesting modern hermeneutical concern for reflection. Besides the concerns of *virtue* and the place for *systematic theology* in interpretation, another interesting issue is the use of *red letters* to highlight the words of Jesus in some modern English Bibles and how they can influence interpretations in the Gospel of Matthew.

However, there are three drawbacks of this book. First, I feel that Starling has not addressed satisfactorily the implication of his analysis. Although his observations are important, it is not clear how inner-biblical interpretation methods can be emulated. For instance, Starling notes that although Revelation is filled with images and concepts from the Scripture, it "does not contain a single scriptural quotation that is overtly identified" (p. 194). In other words, it was not always easy to identify how inner-biblical interpretation was at work, let alone emulate it. Hence, it is difficult to fully identify with the metaphor of *apprenticeship*. To what extent can we follow the interpretive methods of the biblical authors? Second, Starling has certain assumptions and generalizations in his work. For instance, directions of textual dependence are generally assumed without much clarification (e.g., the book of Job depended on Proverbs). At times, Starling's observations may appear too general (e.g., the author[s] of 1–2 Chronicles interpreted earlier texts "historically" and "intertextually," p. 65) and applicable to any other book. A brief final point concerns an imbalance in the treatment of the selected Old and New Testament books (by page count, Starling's treatment of the NT is 1.5 times longer than the OT).

In sum, Starling's work is to be commended. The overarching idea of his book is important and his observations of inner-biblical interpretations deserve a close reading.

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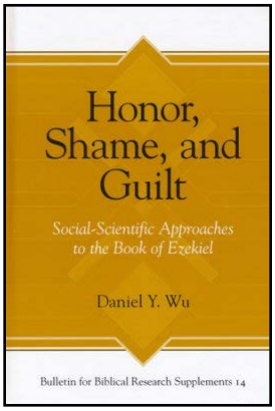
Daniel Y. Wu. *Honor, Shame and Guilt: Social-Scientific Approaches to the Book of Ezekiel.* Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements 14. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016. xix + 210 pp. £38.50/$47.50



Social-scientific approaches to the Old Testament range from forced and wildly inappropriate impositions of ideas from alien contexts to illuminating and profound explorations of the biblical text in the light of useful comparisons with similar cultures. In this revision of his University of Sydney doctoral thesis, Daniel Wu has provided us with a stellar example from the latter category. This study will be of value both to those interested in the concepts of shame and guilt cultures, which have become a staple in both OT and especially NT studies, as well as to the smaller circle of Ezekiel scholars.

Wu begins his thesis with an extensive analysis of the concepts of guilt and shame, and especially the practice of contrasting so-called "shame cultures" with "guilt cultures." This survey alone is worth the price of the book. He argues that these distinctions are overly simplistic, as commonly used, and that in fact most cultures combine varying proportions of shame and guilt. That is to say, all societies actually utilize a combination of external and internal sanctions to rein in aberrant behavior. Wu is perhaps particularly sensitive to these complexities given his own heritage as an Australian-born Chinese, and therefore straddling two cultures.

In addition to his discussion of shame and guilt, Wu also explores the opposite concept of honor. Here he notes that previous studies have helpfully drawn attention to the relational context in which honor is gained or lost. However, Wu rightly points out that with respect to the OT, in addition to the "Public Court of Recognition," the "Divine Court of Recognition" has to be taken into account. Honor is not merely bestowed by human acknowledgment; that would make the deity's honor ultimately dependent upon the worshipper. Rather, in the OT, honor has a substantive aspect to it: it is a quality that properly belongs to YHWH and which ultimately can only be bestowed by him (p. 71).

This, it seems to me, is fundamentally correct. It is not that the Public Court of Recognition is unimportant to YHWH in Ezekiel: he is concerned lest his name be profaned among the nations by Israel's ongoing exile and so he acts in order that the nations may know that he is YHWH (see Ezek 36:21–24). Yet his goal in this is to correct a misperception on the part of the Public Court of Recognition of the true state of affairs, which is the unchanging reality of his glory. Here, as Wu notes, there are strong similarities to the book of Exodus, where similar concerns to display YHWH's intrinsic glory to a watching world are prominent.

When it comes to shame, Wu argues that the key Hebrew word בוש has a broader semantic use of "the experience of causing disappointment". This, of course, includes the conventional meaning "shame" in some contexts but not all. In particular, whereas modern readers generally view shame as

a wholly negative emotion, one strongly to be avoided, *bosh* may be used in a more positive sense of disappointment with past actions. This helps to account for the persistence of "shame" in contexts of restoration, such as Ezekiel 16 and 36. Conventional understandings expect shame to be removed by restoration, and if it persists, portray YHWH as psychologically abusive in refusing to let go of past transgressions. A broader understanding of בוש as "disappointment with past actions" explains how remaining memories of past sin may actually be profitable: they provide an incentive to pursue different patterns of behavior in the future and highlight the magnitude of God's grace in forgiving his people. Indeed, we might add, this is one of the key ways in which YHWH's glory is demonstrated in Exodus 34: forgiving, wickedness, iniquity and sin. If such transgressions are completely forgotten, then a prime element of YHWH's character is obscured. But in the light of his forgiveness and love in the gospel, memory of our past sin need not overwhelm us with the psychological sense of shame. As Wu puts it, בוש "is necessary for sinful people to "know that I am YHWH" (p. 130).

This otherwise fine work is somewhat marred by the frequency of typographical errors, both in the English text and especially in the Hebrew, where some failure in the "right to left" program results in the Hebrew letters frequently being transposed – especially in the section headings. Apart from this minor quibble, however, the work is highly recommended.

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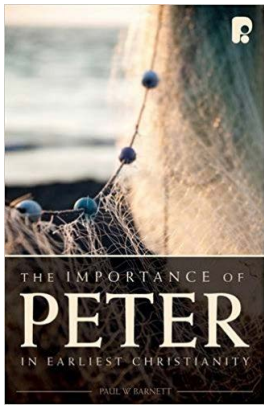
— NEW TESTAMENT —

Paul W. Barnett. *The Importance of Peter in Early Christianity*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2016. 178 pp. £14.99.



One of Paul Barnett's acknowledged strengths is the historical interest he takes in the New Testament accounts, bringing together geographical, political, and cultural observations to inform exegesis. *The Importance of Peter in Early Christianity* continues this legacy. It is a small book, accessible to entry-level readers, comprised of short chapters with helpful subheadings and clear conclusions (though the choice of endnotes rather than footnotes was, for this reader, more distracting than simplifying). The book seems intended for a broad audience also in the sense that it often suggests rather than assumes the historicity of the New Testament.

Barnett begins by introducing readers to the apparent "paradox of Peter" (ch. 1), followed by a historical exploration of Peter's geographic, cultural, and linguistic background (ch. 2). He makes the interesting claim that Peter was "almost certainly" a disciple of John the Baptist (p. 7). The book then examines Peter's call (ch. 3) and his time with Jesus (ch. 4) prior to his fall and restoration, at which point Barnett makes the unusual assertion that Peter's return to Jesus after his betrayal was his "conversion" (ch. 5, discussed further below). A discussion of Peter's role as apostle (ch. 6) is followed by chapters on Peter as "President of the Council of Apostles" (ch. 7), the "eclipse" of Peter in AD 42–48 (ch. 8), the Antioch crisis and the Jerusalem Council (chs. 9–10). Next,

Peter is examined according to his movements west (ch. 11), his time in Corinth and Rome (chs. 12–13), his first letter (ch. 14), martyrdom (ch. 15), influence on Mark's Gospel (ch. 16), and enduring influence (chs. 17–18).

A strength of Barnett's work, besides achieving a succinct explanation of the most germane texts relating to Peter, is the food for thought that he offers in areas beyond what is commonly known. His style is one which freely offers suggestions and quite speculative possibilities. He explores fruitfully, for example, the extent to which Peter was likely helpful to young Paul when they spent days together, challenging the argument that Paul had "no knowledge of the historical Jesus" (p. 41).

Having stated this as a strength, the scale of this practice arguably weakens the work overall, especially when compounded by questionable corollaries. On page 90, for example, I counted nine explicitly speculative assertions, most of which I found unconvincing. The result resembles eisegesis, and sometimes leads Barnett to make rather odd claims about significant theological matters, before the discussion simply moves on. As one example, reading of Peter's "conversion" (p. 30, 33–34) had a jarringly anachronistic ring to it. Barnett says, "Remarkably Jesus' words then imply that Simon was yet to be 'converted.' This is the force of the words, 'when you have turned again' – *epistrepsas.*" (p. 34). Such a theologically significant assertion, which implicitly throws into question the continuity of covenants, demands far more theological and exegetical support than can be offered by the verb *epistrepho,* which can simply mean "turn" or "return."

A second concerning feature of this work was the extent to which it seems to have been influenced by the approach and interests of critical Petrine scholarship, which leads to clashes with the New Testament's emphases. Barnett in the Preface credits "Martin Hengel's luminous *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle*" (p. ix) for sharpening his interest in Peter, and the early chapters in particular share some of Hengel's troubling interest in matters foreign to the text, and an implied distance between the historical events and that which is recorded in scripture (cf. my earlier review of Hengel's book in *Themelios* 37.3).

The supernatural and superintending work of God is at times explained primarily by natural (by which we might include historical, psychological, or cultural) causes, and Peter's character and personality are credited more explicitly to explain Peter's rise and prominence in the Gospels. He writes, for example, "Apart from Peter's influence Jesus might have been remembered as an unorthodox rabbi who gave unusual judgements about the law" (p. 3), which seems to imply Jesus's success was dependent upon Peter's influence, rather than on the God whose plans are not thwarted and who raises his servants at will.

Another example is the way in which Peter came to accept Gentiles as equal members of the covenant community. Barnett posits, "Although he was a strictly observant Jew, as leader of the Jesus movement after the resurrection he showed remarkable flexibility in welcoming non-Jews into membership of the new covenant people" (p. 5). (Peter's change in "temperament and personality" [p. 14] is not so much to be credited, as the Spirit who filled and equipped Peter for his prominence and work.) The Book of Acts, however, would not have us credit Peter's flexibility for such a monumental change; in Acts 10:1–28 God uses numerous miraculous events to overwhelm Peter's reluctance to "associate with or visit" Gentiles (v. 28), let alone fully welcome them as God's people. Barnett's brief epilogue, however, provides a more explicitly theocentric, and I would add accurate, appreciation of Peter's life and ministry.

Similarly, while Barnett does not deny that Peter wrote 2 Peter, it may have been critical scholarship's distrust of 2 Peter that led Barnett to almost disregard its contribution (see references to it on p. 110

and pp. 173–74 n. 4). Christian readers buying a popular-level biography of Peter might wonder why the portrait was not informed by the riches of Peter's second letter, even if critical scholarship has traditionally excluded it.

Overall, Barnett provides a stimulating biography of Peter, combining sound exegetical and historical perspectives with more speculative possibilities, many of which may inspire fresh investigation and discovery.

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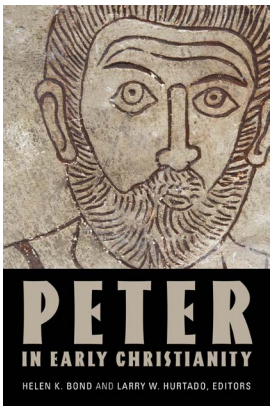
Helen Bond and Larry Hurtado, eds. *Peter in Early Christianity.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. xxii + 358 pp. £28.99/$40.00.



This volume is a compilation of essays representing "the highlights of a conference organized by Edinburgh University's Centre of the Study of Christian Origins in July 2013" (p. xvi). Most of the nineteen contributors occupy academic posts across the United Kingdom.

Peter in Early Christianity contributes to the flow of interest in the Apostle Peter over the last 15 years, after a long period of Peter "playing second fiddle to Paul" (p. xvi). Through its range of essays, pitched to an academic audience, it furthers our understanding of Peter through both its breadth and its depth. Since the volume is comprised of nineteen quite distinct essays, this review seeks to succinctly summarize the main argument of most chapters, with limited scope for critique.

Overall, there is a logical, chronological arrangement of essays, moving from studies pertaining to Peter's background, geography, context, and names, through to discussion of Peter's place in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles, and concluding with his historic influence upon the church.

The introductory essay by Hurtado leads readers through three representative Protestant portraits of Peter from the past six decades, sympathetically presenting the work of Oscar Cullmann, Martin Hengel, and Markus Bockmuehl. The chapter thus offers an efficient orientation to recent decades of Petrine scholarship.

Chapters 2–6 each consider particular aspects of the historical Peter and his world, namely: research into the fishing industry on Lake Tiberias (Sean Freyne); an analysis of Peter's names and some discussion as to their significance (Margaret Williams); the affirmation of a likely influence of Peter upon the author of Mark's Gospel (Helen Bond); a broad endorsement of the historicity of the Petrine speeches in the Book of Acts, with qualifications (Jonathan Lo); and lastly, an interesting argument, based substantially on John 21:18–19, that Peter was not crucified but was burned alive (Timothy Barnes).

Chapters 7–11 examine Peter's place in the New Testament, as a dominant character as well as an apparent epistolary author. Chapter 7 offers a helpful corrective to the assumptions behind Peter's lack of "perceptiveness" in the Gospels. The imperceptiveness should not be interpreted as a negative portrayal by Gospel authors, as has been commonly asserted by scholars, but as somewhat typical

of those who receive revelation in Scripture (John Markley). Chapter 8 promotes a more nuanced understanding of Peter in recent scholarship by observing Peter's development in John's Gospel, which sees Peter mature and learn submission (Jason Sturdevant). Chapter 9 considers Peter in Luke-Acts, but uses the "negative" and "positive" categories rightly deemed unhelpful by authors of chapters 6–7 (Finn Damgaard). Chapter 10 offers a convincing demonstration of the ways in which the NT texts, and other early writings, present Peter as clearly literate (Sean Adams). Chapter 11 (Matthew Novenson) stands or falls with the validity of the author's assumption that both of the Petrine epistles are pseudonymous. For those who consider one or both of the Petrine epistles to be authentically Peter's (see, for example my *First-Century Guides to Life and Death: Epictetus, Philo and Peter* [Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2017]), the essay's attempt to explain why we have the Petrine epistles at all is, *ipso facto*, of debatable value.

Chapters 12–18 then examine the place of Peter in later Christian traditions before Markus Bockmuehl concludes the volume with an even-handed critical reflection on the Roman Catholic Church's relationship with Peter, entitled "Scripture's Pope Meets von Balthasar's Peter." While it seemed, on first impressions, an obscure topic with which to conclude the volume, it does function well to draw together themes of the book while also reconsidering the divide between Roman Catholic and Protestant views over Peter's relevance for the church today. Bockmuehl suggests each has something to teach the other: Protestants, for example, may have dismissed with inadequate reflection how Jesus's extraordinary words to Peter (in key texts such as Matt 16:17–19; Luke 22:31–32; and John 21:15–17) do indeed have enduring significance.

While the assumptions of critical scholarship should be open to re-examination and rejection if the evidence points that way, there seemed at times some a reluctance from some contributors to voice confidently views which endorse such positions as the historicity of the accounts in the Gospels and Acts, or Peter's general competence as a thinker and author (capable of writing 1 Peter), or the close connection between the Apostle Peter and 2 Peter. Perhaps due to the particular conference environment in which these papers were presented, the more conservative findings seem to be couched hesitantly and with significant qualification, while more critical and speculative propositions are offered freely. As one example, Damgaard confidently speculates, "Luke might not only have written a 'Pauline' speech for Peter at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:7–11), he may even have rewritten Peter narratives such as the denial narrative under the influence of Paul's letters—in this case Paul's self-portrayal as a persecutor of the church." (p. 129). In light of the critical tradition this is unsurprising, but it is worth noting that these influences were not without effect.

With that said, the volume makes an excellent contribution to Petrine studies. While undergraduate readers who are unfamiliar with the critical tone of Petrine scholarship might find some essays perplexing, if not disturbing, due to their inherent distrust in the historical reliability of Scripture, the range of topics and the quality of presentation make it, on the whole, an enjoyable and insightful volume.

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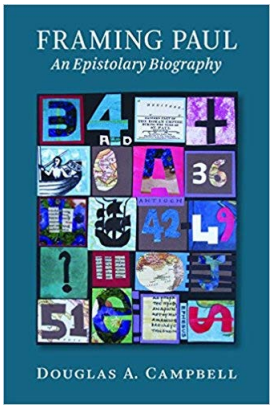
Douglas A. Campbell. *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 468 pp. £32.99/$39.00.



Douglas Campbell, professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School and author of *The Quest for Paul's Gospel* (London: T&T Clark, 2005) and *The Deliverance of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), has produced a significant study of the historical background of Paul's letters that will be sure to generate considerable scholarly discussion. Rather than providing a comprehensive biography of Paul's life or an analysis of his theology, Campbell's central aim is to explore what may be determined regarding the historical circumstances that gave rise to the Pauline letters. For Campbell, such an investigation is hardly trivial. As he contends, "any valid Pauline interpretation in any historical respect must begin with a workable account of the letters' circumstances in relation to one another (p. 12)." His examination is unique in its attempt to "frame" each of the Pauline writings using evidence gleaned exclusively from the Pauline letters without depending on the relevant narratives recorded in Acts. Campbell's decision to exclude Acts from his investigation derives from his concern that previous studies have worked from "either an Acts-based chronology that had serious problems or with a muddled approach that switched between Acts-based and epistolary systems (p. xv)."

Campbell's primary thesis is that ten of the canonical epistles that bear Paul's name are authentic and that they were written in two particular phases of Paul's ministry. He concludes that 1–2 Thessalonians were written as early as 40 CE shortly after the "Gaian Crisis" and that the remaining eight epistles were written about a decade later (i.e., between 50–52 CE) in locations around the Aegean Sea and during occasions of significant hardship. By placing the composition of eight of the Pauline letters in the early 50s, Campbell argues for a significantly earlier date of composition than is often assumed for the "Prison Epistles," while challenging the well-known tradition that they were written during a Roman imprisonment. In addition to the substantial amount of material that is analyzed in support of this general framework, Campbell offers several unique proposals relating to the historical background of the individual writings. The following is a summary of some of the more notable conclusions that relate to the background of the ten Pauline letters he deems authentic.

- **Romans:** Follows the theory of Charlotte Hartwig that the original audience of Romans was the believers in Corinth prior to the epistle's dispatch to Rome.
- **1–2 Corinthians:** Identifies the "Letter of Tears" referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:4 as 1 Corinthians rather than a non-extant epistle.
- **Galatians:** Determines that Galatians was written from Corinth, a conclusion which accounts for Paul's instruction about topics such as sexual immorality, drunkenness, and idolatry as well as his emphasis on Christian unity.
- **Ephesians:** Contends that "Ephesians" was originally sent to the church in Laodicea and that this letter was referred to in Colossians 4:16.
- **Philippians:** Suggests that Philippians was written from Corinth and that Philippians 3:2—4:3 was a separate and previously written letter that was ultimately placed within the canonical letter of Philippians.

- **Colossians:** Concludes that Paul probably wrote Colossians from somewhere east of the Lycus Valley in a city such as Apamea after the arrival of Onesimus.
- **1–2 Thessalonians:** Argues that the Thessalonian epistles were likely written from Athens.
- **Philemon:** Follows the theory of Peter Lampe and others that Onesimus was most likely a truant slave (*erro*) who sought to appeal to a friend of his master (Paul) rather than a runaway (*fugitivus*) slave. This leads him to conclude that Paul must have been a relatively short distance from Colossae when he wrote Colossians and Philemon.

Although Campbell is to be commended for his insightful examination of the historical context behind each of the Pauline letters, not all readers will find themselves in agreement with each of his conclusions or with various aspects of his method. To mention a few examples, Campbell places great emphasis throughout the volume on the *Nebenadressat* of each letter, that is, on the identification of those in the immediate vicinity of Paul who would have read or heard his letters prior to their dispatch. This area of study is certainly deserving of greater scholarly attention given its importance in clarifying the identity of the "original" audience of Paul's writings. However, one wonders if there are occasions in which Campbell places too much weight on certain thematic parallels between various Pauline letters in an effort to identify a writing's *Nebenadressat*.

Second, while Campbell's investigation of evidence from the Pauline epistles is far-reaching and valuable in its own right, some readers may disagree with his decision not to corroborate his conclusions with the historical insights that can be gleaned from Acts. Campbell insists that "only when the epistolary process has run its course … and each item of information has been squeezed dry for every last drop of insight, should interpreters turn and introduce evidence from Acts" (p. 411). It is possible, however, that some of the more tentative conclusions made throughout the volume might be more difficult to maintain when the evidence from Acts is considered. To mention but one example, Campbell concludes that both of the Thessalonian letters were written from Athens. This conclusion is certainly a possibility and there is evidence that some Christians had reached the same conclusion by the fourth century if not earlier (see, for example, the subscriptions found at the end of Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Vaticanus). However, if the testimony of Acts is considered alongside of the information Paul provides in 1 Thessalonians 3 regarding his brief stay in Athens, it seems more likely that Corinth was the place from which the Thessalonian epistles were sent, given Luke's report that Timothy and Silas were not with Paul in Athens during a significant portion of Paul's visit (see Acts 17:16 and 18:5).

Finally, while Campbell's rejection of the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles is by no means unique in modern scholarship, not all readers will find his arguments against authenticity to be convincing. In his examination of the external evidence, he dismisses the importance and reliability of several early sources that contain clear or possible references to the Pastorals (e.g., 1 Clement, the Muratorian Fragment, and Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians) in order to support his conclusion that "only the ten communal letters by Paul are genuine, and that the Pastorals were written precisely to combat Marcion, along with other perceived Christian deviations, in the second century" (p. 390). Several observations relating to the content of the Pastorals are also offered in support of this conclusion. To cite only some of the more notable examples, Campbell observes that it would have been impractical for Zenas and Apollos to travel through Crete (Tit 3:13). Concerns relating to the literary style of Titus are also raised despite his acknowledgement elsewhere that literary style is often an unreliable test for determining the authenticity of New Testament writings. With regard to 1–2 Timothy, Campbell concludes that the similarities in content and language between these letters and the genuine Pauline letters and Acts

is consistent with the opinion that the Pastorals were the work of a pseudepigrapher. Perhaps most troubling from Campbell's perspective is the description of a saying of Jesus as Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18. This reference, of course, is only problematic if the concept of authoritative Scripture was indeed absent during the final years of Paul's lifetime.

In sum, while readers will certainly not agree with all of his conclusions, Campbell's study is the culmination of an extensive and rigorous investigation into the historical context of the Pauline letters that demands serious consideration and promises to spark fruitful scholarly discussion.

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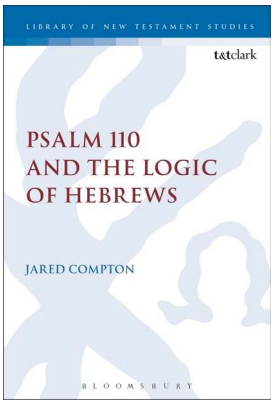
Jared Compton. *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews*. Library of New Testament Studies 537. London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. viii + 226 pp. £84.99/$114.00.



Jared Compton currently serves as a pastor of Crossway Community Church in Bristol, Wisconsin. Based on a PhD dissertation written under the supervision of D. A. Carson at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews* explores the function of the Old Testament, particularly Psalm 110, in the structure and logical development of the New Testament book of Hebrews (p. 1). The study develops over five chapters, with back matter consisting of an appendix surveying literature on the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews' structure, a bibliography, an index of references, and an index of authors.

