



themelios

*An International Journal for Students of
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THE GOSPEL COALITION

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DESCRIPTION

Themelios is an international, evangelical, peer-reviewed theological journal that expounds and defends the historic Christian faith. Its primary audience is theological students and pastors, though scholars read it as well. *Themelios* began in 1975 and was operated by RTSF/UCCF in the UK, and it became a digital journal operated by The Gospel Coalition in 2008. The editorial team draws participants from across the globe as editors, essayists, and reviewers. *Themelios* is published three times a year online at The Gospel Coalition website in PDF and HTML, and may be purchased in digital format with Logos Bible Software and in print with Wipf and Stock. *Themelios* is copyrighted by The Gospel Coalition. Readers are free to use it and circulate it in digital form without further permission, but they must acknowledge the source and may not change the content..

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REVIEWS

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

EDITORIAL

The Postmodernism That Refuses to Die

— 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.

People aren't talking about postmodernism nearly as much as they were fifteen or twenty years ago. Thirty-five years ago, graduate students in English departments in many universities of the Western world spent more time reading Lyotard, Derrida, and Foucault than Shakespeare, Keats, and Frost. Proof of mature reading of a text was tied rather more to creative deconstruction than to trying to understand the text in its historical and cultural framework. More important than the English texts was postmodern theory.

Much of this has changed. Far fewer students are assigned major readings from Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. The founding writers of postmodernism (understood, for the sake of this brief editorial, as an epistemological enterprise) are largely sidelined from college curricula.

But that doesn't mean the impact of postmodernism has entirely dissipated. What seems to be taking place, rather, is something like this: some of the conclusions of postmodernism are now adopted with little question as cultural "givens" without a felt need to justify them. Why defend stances that large swaths of the culture accept as obviously true? So, what we find is substantial numbers of postmoderns who rarely think of themselves as postmoderns, and who know next to nothing of the literature and debates that occupied so much attention a bare generation ago. They understand neither the theory nor its critics, but they presuppose many of its conclusions.

A couple of examples might help. Recently, Christian students at a fine West Coast university engaged in a thoughtful survey of their fellow students, focusing on what they thought about religion in general and Christianity in particular. Some of the questions focused on the afterlife: e.g., What would it take to know that there is a new heaven and a new earth to be gained? A not uncommon answer was, "How can you claim to know anything at all?" Or again, when asked how they understood the exclusive truth claims of Christianity (e.g., John 14:6; Acts 4:12), most responses fell into one of two pools: (1) "Christians are so bigoted. We all have our own distinctive approaches to spirituality. Christians don't have the right to rule out of camp the claims of other religions." Or: (2) "Deep down, all religions are really saying the same thing anyway, so why should one view others as distinctively different or in some way inferior?"

Of course, the adoption of such stances should not be traced exclusively to the impact of postmodernism. Other competing streams have brought to bear important influences: contemporary understanding of what "faith" means, the shifting tides of "tolerance," and the broader cultural developments that some wag has identified as "a thin crust of vehement hostility masking a vast sea of apathy." Yet we would be avoiding the obvious if we did not sniff out something of the impact of postmodernism on contemporary epistemologies.

The students at that West Coast university kindly passed on to me the results of their survey as I was preparing for an evangelistic event at the university. Those stances, I soon discovered, characterized not only a substantial number of students who labeled themselves atheists or secularists or anything other than followers of Jesus, but also surfaced in the minds of many Christians who faced these questions in their own courageous attempts to share their faith, and did not quite know how to answer them. So here are a few of the answers I've found helpful in my responses to both groups.

- (1) Not a few of the discussions about what we can or cannot know depend on a misleading baseline. The argument is that unless we know everything about something, we cannot know anything certain about that thing. The logic depends on a rather antiquated form of the so-called "new hermeneutic." That is an impossible standard. It means that we can legitimately speak of knowledge only if we enjoy omniscience—or, to put it another way, only Omniscience truly knows anything. Read a certain way, of course, that is true. Yet we human beings often speak of things we "know," and implicitly we are not claiming omniscience; rather, we speak of a variety of human modes of knowing that are appropriate to the human condition. That is true of human beings in the Bible; it is equally true about all human beings everywhere. We "know" the earth will rotate on its axis, and there will be a sunrise tomorrow morning; I "know" that my United flight is scheduled to leave San Francisco in just over an hour. Of course, my "knowledge" of the latter turns on what I read on the United screen and on my United app, and I confess it is a bit disconcerting to sit here and listen to an audio announcement to the effect that what the big screen says about another flight is erroneous on the screen: maybe it will turn out that the posting for mine is erroneous, too. If I were omniscient, there could be no errors of that or any other sort. Nevertheless, we continue to make our plans on the assumption that the earth will continue in its rotation, and that my United flight will leave at 6:00 pm unless there is another notification. We "know" these things, as we know that King David reigned in Jerusalem and that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, not with the knowledge that belongs exclusively to God, but with the knowledge that is appropriate to our human status. To adopt the baseline of omniscience is counter to human experience and common parlance.
- (2) Another way of getting at the same thing—viz., that one can responsibly talk of human knowing even though our finiteness and proneness to error both ensure that human knowing is never grounded in omniscience—is to recall how learning takes place. Whenever we embark on a new discipline, whether Attic Greek, Shakespearean sonnets, or microbiology, the opening stages seem daunting: there is so very much to learn, so much to memorize. Nevertheless, the weeks and months skip past, and pretty soon the elements that seem so daunting at the beginning of the learning curve have been comfortably absorbed. There is no longer any effort expended on the present indicative paradigm of $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omega$, because we *know* that, even though there is so very much about Greek that we do *not* know. It is difficult to see why this should not be the case with every discipline, including biblical and theological studies. In other words, the common experience of learning things, whether in academic courses or in the business of life, confirms that human knowledge is attainable, even if it is invariably partial.
- (3) That there are highly diverse interpretations of the Bible is often taken to justify the conclusion that we cannot legitimately claim to *know* what the Bible says. That conclusion holds if one of two conditions holds true: (a) The Bible is so multi-faceted, and without a coherent message, that diverse readings of it are inevitable. (b) The Bible may in theory have a univocal message,

but church history shows that we cannot agree as to what it is. Either way, how can we fairly claim to enjoy genuine knowledge of God? Neither stance holds up very well. On the first point, what is at stake is what the Bible *is*. I cannot delve into that subject here. On the second point, my own experience (and it is a common one) is that it is surprising how much agreement regarding what the Bible is saying can be achieved, provided there is agreement among dialogue partners that the Bible is the final authority, and that they are willing to be corrected by it. Elsewhere I have recounted my ten happy years with what was then called the World Evangelical Fellowship, coordinating highly diverse study groups where I was invariably pleasantly surprised by how much unanimity could be achieved by hard work, patient discussion, mutual criticism, humility of mind, and a greater hunger to be faithful to the text than to be thought right.

- (4) So far, these epistemological discussions have treated challenges to the acquisition of knowledge as essentially neutral problems. Not many experts in hermeneutics devote much space to the role of moral turpitude in trying to know the truth, or to the dangers and barriers cast up by idolatry in this business of trying to *know* God. At some point in discussion with an atheist, isn't it worth pondering what the Bible says on this point? "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God" (Ps 14:1). This is not the short-fused condescension of a knee-jerk conservative, but a sober assessment of how widely God has disclosed himself and how the atheist jettisons that revelation. But in any case, it is certainly part of the biblical response to the epistemological postmodernism that will not die.

Hans Madueme has faithfully served as the Systematic Theology and Bioethics book review editor since 2008, when TGC took over publication of *Themelios* from RTSF/UCCF. Over the past decade Hans has made a tremendous contribution to the journal as a member of the editorial team and has also authored a number of articles and reviews. Owing to other opportunities and commitments, this is Hans's last issue as an editor, but he has agreed to serve henceforth on the journal's editorial board. Succeeding him in this role is David Garner, who is vice president of advancement and associate professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. David completed his PhD at Westminster and is an ordained Presbyterian minister. He is the author recently of *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* and is a past contributor to *Themelios*. David may be contacted at david.garner@thegospelcoalition.org.

Jeremy Kimble began serving as the Ethics and Pastoralia book review editor in 2016 and is now transitioning to focus on other responsibilities. Rob Smith succeeds Jeremy in this editorial role. Rob is lecturer in theology, ethics, and music ministry at Sydney Missionary & Bible College in Sydney, Australia. He is an ordained Anglican minister, is co-author of *Songs of the Saints: Enriching Our Singing by Learning from the Songs of Scripture*, and has published a number of articles in *Themelios*. Rob may be contacted at rob.smith@thegospelcoalition.org.

We will miss Hans Madueme and Jeremy Kimble and are grateful to God for vital work as book review editors. We warmly welcome David Garner and Rob Smith to the editorial team.

STRANGE TIMES

A Wiser Idiot

— Daniel Strange —

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

Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
In the markets she raises her voice;
At the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
At the entrance of the city gates she speaks.
(Prov 1:20)

The British comedian Frank Skinner has a regular feature on his podcast called ‘Idiot Eureka Moments’ (IEMs), those times when you discover you have been innocently oblivious to what seems blindingly obvious to everyone else. So, for example, the correspondent who hadn’t realised that the contemporary music artist ‘will. i. am’ was a play on the name ‘William’ (please don’t tell me you didn’t realise that!), or the person who suddenly realised the nomenclature of ‘Banoffee Pie’ was related to its constituent ingredients.

Earlier this year, I was invited to take part in a symposium organised by the doctrinal commission of a large Irish Presbyterian denomination. The topic concerned whether or not the denomination should participate in ‘multi-faith civic events.’ The experience triggered a number of IEMs that might be worth sharing just in case there are some other like-minded idiots out there. If you are not an idiot and what follows is obvious to you, then my apologies – you can give a little smug chuckle, and get on with being edified by the rest of *Themelios*.

I said above ‘the experience’ because what I want to focus on is not so much on what I actually said to these leaders on the topic: those who have read stuff I have done before will not be surprised to know that the framework of ‘subversive fulfilment’ had a starring role.¹ Rather, my ‘revelations’ came in the peripheral and often unseen ‘areas’ of preparation, methodology, pedagogy and reflection, intensified by a series what I shall call ‘providential coincidences.’

IEM 1. *We’re all in the same boat, and that’s both encouraging and discouraging.* Over the last decade I have done a fair amount of reading on both the theology of religions and public theology, and I like to think I’m fairly on top of my subject. However, I very quickly realised that the presenting issue was more complex than I had first imagined (of which more anon). My slightly panicked response was to contact a number of the great and good in our constituency and ask for their comments and advice, scholars from whom I have learnt a lot, and some of my best former students now in ministry around the UK and beyond. Surely they would come to my rescue? While there were a number of astute observations and

¹Daniel Strange, *Their Rock is not like Our Rock: A Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016)

insights, there emerged a constant refrain running through most of the responses, 'Really great question Dan. It's a toughie. I haven't personally come across this but it's definitely something that we need to think about more and more. I'll be interested to know what you come up with...' Now while such responses renewed my confidence that I wasn't alone in recognising the complexity, and that there wasn't a seminal text on the subject that I'd neglected, I'm not that solipsistic in realising a broader implication which was troubling. My sneaking suspicion is that this is an (other) area where, as conservative evangelicals, we are behind the curve. At best this shows a lack of joined up thinking and at worst a burying our head in the sand. It's 2018. The particular instantiation of multi-faith civic events might be new(ish), but (a) the existence of other religions as an empirical reality; (b) that adherents of these religions might have an interest in our corporate social life; and (c) that late-modern liberal democracy might want to have a piece of the civic action, is not. While I genuinely applaud this Presbyterian denomination for wanting to tackle this issue, my gut feeling is that as a constituency we are too often reactive and playing catch up, rather than being proactive and prophetic. When will we get ahead of the game and set the agenda? What do we need to put in place organisationally, institutionally and financially to be able to be able to create time and space for such joined-up visionary thinking, the fruit of which can be generously shared around? Maybe in your own context, constituency and church this is happening. It's pretty sporadic around here.

IEM 2. When we bother to take the time and pay attention to context, we realise that reality is messy and complex, and it calls for attentive listening, prayerful wisdom, judicious discernment ... and jolly hard work. For a Reformed evangelical, the topic of engaging with 'multi-faith civic events' might appear on the surface to be a textbook open-and-shut case. Guilty as charged. Our theology of religions cannot be syncretistic, neither will we want to be *perceived* as being syncretistic to a watching world. Against all other so-called 'gods' which are lifeless and futile idols, we proclaim the transcendent uniqueness and crown rights of Jesus Christ our Lord: 'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

However, there are some complications. Intra-theologically, while our theology of religions might ask soteriological and alethic questions, the answers to which push us in one direction, our public theology asks different questions which pull us in a different direction. Speaking from within this discipline, we will be aware of the dangers of cultural extractionism, of our mandated Christian (and ecclesial?) civic and public responsibilities, and of that same 'watching world' perceiving by our action or inaction, all kinds of things which affect the plausibility structures into which we witness and proclaim the exclusivity of Christ. I'll return to this particular 'tension' shortly.

For now, though, there are contextual 'complexities' which defy simplistic answers. A more nuanced and liminal space emerged when I interrogated my host about the particularities of the Irish Presbyterians' situation. There are at least two levels of granularity. The first surrounds what we mean by 'multi-faith civic events'. So 'multi-faith' can be distinguished from 'inter-faith'; an 'event' needs to be distinguished from a 'service' (which itself needs careful definition) and the word 'worship' isn't used at all, even though we may conclude that that is what's happening (again definitions needed please!).²

²One denomination which does give this definition in the context of this issue is *The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*. See their "Guidelines for Participation in Civic Events," April 2004, <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=354>. Overall this was one of more helpful documents I read although it should be noted that when it comes to the issue of 'seriatim' prayers, the report notes that there was not unanimity within the Commission.

Moreover, what is being proposed is not a syncretistic mush but in an attempt to avoid syncretism, consciously ‘sequenced’ or ‘seriatim’ contributions from faith communities.

Now under *these* conditions and if we could engineer the opportunity, could we start to conceive, however fantastical, of a contribution that might not only avoid syncretism, but could be positively apologetic and evangelistic – a more polite, 21st century version of YHWH vs. Baal in 1 Kings 18.

Now feeling quite out of my depth, I started searching for close-by models and precedents that might help me. The Church of England has done quite a lot of work in this area that could be refracted through an evangelical lens. In particular, a little study *Multi-faith Worship?* asks helpful questions and delineates different contexts which would call for different levels of Anglican engagement and how all this relates to Canon Law.³

Enter my first ‘providential coincidence.’ As it happened, I was delving into this documentation in the week of a National Memorial Service at St Paul’s Cathedral in London for the victims of the Grenfall Tower fire where seventy-one people had died including a large number of Muslims. As part of this service, Muslim schoolgirls sang a song called ‘Insha Allah.’ While I believe the inclusion of this element to be wrong, in the context of the Church of England guidance plus some digging around behind the scenes, I could at least begin to see how such a decision might be defended. Yes, they were Muslims; they sang a song to ‘Allah’ – but the song’s words were carefully vetted so it could be argued that they were not *intrinsically and necessarily* Islamic. St Paul’s Cathedral was emphatic that this National Memorial Service was *not* interfaith. None of the prayers at the service were led by any but Christian representatives. Reports said, misleadingly but not strictly inaccurately, that prayers were said by ‘faith community leaders’ – in fact, they were only Christian pastors. That media outlets reported it as such just shows their lazy journalism. Overall the rationale for the inclusion of this element in the service seemed to be that as an established church ministering to the whole community over an extraordinary and very public tragedy, this was believed to be making a reasonable adjustment without compromising the truth of the faith. Let me re-iterate, even if this was the rationale, I still think it *did* compromise the truth of the faith, but it’s not as clear cut as I had first thought, and I realised that my initial opprobrium might need to be tempered a little.

This though leads me to the second level of contextual granularity. I was *not* being asked to speak about ‘multi-faith civic events’ in London to Anglicans but in Belfast to Presbyterians (and I’m a Reformed Baptist!). There are very obvious historical and cultural differences that would need to be factored in. There is not an *established* church in Ireland which affects how the church sees its civic responsibilities. However, the denomination to which I was speaking would consider itself a *national* church. Moreover, Irish Presbyterians are not English Anglicans are not English Baptists which means a whole new set of ecclesiological questions as to the ‘who’ of participation: the Christian as individual Christian, or the Christian as ‘Church’ (i.e., denominational representative)? Finally, discussion of ‘multi-faith civic events’ in Ireland could not be conducted without recognition to the current state of Protestant-Catholic relationships and civic discourse.

One might think all this is overkill and somewhat paralysing, but I deemed that such contextual questions had to be asked if I was to serve the denomination and help them scratch their itch, and yes, it is *their* itch. This was a cross-cultural experience in which I needed to listen first before speaking

³ *Multi-faith Worship? Questions and Suggestions from the Inter-Faith Consultative Group* (Church House, 1992). See also “Presence & Engagement Guidelines: Civic Services or Events,” <http://www.presenceandengagement.org.uk/sites/default/files/Civic%20services.pdf>

(not my natural *modus operandi*) and help them to think through *their* issues. Abstract and contextless pontificating from an English Baptist guy would have been counter-productive and the equivalent of using a machete when a scalpel was needed. As the saying goes, ‘two ears, one mouth.’

Enter my second ‘providential coincidence.’ At this time, I was already part way through reading some recent works that have been stressing the need for our theology to be ethnographically sensitive and ‘lived’⁴ so that we are ‘better students of the real.’⁵ This is what Smith calls ‘the ad hoc, contextualised work of discerning what faithful political presence looks like in *this* time, in *our* place, given *these* current challenges and *these* policy proposals and *this* political environment.’⁶ This reading only confirmed and intensified the IEM.

For those of us who serve the church as theologians and teachers, if we want to be of real use, let’s not be afraid to get our hands dirty in the granularity of context. Moreover, let’s train those under our care to be competent surgeons of cultural exegesis and ethnography.

IEM 3. Our theological presuppositions and frameworks really do affect how we respond to the presenting issues we face. This IEM balances my previous point (as well as happily continuing to justify my existence!). Our ‘lived theology’ needs to be *Reformed* lived *theology*, our ethnography needs to be *Reformed theological* ethnography. Methodologically this entails at least two commitments. First, that theology as the queen of the sciences does not become subsumed under and servile to the social sciences. Institutionally this seems to be the trend in UK universities over the last decades. More alarmingly, there seems something of this shift in some theological colleges and seminaries. Second, as those belonging to a Reformational heritage, that we maintain an unswerving confessional commitment to the ultimate authority of Scripture, meaning we do not reverse the hermeneutical flow of interpreting the world through the Word.

A case like ‘multi-faith civic events’ is a good case of the messy liminality which is the stuff of real every-day late-modern life. If we are truly committed to engage at the level I have suggested above, the temptation might now be to question or even tinker with our methodology because there often appears a dissonance between theoretical framework and lived reality. Are our theological method, grammar and confessions ‘too heavenly to be any earthly good’? Are they really up to it? Under no circumstances must we capitulate here. Supple, contextual, flexible, creative, imaginative – Amen and Amen! But to use a sporting analogy, the defence must be told to keep its (*sola*) shape with *norma normans* constantly being shouted to each other across the line.

Now I recognise that confessionally this *sola* shape allows some legitimate variation. In this instance I was able to talk in the ‘thick’ language of Reformed theology to a Reformed audience where I would hope there would be a familiarity of theological anthropology and of terms such as ‘antithesis’, ‘idolatry’ and ‘common grace’. I was also presuming a consensus in soteriology concerning the exclusivity of Jesus Christ. However, in the public theology space I was aware that there is more diversity in terms of theological frameworks. Different construals of continuity and discontinuity between covenants; different eschatological emphases put on the ‘now’ or the ‘not yet’; the penultimate and ultimate; and different understandings of the ‘mission of the church’ might issue in different approaches to ‘multi-faith civic events.’

⁴ Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 64.

⁵ Christian Scharen, “‘Judicious Narratives,’ or Ethnography as Ecclesiology,” *SJT* 58 (2005): 125–42, 131.

⁶ James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 97, emphasis original.

Naturally, I have my own particular framework within which I wanted to approach the issue, but part of my role would have to be showing how a number of frameworks might tackle the issue: ‘So, from a two-kingdoms paradigm, it might look like this...’; ‘from a principled pluralism paradigm it might look like this...’; ‘from a transformationalist paradigm it might look like this...’ The point here is that there exist well-worn biblical-theological frameworks within the Reformed family which can and must be explicitly brought to bear on these contemporary issues. Theology matters and theological method matters in the madness.

IEM 4. Working on a real-life scenario enabled me to make connections I’d not seen before. This is personal but I hope illustrative. As alluded to above, I’ve long pondered how to connect my own Reformed theology of religions with my own Reformed public theology. While not hermetically sealed, they are subject areas asking different questions and sometimes appear to be giving answers which push against each other causing some dissonance. It was only as I wrestled with this very particular example of ‘multi-faith civic events’ that I suddenly was able to see how connections might be made. This was an IEM within an IEM: ‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved’ is *both* a soteriological claim and a public theology claim against the imperial cult of Caesar. Yes, I admit I have been drinking from the Augustinian well alongside Leeman, Smith and O’Donovan.⁷ I do believe the church is political and the state is religious. But it took the case of ‘multi-faith civic events’ for me to really ‘see’ it and ground it, bringing together context and theological framework. The process of looking at this specific problem had been instrumental in me making an intra-theological breakthrough.

(Warning: if you are more 2-K inclined you might want to look away now). In short, and in my model of ‘subversive fulfilment’ whether and how we engage with ‘multi-faith civic events’ has to navigate between two tramlines. One the one hand, a stance of subversive confrontation which proclaims the Lordship of Christ horizontally in the context of other ‘religions’ and vertically against the pretensions of ultimacy that come from late-modern liberalism which so often views religion as ‘window-dressing’ but is itself deeply ‘religious’. On the other hand, a stance of fulfilling connection which recognises the time and our space and place: the story of ‘how modernity is the Child of Christianity, and at the same time how it has left its father’s house and followed the way of the prodigal.’⁸ Using stolen capital such cultural conditions have birthed a strange looking child called the ‘multi-faith civic event’ which we need to relate to. Perhaps to the disappointment of some on the day, I didn’t and couldn’t give a straight ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the denominations involvement in these events, but I could give them a set of questions for them to ask, boundaries of which they would need to be aware, and a possible framework within which they could engage faithfully.

IEM 5. And this might have implications for our pedagogy. Enter my last ‘providential coincidence’. My invitation to speak on ‘multi-faith civic events’ comes at a time when as a seminary we are starting to look at the revalidation of our programme with a view to making us more and more fit for purpose as we educate, train and form men and women to be life-long pastor-theologians. A non-siloed, truly integrated head-heart-and-hands curriculum and seminary experience is something for which we’ve been striving for a while, recognising we are some way off it being achieved.

⁷Jonathan Leeman, *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ’s Rule* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2016); Smith, *Awaiting the King*; Oliver O’Donovan *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

⁸O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 275. Quoted in Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 112.

Here's the IEM: while I have been vaguely aware of Problem Based Learning (PBL) as a pedagogical method in other disciplines, it has not figured heavily in an *explicit* way in our institution or in my teaching. However, I believe that my recent experience does qualify as an example of PBL and now I'm interested. As a viable pedagogical method, while obviously not a panacea, it has done itself no harm in putting itself on the agenda as we think about how we theologically educate our next generation.⁹

With thanks to God for the Irish Presbyterians making me a wiser idiot.

⁹ See Hans Madueme and Linda Cannell, "Problem Based Learning and the Master of Divinity Program," *Theological Education* 43.1 (2007): 47–60.

B. B. Warfield and the Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity

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Abstract: B. B. Warfield’s 1915 *ISBE* article on the Trinity presents the Princeton theologian’s mature thinking on the biblical bases and meaning of the doctrine and offers a revisionist interpretation of the personal names of “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit.” Instead of interpreting the personal names of the Trinity in terms of relations of origin, Warfield argues that the personal names only signify likeness between the persons. The present article locates Warfield’s revision within its immediate and broader historical contexts, critically engages Warfield’s proposed revision, and discusses the importance of a traditional interpretation of the personal names for Trinitarian theology.

1. Introduction

What does it mean to say that the doctrine of the Trinity is a biblical doctrine?¹ Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield’s “Trinity” entry in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* provides an instructive response to this question.² Originally published in 1915, within a largely Ritschlian context that regarded doctrines like the Trinity as later corruptions of an originally undogmatic Christian religion,³ Warfield’s article presents his mature account of the biblical bases of the church’s Trinitarian confession. Warfield examines the major biblical texts from which the doctrine of the Trinity is drawn. He surveys Old Testament passages commonly adduced by the “older writers” (e.g.,

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²B. B. Warfield, “Trinity,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr, vol. 5 of *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Chicago: Howard-Severance, 1915), 3012–22. Warfield’s “Trinity” article was republished in numerous venues, including: idem, *Biblical Doctrines* (New York: Oxford, 1929), 133–72; idem, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1952), 22–59; and idem, *Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 79–116. NB: Throughout the present essay, I have replaced Warfield’s original abbreviations of terms with full terms and used contemporary conventions of capitalization.

³Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 185.

Gen 1:26; Num 6:24, 26; Ps 110:1; Prov 8), as well as those adduced by “more recent authors,” including texts which portray the operation of a threefold divine cause in “the first ... and the second creation” (e.g., Ps 33:6; Isa 61:1; 63:9–12; Hag 2:5–6).⁴ Warfield also surveys various New Testament passages, considering the contributions of the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine and Pauline writings, and the Catholic Epistles to Trinitarian doctrine. In each instance, he is careful to acknowledge the distinctive idiom of each New Testament author and to defend the authenticity of key Trinitarian proof-texts (e.g., the Trinitarian baptismal formula of Matt 28:19).⁵

Warfield’s *ISBE* entry on the Trinity is not merely an examination of Trinitarian proof-texts. Over the course of the article, the Princeton theologian offers a series of sophisticated judgments regarding the underlying hermeneutical logic that informs, and is informed by, exegesis of those texts. He discusses the legitimacy of using extra-biblical terminology to convey biblical teaching, the role of reason in Trinitarian doctrine, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments within the Trinitarian economy of revelation, and the variety and significance of biblical terminology in relation to its triune referent. Ultimately, according to Warfield, the *doctrine* of the triune God follows from the *revelation* of the triune God in the *redemptive* work of the triune God. In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed to us “in the incarnation of God the Son and the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit.”⁶ The New Testament is the literary sign that the early church embraced this revelation of the triune redeemer and the literary expression of its universal Trinitarian consciousness.⁷

Warfield summarizes the main lines of biblical teaching on the Trinity in three points: (1) “there is but one God,” (2) “the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each God,” and (3) “the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each a distinct person.” “When we have said these three things,” he insists, “we have enunciated the doctrine of the Trinity in its completeness.”⁸ Warfield’s summary is unremarkable when placed alongside later Reformed and evangelical syntheses of the doctrine. Wayne Grudem, for example, basically repeats Warfield’s three-point summary in his *Systematic Theology*, as does Robert Reymond.⁹ However, viewed in relation to earlier statements of the doctrine, including those of Warfield’s Presbyterian Church,¹⁰ his summary lacks the “completeness” he claims for it. Specifically, Warfield omits any mention of the so-called “personal properties” which distinguish the divine persons from

⁴ Warfield, “Trinity,” 3014.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3014–20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3015. A few years before the publication of his *ISBE* article, Warfield made a similar methodological point: “The Trinity has been revealed to us only in the manifestations of the Son and Spirit in the persons of Jesus Christ and the Paraclete whom he has sent; and we obtain our only knowledge of the nature of the persons in the Trinity from the manifestations of personality in these persons. It is the Christological conception of personality, in other words, which must rule in constructing our trinitarian conception of person; to this extent our theology must be Christo-centric” (Warfield, review of *Von der Gottheit Christi: Gegen den religiösen Rückschritt in Grüz-machers Dreieinigkeitslehre* by D. Karl Thieme, *Princeton Theological Review* 10 [1912]: 344).

⁷ Warfield, “Trinity,” 3015.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3016.

⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 226; Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), ch. 8. A similar summary appears in Roger Nicole, “The Meaning of the Trinity,” in *Standing Forth: Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2002), 389.

¹⁰ Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 2.3; Westminster Larger Catechism, Question & Answer 9–10.

one another, namely, the Father's eternal begetting of the Son ("paternity"), the Son's eternal generation from the Father ("filiation"), and the Spirit's eternal procession from the Father and the Son ("spiration").

Although his views are not without precedent in North American Presbyterianism and the broader Reformed tradition, this is a somewhat surprising omission to find in an article devoted to the biblical roots of Trinitarian doctrine. The personal properties reflect a broad ecclesiastical consensus in interpreting the revealed names into which we are baptized.¹¹ On the basis of the revealed names "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit," the church confesses that within the eternal depths of God's being there is one who stands in the relation of a father to a son, one who stands in the relation of a son to a father, and one who is breathed forth in the mutual love of the other two. Though somewhat surprising, this omission is not an oversight on Warfield's part. It is the result of reasoned interpretive judgment. According to Warfield, the Son's eternal generation and the Spirit's eternal procession "are not implicates of their designation as Son and Spirit."¹²

The purpose in what follows is to consider Warfield's proposed revision to the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. The discussion will proceed in four steps. First, we will summarize Warfield's biblical argument against the personal properties. Second, we will locate Warfield's argument within the historical-theological trajectory of which it is a part. Third, we will respond to Warfield's argument by pointing to patterns of biblical teaching that challenge his interpretation and by addressing what seems to be Warfield's primary worry regarding eternal generation and eternal procession. Fourth and finally, our discussion will conclude with some observations on the importance of the traditional interpretation of the revealed names for Trinitarian theology.

2. Warfield's Revision in Its Immediate Historical Context

We may appreciate more fully the nature of Warfield's proposed revision of Trinitarian doctrine by comparing his summary of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity with that of Charles Hodge, Warfield's predecessor in the Chair of Theology at Princeton. Hodge summarizes the "biblical form of the doctrine" in five points.¹³

Hodge's first three points are nearly identical to the three points we find in Warfield: (1) "There is one only living and true God." (2) "In the Bible, all divine titles and attributes are ascribed equally to the Father, Son, and Spirit." (3) "[T]he Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons."¹⁴

Hodge's fourth and fifth points include affirmations absent from Warfield's summary. (4) Hodge's fourth point affirms ordered modes of being and operation within the Trinity: "In the Holy Trinity

¹¹ Basil of Caesarea: "I think there is no doctrine in the gospel of our salvation more important than faith in the Father and the Son... we have been sealed in the Father and the Son through the grace received in baptism. Hence when he [Eunomius] dares to deny these terms, he simultaneously takes exception to the whole power of the gospels, proclaiming a Father who has not begotten and a Son who was not begotten" (*Against Eunomius*, trans. Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011], 2.22). On the place of the doctrine of eternal generation in Pro-Nicene theology, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 236 *et passim*.

¹² Warfield, "Trinity," 3020.

¹³ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., repr. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1:443–45.

¹⁴ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:444.

there is a subordination of the Persons as to the mode of subsistence and operation.”¹⁵ (5) Hodge’s fifth point then specifies the nature of these ordered modes of being and operation. According to Hodge: the distinct modes of subsistence in the Trinity are reflected in the predication of “certain acts, or conditions” to “one person of the Trinity, which are never predicated of either of the others,” such as “generation ... to the Father, filiation to the Son, and procession to the Spirit,” while the distinct modes of operation are reflected in the way certain external operations, common to and indivisible among the persons of the Trinity, are nevertheless “predominantly” predicated of one person in particular. Thus, for example, “the Father creates, elects, and calls; the Son redeems; and the Spirit sanctifies.”¹⁶

Though not included in his summary of biblical teaching on the Trinity, Warfield does affirm with Hodge the existence of ordered relations among the persons in their external modes of operation:

There is, of course, no question that in “modes of operation,” as it is technically called—that is to say, in the functions ascribed to the several persons of the Trinity in the redemptive process, and, more broadly, in the entire dealing of God with the world—the principle of subordination is clearly expressed. The Father is first, the Son is second, and the Spirit is third, in the operations of God as revealed to us in general, and very especially in those operations by which redemption is accomplished. Whatever the Father does, he does through the Son (Rom. ii. 16; iii. 22; v. 1, 11, 17, 21; Eph. i. 5; I Thess. v. 9; Tit. iii. v) by the Spirit. The Son is sent by the Father and does his Father’s will (Jn. vi. 38); the Spirit is sent by the Son and does not speak from himself, but only takes of Christ’s and shows it unto his people (Jn. xvii. 7 ff.); and we have our Lord’s own word for it that “one that is sent is not greater than he that sent him” (Jn. xiii. 16). In crisp decisiveness, our Lord even declares, indeed: “My Father is greater than I” (Jn. xiv. 28); and Paul tells us that Christ is God’s, even as we are Christ’s (I Cor. iii. 23), and that as Christ is “the head of every man,” so God is “the head of Christ” (I Cor. xi. 3).¹⁷

Warfield argues, nevertheless, that the order of operation among the persons “in the redemptive process” does not reflect a deeper reality within God’s triune life. In other words, Warfield denies that the Trinity’s external modes of operation follow the Trinity’s eternal modes of subsistence: that the Father’s sending of the Son in time follows from the Father’s begetting of the Son in eternity, that the Father and the Son’s sending of the Spirit in time follows from the Father and the Son’s breathing of the Spirit in eternity. He suggests instead that these ordered external operations follow only from “a convention, an agreement, between the persons of the Trinity—a ‘covenant’ as it is technically called—

¹⁵ As the context demonstrates, Hodge uses the term “subordination” in the Latinate sense of “ordered under,” referring to the relations of origin that distinguish the persons from each other, i.e., the fact that the Father personally exists and acts from himself, that the Son personally exists and acts from the Father, and that the Spirit personally exists and acts from the Father and the Son. (NB: “Subordination,” for Hodge, does not describe an ordered relation of authority and submission between the persons of the Trinity, as some later theologians will come to use the term, but rather an order of subsistence within God’s consubstantial being *ad intra* and indivisible operation *ad extra*.) Warfield, for reasons that will become clearer in section 3, seems to operate with a different sense of the term “subordination,” assuming that it (and the relations of origin that the term traditionally signifies) connotes derivative, lesser status within the Godhead. As we will see below, Scripture and tradition give us ample reason to discount this assumption. See also footnote 52.

¹⁶ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:445.

¹⁷ Warfield, “Trinity,” 3020–21.

by virtue of which a distinct function in the work of redemption is voluntarily assumed by each,” from “the humiliation of the Son of God for his work’s sake,” and from “the two natures in the constitution of his person as incarnated.”¹⁸ God’s triune *will*—as expressed in the covenant of redemption and in the Son’s incarnate mission—rather than God’s triune *nature* determines his triune mode of operation within the external economy of nature, grace, and glory.

From one vantage point, Warfield’s sensibilities here are entirely sound. Christian theology must affirm that God’s triune will determines much about the character of the triune economy. The alternative would be the perilous assumption that God necessarily creates, necessarily becomes incarnate, and necessarily indwells the church. Nevertheless, while Christian theology must affirm the *freedom* of creation, incarnation, and indwelling, it has typically affirmed also that God’s external actions in creation, incarnation, and indwelling *correspond* in some way to realities that obtain within God’s triune life, that God’s ordered modes of operation outside himself (*ad extra*) follow God’s ordered modes of subsistence inside himself (*ad intra*). And it has affirmed that these ordered modes of subsistence are identifiable by the personal properties of paternity, filiation, and spiration. This Warfield fails to affirm, and that for what he deems biblical reasons.

Contrary to broad Protestant and Catholic exegetical consensus, Warfield argues that the revealed names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” do not signify the personal properties of paternity, filiation, and spiration. His argument is twofold. First, Warfield attempts to relativize the significance of these revealed names by pointing to broader patterns of Trinitarian naming in the New Testament. It may seem “natural ... to assume that the mutual relations of the persons of the Trinity are revealed in the designations, ‘the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,’” Warfield concedes, but the vast diversity of names used by New Testament writers to describe the divine persons and the varied orders in which the divine persons are described militate against this assumption.¹⁹ In the Synoptic Gospels, and especially in the Johannine writings, the names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” are common designations of the divine persons. In Paul and other New Testament authors, however, the names “God,” “the Lord Jesus Christ,” and “the Holy Spirit” are also common.²⁰ Moreover, he continues, the latter designations do not always follow the same order as that found, for example, in Matthew’s baptismal formula where the Father is named first, the Son is named second, and the Holy Spirit is named third (Matthew 28:19). In the case of these other designations, sometimes the Lord Jesus Christ is named first (1 Cor 13:14), sometimes the Spirit is named first (1 Cor 12:4–6; Eph 4:4–6).²¹ Given the diverse pattern of Trinitarian naming in the New Testament, Warfield contends, we should not conclude that the names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” exclusively indicate the nature of the divine persons’ internal relations.

Second, Warfield argues that the traditional interpretation of the names “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” has misunderstood their theological significance. Though his argument at this point is formally quite similar to that of Herman Alexander Röell, Thomas Ridgely, and several leading New England Congregationalist theologians, Warfield does not follow Röell, Ridgely, and others in arguing that these names merely describe the divine persons in terms of their economic relationships with creatures.²²

¹⁸ Ibid., 3021.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3020.

²⁰ Ibid., 3019.

²¹ Ibid., 3020.

²² We will return to Röell’s views below. For Ridgely’s arguments in this regard, see *A Body of Divinity: Wherein the Doctrines of the Christian Religion are Explained and Defended, Being the Substance of Several Lectures on*

According to Warfield, the personal names signify “eternal and necessary relations.”²³ What is the nature of these “eternal and necessary relations”? Warfield grants that it may be natural to assume the names “Son” and “Spirit” imply *relations of origin* among the divine persons, i.e., relations in which the Father is the source of the Son through begetting and in which the Father and the Son are the source of the Spirit through breathing. “But,” he insists, “it is quite certain that this was not the denotation of either term.”²⁴ When one considers John 5:18 and 1 Corinthians 2:10–11—texts that provide nearly “formal definitions” of the terms “Son” and “Spirit” according to Warfield, the emphasis in both cases “is laid on the notion of equality or sameness.”²⁵ Furthermore, Warfield attempts to demonstrate that other terms, such as “only begotten” (John 1:18) and “firstborn” (Col 1:15), “contain no implication of derivation” but instead indicate “unique consubstantiality” and “priority of existence.”²⁶ Warfield’s interpretive conclusion: “What underlies the conception of sonship in Scriptural speech is just ‘likeness’; whatever the father is that the son is also.” The same goes for the Holy Spirit.²⁷

With these two arguments Warfield attempts to demonstrate that the ordered relations that characterize God’s tripersonal action outside himself do not characterize God’s tripersonal relations inside himself. Before addressing these two arguments, we should note what seems to be Warfield’s major worry about affirming ordered relations of paternity, filiation, and spiration within God’s triune being. In his judgment, the personal properties of paternity, filiation, and spiration imply the existence of “derivation” and “subordination” within the triune God and thereby compromise “The complete and undiminished deity of each of these persons.”²⁸ For Warfield, the full equality and consubstantiality of the divine persons is ultimately at stake in interpreting the revealed names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit.”

Relative to Hodge’s summary of Trinitarian doctrine, we may describe Warfield’s as one characterized by a “principled non-affirmation” of the doctrines of the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit. Though Warfield’s *ISBE* article does not explicitly *deny* these doctrines,²⁹ it argues from multiple angles that biblical exegesis does not require us to *affirm* them. The discontinuity between Hodge and Warfield, however, should not be overstated. In his treatment of the doctrine of eternal generation, Hodge expresses a number of worries about attempts by Pro-Nicene theologians to explain the doctrine and ends up with an apophatic account that effectively drains the doctrine of much

the Assembly’s Larger Catechism, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: W. W. Woodward, 1814), 1:259–60, 263, 266–70, 274, 277. For Moses Stuart, see *Letters on the Eternal Generation of the Son of God, Addressed to the Rev. Samuel Miller* (Andover: Mark Newman, 1822). Warfield interacts with these views in his “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” in *Calvin and Calvinism*, repr. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), ch. 4. According to James H. Moorhead, “[Moses] Stuart claimed he had never once heard [the doctrine of eternal generation] ‘seriously avowed and defended’ in New England” [!] (Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 70).

²³ Warfield, “Trinity,” 3021.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3020.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3020, 3022. This motivation is also observed by Brannon Ellis, *Calvin, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Aseity of the Son* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8.

²⁹ A point rightly emphasized by Fred G. Zaspel, “Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield on the Doctrine of the Trinity,” *SBJT* 21.2 (2017): 104–7.

of its meaning.³⁰ Hodge's treatment of the doctrine of eternal generation, moreover, resonates with that of his Princeton colleague Samuel Miller who, in his defense of the doctrine against Moses Stuart's objections, expresses similar reservations regarding earlier explanations of the doctrine, including most notably that of Francis Turretin.³¹ Warfield's "principled non-affirmation" of the doctrine of eternal generation thus represents a not unnatural development within a Princeton theological tradition already characterized by what we might call a "tepid affirmation" of the doctrine.

3. Warfield's Revision in Its Broader Historical Context

We may shed further light on the nature of Warfield's position by looking at the broader historical-theological context within which it emerges. Toward the conclusion of his *ISBE* article, Warfield offers a brief sketch of the history of Trinitarian doctrine. On his reading, the history of the doctrine exhibits a struggle between those who properly assert "the principle of equalization" among the persons of the Trinity and those who "unduly ... emphasize the elements of subordinationism which still hold a place ... in the traditional language in which the church states its doctrine."³² Warfield identifies John Calvin among those who stand on the right side of this historical contest: "Calvin takes his place, alongside of Tertullian, Athanasius and Augustine, as one of the chief contributors to the exact and vital statement of the Christian doctrine of the triune God."³³ According to Warfield, Calvin's particular contribution to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is "to reassert and make good the attribute of the self-existence of the Son."³⁴ Although Warfield's *ISBE* article does not fully indicate *how* Calvin's theology accomplishes this, his other writings do. Calvin's radical commitment to the aseity of the Son leads to a revision of the doctrine of eternal generation in the Reformer's own thought and lays the exegetical foundation that would eventually lead to wholesale rejection of the doctrine of eternal generation by later followers.³⁵ I believe Warfield's rejection of the personal properties of paternity, filiation, and spiration is best understood as an attempt to perfect this trajectory in Calvinian Trinitarianism.

As Richard Muller observes, the affirmation and defense of the Son's aseity is "the distinctive feature of Reformed trinitarianism."³⁶ According to common Reformed teaching, the Son not only possesses the divine attributes of eternity, immutability, omnipotence, and omnipresence, he also possesses the divine attribute of aseity. The Son is *autotheos*, God in and of himself. For Reformed theology, the affirmation of the Son's aseity is integral to the affirmation of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father. Because he

³⁰ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 468–73.

³¹ Samuel Miller, *Letters on the Eternal Sonship of Christ: Addressed to the Rev. Professor Stuart of Andover* (Philadelphia: W. W. Woodward, 1823), 34–36.

³² Warfield, "Trinity," 3022.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity," 276–77.

³⁶ Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725, Volume Four: The Trinity of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 324. For development and debate, see Ellis, *Calvin*. For debate at the Westminster Assembly, see Chad Van Dixhoorn, "Post-Reformation Trinitarian Perspectives," in *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, ed. Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2017), ch. 10.

is “equal with God” (John 5:19), the Son must have “life in himself” just “as the Father has life in himself” (John 5:26).

The majority of theologians in the Reformed tradition argue that the aseity of the Son is consistent with the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. The consistency between these two aspects of the Son’s person lies in properly distinguishing the Son’s *being* (that which the Son holds in *common* with the Father and the Spirit) from his *mode of being* (that which *distinguishes* the Son from the Father and the Spirit). Because he is “equal with God” *in being* (John 5:19), the Son has “life in himself” just “as the Father has life in himself” (John 5:26). Because he is distinct from the Father *in his mode of being*, the Son has “life in himself” as something eternally “granted” or communicated to him by the Father (John 5:26). For these theologians, it is precisely the Son’s *distinct mode of being* as one eternally begotten of the Father that accounts for his *being consubstantial* with the Father.³⁷ Thus Francis Turretin:

As all generation indicates a communication of essence on the part of the begetter to begotten (by which the begotten becomes like the begetter and partakes of the same nature with him), so this wonderful generation is rightly expressed as a communication of essence from the Father (by which the Son possesses indivisibly the same essence with him and is made perfectly like him).³⁸

Though he does not reject the doctrine of eternal generation *per se*, Calvin’s commitment to the Son’s aseity does lead him to revise the doctrine considerably. For Calvin and the significant minority of Reformed theologians that follows him on this issue, the eternal generation of the Son from the Father involves no “communication of essence” to the Son by the Father.³⁹ Accordingly, texts like John 5:26, which speaks of the Father “granting” aseity to the Son, are not interpreted with reference to the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son but with reference to the temporal, economic relationship between the Father and the Son in his office as incarnate mediator. The Genevan Reformer considers a properly Trinitarian exegesis of this verse “harsh and far-fetched.” In his judgment, the focus of John 5:26 is the Son of God only “so far as he is manifested in the flesh.”⁴⁰

Calvin’s precedent in revising the doctrine of eternal generation and his pattern of exegetical reasoning provide the foundation for “the more advanced position” on eternal generation that Warfield

³⁷ Representative statements include Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Willard, repr. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, n.d.), 130–32, 135–36, 181–84; Jerome Zanchi, *De Tribus Elohim* (Frankfurt am Main, 1572), I, 5.7.4 (p. 222, col. 2); Dolf te Velde, ed., *Synopsis of a Purer Theology*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 8.7, 18; James Ussher, *A Body of Divinity: Or, the Sum and Substance of the Christian Religion*, ed. Michael Nevarr, repr. ed. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2007), 69–70; John Owen, ΧΡΙΣΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ: *Or, A Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ—God and Man in The Works of John Owen*, vol. 1, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), 71–72.

³⁸ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 293.

³⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.13.19–29; with Scott R. Swain, “The Trinity in the Reformers,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 235; and more fully Ellis, *Calvin*.

⁴⁰ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, vol. 1, trans. William Pringle, repr. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 198–207. On Calvin’s general reticence toward Trinitarian reflection in his exegesis of classical Trinitarian proof-texts, see Arie Baars, *Om Gods verhevenheid en Zijn nabijheid: De Drie-eenheid bij Calvijn* (Kampen: Kok, 2004), 291–308.

finds in Herman Alexander Röell (1653–1718).⁴¹ Röell, Professor at Franeker and then Utrecht in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, was a leading synthesizer of Cartesian rationalism and Reformed theology.⁴² Building upon a notion of divine perfection derived from his Cartesian natural theology and eager to avoid the subordinationist tendencies he detected in Arminian and Socinian thought,⁴³ Röell elevated the Calvinian commitment to divine aseity to the level of critical principle for Trinitarian theology. The effect was to exclude any conception of communication or origination, whether in being or mode of being, from God’s triune life.⁴⁴ Where the majority of Reformed theologians had confessed a self-existent Son *because* they confessed an only-begotten Son, and where Calvin had confessed a self-existent Son *alongside* the (modified) confession of an only-begotten Son, Röell forced theology to choose *between* a self-existent Son and an only-begotten Son.

As noted earlier, Warfield does not follow Röell and others in limiting the meaning of the personal names of the Trinity to their significance within the economy of salvation. It seems, however, that Warfield ultimately accepts Röell’s dilemma regarding aseity and eternal generation and that he is willing to sacrifice the confession of “begotten not made” on the altar of “consubstantial with the Father.”

Before moving on to assess Warfield’s proposed revision in Trinitarian theology, it is worth pausing to observe what the preceding discussion exposes. First, the relationship between divine aseity and divine persons is far from self-evident—even among those who share similar Reformed theological sensibilities! Second, the implications of divine aseity for the nature of divine persons is internally related to the question of whether the derivation (certainly an unhappy term) of one divine person from another divine person entails equality or inferiority. As we have seen, for the majority of Reformed theologians, derivation is the root of equality and thus a ground for confessing the full deity of Christ; for the Calvinian minority of Reformed theologians, which includes Warfield, derivation is evidence of inferiority and thus a threat to an orthodox Christological confession. Third and finally, theological judgments regarding each of the aforementioned issues rest upon exegetical judgments about the interpretation of various Trinitarian proof-texts and hermeneutical judgments about which proof-texts count as relevant to the discussion, which brings us back to the topic at hand.

4. Response to Warfield’s Revision

According to Warfield, the revealed names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” do not signify the personal properties of paternity, filiation, and spiration. What should we make of this interpretive claim?

Warfield’s first argument against the traditional interpretation is that the New Testament uses a wide variety of names in varied orders to describe the Trinity. This argument, however, is not problematic for the traditional interpretation of the personal names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit.” The variety of names and varied orders of naming that appear in the New Testament neither relativize nor undermine the

⁴¹ Warfield, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” 276–77. Compare Warfield’s judgment with Miller’s estimation of Röell vis-à-vis Turretin’s views of eternal generation in, *Letters on the Eternal Sonship of Christ*, 34–36.

⁴² For fuller discussion of Röell’s views, see Ellis, *Calvin*, 224–40.

⁴³ For the influence of Arminian and Socinian views of the Trinity upon Reformed formulations of the doctrine, see Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:328–32.

⁴⁴ Herman Alexander Röell, *De Generatione Filii et Morte Fidelium Temporalis* (Franeker: Gyselaar, 1689); and idem, *Explicatio Catecheseos Heidelbergensis: Opus Posthumum* (Utrecht, 1728), 175–84, 259–71; with Warfield, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” 276; and Ellis, *Calvin*, 237–38.

traditional interpretation. As we will see below, the New Testament often employs additional names for the Trinity in order to further specify the meaning of the names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit.” Moreover, though Paul commonly identifies the triune persons from the perspective of the relations in which they stand to creatures (e.g., “God,” “Lord Jesus Christ,” etc.) rather than from the relations in which they stand to each other (e.g., “Father,” “Son,” etc.), this pattern is not absolute. The apostle also uses descriptions that combine the persons’ relations to creatures with their relations to each other and, when he does, these combinations reinforce the significance of the personal names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit.” Thus, for example, Paul regularly identifies the first person of the Trinity as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; Col 1:3; see also 1 Pet 1:3). And he identifies the Spirit as “the Spirit of [God’s] Son” (Gal 4:6) and as “the Spirit of sonship” (Rom 8:15), who enables us to call God, “Abba! Father!” (Gal 4:6). Finally, the fact that the persons appear in varied syntactical orders in the New Testament writings hardly supports Warfield’s criticism of the traditional interpretation of the personal names of the Trinity. Syntactical order should not be confused with personal order. Though Jesus Christ appears syntactically before God and the Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians 13:14, the appropriation of “grace” to Jesus Christ, “love” to God, and “fellowship” to the Holy Spirit indicates that, in Paul’s mind, God’s triune saving agency proceeds from God’s loving impulse, through the gracious gift of Jesus Christ, culminating in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This ordered mode of operation in God’s triune saving agency does not contradict but confirms a traditional understanding of the ordered modes of being among the persons of the Trinity.

Warfield’s second argument against the traditional interpretation of the personal names is that in Scripture the names “Son” and “Spirit” connote likeness, equality, and sameness with the Father rather than derivation from the Father. This argument also runs into problems upon closer analysis. In biblical idiom—whether it be Trinitarian or non-Trinitarian contexts, literal or metaphorical contexts, relations of origin are not opposed to likeness; relations of origin regularly constitute the basis for likeness. In Genesis 5:3, Adam “fathers” Seth “in his own likeness, after his image.” In this paradigmatic instance of literal fathering, natural *likeness* between Adam the father and Seth the son is traceable to the relation of origin whereby Adam *begets* Seth. Likewise, even in metaphorical cases of fathering, where there is metaphysical disproportion between father and offspring, the link between begetting and likeness is preserved and emphasized. In the Davidic Covenant, the right of the Davidic heir to rule on earth as YHWH rules in heaven follows from the fact that YHWH has “begotten” him as his son, thus constituting him the heir of God’s family business (2 Sam 7:12–14; Ps 2:6–9). In similar fashion, though there is infinite metaphysical disproportion between God and the created lights that he has produced and placed in the heavens, James 1:17 perceives in the created lights a filial resemblance to the “Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” Again, in metaphorical contexts of begetting as in literal contexts, resemblance is rooted in relations of origin.⁴⁵

What is true in non-Trinitarian contexts of begetting, both literal and metaphorical, is true in Trinitarian contexts as well. Leaving aside the question of how we should translate *μονογενής* (various options include “one of a kind,” “only begotten,” and “only child”), consider three examples of how the New Testament portrays the Father-Son relation as a relation as a *relation of origin*, with the Father

⁴⁵ For further discussion of this point, see Scott R. Swain, “The Radiance of the Father’s Glory: Eternal Generation, the Divine Names, and Biblical Interpretation,” in *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, ed. Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2017), 36–40.

being the principle or source of the Son's person or agency, and *ontological equality*, with the Son sharing the self-same nature and agency of the Father.⁴⁶

(1) *Illustrations of the Father-Son relation*: The New Testament employs a number of illustrations, what Athanasius calls "*paradeigmata*,"⁴⁷ that further amplify the nature of the relation that obtains between the Father and the Son. These additional names for the Son are not merely ornamental. They function as indispensable conceptual tools that help faith contemplate more fully the (ultimately incomprehensible) nature of the Father-Son relation.⁴⁸ Drawing on Old Testament and other Jewish wisdom literature (e.g., Proverbs 8; Wisdom 7:26), the New Testament portrays the Son as the "radiance" of the Father's glory (Heb 1:3), as the "image" of the invisible God (Col 1:15), and as the "Word" of God (John 1:1; Rev 19:13). In each instance, these illustrations indicate complete ontological correspondence between the Father and the Son: the Word of God is God (John 1:1); the image of the invisible God stands on the Creator side of the Creator-creature divide as the one by whom, in whom, and for whom creation exists (Col 1:16–17); the radiance of God is the exact imprint of the Father's substance (Heb 1:3). These illustrations also indicate that ontological correspondence between the Father and the Son obtains within the context of a relation of origin wherein the Father is the principle or source of the Son, who is his perfect Word, image, and radiance.

(2) *God's unique name/nature and the Father-Son relation*: The New Testament also indicates that the Father and the Son share the unique divine name and nature within the context of a relation characterized by giving on the part of the Father and receiving on the part of the Son. According to John 17:11 and Philippians 2:9–11, the Father has given his "name" to the Son. According to John 5:26, the Father has granted the Son to have "life in himself" just as the Father has "life in himself."

(3) *God's external actions and the Father-Son relation*: Finally, the New Testament in various ways displays God's external actions toward his creatures as expressing the ordered relation of the Father and the Son. In God's creative and providential activity, the Father acts *through* the Son (John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16), and the Son acts *from* the Father (John 5:19). In similar fashion, the Son's mission to become incarnate and make atonement is a mission he fulfills in obedience to the Father who sent him (Mark 12:1–12; John 6:38; Gal 4:4–5), and the Son's enthronement as king is an authority he receives from his Father (Matt 11:27; 28:18; Eph 1:20–23; Heb 1:3–4; with Ps 110). In each of these instances, we are not dealing with a distinction between God's action and the action of a creature. We are dealing with God's unique divine action as creator, providential ruler, redeemer, and lord, and with a distinction that obtains *within* this unique divine action: a distinction that expresses the ordered relation of the Father and the Son.

Similar patterns of divine naming characterize the Spirit's relation to the Father and the Son as well. (1) *Illustrations of the Spirit's relation to the Father and the Son*: The New Testament employs several paradigms or illustrations that amplify the unique nature of the Spirit's relationship to the Father

⁴⁶ In the following two paragraphs, I draw from Scott R. Swain, "Divine Trinity," in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 88–90.

⁴⁷ On which, see Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius* (London: Routledge, 2004), 62–67; and idem, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 110–14.

⁴⁸ Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, 1.19–20 in *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius and Didymus*, trans. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 82–85.

and the Son. As in the case of the Father-Son relation, a number of these illustrations are drawn from the Old Testament (e.g., Isa 44:3; Joel 2:28; Ezek 47:1–12). Particularly instructive are illustrations that associate the Holy Spirit with water. The Spirit is identified as one who is “poured out” by the Father (Rom 5:5) and by the Son (Acts 2:33), as the element with which Jesus baptizes his disciples (Mark 1:8; 1 Cor 12:13), and as the living water that flows from the throne of God and of the lamb (Rev 22:1). This rich web of imagery at once identifies the Spirit as divine source of life and as one who in his life-giving identity and mission proceeds from the Father and the Son.

(2) *God’s unique name/nature and the Spirit’s relation to the Father and the Son:* The New Testament also indicates the nature of the Spirit’s relation to the Father and the Son by virtue of the Spirit’s relation to God’s unique name and nature. As the Father gives the divine name to the Son, so the Spirit (who also shares the divine name: 2 Cor 3:17) causes the Son to be acknowledged as “Lord” (1 Cor 12:3), to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:11). Similarly, while the Spirit *is* “the truth” (1 John 5:6), he is also the Spirit *of* truth” (1 John 4:6). Consequently, he is able to guide Jesus’s disciples “into all the truth” (John 16:13) because of the unique relation in which he stands to the Father and the Son: He does not speak “from himself” but only what “he hears” (John 16:13), taking what he holds in common with the Son and with the Father and declaring it to the apostles (John 16:14–15).⁴⁹ When it comes to divine truth, therefore, the distinction between the Spirit and the Father and the Son “is not in what is had, but in the order of having.”⁵⁰

(3) *God’s external actions and the Spirit’s relation to the Father and the Son:* Finally, as in the case of the Father and the Son, the Spirit’s ordered relation to the Father and the Son is expressed in God’s external actions toward his creatures. The Father and the Son work *through* the Spirit: the Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke 11:13) and Jesus performs miracles “by the Spirit of God” (Matt 12:28). Moreover, as the Father sends the Son to accomplish his incarnate mission, in similar fashion the Father and the Son send the Spirit to indwell God’s children (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Gal 4:6) in order that, through the Son, Jew and Gentile might have access “in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph 2:18; with 1:23 and 5:18). Once again, an observable pattern emerges: The distinction between the activity of the Spirit toward creatures and the activity of the Father and the Son toward creatures is not a distinction between creaturely action and a divine action. The distinction between the three is a distinction that is internal to the singular divine action whereby triune God fulfills his ancient covenant promise to dwell among his people forever (John 14:16–17, 23; with Lev 26:12), and that manifests the Spirit’s ordered relation to the Father and the Son. In the coming of the triune God to dwell among us, the Spirit comes from the Father through the Son and leads us through the Son to the Father.

One might object that many of the aforementioned examples of Trinitarian naming refer to the persons within the economy of salvation, not to their eternal relations. However, while many of these examples speak of the persons *in* the economy, it is important to observe that they do not merely speak *of* the economy. The focus in each of the above instances is the *relation* that obtains *between* the persons, whether prior to or within the economy of redemption. Moreover, the fact that the New Testament portrays the missions of the Son and the Spirit as means of unveiling God’s true name and nature (Matt 11:25–27; John 17:3, 6) suggests that we should not draw too sharp a division between God’s

⁴⁹ Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, 170–74, in *Works on the Spirit*, trans. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011).

⁵⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 13–21*, trans. Fabian Larcher (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 145.

eternal modes of being and his temporal modes of operation. The distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity does not map onto the Kantian distinction between noumenal and phenomenal realms. Better, I think, to see the temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit as the free, gracious, temporal extensions of their eternal, necessary, natural relations of origin.⁵¹

What about Warfield's worry that the traditional interpretation of the personal names compromises the full equality of the divine persons? The preceding discussion suggests that Warfield's worry is unjustified. According to the pattern of personal naming traced above, the eternal relations of origin that constitute the Son and the Spirit as divine persons do not constitute them as derivative deities. The eternal relations of origin that constitute the Son and the Spirit as divine persons are the bases of their full ontological equality with the Father: the Son *of God is God*; the Spirit *of God is God*.⁵² Moreover, this pattern of personal naming suggests that, far from undermining God's aseity, the doctrines of the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit actually deepen our understanding of God's perfection. Aseity is not merely a negative attribute, referring to God's lack of dependence upon creatures. Aseity is a positive attribute, referring to the internal, tripersonal fecundity of God's life as Father, Son, and Spirit. God is eternally, internally full. And God's eternal, internal fullness is manifest in the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit.⁵³ As Warfield's European counterpart, Herman Bavinck, eloquently affirms, God's intra-Trinitarian fecundity "is a beautiful theme," which illumines both God's internal perfection as Father, Son, and Spirit and also God's external works:

God is no abstract, fixed, monadic, solitary substance, but a plenitude of life. It is his nature (οὐσία) to be generative (γεννητική) and fruitful (καρπογόνος). It is capable of expansion, unfolding, communication. Those who deny this fecund productivity fail to take seriously the fact that God is an infinite fullness of blessed life. All such people have left is an abstract deistic concept of God, or to compensate for his sterility, in pantheistic fashion they include the life of the world in the divine being. Apart from the Trinity even

⁵¹ On the relationship between eternal relations of origin and temporal missions, see Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 15; Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2016), chs. 3–6. On the metaphysical distinctions involved in this relationship, see Scott R. Swain, *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), chs. 6–9.

⁵² From a linguistic perspective, relations of origin (i.e., eternal generation, eternal procession) gloss the personal names (i.e., Son of God, Spirit of God). From a metaphysical perspective, relations of origin distinguish the persons without dividing the essence—indeed, they are the *only* way of distinguishing the persons without dividing the essence. Grasping this point helps us appreciate where uses of terms such as "subordination" are appropriate or inappropriate in Trinitarian theology. When the term "subordination" is used, as it traditionally has been used, to refer to relations of origin (or to their temporal expressions in mission), then the term is licit. When the term "subordination" is used, as it more recently has been used, as an alternative to relations of origin in order to distinguish the persons by relations of authority and submission, then the term is illicit. Whereas the former usage preserves what is common to the three (being, authority, glory, operation, etc.), the latter compromises what is common to the three, turning, for example, "authority" into a personal property of the Father rather than a common property of the three. In theological grammar, it is not the "lexicon" alone (i.e., terminology) that determines whether a theological viewpoint is licit, but also the "syntax" (i.e., ruled usage of terminology). See footnote 15.

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I Q 27, art. 5, ad 3; I Q 32, art. 2, ad 3. For discussion of this theme in certain Pro-Nicene Fathers, see Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 114–15, 190. It is worth noting here that linking personal generation with ontological subordination was a typically "Arian" theological move.

the act of creation becomes inconceivable. For if God cannot communicate himself, he is a darkened light, a dry spring, unable to exert himself outward to communicate himself to creatures.⁵⁴

5. Conclusion

I conclude with several observations regarding the importance of the traditional rendering of the revealed names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” by the personal properties of paternity, filiation, and spiration. First, the traditional interpretation suggests a *reason* for the Bible’s employment of *these names in particular* in the revelation of the triune God. The traditional interpretation claims that the Bible *calls* God “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” because relations of paternity, filiation, and spiration *exist* preeminently in God, in a sublime manner that ultimately transcends our understanding and evokes wonder. However, Warfield’s interpretation, which reduces the meaning of “Son” to “likeness,” cannot tell us why the Bible calls the second person of the Trinity God’s “Son” rather than God’s “Brother.” It is unclear, on Warfield’s interpretation, what the personal names “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” actually *reveal* about the nature of God other than bare triunity.

Second, the traditional interpretation of the personal names of the Trinity is hermeneutically productive. Among other things, Wesley Hill’s recent book, *Paul and the Trinity*, demonstrates how classical categories of “persons in (asymmetrical) relations” help us move beyond the constraints of the modern interpretive categories of “high” and “low” Christologies, providing a richer, more nuanced reading of Pauline texts.⁵⁵ Elsewhere, Andreas Köstenberger and I have attempted to demonstrate the profitability of these categories for interpreting the Gospel of John.⁵⁶

Third, the traditional interpretation offers a way of relating and distinguishing God’s eternal modes of being and his temporal modes of operation. It is one of the stranger ironies of modern Reformed and evangelical theology that many who follow Warfield in rejecting the eternal generation of the Son have seized upon eternal subordination—a notion fiercely opposed by Warfield—as the distinctive personal property of the Son.⁵⁷ The traditional interpretation of the personal names of the Trinity allows us to honor Warfield’s insight that the obedience of the incarnate Son is a contingent consequence of the intra-Trinitarian covenant of redemption, not a necessary feature of his personal identity, all the while showing us how the Son’s economic obedience expresses his eternal generation from the Father.⁵⁸

Fourth, the traditional interpretation of the personal names of the Trinity helps us better appreciate the soteriological and religious significance of Trinitarian theology. One of the great strengths of

⁵⁴ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 2: God and Creation*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 308–9.

⁵⁵ Wesley Hill, *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

⁵⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), esp. chs. 7–8, and 10.

⁵⁷ See, most recently, many of the essays in Bruce A. Ware and John Starke, ed. *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015). See also footnote 52.

⁵⁸ For further development of this theme, see Scott R. Swain and Michael Allen, “The Obedience of the Eternal Son,” *IJST* 15 (2013): 114–34; Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), ch. 6.

Warfield's *ISBE* article is its focus upon the soteriological and religious setting of New Testament teaching on the Trinity. Warfield states:

If he [the Christian] could not construct the doctrine of the Trinity out of his consciousness of salvation, yet the elements of his consciousness of salvation are interpreted to him and reduced to order only by the doctrine of the Trinity which he finds underlying and giving their significance and consistency to the teaching of the Scriptures as to the process of salvation. By means of this doctrine he is able to think clearly and consequently of his threefold relation to the saving God, experienced by him as Fatherly love sending a Redeemer, as redeeming love executing redemption, as saving love applying redemption: all manifestations in distinct methods and by distinct agencies of the one seeking and saving love of God.⁵⁹

The personal properties of paternity, filiation, and spiration further enrich and expand our understanding and experience of this "one seeking and saving love of God." How so? They help us see that the eternal covenant of redemption—the foundation of all God's saving works in time—flows from and expresses the deep, mutual, and eternal delight of the blessed Trinity. They help us see that the Father who has eternally begotten an eternally beloved Son also wills to bring many other sons to glory. They help us see that, at the Father's sovereign behest, the Father's only-begotten Son has willed to become our kinsman redeemer, assuming our creaturely nature, satisfying our twofold debt to God's law, in order that he might become the firstborn among many redeemed brothers and sisters. They help us see that the Holy Spirit who eternally proceeds in the mutual love of the Father and the Son has equipped the Son with all things necessary for redeeming his brothers and sisters; and, that redemption being accomplished, the Spirit now applies the blessings of adoption to us, uniting us to our incarnate elder brother and welcoming us into the fellowship which the Spirit has enjoyed with the Father and the Son from eternity and which we, in, with, and by the blessed Trinity, will enjoy for eternity as well, to the eternal praise of our great God and Savior: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Warfield, "Trinity," 3021.

⁶⁰ I am grateful to Michael Allen, Robert Cara, Graham Shearer, Fred Sanders, and Dolf te Velde for comments offered on an earlier draft of this article.

Reversing the Gospel: Warfield on Race and Racism

— Fred G. Zaspel —

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Abstract: The giant of Old Princeton, B. B. Warfield, outspokenly condemned the racism and rigid segregation of American society of his day. His views were remarkably ahead of his time with regard to an understanding of the evil of racism and even somewhat prophetic with regard to the further evil that would result from it. His convictions were explicitly grounded in an understanding and faithful application of the unity of the human race in Adam and the unity and equal standing of believers in Christ. This brief essay surveys Warfield’s arguments within the context of his day.

“Are we today to reverse the inspired declaration that in Christ Jesus there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman?” (B. B. Warfield, 1887)

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851–1921) of Old Princeton earned international reputation as the vigorous defender of the historic Christian faith—particularly in its Reformed expression—and it was in the traditional categories of biblical and theological studies that his publishing energies were almost exclusively spent. Social causes crop up only very seldom in his works, but one social cause stands out as one holding his particular interest: the cause of the American blacks. His literary output here was not extensive, to be sure, but it was pointed, revealing a deep sense of urgency about the issue. And though Warfield seldom became involved in any organized efforts outside the seminary, this was the exception—and this even though the position he took was unpopular (to say the least!) both in society and in the church, and even in his own Princeton Seminary. To Warfield, the “wicked caste” society that America then was constituted a moral and theological evil that, if not reversed, would bring only further harm to our nation.

The theological foundation of Warfield’s opposition to racism was two-fold: 1) the unity of the human race created in Adam in God’s image, and 2) the unifying entailments of the gospel of Christ.

In his 1911 “On the Antiquity and Unity of the Human Race”¹ Warfield famously argued that the age of humanity is not a biblical question. The Bible doesn’t speak to the matter, he argued, and thus it is a question of no theological interest. We may take interest on scientific grounds, but not on biblical grounds. However, the *unity* of the human race, by contrast, is indeed a theological question and a very important one at that.

The unity of humanity was, in fact, commonly acknowledged by all sides in Warfield’s day. Evolution had removed the motive for denying a common origin to humanity and “rendered it natural to look upon the differences which exist among the various types of man as differentiations of a common stock.”² He notes that in the past there were various opposing theories, such as co-Adamitism and Pre-Adamitism. And he notes that some early evolutionists had suggested multiple times and places of human origins. Racial pride continued to exist, to be sure, but virtually all sides acknowledged a unity to all humanity that is evident physically as well as psychologically (speech, common traditions, etc.). There were various factors employed in accounting for this unity, but the fact of a common humanity no longer required defense.

The importance of the unity of humanity, for Warfield, could scarcely be overstated, both biblically and theologically. The idea is built into the very structure of the Genesis account of man’s origin: God created a single pair from whom descended the whole race (Gen 1:26). Eve was so named “because she was the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20). Adam himself is so named (“man”) for the first place given him; Warfield notes this and points us accordingly to the biblical expressions “sons of Adam” or “man” as reflective of it. Moreover, at the flood all of humanity, save eight, were destroyed, and humanity begins again, via Shem, Ham, and Japheth, with Noah as their common father, and from Noah’s sons “the whole earth was overspread” (Gen 10:32). The *differentiations* of peoples, Warfield reminds us, is the result of rebellion and the dispersion following the tower of Babel (Gen 11). “What God had joined together men themselves pulled asunder.” Throughout the Scriptures, all mankind is treated as a unit, sharing “not only in a common nature but in a common sinfulness, not only in a common need but in a common redemption.”³ The entire structure of biblical teaching regarding sin and salvation, Warfield insists, is built on the assumption of our common unity in Adam. Israel was given privilege, to be sure, but this was not due to anything about them; their privilege was due only to divine mercy. And in the Law’s provisions regarding slaves Israel was reminded of their common humanity. Indeed, Israel’s privileged status was only so designed that, through them, mercy would extend to the whole of humanity.

Warfield surveys the biblical evidence quickly but somewhat comprehensively. He notes, importantly, that Jesus affirmed the origin of humanity in a single pair (Matt 19:4). And he cites the apostle Paul’s plain pronouncement on the subject in Acts 17:26. Mankind’s unity is so obvious in Scripture that it scarcely requires defense: “the whole New Testament is instinct with the brotherhood of mankind as one in origin and in nature, one in need and one in the provision of redemption.”⁴

The fact of racial sin is basal to the whole Pauline system (Rom. 5:12 ff.; 1 Cor. 15:21 f.), and beneath the fact of racial sin lies the fact of racial unity. It is only because all men

¹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology: The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 235–58.

² *Ibid.*, 9:252.

³ *Ibid.*, 9:256.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9:257.

were in Adam as their first head that all men share in Adam's sin and with his sin in his punishment. And it is only because the sin of man is thus one in origin and therefore of the same nature and quality, that the redemption which is suitable and may be made available for one is equally suitable and may be made available for all. It is because the race is one and its need one, Jew and Gentile are alike under sin, that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the matter of salvation either, but as the same God is Lord of all, so He is rich in Christ Jesus unto all that call upon Him, and will justify the uncircumcision through faith alone, even as He justifies the circumcision only by faith (Rom. 9:22–24, 28 ff.; 10:12). Jesus Christ therefore, as the last Adam, is the Saviour not of the Jews only but of the world (John 4:42; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 4:14), having been given to this His great work only by the love of the Father for the world (John 3:16). The unity of the human race is therefore made in Scripture not merely the basis of a demand that we shall recognize the dignity of humanity in all its representatives, of however lowly estate or family, since all bear alike the image of God in which man was created and the image of God is deeper than sin and cannot be eradicated by sin (Gen. 5:3; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Heb. 2:5 ff.); but the basis also of the entire scheme of restoration devised by the divine love for the salvation of a lost race.⁵

The unity of the human race in Adam is not only biblically evident, Warfield insisted—it is of central importance to Christian theology and to Christianity itself.

Moreover, a recognition of our common humanity carries with it a corresponding ethical obligation. Warfield writes,

The unity of the human race is therefore made in Scripture not merely the basis of a demand that we shall recognize the dignity of humanity in all its representatives, of however lowly estate or family, since all bear alike the image of God in which man was created and the image of God is deeper than sin and cannot be eradicated by sin (Gen 5:3; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; Heb 2:5ff.); but the basis also of the entire scheme of restoration devised by the divine love for the salvation of a lost race.⁶

That is to say, our understanding of the essential unity of humanity in Adam carries a moral significance; it is not a question of merely abstract theological interest. Nor did Warfield leave this issue to mere theological discussion, and in his condemning of racial pride Warfield was generations ahead of his time.

Both of Warfield's parents had come from families of outspoken abolitionists and with important connections to the cause of emancipation. In one letter he seems to boast of it:

John C. Young, the drawer of the resolutions of the Ky. Synod of 1835 was the husband of my mother's first cousin. My Grandfather R. J. Breckinridge ran on an emancipation ticket in 1849 – at the peril of his life. Cassius M. Clay was the husband of my father's first cousin. My Mother-in-law was an abolitionist of the Garrison type. My grandparents,

⁵Ibid., 9:257–58.

⁶Ibid., 9:258.

parents & the parents of my wife sought in every way to do their duty to those whom they felt themselves sinners to hold in bondage.⁷

Ironically, Warfield's family and the families of the grandparents all owned slaves—even with a bad conscience for it, it seems. But (rightly or wrongly) they considered the slaves ill-prepared for life on the outside, and the slaves were evidently treated respectfully and well, and generously so in the family wills.⁸

However, the post-civil war—even post-reconstruction—society was still deeply segregated, even if the slaves had been freed. Race antagonism was not gone, and in this decidedly segregated society blacks were given little room for self- or social advancement. The plight of the freedmen and their children as Warfield presents it—as “virtually subjects and not citizens, peasants instead of freedmen,”⁹ though seven million of America's then fifty million souls¹⁰—is disturbingly revealing. “Wicked caste” was not at all overstating the case, Warfield insisted, and when he took up this cause he must have seemed a voice virtually alone.

In 1885 Warfield became a member of the Presbyterian Board of Missions to Freedmen and worked for their betterment. As noted above, Warfield was not given to social activism, and he was not disposed to serve on committees. But this was the exception, and his passion for the cause is evident.

In 1887 and 1888 he published articles decrying the accepted state of affairs and pleading for Christians to consider more seriously the doctrine they profess to believe. In his 1887 “A Calm View of the Freedman's Case” he argued that the “elevation and civilization” of blacks was “the greatest work before American people today,” and that “the terrible legacy of evil which generations of slavery have left to our freedmen is scarcely appreciated by any of us.”¹¹ He acknowledges that remedying the problem is easier said than done, but he balks at those who think that they had done what they could, and he foresees only a very difficult future for the freedmen. Individual potential among them was no doubt felt by them all, but with so many obstacles the outlook seemed bleak.

As for slavery itself, Warfield characterizes it as “the most potent of demoralizers,” having disallowed the slave a will of his own. It is a “curse” that “eats to the roots of all of life,” a “false and perverted system”¹² that has only a demoralizing effect on those who were once captive to it. And by 1887 (the date of Warfield's article) the society in which the children of freedmen were brought up, now without the artificial restraints imposed by slavery, had a still further demoralizing and even immoralizing

⁷B. B. Warfield, Letter to Joseph William Torrence, 7 January, 1887 (Princeton Theological Seminary Archives, Warfield Papers, box 17). Bradley Gundlach provides the most complete background for this generally available. See his “‘Wicked Caste’: Warfield, Biblical Authority, and Jim Crow,” in Gary L. W. Johnson, ed., *B. B. Warfield: Essays on His Life and Thought* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), ch. 6, esp. pp. 139–47. See also James H. Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary in American Religion and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 252–55.

⁸There is, however, a story from the Warfield family of Robert Jefferson Breckinridge who, upon turning age 16, beat up an older family slave—to prove his manhood, it seems—an offense for which he received due punishment. In fairness, it should also be pointed out that as an older man Breckinridge championed emancipation.

⁹B. B. Warfield, *Benjamin B. Warfield: Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter, 2 vols. (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 2:743.

¹⁰Ibid., 2:735.

¹¹Ibid., 2:735.

¹²Ibid., 2:736–37.

effect.¹³ Moorhead's observation here is helpful: "Like most other whites, Warfield assumed that African Americans had experienced a moral declension since emancipation. However, unlike many others, he did not attribute this fact to some moral defect in African Americans themselves."¹⁴ White society was largely to blame, and Warfield pleads:

What pressure can we bring to bear on these wandering souls to draw them within the formative influences of a true and sound morality? The strongest motive with most men is the hope of rising. The most degraded immigrant that reaches our shores is under this spell: the lure of hope dances ever before his eyes. However high above him others may stand, he has but to lift his eyes to see that the plain pathway runs from his feet to theirs, and it is only a question as to whether he is willing to climb — whether he will not stand by their sides tomorrow. If he has no ambition for himself, he has for his children; and it is rare indeed that the civilizing influences of this single hope is not the sufficient excitement to endeavor, self-respect, and growth. But this is lost for the African. The class to which he belongs by birth is the class with which he must make his home until death sets him free. He bears a brand on his brow that closes all avenues of advance before him, and the despondency of his heart, that makes him reckless of public opinion as to his deeds, is but the inward answer to the stern outward fact that, become what he individually may, he cannot rise into the classes above him. It is probably impossible for any of us to realize the deadening burden of this hopelessness. It clips the wings of every soaring spirit, and drives every ambition back to gnaw its own tongue in unavailing pain. Yet an adequate appreciation of it is one of the conditions of our understanding the gravity of the problem that is before us, in our efforts to raise and educate the blacks to take their proper place in our Christian civilization.¹⁵

Illiteracy among the blacks was increasing, which was only further demoralizing. They had been "freed" yet left virtually without hope, "paralyzed" in a "wicked caste" society. Warfield used the term advisedly, insisting that it cannot be called anything less: it could not be denied that it was, in fact, a caste society, and that this caste society was wicked was obvious to all who would look. And so Warfield pressed the responsibility of society—and especially Christians—to help the freedmen and their children in their cause, to come to their aid, and to allow them to rise to their full potential in society.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that it is not he who feels persuaded that the Negro was made a little lower than man, and who is graciously willing to train him into fitness for such a position, who can educate him into true and self-centered manhood. It is only he who is thoroughly persuaded that God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth, that has the missionary spirit, or that can serve as the hand of the Most High in elevating the lowly and rescuing the oppressed.¹⁶

Warfield criticizes the caste society of both North and South. He relays the story of a negro woman he knew who went to attend a revival meeting at a church. When she arrived, the elders of the church

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2:737–40.

¹⁴ Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary*, 253.

¹⁵ *Selected Shorter Writings*, 2:738–39.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:740.

asked her to leave. He relays another story of Episcopalians boasting that they have done well with regard to race relations in their church, cheerfully affirming that blacks were allowed to attend their services: “seats have been set aside for them in all the churches.” In virtually every corner of society, Warfield laments, they are taught to know “their place.” Even in the congregation of the saints, their place was not in the midst of God’s children but off to the side. To all this Warfield abruptly exclaims, “Are we today to reverse the inspired declaration that in Christ Jesus there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman?”¹⁷ Sustained treatment of this kind destroys hope, paralyzes effort, and cuts away all inducement to self-advancement. In light of all this Warfield calls for Christians to provide needed help on every level:

If it is a true moralization of the blacks that is needed, this can be secured only by a careful moral teaching such as can be furnished only by religious organizations which will educate as well as preach. Secular training will do small good; simple preaching of the gospel does not reach deep enough. We must have Christian schools everywhere, where Christianity as a revealed system of truth and of practice is daily taught by men and women whose hearts are aglow with missionary fervor—who find in every creature of God the promise and potency of all higher life.¹⁸

Warfield begins his 1888 “Drawing the Color Line” with a reference to two newspaper articles professing that race relations had been much improved, a claim Warfield found stunningly incredible. Instead, Warfield charges, “emancipation has abolished only private but not public subjugation” and has “made the ex-slave not a free man but only a free Negro.”¹⁹ Then, in words that seem prophetic, Warfield writes,

The black masses, who, taken as a class, emerged from slavery with no sense of wrongs to avenge, but rather with a lively appreciation of the kindnesses which they had received from their masters, and with a true gratitude for the elevation which they had obtained at their hands through the generation or two that separated them from the dimly remembered savagery of Africa, have been gradually becoming, under the irritation of continually repeated injustices, great and small, more and more compacted into a sullen mass of muttered discontent, which promises to develop into full-fledged race-antagonism on their side also.²⁰

Warfield foresaw that the despising treatment of blacks in that caste society would breed only resentment and hatred in return. The social upheavals and race riots America would witness only decades later would not have surprised Warfield—he predicted it.

Warfield recites the actions of Episcopal and Presbyterian denominations with regard to “the color line” and observes that there are no black pastors of white congregations and that there are so many separate churches for blacks. The depth of his convictions here are revealed in his remarks related to the proposed reunion with the Southern Presbyterians. Reunion with the Southern Presbyterians—with its

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:739–41.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:742.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:744.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:744.

luminaries such as Robert Louis Dabney—was a move Warfield would otherwise have favored, but not if it meant condoning the continued segregation that was “practically universal” in the Southern body.²¹

Can the story imbedded in such examples be missed? Christian men, under the pressure of their race antipathy, desert the fundamental law of the Church of the Living God, that in Christ Jesus there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman.²²

In the above-mentioned letter to Joseph William Torrence, Warfield speaks more pointedly: “that [the Southern Church] is not awake to its duty to the Freedmen & that organic union with it would injure if not destroy our work among them makes me deprecate & pray against reunion in any near future.”²³

Again, Warfield’s convictions on this score had a two-fold theological grounding: 1) the unity of humanity in Adam, created in God’s image, and 2) the leveling entailments of the gospel. His position may have been unpopular, but it was firmly grounded. And for him there was only one just option: the caste system, and the very “spirit of caste,” must be utterly repudiated by all. No kind of racism is a Christian option, and there is no Christian room for toleration of it at any level.

Predictably, Warfield’s published remarks drew opposition. We find this in his correspondence, as the already-cited Torrence letter implies. Another minister responds with fears of what would come if Warfield’s counsel were to be followed: equality of black and white ministers, black pastors in positions of denominational leadership, equal respect to black as well as to white women, and—most unthinkable of all—interracial marriage. Surely Warfield had just not thought through the implications of his position!

In his response Warfield, typically, turns to Scripture—in this case James 2:1–13, Ephesians 3:1, and 1Timothy 3:15—and writes with a corresponding exhortation,

All this is no concern of yours & mine. For, just because the Church is the pillar & ground of the Truth by which the world is to be saved, the Lord has not left its advising to us but has given us instruction as to how it ought to be behaved in the Church of the Living God.... I cannot help believing that there is no line so wise or well or so loyal as simply to let God order his own house in his own way & gladly range ourselves by his side. Let us beware lest, in arranging things for oneself & so as to fit our personal prejudices, we build up a kingdom indeed, but not to God or one which He will neither own nor bless.²⁴

Warfield’s blunt message was clear: we must not pretend to be wiser than God. If these concerns that you have expressed are not concerns of God’s, then they should not be concerns of ours.

In 1907 Warfield published his plea in a poem entitled, “Wanted—A Samaritan.” Here he applies the parable of the Good Samaritan to contemporary sensitivities and behavior. The application—the punch line, we may call it—is reserved for the last line, but the punch was hard-hitting:

Prone in the road he lay,
Wounded and sore bested:

²¹ Ibid., 2:740, 746–48.

²² Ibid., 2:748.

²³ Cf. Gundlach, “Wicked Caste,” 163–65; Moorhead, *Princeton Seminary*, 253–55.

²⁴ B. B. Warfield, Letter to R. M. Carson, 3 March 1887 (Princeton Theological Seminary Archives, Warfield Papers, box 17). See Gundlach, “Wicked Caste,” 157.

Priests, Levites past that way
And turned aside the head.

They were not hardened men
In human service slack:
His need was great: but then,
His face, you see, was black.²⁵

In 1913, while Warfield was acting president of the seminary, he acted on these convictions administratively. The faculty had maintained that whites and blacks should remain socially separate, and Machen, Warfield's junior colleague at the time, complains in a letter to his mother that Warfield unilaterally overruled the protest and allowed a black student to live in the student dormitory at Alexander Hall.²⁶ Warfield practiced what he preached.

In a 1918 review of Hastings's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*²⁷ Warfield takes issue with an article on "Negroes in the United States" by William O. Carver of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Warfield characterizes Carver's article as cheerfully endorsing a permanently segregated America—"two races, separated from one another by impassible social barriers, each possessed of an ever more intensified race-consciousness and following without regard to the other its own race-ideals."²⁸

Warfield objects, and argues instead for an integrationist position:

This [Carver's viewpoint expressed in the encyclopedia article] is to look upon the negro as (according to one current theory of the nature of cancerous growth, at any rate) just a permanent cancer in the body politic. We may suspect that it is not an unaccountable feeling of race repulsion that impels Dr. Carver to repel with sharp decision the forecast that amalgamation of the races must be the ultimate issue. With continued white immigration and the large death rate of the blacks working a progressive decrease in the proportion of the black population to the white, is it not natural to look forward to its ultimate absorption? That is to say, in a half a millennium or so? That is not, however, our problem: for us and our children and children's children the two races in well-marked differentiation will form but disproportionate elements in the one State. What we have to do, clearly, is to learn to live together in mutual amity and respect and helpfulness, and to work together for the achievement of our national ideals and the attainment of the goal of a truly Christian civilization.²⁹

Again, Warfield calls for an end to segregation.