In the introductory chapter, Compton follows G. W. Buchanan's observation that Psalm 110, especially verses 1 and 4, is a critical piece in unlocking the book's logical development and structure. The balance of the chapter offers a brief review of three works that have dealt substantively with the use of Psalm 110 in Hebrews's structure, a plan and preview of the study, an overly brief quarter page on "presuppositions" that lie behind the monograph, and finally the first of the monograph's many excursuses.

Chapters 2–4 analyze the logic of three main movements in the expositional material of Hebrews: Hebrews 1–2, Hebrews 5–7, and Hebrews 8–10. For instance, chapter 2 on Hebrews 1–2 considers the internal logic of Hebrews 1:5–14, 2:5–9, and 2:10–18. Compton then proposes how Psalm 110 plays a significant role in each movement and concludes each chapter with a synthesis of his findings.

Further, the author punctuates chapters 1–4 with ten excursuses on a wide variety of topics, for example, "Hebrews' Audience and Situation" (Chapter 1), "Σωφία and Λόγος Traditions in Early Judaism and in Hebrews" (Chapter 2), and "Melchizedek's Identity" and "The High Priest's Daily Sacrifice" (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 alone has five excursuses! Although these excursuses are substantive summaries on the topics addressed, some readers may find them distracting from the primary research question. Chapter 5, as the conclusion of the study, summarizes the logic of Hebrews and offers suggested implications for Hebrews's situation.

Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews presents a thoughtful analysis of one vital aspect of Hebrews's purpose and structural development. Copious footnotes throughout point to a depth of research, and the approach of "filtering" the book's expositional units through the lens of what is undoubtedly the key

Old Testament passage for the author, lends a cohesiveness to the argument and interesting perspectives on Hebrews's theology and rhetorical goals.

At the same time, the basic approach followed in the monograph, where the internal logic of the expositional units is considered in relative isolation, may at points be seen as obscuring the clarity of Hebrews's structure. Compton follows George Guthrie (*The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-linguistic Analysis* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 115) in considering the benefit of discerning the expositional material's specific semantic program. However, part of the benefit of such discernment has to do with a heightened awareness of how that content then integrates both rhetorically and theologically as it interplays with the book's introduction and sections of hortatory material. For example, although mentioning the allusion to Psalm 110:1 at Hebrews 1:3, Compton does little to establish the expositional material in contextual relationship to this vital launch of the book's use of Psalm 110, and the exaltation in 1:3 as a referent inclusive of the Son's resurrection—a key question in recent Hebrews research—is more assumed on the basis of the work of others than it is argued. At a number of points throughout, the reflections could have been strengthened by establishing more firmly the rhetorical role the expositional passage plays vis-à-vis the surrounding material.

Nevertheless, Compton argues his case well that at every point in the development of the book's Christology, Psalm 110 looms large as a primary backdrop. Even passages like 2:10–18 and 9:1–10, where the psalm's role recedes, giving way before other focal Old Testament texts or topics, its presence is still felt. Furthermore, the conclusion that the author uses the psalm, in part, to make a case for a suffering messiah, offers a fresh focus on the use of this important passage in early Christianity.

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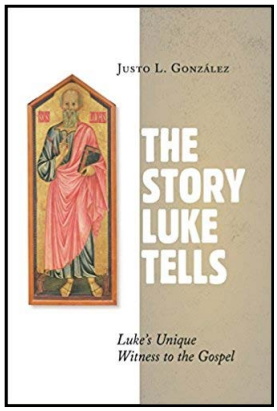
Justo L. González. *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. xii + 129 pp. £10.99/$14.00.



The Lukan corpus is unparalleled in its uniqueness and often undervalued by scholars (p. vii), but *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel* deftly illustrates the literary artistry and unity of Luke-Acts, and the books' open-ended invitation to become a part of Luke's story. This slim volume, which can be read in one sitting, elucidates Luke's story—both vertically (within each of Luke's respective works) and horizontally (across Luke-Acts and the rest of the NT). While perhaps an unlikely candidate for penning a Lukan theology (González's doctoral dissertation at Yale focused on Bonaventure and medieval scholastic theology), González's background as a professor of historical theology (Evangelical Seminary in Puerto Rico and Candler School of Theology) and United Methodist minister offers a fresh perspective from which to view the Third Gospel.

González opts not to diverge into technical discussions that often obscure, rather than illuminate, Luke's story. Instead, the purpose of González's work is to "investigate and expound something of Luke's theology, underlining both those elements which he shares with the rest of the New Testament authors

and those which are unique to him" (p. viii). Whether the author of Luke-Acts is the "beloved physician" (Col 4:14), Lucius of Cyrene (Acts 13:1), or someone else, what ultimately matters for González is that the author "left us two books that help us understand both the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the thought and interest of Luke himself" (p. xi). Luke does not undervalue the work of the other Gospel writers in any way (p. 4), but seeks to write a "new history" of the stories of Jesus and the Church from Luke's own unique perspective (pp. xi, 4). Luke does this while leaving his unique story (p. vii) unfinished—thus, inviting both Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1) and the Church to participate (pp. 11–13).

Structurally, González's work is divided into ten sections. In his introduction, González states his purpose in writing, and offers a brief prolegomenon to Luke-Acts. Chapters 1–8 survey what González feels to be the eight major motifs within Luke-Acts: the history of humankind (ch. 1); the history of Israel (ch. 2); the great reversal (ch. 3); gender (ch. 4); salvation (ch. 5); food and drink (ch. 6); worship (ch. 7); and the Holy Spirit (ch. 8). González concludes his work discussing Luke's open invitation to become a part of his story (p. 129). González argues that Luke purposefully leaves his story unfinished on at least two levels: chronologically and geographically (pp. 12–13, 128–29). Chronologically, Luke's story does not end, it just abruptly "stops." Geographically, the gospel must continue reaching toward the "ends of the earth" as Acts 1:8 demands.

Numerous strengths mark González's work: it is well written, accessible both in its content and its price, and brief enough for busy pastors or students to digest quickly. Given González's background as a historian, chapters 1–2 make the strongest contributions to Lukan studies. In chapter 1, González contrasts secular historiography's focus on information lists that merely satisfy curiosity with Luke's intentional focus on "invitation" (p. 13). Chapter 2 discusses Luke's typological interpretation of the OT. González sees two main examples of Luke's typology: the relationship between God's redeeming acts in Christ and the Exodus; and the relationship between Christ and Adam (pp. 19–20). The conclusions that González draws (e.g. on p. 67) regarding the implications of Luke's approach for theological of the New Testament (and the Old) have affinities with Richard Hays's approach in *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).

Despite its strengths, curious omissions plague an otherwise excellent book. Two such lacunae in González's discussion of Luke's themes are wealth and poverty, and eschatology. First, González does briefly discuss wealth and poverty in chapter 3 (pp. 35–38), but his discussion is woefully inadequate given the prominence of this theme in Luke-Acts, as John Szukalski's monograph, *Tormented in Hades* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), has aptly shown. Second, while González's discussion of the eschatological reality of heaven in terms of salvation and worship is helpful (pp. 70–73, 100–03), there is no mention of the eschatological reality of hell/judgment/punishment in González's text. This seems imbalanced, as Luke vividly describes God's authority to cast unbelievers into Gehenna (Luke 12:5), eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth (Luke 13:28), suffering in Hades/torments (Luke 16:23, 28), and a God-appointed day in which Christ will judge the world (Acts 17:30–31). However, the major weakness in González's work is the absence of footnotes/endnotes, author/Scripture/subject indices, and bibliography. The omission of these important elements outweighs any advantage gained in the brevity of this book. Moreover, the absence of citations, indices, and bibliography impedes further research in Luke-Acts.

In sum, *The Story Luke Tells* would greatly benefit anyone preaching/teaching through Luke-Acts. However, this work would have been improved had González given us, as Paul Harvey would say, "the

rest of the story." Despite these shortcomings, González succinctly summarizes many of the major motifs within Luke-Acts, and chapters 1–2 alone are worth the price of this book.

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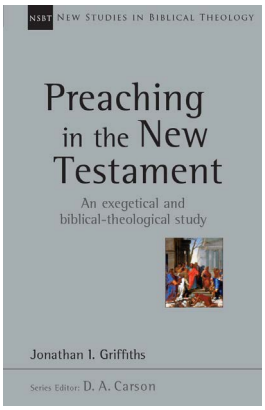
Jonathan I. Griffiths. *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 42. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. xv + 149 pp. £12.99/$22.00.



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This is an important and valuable book. It tackles two foundational questions about what we call 'preaching':

> First, according to Scripture, is there actually such a thing as 'preaching' that can be differentiated in any way from other forms of word ministry? Or, if there was such a phenomenon in the context of the Old Testament prophetic ministries, or in the ministries of Jesus and his apostles, is there still such a thing as a specialized word ministry called 'preaching' in the post-apostolic age? … We then encounter a second and related question: How would post-apostolic 'preaching' relate to the preaching of the Old Testament prophets and of Jesus and his apostles? (pp. 2, 3)

Griffiths recognises that these are crucial questions. We could decide that preaching is optional or do it because we have always done it. Or we could do it because it seems to work or stop doing it because it seems not to work! These kinds of responses are unsatisfactory and inappropriate.

These questions are the focus of the book, and Griffiths tackles them by developing a biblical theology of preaching; by investigating three crucial words: εὐαγγελίζομαι, καταγγέλλω, and κηρύσσω; he then studies key passages in 2 Timothy, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, and Hebrews. This is a powerful combination, including as it does biblical theology, key words, and key passages. He also includes a discussion of the relationship between Old Testament prophets and New Testament preachers. And he places preaching in the context of the broader word ministries of the New Testament. Through this exercise he develops a robust and convincing exposition of the crucial role of preaching in post-apostolic ministry, and also demonstrates its continuity with and dependence on the ministry of Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles.

Here are his conclusions:

- 'Preaching is a proclamation of the word of God.' (p. 122)
- 'Christian preaching stands in a line of continuity with the preaching of Jesus and the apostles.' (p. 123)

- 'Christian preaching stands in a line of continuity with the Old Testament prophetic tradition.' (p. 126)
- 'Preachers must be commissioned to preach.' (p. 129)
- 'The nature of preaching uniquely reflects the nature of the gospel.' (p. 129)
- 'Preaching is a divine and human activity that constitutes an encounter with God.' (p. 130)
- 'Preaching has a natural context and particular significance within the Christian assembly.' (p. 131)
- 'Preaching is related to, but distinct from, other ministries of the word.' (p. 133)

All this is carefully and comprehensively argued and supported, yet presented with elegant simplicity. He clarifies what the Bible teaches, and does not go beyond the evidence. You will miss the significance and power of these conclusions if you do not read the book yourself, and see the evidence with which Griffiths supports these claims.

Those who are excited by reading this book would be further enriched by reading his *Hebrews and Divine Speech*, which forms the foundation for his section on Hebrews in this book and also provides an even deeper and richer theological foundation for what is found here.

This is important evidence we need to keep in mind when making decisions about the place of preaching within ministry in both the Western and the Majority world. At least the book makes it clear that preaching is not a Western invention or the product of a rationalist and scientific age!

Issues which could be profitably followed up include the following:

- Any clues or indications of what New Testament preaching might or should look like in the prophecies of the Old Testament, as for example Deuteronomy.
- A fuller development of the place of New Testament prophets and prophecy within the general frame he has outlined of the relationship between Old Testament prophets and New Testament preachers.
- The relationship between the teaching ministry of Old Testament priests (see for example Ezra 7, Neh 8, and Mal 2) and New Testament preachers.

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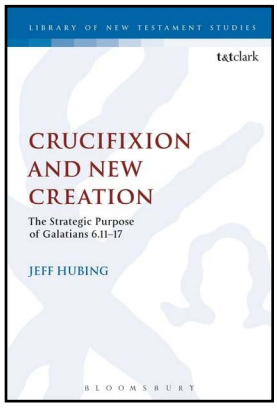
Jeff Hubing. *Crucifixion and New Creation: The Strategic Purpose of Galatians 6:11–17*. Library of New Testament Studies 508. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. xiii + 282 pp. £28.99/$39.95.



This work primarily examines Galatians 6:11–17 in light of its epistolary function and the letter's persecution theme. *Crucifixion and New Creation* is a lightly revised version of Jeff Hubing's dissertation, completed at Loyola University under the supervision of Thomas Tobin. Hubing is currently the President of FIRE School of Ministry in Chicago, IL.

Hubing first addresses the epistolary function of Galatians 6:11–17 in chapter two by assessing scholarly contributions to this issue. Here Hubing reviews the work of several scholars and identifies three closely related problems: 1) terminological issues; 2) an overemphasis on Paul's comment in Galatians 6:11; and 3) the tendency to identity verses 11–17 as a letter closing (pp. 3–4, 42).

Chapter three then presents Hubing's own assessment of the epistolary function of Galatians 6:11–17. Hubing first compares letter closings in Greco-Roman letters with Galatians 6:11–17 and concludes that there are insufficient similarities to warrant identifying verses 11–17 as the letter closing of Galatians (pp. 46–71). He then compares body closings in Greco-Roman letters with Paul's statements in verses 11–17. Hubing concludes that while Paul does modify these secular conventions for his own purposes, enough similarities exist to warrant identifying verses 11–17 as the body closing (pp. 72–81). Importantly, Hubing notes Paul begins (vv. 12–13) *and* ends (v. 17) this body closing with statements concerning persecution (pp. 83–84).

Hubing next addresses scholarly discussions of the letter's persecution theme in chapter four. The contributions of E. Baasland, A. J. Goddard and S. A. Cummins, J. Muddiman, and T. Martin are all carefully evaluated. Hubing particularly highlights Muddiman's analysis, which differentiates between several different participants (Paul, the Galatian believers, the "agitators," and those whom the "agitators" are seeking to make an impression on) within the letter.

Chapter five then examines four explicit references to persecution in Galatians (Gal 1:13–14; 1:21–24; 4:28–5:1; 5:7–12). Hubing's discussion of persecution is especially important because it sheds light on his assessment of the historical situation in Galatia. More specifically, Hubing concludes from these four texts that the Galatian believers are currently being persecuted (pp. 142–43); this persecution is coming from a non-Christian element within first-century Judaism (pp. 143, 152–53); the oppression primarily takes the form of "a diabolical strategy of deception, misinformation, and subtle compulsion in order to manipulate the Galatians into accepting circumcision" (p. 157).

Six implicit references to persecution in Galatians (Gal 1:7; 2:1–5; 2:11–14; 3:1–5; 4:12–18; 5:4) are the subject matter of chapter six. Hubing's analysis of these texts helpfully demonstrates that all the major parties referenced in Galatians are somehow associated with persecution. Hubing especially emphasizes how these texts describe different responses to persecution. For Hubing, Paul presents himself as an example of one who appropriately responds to persecution, in contrast to those like Peter, who hypocritically avoid suffering for the sake of the gospel (pp. 185–86).

Hubing then carefully analyzes Galatians 6:11–17 in chapter seven. The focus of this detailed treatment of verses 11–17 is twofold. First, he explains how reading verses 11–17 as a body closing impacts the interpretation of this text. Second, he explains how verses 11–17 continue the letter's

persecution theme. Based on his epistolary analysis, Hubing argues that verses 11–15 confirm Paul's rationale for writing Galatians by highlighting the stark contrast between Paul and his opponents, both in terms of their assessment of the cross and their willingness to accept persecution for the cross. Hubing also concludes that verses 16–17 create a foundation for further interaction between Paul and the Galatian believers by 1) presenting an implicit threat to those who do not accept his assessment of the cross (v. 16); and 2) following that threat up with an explicit warning in verse 17 to those who hamper his ministry in Galatia (pp. 245–257). Finally, Hubing suggests that verses 12–13 develop the persecution theme in Galatians by providing new information about the hypocritical motivations of Paul's opponents (pp. 207–214).

This study is a helpful analysis of Galatians. Hubing's treatment of the persecution theme in Galatians is particularly constructive. Readers interested in epistolary analysis will find his examination of the function of Galatians 6:11–17 especially stimulating as Hubing's objections to viewing Galatians 6:11–17 as a letter closing are indeed sound.

Having said that, those who are skeptical of the value of epistolary analysis will likely be left wanting more. Hubing himself recognizes that Paul's statements in Galatians 6:11–17 are quite dissimilar to the formulaic expressions found in the common Greek letter tradition (pp. 72–82). Furthermore, while it seems plausible to interpret the function of verses 16–17 as a "basis for further communication," the same cannot be said for Hubing's suggestion that verses 11–15 function as Paul's "primary motivation for writing" (pp. 76–82).

The serious student of Galatians will likely find this an insightful analysis of the letter. Hubing's assessment of prior scholarship on the epistolary function of Galatians 6:11–17 provides an important contribution, even if his own solution is wanting. Furthermore, his analysis of persecution in Galatians effectively highlights the importance of this theme and its practical significance (pp. 187, 262–63). Other issues in Galatians, particularly justification, tend to receive more attention. Hubing's work will hopefully help remedy that lack of interest.

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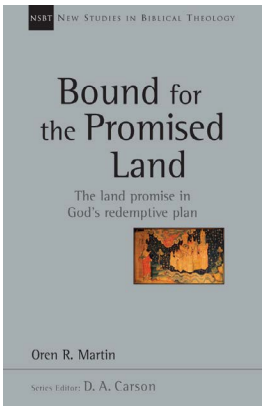
Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 34. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 208 pp. £12.99/$25.00.



It is difficult to understand a book like Martin's *Bound for the Promised Land* without realizing that it is sitting on top of an enormous controversy. His irenic style and casual assembling of biblical texts doesn't let on why this topic starts wars—metaphorical theological wars and quite literal military campaigns. And he shies away from drawing out the obvious implications for us, something that every reader will look for. But first some background.

The subject of "land" is explosive. Is God the distributor of land? Is "land" an inherent cultural right for people ("This is my land") or more tellingly, does it

come with a divine right ("God has given me this land"). Cherokee Christians in the US are working on this issue and virtually everyone in Israel/Palestine thinks about it.

The theological problem is anchored to one question and one question alone: *Do the Abrahamic promises of land* (Gen 12:1–3, etc.) *still have relevance for Christians or have they been fulfilled by the New Testament?* There are two fundamental approaches to this. For some whose theology is formed by dispensationalism (Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock) the answer is yes. Others accept dispensational eschatology, wed it to modern political Zionism (Joel Willitts, Gerald McDermott, Mark Kinzer) and end up with the same result: Abraham's covenantal land promises still have currency in biblical theology and today in the politics of the Middle East. Here we can consult the recent edited volume *The New Christian Zionism*, edited by Gerald R. McDermott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), whose voices affirm a very strong "yes" and are eager to affirm these land promises not only in biblical theology but for the modern secular state of Israel. But here the key is Abraham. Thus Blaising writes, "To understand the Bible, one must read it in view of the Abrahamic covenant and that covenant with Abraham is the foundational framework for interpreting Scripture and the history of redemption which it reveals" (*Progressive Dispensationalism* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993], 135). From this they will conclude that the land promises to Israel are unconditional and permanent. And an easy line is drawn from "the land of Abraham" to "the land of modern Israel" in the Middle East today.

On the other hand, there are a host of other scholars who take a second view. In each case, they cover the exegetical issues of the Old and New Testament carefully and then work to build a case for a "land" theology. In some cases, they are academic pastors such as Fredrick Martin who wrote *American Evangelicals and Modern Israel* (Sisters, OR: Deep River, 2016). They are Palestinian scholars such as Munther Isaac at Bethlehem Bible College (*From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth* [Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2015]). There is Walter Bruggemann's well-known *The Land,* now in its second edition (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) and Colin Chapman's *Whose Promised Land?* now also in its second edition (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2015). I have also added to this conversation with *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to "Holy Land" Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010). These scholars are shaped by Reformed Theology, they see the Abrahamic land promises as temporally limited and conditional, and they argue that the dispensational and Zionist scholars are underestimating the significance of what the New Testament is saying. Generally, they do not draw a line between Abraham's descendants and the modern state of Israel (both presumed recipients of the same promise). These Reformed theologians elevate the importance of Jesus and his covenant, they believe that the new covenant fulfills the substance of what was given to Abraham, and they find a long theological arc that stretches from the "land of Eden" to the "land of Abraham" and culminates in the renewal of the world in the universal promises given in Christ. Land, then, is less a political reality than it is a theological reality, a theological symbol perhaps, for what God is promising his people.

Oren Martin's *Bound for the Promised Land* sits squarely in this second tradition. Martin is a theologian at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky—a school well-known for its Reformed theological views. And here he offers a careful, thoughtful outline strongly reminiscent of Munther Isaac's *From Land to Lands*. As a theologian, he wants to see the whole and this is clearly the book's strength. He prefers the forest over the trees and yet he does not neglect the needed exegetical detail in specific texts. But he asks new and important questions: What is God's eschatological goal in history? What is the relationship of the kingdom announced by Jesus to this goal? For Martin, the question of "land" cannot be an end in itself but is a subset of the larger questions regarding God's

purposes. And this is where he shines as a theologian. He requires that exegesis of key texts serve the larger theological arc of scripture.

The book advances through the land promises of Abraham, the subsequent movements of land acquisition (the conquest) and the failures to keep the land (the exile). And here he shows (echoing the OT prophets) just how tenuous, conditional, and fragile the reality of this promise is. Moreover, he claims that the land promises are not an end in themselves but serve as a type or pattern of something else, a future reality that will only be seen in the New Testament. He refuses to begin with Abraham and move to modern Israel. Instead he begins with Adam and moves toward the eschatological promises of Christ. He moves then from Eden to Eden.

When he turns to the New Testament he deftly shows how the promise of land is imbedded in the Gospels as well as the Epistles. For the casual reader, it may not be obvious but like things assumed widely in any culture, they only need the barest hint and everyone understands what is meant. As I have argued as well (in *Jesus and the Land*) the New Testament is announcing the fulfillment and inauguration of this land motif and the Apocalypse is describing its completion. The wider theological program is a sweeping movement from Eden to Eden (not Israel to Israel) and the gospel takes up what was promised and announces its arrival. As N. T. Wright has said many times over: the promise of the New Testament is not the re-establishment of a political entity (OT Israel) but the reconstituting of the world. The disciples' question to Jesus in Acts 1:6 ("Lord will you at this time reestablish the kingdom to Israel?") displays the deep misunderstanding we must avoid. God's program for the world is not political realities but kingdom realities.

Martin's treatment of these themes is perhaps the most sensible and thorough we have seen to date. And yet when we finish reading the last chapter ("Theological Reflections") we are left with an inescapable disappointment. This book ends as if it were 1950. Today many theologians and fervent Christians, particularly in the millennial generation, are seeking more: *What are the ethical implications for this reframing of the land promises?* In a word, the land promises of the Bible have been weaponized in the Middle East just as they were used to conquer the Native American tribes centuries ago. We need sober, courageous, and wise teachers like Martin to help us through the woods. It takes courage to make explicit what is implicit in this theology. And in very conservative settings, these implications will come with a degree of risk. But this is what my students want us to say in class: *What difference does our theology make?* Martin has written the map and now we look to him to show us the way from here.

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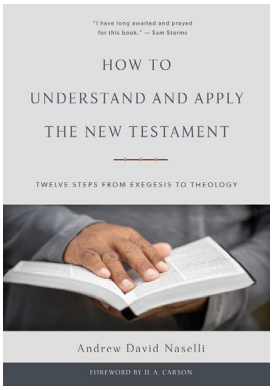
Andrew D. Naselli. *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017. xxx + 384 pp. £31.14/$39.99.



Andrew Naselli's recent publication *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament* is one of the best introductions to the topic in recent years. For brevity, in this review I limit my comments to what comes before and after the main body, namely the analytical outline, introduction, Appendix B, and glossary. This gloss over the "meat and potatoes" reflects my endorsement of the main body.

The main body of the book initially follows the sort of outline found in any standard exegetical resource—genre (ch. 1), textual criticism (ch. 2), translation (ch. 3), etc. What is distinct about Naselli's organization is the way he transcends "pure" exegesis to include the important categories of biblical theology (ch. 9), historical theology (ch. 10), systematic theology (ch. 11), and practical theology (ch. 12). Few books on NT interpretation devote enough attention to these categories. Naselli's work, however, walks a student not just through exegesis but all the way to the "end"—application benefiting from the rich interplay between exegesis, biblical theology (BT), historical theology (HT), and systematic theology (ST).

The analytical outline is the sort of outline a professor distributes at the beginning of a course. As such, it is useful for students who want to see how they are progressing in the topic. But it is also helpful for professors who teach NT exegesis (though Naselli states that this book is for "students … pastors and people with theological training … [and] thoughtful men and women who have little or no formal theological training," p. xxv). A professor in Greek exegesis can compare his or her analytical outline to Naselli's and benefit from possible points of difference in pedagogical organization and emphasis. One suggestion for a revised edition would be to have the roman numerals in the analytical outline correspond to the body chapters.

The introduction is packed with rich information and pastoral wisdom. The following are just a few examples. Naselli asserts: "Before you teach the Word to others, you need to practice it.… But before you practice and teach the Word, you have to know what it says.… That's what this book is about" (p. 1). Here, Naselli states not only the book's goal but one of the key insights into sound exegesis—*praxis*. Pastors and preachers know perhaps better than professors how experience and exegesis inform and shape one another. Naselli's appreciation for the "need to practice [the Word]" (p. 1) permeates his book, which constitutes one distinctive.

Similarly, in the introduction, Naselli makes a sobering observation. He asserts that it is only "after *decades* of exegeting the Bible, [a world-class scholar] has found that the exegetical process has become more intuitive and integrative for him" (p. 4, italics mine). Cal Newport makes a similar point in *So Good They Can't Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love* (New York: Business Plus, 2012). Newport argues that any apparent virtuoso is really the product of decades of focused discipline. As Naselli and others have argued, exegesis is "both a science and an art" (p. 4). However, it does have to begin more as a science—as "a mechanical, robotic process" (p. 4). In this sense, I echo Naselli's concluding exhortation, "So practice, practice, practice" (p. 332).

In his discussion on exegesis being both a science and art, Naselli makes the following exhortation: "Approach the exegetical process humbly and prayerfully. Ask God to open your eyes. You need the

Holy Spirit to illumine your mind" (p. 4). Naselli is exhorting contemporary interpreters, who are sober about their own sinfulness and the sinful idols pervasive in the academic world, to ask the Spirit's protection against heresy and speculative exegesis. In sum, the act of praying before, during, and after interpretation should never be construed as a mere formality. Naselli does a good job of underscoring the need for piety in the interpretive process. This is a point that is especially worth reiterating in an introductory book on exegesis.

One last note regarding the introduction. In the penultimate section, Naselli poses the question, "How Do Exegesis and Theology Interrelate?" (p. 5). Some exegetes tend to approach the Bible with a low view of ST and HT. Sometimes it's put along these lines: "I just want to be faithful to the Bible and not feel constrained by dogma." As Naselli observes, "No exegesis is ever done in a vacuum.… It is absurd to deny that one's systematic theology does not affect one's exegesis" (p. 6). Moreover, exegesis that is done in deliberate interaction with BT, HT, ST, and practical theology always yields richer conclusions than "isolated" or supposedly "pure" exegesis. Problems tend to arise when scholars from these different fields stop dialoguing with one another. Moreover, exegesis done in close conversation with especially systematics has the twofold benefit of helping an exegete both to see if he or she is straying from "sound doctrine" and to become more self-aware of the presuppositions underlying his or her own exegetical approach. We should commend Naselli for making—and emphasizing—this important point of "holistic" exegesis at the outset of his book.

Regarding Appendix B ("Why and How to Memorize an Entire New Testament Book"), I had the privilege of learning hermeneutics from Vern Poythress. Among the memorable takeaways from the class, I recall both his exhortation to memorize not just chunks of the Bible but entire books. More so, he modeled this through his life, systematically working to memorize the entire Bible. Those who have practiced this discipline know that it results in developing "biblical instincts"—an intuitive sense of which way to go and which way not to go—when studying a text. Quoting Jon Bloom, Naselli puts it this way: "memorizing big chunks of the Bible 'will fine-tune your hooey gauge'" (p. 340). This consistent discipline over a long period will yield an inestimable spiritual benefit. Naselli's treatment of memorization is helpful (pp. 340–42), especially the advice to "walk while you memorize" (p. 341). I would add to this list, "Memorize the Bible instead of spending countless hours on social media."

Finally, the glossary is a gem. For this section alone, I would recommend the purchase of the book. Similarly, the selected bibliography is a repository of incredible sources not only for hermeneutics but also for biblical theology and systematic theology. In addition to everything I have written above, I would add that Naselli's book is accessible, personable, comprehensive, devotional, and full of nifty diagrams and illustrations—all impressively compressed into a single volume.

Given the practical nature of the book, I would offer one suggestion (though Naselli touches on it in different parts of his book, especially in chapter 6 [argument diagram] and chapter 7 [literary context]): developing an analytical outline of a given book in the New Testament before exploring a passage in it. I recognize that this discipline might not be realistic, especially for lengthier books. Moreover, it is incredibly arduous and perhaps overwhelming for a new student in exegesis. Nevertheless, the process of outlining an entire book forces one to pay attention to the rhetorical flow of the book, to assimilate key themes and images, and to develop an intuitive sense of what the book is all about. Given the fundamental rule of "context, context, context" for sound interpretation, I would emphasize this discipline in an introductory book.

My last thought on the book is that Naselli might want to consider writing an abridged version. Alternatively, he could perhaps consider including another appendix where he condenses his rich chapters into a manageable checklist (though Naselli explains in the Introduction the liabilities of a "checklist approach"). But these minor points should not detract from this monumental work that has earned much praise and should have a lasting place in the shelf of every student of Scripture. It will serve as a rich resource for more seasoned NT exegetes and an ideal textbook to use in the classroom.

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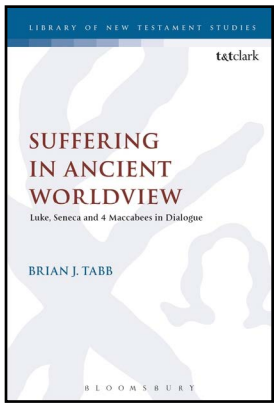
Brian J. Tabb. *Suffering in Ancient Worldview: Luke, Seneca and 4 Maccabees in Dialogue*. Library of New Testament Studies 569. London: T&T Clark, 2017. xix + 274 pp. £85.00/$114.00.



Brian Tabb begins this insightful monograph on suffering (a revision of his PhD thesis completed at the London School of Theology and Middlesex University under the supervision of Steve Walton) with an invitation to imagine a conversation in a private home between a Roman Stoic (Seneca), a Hellenistic Jew (the author of 4 Maccabees), and the first Christian historian and author of much of the New Testament (Luke), on the perennial, complex, and difficult subject of suffering. The potential for such a conversation to help us better appreciate the ancient historical context for Luke's writings and better understand Luke's own emphases on the theme of suffering quickly becomes apparent when one remembers the frequent encounters with Hellenistic Jews in Acts and the encounter with Stoic philosophers in Acts 17. More specifically, Seneca (tutor to Nero and brother of Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia who is mentioned in Acts 18:12–17), "writes considerably about his own and others' suffering and he relates suffering to larger questions of providence, virtue, and ethics" (p. 3). Likewise, although the theme of suffering is treated "in many intertestamental Jewish writings, 4 Maccabees stands out for its extended reflection on the graphic suffering of nine faithful Jews and the significance of their deaths" (p. 4).

Tabb recognizes the differing readerships, concerns, and genres of these authors and proposes a series of worldview questions that will serve as a "heuristic tool for summarizing and synthesizing" the authors' perspectives and provide a "common standard for analyzing" each of the authors and their texts (p. 18). These worldview questions are:

1. Who is God, and how is God involved in our suffering?
2. How does suffering relate to our nature, task, and purpose in the world?
3. How does suffering clarify the world's basic problem?
4. How does suffering relate to the solution for the world's problem?
5. How does suffering relate to our expectations for the future?

Thus, the central question that the book seeks to answer is, "How does suffering function in the worldviews of the Roman author Seneca, the Jewish author of 4 Maccabees, and the Christian author of Acts?" (see e.g., p. 20).

After a survey of scholarship on the theme of suffering in Seneca, 4 Maccabees, and Acts, Tabb helpfully defines key terms such as suffering, persecution, and worldview. The following six chapters analyze the three authors with two chapters devoted to each author. The first chapter in each pair begins with an introduction to the author and text and then provides an exegesis of key passages on suffering. The exegetical chapter on Seneca focuses on *Epistle* 67 and *On Providence*, the exegetical chapter on 4 Maccabees focuses on 4 Maccabees 6:1–30 (the martyrdom of Eleazar) and 17:7–24 (summarizing the achievement of the martyrs), and the exegetical chapter on Acts focuses on Acts 6:8–8:4 (Stephen's speech and death) and 9:1–30 (Saul's conversion and call). The second chapter in each pair synthesizes the teaching of that author by providing the answers each author would give to the worldview questions. The final chapter takes us back to the introductory invitation to imagine a conversation between these three authors and Tabb actually provides one such hypothetical conversation made up of what each author would say on the basis of their writings (in the tradition of Cicero's ancient dialogue between an Epicurean, a Stoic, and an Academician in his *On the Nature of the Gods*). This is followed by a final summary of what each author's response would be to the worldview questions. A brief evaluation of the monograph's contribution to scholarship and a summary of the contemporary relevance of the study complete the volume.

The strengths of this volume are many. The introductions to each work are informative, and readers of Acts will find in this monograph a succinct and judicious overview of issues such as authorship, date, genre, purpose, and a summary of previous scholarship on suffering in Acts. Readers are treated to an informed investigation of a wide range of other topics related to Seneca and 4 Maccabees along the way (e.g., regarding Seneca: fate [pp. 49–52], and the right worship of the gods [pp. 54–56]; regarding 4 Maccabees: the meaning of ἱλαστήριον and the martyrs' deaths [pp. 93–96, 111–13], the role of endurance [ὑπομονή; pp. 105–6], and the eschatological hope of a bodily resurrection [pp. 116–18]).

Tabb builds on earlier studies of suffering in Luke's writings and brings much clarity to matters of definition and broader context. As I indicated above, for readers of Acts to listen in to what the Stoic philosopher Seneca and the Hellenistic Jewish author of 4 Maccabees say on suffering is a valuable exercise in recognizing the similarities and differences of each author. In this regard, the highlight for me was the imaginary conversation Tabb provides in his final chapter. Although hypothetical, it builds on the hard work of the previous pages and is supported with numerous references in the footnotes. In fact, I would love to see this conversation expanded a little more into a booklet and published separately for a wider audience (perhaps along with the concluding summary postscript). I think many would find this section of Tabb's work fascinating and encouraging as the hope of the gospel is brought to bear on life's struggles.

I have no significant criticisms of this fine work and just have two general queries. First, some might wonder if the exegesis chapters might have been omitted or subsumed into the corresponding worldview chapter. Although the exegetical chapters help to show that Tabb is treating each author carefully and contextually, in each worldview chapter either different texts are treated or conclusions from the earlier exegesis chapter are restated. Thus, apart from the discussion of date, authorship, etc., the exegetical chapter doesn't seem necessary for the following worldview chapter. Second, although the worldview questions provide clarity and a common standard for analyzing the different authors, the questions relating to humanity in general seemed better suited to Seneca and Luke than 4 Maccabees (e.g., pp. 110–14 and the world's problem).

Brian Tabb's *Suffering in Ancient Worldview* is a careful and perceptive treatment of a topic that is always relevant. Scholars and students of Acts will especially find this monograph richly rewarding, complementing previous studies of suffering in Luke–Acts. Pastors will find much here that will strengthen and deepen pastoral application in ministry.

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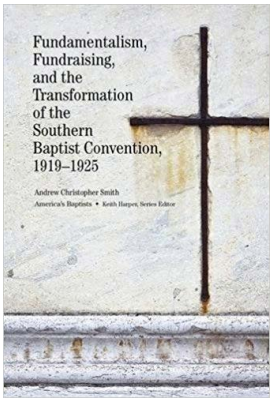
— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Andrew Christopher Smith. *Fundamentalism, Fundraising, and the Transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1919–1925*. America's Baptists. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2016. viii + 249 pp. £35.82/$46.00



In his first book, Andrew Christopher Smith, Assistant Professor of Religion at Carson-Newman University, makes a two-pronged argument. First, he explains the relationship between American Fundamentalism and Southern religion during the crucial period of Fundamentalism's development, 1919–1925. Although he occasionally brings into his analysis the perspective of other denominations residing in the South such as the Disciples of Christ, Smith focuses most of his attention on the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest and most influential Christian group in the region by the time of World War I. Thanks to George Marsden's landmark *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), Smith notes that scholars have a good grasp of the origins and growth of Fundamentalism in the northern United States but not how Fundamentalist ideas affected the South.

Related to his first argument, Smith also examines how the Southern Baptist Convention moved toward increasing bureaucratization and centralization in order to raise funds for the ambitious, and on the surface, unsuccessful, "Seventy-Five Million Campaign." Southern Baptist leaders encouraged church members to give, and in an emotional fervor, church members pledged to give over $92,000,000 in 1919. Eventually, as a result of the postwar depression, members contributed only about $59,000,000 of their pledged money, and the SBC became mired in debt for decades to pay for the shortfall. While the fundraising campaign did not meet its goal, Baptist denominational leaders continued to insist upon the need for a professionalized and educated bureaucracy that could most efficiently raise and allocate funds. The leaders' emphases upon centralization and an educated, professional class of bureaucrats mirrored Progressive movement trends in governmental and business common in that time. The Seventy-Five Million Campaign was also the forerunner of the SBC's Cooperative Program, established in 1925, which made denominational centralization permanent in SBC life.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution that Smith makes to the historiographies of both Fundamentalism and religion in the post-Civil War South is his contention that "faced with pressure from the burgeoning ecumenical movement on the left and Fundamentalism on the right, leaders among

Southern Baptists chose neither route but instead constructed a third way that reflected the influence of both" (p. 5). Southern Baptists adopted fundraising and advertising practices that were prevalent in the ecumenical Interchurch World Movement (IWM), but rejected the IWM's perceived watering down of the gospel for the sake of institutional cooperation. In turn, Southern Baptists agreed with Northern Fundamentalists' arguments for inerrancy and the divine origin of the Bible, but they found distasteful many Northern Fundamentalists' penchant for separating from their denominations and used their own lack of doctrinal controversy to illustrate SBC denominational unity and superiority.

Moreover, Smith's book is unique because he is the first to analyze in any sort of detail the Seventy-Five Million Campaign's impact upon the SBC and how the move toward centralization and professionalization was reflective of tendencies prevalent in the wider Progressive milieu. Smith also conducted an extensive analysis of approximately twenty state convention newspapers to show how Southern Baptist denominational leaders like E. Y. Mullins and especially Lee Scarborough wrote letters and essays in the newspapers to encourage and cajole Southern Baptist congregations to fulfill their pledges in order to prove their obedience to God as faithful givers and their loyalty to the SBC. Smith observes how the newspapers' editors also "included letters from their readers when they could, providing extremely rare and valuable glimpses into the thoughts and lives of their workaday Baptist readers" (p. 10). As a result, historians can evaluate not only what denominational leaders or state convention leaders thought about denominational centralization but also whether the average church members thought that the changes occurring in SBC life were good for Baptists. His detailed examination of Baptist newspapers made the story of the campaign come alive for this reviewer and is reminiscent of Gregory Wills's comprehensive and successful use of the Georgia Baptist newspaper *The Christian Index* to discuss the importance of church discipline and its eventual decline in Baptist churches in Georgia in his *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

My only critique of the book was the presence of several minor publishing errors: "At other time" instead of "At other times" (p. xi); "or Virginia" instead of "of Virginia" (p. 11); and "McGlothlin, William G." instead of "McLoughlin, William G." (p. 240). Overall, though, I would highly recommend this well-researched and beautifully-written book to undergraduate and graduate students, pastors, historians of Baptists, historians of the American South, and historians of American religion.

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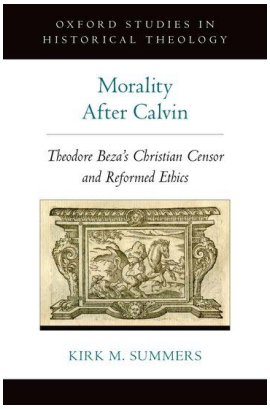
Kirk M. Summers. *Morality After Calvin: Theodore Beza's Christian Censor and Reformed Ethics*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 432 pp. £64.00/$99.00.



There is a relative dearth of treatments on the ethics of the Reformers outside of the most significant figures, like Calvin and Luther. The moral reasoning of such early major figures is treated as normative for the entire movement, without carefully considering the application and extension of those ethical concepts in later generations. In some ways, the study of the applied ethics of the next generation after a major figure is more significant than the ethics of the great theologian, as a means of judging the impact of famous figure. Kirk Summers fills this void for John Calvin with his recent volume, *Morality After Calvin: Theodore Beza's Christian Censor and Reformed Ethics*.

Summers is a professor of Classics at the University of Alabama, but he also holds a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies from Reformed Theological Seminary. His background in the Reformed tradition adds a layer of richness to this volume, as he regularly connects the ideas of Classical thinkers with the Reformed theology that arose from the milieu of scholasticism. Summers clearly did his research in both disciplines, as he cites the most significant works on the ethics of the Reformers, including recent secondary works. This volume also brings to light evidence from recently available, unpublished Consistory records, which add to the scholarly value of the book.

The volume is divided into nine chapters with an additional introduction. Chapter one opens with an overview of Beza's poem, *Cato Censorious Christianus*, that was written to present a view of Christian ethics, addressing key issues in his context. Summers outlines Beza's presentation of basic theological concepts like sin, God, and natural law in this chapter. In the second chapter, Summers shows how Beza presented topics like humility, obedience to the Word, and the pursuit of doctrinal integrity. Chapter three presents an ethics of integrity, including truth telling, honesty in the marketplace, and generosity.

The fourth chapter examines Beza's call to diligence in life. This chapter touches on Beza's notion of vocation, games of chance, and laziness. Beza follows the other Reformers in developing a doctrine of vocation apart from ministerial service. Chapter five deals with usury, which reflects tension between the permissive attitudes of other Reformers and classical prohibitions. In this chapter, Summers branches out beyond Beza more than in other chapters to capture the extensive debate over the practice of charging interest that was ongoing in that time. In the sixth chapter, Summers treats the attitude of Beza and the Geneva Consistory toward sexual ethics. Summers shows that Beza's attitude was consistent with Scripture, but that the Consistory was not always faithful in enforcing discipline for sexual immorality.

Chapter seven is a catch-all for the miscellaneous ethical themes covered in Beza's ethics. In this chapter, Summers covers Beza's writings on drunkenness, Catholic infiltrators, and those who attempt to live life ignoring God. The eighth chapter has a different tone, dissecting Beza's reflections on old age and his impending death. Chapter nine concludes the volume with summative analysis and commentary on the impressive consistency of Beza's ethics over fifty-seven years of active ministry. Summers ties together some of the themes that run through the volume, most significantly that the Reformers viewed sanctification as a process not a singular event.

Morality after Calvin deserves significant praise. It is a book that fills a significant void in the study of historical ethics by analyzing the moral theology of Theodore Beza in light of the Consistory records of Geneva. The book is at times dense, but the prose is never turgid. Summers communicates clearly, carefully, and thoroughly. Summers engages the thinking of Beza and his contemporaries critically, but charitably; he contextualizes Beza's writings, particularly *Cato Censorious Christianus*, the moralistic poem that guides the reader through the book.

The author does excellent, careful, and thorough analysis of various ethical topics. The chapter on Beza's ethics of usury is a worthy summary of the major literature of the field, as well as Beza's own perspective. With one foot in Reformation studies and the other in Classics, Summers is able to aptly interpret the translation of Classical thought into the poetry and ethics of an early Reformer. For many, Beza's *Cato Censorious Christianus* would be a quaint attempt to mimic previous poets. For Summers, Beza's poetry is an intriguing dialogue between ancient ethics and biblical morality. Summers gracefully highlights the allusions, nuances, and contours of Beza's literature in a way that illuminates the text for readers with an interest in ethics in the Reformed tradition who lack a background in Classics.

This latest volume in the Oxford Studies in Historical Theology Series is an important piece of scholarship and a valuable addition to the library of Reformation scholars, ethicists, and theologians interested in the development of morality within the Reformed tradition. Its price will likely consign this volume to the shelves of libraries and specialists, but it is a book that deserves to be read well and widely.

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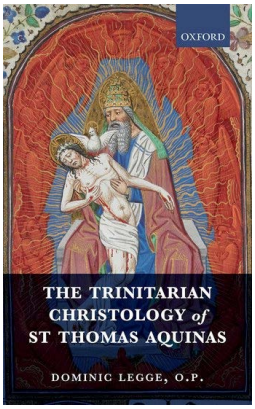
— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Dominic Legge. *The Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xvii + 261 pp. £65/$95.



For the past several decades, the question of how to relate the Holy Spirit to the incarnate Son has been a subject of varying interests across the disciplinary lines of biblical studies and dogmatics. The question has prompted answers that range from insightful to curious, and this is often related to the underlying conceptions of the Trinity operative (or not) in such inquiries. As often in questions of doctrine, we must know where the tradition has stood before venturing down unmarked paths. One virtue of such knowledge is that we come to understand there are precious few genuinely unmarked paths; typically the signs and footprints are already there, only hidden by overgrowth. Historical studies of such contested questions can prune these paths, and help us discern which are worth taking. Such is, in its own measure, Dominic Legge's study of Aquinas's Christology, which is a welcome contribution that offers limpid insight into its subject matter.

Legge undertakes a close reading of Aquinas's mature Christology from within the horizon of his trinitarian theology, which frames all that Aquinas has to say about the economy. In the first two parts of the book, Legge clearly explains Aquinas's doctrine of the missions of the Son and Spirit, and how

trinitarian considerations bear upon the interpretation of the Son's incarnation. Aquinas's theory of the missions is essential to his understanding of the incarnation and the relation between Christ and the Holy Spirit. Generally, the mission of the Son or the Spirit includes both the person's eternal procession and a created effect in time. The 'created effect' in question might be a range of things: the Son's human nature, the appearance of a dove or tongues of fire, or the 'created' grace by which the divine persons inhabit the Christian. Thus, these created effects always refer some creature to the procession of the Son or the Spirit.

Missions fall into two types: visible and invisible. While the visible missions of the incarnation and Pentecost are central episodes in salvation history, and the Son's mission is irreducibly unique, they are set alongside other visible missions like the Spirit's descent upon Christ at his baptism and transfiguration, or the Spirit's outpouring on Mary and the Apostles on the night of the resurrection. Each of these reveal something particular about the persons and the economy of grace, and in this respect, Legge's discussion is helpful in laying bare how Aquinas's trinitarian theology supports his Catholic ecclesiology (pp. 54–58). But despite the particularity of any given mission, they all point us back towards the eternal processions as their ground.