Carver concluded his article with a call to live together for common goals, and so here Warfield gives a more favorable comment: "It is to this that Dr. Carver rightly exhorts us in his closing words. It

²⁵ "Wanted—A Samaritan," in *The Independent* LXII (31 January 1907), 251; republished in B. B. Warfield, *Four Hymns and Some Religious Verses* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1910), 11. See David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary, vol. 2: The Majestic Testimony 1869–1929* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1996), 326, 505.

²⁶ Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, 505.

²⁷ B. B. Warfield, review of *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* by James Hastings, *PTR* 16 (1918): 110–15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 114–15.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

is in effect an exhortation to political and social, – if not yet racial – amalgamation. After all, we are, for better, for worse, bound up together in one bundle of life.”³⁰

Warfield nowhere expounds his convictions regarding racism at length. But his several references to the question are both explicit and pungent. He decries segregation at any level, both in society at large and especially in the church. Racial pride is a denial of our unity in Adam and our shared creation in God’s image. And racial pride in the church entails a further evil—a denial of our unity and shared status in Christ; this, for Warfield, constitutes a denial of the gospel and is ground for ecclesiastical separation.

It is impossible to measure what influence Warfield may or may not have had with regard to racial attitudes, but we have no evidence that his voice was widely heard. And some could argue that we find even in Warfield traces of paternalistic sentiments that still bound him to his day. Even so, Warfield’s convictions were ahead of his time. He was a needed corrective for his day whose voice was certainly not heeded enough. And he serves as a guide for us still today. He condemns racism on the two most fundamental levels—creation and redemption—and he insists that we allow the full implications of these biblical teachings to work their way out in a fully integrated society and a fully integrated church, with equal rights and privileges to all.

The “wicked caste” society that Warfield deplored is, thankfully, not today’s America. Slavery is behind us, as are reconstruction and the Jim Crow laws. But it has all left a scar of racism that remains. Few would argue that we have arrived, as recent events in America attest. Prejudice and resentment remain. Yet the way forward is so simple, if only pride were not in the way: once we acknowledge our unity in Adam (and Noah!), created in the image of God, and once we acknowledge the necessary entailments of the gospel by which we are united to one another in our Redeemer, it is left only to submit our minds, our decisions, our attitudes, and our mutual behavior accordingly.

³⁰ Ibid.

A Theological Sickness unto Death: Philip Rieff’s Prophetic Analysis of our Secular Age

— Bruce Riley Ashford —

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Abstract: Philip Rieff’s sociological analyses explore the implications of Western Civilization’s unprecedented attempt to maintain society and culture without reference to God. He argues that this attempt to desacralize the social order is deeply detrimental and encourages Westerners to resacralize the social order. For Western Christians who wish to help facilitate a “missionary encounter” between the gospel and our secular age, Rieff’s work will pay rich, albeit uneven dividends. His work is most helpful when diagnosing the ills of our secular age but is less illuminating in its prognosis and prescription. Thus, a Christian framework of thought must be employed to evaluate Rieff’s work and leverage it for the Christian mission.

The great American sociologist Philip Rieff (1922–2006) stands as one of the 20th century’s keenest intellectuals and cultural commentators. Rieff did sociology on a grand scale—sociology as prophecy—diagnosing the ills of Western society and offering a prognosis and prescription for the future. Although he was not a Christian, his work remains a great gift—even if a complicated and challenging one—to Christians living in a secular age.

In his work, the Western church will find a perceptive diagnosis of Western society and culture and an illuminating, though insufficient, prognosis and prescription.

1. A Therapeutic Revolution

Rieff began his academic career in the 1950s and 60s by focusing on the work of Sigmund Freud.¹ In *The Mind of the Moralizer* and *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, Rieff argued that Freud’s exploration

¹ While still an undergraduate student at the University of Chicago, Rieff was offered a faculty position there. He accepted the offer and in short order, completed his PhD dissertation which was later published as *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer* (1959). See also Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud*, 40th Anniversary ed. (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2006).

of neurosis was really an exploration of *authority*, as Western man was coming to view the notion of divine authority as an illusion. If God does not exist, appeals to divine authority are illegitimate. Freud recognized that as belief in God was fading, psychological neuroses were multiplying. He posited a cause-and-effect relationship between the two phenomena but, instead of healing neurosis by pointing persons back to God, Freud sought to heal it by teaching his patients to *accept* this loss of authority as a positive development.²

This psychotherapeutic view of modern man came to serve as a unified theory of modern society. In Rieff's view, therapeutic ideology, rather than Communism, was the real revolution of the twentieth century. Compared to Freud, the neo-Marxists were cultural conservatives who still believed in the notion of authority and the idea of a cultural code. The proponents of Freudian therapeutics, on the other hand, would not countenance authoritative frameworks and normative moral codes. In a therapeutic culture, authority disappears. In place of theology and ethics, we are left with aesthetics and the social sciences. Thus, therapeutic culture was born. This tradeoff would turn out to be so destructive that Rieff would describe the United States and Western Europe (rather than the Soviet Union) as the epicenter of Western cultural deformation.³

2. A Sickness unto Death

Though Rieff rose to prominence as a public intellectual in the 1970s, he suddenly withdrew from the public eye for more than three decades.⁴ In fact, it was not until after his death in 2006 that he re-entered the public square with the publication of *My Life Among the Deathworks*, the first volume in a "Sacred Order/Social Order" trilogy which would bring his earlier cultural exegesis to maturation.⁵

Deathworks is a devastating critique of modern culture, focusing on our vain Western attempts to reorganize society without a sacred center. According to Rieff, a patently irreligious view of society—which many Westerners desire—is not only foolish and destructive, but impossible. We can no more live without a religious framework than we can communicate without a linguistic framework or breathe without a pulmonary framework. Religion is in our blood, and the more we deny it, the sicker our society becomes. As Rieff surveyed the 21st-century Western world, he perceived the sickness had become nearly fatal.

² Antonius Zondervan, *Sociology and the Sacred: An Introduction to Philip Rieff's Theory of Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 8–10.

³ Philip Rieff, *The Crisis of the Officer Class: The Decline of the Tragic Sensibility*, ed. Alan Woolfolk, Sacred Order/Social Order, vol. 2 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 134.

⁴ By the 1970s, Rieff had become one of America's premier public intellectuals, publishing regularly in the major literary magazines and appearing on prominent talk shows. In the 1980s, however, Rieff mysteriously withdrew, for the most part, from the public eye. As Jonathan Imber notes, Rieff was protesting "against the vainglorious encounter he saw at work between intellectuals and the public." In his writings and lectures during the latter part of his career, therefore, Rieff took care to display the sort of public modesty that he thought behooved intellectuals. Jonathan B. Imber, "Philip Rieff and *Fellow Teachers*," *Sociology* 50 (2013): 61.

⁵ Rieff, *My Life among the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority*, ed. Kenneth S. Piver, Sacred Order/Social Order Vol. 1 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); *The Crisis of the Officer Class: The Decline of the Tragic Sensibility*; *The Jew of Culture: Freud, Moses, and Modernity*, eds. Arnold M. Eisen and Gideon Lewis-Kraus, Sacred Order/Social Order Vol. 3 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

3. *Three Cultural “Worlds”*

To expose the problems of modern society, Rieff organizes Western history chronologically according to three cultural “worlds.” The first was the pagan world, enchanted by its many gods. Following this was the second cultural world, one dominated by monotheism. This era has only recently given way to the third cultural world, our present age, in which many wish to do away with the gods altogether.

The striking characteristic of third world culture, as Rieff saw it, is its historic departure from the belief that *social order* should be underlain by *sacred order*. The latter always and necessarily funds the former by providing a world of meaning and a code of permissions and prohibitions, in which and through which society could flourish. Historically, sacred order translates its truths into the tangible realities of the social order. Rieff writes:

World creation comprises the historical task of culture: namely, to transliterate otherwise invisible sacred orders into their visible modalities—social orders. As transliterating institutions of sacred order into social, cultures are what they represent: ‘symbolics’ or, in a word that represents what it is, ‘worlds.’⁶

Thus, sacred order historically shaped social order, employing culture makers and cultural institutions as middlemen between religion and society. Yet, the spirit of our third cultural world seeks to undo all of this.

3.1. **First World Cultures**

First world cultures tended to be pagan, with many pantheons of whimsical and capricious gods. These societies and their cultural institutions centered on “fate.” Even though one finds exceptions such as Socrates or Plato, first world influencers were magicians or conjurers upon whom society depended to manipulate the gods and change the course of history. In first world cultures, social order was maintained less by a moral code of permissions and prohibitions than by a system of taboos.

3.2. **Second World Cultures**

Second world cultures are generally, though not exclusively, monotheistic. Their conception of sacred order is one in which God the Creator reveals himself to his creatures and endows the created world with life and significance. James Davison Hunter’s summary of Rieff’s second world cultures is apt:

[In] second world cultures...truth about the world and how to act in the world is grounded in revelation and is creedal in character. The interdictions, then, are divinely commanded. Faith, rather than fate, is the dominant cultural motif, again especially as it depicts the address of social order to sacred order. God is active in history, and it is through trust and obedience, and with the guidance of various teaching authorities, that ascent in the vertical in authority is possible.⁷

Rieff placed Christianity in the second cultural world. Although Rieff had been critical of Christianity early on, by mid-career he was committed to monotheism and embraced the positive role Christianity

⁶Rieff, *Deathworks*, 2.

⁷Ibid., xxi.

should play in society. Christian monotheism provided the sacred foundation on which Western society was built and gave individuals a place to stand and a way to live. Virtue was not just taught explicitly but reinforced implicitly through cultural institutions—in such a way that it shaped the habits and instinctual desires of each successive generation.⁸ In so doing, the underlying sacred order provided a powerful means of opposing social and cultural decadence. Similarly, individuals learn to identify themselves and find meaning in life through this theistic world of meaning. “Wherever we may be, in the *whatness of our whoness*, what we are is constituted by where we are in the sacred order.”⁹

3.3. Third World Cultures

In contrast to the first and second world cultures whose social order is undergirded by a world beyond the visible and a moral authority beyond the self, third world cultures (contemporary Western cultures) sever the connection between sacred order and social order, limiting the “real” world to the visible and locating moral authority in the self. Similarly, whereas each of the first two worlds sought to construct identity *vertically* from above, our third world rejects the vertical in favor of constructing identity *horizontally* from below. Rieff knew the result of this rejection would be nihilism: “Where there is nothing sacred, there is nothing.”¹⁰

Rieff pulls no punches in describing the cultural fruits of this project, terming them *deathworks*. Instead of causing society to flourish (via works of life), modern cultural institutions and culture-makers function as subversive agents of destruction (works of death), undermining the very culture from which they arose. Rieff indicts an array of cultural elites—but especially Freud, Joyce, Picasso, and Mapplethorpe—for their role in poisoning society. “The guiding elites of our third world,” he observes, “are virtuosi of de-creation, of fictions where once commanding truths were.”¹¹ Wishing to forget religion and rebuild society (irreligiously) from the ground up, these elites labor to construct a contemporary tower of Babel.

One of the front lines of the contemporary battle is the notion of truth. The third world perspective abolishes truth, leaving only desire. Yet desire proves to be as fierce an authority as any god—and jealous to boot. Nature, after all, abhors a vacuum. So, the throne on which God once reigned does not remain empty; it is filled with the more erratic god of desire.

The chief desire in our American third world culture is sexual, and this desire demands freedom of exercise. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is kicked out the front door, while the god of sexual desire is whistled in through the back.

Rieff argues that attempts to desacralize society are, ultimately, futile. “Culture and sacred order are inseparable.... No culture has ever preserved itself where there is not a registration of sacred order.”¹² Even though our third world continues its production of deathworks as a “final assault [on] the sacred order,”

⁸ In *Charisma*, a book written mid-career, but not published until just after his death, Rieff’s central argument is that the New Testament concepts of grace and humility are essential to moral order. Philip Rieff, *Charisma: The Gift of Grace, and How It Has Been Taken Away from Us* (New York: Pantheon, 2007), 288.

⁹ Rieff, *Deathworks*, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

and even though third world elites are now busy congratulating themselves on an apparent rout, the third world culture will not prevail.

4. Onward to a Fourth World

Christians who resonate with Rieff's grim assessment may be tempted to rewind the clock in a futile attempt to retrieve the lost Christendom of a previous age. But Rieff pushes us forward to envision a fourth world. We cannot rewind the clock by ignoring third world deathworks and returning to an ostensibly golden age, but we can recognize the realities of third world culture even while building for a fourth world culture in which sacred order once again underlies social order. Rieff writes:

The faith instinct...simply cannot be killed. That 'simply cannot' means that we simply cannot not live—cannot live as if life were meaningless, without purpose; as if life were merely material or mechanical or not spiritual. Such an effort in its deadly futility represents a historical ending time, a time just before the faith instinct will show itself again.¹³

The third cultural world seems powerful now, Rieff avers, but its foundations are weak and already starting to crumble.

The construction of a fourth world will involve a recovery of sacred order and, by extension, recoveries of revelation and authority, and of transcendent meaning and morality. Recoveries such as this do not enact themselves; they await a people who will speak and act responsibly. This fourth world "people," Rieff argues, must articulate and embody seemingly defunct notions of truth and virtue, a formidable task in our radically disenchanting and morally permissive third world culture.¹⁴ Nonetheless, in spite of the formidable challenges posed by third world order, there are already cracks in the foundations; although it once seemed liberating to fire God from his post and live without limits, the third world will soon realize that a world without boundaries is a frightening—not a freeing—place. Thus, a responsible people must arise to manifest the beauty of the "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not."

5. Rieff in Perspective

Critics have faulted Rieff for his dense prose, for the demands he makes upon his readers. He read widely, and even a cursory glance at his trilogy shows that he had "at his fingertips" a broad cadre of culture-makers such as Nietzsche and Derrida, Freud and Jung, Picasso and Mapplethorpe, Joyce and Kafka. More to the point, however, he alluded to these culture-makers in complex and sometimes obscure manners, making the reader work hard to follow the argument. Indeed, his books are complicated and challenging, but are strategically so, rewarding the reader who perseveres. In *Fellow Teachers*, Rieff reflects upon his rhetorical strategy:

Privileged knowledge...can only be conveyed by the art of concealment. We teachers are called to represent the god-terms, in all their marvelous indirections, inhibiting what otherwise might be too easily done. Even Christ, as he revealed, precisely in order to

¹³ Rieff, *Officer Class*, 6.

¹⁴ Rieff, *Crisis*, 169.

reveal, concealed.... Concealment is the most necessary pedagogic art, without which there are not revelations.¹⁵

The reader must work hard to understand Rieff's text, just as the reader will have to work hard to discern the deathly contours of third world culture and to help build a fourth world.¹⁶ But Rieff has worked harder than the reader, and those who are patiently attentive will reap dividends.

For Western Christians who wish to help facilitate a "missionary encounter" between the gospel and our secular age, Rieff's work will pay rich, albeit uneven, dividends. One way of assessing the potential dividends is to evaluate his work in light of the biblical pattern of *formation–deformation–reformation*, concluding that Rieff's work is most helpful when it is *diagnosing* the ills of our secular age (deformation), but is less illuminating when it reflects back upon original order (formation) or looks forward via prognosis and prescription (reformation).

5.1. Deformation

Rieff is at his gimlet-eyed best when he explores the deformation of Western culture and society. He spent the large part of his career analyzing and diagnosing the ills of Western society and culture. He is prophetic in drawing conclusions that cut to the heart of the problem: the West is in the midst of an unprecedented attempt, by the cultural elite, to rip the sacred foundations from underneath social order, leaving social order to float on its own, slowly but surely toward death. When we, in the wake of Rieff's analysis, read and re-read the events of our own time, we will be able to recognize many cultural products of our time as deathworks and the authors of those products as subversive agents undermining social order.

In his analysis of deathworks, Rieff focused on philosophers, social scientists, artists, and writers as the most subversive creators and purveyors. He critiques various cultural elites for their poisonous influence on society. To supplement and enhance Rieff's analysis, the Christian community is well-served to shift the emphasis of our analysis to include a greater role for other, less recognized types of subversive culture-makers, such as those found in the legal, commercial, and educational sectors.

Consider, for example, United States Supreme Court justices as members of the "officer class" who sometimes play the role of subversive agents and purveyors of deathly culture. The monumental *Roe v. Wade* (1973) decision is case-in-point; the *Roe v. Wade* majority functioned as members of the *creative class* when they forsook their calling to interpret the Constitution, engaging instead in the fabrication of new "rights" and enshrining those rights as the law of the land. Additionally, the Court majority made themselves *purveyors of death* when they treated the unborn human being as the mother's "personalty" (the legal word for a moveable piece of *property*), able to be disposed of if the mother so chooses. Indeed, mere decades after having given proper legal and moral status to an entire class of human beings—black slaves—who previously had been treated as property, America decided to rescind proper legal and moral status to an entire class of human beings—unborn babies—who previously had been

¹⁵ Rieff, *Fellow Teachers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 9–10.

¹⁶ In the introduction to *Deathworks*, James Davison Hunter reflects upon Rieff's rhetorical strategy, writing, "The book is difficult, intentionally so. His is a strategy of concealment. In a culture where everything is on display yet so little of substance actually revealed, Rieff tends to write with deliberate and often clever obscurity as a means of veiling his contentions and insights.... Rieff wants the reader to work for the insight he has to offer; to read and then reread" (xvi).

treated as human persons, and allow members of that class to be terminated on demand.¹⁷ As a cultural “deathwork,” *Roe v. Wade* is especially significant because it brought death to society not only indirectly but directly through its legitimation of lethal violence against innocent and helpless persons.¹⁸

So, Rieff’s analysis of cultural deathworks bears fruit, not only through his written page, but as a heuristic framework and mode of socio-cultural analysis that Christians can adopt as we take a “missionary posture” toward the secular West.

5.2. Formation

Though Rieff’s work is especially helpful for understanding the social and cultural degradation of our secular age (deformation), it is less helpful when reflecting back upon original sacred and social order (formation). Positively, Rieff recognizes that, historically, sacred order has always underlain social order, funding it with meaning and a moral code. His answer, as far as it goes, is good and helpful. Or, we could say, it is helpful but “thin.” Even better, or “thicker,” would be a full doctrine of creation, reflections on the goodness and order of the created world, and indications of how that goodness and order connects to human flourishing.¹⁹

For a thick description of formation, the work of Abraham Kuyper is especially helpful, undergirding, as it would, Rieff’s analysis with an articulation of creation’s order in terms of “sphere sovereignty.” This concept of sphere sovereignty was Kuyper’s way of describing the various spheres of human activity and their relationship to one another. As the name implies, Kuyper understood each sphere of culture to have a God-given inherent sovereignty in relation to other spheres; each sphere has its own center (reason for being) and circumference (limits to its jurisdiction). The political sphere, for example, exists to achieve justice for the individuals and communities under its purview, but its jurisdiction is limited and does not extend to the artistic, educational, or ecclesial spheres, and vice-versa. In other words, Kuyper’s description reveals creation order as a *de facto* system of checks and balances—not at the political level by dispersing governmental authority but at a deeper, ontological level by dispersing

¹⁷ For a concise legal analysis of *Roe v. Wade*, see Francis J. Beckwith, *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case against Abortion Choice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 18–41.

¹⁸ For a summary overview of the physical, psychological, and sociological harm caused by abortion on demand, see Mary Cunningham Agee, “The America We Seek: A Statement of Pro-Life Principle and Concern,” *First Things* 63 (1996): 40–44.

¹⁹ In his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, anthropologist Clifford Geertz offers a helpful contrast between “thick” and “thin” descriptions of reality. A thick description of human behavior is one that explains not just a human behavior but the cognitive, affective, and evaluative framework operative in the cultural context in which the behavior arises. By contrast, a “thin” description is one that does not provide such context. Transferred from anthropologic to public life, a “thick” argument or explanation is one that appeals to religious and ideological frameworks and beliefs overtly, while a “thin” argument or explanation will use more generic or consensual language. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–30.

cultural authority.²⁰ So Christ the King rules over every sphere, but he also orders each sphere according to distinct patterns.²¹

An understanding of God's normative order for creation is so important because, as James K. A. Smith puts it, humans are embodied actors rather than merely cognitive machines.²² Thus, in a discussion of Christianity's relationship to cultural context, nothing less than true or false worship is at stake. Cultural institutions have visions of the good life (of the kingdom!); those visions of the good life produce habits and practices (liturgies!) that shape our instinctual desires and thus our ways of thinking and living. Humans shape culture but culture in turn shapes them.

Our recognition of creation's normative order reminds us that God is faithful to his creation even when his creatures are not faithful to him. It causes us to remember that God created the spheres and holds them in his sovereign hand. By implication, no sphere, no matter how corrupted or misdirected, is too far gone. No matter how strong of a hold the officer class might have, no matter how compelling its cultural deathworks may be, they cannot contradict reality indefinitely with impunity. "Truth has a way of making its presence felt, even as some undertake to deny it."²³ By God's grace, our faithful social, cultural, and political efforts may eventually bring some healing and redirection to the political sphere.

In Kuyper's approach, therefore, faithful Christians should approach a given sphere of culture by discerning God's creational design for it (formation) and exploring the ways his intentions for that sphere have been corrupted and misdirected by individual sin and corporate idolatry (cultural deathworks, or, deformation).²⁴ After having done so, the Christian community can work together to seek healing and redirection for that sphere (reformation). Consider again the example of *Roe v. Wade*. God has instituted government to do justice to the various individuals and communities under its purview (formation). Unfortunately, the United States Supreme Court has corrupted and misdirected

²⁰ Kuyper gave politics a "pre-Fall" location in God's plan for his good creation. He argued that there would have been a need for government even if the Fall had not occurred. Even though political authority in an unfallen world would not have involved "the sword," there still would have emerged "one organic world-empire, with God as its King; exactly what is prophesied for the future which awaits us, when all sin shall have disappeared." Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 92.

²¹ Kuyper developed his view of sphere sovereignty as an alternative to two competing conceptions. The first competing conception is what Kuyper viewed as the church-controlled culture of the medieval period, in which God ruled the spheres of culture via the institutional church; ecclesiastical authorities gave direction to the various spheres. The second competing conception is the modern secularist view, which rightly wanted to liberate the spheres from ecclesiastical control, but wrongly tries to liberate the spheres from God's rule altogether. By way of contrast, Kuyper places the spheres under God's rule, but not under the rule of ecclesiastical authorities. See Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 463–90.

²² James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

²³ David T. Koyzis, "Living Communally in God's Good Creation: Rod Dreher and Benedict's Way," *First Things* (May 30, 2017), <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2017/05/living-communally-in-gods-good-creation>.

²⁴ Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen's *Living at the Crossroads* is an introduction to Christian worldview conceived in line with Kuyper's notion of sphere sovereignty. In the book, they not only evaluate the rise and development of Western thought in light of its conformity with, or departure from, Christians principles, but also explore what it means for Christians to bring healing and redirection to Western cultural institutions and areas of public life. Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

God's design by legalizing lethal violence against innocent unborn beings (deformation). Therefore, the Christian community must work for cultural renewal and legal reform in hopes that every human being created in God's image and likeness will be "protected in law and cared for in life" (reformation).²⁵

Reflecting back on Rieff's heuristic framework, we should recognize that his concept of "cultural deathworks" has enormous potential for helping Christians explore the corruption and misdirection of our cultural institutions and the deforming powers of many Western culture-works. Yet, his understanding of original sacred order is not fully-formed and would benefit from a more robust understanding of that order, such as Kuyper's construal.

5.3. Reformation

Having illuminated the cultural deformation of our secular age, Rieff found it necessary to reflect upon how we might reconnect sacred order and social order, paving the way once again for cultural institutions and works to nourish and reform society rather than sickening and deforming it. He recognized that the medicine for our sickness is theological, that society must once again allow sacred order to fund its cultural institutions and inspire its culture makers, thus shaping its social order. Its cultural elite must restrain themselves from decadence, producing a culture that fosters social renewal rather than decay. It must do so without regressing to Christendom, with its imposed theocratic uniformity, or lapsing into multiculturalism, with its incipient relativism. What Rieff provides, in fact, is an eschatology, in which a fourth world "people" call for a reintroduction sacred order, accompanied by moral restraint and a theologically-undergirded principled pluralism.

And yet, Rieff does not sufficiently name the "people" who are uniquely capable of helping our third world move onward to a fourth world era. Again, Kuyper's theological framework is helpful. Kuyper emphasizes that, when the crucified-but-risen Lord ascended, he left behind a "people," the church. The church exists in two capacities—as institution and as organism.²⁶ As an *institution*, this people gathers weekly to worship the Lord through the proclamation of the Word, celebration of the Lord's Supper, and fellowship with one another. The institutional church's "power" is not social, cultural, or political activism but proclamation of the gospel, a proclamation that challenges the *cultus publicus* of our secular age. By proclaiming that Jesus is Lord (and Caesar is not), the church nourishes our true identity and previews the day when the Lord will return to set the world aright, securing once-and-for-all the reconnection of sacred and social.

Yet the church exists also as an *organism*. After having gathered institutionally to nourish our political identity, this people is sent as ambassadors of the King into their respective stations in life. We are able to serve society and culture, to reconnect social order to sacred order by serving the king in every sphere of culture—art and science, scholarship and education, business and entrepreneurship, politics and economics, sports and competition. Reshaping cultural institutions in accord with God's design, the Christian community can thus minister to our secular age by proclaiming a Christian vision

²⁵ Richard John Neuhaus, "The America We Seek: A Statement of Pro-Life Principle and Concern," address delivered July 5, 2008 at the convention of the National Right to Life Committee. Republished in *First Things* (January 22, 2015), <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2008/07/we-shall-not-weary-we-shall-not-rest>.

²⁶ Abraham Kuyper, *Rooted and Grounded: The Church as Organism and Institution* (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2013).

of the good life and infusing that vision into our culture's "gut" by means of gospel-centered culture formation.²⁷

In summary, Sunday morning public worship prepares this "people," the church, for Monday morning public life. Sunday morning worship reminds us that Christian Scripture provides the true story of the whole world and that Jesus stands at the center of that story as the King of the world. Monday morning public life provides the opportunity for Christians to allow the Bible's story and Jesus's kingship to shape the way we speak and act in the public square. After gathering together in the light of word and worship, we are prepared to disperse for the rest of the week to reflect the "light of the world" together in our respective stations of life.

Similarly, the eschatology Rieff provides is good as far as it goes, but is not muscular enough to accomplish what he envisions. Only a fully Christian eschatology, rooted in the atonement of Christ and awaiting the triumphant return of Christ, provides what is necessary to push forward toward a "fourth world culture." Any eschatology like Rieff's that lacks the power and promise of the resurrection is destined, as a rule, to end in disappointment. What we see around us in Western culture is not merely a sickness, but a sickness unto death. Thus, we need not only a heavenly vision of society, but a supernatural power to bring heaven down to earth.

This is what Christianity, and Christianity alone, offers as we look to the future. The resurrection of Christ teaches us that where death seems to have uttered the final word, this "ending" is penultimate. God will restore the earth, and his kingdom will prevail. What he created, what he mourned over as it reveled in deathworks ranged against him, what he pursued and redeemed—*this* he will restore, from top to bottom. The Father does not intend to trash his creation or provide a salvation that removes us from it.²⁸ He will do for creation what he did for his Son, taking what was dead and making it alive. What gives us grounds for hope is that we are privy to this finale *before the finale*.

6. Where Hope Prevails

As those who know the end of history's story, Christians can engage in cultural activity with a humble confidence. The realm of culture, as dark as it may often seem, will one day be raised to life and made to bow in submission to Christ. Christ will gain victory and restore the earth, but it will be *his* victory rather than ours, so we remain confident but humble.

We conclude with a reminder from Lesslie Newbigin, who recognized the profound implications that history's final act had for contemporary social action, even in the midst of a deformed society. He writes:

²⁷ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 26.

²⁸ Plato viewed salvation as an upward movement, away from the physical realm which imprisons us and toward a non-physical realm that liberates us. This, however, is not the type of salvation provided by God through Christ. The biblical depiction of God's salvation is one in which God renews and restores his original creation (Acts 3:21; Rom 8:21–22; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20; Rev 21:1–4) instead of annihilating it; his salvation does not take us up and away from creation but takes places us firmly in the midst of it, both now and forevermore. Some commentators point to 2 Pet 3:10–12 to argue that God will annihilate the earth by fire, but, as Al Wolters has argued, the Greek word εὑρεθήσεται is better translated "will be found" than "will be burned up." This translation is faithful to the Greek and reinforces the teaching of other biblical passages such as Acts 3:21 and Rom 8:21–22. Al Wolters, "Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10," *WTJ* 49 (1987): 405–13.

The point is that [a transformed society] is not our goal, great as that is.... Our goal is the holy city, the New Jerusalem, a perfect fellowship in which God reigns in every heart, and His children rejoice together in His love and joy.... And though we know that we must grow old and die, that *our labors, even if they succeed for a time, will in the end be buried in the dust of time*, and that along with the painfully won achievements of goodness, there are mounting seemingly irresistible forces of evil, *yet we are not dismayed*.... We know that these things must be. But we know that as surely as Christ was raised from the dead, so surely shall there be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. *And having this knowledge we ought as Christians to be the strength of every good movement of political and social effort, because we have no need either of blind optimism or of despair.*²⁹

²⁹ Lesslie Newbigin, *Signs amid the Rubble: The Purposes of God in Human History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 55. Emphasis added.

Spurgeon's Use of Luther against the Oxford Movement

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Abstract: Nearly three hundred fifty years after Martin Luther nailed the *95 Theses* to the castle church door in Wittenburg, Charles Haddon Spurgeon confronted the growing influence of Roman Catholic teaching within the Church of England. Led by Edward Pusey and others, the Oxford Movement called the Church of England to return to her pre-Reformation traditions and teaching. Spurgeon considered this a betrayal of the gospel and, beginning in 1864, would take a Luther-like stand for the truth. This essay will argue that Spurgeon drew from Luther's model of bold leadership and teaching on justification by faith in his battle against the Oxford Movement.

“Every period is, on some account or other, a crisis. The conflict between the powers of darkness and the Spirit of truth concerns such vital interests, and is conducted with such unceasing energy, that each moment is big with importance, and every instant is the hinge of destiny.”¹ So wrote Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1866. In many ways, this statement could have been a description of the life of Martin Luther as he battled the Roman Catholic Church in his day and launched the Protestant Reformation. But what Spurgeon had in mind was not Luther's battle, but his own.

Beginning in the early 19th century, in response to the “quiet worldliness” of the church, the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and the inactivity of evangelical churchmen,² a movement arose out of Oxford that sought to bring the English Church back to its former glory prior to the Reformation. Led initially by John H. Newman³ and later by Edward B. Pusey, the Oxford Movement⁴ was driven

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Works in His Magazine The Sword and the Trowel*, 8 vols. (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 2004), 1:227. Hereafter, this will be abbreviated *S&T*.

² For a description of the condition of the Church of England prior to the Oxford Movement, see R. W. Church, *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years 1833–1845* (London: MacMillan, 1891), 2–17.

³ Newman was the primary leader of the movement until his defection to the Roman Catholic Church in 1845, well before Spurgeon began to preach. After his departure, Pusey would take his place. For an account of Newman's separation from the Church of England and Pusey's subsequent leadership, see Church, *The Oxford Movement*, 333–52.

⁴ Also known as Tractarianism, after the 90 tracts which they published, or Puseyism, after Edward Pusey.

by a series of publications, the *Tracts for the Times*.⁵ In them, they argued for the recovery of an older understanding of the Church, for apostolic succession, a sacramental⁶ view of salvation, the authority of tradition alongside the Scriptures, the use of the confessional, and other doctrines associated with Roman Catholic teaching. Though the movement was initially condemned, its writings continued to be distributed and discussed among the rising generation of Anglican priests. By the mid-1800s, the Church of England was reinvigorated, in no small part owing to the Oxford Movement, resulting in advances in literature, hymns, art, and architecture,⁷ the founding of new schools, and the building of hundreds of new churches,⁸ not only in England but throughout the British empire.⁹ It was in this context that Spurgeon began his pastoral ministry in 1854 at the New Park Street Chapel, later to become the Metropolitan Tabernacle.¹⁰

Separated by three and a half centuries, both Spurgeon and Luther recognized the threat to the gospel and the church in the teaching of Roman Catholicism, and both would engage in the fight for biblical truth. Though Spurgeon's theological tradition flowed from the Reformed family of churches¹¹ particularly through the English Puritans, he nonetheless drew heavily from Luther's reformation legacy. This essay will argue Charles Spurgeon employed Martin Luther's model of bold leadership and teaching on justification by faith in his battle against the Oxford Movement.

1. Spurgeon and Luther

Luther's influence on Spurgeon began at an early age. At fifteen, Spurgeon wrote a 295-page essay entitled, "Antichrist and Her Brood; or, Popery Unmasked."¹² Though this essay was primarily influenced by his reading of the English Puritans,¹³ it is clear that Spurgeon had some understanding at this point

⁵The tracts can be accessed here: "Tracts for the Times," Project Canterbury, [cdli.wiki, http://anglicanhistory.org/tracts/](http://cdli.wiki.org/tracts/).

⁶Allison defines sacramental theology in this way: "Catholicism maintains that created elements in nature ... are capable of transmitting divine grace as the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist are administered. Moreover, these elements, when consecrated, are effective in conveying grace *ex opere operato*, that is, just by their administration as sacraments." Gregg R. Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 51.

⁷S. L. Ollard, *A Short History of the Oxford Movement* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1915), 204–39.

⁸G. H. F. Nye, *The Story of the Oxford Movement* (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1899), 144–49.

⁹See Steward J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles, eds. *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World 1830–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁰Spurgeon preached against the Oxford Movement as early as August 1851. See Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon, Vol. 1*, ed. Christian George (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 191.

¹¹"I, who am more a follower of Calvin than of Luther, and much more a follower of Jesus than of either of them, would be charmed to see another Luther upon this earth." Charles H. Spurgeon, "The Luther Sermon at Exeter-Hall," *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached and Revised by C. H. Spurgeon* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1970–2006), 29:636. Hereafter, this will be referred to as *MTP*.

¹²Charles H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897–1899), 1:60–66. Hereafter, this work will be referenced as *Autobiography*.

¹³Peter J. Morden, *Communion with Christ and His People: The Spirituality of C. H. Spurgeon* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 24–25.

of “Luther’s Reformation.” The chapter headings of this essay reveal Spurgeon’s anti-Catholicism, confronting the darkness, superstition, and persecution of popery. What is missing is a chapter on the doctrine of justification by faith, which lay at the heart of Luther’s theology. Though Spurgeon would have known about this doctrine, he did not come to saving knowledge of it until the following year. Through the preaching of an unknown deacon in a Primitive Methodist chapel, Spurgeon came to see that his salvation lay not in his works, but in the simple act of faith, looking to Christ for salvation. “There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun.”¹⁴ This Luther-like discovery would launch him into a life-long ministry of proclaiming and defending this message.

At the age of 19, Spurgeon was called by the New Park Street Chapel to serve as pastor. As a new preacher in London, Spurgeon had his share of critics and being young, he had not yet become accustomed to the public attacks which came from many directions.¹⁵ But he found strength in the example of Martin Luther. In a sermon preached towards the end of his first year of ministry at the New Park Street Chapel, Spurgeon declared,

I have often admired Martin Luther, and wondered at his composure.... In a far inferior manner, I have been called to stand up in the position of Martin Luther, and have been made the butt of slander, a mark for laughter and scorn; but it has not broken my spirit yet, nor will it... But thus far I beg to inform all those who choose to slander or speak ill of me, that they are very welcome to do so till they are tired of it. My motto is *cedo nulli*—I yield to none.¹⁶

Since his first pastorate at Waterbeach, Spurgeon was intimately familiar with Luther’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*.¹⁷ Commenting on Galatians 2:6 and reflecting on his own opposition, Luther wrote, “In this matter of faith, I will give place to none, according to the proverb *cedo nulli*.”¹⁸ As Spurgeon faced opposition in his early ministry, he found a father in the faith in Luther. Luther’s motto became Spurgeon’s and this unwavering stance on the gospel would mark both of their ministries.

Spurgeon would go on to preach thousands of sermons and Luther’s influence on Spurgeon can be seen in those sermons.¹⁹ Spurgeon often referred to Luther’s life to teach his congregation and students about prayer, meditating on Scripture, conversion, resisting the devil, pastoral ministry, and more. However, there were two prominent themes that Spurgeon would repeat when speaking of Luther: his bold leadership against the Roman Catholic Church and the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

¹⁴ *Autobiography*, 1:106.

¹⁵ See *Autobiography*, 2:33–16 for Spurgeon’s own account of the criticisms and slander he experienced in his early years of ministry.

¹⁶ Charles H. Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit: Sermons Preached and Revised by C. H. Spurgeon* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1975–1991), 1:90.

¹⁷ Spurgeon inscribed in his copy of Luther’s commentary, “This volume is one of my earliest friends; – needs no letter of commendation. – C. H. Spurgeon, 1852.” See *Autobiography*, 4:300.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, ed. John P. Fallowes (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1979), 52.

¹⁹ A word search through the 63-volume set of Spurgeon’s sermons reveals 971 hits related to the term “Luther.” Many more references to Luther can be found in Spurgeon’s other works. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Sermon Collection*, Accordance electronic ed., 2 vols. (Altamonte Springs, FL: OakTree Software, 2004).

These two themes can be seen in the sermons that Spurgeon preached on the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Luther's birth.²⁰

On Sunday morning, November 11, 1883, Spurgeon preached "A Luther Sermon at the Tabernacle" on Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by faith."²¹ Here, Spurgeon comes to the center of Luther's theology: "I wish to take my little share in commemorating Luther's birthday, and I think I can do no better than use the key of truth by which Luther unlocked the dungeons of the human mind and set bondage hearts at liberty. That golden key lies in the truth briefly contained in the text before us – 'The just shall live by his faith.'²² In his first two points, Spurgeon outlines the difference that faith will make in producing a just life, both individually and in society. Spurgeon echoes Luther's rejection of any antinomian understanding of faith. However, in his third point, Spurgeon makes clear that though faith produces works, one is not justified by works or anything else, but by faith alone. "At one blow this ends all claims of righteousness apart from one mode of life.... Implicit trust in Jesus, our Lord, is the way of life, and every other way leads down to death."²³ It is this truth that demolished the teaching of Roman Catholicism that Luther spent his life proclaiming. And yet, the work is not finished. Luther's torch has been passed down to the present day. "Today the truth proclaimed by Luther continues to be preached, and will be till our Lord himself shall come ... but till then we must shine with gospel light to our utmost. Brethren, let us stand to it that as Luther lived by faith even so will we."²⁴

That evening, Spurgeon preached another commemoration sermon, "A Luther Sermon at Exeter Hall,"²⁵ this time on Galatians 5:6. In this sermon, Spurgeon focused on the centrality of faith above ritualism. "When God raised up Martin Luther, who was born four centuries ago, he bore emphatic testimony against salvation by outward forms and by the power of priestcraft, affirming that salvation is by faith alone, and that the whole church of God is a company of priests, every believer being a priest unto God."²⁶ Justification by faith banished priestly ritualism and transformed not only the individual, but also the church, into an army of active ministers of God. As a Baptist, Spurgeon held strongly to Luther's teaching on the priesthood of all believers, and this was rooted in the doctrine of justification by faith. In his first three points, Spurgeon unpacked the definition, necessity, and operation of faith. But in his concluding point, Spurgeon reflected on the fruit of Luther's active faith. In the face of opposition and temptation, it was faith which enabled Luther to make an open declaration of his convictions and persevere in courage. But for Spurgeon, this was not merely historical curiosity. Luther's faith stood as a model for all believers. "O you who make no profession, let this man's outspoken faith rebuke you! His dauntless valor for truth caused him to be greatly hated in his own day with a ferocity which has not yet died out."²⁷

These two themes of justification by faith alone and faith's fruit of courage marked Spurgeon's use of Luther against the Oxford Movement in his day. As Spurgeon encountered growing Roman Catholic

²⁰ See *S&T* 7:194, 7:221 for notes about the commemoration.

²¹ *MTP* 29:613.

²² *Ibid.*, 29:614.

²³ *Ibid.*, 29:617–18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29:624.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29:625.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 29:633.

teaching and practice throughout England, as he saw the relative indifference among evangelical churchmen and nonconformists, he pointed to the example and teaching of Luther to bring about reform in his day.

One clarification should be made: Spurgeon's use of Luther was not geared towards the academy. The historical details were not always precise,²⁸ and his preaching on justification aimed first at conversion rather than theological debate. This is not to say that Spurgeon was not concerned for or incapable of historical and theological scholarship.²⁹ Rather, Spurgeon was a preacher and his primary audience was not the intellectual elite, but the common person. In this, he followed the example of Luther:

Luther said, "When I am preaching, I see Dr. Jonas sitting there, and Oecolampadius, and Melancthon, and I say to myself, "Those learned doctors know enough already; so I need not trouble about them. I shall fire at the poor people in the aisles." That is the way Luther preached, and God richly blessed his ministry because he did it.³⁰

Like Luther, Spurgeon held to the priesthood of all believers and knew that reformation would only happen as the people were equipped with the truth. And so his preaching was aimed at the pew, seeking to stir his hearers with the courage and teaching of Martin Luther.

2. Faith's Courage

The Oxford Movement had the advantage of operating within the Church of England. As the established state church, it enjoyed the privilege of government sanction, the respectability of history, and the funding of mandatory tithes and taxes from all citizens. Nonconformists, on the other hand, were relegated to a second-class status.³¹ Though they had come a long way since the Toleration Act 1689, they were still at an institutional disadvantage. Spurgeon understood that pushing back the Oxford Movement and the influence of the Church of England would require not only a change in the law, but a change in the hearts of the English people, through the courageous example of a leader.

In the August 1866 edition of *The Sword and the Trowel*, Spurgeon penned an article entitled, "The Holy War of the Present Hour."³² In this article, he tells the story of Arnold von Winkelried, a Swiss soldier who sacrificed his life, crashing through the ranks of the Austrian phalanx and allowing his comrades to burst through the gap and defeat their enemies. Then Spurgeon draws this lesson:

All great movements need the entire self-sacrifice of some one man who, careless of consequences, will throw himself upon the spears of the enemy. Providence has usually

²⁸ For example, Spurgeon repeatedly refers to the legend of Luther's conversion as happening on the Pilate's stairs during his trip to Rome in 1510 (See *MTP*, 29:1750, 626), but Luther himself claimed in the Preface to his Latin Writings that his conversion took place later, in his study of the Scriptures. See Denis R. Janz, ed. *A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 82.

²⁹ Spurgeon reflected the Reformation scholarship of his day. For a summary of Spurgeon's familiarity with Luther scholarship, see Tom Nettles, *Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2015), 424.

³⁰ *MTP* 45:521.

³¹ See John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 93.

³² *S&T* 1:227.

raised up such a one just when he was needed, and we may look for such a person to come suddenly to the front now. Meanwhile, is there not a man of the sort to be found in our churches? We believe there are many, and to aid in identifying them we will sketch the man required. He must be simple-minded, outspoken, bold and fearless of consequences. To him courage must be instead of prudence, and faith instead of policy. He must be prepared to be apparently despised and really hated, because intensely dreaded, tie must reckon upon having every sentence he utters distorted, and every action misrepresented, but in this he must rejoice so long as his blows tell and his utterances win a hearing. Ease, reputation, comfort, he must renounce, and be content so long as he lives to dwell without the world's camp. Standing at the point of the wedge he must be ambitious to bury as many spears as possible in his own bosom that others may win the victory. Now who is the man who should naturally take up this position? Who in our churches is most called to it? Is it not the minister of Christ?³³

Undoubtedly, Spurgeon considered Luther as the “one man” who sacrificed himself in his day, bearing the blows of the enemy, acting in courage and faith, rather than prudence and policy. And through his sacrifice, Luther began the great movement of the Protestant Reformation that pushed back the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. For Spurgeon, Luther's example was a model for how victory was to be won in all spiritual and theological conflict. After all, this was the model that Christ set as he sacrificed himself for the salvation of his people, and the ministers of Christ were to follow his example.

This is what Spurgeon set out to do on June 5, 1864 in the sermon “Baptismal Regeneration.”³⁴ On the Sunday after the 300th anniversary of John Calvin's death,³⁵ Spurgeon preached a sermon condemning the doctrine of baptismal regeneration found in the teaching of the Book of Common Prayer as unbiblical and damning. Spurgeon warned his publishers about the risk that this sermon would pose for the sale of his weekly sermons.³⁶ He was also deeply aware of how this would expose him to the slander of his enemies, and yet, like Luther, he dared not go against his conscience.³⁷ He had to speak regardless the cost. This sermon was his *95 Theses* moment. And it was only the beginning.

Three weeks later, he preached another sermon on Hebrews 13:13, “Let Us Go Forth,”³⁸ calling evangelicals to leave the Church of England. This would be followed by two more sermons, “Children Brought to Christ, and Not to the Font”³⁹ and “‘Thus Saith the Lord’: Or, the Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary,”⁴⁰ both attacking the unscriptural traditions of the Church

³³ Ibid., 1:229–30.

³⁴ *MTP* 10:313.

³⁵ Evangelicals throughout London gathered that week for various commemorations. See G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 3:92.

³⁶ Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3:95.

³⁷ “I mentioned to one of my publishers that I was about to destroy [the sale of the sermons] at a single blow, but that the blow must be struck, cost what it might, for the burden of the Lord lay heavy upon me, and I must deliver my soul.” *Autobiography*, 3:82.

³⁸ *MTP* 10:365.

³⁹ Ibid., 10:413.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 10:533.

of England. These four sermons would be published together in one volume and sold to the public.⁴¹ After 1864, Spurgeon would continue his attacks through *The Sword and the Trowel*, publishing 22 different articles in the next five years against Roman Catholicism and the Oxford Movement, and more in the years following. Spurgeon would even withdraw from the Evangelical Alliance in 1870 for his denunciation of evangelicals in the Church of England.⁴² In all this, Spurgeon ignited a firestorm of controversy. Hundreds of articles were written and hundreds of sermons were preached against him. Many of Spurgeon's former evangelical allies turned against him. However, because of Spurgeon's leadership, many notable pastors also joined him in this fight, along with many more lesser known ones.⁴³

But Spurgeon's goal was not only to stir up pastors to follow his lead, but also to mobilize the lay people. Living under a monarchy, Luther believed that reformation in his day would not advance apart from the support of the magisterial authorities. In his treatise *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*, Luther argued that the Roman Catholic Church had made itself impervious to all church reform, and therefore, called the political authorities to bring about reform within their lands.⁴⁴

But Spurgeon lived under a democratic government. Additionally, as one who held to a congregationalist church polity, Spurgeon understood that the authority within the church lay fundamentally with the people, not with any magisterial authority. Therefore, any attempt to bypass the congregation in bringing about church reform would be futile. Speaking in 1866 to a Welsh congregation in London about the spread of Roman Catholicism in the Church of England, Spurgeon makes this point, "How well the Reformation went on under Martin Luther until kings came in to help it! ... As soon as ever the kings touched the Reformation, the Reformation ceased. It never went further; it could not, it was impossible." This was the problem with Cromwell's reformation, that it "was achieved by carnal weapons."⁴⁵ Though their contexts were very different, Luther and Spurgeon both sought to involve the authorities of their day, whether magisterial or democratic, to bring about change.

As a Baptist, Spurgeon rejected the establishment of any religion by the state as unjust and the source of religious persecution. "The dogma of union between church and state ... is the essence of Antichrist and the germ of persecution: an injustice to man, and an impertinence to God."⁴⁶ Therefore, he fought for the disestablishment of the Church of England. His goal was for the government to not coerce or extend patronage towards any religion. To do so would be to go the way of Rome. "To act as Rome has acted is to unprotestantise ourselves ... is to degrade ourselves to their level by handling their weapons."⁴⁷ Rather, through his preaching and publications, Spurgeon sought to expose superstition within the Church of England and to stir the hearts of the people to call for the abolishing of the state church.

The main way that Spurgeon envisioned this happening was as people abandoned the Church of England. In his sermon "Let Us Go Forth," Spurgeon used Luther as an example of courage. Here was one who was willing to leave the established church:

⁴¹ Ibid., 10:548.

⁴² *Autobiography*, 3:86. Spurgeon would eventually rejoin the Evangelical Alliance.

⁴³ Ibid., 3:84–85.

⁴⁴ Janz, *A Reformation Reader*, 98.

⁴⁵ Pike, *Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 3:183.

⁴⁶ *S&T* 2:82.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Many there were who said, “The Church of Rome has in it good and true men: let us try and reform her. Her cloisters are not without piety, her priests are not without sanctified lives—let us try and restore her purity”; but Luther heard the voice of God, “Come ye out from among her, lest ye be partakers of her plagues”; and therefore he led the van, taking for his watchword, “Let us go forth without the camp.” To this day the Christian’s place is not to tarry in the camp of worldly conformity, hoping, “Perhaps I may aid the movement for reform”: it is not the believer’s duty to conform to the world and to the world’s ways, and say, “Perhaps by so doing I may gain a foothold, and men’s hearts may be the more ready to receive the truth.” No, from the first to the last day of the Church of God, the place of witness is not inside, but outside the camp; and the true position of the Christian is to go forth without the camp, bearing Christ’s reproach.⁴⁸

Historians have sought to explain Luther’s harsh handling of his opponents and some have traced the theme of passive blasphemy in Luther’s polemics. As Luther encountered active blasphemy, he refused to be complicit in that blasphemy by remaining quiet. Luther believed that those who remained quiet betrayed the cause of Christ.⁴⁹ In many ways, Spurgeon reflected this view, shown in his scathing words against professing evangelicals who remained within the Church of England:

When will you come out? How far is the corrupt element to prevail before you will separate from it? *You* are mainly responsible for the growth of all this Popery, for your piety is the mainstay and salt of what would otherwise soon become too foul to be endured, and would then most readily be swept from the earth. You hinder reformation! You protect these growing upas trees which drip with death to the souls of men! You foster these vipers beneath your goodly garments! You will be used as a shield to protect the agents of the devil, until they need you no longer, and then they will cast you away! For the love you bear to your Redeemer, be duped no longer, and by your own hatred of monkery and priestcraft, *come ye out from among them, be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing.*⁵⁰

However, Spurgeon was not content merely to address evangelical churchmen. He also addressed Protestant dissenters. “How can you so often truckle to a Church which is assuming the rags of the old harlot more and more openly every day? Alliance with true believers is one thing, but union with a Popish sect is quite another.”⁵¹ Though Spurgeon did not deny the reality of individual believers within the Church of England, he rejected the notion that there might be an evangelical alliance with a Church that held to Popish doctrines and practices. This was a call for dissenting churches to raise their voices and disavow their relationship with the Anglican Church.

But Spurgeon believed that the injustice of a state church ought to be the concern not only for Christians, but for all English citizens. In an article describing the horrors of the Inquisition, Spurgeon warned his readers,

⁴⁸ *MTP* 10:577, 367

⁴⁹ Olaf Roynesdal, “Luther’s Polemics,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 6.3 (Autumn 1992), 235–37.

⁵⁰ *S&T* 1:56.

⁵¹ *S&T* 1:106.

Against her common humanity is up in arms as much as evangelical religion. Her confessional is as dangerous to the mere moralist as to the Christian; her inquisition would be as ruinous to mercantile prosperity as to spiritual activity. Men of all religions and of no religion should deprecate the growth of a system which rendered the Inquisition possible.⁵²

Like Luther, Spurgeon employed the media channels of his day to educate the people of his country and engage them in the fight against Roman Catholic teaching. In Luther, Spurgeon found the example of courage needed for reformation, and by his bold leadership, he sought to bring others into the fight along with him.

3. Justification by Faith

According to historian Owen Chadwick, the Oxford Movement was not so much concerned about religious doctrine as it was about religious experience. Those within the movement detected an antinomian passivity within Reformed theology and yet they were hesitant to turn to the social works agenda of Rationalism. As a result, they emphasized religious experience, “the sense of awe and ministry in religion, the profundity of reverence, the concern with conscience not only by way of duty, but by growth of holiness,”⁵³ rather than doctrine. The difference between the old high church and the Oxford Movement was not so much about theology, but in visible and external “atmosphere.”⁵⁴

Even so, they did not hesitate to articulate their theological position in their publications—particularly the *Tracts for the Times*—and lectures. Led by Newman, Pusey, and others, the Oxford Movement sought to find some compromise—a *via media*—between Protestantism and Catholicism. In their doctrine of justification, they rejected the Roman Catholic teaching on merit and works of supererogation, and thus denied any charge of salvation through good works. And yet, they affirmed a “moderate” theology of justification, stressing the necessity of good works as a fruit of faith, even allowing that works could be accepted before justification, that justification could be a process, and that righteousness was not only imputed, but imparted.⁵⁵ And so, in order to aid Christians in that process of justification, the Oxford Movement “called the Church of England to revive the ancient ways ... not only in doctrine, but in liturgy and devotion ... [in] daily worship, frequent celebrations, and more ornaments and vestures than were commonly to be found in English parish churches.”⁵⁶

Spurgeon, however, rejected all this. The only difference he allowed between the Popery of Rome and the Popery of Oxford was in history and circumstances. In essence, they were “both equally deadly, and equally to be abhorred.”⁵⁷ But what was the danger in “candles, vestments, crosses, altars”? Could not these things be *adiaphora*, things indifferent, as the Lutheran tradition taught? Reflecting the Reformed tradition before him, Spurgeon held to the regulative principle, which only permitted those

⁵² *S&T* 2:81.

⁵³ Owen Chadwick, ed. *The Mind of the Oxford Movement* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1960), 28.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 49. For a full treatment of the Oxford Movement's view on justification, see John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁷ *S&T* 2:54.

things prescribed in God's Word for the worship of the church. Things which were initially tolerated as *adiophora* by the early English reformers had now come to be viewed as necessary by those within the Oxford Movement.⁵⁸ More importantly, Spurgeon saw how these rituals darkened the hearts of men to the light of the gospel. "I see this coming up everywhere – a belief in ceremony, a resting in ceremony, a veneration for altars, fonts, and Churches.... Here is the essence and soul of Popery, peeping up under the garb of a decent respect for sacred things."⁵⁹ Spurgeon's concern was not merely for the growth in ceremony and ritual, but for what those things represented, namely a "resting in ceremony" rather than a resting in Christ. Too often these religious experiences became a substitute for saving faith.

This is where Spurgeon and Luther come together. Though Spurgeon and Luther would have disagreed on the allowance of external aspects of liturgy in corporate worship, both agreed on this point: a clear understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith is of ultimate importance. For Luther, this meant rejecting the growing iconoclasm and being slow to reform the church's liturgy because he did not want his people to place their trust in their own works of reform.⁶⁰ For Spurgeon, this meant denouncing the growing ritualism of his day that distracted people from the gospel.

Central to any reformation within the church is a clear proclamation of the gospel of salvation: "This great doctrine of a salvation which emanates from God and not from man, was not only the power of God to save the soul of Luther, it also became the power of God to reform the Church."⁶¹ Therefore, it is particularly fitting that Spurgeon, a Baptist, began his battle against the Church of England with a sermon against baptismal regeneration. Whereas Luther confronted the abuse of indulgences, denouncing them as opposed to the truth of justification by faith, Spurgeon confronted the baptismal language of the Anglican liturgy which declared infants regenerate and bypassed the salvation that only happens through faith in Christ.

The form for the administration of this baptism is scarcely less plain and outspoken, seeing that thanks are expressly returned unto Almighty God, because the person baptized is regenerate. "Then shall the priest say, 'Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.'"⁶²

His objection here was not with infant baptism, as practiced by other Protestants.⁶³ Rather, he was outraged, because such teaching directly contradicted the doctrine of justification by faith alone, removing the necessity of faith for salvation. According to the Scriptures, regeneration, or new birth, is inseparably tied to salvation and does not happen apart from faith in Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴ And yet, the liturgy of the Church of England, like the Roman Catholic Church, taught

⁵⁸ *SET* 2:207–9.

⁵⁹ *MTP* 10:323.

⁶⁰ See Martin Luther, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 449, 461–62.

⁶¹ *SET* 4:4.

⁶² *MTP* 10:316.

⁶³ Spurgeon would later argue that a covenantal understanding of infant baptism would ultimately lead to baptismal regeneration. See Morden, *Communion with Christ*, 91–92.

⁶⁴ Cf. John 3:3–16; 1 Pet 1:3–5.

regeneration for all those who were baptized as infants. Spurgeon saw how this doctrine inoculated people from the gospel and robbed it of its power in their lives.

The man who has been baptized or sprinkled says, "I am saved, I am a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Who are you, that you should rebuke me? Call me to repentance? Call me to a new life? ... It is true, I drink and swear, and all that, but you know I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, for when I die, though I live in constant sin, you will put me in the grave, and tell everybody that I died 'in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.'"⁶⁵

Here, Spurgeon refers also to the language of the burial service, which assured all those who died within the church of a "sure and certain hope" of eternal life. Whether expressed in baptism or in burial, membership within the Church of England had become a substitute for a life of repentance and faith in Christ.

At the heart of Spurgeon's battle against the Oxford Movement was a battle for the gospel. Thus, he concludes,

We shall be clear, I say, of those who teach salvation by baptism, instead of salvation by the blood of our blessed Master, Jesus Christ.... Here shall come the great battle between Christ and his saints on the one hand, and the world, and forms, and ceremonies, on the other. If we are overcome here, there may be years of blood and persecution, and tossing to and fro between darkness and light; but if we are brave and bold, and flinch not here, but stand to God's truth, the future of England may be bright and glorious.⁶⁶

Because the gospel was at stake, no Christian could sit on the sideline, but all would have to be engaged in this battle for the truth.

The battle for the gospel was also a battle over authority. The Oxford Movement based their claims in the ancient traditions of the Church of England. Like Luther, Spurgeon proclaimed the authority of the Word of God over all the traditions of men. Luther's famous statement at the Diet of Worms was not about the principle of freedom of conscience, as so many have argued. Rather it was about Luther's discovery of the authority of the Scriptures and his "absolute obedience to the Scriptures against any authorities; be they popes or councils."⁶⁷ On the foundation of the Scriptures, Luther built his reformation and Spurgeon followed.

Though the Oxford Movement appealed to an older tradition prior to the English Reformation, Spurgeon appealed to an even older authority, the teaching of the prophets and apostles in the Word of God. Whereas Roman Catholicism had built a doctrinal fortress,⁶⁸ Spurgeon envisioned Scripture as "the great corvus" capable of pulling down that "piece by piece the mischievous system of falsehood, be it never so great or high."⁶⁹ One of the clearest examples of this is his sermon, "Thus Saith the Lord."

⁶⁵ *MTP* 10:321.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10:328.

⁶⁷ Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 203–4.

⁶⁸ Luther used a similar image in his letter, "To the Christian Nobility." See Janz, *A Reformation Reader*, 98–105.

⁶⁹ *S&T* 1:195.

While his critics accused him of being ignorant of “historical theology” and “logical terms,”⁷⁰ Spurgeon again and again takes them back to the Scriptures and demands for Scriptural proof of their teaching. In the main body of this sermon, he works through the Book of Common Prayer and examines the sacramental language associated with the rites of baptism, confirmation, absolution, burial, ordination, the crowning of monarchy, and excommunication. For each of these practices, Spurgeon asks, “Is there a ‘Thus saith the Lord’? ... Will any person find us a text of Scripture?”⁷¹ Much like the sermon “Baptismal Regeneration,” Spurgeon argued that the Church of England’s use of the Book of Common Prayer undermined the authority of Scripture.

Like Luther, Spurgeon understood that true reformation had to be built on the Word of God. There, the gospel is found, and all other systems of salvation are torn down. “As long as one Bible remains, the religion of free grace will live.... Because of this, let us be comforted in this day of blasphemy and of rebuke-comforted because though ‘the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.’”⁷²

4. Conclusion

Throughout his ministry, Spurgeon was committed to promoting unity among evangelicals regardless of denomination, so long as the gospel was held in common. Whether Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Baptist, or even Anglican, Spurgeon believed that “all who were born again were members of the church of Jesus Christ.”⁷³ In spite of differences on secondary matters like baptism or church polity, Spurgeon worked alongside evangelicals from other denominations in the cause of evangelism, missions, and social justice. He even believed there could be true believers in the Roman Catholic church, like the priest he encountered during his vacation in Brussels who preached “that the blood of Jesus alone could save.”⁷⁴ As long as the central message of the gospel was rightly held, Spurgeon was glad to acknowledge their fellowship in Christ. Luther, on the other hand, refused to unite with other Protestants because of their differences on secondary matters.⁷⁵ While Spurgeon distinguished his Baptist convictions from the gospel and could downplay those differences for the sake of unity,⁷⁶ Luther saw his convictions on secondary issues as being closely tied to the gospel, so he refused to compromise them.

However, as his battle against the Oxford Movement shows, as soon as Spurgeon detected a threat to the gospel of justification, his attitude changed. He could downplay differences on secondary matters, but if those differences touched on primary matters of the gospel, he would take Luther-like stand. Spurgeon understood there could be no true unity apart from the gospel. Therefore, Spurgeon would preach against any teaching which undermined the gospel and he would require the same theological clarity from Christians around him. In times of controversy, Spurgeon’s commitment to unity would

⁷⁰ *MTP* 10:538–39.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 10:541.

⁷² *MTP* 29:614–15.

⁷³ Gregory A. Wills, “The Ecclesiology of Charles H. Spurgeon: Unity, Orthodoxy, and Denominational Identity,” *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 14.2 (2015): 38.

⁷⁴ *Autobiography*, 2:364–65.

⁷⁵ See Zwingli’s report on Luther from the Marburg Colloquy. Janz, *Reformation Reader*, 195–98.

⁷⁶ Wills, “The Ecclesiology of Charles H. Spurgeon,” 45.

give way to his commitment to orthodoxy, and he would harden in his convictions, even against his fellow evangelicals. This was particularly evident in two intense periods of controversy: first, against the ritualism of the Church of England at the beginning of his ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and then against theological liberalism in the Baptist Union towards the end of his ministry.⁷⁷ In both controversies, Spurgeon would follow Luther in combating theological error and would disassociate from those who did not share his gospel convictions. Spurgeon understood that silent passivity could be as confusing as false teaching, and in word and action, he sought to uphold the truth of the gospel.

Nearly 350 years after Luther nailed his *95 Theses* on the door of the castle church in Wittenburg, Spurgeon continued the fight against Roman Catholic teaching in the heart of London. Though Spurgeon was assailed on many sides for his stand, he knew that he stood in the company of reformers who had gone before him, and therefore he was not alone. One hundred fifty years later, the examples of Luther and Spurgeon remain relevant for the church and continue to inspire courage and faithfulness for the preservation and proclamation of the gospel.

⁷⁷ Much has been written on the Downgrade Controversy. For Spurgeon's own writings on this controversy, see *Autobiography*, 4:253–64 and Charles H. Spurgeon, *The "Down Grade" Controversy* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 2009).

Burning Scripture with Passion: A Review of *The Psalms* (The Passion Translation)

— Andrew G. Shead —

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Abstract: Brian Simmons has made a new translation of the Psalms (and now the whole New Testament) which aims to ‘re-introduce the passion and fire of the Bible to the English reader.’ He achieves this by abandoning all interest in textual accuracy, playing fast and loose with the original languages, and inserting so much new material into the text that it is at least 50% longer than the original. The result is a strongly sectarian translation that no longer counts as Scripture; by masquerading as a Bible it threatens to bind entire churches in thrall to a false god.

1. Some Reflections on the Task of Bible Translation

Brian Simmons’s translation of the Psalms¹ is one volume of a projected new Bible, of which the New Testament and a few other Old Testament books are also finished. Two things immediately mark it out as different from other English versions. First, it is a solo effort. And secondly, its approach to translation removes the final text much farther from the original words than any other English version.

In principle there is nothing wrong with this. Solo versions – think *The Message*, or the J. B. Philips translation – let the unique personality of their creator shine through in refreshing ways. And while they can be idiosyncratic and flawed, such as Mitchell Dahood’s Psalms, or J. B. Phillips for that matter, they can also be faithful, as William Tyndale’s was. And even the most formal of versions, such as the KJV or the ESV, embrace meaning-based translation. The word of God is conveyed not by the words in and of themselves, but by the *meaning* those words generate when combined into clauses, sentences and paragraphs. And this means that all translation involves interpretation.

So how can a translation avoid the dangers of subjectivism, of reading meanings into the text that were not there to start with? There are three main ways, all closely related to one another. (1) Through

¹Brian Simmons, *The Psalms: Poetry on Fire*, The Passion Translation (Racine, WI: BroadStreet, 2014).

prayerful reliance on the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit points us to Christ as the goal and meaning of all Scripture, and this understanding of the whole helps us better to appreciate and respect the original meaning of the parts. (2) Through Christian fellowship. Translators since Martin Luther have worked together in groups, not only to pool their expertise, but to restrain the idiosyncrasies, impulsive decisions and lack of wisdom from which the best of us suffer. (3) Through the canonical rule of the original words. When a Hebrew sentence has been translated into an English sentence of equivalent meaning, the original words are of course lost. But they can never be left behind: each element of meaning in the English has to justify its existence by reference to the words of the original, and each element of the original ought to be represented in some way in translation. This is because Holy Scripture is inspired at the level of its words.

Let me tease out this last point a bit more. The word of God takes many forms, but not all of them are Scripture. Any message which truly and faithfully presents Christ, such as a sermon or even a song, is a proclamation of the word of God. But for the word of God to count as Scripture, that is, the Bible, it must be a faithful equivalent of the specific words used by the inspired authors. The translation must not add to or subtract from the original words, or change their meaning. Not that there is anything wrong with adding, subtracting or changing words (so long as the message is not distorted), but the result will be an adaptation or commentary, which by nature lacks the authority and normative status of Scripture.

Finally, translators, even with God's help, are only human, and they do not get every phrase or even sentence exactly right. But context helps to correct these inaccuracies, and when more and more sentences are read together as a whole, their combined meaning becomes more and more accurate. The only exception to this is when a generally accurate translation strays from faithfulness in order to introduce a bias, or tendency. A good example is the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses. While most of its sentences are faithful, they add up to a portrait of a different God.

2. The Textual and Linguistic Competence of the Translation

2.1. Textual Accuracy

The Hebrew Masoretic text of the Psalms (MT) preserves an old and accurate text, but it does contain copying errors and other damage, which we can often correct with the help of other ancient manuscripts. Apart from the Dead Sea scrolls, which Simmons does not cite even when their evidence is important (e.g., Pss 22:16; 107:29; 144:2; 145:13), these manuscripts are translations of the Hebrew, and so must be used with double care. First, we must decide if a phrase was translated literally enough to be able to tell what the underlying Hebrew was; then, we must decide whether that underlying Hebrew text is any more accurate than our text. The goal is always to recover the original reading that gave rise to the variety of readings reflected in the textual evidence.

Unfortunately The Passion Translation (TPT) shows little understanding, either of the process of textual criticism, or of the textual sources themselves. When it says 'Aramaic' it generally means Syriac – a confusion that some Syriac versions themselves perpetuate – but from a text-critical point of view the difference is important. The *Syriac Peshitta* is a generally conservative translation of a Hebrew text almost identical to ours, made a few centuries after Christ. Only rarely is it a witness to an earlier or more original text. The *Aramaic Targums* are based on the same Hebrew text, but often insert interpretations

into the text, so that Jews did not consider them to be Scripture.² Our oldest copy of the Aramaic Psalms is from after 800 AD. The *Greek Septuagint* is by far the oldest and most important non-Hebrew witness to the original. It has a complex history and varied character, and must be used with care.

None of these considerations seem to weigh with Simmons, because his aim does not appear to be the reconstruction of the original text. In many places where the Syriac is actually an important witness to the original Hebrew text, Simmons makes no reference to it at all (e.g., Pss 2:9; 24:6; 42:4; 49:11; 73:7; 145:13). He seems instead to be looking around in ancient sources for changes and additions that he can use as he himself changes and adds to the text.³ As a general rule, when ancient versions disagree over the original Hebrew, Simmons either ignores the problem or uses all of them. The famous line in Psalm 22:16, 'they pierced my hands and feet' (Dead Sea scrolls, Syriac, Septuagint), reads 'like a lion my hands and feet' in the MT; Simmons uses both 'lion' and 'pierce', the latter twice over for good measure.

To give one more example, in Ps 74:3a the Syriac has 'servants' ('*bd*') instead of the Hebrew 'steps' (פּעַם), possibly because the Syriac translator read the word פּעַל in his Hebrew source-text (*p'l* means 'to labour' in Syriac). The Septuagint, ignored by Simmons, has yet another reading ('hands'), which suggests an ancient interpretive struggle here, possibly due to a textual uncertainty. Simmons's response is to mistranslate the 'Aramaic' (Syriac) in a footnote, and use it as an apparent licence to provide a double translation that bears no resemblance to the Syriac or any other ancient version!⁴

2.2. Linguistic Accuracy

Linguistically TPT is just as questionable. One of its most frequent techniques is to find words with more than one meaning, and create a double translation containing both of them. This is sometimes legitimate, since poetry in particular can play on the double meaning of words. But context must determine case by case whether word-play is intended, and Simmons clearly does not feel himself bound by this.

Take Ps 18:2, 'my God is ... the horn of my salvation.' The word קַרְן, meaning an animal horn, is frequently used as a metaphor of strength (e.g., Ps 75:11; 89:17; 92:10, etc.). But there is one verse where horn, because of its shape, is used to mean 'ray of sunlight' (Hab 3:4, where it is in parallel with 'brightness' and 'light'), and Isaiah uses it once with the meaning 'hill', to create a rhyme (Isa 5:1). A related verb means 'to send out rays', but the horn's shape underlies all these derived meanings. Simmons ignores the core meaning of the word (strength) and creates a double translation combining all the derived meanings: 'You are Salvation's Ray of Brightness / Shining on the hillside.' He also makes the false claim in a footnote that the root word means 'ray of brightness or hillside.' It means neither.

²The Targums were written versions of the oral Aramaic explanations given in the Synagogue after the text had been read out in Hebrew.

³Nothing illustrates this better than his willingness to use Augustine's translations (e.g., in Ps 9:1), when it is well known that Augustine creatively adapted Latin translations of Greek Psalms manuscripts of such poor quality that sometimes they made no sense at all.

⁴The Syriac 'those who are arrogant' becomes 'those who take them captive' in Simmons's footnote. This is not the only time he mistranslates Syriac. In Ps 19:4, for example, he inserts the word 'gospel' on the basis that it is a 'literal translation from the Aramaic.' However, the word in question, while it means 'gospel' in the NT, has 'tidings' as its primary meaning in the OT.

Despite all these glaring problems, if the context pointed strongly enough in this direction then a case might be made for *ray*, or in theory even *hill*. However, the other descriptors of God in Ps 18:2 are all about strength: ‘rock’, ‘fortress’, ‘deliverer’, ‘refuge’, ‘shield’, ‘stronghold’. If we did not know what קרן meant, we could still make a pretty good guess from a context as strong as this. Simmons derails the verse with his fanciful misuse of the dictionary.

This is a relatively minor error for Simmons, because at least the three words in question go back to a single word (‘horn’). There are many places, like Ps 117:1, ‘Praise the Lord’, where things get worse. Simmons’s double translation is ‘Shine with praise to Yahweh!’ A footnote claims that ‘the word for *praise* is taken from the word *shine*’. This is a basic fallacy, which falsely assumes that the Hebrew הלל = ‘shine’ must be the same word as הלל = ‘praise’, just because they look the same. It’s equivalent to translating ‘He bowed before the Queen’ as ‘He bent forward before the Queen like the front of a ship’, because two unrelated words just happen to be spelled ‘bow’.

Finally, the translations of Syriac and Greek referred to in footnotes are often simply wrong. Two examples: (1) Simmons renders ‘word’ in Ps 119:11 as ‘prophecies’, claiming that this is translated from the Septuagint. The Greek word in question (λόγιον) means ‘word’, ‘teaching’ or ‘saying’; thrice in the Bible it means ‘oracle’. But in Psalm 119 it is a key term meaning ‘word’ or ‘promise’ – and this is how Simmons translates all 18 other cases in this psalm where the Septuagint has λόγιον. It appears that he was just looking for an excuse to slip prophecy in, despite the fact that the Psalm celebrates God’s written word, not the spoken oracles he gave his prophets. (2) Simmons rejects the line ‘The fear of the Lord is clean’ (Ps 19:9) in favour of ‘Every one of the Lord’s commands are right, / Following them brings cheer’. His claim, ‘as translated from the Septuagint’, is false. The Greek reads, ‘The fear of the Lord is pure.’ One gets the impression that Simmons felt more comfortable with a response of cheer than fear in this verse, and simply made up an excuse to distort the text. I’m not saying this is what he did, but it is the unfortunate impression the text gives.

Simmons seems as uninterested in linguistic accuracy as he is in textual accuracy. He searches the dictionary, and sometimes apparently his imagination, for ways to insert new ideas that happen to align with his goals, regardless of their truthfulness. What results from this process may still technically count as a translation of the psalms, because there are many ways to translate, including impressionistic and reader-responsive translations. But it does *not* count as a faithful witness to the original text. There is no possible way in which a reader of this translation could ever know whether a given unit of meaning in TPT has an equivalent in the original. And this severing of meaningful connection to the words of the inspired original firmly excludes Simmons’s translation from the category of Scripture.

3. The Translation Itself

To deal with all the issues raised by the translation would take a book many times longer than the original. So rather than simply pick and choose from across the book, it seems fairer to look closely at a block of text, to prevent the ‘cherry-picking’ of translation issues. I shall therefore look at an excerpt from Psalm 18. Along the way I will also make reference to other psalms.

3.1. Additions, Omissions and Alterations in Psalm 18:1–6 and Beyond

The NIV, ESV, CSB and even *The Message* all take between 108 and 110 words to translate Psalm 18:1–6; Simmons takes 164. He is even more expansive later on (e.g., 18:24–34 take 290 words to the NIV's 169). Where do all these extra words come from?

	<i>NIV</i>	<i>TPT</i>
1	I love you, Lord, my strength.	Lord, I passionately love you! I want to embrace you, For now you've become my Power!
2	The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.	You're as real to me as Bedrock beneath my feet, Like a Castle on a cliff, my forever firm Fortress, My Mountain of hiding, my Pathway of escape, My Tower of rescue where none can reach me, My secret Strength and Shield around me, You are Salvation's Ray of Brightness Shining on the hillside, Always the Champion of my cause.
3	I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies.	So all I need to do is to call on to you Singing to you, the praiseworthy God. And when I do, I'm safe and sound in you.
4	The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.	For when the spirit of death wrapped chains around me And terrifying torrents of destruction overwhelmed me,
5	The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.	Taking me to death's door, to doom's domain;
6	In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.	I cried out to you in my distress, the delivering God, And from your temple-throne You heard my troubled cry. My sobs came right into your heart And you turned your face to rescue me.

3.1.1. Additions

The most common source of extra words is double and even triple translation.

- Double translations of single words and clauses: 'Love' becomes 'passionately love' (v. 1); 'rock' becomes 'Bedrock beneath my feet' (v. 2); 'torrents' becomes 'terrifying torrents' (v. 4); 'the snares of death' becomes 'to death's door, to doom's domain' (v. 5); 'my voice' becomes 'my troubled cry' (v. 6); 'blameless' becomes 'loyal and true'.
- Double translations of entire lines: 'I passionately love you/I want to embrace you' (v. 1), which Simmons justifies in a footnote spuriously claiming the word used for love here 'carries the thought of embrace and touch'. In the 44 remaining verses there are about 23 more cases, e.g., v. 31: 'Could there be any other god like you? / You are the only God to be worshipped'.
- Often the doubled clause or line makes space for ideas (underlined) not represented in the original: 'So all I need to do is to call on [sic] to you / Singing to you, the praiseworthy

God' (v. 3); 'My sobs came right into your heart / And you turned your face to rescue me' (v. 6). These cases of exegetical expansion count as alterations, not just additions.

Double translation is Simmons's principal translation technique, but his constant addition of images and ideas into the text is not confined within his double translations. Sometimes he creatively alters the Hebrew (underlined below); elsewhere he creates stand-alone additions, or attaches them by hyphen to a word in the text. They mostly fall into two categories:

(1) 'Spiritual' images, especially of light, height and mystery, designed to inspire feelings of awe and worship; all but the words in [brackets] have no counterpart in the Hebrew:

Ray of brightness ... shining (v. 2), singing (v. 3), spirit (v. 4), burning (v. 7), spirit-[wind] (v. 10), mystery-[darkness] (v. 11), blessing ... treasure (v. 24), all at once ... floodlight (v. 28), revelation ... brightness (v. 28), worship (v. 31), ascend ... [peaks of] your glory (v. 33), [warfare]-worship (v. 34), power within (v. 35), conquers all ... lifted high ... towering over all (v. 46), with high praises ... highest [God] (v. 49), magnificent miracles (v. 50).

Additions aimed at stirring up ecstasy are unsurprisingly prominent in TPT's praise psalms. In Ps 148:2–3 Simmons plays DJ to the psalmist, expanding the repeated imperative to 'praise him' (NIV) with 'go ahead', 'keep it up', 'don't stop now', 'take it up even higher'. He rounds off Psalm 150 by inserting 'crescendo of ecstatic praise'.

(2) 'Corporeal' images of touch, ardour and physical intimacy designed to intensify feelings of love:

Passionately (v. 1), embrace (v. 1), around me (v. 2), in you (v. 3), wrapped (v. 4), sobs (v. 6), heart (v. 6), reached down into my darkness (v. 16), I was helpless (v. 17), held onto me (v. 18), his love broke open the way (v. 19), heart (v. 24), surrendering to him (v. 24), taste (v. 25), you love (v. 25), wrap-around God (v. 30),⁵ wrapped (v. 32), your wrap-around presence ... stooping down (v. 35), your loving servant (v. 50).

Again, added vocabulary of physical and emotional intimacy is ubiquitous in the book, as evidenced in the frequent description of God's people as his 'lovers'. This is Simmons's regular gloss for the Hebrew **אֱמוּנָתָאֵל**, which means 'faithful ones', or 'godly ones', but definitely not 'lovers'. And he even uses it to translate words as neutral as 'people', e.g., Ps 95:7, where 'we are the people of his pasture' becomes 'we are the lovers he cares for'.

3.1.2. Omissions

Omission is rare, and mostly consists of the repeated words and phrases that characterise Hebrew parallelism. Clearly Simmons's preferred style is not that of the Hebrew poets, who build argument through the juxtaposition of parallel ideas:

⁵There is some justification for 'wrapped' in v. 32, as the word means 'put on' or 'gird', but the image is martial, suggesting a sword rather than a cloak. However, 'wrap-around' (vv. 30, 35) is unjustifiable, and the footnote's claim that 'shield' means 'to wrap around in protection' is incorrect. The word refers to a shield that was often used as a weapon as well as defensively. Only once is there a sense of wrapping around (Ps 3:3), which is conveyed in Hebrew by adding the preposition 'around' to the noun.

‘The cords of the grave coiled around me’ (v. 5) is omitted following a very similar line in v. 4; ‘I cried out’ (v. 6b) is omitted following ‘I called’ (v. 6a). Eight more omissions follow in the rest of the psalm, mostly of verbs or noun clauses repeated in parallel lines.

3.1.3. Alterations

Some types of change are very frequent, such as the conversion of [a] speech *about* God or others into speech *to* God (nine times in the psalm); [b] metaphor into simile (once); [c] concrete images into more abstract ones (about ten times, including the elimination of feet, deer, path, bow, rock, shield); and [d] the removal of historical references (including the removal of about half the references to enemies and nations). The examples show ESV → TPT:

<i>ESV</i>	<i>TPT</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
‘The Lord is my rock’ (v. 2)	‘You’re as real to me as Bedrock’	a, b
‘from my enemies’ (v. 3)	‘in you’	a, d
‘From his temple’ (v. 6)	‘from your temple-throne’	a, d
‘to him ... his ears’ (v. 6)	‘right into your heart ... your face’	a
‘a shield’ (v. 30)	‘a secure shelter’	c

Many English versions occasionally replace concrete images with more abstract explanations [c], according to their translational goals. However, the other categories are harder to defend. For example, in v. 28 the expression ‘keep my lamp burning’ refers to the preservation of the psalmist’s life (cf. Prov 13:9; 20:20, 27), and specifically to the preservation of the king’s life and therefore the life of the nation (compare 2 Sam 21:17 with 22:29). But Simmons lifts the image from its historical context and turns it into one of illumination: ‘you turned on a floodlight for me!’ Shifts from external events to internal states occur frequently in his translation.

Even the historical psalms in TPT, such as Psalm 106, tend to make historical people and places less prominent, though the majority of them are retained. Thus there are no tents in TPT 106:25, no Canaan in 106:38, etc. On the other hand, references to pagan gods are intensified: ‘works of darkness,’ ‘serve their gods,’ ‘demon spirits,’ ‘dark practices,’ ‘murder and bloodshed’ are all additions to the original text of Ps 106:34–39.

Other pieces of dehistoricizing and spiritualizing are more theologically loaded. ‘Inherit the land’ (Ps 37:9, 11) becomes ‘live safe and sound with blessings overflowing’ in v. 9 and ‘inherit every promise’ in v. 11. And in Psalm 22 the bulls of Bashan in v. 12 become ‘forces of evil,’ and the dogs in v. 20 become ‘demons.’ At each point Simmons explains in a footnote that these represent ‘the many demonic spirits’ who ‘were bent on destroying Jesus on the cross.’

The most radical cases of alteration involve the complete rewriting of a line or couplet, often resulting in a different meaning (e.g., the rewriting of Ps 18:25 as ‘Lord, it is clear to me now that how we live / Will dictate how you deal with us,’ as the first element of the verse’s double translation). Twenty times in the first twenty psalms the justification ‘implied in the text/context’ is added in a footnote, but the great majority of alterations and additions are unmarked. In Psalm 13, for example, the four verses of lament are fairly modestly treated, but the final two verses of praise are more than doubled in bulk, changing the meaning of the whole psalm in the process. They do this first, by making David’s rejoicing something he will do conditionally on being rescued; second, by identifying God’s goodness

to David with the therapeutic benefits of his suffering; and third, by the invention of two entire lines at the end that make the theme of the psalm the triumph of David's confidence in the face of his enemies' skepticism. Here is TPT vv. 5–6, with additions underlined and alterations in italics:

⁵Lord, I have always trusted in your kindness,
So answer me, [Note: implied in the text]
I will yet celebrate with passion and joy
When your salvation lifts me up.
⁶I will sing my song of joy to you, the *Most High*,
For in all of this *you have strengthened my soul*.
My enemies say that I have no Savior,
But I know that I have one in you!

Finally, while most alterations have theological implications, sometimes theology seems to be the driving factor, serving either to advance the author's favourite themes or to bring potentially problematic statements into his theological comfort zone. I will mention three broad types of theological alteration that pervade the translation.

(1) Changes aimed at explaining Christology, e.g., TPT Ps 22:31b, 'And they will all declare, "It is finished!"'; TPT Ps 110:1, 'Jehovah-God said to my Lord, the Messiah'. These changes can become perilous. The softening in TPT of Ps 22:1 – 'Why would you abandon me now?' – is explained by an addition to the biblical text in v. 24: 'He was there all the time.'

(2) Changes that seek to soften extreme statements that modern readers find uncomfortable, such as the psalmist's claims to be righteous. Here are examples from Psalm 18, NIV (or ESV) → TPT:

- I have kept the ways of the LORD → I will follow his commands (v. 21)
- I am not guilty → I'll not sin (v. 21)
- I have been blameless → I've done my best to be blameless (v. 23)
- [I] have kept myself from sin → keeping my heart pure (v. 23)
- God ... made my way blameless (ESV) → you've shared with me your perfection (v. 32)

Violent or unforgiving language is also toned down, whether by completely changing the meaning (e.g., TPT Ps 23:5, 'You become my delicious feast / Even when my enemies dare to fight'), or by spiritualising and blunting the force of the original (e.g., Ps 137:9, 'Great honor will come to those / Who destroy you and your future, / By smashing your infants / Against the rubble of your own destruction').

(3) Most troubling are changes that tamper with statements about God, whether it be his attitude towards sin (e.g., TPT Ps 51:4, 'Everything I did, I did right in front of you'); judgment (e.g., TPT Ps 18:27, 'The haughty you disregard'); or death (e.g., TPT Ps 88:5, 'They're convinced you've forsaken me, / Certain that you've forgotten me completely—/ Abandoned, pierced, with nothing / To look forward to but death'). Sometimes even God's own character is impugned, e.g., TPT Ps 106:23, 26, 'So you were fed up and decided to destroy them ... so you gave up and swore to them.'

In the early 4th century the great Church Father Athanasius wrote a letter commending passionate, Christ-focused, Spirit-filled interpretation of the psalms. But he concluded with the following warning:

There is, however, one word of warning needed. No one must allow himself to be persuaded, by any arguments whatever, to decorate the Psalms with extraneous matter

or make alterations in their order or change the words themselves. They must be sung and chanted with entire simplicity, just as they are, so that ... the Spirit, Who spoke by the saints, recognizing the selfsame words that He inspired, may join us in them too.’⁶

In short, altered Psalms cease to be Spirit-inspired Scripture.

4. *The Style and Translation Technique of The Psalms*

Simmons’s style is certainly striking and absolutely contemporary. The book is a treasure trove of one-liners. ‘You are my prize, my pleasure, and my portion’ (16:5); ‘My tears are liquid words, and you can read them all’ (38:9); ‘You call yourself a mighty man, a big shot?’ (52:1). ‘Here’s my story: I came so close to missing the way’ (73:2). ‘Like a river bursting its banks, I’m overflowing with words’ (45:1). Of course, many of these are not part of the text, but there are many vigorous, fresh and accurate translation choices that do faithfully reflect major theological themes, such as ‘Yahweh now reigns as king!’ (Pss 93:1; 97:1). However, the stylistic hallmark of *The Psalms* is not its linguistic freshening-up, but its genre.

Simmons has changed the genre of the Psalms from Near Eastern poetry to poetic prose. Notice in the following example, where I have laid out TPT as prose, how words are omitted (underlined in ESV) that would have created duplicate sentences saying the same thing, and words are inserted (underlined in TPT) that turn the remainder into a complex prose paragraph whose elements are logically joined into a narrative. A poetic flavour is added back into this prose by means of abundant alliteration, a technique used in at least every second verse, and by multiplying colourful, emotive, and exclamatory language wherever possible.