From these visible missions there follow invisible missions, in which the Son and Spirit are sent and active in creatures without any visible manifestation. Such invisible missions include the indwelling of believers by sanctifying grace, which resides in their soul as a created effect. This sanctifying or habitual grace conforms the soul to the likeness of the Trinity through the gifts of wisdom and charity, thereby corresponding to the processions of the Word and Love from the Father. In this active assimilation of the soul to the divine processions, the Son and Spirit are really present to the soul in grace, effecting its movement towards the Father. This is a very precise way of talking about believers' communion with the Trinity, and it proves fruitful in accounting for the variety of ways the NT speaks about the presence of the Son and Spirit.

Within this account of visible and invisible missions, the trinitarian dimensions of Aquinas's Christology come into view. It is only when we understand the Son's filial mode of being as the eternal Son of the Father that we also understand his filial mode of agency, which is to act *from* the Father. Legge argues that this same principle also accounts for the fact that, just as the Son is and acts 'from' the Father, so too the Son is and acts with a forward reference 'to' the Spirit. From and with the Father, the Son eternally breathes forth the Spirit, and so from and with the Father the Son temporally sends the Spirit both upon himself and upon his church. The order and inseparability of the missions follows the order and inseparability of the processions.

The final part of the book in chapters five through eight constitutes the heart of the book's contribution, and it is considerable. Here Legge explores at length how the Son and Spirit relate to one another in the economy. For Aquinas, the Holy Spirit's invisible mission is the source of the grace created in the soul that sanctifies (*gratia gratum faciens*), which yet depends on the uncreated grace (*auxilium*) of the Trinity moving the soul to acts of love. This habitual grace is appropriated to the Spirit, but it is the sign and basis of the whole Trinity's residence in the soul. The grace of Christ's human soul is therefore the point of entry for consideration of the Spirit's work in Christ's life: the Spirit descends upon Christ at his baptism and transfiguration to signify the gifts of grace he bestows on Christ to save and to teach. Legge shows how the Spirit's invisible mission to the Son in grace accounts for the Son's gifts of grace, including his beatific vision and prophetic knowledge, as well as the entitative and operative *habitus* that enable the Son's human nature and agency to operate in perfect accord with his

divine nature. The Spirit's work on Christ is therefore intrinsic to Aquinas's understanding of the Son's theandric activity. Beyond equipping the Son's humanity as an 'instrument' of his divinity, the Spirit also moves the incarnate Son to act (again, in an appropriated sense, because the Trinity acts indivisibly *ad extra*). So like creatures more generally, so similarly with the Son: the Spirit bestows both a habitual and 'actual' grace that enables all the Son's acts for his saving work. In conclusion, Legge unfolds Aquinas's development on the question of whether the Son can send the Spirit as a man, which resolves upon his understanding of the Son's theandric activity: the Son sends the Spirit 'authoritatively' as God and 'instrumentally' as man.

Legge's work is indispensable to those interested in understanding Aquinas's Christology, and in tracing its broader influence. The evidence marshaled and the judgments drawn are all well-supported, and avoid the easy trap of reading too much into Aquinas. Not everyone will agree with Aquinas's conclusions, but the piece is more historical and descriptive than analytical. It is helpful on a number of fronts, and should breathe fresh air into debates about 'Spirit Christology' especially because the example of Aquinas shows how imprecise such designations can be historically. Those wondering how to relate the missions of the Son and Spirit intelligibly would do well to give Aquinas careful consideration, and to that end, should direct their attentions to Legge's fine work.

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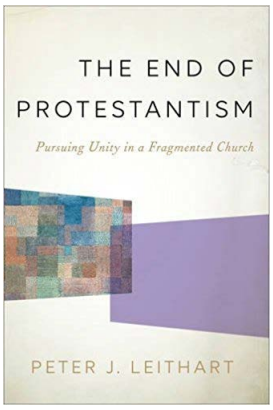
Peter J. Leithart. *The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church*. Brazos, 2016. 225 pp. £ 17.90/$21.99.



"Jesus prayed that his disciples would be united as he is united with his Father" (John 17:21). This is where—with his very first sentence—Peter Leithart's *cri de coeur* begins.

Denominationalism, Leithart continues, "is not what Jesus desires for his church. It does not fulfill his prayer" (p. 4). So why have Protestants allowed ecclesial fragmentation to persist? Leithart answers: "We can live with ourselves because we have created a system to salve our conscience and to deflect the Spirit's grief" (p. 3). In the pages that follow, Leithart seeks to remove the salve and expose the Protestant conscience.

Leithart conceives of his book as meeting a moment of productive flux and re-organization in the ecclesial landscape. "I speak from within denominational Christianity to call Christians to strive in the Spirit toward a new way of being church. This is an interim ecclesiology and an interim agenda aimed specifically at theologically conservative evangelical Protestant churches" (p. 5). He calls his agenda for change "Reformational Catholicism."

Four overarching movements advance Leithart's purpose. In the first, he lays out a vision for a Reformational Catholic Church in the future, contending for its biblical and Reformational cogency. His second movement analyzes denominational Christianity in the United States, arguing that despite its accomplishments, it has impoverished the church by undermining its unity. An intermezzo shines optimism onto the problem of denominational fragmentation by explaining how the Creator God

dismantles the structures of the world, even ecclesial structures, in order to reassemble them according to his redemptive grace. Movement three contends that God is remapping the global church, signaling a potential inflexion point for American denominationalism. Finally, in the fourth movement, he offers guidelines to theologians, pastors, and lay Christians who wish to apply his proposal in the hope of realizing such unity.

So where does Reformational Catholicism begin? Leithart suggests, "We live the future now when we receive and cultivate the fruits of the Spirit that preserve and deepen the unity of the church" (p. 20). But such communion requires mutual commitment, particularly in the following areas:

- mutual recognition of baptism
- common confession of apostolic faith and proclamation of the gospel
- common celebration of the Lord's Supper
- common devotional worship, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving
- common life in witness (mission) and service in the world
- mutual recognition of ministries and members
- ability to act and speak together in view of concrete tasks and challenges

Conservative Protestants have, with good reason, regarded such aspirations with a healthy measure of suspicion. But Leithart insists that we must nevertheless prioritize visible unity according to the above commitments. No, this does not mean that reunion is simply a matter of returning schismatics to the mother church. History matters too much; differences cannot be swept under the rug. Yet somehow, Leithart maintains, there must be rapprochement.

In this opening section, Leithart is speaking simultaneously as prophet and visionary. In line with the latter, he paints a portrait of Reformational Catholicism (pp. 25–36), asserting that it will leave every creed and confession open to correction by the Word of God. It will teach the entire Bible. It will not insist on prayers to Mary or veneration of icons. All pastors will recognize the ordination and authority of all others. It would be a culturally engaged church in which pastors mix with mayors, city managers, and other social stakeholders.

What is required to approach this vision? Starkly, in Leithart's view, "ecclesial death" is required. Our churches, in other words, will have to die to some of the things we hold dear (p. 36). "Presbyterian churches," says Leithart, "would no longer be not-Lutheran, nor the Lutheran a not-Presbyterian. Methodists would no longer identify themselves as not-Catholic. All would be congregations of the church, local outposts of one global communion" (p. 37).

I am not exactly sure why I wrote "ecumenical fudge" in the margin beside this section. Maybe my blood sugar was low. Or maybe it was the class on Luther I just finished teaching, which illustrated the profound difference, not of whim and fashion, but of conviction and conscience between these traditions. I certainly agree with our author that we can do better than the Marburg exchange. We ought to affirm the same Spirit in one another. But as Leithart has already asserted, "History matters."

He concludes his first movement with an exhortation. "We need to repent of our failure to follow the Lord Jesus, who prays that we would be one, as well as our failure to pray for unity in and with him" (p. 51). But does not fidelity to our Lord require us to be more concerned with the substance of our unity than the mere degree of it? To be sure, some kind of visible unity is desirable. But must it be *institutional*? Can the center of gravity be on a common kerygma from different denominations? More about this anon.

The second movement begins with a bold assertion: "[This vision] is not the church of the present. Emphatically not" (p. 55). If we are envisioning a specifically institutional unity, Leithart is surely right. But what about, for example, the lecture series we recently hosted in our non-denominational church, where I had R. R. Reno of *First Things* speaking on the future of marriage and my friend Dan Olson of the (Catholic) Archdiocese of Chicago responding among other scholars. I would like to think of that event as Reformational Catholicism—we stood together on our common Christ-centered convictions despite our differences. At this point of the book, I am beginning to find Leithart's definition of visible *institutionalized* unity unnecessarily narrow and pedantic.

The intermezzo—titled "From Glory to Glory"—is a chance for readers to take a breath and digest the preceding ninety-eight pages of pointed critique. More than that, it is a delight to read the unfolding story of redemption from such a gifted expositor as Leithart. This section concludes with the observation that history is not a seamless garment. "It has gaps and tears, some quite rough. There are evenings and mornings, deaths, and revivals. God tears garments and then sews them back together in new ways. That is the story of the Bible and it is the continuing story of church history" (p. 113). Thus, because God is the Living Creator, still working powerfully and surprisingly in history—moving backward in death before moving forward in resurrection—we should not be surprised when he shakes up our ecclesial world.

In his third movement, "Divided Church Dissolving," Leithart explores American denominationalism and the global church. He considers Pentecostalism as an example of a new form of Protestantism that breaks down traditional boundary markers. He adds to this nondenominational church networks such as Willow Creek and concludes, "The time seems ripe for a seismic reconfiguration" (p. 151).

Movement four, "United Church Reborn," seeks to take readers from the present to the future. This is where Leithart the prophet discharges some specific directives, applying Reformational Catholicism to various dimensions of church life (e.g., sacramental theology, pastoral ministry, liturgy, and social action). Appropriately, he concludes with a wish: "I dearly hope that Protestant tribalism of American denominationalism dies" (p. 191).

Leithart is surely correct when he writes, "The church can face the challenges of this new century only as a *united* church" (p. 166). And he helpfully points out that this engagement "affords a fresh opportunity to heal old wounds and break down old misunderstandings" (p. 166). But his focus on institutional unity suffers from two fundamental flaws. First, Roman Catholic ecclesiology postulates a hierarchy of churches, in which Rome stands over other Christian traditions, particularly Protestantism. This is observed in Rome's insistence that "the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church," an assertion made by the Second Vatican Council in the ecumenical decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 8), and reiterated by more recent statements such as *Ut Unum Sint* (1995) and *Dominus Iesus* (2000). Unfortunately, this undermines the dialogue that Leithart envisages by placing conversation partners on an unequal footing, suggesting that one side of the conversation (Protestantism) is inferior and defective.

The second problem is closely connected to the first, and concerns Rome's use of the term "Catholic" as properly describing the Roman Catholic Church. Against this background, Pope John Paul II declared that "the ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to re-establish full visible unity among all the baptized" (*Ut Unum Sint*, 77). Taken to its logical conclusion, this would mark the end of Protestantism by submitting it to Roman authority.

Faced with the contemporary temptation of Docetism and the danger of yielding to the fragmentation of postmodernity, we must not disregard the importance of visible unity. In this way, Leithart does the contemporary church a service by daring us to imagine ecclesial life bound together in universal communion. To succeed, however, at least in the institutional form that he proposes, the Roman Catholic Church will be required to make the most fundamental changes, which will require the end, not of Protestantism, but of Roman Catholicism as we know it.

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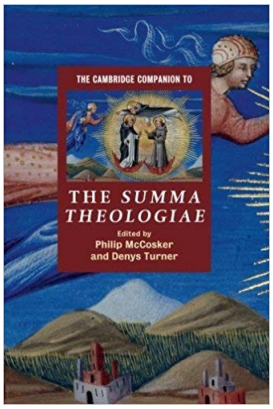
Philip McCosker and Denys Turner, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the* Summa Theologiae. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xvii + 368 pp. £19.99/$34.99.



The Cambridge Companions to Religion serve as a wonderful entryway to the state of the conversation in a number of fields. I have not only taught introduction to theology courses using the *Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* but also found my knowledge of detective fiction recently enhanced by the *Cambridge Companion to American Crime Fiction*. In both cases, the text draws the newcomer in with clarity, a sense of proportionality, and an invitation to the ongoing debates marking out a field. Novitiates need guidance not only regarding subjects and themes, however, but also regarding the most important texts. Thus it is notable that Philip McCosker and Denys Turner have edited a newly released *Cambridge Companion to the Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas.

The companion includes an introduction and twenty-four chapters in three parts. The first part introduces the character of the *Summa*: literary features, spirituality, structure, engagement of Scripture, use of philosophy, and theological method. The second part then includes chapters which address key themes appearing in the text: God, eternity, Trinity, Holy Spirit, creation, providence, the human person, happiness, virtues, grace, the person of Christ, the life of Christ, redemption, and the sacraments. The third part looks to the reception history of the *Summa*, including essays on Roman Catholic traditions, Eastern Orthodox traditions, Reformed (or Protestant) traditions, and Non-Abrahamic traditions of interpreting and engaging the *Summa*. What might we make of the structure of the companion and of its contributors? The three-part structure serves the student well, helping contextualize its shape, clarify its claims and arguments, and dip into its ongoing streams of influence and engagement. The first part is especially well proportioned and conceptualized. The third part likewise covers the terrain well, suffering only in that it tends to merge philosophical and theological conversation within its constituent traditions in a way that appears in places to be somewhat too pacific. The second part raises more interesting questions, however, regarding the contents of the *Summa*. The inclusion of chapters on eternity and the life of Christ are interesting (somewhat unexpected) choices; I find the former choice odd, the latter one brilliant. This part heavily addresses the *prima pars* (first part of the *ST*), with seven chapters largely focusing on that segment of the *Summa*. I find this judgment to be wise as it shows the structural role played by the material there in the first segment of the text. The inclusion of four

chapters on the *tertia pars* (third part), indeed more than ruminate on the *secunda pars* (second part), shows a marked change in Thomistic studies in the last half century. Whereas Thomas used to be read in a manner that minimized his Christocentric specificity (e.g. the claims of the philosopher A. M. Fairweather or the apologist Cornelius Van Til), those engaged in the study of his theology in recent decades have seen the way in which the *tertia pars* serves as the summit of the *Summa* (hindered, however, by its incompleteness). I might add that reading Thomas in this way in no way prejudges the validity of his claims materially so much as it enables a higher level discourse, wherein he is actually engaged on his own turf and in his own manner.

The chapters offer a smattering of insights. Only one seems an odd fit: a posthumous essay from Herbert McCabe, which is marked by its datedness from the 1980s and, as much as McCabe's work remains worthy of study, which simply does not fit the collection as a whole. Most contributors are involved in an ongoing way with Thomistic study (with many senior notables included, such as David Burrell, Jean Porter, Mark Jordan, and Gilles Emery); others, such as Sarah Coakley, nonetheless bring both a familiarity with the text as well as insight from broader familiarity with the dogmatic and philosophical streams in which the *ST* fits. Some essays are remarkable additions (without peer in parallel volumes), such as John Marenbon's essay on the scholastic method of the *ST*, which includes a matchless comparison of its question and answer format to the wider academic field of its day. Some essays distill much wider learning in a small essay, such as Fritz Bauerschmidt's guidance regarding how to read portions of the *ST*, Mark Jordan's ruminations on the structure of the *ST* and its purpose of moral reform, Pim Valkenberg's concern to analyze the scriptural analysis found in the *ST*, Kathryn Tanner's discussion of the relation of God and creation and of respective agency, Paul Gondreau's patient attention to the oft-ignored portion of the third part of the *ST* (questions 27–59) addressing the life of Christ. Christoph Schwöbel's essay on Thomas and the Protestant (mainly Lutheran and Reformed) traditions sketches the ways in which a more text-sensitive and exegetical approach to the *ST* (and Thomas's biblical commentaries, we might add) has led past earlier Barthian (and Van Tillian, we must add) oppositions *tout court* to the work of the angelic doctor; he traces the conversations amongst Protestants in recent decades which have re-identified Thomas as a pre-Reformational doctor of moral and spiritual reform and a key expositor of catholic orthodoxy regarding God, creation, and Christ.

This volume will be of great interest to the graduate student and pastor interested in catching up on the latest debates regarding the theology of Thomas Aquinas and, even more important, desirous of being able to read Thomas with skill and insight. I must admit that other volumes serve as more useful introductions to the text: I think especially of Fergus Kerr's *Thomas Aquinas: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and F. C. Bauerschmidt's *Holy Teaching: Introducing the* Summa Theologiae *of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005). With Romanus Cessario's *A Short History of Thomism* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum, ed., *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2004) and *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), and Fergus Kerr's *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), this volume will provide a useful secondary resource to getting to know Thomas's theology in the *ST* and its interpretation. In that regard, it is highly commended. And, in many ways, this latest companion shows what a revival we have seen in Thomistic studies. While it focuses mostly on the text of the *ST* (indeed, the footnotes are primarily to references within the text itself rather than to its voluminous reception-history), it also brings to the reader a wealth of analysis distilled from many monographs and technical

articles over the past 30 years into a modest sized and rather accessible textbook. Most of all, it helps equip the student or scholar today to read Thomas in a more confident and competent manner.

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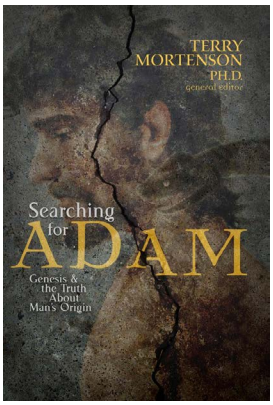
Terry Mortenson, ed. *Searching for Adam: Genesis and the Truth about Man's Origin*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2016. 524 pp. £19.95/$24.00.



The current evangelical debate over the historical Adam has been going for nearly a decade. Early and mostly academic discussions came to the attention of the wider public in 2011 through a feature article in *Christianity Today* and a subsequent story on National Public Radio. Since then, a steady stream of books and articles have appeared to address the case for and against the historical Adam and his theological importance. This recent entry, *Searching for Adam: Genesis and the Truth about Man's Origin*, edited by Terry Mortenson, weighs in on the debate from the young-age creationist perspective.

The book consists of an introduction and sixteen chapters written by sixteen contributors, six of which are formally affiliated with Answers in Genesis, the world's largest creationist organization. Authors such as Stuart Burgess, Jerry Bergman, and Marvin Lubenow will be familiar to anyone already acquainted with young-age creationism. Eugene Merrill also contributed a chapter titled, "'Where are you, Adam?' The Disappearance of Adam and the Death of Truth." Authors that might be new to readers include David Casas (president, Berea School of Ministry) writing on the Image of God, David Croteau and Michael Naylor (faculty at Columbia International University) writing on Adam in the New Testament, and Steve Ham (senior director for international outreach at AIG and brother of Ken Ham) writing a response to John Walton.

The range of topics in the chapters is appropriately broad, with seven chapters on the Bible and theology, five chapters addressing science, and four chapters on cultural issues. Mortenson's introduction sets the agenda for the rest of the chapters, to "show that not only is belief in a literal Adam and Fall consistent with historic Christian orthodoxy and sound biblical exegesis, but it also is powerfully confirmed by many lines of solid scientific evidence" (p. 15).

The book presents a standard view of the creationist position on the historical Adam. Readers will encounter "origins science" vs. "operation science" (pp. 10–13), the humanity of Neandertals (chapter 9), the amazing design of the human body (chapter 11–12), the negative cultural consequences of evolution (chapters 13 and 16), and the critical importance of the historical Adam for Christian theology (throughout the book). In this respect, the book provides a helpful packaging of existing ideas, even though some of the chapters have deficiencies.

One such deficiency is an overreliance on anecdotal evidence. Tom Nettles's chapter, "Adam's Place in the History of the Church's Theology," presents anecdotal evidence supporting the historical Adam from throughout church history but without significant discussion of alternative ideas on Adam from the history of the church. Consequently, we cannot tell how prevalent (and therefore important) the

historical Fall really was. Likewise, Bergman's chapter "Evolution, Racism, and the Scientific Vindication of Genesis" presents copious anecdotes documenting racists' use of Darwinian thinking. However, Bergman's chapter does not discuss Christian advocacy of eugenics, anti-evolutionist racists, or pre-Darwinian anthropological racism, all of which would complicate his portrayal of Darwinian thinking as a primary cause of racism.

Other chapters omit important, relevant details. Burgess's two chapters on the differences between human and ape anatomy focus almost exclusively on extant creatures. He concludes that evolution cannot explain the origin of uniquely human anatomy, but how can the reader evaluate the evidence fairly when the fossil record is barely mentioned? Similarly, Landis's chapter on the ingenuity of ancient people concludes, "Ancient man was not a grunting ape-man gradually changing into *Homo sapiens* over millions of years" (p. 443), but he presents only anecdotes about *Homo sapiens*. He does not discuss the culture and stone tools of Neandertals, *Homo erectus*, or any other hominins. How can the reader judge the adequacy of Landis's evidence as a response to evolution when the purported evidence of evolution is omitted?

Despite these shortcomings, at least three chapters stand out as particularly useful contributions to the historical Adam debate. Interestingly, all three come from relatively new authors to the world of young-age creationism. First, Croteau and Naylor's "The Question of a Historical Adam: A New Testament Perspective" presents a helpful discussion of the pertinent cultural and scriptural evidence. They open with a brief discussion of first century extra-biblical literature, emphasizing nonhistorical interpretations of Adam that were available to the NT authors. They conclude that Paul was not merely following cultural convention by treating Adam as historical since there were other possible interpretations available to him. After extensively discussing Paul, they address a number of indirect references to Adam that are sometimes overlooked. Unsurprisingly, they find the historical sense to be the best interpretation of each.

The second outstanding chapter is Steve Ham's thoughtful discussion of John Walton's functional and archetypal views of Genesis 1–3. Ham critically evaluates and engages familiar counterarguments to Walton's claims, but he develops additional, important points. He notes that Walton's exclusively functional view of creation denies the very perspicuity that Walton claims to accept. Further, he notes several of Walton's idiosyncrasies, such as the strawman assumption that the inheritance of original sin must be genetically based or Walton's inordinate attention to human evolution despite claiming that it has no bearing on his exegesis. Ham's chapter is a worthwhile discussion of Walton's novel interpretations of Genesis.

Perhaps most striking of all, however, is chapter 10, "Genetics Confirms the Recent, Supernatural Creation of Adam and Eve," by Nathaniel Jeanson and Jeffrey Tomkins, which is extremely well written and clearly argued. The chapter opens with an anecdote from Jeanson's education which sets the terms of the analysis that follows. Jeanson explains three types of experiments, as first explained to him by one of his professors. Type 1 experiments distinguish between models when one predicts one thing and the other predicts the opposite. Type 2 experiments test only one model but say nothing about the other. Type 3 do not compare models at all. Unquestionably, Type 1 experiments should be preferred when one is trying to select between competing models.

The authors then follow carefully through with their analysis on those terms. Procedural details are left to their 93 footnotes, but there is no mistaking the overarching thought process that guides their work. Perhaps most importantly, they emphasize the need to carefully construct arguments and

experiments so that they can actually distinguish between competing models. Jeanson and Tomkins's chapter is extremely helpful as a summary of their views and research.