<i>Psalm 18:4–6 ESV</i>	<i>Psalm 18:4–6 TPT</i>
The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave <u>coiled around me</u> ; the snares of death <u>confronted me</u> . In my distress I called to the Lord; <u>I cried to</u> my God <u>for help</u> . From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.	For <u>when</u> the spirit of death wrapped chains around me and terrifying torrents of destruction overwhelmed me, <u>taking</u> me to death’s door, to doom’s domain, I cried out to you in my distress, the delivering God, <u>and</u> from your temple-throne you heard my troubled cry. My sobs came right into your heart <u>and you turned your face to rescue me</u> .

The effect is often striking, and would make for an interesting meditation on the psalms, albeit with a strong sectarian flavour. However, by eliminating the poetic techniques of parallelism and juxtaposition, TPT denies the reader the chance to follow the particular logic of the psalms. By abandoning the ‘how’ of Hebrew poetry and replacing it with prose-poems we are left at the mercy of the translator’s impression of the theological story each psalm relates.

A clue to Simmons’s translation technique is his frequent elimination of the second verb in a verse and reversal or mingling of the elements of its two lines; he also tends to split logically subordinated

⁶‘The Letter of St. Athanasius to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms,’ in *St. Athanasius on the Incarnation: The Treatise de incarnatione verbi Dei*, ed. and trans. A Religious of CSMV, 2nd ed. (London: Mowbray, 1953), 116.

sentences into simpler, unconnected sentences. Psalm 50:6 is a good example (comparing ESV and TPT):

The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!	And the heavens respond: “God himself will be their judge, And he will judge them with righteousness!”
---------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

This suggests that Simmons has adapted the method of translation, pioneered by Eugene Nida, of reducing Hebrew sentences to their simplest kernels, transferring those simple structures to English, and then freshly generating a semantically equivalent text.⁷ This is a tried and true method, common among translators who work to give language groups in the majority world their first Bibles. It can produce clear, faithful and accurate translations, but the method needs to be carried out with care to prevent meaning from being lost in the transfer process.

To counter the loss-of-meaning problem Nida stressed the importance of moving beyond linguistic meaning, by recognising (1) contextual specification of meaning, in which the relevant component of a word’s meaning is clarified through its interaction with other word-meanings nearby,⁸ and (2) connotative meaning, namely, the reactions that words prompt in their hearers.⁹ It may be that Simmons has tried to respect these two elements of Nida’s method by means of (1) his constant double translations, and (2) his constant additions of emotive language. However, Simmons has strayed so far outside Nida’s programme that his work would not be recognised as legitimate by any Bible translation society in the world, past or present. Here is Eugene Nida on the question of style and exegesis:

It is style we are concerned with, not exegesis. The two questions are quite independent. Exegesis is wrong, entirely apart from any stylistic considerations, if it (1) misinterprets the point of the original, or (2) adds information from some nontextual source, and especially from some other cultural milieu. ... We may then contrast a linguistic translation, which is legitimate, and a cultural translation or adaptation, which is not.¹⁰

⁷ Eugene Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), esp. p. 68: ‘Instead of attempting to set up transfers from one language to another by working out long series of equivalent formal structures which are presumably adequate to “translate” from one language into another, it is both scientifically and practically more efficient (1) to reduce the source text to its structurally simplest and most semantically evident kernels, (2) to transfer the meaning from source language to receptor language on a structurally simple level, and (3) to generate the stylistically and semantically equivalent expression in the receptor language.’

⁸ Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 56–90.

⁹ ‘Because any theme is inevitably interpreted in the light of the distinctive set of values maintained by each culture or society, one must expect that events will never be mere events, any more than words are mere words. They are always colored by associations, and evaluated in terms of the emotive reactions of people’ (Nida and Taber, *Theory and Practice*, 98).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 133–34.

5. Conclusion: Passion, Translation and Scripture

5.1. The Aim: 'Passion'

The aim of TPT is 'to re-introduce the passion and fire of the Bible to the English reader' (p. 7). 'This is a heart-level translation, from the passion of God's heart to the passion of your heart' (p. 8). Now this may seem an obvious question, but what does 'passion' mean? For Simmons it means a type of emotion. It might be happy, or sad, or angry, or loving, but what makes any emotion into a passion is simply its strength. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines passion as: 'a very strong feeling of sexual love', 'a very strong belief or feeling about something', or 'a very strong liking for something'. But more than this, Simmons wants his translation to 'trigger an overwhelming response to the truth of the Bible' (p. 8). This valuing of being *overwhelmed* by something is what seems to drive his whole project. And here's the thing – this is a uniquely modern, even novel, cultural phenomenon. The idea that things are more real, more true, more valuable, when we feel them strongly is a product of 19th century Western Romanticism. Not that Simmons believes that our emotions make God himself more real. Rather, they make him more real to us; the stronger the emotion, the more fully we realise our 'quest to experience God's presence' (p. 4).

5.1.1. Emotions in the Bible

Emotions are a contentious topic in Christian theology, because they are both powerful and morally ambiguous. The Bible is both deeply affirming of human emotions, and acutely aware of the danger of being controlled by them.¹¹

To be human is to have emotions, and the Bible is full of them. There's no denying the depths of Jacob's love for Rachel (Gen 29:20); of the exiles' grief at the loss of Jerusalem (Lam 1:2); of the Magi's joy at seeing Jesus (Matt 2:10). Jesus, too, shared the emotions common to humanity, both negative and positive. He felt extreme grief at the prospect of his death (Matt 26:38); he was consumed by jealousy on the LORD's behalf (John 2:16–17); he exulted when the Spirit showed him what the Father is like (Luke 10:21).

Not all emotions are desirable, of course, and the Bible uses language of being 'overwhelmed' for unwelcome emotions, emotions that come from outside and 'prevail against' us, such as terror, guilt, or grief (e.g., Pss 55:5; 65:3; 88:7–8). Not that there is anything wrong with feeling them – it's part of living in a fallen world. However, 'passions' are another story. The word 'passion' is used to translate a wide range of Greek and Hebrew words whose meaning spans craving, strong desire, lust, jealousy, rage, or anguish. What these very different internal states have in common is that they tend to overwhelm us and control our behaviour. They pull at us so that we will give in to them. They long to direct our lives in place of the Holy Spirit.¹²

In short, emotions are a mixed bag. There is good fear and bad fear, good grief and bad grief, even good joy and bad joy (Jer 50:11–13). One key principle holds this mixed picture together: *Right*

¹¹ For a good introduction to this vast topic, see Michael P. Jensen, ed., *True Feelings: Perspectives on Emotion in Christian Life and Ministry* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2012).

¹² See Rom 1:26; 6:12; 7:5; 1 Cor 7:9; Gal 5:24; Eph 2:3; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5; 1 Tim 5:11; 2 Tim 2:22; 3:6; 4:3; Tit 2:12; 3:3; Jas 4:1; 1 Pet 1:14; 2:11; 4:2; 2 Pet 2:10; Jude 18; Rev 14:8. In nearly all these verses TPT avoids using the word 'passion'.

emotion flows from right knowledge of God. We learn to love what God loves and hate what he hates by encountering him in Scripture (Deut 6:5–6; Prov 2:6–10). To be in Christ means being shaped by the Word of God, which includes our emotions (Col 3:16). Joy, for example, is a fruit of the Spirit because it is evoked by coming to understand what God has done for us in Christ (Ps 105:43; Luke 2:10; Rom 15:13). The emotions of a believer do not grow stronger; instead, by the grace of God they become redirected. And this process of redirection also entails learning to govern emotions and not be ruled by them (Tit 2:11–12; Jas 4:1). Again, the word of God is key.

5.1.2. *Emotions in The Passion Translation*

Fatally for Simmons's 'passion' programme, the emotions TPT seeks to evoke do not arise naturally from the word of God, but are artificially introduced. TPT generates emotions from the translator's personal response to the text, and uses them to shape our reception of the text. It evidently does not trust in the power of Scripture to move the hearts of its readers without a good deal of outside assistance. After all, if Scripture were sufficient for the task, TPT would not have dialled the emotional volume up to eleven. And the problem is not simply that actual references to emotional states in the Hebrew Psalms are multiplied until they completely and wrongly dominate the whole book. It's the nature of these insertions as well. The Bible's emotions are modified. Feelings of awe are directed towards total ecstasy; feelings of ardour and intimacy are directed towards total surrender. In short, Simmons makes a false claim when he states that TPT will 're-introduce the passion and fire of the Bible to the English reader.' It's the other way round – Simmons is trying to introduce the 'passion and fire' beloved of his own culture into the Bible. He is trying to make the Bible value something that we value – the feeling of being overwhelmed by a strong emotion – in spite of the strong stance the Bible consistently takes against this exact thing. As Ps 117 TPT says (but the Bible does not), 'Let it all out! ... go ahead, let it all out! ... O Yah!'

Not only does TPT seek to overwhelm its readers with emotions that have been imposed on Scripture, but the distortion of the word of God that results from these additions means that readers are deprived of the correct knowledge of God that is prerequisite for the proper shaping of their emotional responses. Simmons's reprehensible selectivity about the emotions he tries to 'trigger' in his readers plays a role here. In his listing of major genres in the Psalms ('themes', pp. 5–6) he completely omits the Psalter's most common genre, namely, lament. And while the translation does include the lament psalms, it does not give them the expansive treatment that praise receives.¹³ Tragically, this illegitimate layering of selective passions over the top of Scripture – mostly those of physical intimacy and breathless elevation – prevents TPT from showing us the *actual* dimensions, the 'width and length and height and depth,' of the love of Christ as it shines from every page of Scripture.

To call a Bible a 'Passion Translation' would have been unthinkable until recent times. It would be like having a 'Greed Translation,' or a 'Lust Translation.' Meanings change, of course, and today 'passion' just means a strong emotion. And yet, while there is nothing wrong with strong emotion *per se*, there is everything wrong with putting it at the heart of the 'quest to experience God's presence.' Simmons aims for 'an overwhelming response to the truth of the Bible,' but does it by generating

¹³ To list just two examples: TPT Ps 22:1–2 + 4–6 take a modest 103 words compared to NIV's 90, but the words of praise in v. 3 are doubled. And the gloomy final verse of Psalm 39 becomes 'Don't let me die without restoring / Joy and gladness to my soul. / May your frown over my failure / become a smile over my success.'

emotion that is foreign to Scripture and using it to whip us up into a response that is not shaped by the word.

5.2. The Method: Double Translation

It might seem intuitively true that when a Hebrew word does not have a precise English equivalent, what is needed is to use more than one English word. But TPT demonstrates just how wrong this can be. The whole point of meaning-based translation is that a sentence is more translatable than a word. It is context that adds the required precision of meaning, not double translation, which only serves to distance the reader from the original. When the Septuagint translators encountered a phrase they could not easily replicate in Greek, they often ensured that their paraphrase had the same number of words as the Hebrew – what scholars today call ‘quantitative literalism.’ The point is that every unnecessary word in a translation takes it one step further from accuracy. Simmons has produced a text so far removed from the original that it no longer counts as the Bible.¹⁴

And this is even before we remember TPT’s lack of interest in textual and linguistic accuracy. So frequently does TPT misrepresent or ignore the original text that one is forced to conclude that its author had little interest in representing the meaning of the original as preserved in the manuscript tradition. Instead he abuses ancient witnesses, pressing them into the service of his own novel ideas about what the text ought to say. In Nida’s words, this is not a linguistic translation; it is a cultural translation, and hence it is not a legitimate Bible.

5.3. The Result: A New Scripture for a New Sect

TPT is not just a new translation; it is a new text, and its authority derives solely from its creator. Like Joseph Smith and *The Book of Mormon*, Brian Simmons has created a new scripture with the potential to rule as canon over a new sect. Judging from *The Psalms* alone, I would say that it would be a Christian sect, and that unlike the Mormon cult its scriptures will point its adherents to saving faith in God the Son, the crucified and risen Lord Jesus. But TPT is not a Bible, and any church that treats it as such and receives it as canon will, by that very action, turn itself into an unorthodox sect. If the translation had been packaged as a commentary on Scripture I would not have needed to write this review; but to package it as Scripture is an offence against God. Every believer who is taught to treat it as the enscripturated words of God is in spiritual danger, not least because of the sentimentalised portrait of God that TPT *Psalms* sets out to paint. Simmons’s caricature of God as ‘the King who likes and enjoys you’ (‘Introduction,’ p. 5) eliminates all but one facet of God’s feelings about us, and then gets that one wrong.

This 500th anniversary of the Reformation is a time to remember how urgent and contested the question of Bible translation was, back when almost no one in the world had the Scriptures in their heart language. One of the accusations Catholic apologists brought against early Bible translators was that they added words to the text in support of their Protestant heresies, just as the Arians and Pelagians had done before them (all the Arians had to do was change one word in Prov 8:22). This was a dangerous charge, and William Fulke’s defence of 1583 is a good place to end this review.

¹⁴ An interesting comparison is the once-popular Amplified Bible, which clearly marked its amplifications as additions to the text, so that readers could distinguish Scripture from amplification.

The original text of the holy scripture we alter not, either by adding, taking away or changing of any letter or syllable, for any private purpose; which were not only a thing most wicked and sacrilegious, but also vain and impossible. For so many ancient copies of the original text are extant in divers places of the world ... [that] we should be rather mad than foolish if we did but once attempt such a matter, for maintenance of our own opinions.¹⁵

¹⁵ William Fulke, *A Defence of the Sincere and True Translations of the Holy Scriptures into the English Tongue*, ed. Charles Hartshorne for the Parker Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1843), 11. See also pp. 547–56.

When (and How) English-speaking Evangelicals Embraced Q

— Michael Strickland —

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Abstract: This article considers the emergence of an evangelical endorsement of the Two-Source Hypothesis as a solution to the Synoptic Problem in the first half of the twentieth century. Conservative scholars such as B. B. Warfield, Geerhardus Vos, A. T. Robertson, and W. Graham Scroggie considered the hypothesis, and its concomitant Q document, to be amenable to evangelical sensibilities. Specifically, the article details how the scholars considered the Two-Source Hypothesis to be a scientific conclusion, and one that presented an early source for the life of Jesus with a high Christology.

“The two-source theory has been appropriately dethroned from the status of being an ‘assured result of scholarship.’ Nevertheless, properly nuanced, it remains the best general explanation of the data.”¹

The Synoptic Problem is the term used to describe the relationships between the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Why are those gospels so similar in order and wording in places, and yet different in others? I devoted my doctoral thesis to exploring how early orthodox Protestant and evangelical scholars answered the Synoptic Problem over the past almost-five centuries.² While one can hardly summarize the findings of years of that research here, it suffices to say that there has never been an *orthodox* or *evangelical* solution to the Synoptic Problem. Over the centuries, conservative

¹D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 95.

²Published as Michael Strickland, *The Evangelicals and the Synoptic Problem*, American University Series 336 (Berlin: Peter Lang Academic, 2014). I summarize some of the findings of that work below in the conclusion. I have adapted and expanded some of my research in this essay.

authors preferred, at first, the Independence Hypothesis,³ and then the Augustinian Hypothesis,⁴ before the Two-Source Hypothesis⁵ had been proposed. However, as Carson and Moo indicate, it is clear that, though it is no longer considered a proven fact, the Two-Source Hypothesis remains the dominant solution preferred by evangelical scholars of today. This is somewhat surprising, given the fact that source criticism of the gospels was “spawned – not from a mere exegetical vantage point, as was later the case with redaction criticism – but from a desire to identify the historic Jesus. Thus, H. J. Holtzmann was compelled to conclude his book with a chapter on the life of Jesus viewed from ‘Source A,’ truncated from Mark.”⁶ How is it that German historical-critical scholarship regarding gospel origins came to be mainstream in English-speaking evangelical circles by the middle of the twentieth century? It was through the work of American and British evangelical leaders (some of whom had trained in Germany) interacting with (and often rejecting) German scholarship that the Two-Source Hypothesis gained popularity in churches and seminaries, as is seen below. These scholars saw in the theory a rigorous scientific explanation of the biblical data that offered a very early source for the life of Jesus that demonstrates a high Christology.

1. The Princeton School and the Synoptic Problem: Using the Two-Source Hypothesis to Combat the Quest for the Historical Jesus

As most readers of this journal will know, Princeton was known as a bastion of conservative Presbyterian theology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Professors such as Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander, B. B. Warfield, A. A. Hodge, C. W. Hodge, J. Gresham Machen and Geerhardus Vos “provided intellectual foundations for defending the faith” in their scholarship in

³The Independence Hypothesis holds that each evangelist composed his gospel without having seen the work of his predecessors. John Calvin was an early advocate, with more recent advocates being Louis Berkhof, Eta Linnemann, Robert Thomas and F. David Farnell. For greater detail on the works in which these authors advocated for the Independence Hypothesis, see Strickland, *The Evangelicals and the Synoptic Problem*, 193.

⁴The Augustinian Hypothesis, following comments made by Augustine (*De Consensu Evangelistarum* 1.2.4), holds that Matthew wrote first; Mark made use of Matthew; and then Luke made use of both Matthew and Mark. Martin Chemnitz was an early Lutheran scholar of the sixteenth century who advocated for the Augustinian Hypothesis. Most recently, the English evangelical scholar John Wenham argued for this hypothesis. For greater detail on the works in which these authors advocated for the Augustinian Hypothesis, see Strickland, *The Evangelicals and the Synoptic Problem*, 194.

⁵First advocated by C. H. Weisse (*Die evangelische Geschichte kritisch und philosophisch bearbeitet* [Leipzig, 1838]), the Two-Source Hypothesis gained notoriety through the work of H. J. Holtzmann in his *Die Synoptische Evangelien: Ihr Ursprung und geschichtliche Charakter* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1863). The theory holds that Mark wrote first, and then Matthew and Luke both made use of Mark (the first shared source). Both Matthew and Luke also made use of a shared document, now lost, identified with the siglum Q, representing the German word for source, *Quelle*. This document contained at minimum the material of the double-tradition (material common to Matthew and Luke but not in Mark). The Four-Source hypothesis, or Oxford Hypothesis (popularized by the work of Oxford don, B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* [London: Macmillan, 1924]), also posits a unique source for Matthew and another for Luke, but retains the standard elements of the Two-Source Hypothesis. The evangelical scholars who have advocated for this view are too many to list, but perhaps the best known modern scholar is Robert H. Stein.

⁶Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 112n40.

what became known as the “Old Princeton School.”⁷ While most of the faculty at Princeton appear not to have addressed the Synoptic Problem during that time, the approach of two Old Princetonians, B. B. Warfield and Geerhardus Vos, is considered here.

2. B. B. Warfield (1851–1921): *The “Lion of Princeton” and the Two-Source Hypothesis*

Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield was born in Kentucky into a wealthy family, which enabled him to attend university in Princeton, Edinburgh, Heidelberg, and Leipzig. When he returned to the United States for good in 1878, he accepted a position at Western Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. He remained at Western until 1886, when he returned to Princeton as professor, a position he held until his death, and served as one of most formative figures in early twentieth century evangelical thought.⁸

Warfield never wrote a book, article, or chapter specifically dedicated to the Synoptic Problem, though he did offer his opinions on the matter on several occasions. It is impossible to say with certainty what Warfield’s exact solution to the Synoptic Problem was, but three of his publications indicate a tentative endorsement of the Two-Source Hypothesis.⁹ In his chapter entitled, “The Primitive Jesus,” in *The Lord of Glory*,¹⁰ Warfield sought to show that the picture of Jesus in the gospels was a consistent one from the very beginnings of the church. Though he certainly would not accept all of the findings of modern critical scholarship, Warfield was glad to claim that the “hypothetical sources which the several schools of criticism reconstruct for our Synoptics” each contain a clear portrait of a “supernatural Christ.”¹¹ He noted that the theory most “in vogue” was the Two-Source Hypothesis, and without indicating his own opinion of it, worked from the presumption of that hypothesis in his arguments. The first source was Mark, or a primitive version that contained practically all of that gospel.¹² If the synoptics were based on this primitive Mark, and even if it were assumed to contain only the triple tradition, it would still portray Jesus as supernatural.¹³ He would still be called the Christ (8:29 and 14:61–62), would still be implied to be a king (15:2, 32), Son of David (10:47–48), Lord (11:3; 12:35) and Son of God (1:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6–7). Moreover, there would still be details concerning his betrayal and suffering (14:20) as well as his mocking, scourging, and death (10:33). Finally, there would still be mention of his resurrection (10:34), ascension (14:62), and his return with power and glory (8:28; 13:26).¹⁴

⁷ George M. Marsden, “Reformed and American,” in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development*, ed. David. F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 8.

⁸ For an excellent description of Warfield’s life and legacy, see Kim Riddlebarger, *The Lion of Princeton: Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield on Apologetics, Theological Method and Polemics* (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1997).

⁹ William Baird (*History of New Testament Research: From Jonathan Edwards to Rudolf Bultmann*, vol. 2 [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 348) considers it clear that Warfield adopted a “modified form” of the Two-Source Hypothesis.

¹⁰ Warfield, “The Primitive Jesus,” in *The Lord of Glory: A Study of the Designations of Our Lord in the New Testament with Synoptic Problemecial Reference to His Deity* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), 133–58.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

Warfield next moved to the other source of the Two-Source Hypothesis, the hypothetical *logia*¹⁵ document, singling out Harnack's reconstruction.¹⁶ Again, Warfield decided to work with its bare minimum contents, the double tradition, in which are found intimations of Jesus's messiahship (Matt 11:3 = Luke 7:19; Matt 8:8 = Luke 7:6), his control over the destinies of people (Matt 7:21 = Luke 6:46), as well as allusions to the titles "Son of God" (Matt 4:3, 6 = Luke 4:3, 9) and the "Son of Man" (Matt 11:19 = Luke 7:34; Matt 8:20 = Luke 9:58; Matt 11:27 = Luke 10:22; Matt 16:48 = Luke 12:47). As in primitive Mark, a minimal *logia* still mentions a Jesus who faces betrayal and death (Matt 16:28 = Luke 12:47) and ultimately resurrection (Matt 12:40 = Luke 11:30).¹⁷ Warfield rejected critical assumptions that the evangelists created a biased image of Jesus.¹⁸ Especially absurd to Warfield was the attempt to sift through all the mythical and "high claims" of the evangelists, searching "as if for hid treasure," for the "real Jesus."¹⁹ Here, Warfield singled out Schmiedel's entry in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, a work he would address at length in 1913 (see below). Ultimately, Warfield concluded that the evidence from the earliest written sources presented the same Jesus as the one found in the gospels, and attempts to draw stark distinctions had failed.²⁰

Three years later, in 1910, Warfield published the entry for "Jesus Christ" in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*,²¹ which later became a chapter in Warfield's *Christology and Criticism*.²² Warfield offered many of the same arguments made in "The Primitive Jesus" with some minor adaptations. First, rather than mentioning the Two-Source Hypothesis Synoptic specifically, Warfield referred repeatedly to the one source used by all three synoptic writers and the other source Matthew and Luke had in common. Second, Warfield appeared intentionally to be vague regarding the nature of these sources by refusing to state whether they were written or oral, instead referring to their common "narratives" instead of common "documents." Third, because this was an encyclopaedia entry, Warfield wrote in more general terms with fewer comparisons of synoptic data. Fourth, Warfield seemed to gently dismiss the Independence Hypothesis with the following statement:

¹⁵ It was common in this period to use the term *logia* to refer to the Q document, based on Papias' description of Matthew's written account of sayings of Jesus (see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16). However, the German evangelical scholar Theodor Zahn, whose *Einleitung in das neue Testament*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1897, 1900) was soon translated into English (Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2 vols, trans. John Moore Trout, et al. [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909]), had already demonstrated that Papias' *logia* could hardly have meant an Aramaic document with a Greek title, especially one that was never mentioned in any other church writings. See Zahn, *Introduction*, 2:603–4. According to Eta Linnemann, Zahn was the first to argue against equating Q with the *logia*. Eta Linnemann, "The Lost Gospel Of Q—Fact Or Fantasy?" *TJ* 17.1 (Spring 1996): 6. However, because the authors considered in this essay used the terms *logia* and Q interchangeably, I have adopted their practice here.

¹⁶ Adolf von Harnack, *Sprüche und Reden Jesu: die Zweite Quelle des Matthäus und Lukas* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1907).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 140–41.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

²¹ Benjamin B. Warfield, "Jesus Christ," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1910), 6: 150–76. Quotations are from this edition.

²² Benjamin B. Warfield, *Christology and Criticism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), 149–77.

If the three Synoptic Gospels do not give three independent testimonies to the facts which they record, they give what is, perhaps, better—three independent witnesses to the trustworthiness of the narrative, which they all incorporate into their own as resting on autoptic testimony and thoroughly deserving of credit.²³

Instead of arguing, as many advocates of the Independence Hypothesis had done, that the differences in the synoptic gospels proved their independence, Warfield argued that they the differences demonstrated the Synoptics were independently based on the same narrative. Using similar arguments as those in the 1907 article, Warfield posited a narrative source and a sayings source behind Matthew and Luke, and added that the trustworthiness of these sources was guaranteed by Luke's pledge to consult authentic eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:1–4).²⁴

In 1913, Warfield continued an apologetic tone in his article, "Concerning Schmiedel's 'Pillar Passages,'"²⁵ a work meant to answer the most extreme claims of Schmiedel in his 1901 entry in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*.²⁶ Warfield began by grouping Schmiedel with Reimarus²⁷ and Wrede²⁸ in "the quest for the Historical Jesus."²⁹ Warfield criticized Schmiedel's desire for scholars to return to the "pre-Tübingen position of criticism" that did not appeal to source criticism. Interestingly, Warfield advocated the opposite approach, noting that F. C. Baur³⁰ had "laid down the reasonable rule" that criticism of the sources must come before criticism of the gospels.³¹ Warfield faulted Schmiedel for wanting to regress to the approach of Strauss with its "unreasoned scepticism."³² Schmiedel sought to recover the Jesus obscured by legend and faith, and his method for doing so was particularly bothersome to Warfield. Schmiedel argued that he could find the authentic Jesus by comparing those places in the gospels where one evangelist changed details provided by others in order to enhance the view of Jesus. Schmiedel was able to find nine of these passages and termed them "pillars" because they were the foundation of the true reconstruction of the historical Jesus.³³ Warfield argued that Schmiedel erred in his admission, on the one hand, of a common source behind the Synoptics, and on the other, his lack of acknowledgement

²³ Warfield, "Jesus Christ," 152.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Concerning Schmiedel's 'Pillar-Passages,'" *The Princeton Theological Review* 11 (1913): 195–269.

²⁶ Paul W. Schmiedel, "Gospels," in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, ed. Thomas K. Cheyne and John S. Black (London: A. & C. Black, 1901), columns 1765–1896.

²⁷ H. S. Reimarus (1694–1768) is often considered the Father of the Quest for the Historical Jesus. His writings on Jesus were first published posthumously by G. E. Lessing in 1774, without identifying the original author. See Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press: 1996), 2–3.

²⁸ William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901); ET *The Messianic Secret* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971).

²⁹ Warfield, "Concerning," 195.

³⁰ F. C. Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis* (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1935).

³¹ Warfield, "Concerning," 195.

³² Ibid., 197.

³³ Ibid., 203–4. As Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 47, remarks, "These passages would guarantee that such a figure as Jesus existed, that some irreducible minimum could be known with certainty about him, and on this basis a wider picture could be constructed, provided that it did not contradict the pillar passages."

that the common source, Mark, was composed at a time very close to the events described.³⁴ Likewise, Schmiedel failed to appreciate the even earlier construction of the *logia*. Warfield criticised Schmiedel for failing to look beyond Matthew and Luke to these sources:

If we are to break up the Gospels into their sources and appeal rather to these sources than to the Gospels ... we do not lose but profit by the process. Instead of three witnesses of about the seventh decade of the century we have now in view quite a number of witnesses, all earlier than the seventh decade of the century, some of them perhaps very much earlier.³⁵

Thus, Warfield used the Two-Source Hypothesis to counter the radical skepticism inherent in much of the search for the Jesus of history.

Finally, it is appropriate to consider one further article in which Warfield briefly mentioned the Synoptic Problem.³⁶ In 1914, a year after he urged biblical critics to look at the older sources behind the Synoptics, in a footnote Warfield criticized Theodor Keim's³⁷ assumption of Matthean priority and added:

And in general no form of criticism is more uncertain than that now so diligently prosecuted which seeks to explain the several forms of narratives in the Synoptics as modifications one of another.³⁸

This single quote would later be used multiple times by Robert Thomas, evangelical opponent of redaction criticism to show Warfield's rejection of the method.³⁹ While it is obvious that Warfield did not refrain from applying source critical methods to the gospels, he appeared to be wary of source criticism that focused on the editorial activities of the evangelists. Warfield was followed by his Princeton colleague Geerhardus Vos in using the Two-Source Hypothesis to defend the gospels against the "Quest for the Historical Jesus" just a few years later.

3. Geerhardus Vos: Using the Two-Source Hypothesis against Bousset

While not attaining the high profile that Warfield enjoyed at Princeton, Professor Geerhardus Vos was perhaps just as influential in Reformed biblical theology. Vos was born in the Netherlands to a German family, and he moved with the family to Grand Rapids, Michigan for his father to accept

³⁴ Warfield, "Concerning," 240.

³⁵ Ibid. Later, Warfield suggested the sources predated Matthew and Luke by as much as twenty years. See p. 242.

³⁶ Benjamin B. Warfield, "Jesus' Alleged Confession of Sin," *The Princeton Theological Review* 12 (April 1914): 177–228.

³⁷ Theodor Keim, *Die Geschichte Jesu von Nazara (The History of Jesus of Nazara)*, vol. 5 (1876–1881), 37.

³⁸ Warfield, "Jesus' Alleged," 196 n. 34.

³⁹ See Thomas's "Introduction," in *The Jesus Crisis*, ed. Robert Thomas and David Farnell (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 13–36. The Warfield quote appeared three times in the book, all by Thomas (pp. 14, 24, and 358). Thomas also used the Warfield quote in several other publications: Robert L. Thomas, ed., *The Master's Perspective on Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 221; "Historical Criticism and the Evangelical: Another View," *JETS* 43.1 (March 2000): 98; and *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 301.

a position as pastor of a Reformed Church in 1881. Vos was fluent in Dutch, German, and English, allowing him to move freely between the Reformed institutions of America and Germany. He began his theological studies first at the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, then moving to Princeton, and on to Germany where he studied at Berlin and Strassburg, ultimately receiving a PhD in Semitics in 1888. From Germany, he returned to the Theological School as professor for five years, finally returning to Princeton as the Chair of Biblical Theology. He retired from Princeton in 1932 after 39 years and several publications.⁴⁰

It would appear that the only publication in which Vos addressed the Synoptic Problem was a lengthy article he composed for *The Princeton Theological Review* in 1915. Like Warfield a decade before, Vos used his pen to combat the influence of skeptical gospel criticism, but his target was the work of William Bousset, who had the year before published his puissant *Kyrios Christos*.⁴¹ As Bousset had used the Two-Source Hypothesis to argue that the doctrine of Jesus's lordship was a late first-century development, Vos used the Two-Source Hypothesis to argue exactly the opposite. At Strassburg, Vos had been a student of Holtzmann, who first exposed him to the Two-Source Hypothesis,⁴² but Vos used Harnack's reconstruction of Q to refute Bousset.⁴³

In his article, "The Continuity of the *Kyrios* Title in the New Testament,"⁴⁴ Vos showed that the lordship of Jesus had been proclaimed from the earliest NT times. Bousset had observed that the objective title *Kyrios* was only applied to Jesus once in Mark and nowhere in the *logia*, and in the vocative form appeared once in each source. To Bousset, the paucity of the occurrences of the title "Lord" in the earliest gospel tradition compared to its frequent use in Matthean and Lukan non-*logia* contexts implied that the title applied to Jesus was the development of a later tradition.⁴⁵ Using evidence from the proposed *logia*, Vos attempted to disprove Bousset's conclusions. First, Vos disagreed with Bousset's definition of "titular" form of *Kyrios*, which Bousset did not find in the *logia*, as falsely disallowing clear titular occurrences of the word. Vos appealed to Matt 24:43–51 = Luke 12:39–46, where *Kyrios* was used in parabolic form, but clearly implied a "corresponding relationship between Jesus and the disciple."⁴⁶ He also cited Matt 10:24–25, where *Kyrios* was similarly used in a parable, and where Harnack had concluded that *Kyrios* was original to the *logia*.⁴⁷ Moving to the vocative form *Kyrie*, Vos argued that Bousset's claim, that the double *Kyrie*, *Kyrie* in Luke 6:46 was evidence of a later cultic use, was invalidated if the Lukan passage be admitted as coming from the *logia*.⁴⁸ Vos then further developed his argument by offering a discussion of the *logia*. Because the document consisted primarily of a list of

⁴⁰ James T. Dennison, "Geerhardus Vos: Life in Two Worlds," *Kerux* 14.2 (Sep 1999): 18–31.

⁴¹ Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913).

⁴² James T. Dennison, *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 24.

⁴³ Adolf von Harnack, *The Sayings of Jesus: The Second Source of St. Matthew and St. Luke*, trans. J. Wilkinson (London: Williams & Norgate; New York: G. P. Putnam's Son's, 1907–1908).

⁴⁴ Geerhardus Vos, "The Continuity of the *Kyrios* Title in the New Testament," *Princeton Theological Review* 13 (April 1915): 161–89.

⁴⁵ Vos, "Continuity," 164–65.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 168–69.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 169–71. Also, considering Matt 8:8 = Lk 7:6, Vos argued, citing Harnack, that Bousset's failure to include this occurrence of the vocative *Kyrie* in the *logia* was a mistake.

sayings by Jesus, there would be little occasion within it to include appeals to Jesus as *Kyrie* or *Kyrios*. Given its nature, the more conclusive proof from the *logia* should come from the parabolic forms where Jesus indirectly taught about himself.⁴⁹

Again, using the Two-Source Hypothesis as a buttress for his arguments, Vos moved to the other source document, Mark. In Mark 2:28, the Son of Man is called *Kyrios* of the Sabbath, an instance where Bousset too easily dismissed the notion that any kind of sovereignty was meant.⁵⁰ Bousset came to the same false conclusion with regard to Mark 12:35–37 by refusing to allow that the messiah could be both *Kyrios* and son of David, the very point that Jesus was trying to make.⁵¹ The one occurrence of *Kyrios* in Mark which Bousset considered a proper title, Mark 11:3, he still incorrectly minimized because of his negative presuppositions concerning “the supernatural in the consciousness of Jesus.”⁵² Vos also saw a fallacy in Bousset’s acknowledgement that the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:28) referred to Jesus as *Kyrie* but rejected the occurrence as evidence for the early use of the title in Palestine because the woman was a foreigner. In fact, Vos argued, Mark’s inclusion of the title was evidence of her great faith, offering her as an example to the Palestinians of the time.⁵³ From that point, Vos argued that if it be admitted that Bousset’s disqualification of the many occurrences of *Kyrios* and *Kyrie* was faulty, then Bousset’s argument was rendered unnecessary. Regardless of how many times Matthew and Luke used the title outside of the *logia* source, the fact that the title was in their sources proved that the development of the title *Kyrios* as applied to Jesus was not strictly a later development.⁵⁴

Vos’ article seemed to portend a change among evangelical advocates of the Two-Source Hypothesis in arguing from that hypothesis against its more radical proponents. Evangelical scholars came to be comfortable with the notion of *logia*, or Q, because they considered it to reflect a high view of Jesus. This idea was taken even further a few years later by the evangelical scholar A. T. Robertson.

4. A. T. Robertson (1863–1934): Evangelicalism’s Strongest Advocate for the Two-Source Hypothesis

Archibald Thomas Robertson was born in Virginia and raised in North Carolina, where he later attended Wake Forest University, before moving to Louisville, Kentucky to attend the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). After receiving the Th.M. in 1888, he remained at SBTS, working first as a teaching assistant, and then as a professor from 1892 until his death.⁵⁵ The volume of Robertson’s writing is phenomenal. He is perhaps best known for his Greek grammars—*A Short Grammar of the*

⁴⁹ Vos, “Continuity,” 172.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 174. Indeed, as Benedict Viviano, *Matthew and His World: The Gospel of the Open Jewish Christians: Studies in Biblical Theology* (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2007), 114, observes, “The OT background would lie with humans as the crown of creation and the image of God (Gen 1 :26, 28), as well as in the parallelism between man and son of man that one finds in Ps 8:5–9, and in the dominion over creation (Gen 1:28–31; *Jub.* 2:14)... The Christological rereading of the verse by Mark would affect not only Son of man but also *kyrios*. Jesus as Daniel’s Son of man would stand as the divine *kyrios* over the Sabbath.”

⁵¹ Vos, “Continuity,” 176.

⁵² Ibid., 177.

⁵³ Ibid., 180–81.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 185–89.

⁵⁵ Baird, 2:412–14.

Greek New Testament (New York: George H. Doran, 1908) and *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919)—and his six-volume *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1930–33).

More than any evangelical scholar before 1950, Robertson was an optimistic and wholehearted advocate of the Two-Source Hypothesis, confident in the ability of the hypothesis to solve the Synoptic Problem and provide a clearer picture of Jesus. It appears that before 1905, Robertson was not convinced by any particular solution to the Synoptic Problem. In 1905, Robertson was one of four NT professors from various theological institutions interviewed by *The Biblical World* and asked questions relating to biblical matters. One question was, “What is your theory of the relation of the synoptic gospels to one another?” Robertson replied, “The oral, documentary, and mutual dependence theories all have an element of truth in them, though neither by itself can explain all the phenomena.”⁵⁶ However, over the next four years his tone toward the several solutions changed.

Though he had hinted at his newfound confidence in the Two-Source Hypothesis as early as 1909,⁵⁷ Robertson made his full endorsement of the Two-Source Hypothesis known in 1911 with statements in his commentary on Matthew’s Gospel.⁵⁸ He repeated his endorsement that same year in *John, the Loyal: Studies in the Ministry of the Baptist*.⁵⁹ In 1915, Robertson appealed to evidence from Q that the animosity between the Pharisees and Jesus was documented in the “earliest strata of the Gospel narratives.”⁶⁰ In his *Luke the Historian In Light of Research*,⁶¹ Robertson again advocated the Two-Source Hypothesis, claiming that it had been “practically demonstrated” that Mark was used by Matthew and Luke, and that the “oral theory” was insufficient.⁶² Likewise, he was confident that Matthew and Luke had used a common Q document because of the existence of collections of sayings of Jesus at the time, a fact confirmed by the scraps of *logia* found at Oxyrhynchus.⁶³ Robertson believed that Mark was written after Q, and perhaps the evangelist Mark had made use of the document.⁶⁴ In 1922, in *A Harmony of the Four Gospels*,⁶⁵ Robertson extolled the Two-Source Hypothesis as a product of biblical criticism “that is likely to stand the test of time” and further, that the theory “seems to be proven.” He opined that it was

⁵⁶ “An Interview with New Testament Scholars: W. F. Adeney, D. A. Hayes, A. T. Robertson and Frank C. Porter,” *The Biblical World* 26.3 (Sep 1905): 199–200.

⁵⁷ A. T. Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of Paul: Study of Development in Paul’s Career* (New York: Scribner’s, 1909), 87.

⁵⁸ A. T. Robertson, *Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 11–22.

⁵⁹ A. T. Robertson, *John, the Loyal: Studies in the Ministry of the Baptist* (New York: Scribner’s, 1911), 61.

⁶⁰ A. T. Robertson, *The Pharisees and Jesus: The Stone Lectures for 1915–16* (New York: Scribner’s, 1920) 62.

⁶¹ A. T. Robertson, *Luke the Historian in Light of Research* (New York: Scribner’s, 1920), 61–72.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶³ For many years, until the positive identification of the Oxyrhynchus fragments (pOxy. 1, 654, and 655) with the Gospel of Thomas (after the Nag Hammadi discovery in 1945), scholars assumed that published findings of the fragments by B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt (*Logia lesou: Sayings of Our Lord*, Egypt Exploration Fund [London: Frowde, 1897]) provided evidence that collections of Jesus’s sayings were common in the first century.

⁶⁴ Robertson, *Luke the Historian*, 70.

⁶⁵ Robertson, *A Harmony of the Four Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1922).

“plain as a pikestaff” that Matthew and Luke used Mark’s contents and order, and recommended the works of Sanday, Hawkins, and Harnack on Q.⁶⁶

In his 1924 work *The Christ of the Logia* Robertson used the Two-Source Hypothesis to argue for the trustworthiness of the gospels.⁶⁷ The book was a compilation of articles Robertson had contributed to various periodicals, with the title coming from the first essay. Robertson rejected the cleft supposed by critics between the portraits of Jesus in the Synoptics, John, and Paul’s writings. The problem with those who sought “the historical Jesus” was that they failed to face the facts demonstrated in the gospels. However, a critic’s “real attitude” toward Jesus was irrelevant, because the correct approach involved “rigid scientific research into facts.”⁶⁸ Robertson boldly stated that the Two-Source Hypothesis was “one certain result of Synoptic criticism.”⁶⁹ Of the two sources used by Matthew and Luke, Q was earliest, perhaps composed in Jesus’s lifetime.⁷⁰ Therefore, if a scholar desired to find the earliest and simplest Jesus material, the correct place to look was Q.⁷¹ The critic must remember that the full extent of Q can never be known, and the portion present in the synoptics is merely “a torso.”⁷² Robertson validated B. H. Streeter’s conclusion⁷³ that, since about two-thirds of Mark is common to Matthew and Luke, it can be reasonably assumed that Matthew and Luke reproduce about two-thirds of Q.⁷⁴ Even with only a portion of Q’s contents available, Robertson was sure that the character of Jesus was not diminished in the remainder. Much as Vos had done, Robertson used Harnack’s delineation of Q as his basis to prove the supernatural portrait present in the earliest source. However, instead of using Harnack to combat Bousset, Robertson used Harnack to refute Harnack.

Robertson considered it obvious, from Harnack’s section on the temptations, that Jesus was called “the Son of God” by Satan, an occurrence which Harnack himself felt referred back to the voice from heaven at Jesus’s baptism.⁷⁵ Harnack also admitted several other instances of the “Son of Man” terminology into his Q.⁷⁶ Robertson argued that if Jesus was called the Son of God and the Son of Man in Q, it was clear he was called Messiah as well. Harnack’s Q contained important indications of Jesus’s messiahship—the mention that in prison John heard of the “works of Christ,” messianic phraseology of Jesus as “the coming one,” Jesus’s power to give his disciples power to judge Israel, the appeal of “Lord, Lord” to Jesus (language used in the LXX for God)—though Harnack tried to remove the theological and supernatural elements from Jesus’s self-consciousness.⁷⁷ To Robertson, however, the data in Q would not allow a merely human Jesus. He argued, “The facts in Q are open and simple and beyond

⁶⁶ Ibid., 255–56.

⁶⁷ A. T. Robertson, *The Christ of the Logia* (New York: George H. Doran, 1924).

⁶⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 18–19.

⁷¹ Ibid., 20.

⁷² Ibid., 23.

⁷³ B. H. Streeter, “The Original Extent of Q,” in William Sanday, ed. *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), 185–208.

⁷⁴ Robertson, *The Christ*, 24.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 29–30.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 33–34.

reasonable dispute,”⁷⁸ and though the search for the historical Jesus was “laudable,” it had not “gotten rid of the theological Christ.”⁷⁹

Robertson moved next to the other common source of Matthew and Luke, Mark’s gospel, which offered a similar portrayal of Jesus as Q. Mark gave clear indications of Christ’s divine nature in two accounts which were picked up by Matthew and Luke. The first, in Mark 2:7–10, demonstrated the divine power to forgive sins. The second account, Mark 9:7, recounted the voice from heaven after the Transfiguration which called Jesus “son of God.”⁸⁰ Even in the more cryptic portions at the end of the gospel, Mark’s mention of the centurion who called Jesus “son of God” (15:39), as well as the empty tomb of Mark’s shorter ending (16:1–8), must have implied incredible characteristics of Jesus.⁸¹

After his brief chapter on Mark, Robertson appealed to the Two-Source Hypothesis once more, in the beginning of his chapter on Matthew, where he detailed his understanding of the chronology of the synoptics. First, the apostle Matthew composed the *logia* in Aramaic, followed by Mark’s gospel which was written under the guidance of Peter. Robertson did not clarify whether he placed Luke or Matthew third. He admitted that the author of the Greek Matthew was unknown, but posited that it was reasonable to reckon the apostle Matthew took up his *logia* and Peter’s (Mark’s) gospel and “blended” them into the canonical gospel of Matthew.⁸²

While Robertson used argumentation similar to that of Warfield and Vos, his unqualified acceptance of the Two-Source Hypothesis as “a certain result” of biblical criticism meant that the ultimate strength of his approach rested upon the validity of his assumption. Because he knew that most of the skeptical critics involved in the search for the Jesus of history accepted the Two-Source Hypothesis, his confidence in the certainty of his solution to the Synoptic Problem was not a liability. However, Robertson’s fulsome endorsement of the Two-Source Hypothesis was a surprise to some evangelicals. In 1938, R. C. Foster of Cincinnati Bible College wondered how a “scholar with the conservative reputation of A. T. Robertson” could adopt the “radical Two-Source Theory.”⁸³ Likewise, in 1958 Merrill C. Tenney remarked with surprise that “even such conservative writers as A. T. Robertson and W. Graham Scroggie in Britain have espoused the Two-document theory.”⁸⁴ Scroggie’s work is considered next.

5. W. Graham Scroggie (1877–1958): *The British Preacher for the Two-Source Hypothesis*

W. Graham Scroggie was born in Great Malvern, England, into a devoted Baptist family. He attended C. H. Spurgeon’s Pastors College, and immediately began a career in ministry, first at various churches in England, and then at Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh for several years (1916–1933). In 1927, Scroggie received the Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Edinburgh, and in 1938 he became pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle (popularly called Spurgeon’s Tabernacle), where he

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 48–49.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 52–53.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 54–55.

⁸³ R. C. Foster, *Studies in the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1938), 59.

⁸⁴ Merrill C. Tenney, “Reversals of New Testament Criticism,” in Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1958), 353–67, at p. 355.

helped lead the church through WWII. He retired from the Tabernacle in 1944, but he continued to lecture at the Pastor's College in London, and to travel and preach throughout the world. Scroggie was a featured speaker on several occasions at the annual Keswick Convention, a large gathering of evangelical Christians in Cumbria.⁸⁵ In addition to his busy preaching schedule, Scroggie was a prolific writer, authoring *Scripture Union*, a daily bible study guide, as well as educational material for *The Sunday School Times*. He published over 20 books, including commentaries on all four gospels and the massive 680-page *A Guide to the Gospels*.⁸⁶ It was in *A Guide* that Scroggie offered his thorough consideration of the Synoptic Problem.

Scroggie did not propose to break new ground on the issue, but in *A Guide* he offered, from an evangelical perspective, a summary of what he considered to be the accepted opinion of most scholars. His statements on the issue came in four separate sections of the book, first in the section entitled "The Synoptic Problem" and then in discussion of each synoptic gospel. Though his guide was written on the popular level, Scroggie was confident in stating, "[t]hat there is such a [synoptic] problem is a fact, and everyone who is interested in the Gospels should know something about it."⁸⁷ He encouraged his readers to avoid the two potential perils that accompany the Synoptic Problem: either indifference to the gospels' origins or preoccupation with their origins and a lack of appreciation for the gospels themselves.⁸⁸ As evidence that it was typical for the biblical authors to make use of earlier documents, he cited Paul's inclusion of "snatches of song from an early Church hymn book" and summaries of written creedal statements (1 Cor 11:23–25; Eph 5:14, 19; Col 1:13–20⁸⁹; 1 Tim 3:16, 6:15–16).⁹⁰ He quickly dismissed two alternatives to the hypothesis he intended to advocate. The "oral tradition hypothesis" was based on the idea of early "catechetical schools," which Scroggie believed existed, but oral tradition could not completely solve the Synoptic Problem. He also described the "Mutual Use Hypothesis," by which he meant a strict dependency hypothesis with no other written sources. He dismissed the six possible permutations of this hypothesis because it had few advocates.⁹¹ Scroggie then moved on to his preferred solution, the Two-Source Hypothesis, and cautioned his readers that Q was "a theory and not a certainty." He was more confident, however, in the priority of Mark.⁹²

While Scroggie was clearly acquainted with many works of critical scholarship on the Synoptic Problem, he mentioned that he had compared seven different authors on the contents of Q. These

⁸⁵ David. L. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 710–11.

⁸⁶ W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1948). Quotations are from the reprint edition (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995).

⁸⁷ Scroggie, *Guide*, 83.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 84. Presumably, Scroggie meant Col 1:15–20.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 87–89.

scholars were: Harnack, Holtzmann, Wellhausen,⁹³ Wendt,⁹⁴ Hawkins,⁹⁵ Stanton,⁹⁶ and Redlich.⁹⁷ Curiously, Scroggie later listed the contents of Q according to Streeter,⁹⁸ though he did not include Streeter in the initial seven scholars under consideration. Scroggie decided that, when four of the seven agreed on the verses found in Q, those verses could be considered part of the foundation for exploration into the contents of Q. From his comparison, Scroggie determined that four or more of the scholars agreed on a total of 237 verses in Luke. Scroggie compared a few of these Lukan pericopae with their Matthean counterparts to show the likelihood of a common source, invoking Papias's mention of the *logia* as evidence of the existence of a Q-like document.⁹⁹ Scroggie offered further evidence that sayings documents were common in the early church by mentioning a fragment of papyrus from Oxyrhynchus with sayings very similar to those found in the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁰⁰ He was presumably referring to P.Oxy. 654 (which was still a relatively new discovery at the time), though those *logia* are now known to be quotations from the Gospel of Thomas.¹⁰¹

Scroggie then provided a table with twenty-six parallel pericopae between Luke and Matthew, which he considered a “syllabus of Q.”¹⁰² Although he had earlier cautioned his readers that Q was simply a theory, he did not refrain from confidently endorsing it. After giving the syllabus, he encouraged his readers to write out the passages side by side and compare the results of these non-Marcian parallels. He remarked that, though the texts were written by different men, at different times, at different places, and for different purposes, the conviction will not be escaped that these passages come from a common source, the lost document Q.¹⁰³

Aware of the sensitivities of his evangelical readership, Scroggie also dealt with the implications for inspiration such an explanation of gospel origins might have. He laid out what he considered to be an appropriate approach to framing a theory of inspiration. It was fatal, explained Scroggie, to form

⁹³ Julius Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: Reimer, 1905).

⁹⁴ H. H. Wendt, *Die Lehre Jesu*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1886, 1890).

⁹⁵ J. C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae: Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909; repr. 1968).

⁹⁶ V. H. Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents: Vol. 2, The Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909).

⁹⁷ E. B. Redlich, *Student's Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels* (London: Longmans, 1936). See Scroggie, *Guide*, 89.

⁹⁸ Scroggie, *Guide*, 92.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰¹ See John S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 338–39, who quotes Benjamin W. Bacon (“Logia,” in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ed. James Hastings [New York: Scribner's Sons, 1908], 2:45), “The discovery of Grenfell and Hunt of papyri of the 2nd and 3rd century, in which sayings attributed to Jesus are agglutinated with no more of narrative framework than the bare words ‘Jesus saith’ (*legei Iesous*), proves that such compilations actually circulated, fulfilling a function to the *Pirke Aboth*, or the ‘Sayings of the Fathers’ in the contemporary and earlier Synagogue.” See also Edwin Yamauchi, “Logia,” *ISBE* 3:153.

¹⁰² Scroggie, *Guide*, 92–93.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 93.

a theory of inspiration “and then attempt to explain the Scriptures in the light of it.”¹⁰⁴ The correct course would be to “let a doctrine of inspiration arise from the facts” drawn from the Bible. He offered three “facts” that should inform one’s conception of inspiration. First, the individuality (style, mode of expression, arrangement of material) of each evangelist is preserved. Second, the accounts reveal a “great variety of report,” with none necessarily giving “the exact words” throughout. Third, the evangelists did not receive supernatural information directly from God which they could otherwise obtain by their own investigations, as described in Luke’s preface.¹⁰⁵ However, it could be stated without equivocation, opined Scroggie, that the evangelists were guided by the Holy Spirit in the selection of material to fit their individual designs.¹⁰⁶

Concerning the order of the gospels, Mark was first because it was closest in form to the apostolic oral gospel.¹⁰⁷ Q preceded Mark, and Mark may have made use of it, but his primary source of information was the apostle Peter in Rome.¹⁰⁸ Scroggie considered Luke’s gospel to have been written during Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea (58–60 CE), thus Matthew’s gospel, which came earlier, would receive a date in the middle fifties with a provenance of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹ Matthew’s sources were Q, “a Manual of Messianic Prophecy,” Mark, oral tradition, various records now lost (Scroggie referenced Luke 1:1), and Matthew’s own recollections.¹¹⁰ Luke received his information from Q, Mark, Jesus’s mother, and “information derived from the court of Herod, Paul and his associates, and Philip of Caesarea.”¹¹¹ Thus, Scroggie outlined in brief his particular version of the Two-Source Hypothesis, complete with extra sources beyond Q and Mark.

6. Conclusion

While English-speaking evangelicals were reluctant to embrace Q until the twentieth century (the subject matter of this essay), they followed in a long line of biblical conservatives who were interested in the interrelationships between the gospels. Since the outset of the Protestant Reformation, there have been three primary reasons that biblical conservatives have attempted to answer the Synoptic Problem.¹¹² First, important figures such as John Calvin and Martin Chemnitz offered solutions to the Synoptic Problem in the sixteenth century when constructing gospel harmonies. When one is trying to decide how to arrange events in the life of Jesus, and whether passages describe the same or different events, it is natural to wonder which gospel came first, and who might have adapted whom. The second impetus for investigation into the synoptic problem was the construction of a critical text of the New Testament. Thus, John Mill, J. A. Bengel, and Henry Alford, all textual critics, addressed the Synoptic

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 141.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 145.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 179.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 183.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 139.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 254.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 343.

¹¹² This represents one of the major findings of my doctoral research. See Strickland, *The Evangelicals and the Synoptic Problem*, 205–6.

Problem in their publications. In these two pursuits (the construction of gospel harmonies and critical texts), biblical conservatives were at the forefront. Lastly, with the advent of the Quest for the Historical Jesus, conservatives have been playing catch-up for over a century. This essay shows that there were likewise three primary reasons that Warfield, Vos, Robertson, and Scroggie (and the evangelicals who have followed them) were persuaded by the Two-Source Hypothesis. First, they assumed that the appeal to the Q document represented a scientific approach to solutions to the Synoptic Problem. This supposed scientific approach meant that, as Robertson stated, one's faith (or lack thereof) was irrelevant to the investigation, meaning that it could occupy theological "neutral ground." It also meant that older traditions regarding the origins of the gospels (particularly Matthean priority) were dismissed as irrelevant. Second, the fact that Q was considered a very early written collection of Jesus's sayings meant that it was composed even closer to the time of Christ, perhaps even during his earthly ministry. Third, they were all convinced that Q contained a high Christology, so that it could be used to combat the most radical assertions of the Quest for the Historical Jesus. While the current author is not persuaded of the need for appeals to Q, preferring instead the Farrer Hypothesis (or Markan Priority without Q),¹¹³ it is clear that the hypothetical document has had its appeals to evangelicals because they saw in it an early written source, that demonstrated a high Christology, and which best explained the synoptic data.

¹¹³ For a good introduction to the Farrer Hypothesis, see John C. Poirier and Jeffrey Peterson, eds., *Markan Priority without Q: Explorations in the Farrer Hypothesis*, LNTS 455 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

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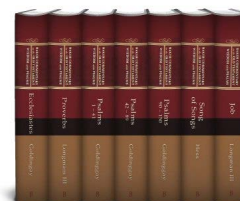
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— OLD TESTAMENT —

Baker Commentary on Old Testament Wisdom & Psalms. 7 vols. Accordance Bible Software. Altamonte Springs, FL: Oaktree Software, Inc., 2015. \$299.00.

The *Baker Commentary on Old Testament Wisdom & Psalms* (BCOTWP) is a great set and even better on a great digital platform. Although I have not made a complete switch to electronic books only, when it comes to reference works like commentaries, I prefer the electronic versions.

Using digital commentaries in Accordance Bible Software has at least two advantages. First, Accordance’s “Info Pane” gives you immediate access to commentaries on each verse as you scroll through a Scripture passage. When the “Info Pane” is open, Accordance instantly displays the commentaries related to the highlighted Scripture reference. Second, Accordance gives several options for searching commentaries. For example, with the BCOTWP set, one can search by scripture reference, Greek, Hebrew, or English content, transliteration, translation, manuscripts, and much more. There is much flexibility in narrowing your search.



The BCOTWP set is primarily aimed at pastors and future pastors (seminary students), and includes seven excellent commentaries published by Baker Academic between 2005 and 2012. Respected OT scholar Tremper Longman III serves as the series editor and authors the volumes on Job and Proverbs and assembled an impressive team of contributors: Craig G. Bartholomew on Ecclesiastes, John Goldingay on Psalms (3 vols.), and Richard Hess on Song of Songs.

The introduction of each volume tackles the major issues that influence interpretation: book title, authorship, date, language, style, text, ancient Near Eastern background, genre, canonicity, theological message, connection to the New Testament, and the structure of the book. After the introduction, the authors interpret each book unit by unit. For each section, they give their own translation with explanatory notes, followed by an extensive “Interpretation” section. Each unit concludes with a “Theological Implications” section.

The authors place most of the technical discussions and interaction with secondary sources in the footnotes, which makes this set a delight to read for those who do not want to be distracted by the technical issues. But having those matters in the footnotes means they are readily available for those who are interested.

The goal of each of the contributors is to explain how God’s message from each book is relevant for God’s people in every age. The “Theological Implications” sections of these commentaries take you beyond the OT and the meaning of the text in its original contexts to the links it has with the NT and how its message is relevant today. Pastors will find these sections helpful for sermon and lesson applications. For instance, here is an excerpt on the theological implications of Ecclesiastes 1:12–18, a section of a book that is notoriously difficult to preach:

Qohelet clearly presents himself as a Solomonic figure, and thus one who has been immersed in the biblical traditions. His crisis and journey of exploration is one of a believer, not of one unfamiliar with the ways of the LORD. Believers are not exempt from this sort of profound crisis of faith, hence the pastoral relevance of Qohelet. What does one do when precisely as a believer everything one observes and experiences seems to lead to the conclusion that all is enigmatic and that the enigmas cannot be

resolved? This is Qohelet's struggle, and it resonates with any believer in a crisis of faith.
(pp. 125–27)

Hess interprets the Song of Songs as a celebration of sex as a gift of God and draws applications relevant for all believers. For instance, he notes in Song 2:8–3:5 that “the female’s devotion to her lover brings to mind the command to love God with all one’s heart” (p. 108). Longman sees Job as a model righteous sufferer for believers but ultimately of Christ the only true underserving sufferer, who patiently endures suffering under a wise and sovereign God. Longman faithfully interprets Proverbs in its OT context and also shows Christ as the epitome of God’s wisdom and how Christ is associated with lady wisdom of Proverbs.

Bartholomew’s work on Ecclesiastes is masterful, but some might disagree with his understanding of הַבְּלָה, one of the key terms in the book. Bartholomew prefers to translate הַבְּלָה as “enigma” instead of the more common “vanity.” In his opinion, the translation “enigma ... leaves open the possibility of meaning [to life as pictured in Ecclesiastes]—it is just that Qohelet with his autonomous epistemology cannot find it” (pp. 93–94).

Goldingay explains the meaning of each psalm in his Psalms commentaries, but he does not attempt to discuss the significance of the immediate and broader contexts of each. This lack is influenced by the fact that based on his own studies “the Psalter as a whole does not have a structure that helps us get a handle on its contents” (p. 36). Goldingay thus disagrees with scholars such as J. Clinton McCann and Gerald H. Wilson, who posit a careful and coherent arrangement of the Psalter. He prefers the more form critical approach of categorizing the various types of psalms (e.g., praise and lament), which taken together “suggest a structure of spirituality” (p. 37). In spite of Goldingay’s lack of attention to the shape of the whole Psalter, the commentary is rich with insights.

Accordance offers the BCOTWP set for \$299.00, so each volume on average costs approximately \$43, which is slightly less than the cost of the individual books in hardback. Considering the competitive price and the advantages of the Accordance platform, this set is worth the cost.

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WJK Library Bundle: Old Testament Library Commentaries and Companion Volumes and New Testament Library and Companion Volumes. 68 vols. Accordance Bible Software. Altamonte Springs, FL: Oaktree Software, Inc., 2017. \$1,726.

Accordance Bible Software has recently released in digital format the 68-volume Westminster John Knox Press Old and New Testament Library Bundle. This vast liberal and semi-technical to technical collection includes the entire Old Testament Library (OTL) Commentary (31 vols) with an additional set of classic commentaries (9 vols) and companion studies (9 vols) and the nearly complete New Testament Library (NTL) Commentary (15 vols, excluding Matthew, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and James) with additional companion studies (4 vols).



Since its origin in the 1960s, the Old Testament Library has become a standard in the field for liberal-critical scholarship, serving both the educated minister and the academic. It began as English

translations from the critical German series *Das Alte Testament Deutsch*, and then it progressed with original English volumes until it covered every Old Testament book, along with a number of corollary topical studies. In 2002, the New Testament Library began, continuing the tradition of thoroughly researched liberal scholarship, and then a number of new and old related studies were added. Perhaps due to my bias or strengths, I think the quality of Old Testament volumes exceeds that of the New.

To varying degrees, all the commentaries in the series provide a fresh translation, critical portrayals of the historical world in which the books arose, attention to literary design, and a theologically perceptive exposition of the biblical text. Nevertheless, because the series bears no stated vision or set structure and includes an array of scholarly critical perspectives and interpretive approaches, the individual commentaries and studies vary greatly in quality, size, and emphases, whether addressing text criticism, grammar and syntax, historical context, literary features, structure, or theology. Some commentators shape their entire volumes around developed theories of hypothetical sources, whereas others focus almost exclusively on a book's final form. Some writers saturate their reflections with historical-cultural backgrounds or socio-scientific research (e.g., anthropology, archaeology) but do little actual work in establishing a book's overall thought-flow and message, whereas others wrestle deeply with literary features, discourse structure, theology, and inner-biblical connections. This disparity within the series, along with its critical bent, naturally makes it varied in its usefulness, especially for evangelical ministers.

This stated, many volumes in the Old Testament Library Commentary stand out for their benefit to evangelical interpreters. Brevard Childs' *Exodus* volume (1974) includes a thorough history of interpretation and remains one of the most exegetically and theologically robust commentaries on the book, attempting to balance critical methods with a final form, canonical interpretation that stretches into the New Testament. Sara Japhet's *1–2 Chronicles* (1993) is exceptional in its careful exegetical analysis and sensitivity to Chronicles as history, usually with conservative conclusions. Adele Berlin's study of *Lamentations* (2002), while never reaching into the New Testament, is among the best available in the way it establishes the book's message by assessing it in light of other ancient Near Eastern literature and by focusing on literary features like metaphor and themes like purity, mourning, repentance, and the Davidic covenant. Two other noteworthy volumes include Jon Levenson's *Esther* (1997), which matches a careful reading of what he believes is a fiction work with a conscious eye toward intertextual connections both inside and outside the Bible, and Childs's *Isaiah* (2000), which is not as thorough as his *Exodus* but focuses on the history of interpretation and a canon-conscious final-form theological message. Where one would expect Childs to address the New Testament's handling of Isaiah, he does, though often viewing it as a radical reinterpretation of the original meaning (e.g., Isa 53). While Gerhard von Rad's *Genesis* (1973) is plagued by a hypothetical reconstruction of sources, it is still useful for its theological, redemptive-historical insights. Marvin Sweeney, while moderately critical, is usually both careful and conservative in his interpretation, and his *1 & 2 Kings* (2007) does not disappoint in its attention to structure, theological agenda, and historical context. Both Richard Clifford on *Proverbs* (1999) and J. J. M. Roberts on *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (1991) are also helpful due to their extensive treatment of text criticism, grammar/philology, and historical background.

In the New Testament Library Commentary, three volumes stand out most. M. Eugene Boring's *Mark* (2006) helpfully focuses on the Gospel's theological agenda including its intentional ending at 16:8, and it includes a number of useful excurses such as kingdom of God, Markan Christology, and the use of Scripture in the Gospel. Frank Matera's moderately-critical *2 Corinthians* (2003) interacts well with secondary literature, affirms Paul's role as a gospel preacher, argues for the letter's unity, and offers

a manageable yet detailed theologically-rich exposition of the text; he fails, however, to see the Mosaic law as standing in the background to Paul's discussion in chapter 3. Luke Timothy Johnson's *Hebrews* (2006) interacts little with contemporary secondary literature but still offers an extended introduction and useful insights in the commentary from Greek grammar, Greco-Roman backgrounds, and the influence of Old Testament quotations and imagery on the author's message.

Along with the contemporary commentaries, the WJK library includes nine classic Old Testament volumes that have now been replaced but that scholars still regularly reference. Strangely missing are Martin Noth's *Exodus* (1962) and *Leviticus* (1965), but helpfully included are Gerhard von Rad's *Deuteronomy* (1966), Claus Westermann's *Isaiah 40–66* (1969), and James Mays's *Amos* (1969) and *Micah* (1976). With these, the series includes numerous supplemental volumes related to introduction, history, theology, and genre analysis. Most noteworthy in OTL are Rainer Albertz's two-volume *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (1994) and Walther Eichrodt's two-volume *Theology of the Old Testament* (1961), both of which are still standards in the field in light of their careful and thoughtful analysis. In NTL one must mention Victor Furnish's balanced and time-tested *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (2009, orig. 1968) and J. Louis Martyn's provocative, paradigm-changing *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed. (2003).

We should not downplay the significance of what Accordance has supplied in giving the WJK Library Bundle in a digital format. First, both the publisher and Amazon only allow you to purchase individual print volumes in the WJK Old and New Testament Libraries, which together take up a massive amount of shelf space and retail at \$4,442.00. In contrast, Accordance lets you access this massive amount of content anywhere on Mac, Windows, iPad, and iPhone, and you can purchase individual volumes, smaller bundles (see above), just the forty-six OTL and NTL commentaries, or all sixty-eight volumes together, the whole of which is 38% of the cost of the print volumes (\$1,726.00). Accordance is portable, flexible, and affordable. Second, Accordance is user-friendly, allowing you to search with lightning speed decades of scholarship and thousands of pages of careful study. A *reference* search takes you directly to the spot where a given commentary addresses your passage of interest. Using the *English content* search, I identified in less than five seconds all 631 instances where "Jesus <OR> Christ" occurs in the thirty-one commentary volumes in the OTL. I also found that the NTL commentaries only rarely cite major evangelical scholars. A *bibliography* search reveals that only the *John* volume cites one of D. A. Carson's authored works, and an *English content* search notes that the commentary mentions him twenty-three times. Only three volumes include authored works by G. K. Beale, but only *Revelation* actually cites him in the body (ninety-five times). Only *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* cite an essay by Thomas R. Schreiner (two times), and not one volume mentions Douglas Moo. N. T. Wright gets broader acknowledgement, showing up in eight volumes around thirty-nine times. Clearly liberal-critical scholars are not too interested in evangelical perspectives. Because the Old and New Testament Libraries use transliteration rather than Hebrew and Greek characters (except in notes), one can't as easily search for Hebrew or Greek content, but Accordance's *transliteration* search does work nicely, not requiring detailed pointing. As such, I was able to type in "Kabod" for the Hebrew term כְּבוֹד ("heaviness; glory; honor") and came up with fifty-two hits in OTL, many of which provided insightful reflection on specific Old Testament texts.

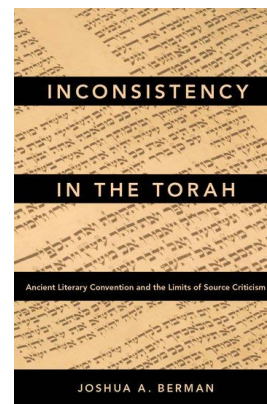
In conclusion, the WJK Old and New Testament Libraries supply a mixed quality of liberal-critical scholarship, which evangelicals can benefit from when engaged with discretion. Many of the commentaries and additional volumes are exegetically rigorous and theologically robust, and they can

supply evangelical readers with fresh translations, extended bibliographies, and careful though critical analysis of the final form of the biblical text. This series will likely not be the first stop for evangelical conservatives, but biblical scholars and graduate students need to engage with these volumes, and Accordance Bible Software has now made this more portable, flexible, affordable, and usable.

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Joshua A. Berman. *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xi + 307 pp. £64.00/\$99.00.

In a seminal book from thirty years ago, R. N. Whybray observed that critical scholarship of the Pentateuch has long overlooked how “the cultural differences between ancient Israel and modern western Europe invalidate many of the judgments made by the documentary critics about what could or could not have been attributed to a single author” (*The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, JSOTSup 53 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987], 51). Secondary aspects of Whybray’s work occasioned major debates on basic methodological questions of the relationship among the sources, redactions, authors, and editors of the Hebrew Bible. Yet until the present work by Joshua Berman, professor of Bible at Bar-Ilan University, little sustained attention has been given to Whybray’s more foundational claim that source critics operate with anachronistic expectations about the sort of literary coherence that a reader should expect from an ancient text like the Pentateuch. Berman offers a wide-ranging, provocative, though occasionally uneven exploration of how Pentateuchal source critics tend to promise more than their methods can reliably deliver.



Berman’s book is structured in three parts. Part I analyzes inconsistency in narrative by situating the Pentateuch’s doublets (e.g., the somewhat divergent accounts of Israel’s wilderness wanderings in Exodus and Deuteronomy) within the literary conventions of the ancient Near East. This section explicates how diplomatic documents and history writing in the ancient Near East employ repetition and variation for intentional purposes of exhortation, rather than being signs of careless editing or haphazard textual growth. Part II treats the topic of inconsistency in law, this time setting the legal corpora of the Pentateuch alongside other ancient Near Eastern legal codes and their methods of resolving discrepancies between laws. Finally, Part III offers a proposal for reconstituting Pentateuchal criticism on the more modest foundation of recognizing the limits of what can be known. This posture contrasts starkly with some quarters of historical criticism which, since the time of Julius Wellhausen and his scholarly descendants in Germany, have formulated large-scale theories of textual evolution without attending to the Pentateuch’s analogues from the ancient Near East.

Part I displays Berman at his best when comparing apparent contradictions in the Pentateuch with ancient Near Eastern texts that exhibit similar traits (chapters 1–2). Just as Exodus 14–15 narrates two versions of Israel’s deliverance at the Sea, for example, the Kadesh Inscriptions of Rameses II offer multiple conflicting accounts of the Egyptian king’s victory over the Hittites during the thirteenth century BC. Yet the original Egyptian audience of these inscriptions would have recognized that the

“Kadesh Poem” (one version of the battle) emphasizes the role of divine help in victory, in contrast to the “Kadesh Bulletin” (another version of the battle) which highlights the king’s courage to the exclusion of divine involvement (pp. 21, 58–59). Both versions were commissioned by Rameses II and even juxtaposed in public as complementary compositions despite the obvious contradictions between them (p. 20, 33). Berman thus demonstrates that scholars who apply their modern intuitions about literary coherence or historical consistency to an ancient Near Eastern corpus like the Pentateuch are likely to find editorial seams where none exist.

In Part II, Berman’s discussion of inconsistency in law shows the consequences of failing to understand the nature of ancient Near Eastern legal genres. In contrast to the modern concept of “strict construction,” which views legal statutes as comprehensive written codes, the laws of the Pentateuch and their cultural counterparts stand closer to the premodern concept of common law which is “consciously and inherently incomplete, fluid and vague” (p. 110) since ancient law collections serve as “records of *precedent*, but not of *legislation*” (p. 114, italics original). Given this distinction, Berman examines why ancient Near Eastern legal corpora (including those of the Pentateuch) intentionally retain laws that deal with similar cases but appear at odds with themselves, such as the differences between laws of manumission in Exod 21:2–6, Lev 25:39–36, and Deut 15:12–18. Where modern scholars see contradictions because of their reliance on a statutory model of law as a self-enclosed system, ancient texts such as the Laws of Hammurabi, the Laws of Eshnunna, and the Pentateuch reflect the open-ended, customary nature of common law.

While much of Berman’s invocation of common-law categories offers cogent explanations for legal inconsistencies, chapters 9 and 10 of Part II also begin to level the charge of anachronism in surprising ways that may themselves be anachronistic. In chapter 9, for example, he categorizes Jewish scholars such as Bernard Levinson and Michael Fishbane as examples of a “supersessionist” approach which sees Deuteronomy’s laws as a replacement for the Covenant Code of Exodus 21–23 (pp. 175–76). Apart from the unfortunate labeling of fellow Jews as “supersessionist” (a term that traditionally refers to Christianity as a replacement for Judaism, and can therefore have anti-Semitic undertones), how would other Jewish scholars react to Berman adducing the Mishnah, a literary heritage that they share, as an empirical model that stands with his own “complementarian” view but against their putatively “supersessionist” view (pp. 196–98)? On Fishbane’s part, for instance, his express aim in *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) was to demonstrate that the exegetical methods of post-biblical Judaism were already present in the Hebrew Bible itself. It thus becomes likely that Jewish scholars would see themselves mirrored in Berman’s summary of the “complementarian” position that “God’s earliest words are interpreted and reapplied in response to the changing circumstances of Israel’s history” (p. 188). For Berman to align himself with Eckart Otto (pp. 186, 196), a preeminent German scholar of the OT, rather than other Jewish scholars, seems to make for strange bedfellows.

Part III’s call for “Renewing Pentateuchal Criticism” contains a similar mixture of brilliance and potential overgeneralization. Particularly in chapter 11, Berman’s stated goal to offer “a critical history of historical criticism” documents how the epistemic humility of Baruch Spinoza and Richard Simon in the seventeenth century eventually became the (over)confidence of nineteenth-century German historicists (pp. 204–7). The latter claimed to be able to reconstruct the Bible’s literary evolution in detail, despite having virtually no information on ancient Near Eastern literary conventions. From this focus on German cultural trends in the nineteenth century, however, Berman jumps more or less directly from German historicism’s weaknesses to the present malaise in Pentateuchal scholarship and

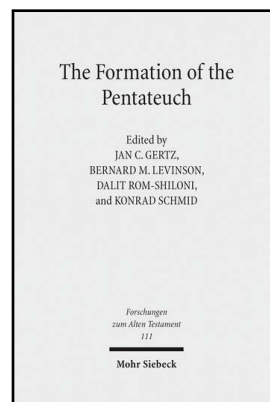
its tendency to multiply source divisions (pp. 210–16, 220–24). As with my earlier questions on how Jews would regard Berman’s interaction with their shared tradition, I again wonder whether German source critics in the modern era would accept his argument that they are the direct methodological heirs of nineteenth-century German historicism. Has correlation too hastily become causation in the service of a totalizing account of how historical criticism developed? Or to borrow a distinction from anthropology, is Berman offering an *etic* assessment (i.e., from the observer’s perspective) on Germany’s intellectual climate that only *emic* analysis (i.e., from the observed’s perspective) can supply? Notably, the book’s footnotes on German historicism contain a preponderance of English-language sources—no proof of caricature, to be sure, but enough to make this reviewer question if German scholars would find Berman’s portrayal of them accurate.

These weaknesses hardly detract from a scintillating work that manages to challenge nearly every received canon in Pentateuchal source criticism. Berman demonstrates that the criteria by which source critics identify strands reflect modern, anachronistic views on the coherence of narratives and laws. As with any ambitious and groundbreaking work, however, it is likely that Berman’s argument would benefit from tighter argumentation and support from ancillary disciplines. In this regard, OT scholarship of all persuasions, whether critical and confessional, will desire a fuller integration of Berman’s work with that of others who also hold that the discipline suffers from various anachronisms. References to two such scholars are notably absent from Berman’s book: William Schniedewind, on the place of texts and books in ancient Israel (*How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005]); and John Van Seters, on the role of editors in ancient Israel (*The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006]).

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Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid, eds. *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*. Forschungen Zum Alten Testament 111. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016. pp. xi + 1204. £302.03/ \$404.00.

This is an important book and to understand how it contributes to biblical studies, it is crucial first to remember the present state of critical scholarship on the Pentateuch. Currently, two main approaches coexist. On the one hand, many exegetes in North America and in Israel still endorse the Documentary Hypothesis, albeit often in a refined version. According to Julius Wellhausen’s hypothesis, four documents (J, E, D, P) underlie the Pentateuch. While this theory came under heavy fire during the last quarter of the twentieth century, some scholars (the so-called “Neo-Documentarians”), building on the work of their mentor B. Schwartz, have skillfully renewed it, notably J. Baden (*The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012]) and J. Stackert (*A Prophet like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2014]). On the other hand, most critical scholars in Europe have long ceased to believe in the existence



of E (the so-called Elohist document), and more recently in J, that is, the Yahwist (see e.g., T. B. Dozeman and K. Schmid, *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2006]). Accordingly, the main division in Genesis to Numbers is to be found between P (the Priestly work) and non-P, with some Deuteronomistic influence too.

Against this background, the idea behind this book was to gather scholars from three geographical areas (North America, Israel and Europe) to debate some critical topics, the object being to “further the discussion” and hopefully “move toward a set of shared assumptions and a common discourse” (p. 4). The book contains papers read during several international seminars and conferences that took place from 2012 to 2014, and this impressive scholarly endeavor results in a mammoth book of 1200 pages containing fifty-six essays written by forty-nine scholars. Space obviously prevents a discussion of each paper, but it is worth noting that the book is divided into ten topical parts and a brief look at their titles may give a sense of the variety and scope of the discussions:

1. Empirical Perspectives on the Composition of the Pentateuch.
2. Can the Pentateuch Be Read in Its Present Form? Narrative Continuity in the Pentateuch in Comparative.
3. The Role of Historical Linguistics in the Dating of the Biblical Texts.
4. The Significance of Second Temple Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls for the Formation of the Pentateuch.
5. Evidence for Redactional Activity in the Pentateuch.
6. The Integration of Preexisting Literary Material in the Pentateuch and the Impact upon Its Final Shape.
7. Historical Geography of the Pentateuch and Archaeological Perspectives.
8. Do the Pentateuchal Sources Extend into the Former Prophets?
9. Rethinking the Relationship between the Law and the Prophets.
10. Reading for Unity, Reading for Multiplicity – Theological Implications of the Study of the Pentateuch’s Composition.

Beyond this topical arrangement, what can be found in this book are, I think, at least four different kinds of papers. First, a number of essays focus on foundational matters that must be taken into account for any attempt to reconstruct the compositional history of the Pentateuch. Indeed, these issues should define the perimeter of what is conceivable in terms of dating and of compositional techniques used by ancient redactors. Such is clearly the case for the papers of Part 1. In keeping with a growing interest in empirical evidence in current research, these chapters discuss material data that may inform the way scholars should make hypotheses, such as ancient inscriptions, manuscripts and Second Temple literary works that did not end up in the canon. For instance, C. A. Rollston rightly argues that epigraphical evidence contradicts the widespread notion that Israelite and Judahite scribes were not capable of producing literary texts prior to the eighth century B.C.E. At the other end of the chronological spectrum, A. Lange offers a thorough and very helpful review of data from the Dead Sea Scrolls, in particular regarding the proto-Masoretic text. In his view, since the *Temple Scroll*, Ezra-Nehemiah and 4Q365 are literarily dependant on the final stage of the Pentateuch, relative chronology provides a *terminus ad quem* for the latter in the fourth century BCE, possibly even the late fifth century.

Another kind of data that should be taken into consideration for dating texts is linguistics: this is the topic of Part 3. This is certainly one of the most significant contributions that this book makes to the debate. Whereas most scholars freely ascribe dates for redactional stages of the Pentateuch to various

times from the Iron Age II to the Persian period regardless of their linguistic profile, linguists recognize that the Hebrew language evolved through time and that most of the Pentateuch is written in “Standard Biblical Hebrew.” For various reasons, “Standard Biblical Hebrew” is believed to correspond to the language spoken and written during the monarchy; it is during the sixth century that it transitioned toward “Late Biblical Hebrew.” In an important article, J. Joosten expounds the grounds for this widely accepted linguistic model and draws conclusions for the composition of the Pentateuch: “ascribing large parts of the Pentateuch to the Persian period, as is done routinely by many OT scholars, is impossible to reconcile with the linguistic data” (p. 336).

Of course, many exegetes resist this conclusion, but the fact that this issue is addressed already represents progress in the debate. Other scholars accept this linguistic model but underline its limitations; in particular, it cannot be used in a mechanical way to date a given pericope. The introduction by S. Gesundheit and chapters by E. Blum, W. M. Schniedewind and N. Mizrahi provide valuable related discussions, and T. Römer widens the perspective by way of a helpful overview of methods for dating texts. F. Polak offers another important contribution by pointing out the existence of two different linguistic registers in biblical narratives. On the one hand, the “intricate elaborate style,” pervasive in P, characterizes the written work of learned scribes trained in official bureaucracy. On the other hand, a “voiced, lean, brisk style” corresponds to most narratives about the Patriarchs and in Exodus; it “preserves an underlying oral-epic substratum.”

What scholars learn from manuscripts constitute another kind of empirical evidence, that illustrates ways in which the texts may have developed in the hands of redactors and scribes. Based notably on textual criticism and comparison between parallel texts (e.g., in Kings and Chronicles), D. Carr shows how the texts themselves may or may not give us solid data to inform the current debates. His own experience leads him to conclude, with characteristic caution and wisdom, that “we know far less than we think we do about the undocumented prehistory of these texts” (p. 106). Similarly, J.-L. Ska discusses textual issues that provide empirical evidence for scribal activity of a redactional nature. In addition, Part 4 deals with the Second Temple literature and the Dead Sea scrolls: for instance, M. Zahn deals with scribal revision in light of 4QReworked Pentateuch.

A second kind of paper concerns issues that are crucial for understanding the composition of the Pentateuch and that are successively examined here by proponents of concurrent models: for instance, the relationship between Pentateuchal sources and the Former Prophets (Part 8) and, most importantly, the relationship between the Law and the Prophets (Part 9). Part 5, which concerns the narrative continuity in Pentateuchal texts, represents a special case, since the main feature of these texts that is used, notably by Neo-Documentarians, to separate documents, is the presence of narrative tensions that would betray the merging of conflicting plots, stories and chronologies. Baden and Stackert insist that the Pentateuch in its present form is “unreadable.” In addition, the origins of overarching plots and themes that extend over long parts of the Pentateuch, like the promise made by God to Abram, is very debated today. Are they features made by late redactors to unify the narratives (as in the “European” approach) or were they integral part of these stories from the outset (as the Neo-Documentarians contend)? Hence the importance of essays on plots and narrative continuity, such as the thoughtful discussion of the notion of plot by J.-L. Ska.

All this being said, what we find in this second kind of papers is often parallel discussions by authors working in the framework of a given model, which is not the same as having scholars of different persuasions debating these issues among themselves. So, one may wonder whether these essays

contribute much to the main aim of the book as defined by the editors, beyond the fact there must have been much discussion during the seminars and conferences that underlie it. At any rate, these articles certainly contribute to furthering research on a variety of subjects and are worth reading for themselves. Some are quite innovative, like C. Nihan's discussion of the relationship between Ezekiel and the Holiness legislation.

A third kind of essay (notably in Part 6, but also in every other part) consists of case studies from which the authors draw conclusions that, incidentally, have implications for the model one should adopt for the composition of the Pentateuch. This may be of significance for the reader who is still trying to make up their own mind, since test cases are sometimes more convincing than general hypotheses. By way of illustration, M. Sweeney attempts to show that the book of Hosea presupposes an early version of the Pentateuch, including narratives about Jacob, the Exodus and the wilderness.

Finally, a fourth category includes innovative approaches, more precisely, new or neglected ways of tackling the problems of the Pentateuch. Thus, one finds a set of articles on historical geography and archaeology (Part 7), in which I. Finkelstein and T. Römer, for instance, try to show how material discoveries may help in understanding and dating texts from the Pentateuch, and T. Dozeman offers a thoughtful discussion on geography of religion (as opposed to religious geography). In addition, the tenth and last part of the book contains reflections on the theological implications of compositional models of the Pentateuch. In particular, B. Sommer offers a fascinating discussion of a Jewish theological appropriation of the Neo-Documentarian theory. According to the latter model, a redactor has brought multiple voices together to create the Pentateuch, without any attempt to make one dominate the others. Hence the result is a conversational dimension which is very similar to the culture of debate well attested in Judaism.

In the end, some papers are of primary interest for all Pentateuchal studies, while others are up-to-date discussions of precise issues from a given viewpoint. What may be lacking in the book is a more direct debate between "Neo-Documentarians" and "European" scholars, a discussion during which they would assess and criticize the strengths and weaknesses of the opposite position. (As it happens, such a fascinating debate took place publicly at the 2017 SBL Annual Meeting in Boston between J. Baden and J. Stackert on the one hand, D. Carr and K. Schmid on the other.) Yet this book is an important landmark in the ongoing debate and must be consulted by any Pentateuchal scholar. Besides having brought together scholars of very different views for discussions during international seminars and conferences, the main contribution of this endeavor for cross-fertilization among scholarship may reside in bringing into the debate considerations that are too often neglected in compositional studies, such as empirical evidence, linguistic dating, and historical geography. For this, and for the breadth of information contained in this well-edited book, the reader should be grateful, regardless of their own view on the composition of the Pentateuch.

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Andrew S. Malone. *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 43. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. xvii + 230 pp. £14.99/\$25.00.

When D. A. Carson says, “there is, as far as I know, no previous book-length *canonical* study of priesthood” (p. ix; emphasis original), you realize the importance of this book. Andrew Malone brings his keen exegetical skills to the massive topic of priesthood in the Bible. In this review, I will survey his approach, commend his exegetical labors, then highlight one area of concern.

In his preface and introduction, Malone orients the reader to priesthood. Rightly, he considers how contemporary language and ecclesial traditions shape our understanding. He reinforces Carson’s observation that many studies on priesthood have considered parts of the Bible, but none have examined the whole canon (pp. xi, 8). Accordingly, *God’s Mediators* fills a significant lacuna with a volume that acts, in Malone’s words, like a “high-level web page” outlining priesthood in both testaments (p. 8).