Despite the quality of their writing and their clarity of thought, there remains at least one significant problem with Jeanson and Tomkins's approach, namely, the omission of any discussion of the *development* of models. For example, Jeanson and Tomkins describe type 3 experiments as "completely useless" (p. 291), even though basic exploratory research like Type 3 experiments provide the data upon which models can be developed. There could be *no* Type 1 experiments without copious Type 3 experiments preceding them.

Furthermore, Jeanson and Tomkins approach their work as if an entire model should be rejected based on a handful of experiments. Scientists rarely do this, however, since models resemble miniature paradigms, joining disparate theories and observations in a single explanatory framework that manifests a consilience of induction. When presented with anomalous or contradictory data, scientists will modify their models rather than discard them altogether. If one model cannot explain a piece of data while a competing model can, scientists prefer the model that can explain the most data. Thus, readers might wonder why Jeanson and Tomkins seem satisfied that their model "does not make specific predictions about human-ape genetic differences" (p. 294), when that would be viewed as a deficiency in need of further development.

One must also remember that comparing models is only profitable if models have been comprehensively sampled. If modern human evolution *and* Jeanson and Tomkins's model of human origins are wrong (or in need of significant revision), it is unclear how their preferred experimental procedure could address this.

Much more could be written about each chapter, but these major themes illustrate the main advantages and disadvantages of *Searching for Adam*. The book contains unquestionably helpful essays that genuinely clarify positions and challenge arguments. Other chapters fall short for reasons discussed previously. The book is unlikely to convince anyone not already convinced of AIG's position that theology and science support a historical Adam, since the ideological positions of the creation/evolution combatants are so firmly entrenched. That is a shame, because this book ought not be so lightly dismissed.

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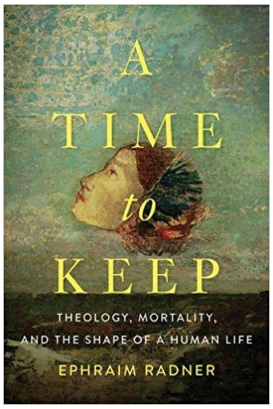
Ephraim Radner. *A Time to Keep: Theology, Mortality, and the Shape of a Human Life*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016. xiv + 290pp. £43.50/$49.95.



In recent days, topics such as sexuality and gender have been placed front and center of the culture's agenda and therefore also the church's attention. There is little agreement about the terms of the debate, with many of the claims and even uses of Scripture seeming fairly arbitrary. In particular, these realities—gender, sexuality, marriage, procreation, etc.—seem to become discrete concepts disembedded from any greater context or broader frame of reference. In *A Time To Keep*, Ephraim Radner suggests that these topics, and much theological reasoning more broadly, have been decontextualized from their place within the broad shape and reality of human life, to our detriment. He invites us to examine how the unavoidable reality of human mortality "unveils to us the mystery of God." What he offers is a thoughtful and thought-provoking examination of human life in conversation with Scripture, culture, and tradition.

The Great Transition. Radner begins by diagnosing the problem as a loss of our understanding of our creatureliness. Without this understanding, we cannot read Scripture aright, nor rightly relate to God. He further identifies what he calls the Great Transition as ingredient in this loss of creatureliness. By the Great Transition he means the dramatic increase in life expectancy and decrease in infant mortality that much of the world has experienced in the last century and a half. This happened rapidly enough that he suggests that we have not even begun to reckon with how dramatically it has reshaped our understanding of virtually every area human life. Indeed, rather than recognizing this as the divine gift that it is, we have come to regard it as inevitable and expected. Radner contrasts this way of human life with the picture of Adam and Eve sent into a hostile world in the graciously provided skins. "Skinfulness," fragile, mortal, yet graciously maintained humanity, he maintains, characterizes human existence in its biblical presentation.

From that diagnosis of our loss of creatureliness, Radner turns to examine our "skinful" existence from a variety of angles. He begins by examining the implications of suicide for our understanding of the ultimate givenness of life. What he underscores is that even when suicide represents an extreme form of taking control of one's life, it can never ultimately undo the divine gift; one can never un-be. Even in its denial of life, suicide affirms life's givenness. If there is a recurring theme in the book it is precisely this: life is fundamentally given, a divine gift.

In discussing suicide, Radner points to the embeddedness of lives in families and communities, places where a residue of the person remains even after suicide. He expands on this key reality of our humanity—our relationality (or in Radner's term "filiation") in the following chapter. In particular, he argues that our experience of creaturehood is defined by generational relations and procreative tendency. Here he offers a sweeping reading of the theme of sexuality and procreation in Scripture which covers both expected (Genesis) and unexpected (Leviticus) territory. The biblical storyline of which human sexuality is a part, he concludes, is one of distinction maintained and difference joined for fruitfulness. "Created mortality is characterized by filiative fruitfulness; the two cannot be separated" (110). This chapter contains some of the richest material in the book and is particularly valuable for those looking for different terms and deeper biblical reflection to bring to bear upon the aforementioned cultural conversations.

Radner spends a chapter considering the theological lessons to be learned from pondering the stages of life. Again he indicates the ways that the Great Transition has stretched and distorted traditional structuring of the phases of life: birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, etc. Here he employs the biblical category of wisdom to suggest that maturity requires attention to and careful passage through these stages. He closes the chapter using the soliloquy from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* as a structuring device to talk through the phases of life and what they each have to offer our theological reflection as well as ways in which the current context distorts them.

In two related chapters, Radner considers the light shone on human existence by the distinction between married and single life. In particular, he finds examination of singleness—a concrete way of existence—a fruitful way to probe notions of diversity and particularity, more abstract concepts. In considering what lessons singleness unfolds to us about human existence, he points to two areas in particular: friendship and work. He closes the chapter with reflection on the idea of friendship, its distortion in our eroticized culture, and alternative visions of it.

Singles extend the value of friendship into the world in two realms in particular, the workplace and the table, and Radner considers these in turn. Reflecting on Adam and Eve's life outside the garden, Radner maintains that work, even toil, is a gift from God because it offers a way of life in the face of death. He also returns to the theme of wisdom to discuss how one's work life provides a place to grow in wisdom with and for others. In discussing the table, he offers some curious reflections on God's very own ingestion of his created goods in the person of Jesus Christ. In some of these passages, readers may be forgiven for failing to keep up with all of the moves and connections that Radner makes.

Radner closes the book with a helpful summary and a call to the church to engage the task of numbering our days. To number our days is to take seriously our mortality and the shape of our lives as framework for our engagement with God and Scripture and as a source of Christian wisdom. Nature, that is our human existence, is coherent with Scripture which depicts human life in all its mortality, not least in the person of Christ.

Ephraim Radner has written a thought-provoking book which is a substantial contribution to theological anthropology. It offers challenging critique, thoughtful reflection, and bracing biblical engagement throughout. In truth, any one chapter could be the subject of a book, and at times the compression of topics was noticeable. There are several points where his biblical interpretation or conceptual linking between two major points would benefit from expansion. This compression is at times further complicated by Radner's arcane prose.

In many ways, the author is doing something new here, blazing a new trail on several of these topics and should be forgiven if the path is not always straight or easy to follow. The task is a legitimate one. In the face of a culture that demands we discuss core aspects of humanity, Radner invites the church to call the culture's bluff and respond by contextualizing those aspects of human life within the more fundamental narrative of the numbered says of human existence—its createdness, its mortality, and most especially its givenness—and these as testified to in Scripture and in the humanity of Jesus Christ.

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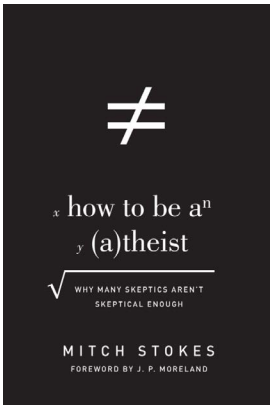
Mitch Stokes. *How to Be an Atheist: Why Many Skeptics Aren't Skeptical Enough*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. 256 pp. £14.83/$18.99.



While Christians have faith, atheists have reason and scientific knowledge, attained through skepticism and rigorous testing – so we often hear. Many self-proclaimed skeptics, however, apply their skepticism inconsistently, with core philosophical commitments receiving little critical attention. In particular, science and ethics are bedrock commitments but the efficacy of reasoning in these areas is generally unquestioned. Mitch Stokes, a senior fellow of philosophy at New St. Andrews College comes to pour water on the atheist parade, exploring these two key worldview issues in a way that is technically precise, but accessible. The overall approach deserves critical attention from evangelists in a skeptical modern culture. What is the best balance between undermining skepticism and presenting and arguing for the truths of the Christian faith?

The thesis of the work is that atheists should be more skeptical about both science and ethics. More than half of the book explores reasons to be skeptical about claims relating to science, while most of the rest considers why atheists should be more skeptical than they often are about ethical claims. The findings of science are called into question with heavy reference to arguments from antirealists such as Bas van Fraassen; in summary, science requires a rich theoretical background, and many scientific claims are a result of inference rather than observation. While the arguments are interesting and provocative, they are highly controversial amongst both theists and atheists, and so perhaps should be held to somewhat lightly. On p. 97 we're told that we shouldn't be 'über-skeptics' of science – but this theme gets little attention subsequently, giving the impression that science should generally be doubted when it strays beyond the observable.

The sections concerning morality I found more persuasive as a whole, drawing on a wider tradition within skeptical thought than does antirealism in science. If atheism is true we find ourselves in a world with many 'ought' claims of a prudential nature, but none that are clearly binding in the traditional sense of moral obligation. In both the science and ethics sections some space is given to critiquing Christian philosophers of a more evidentialist leaning – for instance, William Lane Craig on the implications of the Big Bang, and Mark Murphy on a natural law account of morality. These rather strong critiques suggest the book is also intending to be an account of how not to be a Christian apologist, as much as it is of how to be an atheist; in my view it is more convincing where it sticks to the latter.

How to be an Atheist has received high praise from some of the greats of Christian philosophy, with endorsements such as 'a model for philosophical apologetics', 'must reading', and 'incisive and wide-ranging'. This response is somewhat surprising given that the approach taken is at odds with that favoured by many of these leading figures. Hopefully the critical reflections offered here on the core apologetic methodology will help in engaging the book's thesis, which is a very important one which has been developed by a diverse array of Christian thinkers over recent centuries. I begin with some fairly minor quibbles. As a biologist I was interested to see that Darwinian evolution received no focused attention, but is frequently mentioned briefly and often seems to be just behind the scenes. Sometimes it is unguided evolution that is said to be problematic, but often evolution itself seems to be conflated with naturalism. For instance, on p. 174, 'the evolutionary story of ethics' is said to imply moral nihilism.

On p. 47 we read that 'it isn't at all clear that evolution is anything more than a sketch of a theory, even if it is a suggestive sketch'. In any case, the jump from antirealism in quantum physics to doubts about claims in biology needs to be better supported if it is to convince biologists or other scientifically-inclined skeptics with different presuppositions.

The approach of the book suggests an implicit requirement to undermine mainstream science in order to make room for Christian faith. If mainstream science itself was not deemed problematic the inference from science to naturalism would be a more natural move to question. Reasons we might have to take scientific claims seriously rather than be skeptical of them are not presented. I worry that this feeds the destructive 'conflict thesis' beloved of the 'New Atheists' and their wide circle of influence in popular culture. This assumption of conflict, if it must be promoted, should first be defended. It appears that there is a particular suspicion regarding historical sciences in this book, in favour of the sciences considered more observational, but this is not fleshed out with examples. If the problem is, for instance, evolution, or some aspect of it, this should be stated and explained. If the problem is just naturalism (as held e.g. by Alvin Plantinga), then this should be clarified.

How to be an Atheist lays out its arguments clearly but has little engagement with alternative philosophies, and philosophies of science in particular. A statement of the general philosophical position proposed and its contrast with others would have been helpful. Most scientists and philosophers of science outside of theoretical physics are scientific realists. They might be wrong, but it would have been good to see more dialogue with these views, which are likely the majority amongst Christian philosophers as well as atheists. Sometimes standard Christian apologetic arguments are not stated as strongly as they could be, or are misrepresented. It is claimed for instance (e.g. p. 178), that Christians have said that atheists *should* act immorally on their worldview. But, I think this is not the argument of the sources cited and clearly not representative of the broader Christian moral apologetic. What has been said, based on the quotes provided, is that atheists would be *reasonable* to act selfishly. And this is a completely sensible point to make – without binding moral duties, self-interest becomes a more pressing factor in moral consideration.

In our pluralistic secular culture the effect of a critique of naturalism is worth discussing; will it tend to facilitate a shift to pantheism, or deism, or agnosticism, or a spiritualism of some kind, or is it still likely to support theism or specifically Christian belief? On p. 158 it is stated: 'And of course, if naturalism is false then theism is true.' Unfortunately, this does not follow, as seen in the work of philosophers such as Thomas Nagel, who promotes a form of panpsychism rather than theism. I also worry that the particular angle taken in this book's response to naturalism may feed the story beloved of 'skeptics' that religion should be afraid of the progress of science. Unfortunately, the arguments given serve to undermine the powerful apologetic available from the real success of scientific metaphysics. The orderliness of the universe as discovered by science can offer strong support for belief in God.

I end with some key questions and points which the book raises as for Christian apologetics. Firstly, does an evangelical approach to Scripture and worldview commit us to some form of scientific antirealism? Secondly, if a Christian academic holds a belief that mainstream science is wrong about a consensus position, should this be somehow noted in books touching on the topic? An obvious example is the age of the universe, and disclosure of one's position may be particularly relevant for those teaching at institutions requiring a particular view on the topic. When writing about connected ideas such as evolutionary theory or modern cosmological theories, care should be taken not to conflate the theories with their purported implications. In general, when offering an in-depth critique of another worldview,

ideally one's own worldview, or the alternatives to what is being critiqued, should be clearly stated rather than assumed to be the obvious alternative. After all, the New Atheists know well that it is easier to critique alternative worldviews than provide a case for one's own. Perhaps *How to be an Atheist* is predominantly written for a Christian audience with little sympathy for the typical views of modern skeptics. If so, the opportunity for engagement implied by the title has arguably been missed.

Despite these concerns, I commend further work such as *How to be an Atheist* insofar as it aims at and achieves both technical precision and accessibility to people not trained in philosophy. The weakness of naturalism as a worldview deserves to be contrasted with the ways in which Christian faith can make profound sense of the world we live in and many of the core convictions of our society.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Crossway Library Expansion Bundle. 127 vols. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990–2016. https://www.logos.com/product/120478/. $1,899.99.

Are paper books better than electronic books? It depends on the nature of those books and on how you prefer to read them. I used to think this was a generational thing, but that stereotype doesn't seem to work. Some folks with gray hair are more technologically savvy than hipsters, and I'm meeting more and more young people who would take a print book over an electronic book any day. Overall sales for print books continue to exceed electronic books.

But I still prefer to have a book in an electronic format because it is more versatile and accessible. For example, I can read an electronic book on my tablet while flying on an airplane or lying down in bed in a dark room; I can display it on a screen via a projector when I am teaching; and I can view it on my phone. The beauty of Logos resources is that they seamlessly sync all of your highlighting and notes across all platforms. So if I am reading a book in Logos format on my iPad and highlight a phrase and add a note to it, that highlighting and note will be visible when I open that book on my MacBook or iPhone.

I have enthusiastically used Logos Bible Software for nearly twenty years, and it keeps getting better. Not only does Logos continue to improve the software, but they continue to add more valuable content. The more content you own in Logos, the more valuable your library becomes—and not more valuable like *simple* interest but like *compound* interest. Adding more resources to your Logos library exponentially increases its value because your Logos library is an interconnected system. You can double-click a Hebrew or Greek word in one book and instantly look up that word in the lexicon you most prefer. Or if you are reading a book that cites another book you own in Logos, you can simply click on that other book's title to jump straight to it.

I currently have over 11,000 resources in my Logos library, and I was happy to add the 127 volumes in the latest Crossway bundle. Crossway published these 127 books between 1990 and 2016, and I

already owned 100 of them in other formats because most of the books in this collection are worth owning. They help you do exegesis and theology more responsibly.

There's not space here to list out all 127 titles, but here are the eighteen collections that make up most of the bundle:

1. Christianity and Contemporary Society (3 vols.). Includes *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem.
2. Disciplines of Godly Living (3 vols.). Authored or coauthored by Kent Hughes.
3. Elyse Fitzpatrick (3 vols.)
4. Wayne Grudem (5 vols.). Includes his updated PhD dissertation on NT prophecy.
5. Bruce A. Ware (5 vols.)
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11. Christian History (7 vols.)
12. Theologians on the Christian Life (8 vols.). A series edited by Steve Nichols and Justin Taylor—historically informed and warmly devotional.
13. Studies on the Bible (8 vols.)
14. Theology (9 vols.)
15. Justification and Salvation (11 vols.)
16. Preaching and Ministry (12 vols.)
17. Apologetics (12 vols.)
18. Christian Life (14 vols.)

The biggest drawback to this Crossway Bundle is the price. If you purchase the collection at the retail price of $1,900, then the average cost per book is about $15. Another drawback is that Logos currently does not sell each of the books individually. You can purchase them in smaller bundles such as the seven-volume "Crossway Biblical Theology Collection," but not yet as individual books.

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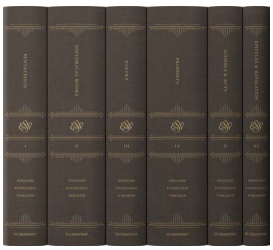
ESV Reader's Bible, Six-Volume Set. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. £ 155.75/$199.00.



With the *ESV Study Bible*, Crossway's team loaded a remarkable amount of additional resources and materials alongside the biblical text. The purpose of the added material, of course, is to enhance the understanding of the text and its background. With the *ESV Reader's Bible*, they move in the opposite direction, seeking to remove all extraneous information and markings with a complementary goal of making the text as reader-friendly as possible.

The physical features of this edition are straightforward and high-quality. The typeface features a 12-point reader friendly font (Trinité No. 2 Roman) with extra spacing between lines. The paper is soft but thick enough to prevent obvious bleed through from the next page. Obvious care was taken in the printing and binding (from a bindery in Italy). Each volume is cloth hardback with Smyth-sewn binding. This quality allows both the larger and the smaller volumes to lay flat when opened on a surface and feel natural when holding them in your hands. The base text is drawn from the 2016 "ESV Permanent Text Edition."

There are several features of this "reader's Bible" that are designed to enhance a reader's experience with the biblical text (sometimes called "paratextual features"). The function of these features stems not from how the editors *supplement* the text but rather how they *showcase* the text.

(1) The Flow of the Discourse. The central feature of this edition can best be seen in what *cannot* be seen on each page. Well-established and long-running trends in Bible production fill the margins, footers, and headers with as much information as possible. The medieval version of this type of supplement is represented by the familiar system of chapter and verse divisions. These features have been omitted from this edition, so that for the most part, a reader encounters the biblical text without breaking points. The text is presented in a single column in the center of the page surrounded on each side by generous margins. There are page numbers at the bottom of the page and an index in each volume that lists the location of the original chapters.

This streamlined feature is particularly helpful when reading narrative, as the stopping points are organic to the story or account itself. You simply stop reading where the story ends. Shifts in genre are also more prominent. One of the calling cards of biblical books is the blend of literary genres. Because the editors still mark out poetic texts with unique margins and spacing, a reader is able to see clearly where narrative ends and poetry begins. Even in non-narrative texts, this feature can introduce fresh readings of familiar passages. For example, one of the unique aspects of the letter to the Hebrews is its repeated shifts from exposition to exhortation. When reading the letter through without chapter breaks, I perceived several textual connections between sections that I had previously neglected. This experience allowed me to recognize the implicit hermeneutical significance I typically attribute to verse and chapter divisions.

(2) The Shape of the Biblical Canon. Because the pages are thicker and the margins are wider, there are six volumes to accommodate the amount of textual material. While a foreign concept to most contemporary Bible readers, this scenario echoes a significant time in the Bible's history when biblical books were gathered and circulated in groupings. Thus, this reader's edition can function not only as a novelty item but also a teaching opportunity.

For instance, the series of six volumes visibly and strikingly communicates the textual real estate that belongs to the Old Testament. The looming volumes of the Pentateuch (507 pp.), the Historical Books (690 pp.), the Prophets (768 pp.), and the Poetic books (504 pp.) stand out against the two slender volumes of the Gospels and Acts (365 pp.), and the Epistles and Revelation (336 pp.). Using this Bible regularly could subtly influence a reader to reckon with the foundational and textual importance of the Old Testament when thinking about the Bible as a whole. Utilizing an edition like this also allows you to conceive how the concept of "canon" could function before the invention of a codex large enough to contain the entire collection.

Being able to take a grouping into your hands also allows a reader to consider the importance of biblical theology and canonical interpretation. One immediately notices how much narrative is in the

Bible. When readers make a selection, they also hold in their hands a discrete grouping or a collection of biblical books. These two physical actions can remind readers of the interconnectedness of these two concepts: the big picture of the Bible's grand storyline is rooted in the shape of the gathered canonical sub-collections. Here we see diversity (several volumes) in light of a canonical unity (within a single conceptual and physical edition).

(3) The Effect of the Intertext. Another significant feature of this edition is the absence of any cross-references or text-critical notes (the front matter directs readers to ESV.org for this information). One might think that because of the vast amount of information available to us as readers, we are in a better position to know how our Bible fits together. However, oftentimes instant search capabilities or the ubiquitous presence of cross-references can actually short-circuit the organic mental steps necessary to identify, conceptually locate, and hermeneutically account for the presence of an intertextual connection. Editions like the *ESV Reader's Bible* can help us recover the art of intertextual discernment and begin training those mental muscles that the age of new media has atrophied.

(4) The Hermeneutics of Headings. One disappointing aspect of this edition for me is the presence of editorial headings. Though most modern versions of the Bible include extrabiblical headings that summarize sections and provide helpful signposts in the text, the reader's edition was meant to allow the text itself to occupy center stage.

The presence of a heading breaks the flow of any text and involves an interpretive move. Accordingly, the presence of a heading influences the reading and interpretation of a literary work. One might respond that there are only a limited number of these headings and that they are intended to summarize the content. While true, this response misses the subtle ways that paratextual elements influence a reader's perception of the meaning of a text. Also, because the editors only place a limited number of headings in a particular book, this actually gives them a much more prominent role in the flow of each volume.

I say missed opportunity because the goal of the reader's edition is to allow the text to demonstrate its own structural framework. The heading at Isaiah 40, for instance, signals something that the text itself could have done. There is a discernable shift from a prophetic message of judgment to one of salvation. However, the shape of Isaiah itself communicates this, as there is a clear literary shift from a narrative form to a poetic one, and the opening sequence of this new major section of the book is, "Comfort, comfort!" Thus, the editors perhaps missed an opportunity to allow their wonderful idea to have its fullest effect. The strategic function of a narrative account in Isa 46–49 is also introduced by the unartful heading, "A Historical Vignette." I actually agree with the decision to provide "sense divisions" that include extra spacing between large sections of texts and a raised initial letter of the first word. Perhaps utilizing this more subtle discourse marker would have assisted readers making their way through large swaths of text but also allowed the flow of the discourse to create cohesion between sections.

Headings are also inescapably hermeneutical, as they interpret the content and structure of a larger block of text. Most of the headings are minimal and generally unobtrusive, thus helping readers maintain a sense of where they are at in larger texts. Though, some are better than others. To the point, it's difficult to see how "Creation and Fall," "Introduction to the Son of God," and "Introduction and the Seven Churches" improve upon the elegance of the initial lines of those texts: "In the beginning" and "The beginning of the gospel," and "The revelation of Jesus Christ."

This very minor disappointment is not really a criticism but rather a talking point prompted by the stellar design concept of the *ESV Reader's Bible*. The cost of this special edition is significant, but

it would make an excellent gift or a worthwhile investment. The enduring value of any publication of the Bible is its ability to help readers focus on the biblical text itself. This beautiful edition is uniquely equipped to leave the reader be and let the reader read.

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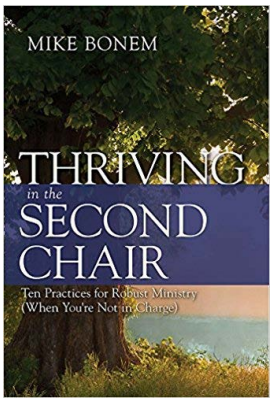
Mike Bonem. *Thriving in the Second Chair: Ten Practices for Robust Ministry (When You're Not in Charge)*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2016. 176 pp. £14.99/$18.99.



There are countless books and resources to help pastors with their general duties (preaching, counseling, discipling, leading, etc.) and numerous resources that focus on specialized areas of pastoral ministry (small groups, youth ministry, worship), but there are few resources targeting pastors serving in the "second chair" as Associate Pastors or Executive Pastors. Mike Bonem, who served as an Executive Pastor after a career in business and now works as a consultant, has recognized this gap and tried to fill it, first with his book *Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, Realizing Your Dreams*, co-written with Roger Patterson (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005) and now with this contribution.

In many respects, this volume stands as a complement and sequel to the aforementioned book, which introduces and defines the concept of the second chair leader as "a person in a subordinate role whose influence with others adds value throughout the entire organization" (p. 5, quoting from *Leading from the Second Chair*). This book refers back to concepts introduced in the previous work and builds upon it, moving from helping leaders understand what it means to be in the second chair to thinking about how one can thrive, not just survive, in this role. Therefore, this volume is best read after reading *Leading from the Second Chair*, but one can benefit from reading this book alone, especially since Appendix A offers an overview of the previous book.

As indicated by its title, the book examines ten practices Bonem maintains are essential for a second chair leader to thrive in his role and bless a church or ministry. Bonem calls these ten practices "deep springs" (p. 2) that give life and will not dry up in times of drought. The ten practices can be divided into three categories, as the first three deal with one's relationship with the first chair leader ("Grow toward Partnership"; "Live with [and Lift] the 'Lid'"; "Clarify Your Role"), the next four chapters deal with one's work in the second chair ("Think [and Act] Strategically"; "Develop for the Future"; "Organize Selectively"; "Navigate Government Nuances"), and the last three deal with the second chair's self-care ("Seek Lasting Rewards"; "Overcome Loneliness"; "Extend Your Shelf Life"). Bonem states that one can read the chapters selectively if desired and encourages readers to focus on one or two of the practices. Each chapter includes reflection questions as well as some questions to discuss with the first chair leader. Appendix B is designed to be read by a first chair leader to help facilitate discussion of the book with the second chair leader. The epilogue gives an encouragement to write a letter to one's first chair leader and offers a prayer for the reader. There is also a list of further resources to supplement ideas found in chapter six, "Organize Selectively" (Appendix C).

By drawing upon his experience as an Executive Pastor as well as his interactions with other second chair leaders, Bonem offers many practical and useful insights for ministers who find themselves in the second chair. Some pieces of advice are not unique to this book, such as the calls to keep one's perspective on eternal rewards, to overcome loneliness by networking with others who understand you and the dynamics of your position in the second chair, and to find ways to draw out one's gifts and passions while delegating tasks that one does not need to be doing. Bonem, however, applies these insights to the unique challenges that one faces in the second chair. Tips for dealing with problems in one's relationship with the first chair leader, particularly the need to do self-examination when frustrated with a first chair leader and the need for multiple conversations to address concerns, are some of the most important takeaways for second chair leaders. The book also continues to help the second chair leader understand his role, offering helpful metaphors such as the need for a second chair leader to have his head "above the weeds and below the clouds" (p. 54) and reminding second chair leaders that some ambiguity will always remain in this role by its very nature (p. 45).

Many of Bonem's ideas derive more from his background in business than from the biblical text (which is not surprising, as he has an MBA rather than an MDiv), but Bonem adapts these business principles in bringing them to the church because he recognizes that the church is not a business so principles cannot be directly transferred (see pp. 93–94). While the systems in the church will differ from those in business, systems and organization are still important to help people; one needs to have the right systems for the context of ministry in general and one's ministry location in particular (p. 71). For example, he notes that organizational charts in the church do not work as neatly as those in the corporate world (p. 86) but are important so people know how to handle issues and problems. He also seeks to stress the importance of goals to bring clarity to one's work and role as a second chair leader, as well as a supervisor who functions as a coach (pp. 76–78). Overall, Bonem stresses the importance of thinking about the church as a garden to cultivate rather than a machine to be managed (p. 94), with structures helping the garden flourish. This gardening metaphor is reminiscent of pictures of the church we find in Scripture and other books with a closer eye towards the biblical text, such as Colin Marshall and Tony Payne's *The Trellis and the Vine* (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2009).

Some assumptions found in Bonem's writing style and examples will differ from realities found among the book's readers, but these do not limit the book's usefulness. For example, the discussion on staffing seems to assume a large church staff, but principles can apply to smaller staffs as well. In addition, Bonem appears to write from an egalitarian perspective, but there is no agenda or attempt to argue for such a position; the reader need not adopt that position to learn from this book. The discussion of navigating governance does not assume one particular model and could be helpful in different settings.

As one who has sat in the second chair for much of his time in ministry, I found this book helpful to think about my role, and I believe it will benefit someone serving as an Associate Pastor, an Executive Pastor, a Campus Pastor, or in any second chair role. Not only can this book help the second chair thrive in his role, but it can also help first chair leaders and organizations thrive through intentional conversations and adjustments in light of the book's material. In fact, this is a great book for a first chair leader to read in preparation for hiring a second chair leader. Therefore, similar to a second chair leader,

this book can add value throughout organizations when partnered with other books focusing more on biblical teaching on pastoral ministry and Christian leadership.

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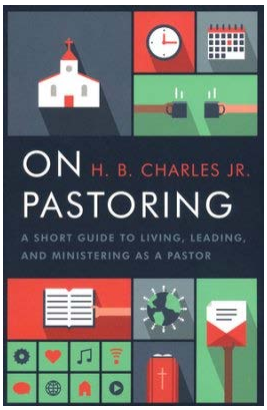
H. B. Charles. *On Pastoring: A Short Guide to Living, Leading, and Ministering as a Pastor*. Chicago: Moody, 2016. 197 pp. £10.14/$12.99.



The pastor must cultivate his own heart before he preaches to the heart of others. This is the cogent advice found in *On Pastoring* from H. B. Charles, pastor-teacher of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville. Charles has become a respected and sought after pastor and preacher, speaking nationally at conferences and conventions. This helpful book surveys pastoral wisdom gleaned from 25 years of experience since Charles began his first pastorate at age 17.

Charles hopes his book will be a compass for the pastor, pointing him toward a God-glorifying office and away from man-centered ministry. It contains 30 chapters, averaging five pages each and continues the format of Charles's earlier work titled, *On Preaching*. These bite-sized chapters fall under three major sections: the pastor's heart, the pastor's leadership, and the pastor's public ministry. Each chapter is self-contained and can be enjoyed independently. There are many heartwarming and humorous stories which read like a journey of Charles's experiences from the struggles he faced as a naïve seventeen-year-old to the seasoned wisdom of a tenured shepherd—along with the scars and callouses to prove it.

The pastor serves for the glory of God and not to win the approval of man (p. 19). This thought sets the tone for Part One: The Pastor's Heart. These brief chapters contain convincing advice garnered from Charles' experience along with sage advice from well-known pastors past and present. Illuminating illustrations add clarity to the topic under discussion making each chapter enjoyable to read. Though not clearly defined, Charles believes the details of a pastor's calling flows from Gods' providence (p. 24). The man called of God should be more concerned about his godliness than his giftedness or reputation (p. 38). Citing Jesus from Matthew 25, a pastor's faithfulness in ministry will be recognized and rewarded if he pursues the glory of God rather than the praise of men. He must also pursue his family with God's unconditional love. The temptation toward celebrity success haunts every pastor and Charles shares his own personal struggle with desiring fame over faithfulness. Throughout the book, he lands poignant one-liners to grab the reader's attention. For instance, the size and strength of your church are not synonymous, says Charles. The pastor "must remain faithful even when he isn't being fruitful" (p. 48). He also says, "Be faithful where God has you rather than long for where he doesn't want you" (p. 49). These are good reminders for ministers who may see "greener grass" on the other side of the ministerial fence.

It is encouraging that Charles advocates long-term pastorates because it takes time to nurture healthy congregations (p. 57). The small church pastor is encouraged to remain faithful. You do not

have to be a prominent figure to be significant to your local congregation. Each ministry assignment is determined by divine providence rather than human opinion (p. 62).

The middle section of the book discusses pastoral leadership. There are common time intruders that steal away from pastoral productivity. The tyranny of the urgent can consume a pastor's schedule. Quoting Spurgeon, the pastor must know what needs to be ignored (p. 74). A pastor must fight for personal time with the Lord. In time, he must raise up his replacement and have patience with young pastors who need to mature, like Peter with John Mark. For the visionary pastor, change seems slow, especially when revitalizing a church. The wise pastor will "make haste slowly" as James Montgomery Boice once said and Charles adds "the harvest doesn't come in a hurry" (p. 90)

Charles admits to his immaturity as a young pastor who tried to assert himself into every church issue. The foolish leader tries to handle all of the churches problems. Fond of colloquialisms, Charles says, "A dog can whip a skunk any day, but it may not be worth the stink" (p. 96). Pastoral leadership demands proper planning. The preaching pastor should consider his preaching calendar and plan time away from the pulpit for his health and the well-being of his church. The pastor's tool box begins with books. Rather than buying the latest on a subject, Charles advocates the purchase of the best ones. Good books are like good friends and good authors should always find themselves in the pastor's library. The pastor should read widely and take sermon preparation seriously.

It is always perplexing for a pastor to know when it is time to leave his post for another position. Charles counsels that, in preparing for such a transition, prayer, godly counsel, and discernment are needed. Wherever a pastor finds himself serving, he should love the people God has given him and weather the storms that will come.

The final section concerns the pastor's public ministry. The preacher is the worship leader and the proclamation of God's Word should take the lead, while music should complement preaching and prayer so that doxology and theology are harmonious. Charles advocates faithful exposition of entire books of the Bible. This demands constant preparation as the race to Sunday comes with unrelenting regularity (p. 145). Still, sheep need to be well-fed and demand quality sermon preparation. Effective proclamation demands a prior spiritual devotion because "what is down in the well is what comes up in the bucket" (p. 145).

Charles admits it isn't preaching that causes him anxiety as much as personal counseling. He gives practical advice in how to do this as well as advice on stewarding the onslaught of meetings that can fill a pastor's calendar. The book concludes with heartfelt thoughts on devotional preaching and caring for the congregation. He even includes advice for the faithful church member, as well as a list of books on pastoral ministry that compliment his own, including Paul Tripp's *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012) and Derek Prime and Allistair Begg's *On Being a Pastor* (Chicago: Moody, 2004). These more robust books on the nature of pastoral ministry balance Charles's personal insights on his remarkable journey in being a pastor.

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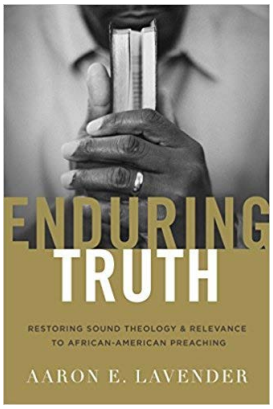
Aaron E. Lavender. *Enduring Truth: Restoring Sound Theology and Relevance to African American Preaching*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016. 128 pp. £19.93/$24.99.



In a manner unique among churches in the United States, preaching is the hallmark of worship in the African American church. Tracing its roots to the African griot, with oratorical creativity, poetry, musical intonations, lament, and celebration, African American preaching (a.k.a. Black preaching) holds an instrumental place in the survival and success of African Americans. Vast numbers of African Americans find solace, hope, salvation, and demands for justice in their preachers' ability to lift the biblical text into the oppressive social dilemmas caused by racial injustice.

In the last half-century or more, evangelicals as a whole have greeted Black preaching with a long handshake. The association of this mode of preaching with theologically liberal personalities and institutions, its emphasis on social justice, and its call for liberation of an oppressed people make it suspect of being less than biblical preaching and/or gospel-centered preaching. If one compares Black preaching to the content and style of the traditional preaching in pulpits of those trained in the wake of Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), it might leave some feeling that the favored Christian rhetoric of the great-great-grandchildren of slaves is spiritually anemic or doctrinally heretical.

It is into these cultural milieus that Aaron Lavender writes, *Endruing Truth: Restoring Sound Theology and Relevance to African American Preaching*. Lavender, Pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Greater Kansas City in Kansas City, MO, and Vice President of Carver Baptist Bible College, Institute, and Theological Seminary (also in Kansas City), hails from the Fundamentalist Baptist Fellowship Association. In addition, he has strong, conservative evangelical biblical and homiletic education and training that, together with his denominational affinity, contributes to his assessment of the current state and needs of Black preaching.

Enduring Truth has a simple four-part format. An opening chapter surveys the modern history behind African American preaching. The three chapters to follow consider biblical exegesis for preaching, a theology of preaching, and the role of relevance in preaching. Each chapter ends with a set of discussion questions that provide the reader a means of reviewing the salient points of each section.

"The Crisis: Erosion of Biblical Preaching in African American Pulpits" provides a narrative from the slavery period through the Civil Rights Era that identifies three culprits behind the decline of Black preaching: Racial Segregation, Black Liberation Theology, and Prosperity Theology. Using broad strokes, the author depicts Black preaching as a response to a host of social ills spawned by America's racist activity. Lavender finds both Liberation and Prosperity responses to be damaging rather than uplifting, for they hollow out the soteriological dimension of the gospel.

Lavender views the Scriptures as inspired by God and inerrant. Therefore, he argues that proper stewardship of God's Word requires sound exegesis. Lavender feels that such exegesis is lacking in Black preaching. He places great emphasis on the fruit of faulty exegesis in the life of the local church. As a remedy, he provides a mini-lesson in the theory of a single-meaning hermeneutic for preaching. I was hoping this chapter also would lend itself to examples of doing the full process of biblical exegesis

through a few passages of Scripture, especially since Lavender strongly commends it as a needed additive to Black preaching.

I am grateful for the author's explanation of selective African American experiences to a broader audience. For example, on the significance of preaching to African Americans, he writes,

The African-American preacher is an important figure in the lives of black people, and his preaching is the centerpiece of worship in the black church. The average person fails to recognize just how significant the church is for African-Americans. For one, the African-American church is the one institution where average black people are in full control. They control the preaching, singing, leadership, and finances. Most every other aspect of society is dominated by whites or the rich and famous. In addition, the black church serves a social purpose, bringing together people who share the same struggles, persecutions, and fears. In the middle of this is the phenomenon known as black preaching. (pp. 59–60)

Contextualized statements of this sort might serve to help those outside of the African American community gain a greater appreciation for the way Black preaching is cherished as an expression of ownership. Within a culture that offers African Americans little participation in wealth and upward mobility, we have treasured the uplifting nature of Black preaching and found it to be rich in rebuilding the dignity of people whose worth is diminished by society at-large.

In contrast to a few positively-contextualized assertions, I found some parts of Lavender's assessment of Black preaching to be overly-negative toward African Americans, while also portraying a "white" entity as savior for them:

The third problem was a propensity among black preachers to seek social justice through political activism. These preachers believed the gospel's transformative power can—indeed … must—be applied to contemporary social, cultural, and political structures. Victimized by racism, the black church in America was set on a course that led it into heretical teachings. Even after African-Americans began attending white institutions, many still looked to political activism as a means to genuine equality. Sadly, the gospel occasionally got lost in the shuffle. (p. 11)

Pitting the gospel against social activism creates an unnecessary and theological false dichotomy. In terms of preaching, such a dichotomy is no more "biblical" than prosperity theology, as both have imbalanced emphases toward life in this age in comparison to the age to come.

Yet Lavender's correctives are not completely without merit; some forms of African American preaching do lack sound doctrinal content, just as some forms of preaching from persons of any ethnicity lack sound doctrinal content. The expositor who wishes to improve his heralding of the gospel, with sensitivity to the stony road trod by African Americans, would do well to read *Enduring Truth* alongside of David Helm's *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014) and Carl Ellis Jr.'s classic work, *Free At Last? The Gospel in the African American Experience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press). They will provide good balance to the practical and social concerns of Lavender's thesis.

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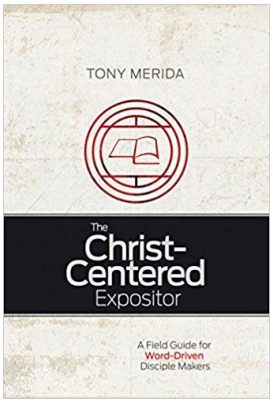
Tony Merida. *The Christ-Centered Expositor: A Field Guide for Word-Driven Disciple Makers*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016. 320 pp. £23.36/$29.99.



To preach Jesus from the Bible, among Christian and non-Christian neighbors, has more to do with our being human, as we imperfectly but truly behold the loveliness of God than it does with our being a homiletician, who flawlessly prepares and effectively delivers a powerful sermon. Content is absolutely crucial, but it must be accompanied by a well examined life that is above reproach. With this helpful book, Tony Merida doesn't take long before he draws our attention to this foundational truth. After quickly introducing us to those characteristics which make an expository preacher effective, he slows preachers down and invites us to look first at our lives. The expositor's message (Part 1), in other words, must follow from our prior attention to the expositor's heart (Part 2).

We take an attentive look at our inner lives by noticing what we believe and how we live this belief ("Watch Your Life and Doctrine," chapter 2). Then we examine what we find lovely (Christ and the Scriptures, chapters 3–4). Preaching begins then with an ordinary life, rooted in a divine calling, demonstrated through a practical dependence upon the Spirit of God (Rely on the Spirit's Power; chapter 5), practiced by real prayer ("Cultivate a Vibrant Prayer Life," chapter 6). We must also learn to pay attention to where our appetites entice us toward false glories ("Preach and Teach for God's Glory," chapter 7). Such forgery glories have nothing to do with the glory of the one who showed us his mercy and met the demands we would not, for a reconciliation we could not earn but desperately needed.

Seasoned preachers and students of the ministry will both find this triune recovery in our preaching refreshing. We preach Jesus, through the Spirit's power, for the glory of God, according to his Word, rooted in a life of prayer and out of a life of love. Since Augustine introduced his book on interpreting and communicating the Scriptures with a treatise on love, it has been rare for the rest of us to follow suit. Likewise, many studies have shown how barren our preaching books are when it comes to sustained attention to the work of the Spirit of God in preaching. By giving us pages in his book that point out love and the Spirit of Christ, Merida offers an important model for this generation of preachers. Furthermore, by interacting with a community of preaching voices, past and present, he also models for us a community of learning, that each of us humbly needs.

Now, out of this personal love for God and with our language of prayer to God in a community, we are ready to consider the expositor's message. Preachers will find this section practical and helpful because Tony takes each aspect of sermon preparation and delivery in their typical order. First, we study the text (chapter 8). Second, we unify the biblical theme in light of its redemptive thrust in Christ (chapter 9). Third, we outline the biblical text (chapter 10). Fourth we develop the functional elements (chapter 11). These functional elements consist of transitioning from our exegetical preparation to our communicative purposes, tending to the issues of explanation, illustration, and application. Finally, we pursue how to introduce and conclude the message we've prepared (chapter 12), and then communicate it to our audience (chapters 13–14).

Pastors will appreciate the various practical examples, the helps for doing exposition in non-pulpit contexts, including funerals, the brief historical sketch of preaching and the sermon evaluation forms to help seasoned preachers refresh and rookie preachers learn. Ministry leaders who communicate the

Scriptures in cultural pockets saturated with de-churched, unchurched or pre-churched neighbors will appreciate the chapter on Contextualizing the Message.

I heartily recommend this book as a textbook for classrooms and a handbook for mentors to use in preaching cohorts. While a plethora of books on the topic of preaching exist, Merida has proven to be a helpful resource (see also the Christ-Centered Exposition series of preaching commentaries, of which Merida serves as one of the editors) to understand both the spiritual and practical dimensions that are involved in preaching the Word. Merida has provided us with a clear, reliable, and helpful guide.

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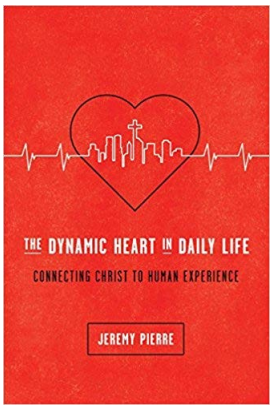
Jeremy Pierre. *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016. 288 pp. £16.09/$19.97



The biblical counseling movement and biblical counselors often discuss the importance of the heart. Our concern in ministering the Scriptures is that true change occurs at the level of the inner man. We are thankful when behavior changes resulting in fewer destructive moments, but ultimately we have greater purposes. We desire counselees to appreciate all that Jesus has done for them, to set their love and affections on a deeper relationship with Jesus, and to think and live with the purpose of glorifying God. These purposes demand discussions about the heart. While we talk about the heart in our books, classes, and conference sessions, we are not always very thoughtful in helping counselors understand how the heart thinks, feels, wants, and decides, or the interactions between these various functions.

Jeremy Pierre's book *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life* attempts to help counselors understand the heart and the dynamic elements included in it. He explains that the heart is not a static concept that only functions along an x-y axis. Instead, the heart is moved and shaped in the four-dimensional world of x-y-z and time. While the heart is infinitely complex (maybe one reason why David prays as he does in Psalm 139:23–24), Jeremy explains that its complexity also has regular patterns.

Section 1 (chapters 1–5) is a biblical theology of the heart in the context of anthropology. One statement that reverberates through the book is, "The human heart responds cognitively, through rational processes based on knowledge and beliefs. It also responds affectively, through a framework of desires and emotions. It also responds volitionally, through a series of choices reflecting the willful commitments of the heart" (p. 12).

The concepts of thinking, feeling and desiring, and choosing interact with one another in complex ways (ch. 2), but God created all of them to worship him (ch. 1). The fall of man and the corruption that came with it not only influenced how a human being would think, feel, and choose, but even the interactions between those concepts (pp. 64–68). The corruption of the heart is one reason why a person can choose to sin even though it dishonors God and results in destruction. Therefore, wise counseling will evaluate carefully the concept of the "heart;" not just its thinking, not just its desiring, not just its actions, but each element and even how the elements work together in a life situation.

Readers will especially appreciate chapter 4. This chapter emphasizes the redemptive possibilities of the human heart. Thus, the chapter is not only a source of training for counselors, but also a source of encouragement for our own lives. The finished work of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit not only determine our eternal future, they change the functions and interactions of the heart in our daily life.

Pierre also explains that the heart is not a self-contained "black box" with its own controls. The heart is influenced by circumstances. The circumstances are not simply occasions for the heart to be expressed, they exert influence on the heart (esp. 89–94). Counselors will thus recognize that a conversation with a counselee will include questions that help the counselor understand both the influences on the heart, but also the heart's responses to the broader circumstances.