Malone rejects the higher-critical method on priesthood, which has “dominated many echelons of biblical scholarship” (p. 2). Instead, he focuses on interpreting relevant passages within the canon and organizing them into two groups. From an inductive study of the canon, Malone envisions “two kinds of priests” in both testaments (p. 6). With “two passes across the tapestry of Scripture” (p. 7), he identifies an individual priesthood and a corporate priesthood. This twofold approach structures his book and provides major support for his conclusion that priesthood should be considered under four quadrants (p. 184):

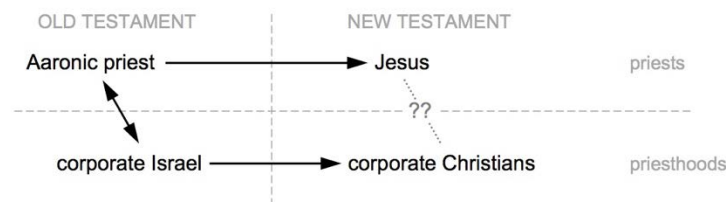
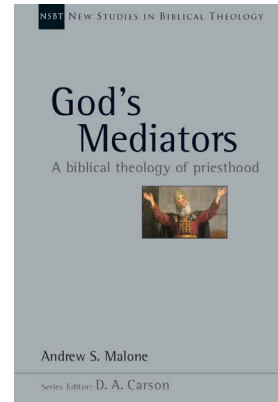


Figure 8.2

This bifurcation is unique to Malone and helpfully organizes the biblical material.

In Part 1 (chs. 2–5), Malone traces the history of individual priesthood from Aaron to Christ. In chapter 2 Malone provides a close reading of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, answering the question, “What does a priest do?” He argues that the high priest brings the people near to God’s presence and God near to the people. In this foundational chapter, Malone also considers the relationship of the high priest to Moses and the Levites.

Chapter 3 digresses to consider the “antecedents to Aaron’s priesthood,” where Malone stresses Aaron, not Adam, as the foundational priest in the Old Testament. In fact, Malone is exegetically circumspect about the latter. In one instance, he finds arguments for Adam’s priesthood “persuasive” (p. 53), but in another he writes, “It is unclear how much we can describe the first humans as the first priests” (p. 66). This minimalist approach to priesthood characterizes his work. Thus, the reader finds very careful exegesis, but the overall effect is far different from *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*



by G. K. Beale (New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 [Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004]), a volume Malone likens to his own (p. 18).

Chapter 4 outlines priesthood in the rest of the Old Testament, where Malone shows how Aaron's priesthood falters (with the Golden Calf), succeeds (with Phinehas's actions at Baal-Peor), and needs replacing (as promised in 1 Sam 2:35). Indeed, by following the history of Israel, Malone shows how priesthood follows a general trajectory of decline. Even so, Scripture also promises a greater priest to come. Highlighting many promises from the Prophets, Malone closes the chapter with a growing picture of what Israel could expect in this new priest.

Chapter 5 concerns the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Dismissing scholarly opinion that Christ is a priest in the Gospels (pp. 103–7), Malone maintains his chastened approach. He focuses his attention on Hebrews and shows how Christ fulfills and exceeds the ministry of Aaron. Yet Malone only considers Christ's priesthood from this New Testament book. He reserves the rest of the priestly language in the New Testament for the corporate priesthood of the church.

In Part 2 Malone retraces his steps through the Bible. Chapter 6 considers the way Israel functioned as “kingdom of priests.” Chapter 7 explains how the language of Exodus 19:5–6 applies to the church. Critical to his argument is his missional approach to the people of God. Israel's holy nation status mediates God's presence to the world. Malone balances the exegetical discussion very well on this subject (pp. 126–37), before showing how the church functions as a nation of priests—both *comprised of the nations* and *sent to the nations*. Malone nicely shows how a biblical theology of priesthood fuels missions.

Overall, Malone's treatment of priesthood is a fine example of biblical theology. He handles Scripture well and makes many important contributions to understanding priesthood, biblical theology, and the mission of the church. That said, I have one abiding concern. As displayed in Figure 8.2 (see above), Malone makes a strong point in dividing Jesus Christ from the corporate priesthood of the church. He writes, “We have seen that the New Testament teaches unambiguously about Jesus as a vocational priest and his followers as a corporate priesthood” (p. 183). Both of these priesthoods, he argues, develop from the Old Testament structures. But he continues, “it is the dependence of one upon the other that I query” (p. 183).

Malone opposes the argument that the priesthood of believers is derivative of Christ's new covenant priesthood (p. 184). In contrast, he believes that the Aaronic priesthood leads to Christ, and that the corporate priesthood of Israel is fulfilled in the church (p. 182), *without Christ originating the priesthood of believers*. The reason for this divide is that Malone doesn't find textual evidence in the New Testament linking Christ's priesthood to the priesthood of all believers.

Time will tell how Malone's model is received. He finds Scripture lacking exegetical proof for a union between Christ and a new covenant priesthood, but is that what others will find? The scope of this review cannot address all his points, but there are a number of reasons why his approach requires further consideration.

First, union with Christ, a doctrine arising from the new covenant itself, explains how everything true of Christ, covenantally speaking, is true of those “in Christ.” Grafted into the vine, Christians are branches who bear Christ's fruit: we are co-heirs with Christ because he has received the kingdom (Rom 8:17; Gal 3:29; 4:7; Titus 3:7); we are living stones because he is the cornerstone (Eph 2:19–22; 1 Pet 2:5); we are members of Christ's body (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12–13) because he is the head (Eph 4:15–16; Col 2:19). John goes so far as to indicate that we, analogically speaking, are one with Christ just

as the Son is one with the Father (17:20–26). Accordingly, it makes most sense that Christians are called a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9) *because* in their union with Christ, he has granted them this priestly status. Malone demurs, and hence his work suggests more biblical exegesis may be needed on this point.

Second, digging deeper into the nature of the new covenant, Hebrews 7:11–28 explains how Christ’s priesthood is the “mechanism” that inaugurates his new covenant. As verse 12 indicates, the law changes when a new priest has been established. In this sense, the priesthood of Christ is the cause of a new covenant, and thus all the blessings found in the new covenant, including the privilege of priesthood, find their genesis in Christ’s priesthood. Rightly, Malone pays ample attention to the book of Hebrews, but more thought should be given to the way Christ’s priesthood relates to the covenantal structures of the Bible.

Third, if sonship is related to priesthood and kingship, as Michael Morales argues and Malone cites approvingly (p. 132), then priesthood under the old and new covenants can be seen as the re-establishment of Adam’s sonship, complete with royal and priestly status (cf. Heb 2:5–9). Malone rightly observes the way priestly language is shared between Adam and Aaron (pp. 52–57), but the theme of sonship could be developed further, especially with respect to Christ’s priesthood. Likewise, if Christians receive their status as sons and daughters in God’s family (Gal 3:16, 26–29), because Christ as the last Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45–49) is establishing a new humanity (cf. Matt 10:34–39; Mark 3:31–34), then this new humanity must share his royal priestly status. Stated more modestly, it seems unlikely that the Christian church could be a royal priesthood without some measure of spiritual or covenantal union with Jesus Christ.

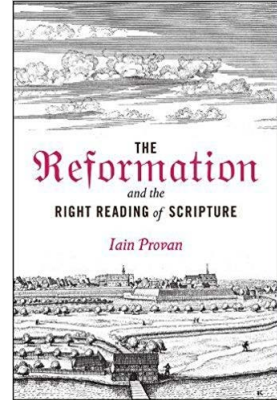
To be fair, some of these observations are more theological than exegetical, nevertheless, as a biblical *theology* of Christ’s priesthood continues to be studied, something Malone desires his book to catalyze (pp. 8, 10), such theological concepts will help our exegetical pursuits. Relating various typological structures (e.g., covenant, son, prophet, priest, king) to priesthood will give us a fuller picture of how to relate Christ to his church.

My concern aside—and it is not insignificant—I happily commend *God’s Mediators*. It is a rich, canonical study of priesthood. It is worth reading for both academic and doxological reasons, because it will help any reader to better appreciate and to understand a biblical theology of priesthood.

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Iain Provan. *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017. xii + 712 pp. £43.50/\$49.95.

2017 was a year full of new books assessing the five-hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and its implications for today. Most of these volumes, understandably, were written by historians. However, this volume, penned by a biblical scholar, deserves to be counted among the more substantial contributions regarding the ongoing hermeneutical and exegetical significance of the Reformation.



In this voluminous work, Iain Provan, a well-respected Old Testament scholar and professor at Regent College, has offered us something of an extended manifesto for recovering the properly conceived of “literal sense” of Scripture as the correct focus of biblical exegesis. Broadly then, this is a book about hermeneutics (especially Old Testament hermeneutics), while in particular it is a response to the hermeneutical confusion that Provan finds rife in Protestantism. Provan classifies this confusion into four contemporary “ways” of reading Scripture that he each finds somewhat deficient, and the book is his attempt to chart a fifth way forward. Provan’s “ways” are as follows (pp. 13–21):

The First Way: “Historical Criticism” (e.g., James Barr)

The Second Way: “Postmodern Reading” (e.g., John Caputo, the emergent church)

The Third Way: “The Chicago Constituency” (defined by adherence to *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*)

The Fourth Way: “Counter-Reformational Protestantism” (e.g., Hans Boersma)

Provan’s own fifth way advocates for what he calls the “seriously literal interpretation” of Scripture (p. 20). This involves appreciating the principles of the Reformers’ hermeneutics (primarily those of Luther and Calvin), above all in their commitment to the literal sense, though it does not thereby entail always following the Reformers in their precise conclusions. Moreover, Provan’s fifth way also includes incorporating the best insights of modern biblical criticism while rejecting its excesses. This allows us both to stand in continuity with the church’s history of interpretation, while also recognizing that contemporary interpreters “must inevitably add to the reading tradition that precedes them” (p. 24).

To this end, Provan’s work proceeds in three wide-ranging parts. Part I, “Before There Were Protestants,” covers a vast array of pre-Reformation issues relating to biblical interpretation. These issues range from the relationship of the canon to the church (which came first?), to the meaning of the “literal” sense, to a wide-ranging survey attempting to prove the centrality of the literal interpretation of Scripture in the New Testament, the Church Fathers, and in the Reformers themselves. Part II, “Now There Are Protestants,” covers the views of the magisterial Reformation on the perspicuity and authority of Scripture, both of which Provan views favorably, before turning to several extended chapters detailing the “eclipse of biblical narrative” (à la Hans Frei) in the modern period. Part III concludes the work by surveying and assessing a host of contemporary methods of biblical criticism (e.g., form criticism, rhetorical criticism, canonical criticism, etc.) and noting what is useful and what ought to be rejected in each.

On the whole, Provan’s work is an admirably broad and serious attempt to define and recover the literal interpretation of Scripture. He displays a wide-ranging and impressive knowledge of the history

of biblical interpretation that one wishes were found among more biblical scholars. Indeed, Part I of Provan's book could easily be required reading in a graduate-level course on hermeneutics or the history of exegesis. The only area lacking here is an unfortunate glossing over of most medieval exegesis, whether for reasons of space or lack of expertise.

Of greatest interest to readers of *Themelios* will be Provan's extended critique of "third way Chicago" readers in chapters 14 and 16 of the book, particularly for what he perceives as their "warfare model" of the relationship between Christianity and science. This, he believes, has fostered both exegetical problems in the interpretation of some biblical texts (notably Gen 1–11), while also creating a "credibility gap" in the wider public mind between faith and science. While Provan certainly points to weaknesses in third way readings, this aspect of the book does seem hampered by an uncharitable interpretation of the *Chicago Statement*. Most telling in this regard is a brief comment in which Provan recognizes that many adherents of the *Chicago Statement* do not in fact approach biblical exegesis in the way he characterizes third way practitioners, though he offers no answers as to why or how this is the case (p. 427, n. 44).

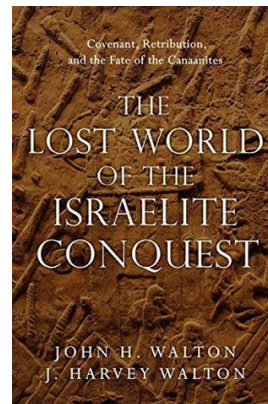
Nevertheless, Provan's work offers much food for thought. Not least, he presents a stirring call for deepened Christian education both in our churches and in Christian colleges and seminaries. Our laxity in this regard, Provan believes, represents nothing less than "a betrayal of the Reformation" (p. 449). As a reader, I had hoped for more concrete suggestions as to how to make this vision a reality, but the vision is nevertheless apropos. Indeed, Provan's work offers much that should provoke critical reflection on the part of all biblical interpreters, particularly regarding the ways in which God continues to speak to his church through the properly understood literal sense of Scripture.

Looking back over a year that has seen a spate of literature on the anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, Provan's work stands out as one of the most substantial contributions by an individual scholar. While readers will likely not agree with all aspects of Provan's program, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture* nevertheless is a book that deserves a broad readership and thoughtful engagement.

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John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton. *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. xiv + 269 pp. £15.29/\$20.00.

Two Waltons, father and son, co-authored this third book in the Lost World series, which aims “to transcend the shackles of our modern worldview and traditional readings to recapture the text as it would have been understood by the original author and audience” (p. xi). The authors attempt to disabuse Christians of the faulty idea that God ordered the Israelites to kill the native Canaanites and to take their land by force. They argue that this misunderstanding derives from a combination of wrong hermeneutics, poor understandings of some of the key biblical passages, and a lack of familiarity with the ancient Near Eastern background of the text. Yet the purpose of the authors goes well beyond simple apologetics. They interpret the Israelite conquest in the larger context of Israelite covenant in order to give practical teachings to modern Christians.



In Part 1 they discuss the purpose of the Old Testament, which is not to provide a list of laws and illustrations to be followed, but to record God’s actions through the Israelites in order that we may understand them and participate in God’s good purposes. The problem, however, is that the Old Testament records God’s actions using the language that had meaning in the context of the ancient cognitive environment. So, in order to understand the Bible’s teaching, the authors argue, the “cognitive environment must be translated” (v. 10). If properly translated, it will provide “a template for interpreting the New Testament which in turn gives insight into God’s purposes for us today” (p. 233).

Parts 2 and 3 are intended to refute the common idea that the conquest was punishment against the Canaanites. The authors argue that no textual indicators show that retributive justice was dealt to the Canaanites. That they were idolatrous, depraved, and in no status of holiness does not make them “deserve” annihilation. The Canaanites could not “sin” because they were not bound by the covenant of Yahweh. Further, the description of the Canaanite nations as sexually depraved and idolatrous in Leviticus 18–20 is comparable to a well-established ancient literary trope about hordes of invincible barbarians called “Umman-manda” (p. 139). The point of the literary trope is to create a negative image of those who live outside the established order, not to describe the observed acts of the historical people of Canaan (p. 140).

After refuting the idea of conquest as punishment for Canaanite sinners, the authors propose an alternative view in Parts 4 and 5: the conquest was the preparation of the land for God’s special use of it. They argue that the conquest recapitulates the idea of *chaoskampf*, namely, removal of chaos in preparation for divine order. Just as the point of *chaoskampf* is the result of the battle, the point of the conquest is the new order that God establishes after the agents of chaos (the Canaanites) have been removed. Noteworthy in this regard is the author’s translation of Hebrew חָרַם as “to remove from human use,” rather than as “utterly destroy.” They argue that God’s חָרַם against the Canaanites was intended to destroy the identity of Canaanite communities lest the Israelites should use it. In other words, חָרַם was intended to create the conditions under which Israel could co-identify with Yahweh only. חָרַם was, therefore, never intended as a genocide, the killing of innocent people. Finally, in Part 6 the authors suggest some practical implications of their understanding of the conquest for modern Christians.

In this informative and readable book, the authors attempt an innovative interpretation of the Israelite conquest by re-reading some key passages concerning the conquest which, the authors claim, have been totally misunderstood thus far (e.g., Gen 15:16; Lev 18:25; Deut 9:5). The authors are to be commended for bringing some of the technical materials of the ancient Near East—otherwise unavailable to lay people (e.g., legal wisdom, the literary trope of Umma-manda)—to bear upon the passages relating to the conquest. Furthermore, the timely use of metaphors and illustrations (e.g., cultural river, baking a cake, eminent domain) help to clarify the sophisticated logic of the authors. Hence, the following criticism does not change the fact that the authors have rendered a great service by helping many perplexed Christians to navigate through some intractable issues associated with the Israelite conquest.

The authors, first of all, would have been more convincing if they had paid as much attention to dissimilarities as to similarities between the Bible and its ancient Near Eastern parallels. For instance, the description of the Canaanite nations in Leviticus 18 may be as polemical as that of Umma-manda in contemporary extrabiblical literature, but one may consider the possibility of biblical reshaping of the extrabiblical motif from its being an alien issue to its being related to universal ethics. Second, the authors could be more sensitive to the dynamic semantics of Hebrew words, as well as their historical development. For example, the semantic division between *תטאח/טאח* and *עון* is not as clear-cut as the authors make us believe. The Hebrew terms *תטאח* and *טאח* are used with respect to the pagans outside the covenantal order, *contra* the authors (Lam 4:22; Zech 14:19). Third, some of the authors' exegetical conclusions are more ingenious than convincing. For instance, "Genesis 15:16 does not say that the conquest was delayed so that the Canaanites could build up a balance of enough sin to warrant their destruction; it says that the conquest was delayed so that the violence and turmoil would not occur during the lifetime of either Abraham or his Amorite allies" (p. 256). The biggest problem with this interpretation is its failure to explain the fact that the delayed destruction was not a favor given to Abraham's Amorite allies alone: other contemporary Canaanites also avoided the violence and turmoil of the conquest. Further, if "the fourth generation" refers to the time shortly after his death, namely the time in which Abraham will "not see his offspring into adulthood" (p. 60), one is hard pressed to explain how the Israelites could possibly come back to Canaan in Abraham's fourth generation. It is more logical to connect the fourth generation to the four hundred years of Israel's slavery in Egypt (cf. Gen 15:13) and to argue that "the four generation" is intended to nuance the conquest as being done under the retribution principle, for the Mosaic law stipulates that one's sin is punishable to the fourth generation. Fourth, even when accepting the thesis of this book, the reader is still left wondering why God allowed "innocent" Canaanites to be "caught up" in the destruction of the land (p. 131). Although the authors may not intend to answer this question definitively, appealing to God's mysterious purpose or asserting that the Bible is not intended to give us universal moral principles (p. 100) comes dangerously close to moral relativism or agnosticism.

This book reminds us that our God is bigger than our questions and encourages us not to be weary in asking honest questions about his revelation in the Bible. As Kierkegaard once said, "In the longing itself the eternal is."

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

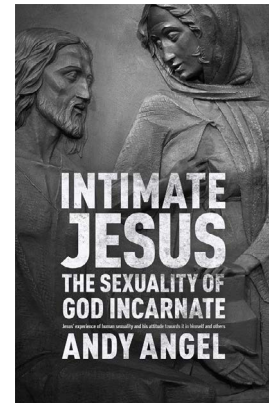
Andy Angel. *Intimate Jesus: The Sexuality of God Incarnate*. London: SPCK, 2017. xv + 176 pp. £12.99/\$17.00.

In *Intimate Jesus*, Andy Angel takes a look at the question of the incarnation from the perspective of sexuality in the Gospel of John. The theological aspects of the question provide the impetus for the exegesis of the narrative. It is John who writes of “the Word made flesh,” and Angel finds much within the Gospel which alludes to, plays on, and indeed subverts conventional first-century understandings of sexuality. The book is an honest and open approach to a question rarely tackled by pious preachers or prudish professors. The final words of his introduction read: “I apologize in advance to any who might find this material offensive” (p. xv).

The first chapter introduces the theme and places the text of John’s Gospel within its historical context. Angel posits that the Gospel was indeed written by an eyewitness, who was the beloved disciple, who was John, son of Zebedee. Yet none of the observations or arguments depends necessarily on the idea of the beloved disciple as the author or witness behind the Gospel.

The prologue proclaims that the word became “flesh” (John 1:14), a term which covers all of humanity, both male and female. Yet flesh is not merely a gender-neutral term for humanity, but often a euphemism for the sexual dimension of human experience. Indeed, in just the previous verse the prologue speaks of those born “of the will of the flesh” (John 1:13). Thus John, “intends his audience to hear in that statement that God experienced human sexuality including sexual desire in Jesus” (p. 30). Yet the story of the incarnation (with its implied experience of human sexuality) is not all that can be said about the Son, who also enjoys a filial intimacy at the breast of the Father (John 1:18): “[B]y using an image of physical closeness, John intends his audience to hear from the outset that the relationship of the Father and the Son is marked by intimacy” (p. 15).

The scene in John which has most often been linked to Jesus’s (subversion of) sexuality is the encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4), which Angel entitles: “A Samaritan bride and her Jewish groom” (p. 31). Angel notes that the bridegroom motif has already appeared at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1–11) and in the teaching of John the Baptist (John 3:29). In the former episode Jesus usurped the role of the bridegroom by providing the wine; in the latter case, Angel quotes b. Ketub. 7b–8a and concludes that the voice/sound/noise (φωνή) of the bridegroom to which the Baptist is alluding is “his ecstatic moaning or shouting during sex” (p. 35). But Jesus has no bride, and so the tension rises with the appearance of a possible candidate at the well. A watering-hole was a place to seek out a bride in Hebrew literature (Gen 24:1–27; 29:1–12; Exod 2:15–21; cf. also Prot. Jas. 11:1). The passage is overflowing with motifs linked to marriage and sexuality: Jesus arrives at a *well* in a *foreign country*, there is no-one else present (John 4:8), the term *δωρεά* is often linked to *wedding presents*, the woman explains that she is *single* (John 4:17), and the disciples are astonished but dare not ask what Jesus is up to (John 4:27)! Angel is less keen on reading sexual imagery into the well and bucket of John 4:11 (see p. 126 n. 63), but suggests that given Jesus’s reference to “living water,” it is understandable that “the woman might suspect Jesus of flirting with her” (p. 41). Thus both the Samaritan woman and the



disciples thought of Jesus in terms of sexuality: “Jesus comes across to them as every bit as sexual as the next man” (p. 58). For Angel, the incarnation means that Jesus experienced not only thirst and tiredness (John 4:6–7), but also human sexuality, over which he exercised self-control, so that the anticipated climax of the scene never comes, as the two go their separate ways (pp. 59–60).

Angel then considers “male intimacy” (p. 61), as John introduces a disciple with a particularly close connection to Jesus (John 13:23, 25; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20). This disciple shares a similar intimacy with Jesus as the Son does with the Father, lying at his breast. Angel now examines the topic of *love* in John 13 and at ancient Greek *symposia*. He then highlights the erotic role of the teacher’s favourite, with particular reference to *Encolpius* in Petronius’s *Satyricon* (pp. 68–71). Yet in all of this, John is “redefining” male intimacy, and while he “risks misunderstanding” he “challenges the *status quo*” (pp. 79–83). John is prepared to risk it all: “But the idea that God so loved the world that men could share this level of intimacy with one another physically, spiritually and emotionally was worth it all for John” (p. 83).

The next to be considered are the Marys. Mary Magdalene is first, of whom it can be concluded that, “John presents Mary as Jesus’ disciple, not his lover” (p. 87). This is not as clear-cut for Mary of Bethany: “John seems to hint that she is attracted to him [Jesus], and that he is aware of this” (p. 87). The allusions in John 12:3 include Mary’s interest in Jesus’s feet (whether his actual feet or a common euphemism for genitals), the perfume of nard, and her loose, uncovered hair (p. 89). Finally, Jesus is moved to tears by Mary’s sorrow (John 11:32–36), which the Jews interpret as love for Lazarus, but from which Angel infers, “John suggests that Jesus has a soft spot for Mary” (p. 91). If there is any hint of heterosexual romance for John’s Jesus, it is here with this Mary (p. 97). Angel is critical of Dale Martin (*Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006]) with respect to Martin’s claim that there are homoerotic undertones in John’s portrayal of Jesus’s relationships with Lazarus, Thomas, Judas, and Peter (pp. 91–94). Chapter 5 concludes with a brief discussion of the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11), a parallel to the Samaritan woman in that in both cases Jesus refuses judgement(alism).

In his conclusion, Angel proposes a hesitant disciple transformed into a confident evangelist: “John too had a mental barrier separating sex from the sacred, but by the time he came to write the story, he understood that God had taken down this barrier in the incarnation” (p. 98). Angel then must admit that due to his incarnation as a man, Jesus could only experience male sexuality, but appeals to the fact that John speaks of the word becoming “flesh” (not “man”) as warrant for his claim that “Jesus can identify with all of us, male and female, in the frailty of our sexual desire” (p. 99).

In his closing remarks, Angel states, “Initial reactions to the book suggest that some may find its subject matter, arguments and conclusions controversial. This I fully accept” (p. 102). Yet one cannot deny Jesus’s human sexuality without denying the incarnation and committing an ancient heresy (p. 102). Whatever one’s views on the theological significance of a sexual Jesus, one is forced, having read Angel’s book, to accept that John did not shy from such topics, but embraced them, toyed with them and denied them the expected climax. John’s Jesus is a sexual Jesus.

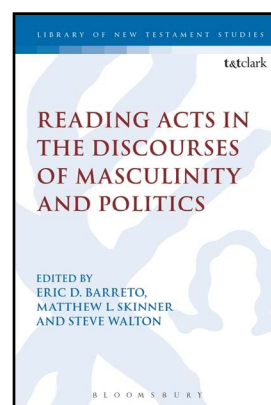
The book is well-written and very readable, with around 100 pages of main text, copious end-notes, a scholarly bibliography and indices of ancient sources, modern authors and subjects. At times it may prove too pious for liberal exegetes, too provocative for conservative readers and too timid for postmodern interpreters. But in his fine attention to the Gospel of John and ancient motifs of sexuality,

Angel has provided a sensible and accessible resource for the discussion of sexuality in the New Testament and Christian life.

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Eric Barreto, Matthew L. Skinner, and Steve Walton, eds. *Reading Acts in the Discourses of Masculinity and Politics*. Library of New Testament Studies 559. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017. 224 pp. £84.99/\$114.00.

Most of the essays in this collection are drawn from papers offered in the Society of Biblical Literature Acts section in 2013 and 2014. Barreto explains in his introduction that the contributors to the volume all approach questions regarding masculine identity and the exercise of power from the basic premise that “identities are human constructions” (p. xii). Nevertheless, as Matthew Skinner stresses in his afterword, this focus on how the book negotiates these humanly constructed discourses frequently raises questions concerning the theological outlook of Acts—“how the book understands the nature of God and God’s activity, as well as how the book depicts and instructs communities of Christ-followers” (p. 157).



The first four essays deal with masculinity in Acts. This is new territory since Luke-Acts gender studies usually focus on Luke’s view of women. But as Christina Petterson points out in her essay, in Acts, the female is entirely dependent on the male and the book “presents a narrative of socially stratified men” (p. 16). Since “phallogocentric language” is easy to demonstrate with respect to women in Acts, Petterson uses the example of Paul and Timothy in Acts 16:1–5.

Colleen Conway picks up this theme by observing that most biblical scholars default to the common protocol for Greco-Roman masculinity and then ask whether Luke subverts these norms. She defines this criterion of masculinity in the Greco-Roman world as mastery of others, proven by constant competition with other men. Manliness was always a morally positive quality, while being effeminate was morally reprehensible. Conway then argues that the author of Acts wants to portray his heroes as ideal men who can take their places in the upper echelons in the masculine Roman world (p. 19).

Brittany Wilson traces some of these themes using Peter and Paul as examples. She argues that Luke provides a reconfiguration of what it means to be a man in the Roman world, but this is neither subversive nor accommodating. For Wilson, Luke is reconfiguring Roman ideals: sexual power gives way to sexual asceticism, paternal power becomes a fictive family, political power becomes faithful submission to political power, and military power becomes participation in cosmic warfare between God and Satan (p. 47).

The final essay of the first section examines the circumcision of Timothy. Christopher Stroup makes the suggestion that circumcision is a “gendered, cultural act” in which Paul (an ideal Greco-Roman male) exercises power over Timothy. Of the essays in this first section volume, Stroup provides the most detailed survey of gender in the Greco-Roman world.

The second part of this volume collects five essays on the theology of Acts as it relates to the Roman Empire. Usually empire studies examine how Acts may reinforce or reconfigure imperial values (p. 157), but these essays focus on how Acts envisions living within the Empire at the discourse level. The section begins with a reprint of Steve Walton's 2002 article "The State They Were In: Luke's View of the Roman Empire." In his response to the essays in part two of the book, Mikeal Parsons calls Walton's essay the "best survey available of where scholarship has been" on the "messy question" of Luke-Acts and politics (p. 141).

Matthew Skinner extends Walton's literature survey to more recent scholarship (including Kavin Rowe and post-colonial criticism). Skinner concludes empire studies in Acts are in a "messy state" at the present time, possibly because Acts has "arrived late to the party hosted by empire studies" (p. 120). Although these new methodologies have reinvigorated a stale debate, there is need to clarify how the theology of Acts relates to the Roman world. Skinner makes six useful proposals to move the discussion forward.

Bruce Winter examines the application of Roman law in the book of Acts and the implications for the historicity of Acts. For Winter, a key theme of the book is its claim that the gospel continues to go out "without hindrance" (ἄκωλύτως, Acts 28:31) despite Rome's uneven distribution of justice (p. 127). He surveys several examples to show Roman law was sometimes enforced properly (Gallio at Corinth) and at other times it was disregarded (Felix at Caesarea).

Mikeal Parsons and Barbara Rossing respond to the previous three essays as well as a paper presented by Warren Carter at the 2014 conference but published separately in *New Testament Studies*. Parsons agrees with Skinner's assertion that disentangling the tensions and ambiguities of the book of Acts is difficult, but he suggests the more we listen to Luke's story the more likely we are to hear what Luke says rather than our own socio-political realities (p. p. 147). Rossing's response examines the eight uses of the word οἰκουμένη as evidence for anti-imperial perspective in Acts. By contrasting Roman imperial texts and the book of Acts, she concludes all the references to οἰκουμένη in Acts are anti-imperial, most notably the accusations against Paul in Thessalonica (p. 154).

Although there is some relation between the two themes of this book, it would have been more useful to focus more deeply on a single theme and expand the number of essays. Despite this criticism, the volume is a valuable contribution to the study of Roman culture and book of Acts.

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Sarah S. U. Dixon. *The Testimony of the Exalted Jesus in the Book of Revelation*. LNTS 570. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017. xv + 184 pp. £85.00/\$114.00.

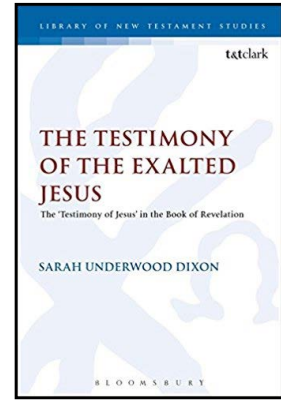
In this revised Cambridge University PhD thesis, Sarah Dixon contributes an important and comprehensive analysis of the enigmatic phrase “the testimony of Jesus” in the book of Revelation. She observes that while most scholars take “the testimony of Jesus” in Rev 1:2 as a reference to the message of the Apocalypse, many interpret the phrase differently in 1:9 and elsewhere. She demonstrates a strong grasp of current scholarship in English, German, and French, and she makes a strong argument for the minority position that “the testimony of Jesus” (μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ) refers to the Apocalypse itself in all six occurrences in the book.

Chapter 1 introduces the study’s principal research questions and text-focused methodology and surveys how thirty scholars interpret “the testimony of Jesus” in Revelation. Dixon acknowledges that most scholars do not read “the testimony of Jesus” consistently as a reference to the Apocalypse itself, since characters within the book of Revelation are said to “have” this testimony in 12:17 and 19:10.

Chapter 2 addresses this challenge by considering internal self-references in Daniel and 1 Enoch to these books’ message or written form as a relevant backdrop for Revelation’s intratextual references to “the testimony of Jesus.” Dixon presupposes that the book of Daniel is pseudonymous, citing Collins (pp. 41–42), and follows Nickelsburg’s reconstruction of the composition and development of 1 Enoch (pp. 43–46). Dixon plausibly concludes that Revelation, Daniel, and 1 Enoch “in some way depict their own messages going out and being used by future recipients” (p. 69). Perhaps the most interesting contribution of ch. 2 is Dixon’s argument that the scroll opened by the Lamb (5:1–8:1) and eaten by John (10:1–10) should be identified as the Apocalypse itself (pp. 62–63).

Chapters 3–6 analyze the meaning of “the testimony of Jesus” in Rev. 1:9; 12:17; 19:10; and 20:4. Surprisingly, Dixon devotes only four pages in the Introduction to “the testimony of Jesus” in 1:2, rather than offering a chapter-length exegesis of this foundational passage. In ch. 3, Dixon challenges the conventional interpretation that John was on the island of Patmos because of persecution. She draws extensively on the recent study by Ian Boxall (*Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse* [Oxford: OUP, 2013]), citing Boxall’s work in 20 of the 45 footnotes in ch. 3. She claims that there is scant evidence for the tradition of John’s exile. Rather, Revelation is silent on why John traveled to the island, and the seer reflecting back on his experience presents his reception of the vision from Christ as the true divinely-ordained reason (pp. 82–83). She claims that John’s self-description as a sharer in tribulation (θλίψις) in 1:9 refers generally to various troubles experienced by all believers and does not support the persecution hypothesis (pp. 73–75). While Dixon’s argument should receive careful consideration, I am more persuaded by Craig Koester’s explanation that John “was relegated to Patmos by the provincial authorities” (*Revelation*, AB 38A [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014], 243; see my review in *Them* 40.1: 124–26). In my judgment, Dixon’s exegesis is most convincing in ch. 5, which considers the two references to “the testimony of Jesus” in Rev. 19:10.

Chapter 7 considers “the testimony of Jesus” alongside the cognate terms μαρτυρία, μάρτυς, and μαρτυρέω, as well as references to “the word of God” and Revelation as a “book of prophecy.” Dixon argues that while “the testimony of Jesus” consistently refers to the Apocalypse, the related expressions



“the testimony which they had” (6:9) and “the word of their testimony” (12:11) are general references to “faithful living” (p. 130; cf. p. 127). She concludes that in 1:2 and 1:9 “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus” are mutually explanatory designations for the book of Revelation, but she posits that “the word of God” in 6:9 and 20:4 retains its “original” meaning as divine revelation via the prophets (pp. 141–42). In my judgment, Dixon’s inconsistent treatment of “the word of God” and “testimony” weakens her overall case for a consistent reading of “the testimony of Jesus” as an internal self-reference for the Apocalypse.

Chapter 8 concludes the study by summarizing the key findings and asserting that a consistent interpretation of “the testimony of Jesus” as a reference to the Apocalypse itself serves John’s rhetorical aim of instructing and encouraging readers to heed the book’s trustworthy message in light of their coming vindication. Dixon’s monograph is a welcome contribution to Revelation studies and should prompt fruitful discussion over the book’s self-presentation as the testimony of Jesus and true word of God.

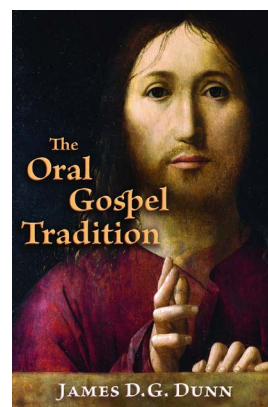
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James D. G. Dunn. *The Oral Gospel Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. x + 390 pp. £37.99/\$45.00.

This excellent book is a collection of fifteen essays previously published by Dunn, mostly in the wake of *Jesus Remembered* (pp. vii–viii), although three do predate that volume: “Prophetic ‘I’-Sayings and the Jesus Tradition” (1978); “John and the Oral Gospel Tradition” (1991); and “Matthew’s Awareness of Markan Redaction” (1992). Overall, the collection is historically stimulating and Dunn’s appreciation for the liveliness of oral traditioning is on display throughout. He frequently emphasizes both communal and performative aspects of oral traditioning, and includes an essay on “Social Memory and the Oral Jesus Tradition” (pp. 230–47).

The book is divided into three parts, thematically arranged, with Part I mostly comprised of essays on Gospel pre-history or the Gospels themselves (including two essays on John’s Gospel, pp. 138–63 and 164–95). Part II focuses on present research related to Dunn’s oral emphasis and engages Dunn’s interlocutors, including Bengt Holmberg and Samuel Byrskog (pp. 199–212), Birger Gerhardsson and Richard Bauckham (pp. 213–29), and Theodore Weeden, who firmly critiques Kenneth Bailey’s model that Dunn relies heavily upon (pp. 248–64). Part III’s essays involve more syntheses of Dunn’s overall contributions and are excellent resources, specifically “The History of the Tradition (New Testament)” (pp. 313–63), which is the clearest and briefest though comprehensive treatment of Dunn’s thinking on oral tradition available.

Fundamental for Dunn is his concern to alter “the default setting” of Gospel criticism, from the stratified and composition-laden “literary paradigm,” i.e., form criticism’s continued and undue influence (pp. 44–49), to one more welcoming and appreciative of the oral culture surrounding the development of the Gospel tradition (pp. 49–59), and the tradition’s own lively character (p. 79; Dunn does not, however, dismiss the two-document hypothesis, p. 61). Although he does not dispense with Q, the oral



traditioning model, according to Dunn, has better explanatory power than the literary paradigm in accounting for the same-yet-different character of the Jesus tradition (p. 59). On the heels of this essay, Dunn presents “Q¹ as Oral Tradition” (pp. 80–108). Here Dunn ably demonstrates the varied character of the six clusters of wisdom sayings (seventeen examples) identified as Q¹ by John S. Kloppenborg with telling insight for his oral thesis of the tradition, concluding, against Kloppenborg, that the evidence for “a discrete compositional unit or stratum is weak” (p. 107).

Dunn has long been intrigued with Bailey’s thesis of informally controlled tradition, and this collection of essays reprints his rebuttal of Weeden (pp. 248–64). Dunn prefers Bailey’s model over Gerhardsson’s better-attested “model of rabbinic traditioning” due to the rabbinic model’s “formal and even regimented process” (p. 249), something Dunn feels cannot account for attested variation. Neither does Dunn find much value in folkloristics (p. 249), in contrast to his student, Terence C. Mournet, who is more appreciative. Dunn’s response to Weeden’s critique of the *haflat samar* leaves much to be desired, since Weeden firmly showed that the practice was akin to evening entertainment (see pp. 251–52, n. 9). When Dunn explains that Rena Hogg’s book, which was used by Bailey to demonstrate the stability of traditioning, is not actually traditioning material (pp. 251–53), he is on firmer ground. Both Bailey and Weeden make the mistake of casting Rena Hogg as a tradent, since both presuppose that her book provides a crystallization of the same traditioning process that was accessible to Bailey. Her account, however, was not a representation of village tradition, but a memoir about her father. Dunn’s response may have fared better in emphasizing this rather than suggesting contextual differences in *hafalat samar* traditioning.

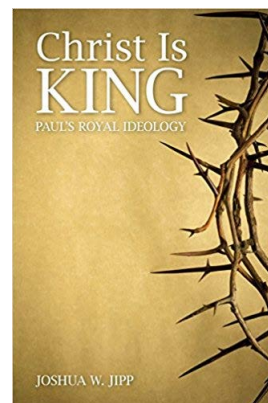
In his discussion with Bauckham (pp. 213–29, esp. 222–29), Dunn reveals that both he and Bauckham have different understandings of Gospel pre-history, though they can and should be taken as complementary (as I. Howard Marshall notes, in “A New Consensus on Oral Tradition? A Review of Richard Bauckham’s *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 6 [2008]: 190). If, as Dunn writes, Bauckham “wants *the eyewitnesses themselves* to bridge the gap between initial formulation and transcription in written Gospels, he may be pressing his case beyond the evidence as it has come down to us” (p. 227). But this ignores the significance of Luke’s prologue and specified tradents (see Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], 34n71; also noted by Marshall), who are just one link in the chain of transmission removed from Luke’s account. Dunn’s rich and lively historiography needs *more* of the complementary project of eyewitness traditioning to assist in offering stability in the similar-yet-dissimilar character of the tradition.

In closing, Dunn’s work on orality is remarkable in the greatest sense of the word. It brings a richness to the text that is seldom accentuated so expertly. Gospel history and liturgy are illuminated in new and rich ways that open up imaginative historical vistas. Dunn’s work deserves appreciation and thankfulness from any student interested in Gospel pre-history.

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Joshua W. Jipp. *Christ Is King: Paul's Royal Ideology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015. 388 pp. £29.99/\$44.00.

The first sentence of Joshua Jipp's book fires a shot: "Despite the fact that, as Francis Oakley has reminded us, '[F]or several millennia at least, it has been kingship and not more consensual governmental forms that has dominated the institutional landscape of what we today would call *political* life,' the ancient institution of kingship has not seemed to most to be a particularly relevant resource for understanding Paul's depiction of Christ" (p. 1). Jipp attributes this neglect in part to "the longstanding scholarly consensus that within Paul's letters Χριστός was a proper name that had lost its titular connotations" (p. 4). Nevertheless, extending lines of argument from William Horbury's *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998) and Matthew Novenson's *Christ among the Messiahs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Jipp contends that "Paul used, reworked, and applied ancient conceptions of the good king—both Greco-Roman and Jewish—to Christ in order to structure reality or the symbolic universe of his congregations" (p. 9).



The first chapter introduces and outlines the book, and provides an anecdotal sketch of kingship discourse in Greco-Roman writings, material remains, Israel's Scriptures, and Second Temple texts. In chapters 2–5, Jipp demonstrates how an understanding of kingship discourse has "explanatory power for resolving some classic scholarly conundrums" (p. 11). The first conundrum he tackles is the meaning of "the law of Christ" in Gal 6:2, though his discussion also touches on Gal 5:14, Rom 8:1–4, 1 Cor 9:22, and Rom 13:8–15:13. Jipp surveys Greek and Hellenistic kingship discourse and then the Old Testament for portrayals of the ideal ruler as a "living law," who functions as a model of obedience for his subjects. Jipp then applies this concept to Galatians, arguing that Christ embodies the Torah. However, as the perfect pattern that Christ offers in himself is only a part of his people's transformation, Jipp could have done much more to integrate the Spirit's role into his discussion, especially with reference to Galatians and Rom. 8:1–4. While Jipp notes that "the king's *presence* somehow stimulates and enables the peoples' [*sic*] obedience" (p. 65, italics added) in Old Testament and Greco-Roman texts, he never explains how Paul develops this concept in his letters in ways that transcend the preceding kingship discourse.

Chapter 3 examines hymns and encomia to rulers in Greco-Roman texts and the Old Testament, which leads into an extended exegesis of Col 1:13–20 and a briefer treatment of Phil 2:6–11. Jipp argues that these Christ-hymns should be interpreted within the widespread ancient practice of praising kings and that realizing this may open a window onto the development of the earliest Christology. Chapter 4 investigates Paul's participatory soteriology—what does it mean to be "in Christ"? Jipp helpfully explains how Christ, as an ideal king, serves as a "bridge figure" between God and his people, mediating God's rule and presence to his people *and* acting as the representative of the people to God. The chapter focuses on Romans but includes reflections on Ephesians and 1 Corinthians as well. Despite repeated claims that believers' participation in Christ entails more than simply receiving benefits from him (see, e.g., pp. 148, 150, 199), Jipp does not clarify how this was so.