Section 2 uses this biblical theology of the heart to inform how the heart responds to four components in our world: God, self, others, and circumstances. Chapters 6–9 discuss the heart's response to each of the four components respectively. Counselees have various forms of conformity of their heart to the heart of the Lord. A healthy heart is one that imitates God's. Pierre explains that one must surrender beliefs, values, and commitments to the Scripture with the result that our core beliefs are the truths of Scripture, that our core values are God's core values, and our core commitments are those given by God (esp. pp. 119–23).

Our response to self is often called identity. This chapter will be familiar ground for those who have appreciated the emphasis over the last decade on the counselee's identity (self-awareness) in Christ. For many, the challenge is that the counselee's understanding of their identity does not often match with the identity that was given to them by Jesus. Thus, helping people understand their identity and encouraging their heart response at every level is an important part of personal ministry (pp. 139–43).

In some ways, the concept of others and circumstances are similar. Both are external forces seeking to mold and shape the functions and interactions of the heart. When we speak about people exerting force upon a life, we think of influence. To whom or to what does our counselee give influence? Whose opinion do they value? When we think of circumstances, we can wisely discuss with counselees how their history, personal schedule and habits, and opportunities shape their heart.

The final section of the book offers help to counselors in order to frame how they can wisely help another person. Pierre uses the concept of read (listening to people's hearts), reflect (help others understand their heart), relate (point them to Jesus), and renew (call them to respond based on faith). Chapters 10–13 explain each of these four concepts. It is here that he creates a Cartesian grid connecting the three aspects of the heart (thinking, desiring and feeling, and choosing) with the responses of the heart to the four shaping influences (God, self, others, circumstances). The individual charts are helpful and provide practical help to link the three sections of the book together into a package.

The Dynamic Heart is a much needed book in the biblical counseling movement. It is a call to all biblical counselors to ensure that they are explaining the Bible's teaching of the heart in its functions, interactions, and responses to life. We can no longer just say "pay attention to the heart." Therefore, this is a work that is going to inform counseling, other writings about counseling, and teaching counseling. In fact, it is influencing my dynamic heart as I relate to my dynamic world.

That said, there are a couple areas that readers may find frustrating. First, and most important, is that this book needs a case study. The average counselor serving at our church would love the robust theology of the heart and be helped by the detailed descriptions of the heart. However, I think some of them would tell me that they are not sure how to bring all this information to the counselor-counselee interaction. A case study would have been a helpful tool to alleviate this issue. I realize books are written

for a purpose and adding material is somewhat of an unfair criticism. But in this situation, the audience would be helped if there was a case study.

Second, section 3 was slightly overwhelming. This concern is related to the first, but slightly different. The author gives four full charts explaining how to read, reflect, relate, and renew with practical questions associated with each—including hundreds of questions! The sum total of the four charts paints the picture of a poor counselor trying to serve someone who has four charts to fill out while they ask 242 questions and listen to properly evaluate the dynamic heart's responses to a series of dynamic influences and interactions.

These elements may be influenced by the fact that this book has its origins in a Ph.D. dissertation. The material may seem a bit challenging for the common layperson working as an engineer or a stay-at-mom who serves around her busy schedule. Weaknesses aside, this is a book that the biblical counseling movement needs. It will have an impact on counseling methodology and instructing others in counseling for years to come.

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David Powlison. *Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016. 256 pp. £15.57/$19.99

I am angry and so are you, but the anger we both experience is rarely constructive and seldom images Christ, for "It's hard to do anger right" (p. 2). In *Good and Angry*, David Powlison aims to convince people like you and me not just that we can do better at handing our anger (although this is one of his stated goals; p. 2), but that as we grow in likeness to Christ, our anger can lead to significantly constructive acts of mercy. This is certainly an interesting take, but can Powlison make the case?

If anyone is qualified to write about an affection as combustible as anger it is David Powlison. That last sentence is not intended to suggest that he is perpetually angry (although he shares many of his own struggles throughout the book); rather, it is because Powlison has interacted with angry people for more than three decades, including stints as a nightclub bouncer (p. 9), a psychiatric ward worker (p. 10), and his better known ministry with the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF). Many readers will be familiar with Powlison's pamphlets, essays, and books, which deal wisely, biblically, and forthrightly with our complicated human experience. *Good and Angry* fits this pattern. Written in a conversational tone sprinkled with numerous reflection questions, Powlison clearly intends the book to be of practical use. He develops his position through a four-fold structure: rather than defining anger from the outset (a task reserved for the second part of the book), Powlison begins with descriptions of universal human patterns of anger. Powlison's constructive argument for redeeming anger occupies section three, while the final section explores several specific "hard cases."

Because anger is part of the universal human experience (p. 9), anyone might read this book profitably. However, Powlison clearly approaches anger as a Christian and his conclusions for transforming anger

into mercy are grounded in the gospel. Although we know that anger is common, when confronted about our own expressions of anger our responses may vary from a lingering sense of guilt to a self-righteous sense of empowerment, or even a general aloofness to our own perturbations. In chapter 3, Powlison identifies six common responses.

But what is anger? "Six common wavelengths" of anger include irritability, arguing, bitterness, violence, passive anger, and self-righteous anger (pp. 37–38). At its core, however, anger is "*active displeasure toward something that's important enough to care about*" (p. 39). The six problematic approaches to anger are so common that they seem unremarkable but Powlison's definition warrants attention as he suggests that anger and its sinful expressions are separable. This definition highlights the moral nature of anger, which "always makes a value judgement" about situations (p. 41).

Perhaps one of the reasons we find it so difficult to disassociate anger from its negative expressions is that our sinful expressions of anger can sweep over us like a tsunami. We find ourselves shocked when mild annoyance quickly explodes into a red-hot rage. Such drastic changes may lead us to conclude that anger is an alien force, an outside thing imposed upon us. Yet this misperception actually hinders one's ability to view anger constructively, because as Powlison point out in one of the most significant arguments of this book, "Anger is not an 'it.' … Anger does not 'happen' to you. You do anger" (p. 46). Anger is complicated because we are complex beings. Anger involves physiology, affections, intellect, behavior, not to mention hidden motives (pp. 47–54). Powlison does an admirable job of explaining and illustrating the various interlocking components of anger. Perhaps some Eastern philosophies or Western cults might remain unconvinced that anger is part of everyday human life, but Powlison goes further than merely noting anger's common-to-man existence; he suggests anger is part of the *Imago Dei*, part of the very fabric of what it means to be men and women created in God's image.

From whence anger? Anger arises from our natural sense of justice. Anger perceives the perversion of justice and responds. Had humanity's first parents exercised appropriate anger in Eden, the deceiving serpent might have died in the garden (p. 63). Yet because Adam and Eve misdirected their anger, the normal human experience of anger is bound up in the effects of the fall and is frequently distorted. Anger is not only natural, it is reinforced by examples and our own choices until it becomes *habitus*, so familiar that it resembles muscle-memory, nearly reflexive. Yet through the gospel, Christians can redeem anger, which is the primary thrust of the rest of section two.

Powlison's key theme for anger done well is, "the constructive displeasure of mercy" and the main idea he argues is that human anger "can be remade into God's image" (p. 72). God is "the most famous angry person in history" (p. 105), yet we, and God's critics, often interpret his wrath in light of our own experiences with anger, which are tainted by sin and fall. As such, our evaluation is biased from the start and needs to be informed by Scripture (p. 106). Scripture portrays God's anger constructively. Constructive anger happens when we identify something is wrong and are moved to make a positive difference through mercy, which itself is marked by patience, forgiveness, charity, and constructive conflict (p. 76).

Exercising patience requires us to make a moral evaluations of a situation, become convinced that a wrong has been done, and to respond deliberately and positively. Our best expressions of patience mirror those of God himself (cf. Exod 34:6, 1 Cor 13:4, and 2 Pet 3:9). Forgiveness is "another curious and complex response to true wrong," a response that identifies a moral wrong but does not seek a "fair" response. Like patience, forgiveness is grounded in God's character (cf. Ps 103:10–13). Forgiveness might be attitudinal (forgiveness expressed toward God for the sins of another person) or transacted

(forgiveness expressed to the offending party; pp. 84–85). Charity identifies something as morally wrong and responds with an "undeserved generous act of kindness" (p. 89). Charity lies at the heart of Jesus moral teaching in the sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:43–44). Patience, forgiveness, and charity form the foundation of a redemption-focused anger, something Powlison calls "constructive conflict." This sort of conflict seeks to redress moral wrongs by actively seeking the redemption of the offender. Practically, though, how do people accustomed to "doing anger" poorly redeem anger? As Christians are sanctified progressively over the course of their lives, they can begin to do anger in a more godly way. This growth comes through the ongoing reorientation of our sinful patterns and desires, being made new by "dying to what is old" and "awakening to new life." Powlison describes this as "becom[ing] Christian with respect to our angers" (p. 125). This transformation is slow and intentional: "It takes grit. You must honestly and patiently wrestle with yourself. You must consciously choose to become a different kind of person. You must work it out over a lifetime" (p. 125). Our sanctification is pointed in the direction of Jesus.

One consistent feature of Powlison's pastoral writings is his use of simple questions to effect deep reflection. Readers familiar with his "X-Ray Questions" from an earlier book, *Seeing with New Eyes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), will know what I mean. *Good and Angry* includes numerous questions designed to help reader's process their own caustic anger and to foster constructive mercy, questions such as: "When you get upset, what do you *want*?" (p. 54), "When God looks at your conflicts, what does he see?" (p. 127), or "How am I playing God in asserting my will?" (p. 130). Chapters 13 and 14 provide longer series of questions focused on deeper self-understanding of our anger (pp. 149–70) and particular situations that seem unforgivable (pp. 184–87). These are not questions to be asked in the moment of "berserker rage," but rather reflective questions that can help us evaluate recent or past failures with anger, or even better, proactive questions to prepare us for future acts of constructive mercy.

If there is one question I wish Powlison had explored a bit more deeply, it is the interplay of physiology and anger. The older I get, the more aware I am becoming of the interplay between my will, intellect, desires, and body, and how these factors affect virtue and vice. Powlison states, "Nothing lies deeper than the lusts that lead to conflict" (p. 129). Reflecting on James 4:1–3, he has correctly identified the heart as the source of spiritual struggles, which is indeed key to this passage. Sometimes, however, blood sugar levels that are too low or too high, a sleepless night caring for a newborn, or the side-effects of chemotherapy touch off grouchiness and arguing (two distorted expressions of anger). Do these physiological triggers *reveal* or *amplify* heart-level distortions already present, or might they occasionally be the deepest explanation for instances of anger? As Powlison suggests, anger is complicated because *we* are complicated.

While reading, I had to continually fight the urge to envision certain angry people in my world as those who would benefit the most from Powlison's wisdom. Yes, they are angry, but so am I and so are you. Simply taking the time to read *Good and Angry* has helped me recognize instances of irritability that I have allowed to become habitual. Like a mild allergy, these habits have become so routine that I was no longer aware of their subtle, slow erosion of joy and their incompatibility with a faithful witness for Christ. Anger, when done right, fosters the *Imago Christi* within believers as the Spirit produces transforming fruit and we choose to walk in new patterns of life that are impossible apart from his sanctifying presence. I am not aware of a recent book that addresses anger and mercy in quite this way or to this extent or as constructively as Powlison's book does. This book does not offer quick solutions or

steps to develop a more chilled-out personality. It does deal thoughtfully and biblically with something that is universal to the human experience.

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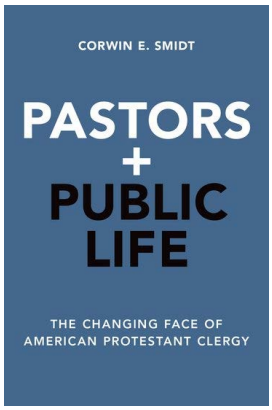
Corwin E. Smidt. *Pastors and Public Life: The Changing Face of American Protestant Clergy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. 264 pp. £16.99/$24.95



Pastors are political elites. So says Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Calvin College, Corwin E. Smidt, in his recent book *Pastors and Public Life*. Elites, not by virtue of their net-worth or family ties or academic pedigree, but because of the unique position they occupy in American culture. Pastors are, by definition, public figures and thus opinion-shapers. They exert significant influence over members of their congregation and thus play a strategic role in shaping American public life.

But who are they—these Protestant clergy? What do they believe? How do they engage in public and political life? Or how do they shape the attitudes and actions of their congregants? And how have their own political beliefs and behaviors changed over the years? These are the kinds of questions Smidt explores in this intriguing study. Smidt analyzes data drawn from three major surveys of Protestant clergy from seven different denominations over a twenty-year period (taken in 1989, 2001, and 2009). His theme is how mainline and evangelical Protestant clergy engage in public and political life while his focus, and the main contribution of this study, is the question of continuity and change—how have the perspective and practices of Protestant clergy changed or stayed the same over this period of time?

Before delving into the specifics, let me first clarify the kind of book this is. It's a serious social scientific study. Some readers may find it a bit technical at points, and others a bit tedious at times. For those like me who didn't take statistics in college, some facets of this work may be lost on you. But these are just little peccadillos. Overall, this is a fascinating (even if it not very exciting) read. Written by a seasoned scholar, it reads like a doctoral dissertation: quite analytical, lots of data analysis, very clear structure, methodical arguments, judicious conclusions. No jokes, stories, charming asides, creative turns-of-phrase, or meandering sentences. And no pictures. Just lots of graphs and charts and tables. This is not a criticism. It's meant to give you a feel for the kind of book this is. We should expect nothing less from an Oxford University Press publication in the social sciences written by a veteran academic.

In the Introduction, Smidt describes the changing world of Protestant clergy—how the social, political, and religious landscape within which both mainline and evangelical Protestant ministers serve has not been static but fluid. Yet despite the changes he describes, there has been little attention given to how Protestant clergy themselves have changed—both in their outlook and actions. Hence, the specific focus of this study.

Chapter 1 is perhaps the most analytical of the chapters. Smidt begins by recognizing the strategic role Protestant clergy have in American social and political life. He then offers a matrix of the ways in which Protestant clergy function as civic and political actors: as citizens, as religious professionals, as

pastors of a local congregation. Additionally, Smidt introduces various types of political action in which clergy engage—from direct political action to cue-giving.

In Chapter 2 Smidt asks about the social composition of Protestant clergy. While, as Smidt says, Protestant clergy are still predominantly "white, male, married and rather well educated," there have been several notable changes of the years. First, there has been a "feminization of the clergy," that is, an increasing number of women have entered the ministry, especially within the mainline traditions (the percentage of female clergy nearly tripled from 1989 to 2009). Second, clergy are getting older, what Smidt calls the "graying of the profession." Today, forty-three percent of clergy are over 55 years of age, while only 13 percent are under the age of 40—a substantial drop since 1989. Additionally, we've seen a shift in marital status. Again, while the majority of clergy are married, an increasing number are single or divorced.

Presumably, theology ought to have a significant impact on clergy beliefs and behaviors. Chapter 3 looks at the theological orientation of Protestant clergy, in particular how views have changed over the last several decades. The surveys used a four-item index to gauge for "theologically orthodoxy," asking about belief in a virgin birth, the existence of the devil, salvation exclusively through Jesus Christ, and belief in an historical Adam and Eve. The results are interesting. First, gender was a significant of theological orthodoxy. Male clergy are more likely than female clergy to exhibit high levels of theological orthodoxy. Second, the era in which one was trained proves to be more important than one's age or years in ministry. So, for example, clergy who trained in the 1960s exhibit the lowest level of theological orthodoxy. But most surprising of all, there has been growth in theological orthodoxy over the last several decades, and this growth has been within the ranks of mainline clergy (since evangelical levels of theological orthodoxy have remained fairly constant over this same period).

But understanding levels of theological orthodoxy among Protestant clergy turns out not to be as relevant as understanding their social theologies. This is the question to which Smidt turns in Chapter 4—how should the church relate to its cultural and political context? The data shows that most clergy believe religion has positive benefits on American political life. At the same time, most clergy recognize that there are different ways of relating the Christian faith to social and political concerns. Encouragingly, research shows that Protestant clergy have rather nuanced social theologies—contrary to how they're often portrayed in the media.

Chapter 5 takes a look at how religious convictions shape specific political issues like social welfare policy, cultural issues, and foreign policy. The most important pattern that emerges is the *growing ideological polarization* of Protestant clergy. From 1989 to 2009, there was a marked increase in percentages of those who label themselves on the "extreme" end of the ideological spectrum. For those who identify as liberal, it went from 9 to 17 percent, while for those who identify as conservative, it went from 22 to 44 percent. Why is this? Perhaps it reflects the ideological polarization of the country as a whole. In short, the so-called "political middle" is collapsing, not only in American culture but among Protestant clergy as well. But, interestingly, the percentage of clergy who identify as conservative has increased over this same period of time. At the same time, clergy today are more likely to consider themselves as more politically liberal than their congregations, thus there is a widening "gap" between clergy and their congregations, at least on certain political issues.

Chapter 6 explores the constraints and enhancements to clergy engagement with political issues. Surprisingly, data shows that there has been very little change over the last several decades. While Protestant clergy continue to be very interested in political issues, they express similar levels of

constraint related to political cue-giving or direct political action. On the other hand, clergy today are likely to approve of political action that is less publicly visible. This is likely related to concerns they have to avoid creating division within their congregations. Interestingly, though, Democratic clergy are more likely to approve of direct political action, while Republican clergy are more likely to approve of cue-giving and have a higher view of the influence of clergy on the political views of their congregants.

In Chapter 7 Smidt invites us to consider two major ways in which Protestant clergy seek to influence the political outlook and actions of their congregants. First, he looks at how clergy use cue-giving to shape the political views; and, second, he analyzes how the congregation itself can become a site for political learning. Cue-giving is any form of communication that directs the receiver's attention to some civic or political phenomena during the worship service, whether this is an aside in a sermon or the focus of congregational prayer. This kind of subtle but significant gesturing has remained fairly constant over the last twenty years. What has changed, however, is the influence of partisan identification of clergy political views. Now clergy are more likely to engage in cue-giving activities because of their partisan identification rather than because of their theological commitments. To put it differently, the most reliable predictor of whether a pastor will try to shape his congregations political views is to look at that pastor's political commitments rather than his theological orientation.

But to what extent to Protestant clergy engage in political activism, and how has this changed? Chapter 8 explores these questions. Of particular note is data that shows that while clergy continue to make public pronouncements about political issues, they speak more frequently today about issues related to "justice" and "equality" (e.g., civil rights, gender equity, unemployment). Yet despite increased interest in social justice (as opposed to moral reform), clergy today are no more likely to engage in political activism than they were twenty years ago. And as it relates to the partisan ends of their political engagement, Protestant clergy are, on the whole, more likely to be Republican than Democrat—and their partisan identification is a better predictor of their voting habits than their theology.

In a concluding chapter Smidt summarizes the key findings of his study, noting the sociological, theological and political changes that have occurred from 1989 to 2009. He also offers several observations about the challenges Protestant clergy face in their role as public and political actors. Their strategic role in American life is weakening as is their authority over the thoughts and views of their congregants. Additionally, as mobility and congregation-switching has increased over time, so clergy are ministering in more politically and ideologically homogenous congregations. Today churches are more constituted by the social and political characteristics of their members than by shared geography.

Let me conclude this review with several observations that stood out. First, I was reminded of the importance of congregations in both the public and political life of the United States. Large swaths of the American populace still attend worship on a regular basis. In fact, membership in congregations is greater than membership in all other voluntary associations combined. This means that congregations are significant influences in American public and political life simply by virtue of their weekly public gatherings.

Second, my appreciation for the importance of clergy as leaders within their local congregations grew through reading this study. In particular, I appreciated the author's discussion about cue-giving as a means of shaping the political views and actions of congregants. While cue-giving is by definition a subtle activity, it is by no means insignificant. In fact, when cues are given from the pulpit, like a wink among close friends, it can be highly significant—even catalytic.

Third, I was cheered by data that shows that Protestant clergy have fairly nuanced views about how the Christian faith ought to inform their political views. Unfortunately, we're often presented with cartoonish characterizations of Bible-thumping clergy who paint everything with a single color. But the reality is that most clergy are quite thoughtful and measured in their political views. They're able to make sense of competing priorities and live with political tensions—a sign of health and maturity.

On the other hand, I am disconcerted by the fact that Protestant clergy are increasing ideologically polarized, like American society. Although there's been only modest change in how clergy view specific issues, there's been substantial change in how they identify themselves ideologically. More clergy identify at the ends of the ideological spectrum. Relatedly, the percentage of independents has dropped considerably in the last several decades. This doesn't bode well for the clergy's ability to ameliorate the political polarization of American society.

Fifth, I was intrigued to learn about the growing theological orthodoxy of Protestant clergy in recent decades, and that this is due mainly to increased levels of theological orthodoxy among mainline clergy (since evangelical clergy have remained fairly constant over this same period). Among other things, this means that there has been a slight convergence of theological orientation between mainline and evangelical clergy.

Finally, one of the most fascinating issues surfaced by this research is what influences a clergy's partisan identification or voting habits. The data suggests that political ideology, rather than theological orientation, has a stronger influence. In fact, the evidence suggests that clergy have a tendency to align their theology to their political ideology—not the other way around. Evidently, the political tail is wagging the theological dog. Of course, this raises the ticklish issue of the role of Scripture in shaping how pastors approach public life, something that should be of particular concern to the very ones under consideration in this study—and perhaps those reading this review—namely, Protestant clergy.

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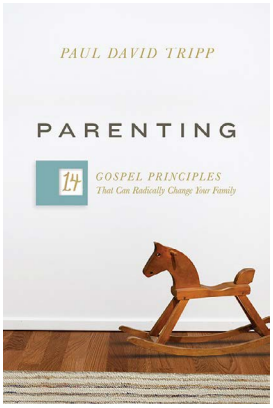
Paul Tripp. *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. 224 pp. £17.90/$22.99.



Paul Tripp's latest book is one of the few Christian parenting books I would broadly recommend. While most books that promise radical life change should be disregarded on the basis of false advertising, this one might actually change your life, or at least your perspective on the task of parenting. Generally, parenting books tend to apply pressure for parents to do more, be more, or change their philosophy of parenting. Christian parenting books tend to polarize parents into two camps: "grace" and "authority," with neither camp's label necessarily defined by Scripture. Rather than deflating parents by introducing a list to be accomplished through self-effort, Tripp puts wind in the sails of every parent. His book is not designed to change a parent's methodologies. Written pastorally, this author shepherds a parent's heart while shaping her perspective

of parenting (which is, in Tripp's words, a "calling" of the highest sort) and informing her understanding of her children as spiritual beings, as worshippers.

Parenting addresses first, the hearts of parents and then the minds of parents, by considering the hearts of their children. Tripp helps to set theologically-informed boundaries regarding what is within a parent's capability, and what is not (but is well within God's capabilities.) Tripp seeks to orient parents toward the hearts of their children, hearts that are not unlike their own.

While the book claims 14 principles, each principle is introduced through the lens of Tripp's concept of parenting as an ambassadorship rather than an ownership. In Tripp's words, "Parenting is not first what we want for our children or from our children, but about what God in grace has planned to do through us in our children" (p. 15). Control, for example, when viewed through the lens of an ambassadorial parent, is not an all-consuming goal, something we want from our children. Rather, control is something to be submitted to God as heart change, rather than behavioral change, takes precedence. An ambassadorial parent is not satisfied with mere control, but wants to help children to see and identify what is in their hearts, and to welcome the transforming grace of God that Jesus has purchased through his work.

While the themes of grace, dependence on God, and hope in the gospel will not surprise readers familiar with his work, Tripp approaches these broad brush-stroke themes by approaching them from different angles, zooming in through lenses of worship and idolatry, law and grace, control and inability, character and foolishness, identity and process and more. Tripp's style is repetitive, but not unhelpfully so, as he circles around major themes such as "we are more like our children than unlike them" (p. 162) and "give up trying to do in the lives of your children what only God can do" (p. 55). Tripp balances the need for wisdom and trustworthy authority in the lives of children with the need for grace, compassion, and loving guidance that would encourage children to receive such wisdom and authority.

Personally, I found the chapters on mercy and rest to be most helpful in altering my current mental landscape in regards to parenting. These pastoral gems are worth the price of the book and contain such life-giving sentences such as "for children of God, weakness loses its terror, because the source of our rest is not our strength but the strength of our Father" (p. 192). Regarding mercy, Tripp writes, "God uses the needs of our children to expose how needy we are as their parents, so that we would do all that we do toward them with sympathetic and understanding hearts" (p. 199). Further, he asserts, "Mercy is parenting with a tender heart…. Mercy is about moving toward your children with love even in those moments when they don't deserve your love" (p. 197).

While Tripp's approach to the task of parenting balances law and grace well, his chapter regarding the lost condition of children's hearts caused me to wonder what should differ in our approach to believing children. While the reminder that our children are born in a state of natural depravity, similar to their parents, is a corrective to our culture's view of children as naturally innocent, and even provides a helpful framework in understanding the tendency of a child's heart to be drawn toward idolatry (similar to our own hearts), it is helpful to remember that some young children may be genuine believers whom the Spirit has sealed for salvation. Due to their youth and immaturity, it may be difficult to distinguish genuine faith at a young age, yet it is important not to discourage such faith, even if its authenticity remains to be tested. However, since salvation is a process that extends from our first hearing of the gospel to a posthumous, literal "day of salvation," Tripp's perspective can provide a helpful impetus to continue to provide gospel instruction throughout a child's years in the home, so that the child will persevere in the faith.

Tripp's words are refreshing and empowering, even as they pinpoint classic parental mistakes such as finding our identity in our children, needing to prove ourselves through the raising of "successful" children, and surrendering higher goals of parenting (heart transformation by the grace of God) to lower ones (control and external obedience in our children). Ultimately, parents who seek to be faithful rather than successful can find rest in trusting in God's promises daily as they take up the parenting mantle afresh.

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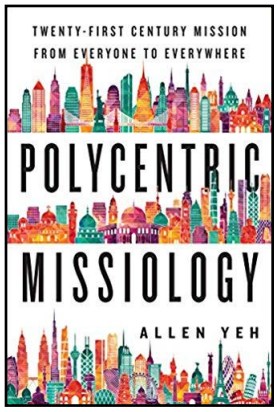
— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Allen Yeh. *Polycentric Missiology: Twenty-First-Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. xiv + 258 pp. £18.69/$24.00.



Polycentric Missiology conveys an infectious enthusiasm for the subject, shows real insight, and is a refreshing contribution to the discourse from a younger scholar. The book is written for interested lay people as well as undergraduates—perhaps the author's own students at Biola University in California. The content is stimulating and the questions provided at the end of each chapter are engaging. However, its usefulness for university teaching would be enhanced by a more academically rigorous approach.

Allen Yeh writes a kind of travelogue of his experiences at five recent mission conferences. He uses these to support the hypothesis that mission is no longer 'from the West to the rest' but 'from everyone to everywhere'. The presentation of the conferences in chronological order forms the body of the book: Tokyo 2010, Edinburgh 2010, Cape Town 2010, 2010Boston, and CLADE V (in Costa Rica) in 2012. He explains the different mission networks represented by each event. The conferences are compared with one another. They are also integrated with reference to the legendary World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, whose centenary occasioned them. These five chapters are set in context by an overview of mission from 1910 to 2010 and an introduction to world Christianity as a shift in the (numerical) centre of gravity of the faith to the Global South. Along the way, we are introduced to mission leaders and movements that Yeh considers significant, including prominent Americans William Carey, Adoniram Judson, John Mott, and Ralph Winter, and Latin American evangelical leaders such as Rene Padilla and Orlando Costas. Pentecostalism, ecumenism, *missio Dei* theology, partnership, and holistic mission are included in the latter category. The appendices contain useful documentation from each event.

One of the interesting questions Yeh raises is: Which of these twenty-first century events is the true heir of 1910? His answer is that they are all legitimate and that our understanding of the original is enhanced by studying them together—just as we know Christ more fully because there are four gospel narratives. Yeh—an evangelical—is not afraid to call this an 'ecumenical' approach. He claims this term to refer not merely to denominational representation but also to the diversity of region, gender, culture,

and so on, that he also sees in early Christianity. The argument for diversity is one of the book's main contributions to evangelical missiology, together with its emphasis on the polycentric nature of world Christianity. The latter is represented by the five conferences on different continents. Polycentrism necessitates a comparative approach. Yeh stresses there is no normative missiology, nor even theology, because these are contextual and churches must be self-theologizing. Along with this inclusivity, he makes many commendable attempts to be even-handed in criticism of the different events.

Although Yeh is an Asian American with links to China and the Pacific region, he has not allowed himself to be defined by his heritage. Instead he capitalized on the intercultural nature of missiology by choosing to do his doctoral studies (in the UK) on Latin America. One of the book's recurring themes is the neglect of Latin America in Anglophone missiology. Another is the lack of 'non-Western' voices in contemporary missiology. Despite this wide experience and his openness to learn from different traditions, as he himself admits, Yeh's own centre is apparent in his selection of 'heroes' above.

While it has much to commend it, *Polycentric Missiology* does have some serious shortcomings. One is the arbitrariness of the selection of the five conferences. They happen to be five that Yeh (uniquely) attended. In his further rationale, Yeh uncritically accepts a widely-published assertion that these four 2010 conferences were the main ones of the centennial. As the Edinburgh 2010 website shows, many other Edinburgh 2010 conferences were held around the world, including international ones. Why were none of these selected, especially as many of them showed the local initiative in the Two-Thirds World that Yeh admires?

Second, Yeh's ecumenical and polycentric approach owes most to Edinburgh 2010 (which was promoted in this way). However, his approach is rather more limited than that project. For example, Catholic missions and missiology are entirely absent from *Polycentric Missiology*, and this despite Yeh's respect for the numerical strength of movements. Third, although Yeh is well-informed and observant, in all cases he was a participant not an organiser and his coverage of the conferences tends toward the journalistic. Stereotypes such as 'ivory-towered academics' (p. 70) are used unthinkingly.

There are some casual assertions, unverified assumptions, simplistic categories, and inappropriate comparisons. In places, this approach leads to outright errors, such as the assertion that Edinburgh 2010 was held in Edinburgh 'mechanically' without any reflection on its appropriateness in the twenty-first century (p. 97). There is ignorance of other traditions, such as the use of 'witness' in ecumenical missiology (p. 119). In other cases, Yeh misses the point; for instance, the political reasons for the inclusion of Anglo-Catholics in 1910 (and consequent exclusion of the Latin American field). Furthermore, premises are unexamined, such as the assumption that like is being compared with like. Edinburgh 2010, for example, was not only a conference but also a University of Edinburgh research project.

One man cannot understand each of these different traditions, but Yeh makes the effort. Let us build on his polycentric principles and have more missiological discussion from different centres. And let us collaborate for in-depth research so that we understand one another—and God's mission—all the better.

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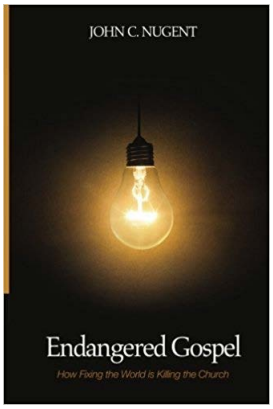
John C. Nugent. *Endangered Gospel: How Fixing the World is Killing the Church*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016. £20.00/$28.00.



One mark of a timely book is that it evokes extreme and opposite reactions in readers. If so, John Nugent's *Endangered Gospel* will certainly be considered "timely." No matter your theological or denominational perspective, his reflections on the church will force a response. At the same time, he does not provoke for provocation's sake. In fact, Nugent's rigorous treatment of the biblical text, coupled with a winsome tone, compels serious reflection.

In Part One, Nugent compares three common but incomplete views concerning God's vision for creating a "better place." Although a "heaven-centered view," "human-centered view," and a "world-centered view" each have commendable aspects, Nugent argues they have a faulty assumption: they "presume that because God will ultimately restore all things, it is the church's job to begin restoring all things" (p. 15). By contrast, his thesis claims, "God's people are not responsible for making this world a better place. They are called to be the better place that Christ has already made and that the wider world will not be until Christ returns" (p. 20).

Part Two contains the heart of Nugent's argument. He presents the grand biblical story in a way that highlights God's intention for his people amid a fallen world culture. Nugent questions popular readings of the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:26–28) that give responsibility to the church to oversee creation in a post-fall world.

His contention here is nuanced. Whereas Christians often think God calls the church to make the world a better place, God's people "*simply live how God calls them to live. They don't try to make the world a better place. They humbly accept that God is making them into a better place*" (p. 54, italics original). Nugent, a professor of Old Testament at Great Lakes College, argues that the entire Bible reflects the same pattern whereby God calls his people to *become* a better people. Thus, he says, "The local body of believers is God's kingdom work. We don't *do* that work; we *are* that work!" (p. 63; italics original).

I suspect many readers will be too quick to dismiss Nugent's most provocative claim. He writes, "This statement is strong, but true. Scripture teaches us to love fellow believers—not all humans in general. The evidence is so clear and overwhelming that it is hard to believe it is not common knowledge" (p. 90). At face value, some people will misunderstand and contort his statement. Nugent will surely test the mettle of many evangelicals. He does not shy away from passages that make people uncomfortable. His extensive look at relevant biblical texts deserves careful reflection.

In Part Three, Nugent shows the practical significance of this vision. This section is rich with applications that are relevant for churches anywhere in the world. He addresses a range of issues, such as discipleship, leadership, family relationships, friendship, vocation, missions among others. All the while, his discussion never veers far from Scripture.

One can predict a criticism people will level against the book. Some might accuse him of withdrawing from culture. On the other hand, Nugent's presentation is far more practical, balanced and biblically argued than others who have proposed a Hauerwasian vision of the church. He advances rather than regurgitates the ideas of others, such as Joseph Hellerman in *When the Church Was Family* (Nashville:

B&H, 2009) and Scot McKnight in *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016).

How might Nugent improve or expand his presentation? His book does not engage many of the hot button issues facing the contemporary church. For instance, how might this way of being the church affect how believers respond to LGBT-related controversies or use political means to protect religious liberty? Nugent's comments spur other questions not answered in the book. How might this vision of the church influence the way local churches spend money, their relationship with para-church ministries, and potential strategies for building bridges between local churches. Though he does not address the issue directly, Nugent's proposal certainly casts a critical shadow over popular methods of church planting.

To be fair, one book cannot adequately answer all these and other questions. These comments do not mark out problematic deficiencies as much as limitations inherent to any book. Nugent's writing is impressively efficient. Not a page is wasted. I offer these comments simply to help prospective readers have proper expectations about what they will (or will not) find in this text.

Where does *Endangered Gospel* fit within the spectrum of related books? As a biblical scholar, Nugent presents the carefully crafted argument of an exegete. Because he incorporates critical New Testament passages, his proposal is more robust and cohesive than specialized works like Christopher Wright's *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). From another angle, it will remind readers of other books that cast a vision for how the church should interact with culture and the political sphere. Nugent is gracious yet sober minded about the role of political powers within the world. One might argue his book could partially serve as the implicit groundwork for some points made in Rod Dreher's *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel, 2017).

In my reading, Nugent could affirm ideas found in Andy Crouch's *Culture Making* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013) with certain qualifications. Where should we make culture? For Nugent, it seems the church itself is that culture. He does not advocate an escapist mentality. "This world will become a better place, but God's people must first become the better place that God called them to be on behalf of this world" (p. 58). Yet, he warns, "If we're not careful, we may gain the world and lose the church— and then, ultimately, we'll lose the world, too" (p. 7).

Nugent argues convincingly that we must take the church far more seriously. This begins by seeing its essential, not tangential, relationship to the gospel. The church does not merely participate in God's mission; it is God's mission in the world. I recommend this book for anyone who wants to develop a more gospel-centered ecclesiology. Regardless of one's theological convictions, this book will challenge readers to construct a more holistic and practical vision of the church and its mission.

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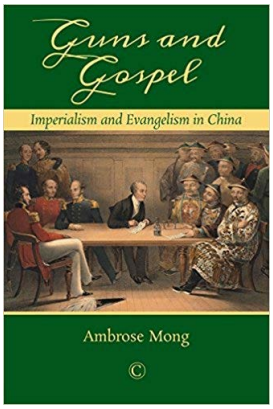
Ambrose Mong. *Guns and Gospel: Imperialism and Evangelism in China*. Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 2017. 200 pp. $50.00/£25.00.



Ambrose Mong, a Dominican priest and research associate at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, is known for his theological writings addressing issues related to religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue. In his latest book, *Guns and Gospel*, he employs his theological perspectives in an attempted evaluation of the interplay between imperialism and evangelism throughout the history of the Christian missionary project in China.

With prose that is easy to follow, Mong organizes his exploration of the relationship between mission and imperialism in China into eight chapters. Chapter one provides a brief overview of the global spread of Christianity from the early church up to the nineteenth century. Mong is primarily concerned in this book with Protestant mission efforts, though he does discuss Catholicism at times with mixed success. While his references to the Ming dynasty Jesuits seem organic and relevant to the overall argument, the Vatican II references feel forced and out of place. Historians may not be satisfied with Mong's breezy summary in this first chapter, but he tries to cover a lot of territory at a brisk pace in order to reach his main area of interest: Christianity in China during the modern era.

In chapter two, Mong focuses on the opening of Protestant missions in China, exploring briefly the eighteenth-century European craze for Asian art and design before discussing early trade between Britain and China as viewed through the East India Company and the Macartney Embassy of 1793. The second half of the chapter explores the interplay between politics and economics in the opium trade, and the complicit relationship between early China missionaries and the trade itself—culminating in the first Opium War of 1839. Chapter three then examines the conflicts in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Boxer Uprising. As he highlights "the impact of Christianity on Chinese soil, which on the whole was disastrous and tragic" (p. 44), Mong stresses the ways in which western military, legal and cultural intrusions into China drove various segments of Chinese society to resist—at times violently.

Each of the remaining five chapters examines a seminal figure in the Protestant mission to China, evaluating the degrees to which their varying approaches to mission contributed to the imperialist exploitation of China. Chapter four opens the biographical evaluations by examining Robert Morrison who, in Mong's reading, was implicated in the imperialistic overreach of the East India Company's work in China by virtue of his employment as their interpreter. Next, chapter five looks at the controversial early missionary Charles Gutzlaff. Without ignoring the compromises involved in Gutzlaff's relationship with the opium trade, Mong admires Gutzlaff for his determination to see Chinese evangelists building the Chinese church and for his embrace of a "minimalist Christianity" that facilitated contextualization of the gospel.

In chapter six, Mong considers Protestant missionary legend James Hudson Taylor and his China Inland Mission. Taylor's emphasis on adapting to local cultural practices is signaled out for special admiration, while the CIM's efforts to distance themselves from the political aspects of the British imperialist push is presented as exemplary for the Christian mission to China. Chapter seven presents the life of noted China missionary Timothy Richard, although with emphasis on Richard's later years and, in particular, his work related to interreligious dialogue. Here Mong finds a kindred spirit, looking

past the evangelical nature of Richard's first twenty years on the field to focus on his accommodationist attempts to connect aspects of Mahayana Buddhism with the Christian faith. Mong closes his biographies with a chapter on Pearl S. Buck, the influential author and missionary child. Although Buck rejected her missionary calling, Mong combines her criticism of her missionary contemporaries with the controversial 1932 Hocking report to support Mong's glowing endorsement of the early twentieth-century Social Gospel influence on the China mission.

Mong concludes his study with a theological reflection on Christianity's future role in China. Drawing on his background in interfaith relations and religious pluralism, Mong discusses at length the potential for a dialogue between Christianity and Marxism to produce a "Christianity with Chinese characteristics" (p. 159) free from the burdens of imperialism and suitable for China in its present circumstances.

Guns and Gospel provides lay readers with a statement of the now classic imperialist critique of the China mission project. While the historical relationship between imperialism and Christian mission is real and worthy of close study, this book and its main argument seem strangely behind the times. Much of the source material used for the book is outdated, and in some instances the absence of more recent research affects the argument. Mong's lack of engagement with the growing body of scholarship on the (early) rise of indigenous, independent Chinese Christianity and its relationship to the missionary effort is particularly glaring. Scholars will also notice that Mong's representation of the contemporary Protestant church in China is trapped in the western academic discourses of the 1980s, divorced from current life in the mainland Chinese Christian community and offering little acknowledgment of the house church phenomenon—let alone the current wave of missionaries from China.

The most glaring problem, however, is the omission of scholarship over the last fifteen years that questions and complicates many aspects of the dated imperialist critique Mong presents. As one example, Ryan Dunch's insightful and now fairly standard essay ("Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity," *History & Theory* 41.3 [2002]: 301–25) is relegated by Mong to a footnote as "an interesting critique" (p. 26). Mong's text does not adequately acknowledge, let alone address, Dunch's contention that older historical narratives of the missionary movement (precisely the materials Mong relies on for his research) were themselves colored by nationalistic biases that fixed missionaries as agents of western modernity. Nor does the book acknowledge Dunch's observation that Chinese people were active agents on their own terms, as evidenced in the many Chinese Christians who shaped their nation's development over the last two hundred years.

Mong's writing is clearly more competent in the sections where he explicitly views the history of Christianity in China from an interfaith perspective. In this sense, Mong's contribution lies not in his insights into the relationship between imperialism and evangelism but rather, for those interested in Mong's theological viewpoint, in his exploration of the intermingling of accommodationism and pluralism within the China mission.

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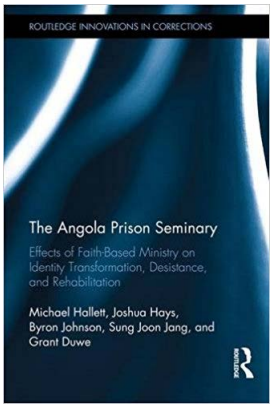
Michael Hallett, Joshua Hays, Byron Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, and Grant Duwe. *The Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation*. Routledge Innovations in Corrections. New York: Routledge, 2017. xv + 248 pp. £110.00/$150.00.



When conservatives and liberals talk about prison, they often seem to speak about two different things. Conservatives tend to think prison is a place to protect society and hold criminals accountable. Liberals, by contrast, generally see prison as a place that reveals social injustice, where allowances are not made for perceived social inequalities, disabilities, and disadvantages. This volume takes the liberal view, emphasizing "mass incarceration" and "draconian sentencing," "focused disproportionately on black males" and "so many disadvantaged youth."

The authors focus more keenly on prison religion and the impact faith-based programming has on identity transformation, desistance, and rehabilitation. Specifically, "This book explores Angola's Christian seminary [via New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary] and the Inmate Minister Program at Louisiana State Penitentiary as a means of researching prison religion and its role in the lives of long-term inmates" (p. 27).

Criminologists and corrections scholars have filled bookcases with studies based upon sociology, psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, etc. The authors of this volume write, "Detailed attempts to study faith as a change agent in the lives of offenders, however, are surprisingly rare and amount to a substantial gap in the literature" (p. 51). Yet is it true we still don't know the effects of faith and religion in corrections? Could the most commonly accepted propositions about faith and religion (e.g., religious conversion is too subjective to measure and faith is nothing more than a coping mechanism) in fact be clichés that obscure more than reveal?

The authors argue that real, deep-level change in self-identity through religious faith and religiously-motivated desistance has indeed eluded us. And an in-depth portrait of faith-based programming can fundamentally overturn the conventional wisdom about faith and religion in corrections.

"In-depth," of course, is the key word here. Whereas most scholars have dismissed religion, this team of scholars redresses this tendency—and then some—with a book that confirms the significant role religion (in this case, "an explicitly evangelical biblical education" [p. 167]) plays in rehabilitating inmates. Indeed, they unpack correctional faith-based programming in far greater detail than previous authors. They show "the role of religion and religious institutions is especially critical in communities where crime and delinquency are most prevalent" (p. 202). The book's subtitle expresses its most arresting contribution.

The authors conclude, "The transformation of Angola – from one of the bloodiest and most storied prisons in America to one with very little violence and innovative programs – has been attributed in part to the existence of a prison seminary launched in 1995" (p. 234). The book, in this respect, is well worth reading as a corrective to harsher judgments against religious practice as an observable solution to the problem of crime.

Although there is much to appreciate in this book, some blemishes inevitably remain. While the in-depth analysis is generally a virtue, the weak writing style tests even the most devoted readers. Furthermore, some key issues receive short shrift. For example, they offer only a handful of paragraphs on constitutional issues and one on suggested remedies. Even then, those sections merely summarize

a 2011 journal article with no detailed evaluation or original contribution of their own. Granted, constitutional issues are not their primary focus. This inattention is still somewhat odd in a volume that highlights "the dismal state of American corrections" (p. 232), mentions that "prisons represent a social location in American culture wherein the 'impossibility' of separation of church and state reveals itself most sharply" (p. 222), and declares that "it is not possible to expect replication of the Angola model unless policy-makers are willing to modify existing legislation and policies" (p. 234).

After reading this book, it is not hard to understand the authors' desire for more prison reform in relation to faith-based programming, "which appeals to conservatives' desire to shrink government and get taxpayers out of the business of community building [and] which appeals to the left's view that community building and social capital ultimately lower recidivism" (p. 229). The authors insist that both conservatives and liberals should admit the positive effect of faith-based programming, embrace its importance, and re-examine the value of religious practice for inmates, especially the prison seminary movement. Yet beyond that call—itself surely heretical in many Washington circles—the authors offer few specifics. Thus, the book suffers from a well-known weakness in the think-tank community: Arguing that policymakers should think more seriously about an issue does not constitute real policy.

Finally, one might question whether Angola was a good choice for such an endowed study. The authors are undoubtedly right that the prison is well-known. They produce sufficient evidence to suggest it is one of the most violent. Yet the persistent effort to underscore how exceptional it is hinders the potential impact of their project. According to the authors, Louisiana State Penitentiary is "America's largest," "a national outlier," "a unique correctional environment," "the only maximum-security prison in American that allows inmates to run their own churches," etc. Why, then, pick such an anomaly and ultimately confess at the end of the book that the Angola model cannot be replicated elsewhere?

The main reason it cannot be duplicated, they argue, is because inmates at other institutions are not "given the freedom to serve others through the churches they attend" (p. 234). Perhaps therein lays a major misunderstanding. They seemly assume that inmates can only serve others through churches if they are officially labelled ministers, pastors, bishops, etc., and if the churches are strictly inmate-led. This is simply not true. Plenty of opportunities exist for inmates to lead by example, positively influence others, apply their faith-based training, develop leadership skills, etc., even without special titles or officiating a worship service. The same could be said for the majority of people in faith communities "on the outside."

These quibbles aside, I hope and pray we will see more books like this one that sidestep the caricatures and gravitate toward facts. Such books would show the business of faith-based ministry is every bit as rehabilitating as the other fields of knowledge.

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