In Chapter 5 Jipp confronts head-on the massive and related issues of God's righteousness, Paul's indictment of humanity in Rom 1:18–3:20, the meaning of Paul's thesis in Rom 1:16–17 (including the referent of "the righteous [one]" in 1:17), the interpretation of Rom 5:15–21 and 6:7, and how Jesus's resurrection as the Davidic Messiah in Rom 1:3–4 must inform all of the above. As in previous

chapters, Jipp's attention to kingship discourse leads him to take fresh angles on well-known problems. In particular, Jipp's discussion of how God's righteousness is manifested in his resurrection of the righteous, suffering, Davidic king—that is, how God shows himself to be righteous by doing the right thing for *Jesus*—was thought-provoking. The final chapter reviews Jipp's conclusions and mentions avenues for further research.

Aside from a couple small gaps in Jipp's analysis that I have noted above, one remaining question concerns Jipp's foundational claim that ancient kingship discourse outside of the Old Testament is a "source" for Paul's Christological language. At times it seems as if kingship discourse in Plato, Xenophon, Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch, and the like provides a *context* in which our interpretation of Paul may be guided and enriched; at other times, he seems to suggest that Paul is consciously adopting and adapting this discourse. The term "source" is a slippery one and proving that Israel's Scriptures are only one strand "of Paul's linguistic and conceptual resources for understanding the good king" (p. 7) is a daunting task. It is not clear that Jipp demonstrates at any point that Paul cannot be properly interpreted apart from an understanding of kingship discourse outside of the Old Testament; in other words, this book does not set forth evidence that Greco-Roman kingship texts are ever used by Paul as a source that is distinct and independent from the Old Testament. Nevertheless, this does not call into question the usefulness of this discourse to the interpreter of Paul.

In summary, although a clear grasp on ancient kingship discourse is not a panacea to cure all that ails Pauline interpretation, Jipp has certainly illuminated a neglected topic that must factor strongly into our interpretation of Pauline Christology. The writing style is technical, and at times repetitive, and thus may be challenging for a non-scholarly audience. Even so, I would highly recommend this book to all readers who seek to comprehend Paul's portrayal of Christ as (the) king.

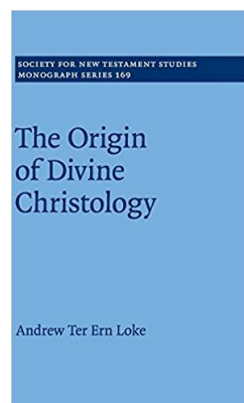
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Andrew Ter Ern Loke. *The Origin of Divine Christology*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 169. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xvi + 249 pp. £75.00/\$99.00.

Why and when did Christians start believing that Jesus is divine? Did Jesus himself indicate that he considered himself divine? The two questions seem an obvious pair. Both are of perennial interest to scholars and laypersons, believer and skeptic alike. Yet the two questions are not always addressed together.

The central thesis of Andrew Ter Ern Loke's monograph, *The Origin of Divine Christology*, is that the answer to the second question also answers the first. Specifically, Loke proposes that "Jesus was regarded as truly divine in earliest Christianity because its leaders thought that God demanded them to do so through the following way: A sizeable group of them perceived that Jesus claimed and showed himself to be truly divine, and they thought that God vindicated this claim by raising Jesus from the dead" (p. 1). Hence Loke pushes the conversation from "early" to "earliest" in the strictest sense: he claims that the best explanation of the historical data is that Jesus himself indicated his own divinity both before and after the resurrection. Hence, while Loke



builds throughout on Larry Hurtado's work on devotion to Jesus in early Christianity, he also seeks to improve on Hurtado's hypothesis by positing that Jesus's own teaching, vindicated by his resurrection, is a better explanation of the origin of high Christology than that offered by Hurtado, who gives early believers' religious experiences a more crucial role (see esp. pp. 119–22).

After an admirably clear introduction (ch. 1), Loke rehearses the evidence, now fairly widely accepted, that the highest Christology was present among the earliest Christians (ch. 2). The next two chapters respond to objections to this conclusion, dealing first with objections involving exalted figures in early Judaism (ch. 3), then a variety of objections regarding earliest Christian beliefs and practices (ch. 4). In ch. 5 Loke argues for the widespread extent of this high Christology among the earliest Christians, and criticizes accounts of early Christology that, in his view, fail to account for this widespread extent. Loke then offers a positive case for tracing the earliest highest Christology back to Jesus's own teachings, based on, among other factors, the earliest Christians' evident concern to pass on Jesus's teachings, the difficulty of regarding a human Jesus as also truly divine, and the strong probability that a number of other peculiar early Christian beliefs and practices originated with Jesus. Chapter 7 assesses evidence for the origin of highest Christology in the Gospels, and ch. 8 offers a conclusion that provides not only an excellent summary of Loke's historical case (pp. 200–1), but also a fascinating discussion of two possible counter-examples to his argument, the deification of Haile Selassie (1892–1975) by Rastafarians, and the deification of Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994) by members of the Elokist Chabad Jews (pp. 202–8).

In my estimation, the book succeeds in advancing its central thesis and critiquing alternative explanations, whether of those unconvinced of early high Christology (e.g., Ehrman) or those convinced of it but whose explanations do not treat Jesus's own testimony to his divinity as a decisive factor (e.g., Hurtado). The book offers no new exegesis, and little new historical evidence, but it advances the historical study of early Christology particularly by noting the widespread extent of high Christology among the earliest Christians and the lack of debate on the issue among them, and inquiring after an adequate historical cause. Loke is fair and scrupulous in his interaction with alternative views, and because of the fullness with which he catalogues and critiques alternate explanations his monograph also serves as a useful overview of recent scholarship on early Christology.

I do have three relatively minor critiques to register. First is the distracting number of spelling and formatting errors. To name just a few: Hebrew written backwards (pp. 28, 40), grammar and spelling errors (pp. 41, 84, 93, 97, 105 and so on), missing spaces (p. 60), and a Greek dative out of context (pp. 76, 97). Second, more substantively, while I appreciate Loke's use (following Wesley Hill's book *Paul and the Trinity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015]) of trinitarian concepts as heuristic tools for reading Paul, I would demur from the "social" model of the Trinity evident in his definition of trinitarian persons (pp. 19–20), and I find his assertions that "Jesus represents YHWH" (p. 30) and that Jesus is "within the being of YHWH" (pp. 91, 97) to be somewhat wide of the mark. Third, especially when handling questions related to how Jesus can be both human and divine, or whether Jesus's subordination to the Father presents a problem for divine Christology, I found some of his answers insufficient (e.g., pp. 18n18, 20, 54n1, 83, 93, 174n13). These issues cry out for what patristic scholar John Behr calls "partitive exegesis," a reading strategy that recognizes that while Jesus is a single ascriptive subject, some scriptural assertions of him speak of him as God, and others speak of him as man. To Loke's credit, he does occasionally highlight the importance of the incarnation for answering these questions (pp. 81,

157), but a more programmatic use of incarnational conceptions would have rendered his response to these challenges more substantive and persuasive.

Yet these criticisms detract little from the overall worth of the work, which is considerable. I warmly commend the book to all interested in the New Testament, Christology, and the origin of Christianity's most distinctive beliefs.

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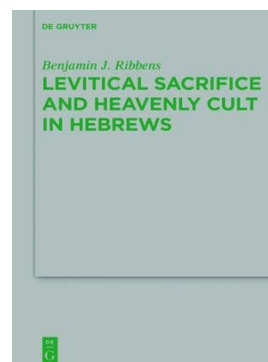
Benjamin J. Ribbens. *Levitical Sacrifice and Heavenly Cult in Hebrews*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 222. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016. 297 pp. £74.99/\$140.00.

In the midst of an ever-growing volume of literature on the sacrificial elements of Hebrews, Ben Ribbens's recent dissertation deals particularly with how Hebrews understand the *efficacy* of Old Testament sacrifices in relation to Christ's sacrifice. It does not unpack the OT's own perspective on this issue, but rather focuses on Hebrews itself as well as other interpretations of the OT from the Second Temple period.

Ribbens suggests, first of all, that Hebrews shares with numerous Second Temple Jewish texts at least the following three assumptions: that OT sacrifices did "atone" for sin, that the disposition of the offerer mattered (thus sacrifices were not effective *ex opere operato*), and that, in cases involving a heavenly sanctuary, OT cultic practices do, or should, correspond to those in heaven. Second Temple texts exhibit a great deal of variety vis-à-vis cultic ideas; Ribbens argues that Hebrews shows particular affinity with the mystical apocalyptic tradition, wherein the heavenly cult is in heaven rather than identical to heaven (or the cosmos) and is equivalent to the throne room of God, the heavenly cult is already functioning rather than waiting in the wings for the eschaton, and heavenly beings (or a single heavenly being in Hebrews's case) act as priests in that heavenly sanctuary.

Keeping an eye on this mystical apocalyptic background, Ribbens then moves through the various key texts in Hebrews to further unpack the nature of the heavenly sanctuary. That sanctuary is, according to Hebrews (and consistent with other apocalyptic texts), created, spatio-temporal, in need of purification via a heavenly cultic act, and a pattern for the earthly cult—both structurally and functionally (pp. 129–30).

The heavenly cult as a pattern for the earthly cult brings into focus both the similarities and the differences between Hebrews and its contemporaries. Frequently, the ongoing activity of the heavenly cult keeps the earthly cult on its feet, so to speak—earthly cultic activity works because there is, simultaneously, heavenly cultic activity. Hebrews diverges from this pattern in two ways: first, Hebrews argues that the only cultic activity in the heavenly sanctuary is that of Jesus himself following his death, resurrection, and ascension—thus, cultic *activity* on earth predates cultic *activity* in heaven even if the positions are reversed vis-à-vis the sanctuary itself. Second, Hebrews also claims that the advent of the heavenly cultic activity marks the advent of a new age, and, therefore, the end of earthly cultic activity (pp. 137–39).



This creates an obvious problem: how can the heavenly cult simultaneously post-date, validate, and terminate the earthly cult? Ribbens labels the OT sacrifices “sacramental, Christological types” (pp. 236), meaning that they were effective because of their correspondence to the later work of Christ. Effective in what way? Clearly, for Hebrews, Christ’s sacrifice accomplishes things that the OT sacrifices—even when validated by Christ’s sacrifice—did not. Ribbens outlines five potential cultic accomplishments that Hebrews discusses vis-à-vis OT sacrifices—five things that sacrifices *could* accomplish, according to Hebrews, and whether or not the OT sacrifices actually did so: forgiveness of sins (yes), atonement (yes), access to God (no), perfection (no), and redemption (no). He then discusses the longer list of tasks that Christ’s sacrifice *did* accomplish: atonement, forgiveness, purification, sanctification, perfection, redemption, removal of sin, forgetfulness of sin, and purification of the conscience. The critical points here are that 1) according to Hebrews, OT sacrifices did accomplish things beyond external cleansing, 2) those accomplishments were possible only by means of their sacramental and typological connection to the later work of Christ, and 3) the later work of Christ made continuation of the OT sacrifices unnecessary.

Ribbens’s book is a welcome addition to scholarship on Hebrews’s sacrificial theology. It is a serious piece of research, especially concerning notions of sacrifice and atonement in Second Temple Judaism. If I have a quibble, it is with Ribbens’s development of the nuances of “forgiveness.” First, he identifies forgiveness (in relation to redemption) as in some sense an inferior salvific good: “[f]orgiveness does not ... mean that the sin or trespass is fully dealt with” (p. 183). Earlier, though, he claims that, according to Heb 10:18, the presence of forgiveness (which in this context refers not to OT sacrifices but to Christ’s sacrifice) implies the end of any need for subsequent sacrifice for sins (pp. 159–60). But this is a minor concern that does not detract from the quality of the overall work.

NB: For those familiar with recent debates on the location and sequence of Jesus’s atoning work, Ribbens agrees with those who locate Jesus’s priestly work primarily in heaven rather than on earth, while still affirming the sacrificial nature of the cross (pp. 108, 132–33; see Bobby Jamieson’s recent essay “Where and When Did Jesus Offer Himself? A Taxonomy of Recent Scholarship on Hebrews,” *CBR* 15 [2017]: 338–68 for discussion of Ribbens and others on this issue).

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Steve Walton, Paul R. Trebilco, and David W. J. Gill, eds. *The Urban World and the First Christians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 404 pp. £39.99/\$48.00.

The Urban World and the First Christians is an edited volume comprised of revised essays first presented at a conference hosted by the Centre for the Social-Scientific Study of the Bible at St Mary's University, Twickenham in 2015 (p. xii). The book demonstrates a multi-disciplinary approach to early Christianity in its urban context, with contributors including New Testament scholars, classicists, and human geographers. This approach provides an interesting mix of insights into the subject matter. In the case of the cities dealt with in numerous essays such as Philippi (Walton, Brélaz) and Jerusalem (Sleeman, Leonhardt-Balzer, Runesson), multifaceted portraits of the cities and their churches emerge.

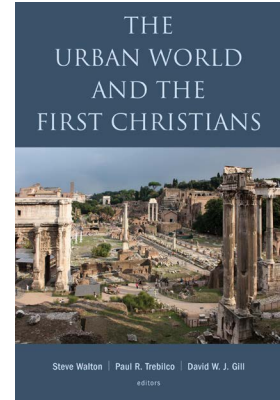
The book is divided into two sections, approaching the relationship between the early Christians and the urban contexts from opposite directions: Part 1 considers how an understanding of the urban context(s) can shed light on the early church and its texts; Part 2 considers how early Christians viewed and wrote about cities.

Part 1 begins with Anthony Le Donne's presentation of the category of nation (ἔθνος) as poliscentric. He argues that Jerusalem loomed large in the identity of Jews (in Judea and the Diaspora) of the Second Temple Period. This insight is developed further in Jutta Leonhardt-Balzer's essay considering the attitudes of Diaspora Jews to Jerusalem as their mother-city and their diaspora locations as their father-city. Her essay also has much to contribute to current discussions utilising "exile" terminology in relation to the church in the post-Christian West.

Volker Rabens provides a helpful discussion of the opportunities the urban context afforded Paul in his mission, but he underplays the relevance of the presence (or lack thereof) of a synagogue on Paul's selection of cities to evangelise, and overplays Paul's focus on large cities such as Corinth and Ephesus (pp. 111, 122). Many of the missionary opportunities afforded to Paul by the large cities were also available at the smaller centres.

A large proportion of the essays focus on aspects of particular cities and how they shape our understanding of the early Church and the related canonical and non-canonical texts. The studies by Joan Taylor on Caesarea and Cédric Brélaz on Philippi provide very interesting material that enriches our understanding of the role of these cities in Acts, particularly the way that Christianity and Rome met in these locations. Helen Morris explores Paul's use of body imagery in 1 Corinthians in light of the use of body imagery to maintain social order in the *polis*. David Gill focuses his attention on how the material remains of Pisidian Antioch illuminate Acts, Galatians, and 1 Corinthians.

Paul Trebilco's exploration of the differing attitudes towards the city of Ephesus between the Pastoral and Johannine epistles, a revisitation of his work in chapter 8 of *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), convincingly demonstrates the differing approaches of the letters. His acknowledgement of the debated provenance of these texts (p. 185), and the lack of specific urban references (especially in the Johannines), limits the extent to which he can ground his analysis in the context of Ephesus. The outcome of this is that the chapter would belong as naturally in a book focusing on the first Christians and the pagan world, or the Greco-Roman world, without any particular urban emphasis.



Part 1 concludes with a pair of essays exploring the impact of the urban environment on the education, literacy, and literary production of early Christians. Chris Keith uses the writings of Justin Martyr and Hermas to argue that class distinctions were more determinative for literacy rates than urbanisation, while Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski demonstrates the ways that the educational infrastructure and cosmopolitan nature of Alexandria offered a fertile context for early Christian education and literature production. Both chapters offer a launch pad for further research into the production and authorship of early Christian texts.

In Part 2, the focus changes from the Early Church's context to how it wrote about its context. Anders Runesson proposes that the Gospel of Matthew's rejection of the city of Jerusalem reveals an alternative early Christian community to that of Luke-Acts: a community based in Galilee that eschewed the urban context (pp. 234–35). Steve Walton discusses how Paul's use of citizenship language in Philippians encourages his readers to be a "city within a city" (pp. 251–52).

A number of chapters apply critical spatial theories to New Testament texts: Matthew Sleeman (in Part 1) considers Paul's return to Jerusalem; Paul Cloke explores "spiritual landscapes in Colossae" (p. 253); and David G. Horrell and Wei Hsien Wan write complementary chapters on the Christian construction of space in 1 Peter. These chapters are thick with the jargon of their theoretical approaches, and the value of each is impacted by the author's control in that area. Wan's and Horrell's essays were both illuminating, demonstrating how 1 Peter uses spacial imagery to create a new identity for Christians, one built on Christ rather than the overwhelming imperial ideology of the first century context.

Ian Paul's discussion of the cities in Revelation draws a distinction between the seven cities' "function as the *arena* of discipleship," and the function of Jerusalem and Babylon as "the *telos* of discipleship" (p. 319). He observes that while the *arena* may change, Christians today face the same choice of which *telos* to pursue.

In a final chapter, the editors offer some suggestions for further research into urban Christian communities. They invite their readers to participate in this research because it is "vital to our understanding of earliest Christianity in its city settings, and will inform and inspire Christian engagement with city life today" (p. 324). This engaging volume is a valuable contribution to that field, and while it is primarily an academic text, frequently points to possible applications of this research for the church today as it grapples with gospel ministry in the urban context.

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Andrew J. Wilson. *The Warning-Assurance Relationship in 1 Corinthians*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/452. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. xii + 224 pp. £79.56/\$110.00.

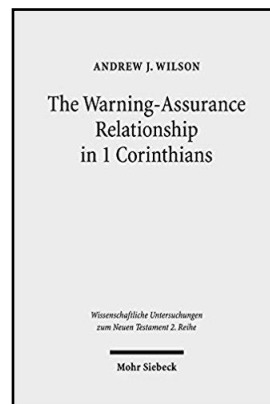
Andrew J. Wilson serves as teaching pastor at King’s Church, London. *The Warning-Assurance Relationship in 1 Corinthians* is Wilson’s first academic monograph, representing a revised version of his PhD thesis completed at King’s College, London. Readers familiar with Wilson’s popular-level publications (e.g., *If God, Then What?* [Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012]; *The Life We Never Expected* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016]), will find a more formal tone here, though Wilson, to his credit, remains eminently readable while tackling a highly nuanced topic.

The problem Wilson seeks to address concerns how one accounts for the numerous assurance and warnings passages in 1 Corinthians, which, at first glance, seem to contradict each other. His solution is an extended exegetical treatment of seven critical passages (1 Cor. 1:1–9; 3:5–17; 5:1–13; 6:1–20; 8:1–11:1; 11:17–34; 15:1–58), leading him to suggest that “the most likely explanation for the warning-assurance tension is that *Paul believes that his apostolic warnings are themselves a means by which the Corinthians will be preserved by God for future glory*” (pp. 167–68, emphasis original).

Chapters 1–2 provide an overview of the scholarly terrain surrounding Wilson’s hypothesis and selected introductory issues pertaining to 1 Corinthians. The opening gambit outlines four approaches to the warnings and assurances of 1 Corinthians. The first two approaches downplay Paul’s assurances (pp. 4–5). The traditional Wesleyan stance (that Paul’s assurances are conditional) fails on account of having to read “implicit ‘if’ clauses ... into the text” (p. 4). The second approach that Wilson highlights is the argument that Paul’s assurances are “merely rhetorical ... to secure the goodwill of the recipients” (p. 5). This approach is developed most fully by B. J. Oropeza, who acts as one of Wilson’s two key interlocutors throughout the monograph.

Wilson’s second primary interlocuter is Judith Gundry Volf, who entertains versions of a third and fourth approach to Paul’s warnings and assurances. The third approach, which argues that warnings do not concern true believers, is problematic for Wilson, because it fails to account for specific warning texts (e.g., 1 Cor 10, which aligns the fledgling church with wandering Israel who fell under God’s judgment despite his saving acts [p. 5]). The fourth approach suggests that Paul’s warnings do not concern eschatological salvation, but rather sees them as loss of reward or temporal judgment to be received in this life (p. 6). For Wilson, this approach struggles like others outlined above, because it too fails to account for a broad swathe of texts that indicate Paul has eschatological judgment in view (e.g., 1 Cor 9:23–27, among others; cf. Phil 3:7–14) (pp. 6–7).

Wilson’s solution is to provide “a full-length study that, while not eschewing synthetic concerns, remains focused on one letter, and yet deals with the full range of material within it” (p. 10). To that end, chs. 3–9 provide the exegetical backbone of Wilson’s work. Chapters 3–6 and 8 provide succinct exegesis of relevant passages for Wilson’s argument, while the most substantial work is found in chs. 7 and 9. Our focus will be directed to chapter 7 given Wilson’s own admission that it is especially critical to his thesis (pp. 159–60).



Wilson's ch. 7 covers 1 Cor. 8:1–11:1 in which "idol food" is Paul's primary focus. More specifically, Paul is both "confronting the Corinthians because of idolatry" and "settling an internal dispute based on love for one another" (p. 79). Firstly, Wilson tackles 1 Corinthians 8 and whether idol food can damage "weaker" believers such that their faith may be destroyed (pp. 83–84). Wilson agrees with most commentators that Paul sees this as a real possibility (p. 89). In taking his stance, he addresses significant objections from Gundry Volf, notably targeting her treatment of ἀπόλλυμι (to destroy, ruin, or lose). Specifically, Wilson chastises her for dismissing four specific verses (Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11; 10:9, 10) that she argues do not denote believers and for her claim that "salvation is never followed by destruction" (p. 87n45). Yet, as Wilson observes, each of these verses deals with those who have experienced God's salvific work. Disregarding such evidence, Wilson says, is "to invite the charge of solving the puzzle by sweeping pieces off the table" (p. 87).

Thus, Paul warns the "strong" Corinthian believers that consumption of idol food in a sacrificial context risks leading weaker believers into sin and the potential forfeiture of their salvation (p. 89). Consequently, Paul urges the "strong" to forgo their rights for the benefit of the "weaker" members of Christ's body (p. 90). In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul presents himself as an example of what forgoing one's rights for the benefit of another looks like. Here, Wilson shows that Paul's renunciation of his rights is predicated on his desire to claim his "prize," namely, his ultimate salvation, and he urges the Corinthians to join him in the same pursuit (pp. 93–96).

After presenting himself as a positive example, Paul presents Israel in exodus as a counter-example to be avoided (10:1–13). Wilson's exegesis reveals Paul's determination to show how the narratives of Israel and the Corinthian church overlap, by sharing a "common initiatory sacramental experience" (10:1–4) and that likewise, they face potential destruction on account of unrepentant sin (10:5–10). Paul follows this with a warning not to follow Israel's pattern of rebellion (10:11–12), and an assurance that God will help them endure temptation (10:13) (pp. 96–97). Tellingly, Wilson shows how the sins of the Israelites align with those of the Corinthians regarding their indulgence in idol feasting (pp. 106–8). In closing his exegesis concerning idol food, Wilson's summary is apt: for Paul, "Love is more important than rights, freedoms, or knowledge, whether the person in question is a Christian or not" (p. 121).

More than any other chapter, the strength of Wilson's thesis is demonstrated here. One cannot ignore that these warnings *are* addressed to believers, and that they *do* concern a believer's ultimate salvation. Nevertheless, Paul promises that the Lord will help them and sustain them so that they do not fall. I am reminded at this point of the all too common pastoral question about whether a person can lose their salvation: the question of "once saved, always saved" or not? To repeat Wilson's answer: "*Paul believes that his apostolic warnings are themselves a means by which the Corinthians will be preserved by God for future glory*" (pp. 167–8, emphasis original). Wilson provides his readers with a persuasive interpretation of the data that Paul has made available to us, and pastors preaching 1 Corinthians and students of the letter (especially those in graduate programmes) will do well to wrestle with his work.

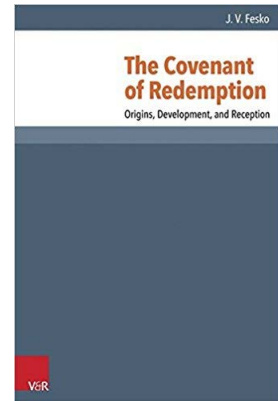
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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

J. V. Fesko. *The Covenant of Redemption: Origins, Development, and Reception*. Reformed Historical Theology 35. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. 256 pp. €100.00/\$110.00.

The doctrine of the covenant of redemption (*pactum salutis*) has fallen on hard times within the contemporary theological landscape. For many, it is a strange, speculate doctrine; for others, it is a historical relic from the dustbins of post-Reformation scholasticism. Thus, J. V. Fesko performs a great service in this monograph, focusing attention on this sorely neglected doctrine.

In the introduction, Fesko notes that while some contemporary theologians (e.g., John Webster, John Frame, and Michael Horton) have offered brief expositions of the doctrine, there have been, by Fesko’s calculation, “only three monographs on the subject and five historical-theological works” (p. 20) since the famous speech on the doctrine by David Dickson (1583–1662) “at the 1638 General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk” (p. 16). With this in mind, Fesko argues that this doctrine ought to be retrieved as it has significant bearing on “christology, soteriology, theology proper, covenant,” and other areas (p. 23).



In the first chapter, Fesko outlines the historical origins of the *pactum*. He asserts that the 1638 speech by Dickson is “the first explicit defense and definition of the [doctrine]” (p. 30). In this speech, Dickson asserts that the primary failing of the Remonstrant view was its neglect of the covenant of redemption. Interestingly, this speech appears to presume the general acceptance of the *pactum* among the Reformed as indicated by the lack of cited authorities in the speech and the identification of the doctrine as “our doctrine” without recorded complaint (p. 31).

Fesko then turns to Herman Witsius’s (1636–1708) refutation of the claim that the covenant of redemption was a recent theological invention. While admitting that few ancient writers engaged with the doctrine, Witsius marshalled such figures as Jacob Arminius (1560–1609), William Ames (1576–1633), and “a Roman Catholic Jesuit theologian, Jacob Tirinius [1580–1636]” (p. 33), to support the high pedigree and basic catholicity of the doctrine. Fesko, anticipating the objection against the persuasiveness of Witsius’s refutation, argues that while the terms connected with the doctrine were not always used, the basic issues surrounding the ontological/economic Trinitarian distinction and its relationship to Christ’s obedience and our redemption are treated by such ancient theologians as Augustine (354–430) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). Fesko notes, in turn, that these “requisite pieces” (p. 42) of the *pactum* are also found in subsequent writers, even when the explicit terms connected with it are missing.

The second chapter addresses the seventeenth-century treatment of the *pactum salutis* in England and Scotland with the lion’s share of the chapter being directed toward Patrick Gillispie’s (1617–1675) full-length treatment of the doctrine entitled *Ark of the Covenant* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1677), mentioning others of the era and period along the way. Here, Fesko notes Gillispie’s definition of covenant, his Scriptural support for the covenant of redemption (e.g., Zech 6:13; Pss 2:7; 40), and the elements and properties that make up the covenant of redemption. Gillespie defines the *pactum* as “an eternal transaction and agreement between *Jehovah* and the Mediator Christ, about the work of Redemption” (*Ark of the Covenant*, p. 50; cited by Fesko on p. 55). Fesko then gives substantial attention

to critical issues that surround the *pactum* (pp. 61–80) such as the role of the Holy Spirit, the relationship between the *pactum* and the covenant of grace, and the implications of the *pactum* on justification and imputation.

The third chapter discusses the treatment of the *pactum* in seventeenth-century continental Europe with primary attention given to Herman Witsius's explication of the doctrine. Fesko notes that in this context, dispute over the exegetical footing of the *pactum* was more fervent than in either England or Scotland. Again, critical issues are explored in connection with the *pactum* (e.g., Christ's merit and reward and whether Christ was a conditional or unconditional surety for Old Testament believers).

Fesko's discussion of the eighteenth century, in the fourth chapter, gives specific attention to John Gill (1697–1771) and Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). For Fesko, these two figures represent the “deconfessionalization and the denominational disintegration” of the eighteenth century (p. 110). Following his justification for including Gill, a Particular Baptist theologian, in his survey, Fesko notes three areas where Gill modifies the prior tradition: (1) the structure of the covenant, i.e., the conflation of the covenant of the redemption and grace; (2) the role of the Holy Spirit as a partner in the *pactum*; and (3) the placement of justification in the immanent life of the Triune God. With regard to Edwards, upon comparing his treatment of the *pactum* with the prior tradition, Fesko gives significant attention to Edwards's understanding of justification, which finds its origin in the *pactum*, and especially his rejection of faith as an instrumental cause of justification. Fesko concludes this discussion by seeing the modification of Gill and Edwards as a reaction to the philosophical challenges of their day.

In Fesko's description of the nineteenth century, he gives most of his attention to the Old Princeton theologian, Charles Hodge (1797–1878). Here, Fesko is concerned to defend Hodge against the charge of rationalism (cf. p. 146) and demonstrate his basic continuity with the Reformed tradition. Thus, he sees Hodge's treatment of the *pactum* as indicative of an epistemology rooted not in reason but in revelation and his articulation of union with Christ and justification as in the mainstream of Reformed theology *contra* Gill and Edwards.

The final two chapters speak most clearly to the reception of the *pactum salutis* as it discusses the twentieth-century critics (ch. 6) and proponents (ch. 7) of the doctrine. With regard to its critics—John Murray (1898–1975), Herman Hoeksema (1886–1965), Klaas Schilder (1890–1952), and Karl Barth (1885–1968)—Fesko notes numerous reasons for their rejection of the *pactum*, e.g., the rejection of the covenant of works, redefinition of the concept of covenant, an elevation of John Calvin (1509–1564), and, excepting John Murray, an anti-scholastic sentiment. With regard to its proponents—Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949), Louis Berkhof (1873–1957), and G. C. Berkouwer (1903–1996)—Fesko argues that, despite differences among them, these twentieth-century proponents of the *pactum* are, to varying degrees, influenced by Vos's speech “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology (in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. [Phillipsburg: P&R, 1980], 234–67). Fesko ends his volume with a conclusion that helpfully summarizes some of the highlights of what he has covered throughout with a final encouragement to appropriate the insights of the *pactum* for contemporary constructive efforts.

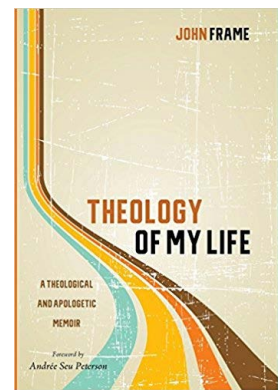
Fesko has offered a clearly-written, well-organized, and insightful monograph on the history of the covenant of redemption, which not only highlights the distinct articulations of the doctrine itself but also how it intersects with and informs other theological loci. He succeeds, in turn, in demonstrating the importance of retrieving this doctrine for contemporary theological purposes. Thus, this reviewer

highly recommends this volume for the aspiring systematic theologian, the student and the historical theologian. Unfortunately, while accessible, its high price point may be cost prohibitive for most educated lay readers. Nevertheless, the price is typical of specialist monographs, so the intended audience will not be caught by surprise.

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John Frame. *Theology of My Life: A Theological and Apologetic Memoir*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017. 230 pp. £25.00/\$30.00.

Theology of My Life: A Theological and Apologetic Memoir by John Frame is a principled, historical, theological apologetic and reflective piece, designed to show, among other things, a window into the life and theology of John Frame. “Like many in their later years,” says Frame, “I have spent some time, perhaps too much, mulling over the course of my past life” (p. xvii). Consequently, Frame’s memoirs humanize one of evangelicalism’s finest theologians and apologists, giving them value for present-day Christians. Frame intentionally wrote this book to serve both as an “autobiographical apologetic” and “autobiographical theology” (p. xviii). He pioneers this existential perspective of apologetics to share with his readers both the events of his life and the thinking that led him to faith in Christ (p. xviii). Frame hopes “that the theology of this book, as well as the apologetic, will carry some exemplary value for younger theologians, and for all Christians, since on [his] understanding every believer is a theologian” (p. xviii).



Frame’s book contains nine chapters, each one designed to discuss key time periods throughout his life. In the first two chapters, Frame discusses his early years, family, conversion, and grade school experiences. In chapters three through five, Frame reflects upon his college and seminary education at Princeton, Westminster, and Yale. He, then, concludes his book by discussing his professional career at Westminster (East and West) and Reformed Theological Seminary. Unlike some memoirs, Frame provides a helpful summary of ten themes and chief lessons God taught him throughout his life (pp. 215–16). For example, some of the lordship themes related to his academic career include:

- The lordship of the Triune God is the central fact of my life and of my theology. Given God’s gracious work in my heart, this theme naturally arises to prominence in all my writings.
- There is an important role for academic study in the Christian life, but not conformity of our thoughts to those of the academic community. Rather, the Christian learns to study God’s world so that he/she can be better conformed to God’s word and empowered to *resist* the world.
- God’s lordship commands obedience to him, not only in worship and ethics, but in the life of the intellect as well.

Evangelicalism in every generation finds itself at a crossroads between obedience and disobedience. Frame’s themes naturally raise the question: Will the future of evangelical scholarship allow the lordship of Jesus Christ and consistent biblical orthodoxy to set the criterion and parameters of our academic

study and intellectual life? Many theologians within the scholarly community feel a constant pressure to allow the academy to set the parameters and conditions of evangelical theology. Frame's life and publications serve as examples of engagement at the highest academic level by one who remained faithful to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Frame's conversion taught him that belief in God and in Jesus as Lord and Savior was accepted as basic (in the philosophical sense of the term). From the beginning of his life as a disciple, Frame was convinced of the "utter centrality of the *lordship* of Christ over all his life" (p. 12). Frame states in clear terms the effect his conversion had upon his professional career. "I offend people," says Frame, "not by my beliefs as such, but by my 'fanaticism.' Later I would write a series of four big books called *The Theology of Lordship*. It all began in my early teens" (p. 13). Frame also informs his readers what the academic life of a Christian ought to be like, claiming, "Thus, a Christian is not one who sets up a group of intellectual criteria and then decides whether Jesus measures up to them. Rather, he or she is first loyal to Jesus and *then* tests all intellectual criteria to find which of them measures up to Jesus" (p. 12).

Despite the height of his passion, Frame's zeal for the lordship of Christ did not shield him from personal and academic hardship and opposition. Frame admits to struggling with the intellectual appeal from relativism and humanism (p. 23). He claims, "My head was going back and forth between the hard-edged Calvinism of John Gerstner and the 'everyone-get-along' humanism of my [high] school. So I was an easy target for what I would later describe as theological liberalism" (p. 23). Frame also talks about his time at Yale University and his studies under Paul Holmer. On a positive note, Holmer was "happy" to have the opportunity to work with an evangelical student. On the other hand, "He was not initially enthusiastic about my view of biblical inerrancy. (Somewhere in his writings he refers to infallibility and inerrancy as nonsensical claims)" (p. 81). Frame's own life illustrates best the existential perspective one must face to affirm the lordship of Jesus Christ in the academy. He could have easily jettisoned his belief in biblical inerrancy to please his advisor. However, Frame allowed his lordship theology to determine the parameters of his intellectual pursuits, instead of vice versa.

This memoir ultimately raises the question: What does *Theology of My Life* teach Christians about the function of evangelical theology and apologetics in the 21st century? First, conversion and regeneration are shown to be necessary to achieve any meaningful and consistent evangelical theology. Second, evangelicals can remain "creative within the bounds of orthodoxy." A place remains for innovation and progress in academic theology; however, each of these pursuits must be tempered by orthodoxy. Third, the presuppositions and axioms of the Christian worldview must set the criterion of our apologetic endeavor. Christians are not called to defend a "minimalistic" view of the Christian faith. Rather, they are to present the fullness of Christianity before the watching world. Finally, Frame illustrates that one can be *both* an academic and a churchman. Evangelicals are not required to abandon their commitment to the local church and its doctrines to engage the academy. However, at the end of the day, if these two areas come into conflict, evangelicals must first and foremost desire to find their place at the Lord's table, measured by the lordship of Jesus Christ.

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Michael J. Kruger. *Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church*. London: SPCK, 2017. xi + 256 pp. £19.99/\$30.00.

Michael J. Kruger's *Christianity at the Crossroads* joins a host of recent publications examining the early centuries of the church. In this thorough and readable introduction to Christianity in the second century, Kruger convincingly argues for an increase in scholarly attention commensurate to the significance of the era in Christian history (p. 2).

Kruger describes his approach in this book as an introductory approach rather than exhaustive, arranged topically, and having a “balance between primary and secondary sources” (pp. 9–10). Kruger does not paint an oversimplified image of the second-century church. Rather, he introduces the reader to the diversity of the Church in that period, while interacting with the breadth of modern scholarship dealing with that period. While he often backs away from dealing with issues in depth, he still highlights important debates and provides resources for further study.

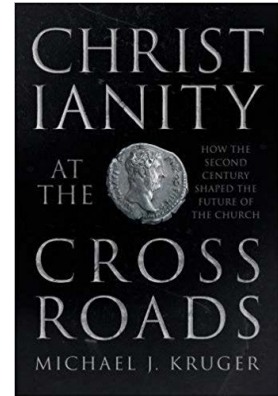
Chapter one looks at the sociological make-up of the church, using Paul's description in Galatians 3:28—neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female—as a framework to discuss the separation of Christianity from Judaism and the increasing number of Gentile adherents, the socio-economic diversification within the church, and the role of women in the church.

Chapter two focuses on the opposition faced by the church, both politically—with state-sanctioned persecution such as that described in Pliny the Younger's letter to Trajan (pp. 41–45)—and intellectually, as the leading thinkers of the day took aim at the church. This context of persecution and opposition combined with Christianity's growing numbers to necessitate the Church's engagement with the surrounding culture and the consequent influx of Christian apologists.

In Chapter three, Kruger considers the ecclesiology of the second-century church, discussing the leadership, structure, and worship. This chapter highlights the continuities between the second-century Church and the previous generation, particularly in the elements of worship: gathering in private homes and businesses, teaching the Scriptures, sharing a meal and the Lord's Supper, and baptism (pp. 85–106). This was also a time of transition regarding leadership structures, with a plurality of elders being the most common form of church leadership at the beginning of the second century while a system of bishop rule took precedent by the end.

Chapters four and five consider diversity and unity in second-century Christianity. Chapter four provides an introduction to the major heretical movements of the period: Ebionites, Marcionites, Gnostics, and Montanists. Chapter five, on the other hand, provides the helpful corrective to the seemingly hopeless division created by those heresies. In this chapter, Kruger demonstrates that the majority of second-century Christians would have held to orthodox belief as reflected in the “rule of faith” described by numerous Christians writers. That rule closely followed the Apostolic teaching found in the New Testament.

Chapters six and seven also complement each other, discussing the “bookish” nature of second-century Christianity, and the evidence of an early formation of a core canon. Rather than being a time when the Church debated any and every idea, this century was a time when the Church was working hard to establish authoritative teaching and texts.



The picture that confronts the reader of this book is one of a Church in transition, seeking to establish its identity and to stay true to its confession as it continues to grow in a hostile context. As Kruger notes in his conclusion, the modern-day Church has much in common with her second-century forebears, especially as it is increasingly the recipient of political and intellectual animosity (pp. 230–31). The Church today would gain much from delving into the experiences, convictions, and practices of the second-century Church. To that end, this book is an informative, lucid, and enjoyable place to begin.

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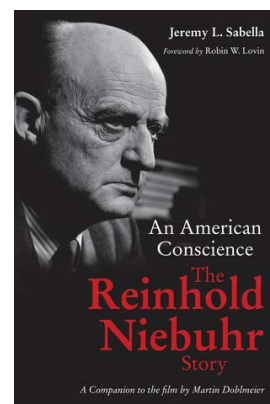
Jeremy L. Sabella. *An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. vi + 155 pp. £16.99/\$19.99.

On PBS this past year, director Martin Doblmeier released an hour-long film on the life of Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971). *An American Conscience*, by Jeremy Sabella, is a companion to the documentary which elaborates on the thought of the movie's subject. Niebuhr's life is presented in five compact chapters focused on his activism and writings. Sabella begins with a description of the subject's time as a young pastor in inner-city Detroit where he united alongside the Catholic and Black community against the Ku Klux Klan. He also challenged business mogul, Henry Ford, in the treatment of his workers. Such activities garnered attention for Niebuhr as an ethicist.

Tireless in his work, the young pastor soon discovered the failings of the Social Gospel in which he had been trained. This led to the writing of *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) in which Niebuhr advocated that the 'moral man had to be willing to engage immoral society on society's own power-driven terms' (p. 26). This book led to Niebuhr's national fame and eventual appointment to Union Theological Seminary. While in New York, Niebuhr discovered his theological voice under the influences of his brother, H. Richard Niebuhr, and fellow theologian, Paul Tillich. In the 1930s, Niebuhr began to propose his ideas of Christian realism.

Sabella summarizes the concept: "In contrast to ultrarealism, Christian realism asserts that we most effectively mitigate the destructive elements in our politics, not through the relentless pursuit of self-interest, but moving beyond self-interest through pursuing the theologically rich ideals of faith, hope and love" (p. 63). Niebuhr presented this pursuit of ideals as a work to be done not individually, but corporately by society as a whole. The resultant positive mass can affect the evil mechanisms within the world. Therefore, institutions must be changed, not just individuals.

In some ways, this understanding built on his previous work where moral man now had a platform to fight immoral man on his own terms. The collective good striving for ideals such as love can make a difference. This led Niebuhr to engage in politics throughout the Second World War and the post-war recovery. He had massive influence upon political thinkers of the day. Roosevelt asked him to serve on various committees. MacArthur had the theologian's works translated into Japanese for the rebuilding effort in Japan. The theologian even appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. Niebuhr remained active until his stroke in 1952. After that event, he was only able to influence through his pen. He became



lifelong friends with Rabbi Abraham Heschel and the Jesuit priest, John Courtney Murray. Sabella uses such relationships to prove Niebuhr as a religious pluralist as he sought the universal good for Christian realism. Yet, Niebuhr also openly criticized the young Billy Graham for focusing too narrowly on the conversion of individuals and not the conversion of institutions.

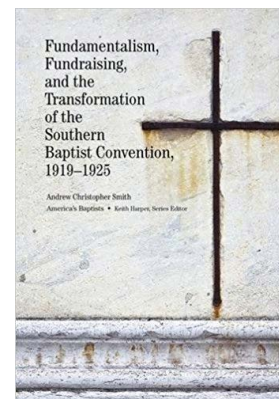
The last chapter of the book discusses the long-term impact of Niebuhr into the present. Making use of the documentary interviews of such well-known personalities as Cornell West, David Brooks, and former president Jimmy Carter, Sabella makes the case that Niebuhr's influence long exceeded his lifetime.

Sabella's work on Reinhold Niebuhr is both fair and accurate. The book is well-written and accessible even for the novice on the subject and time period. Sabella presents his figure in a positive light. There is some negative criticism towards the man—that he was not engaged enough during the civil rights movement, nor did he champion gender related causes. Such criticisms appear more anachronistic than legitimate. If there is any flaw to the volume, it is that his subject's theology is not critiqued. The closest comment is a quote from Stanley Hauerwas's interview where he states that he thoroughly disagreed with Niebuhr. No further information is provided as to how he disagreed. Niebuhr began with a weak foundation in theology—particularly in the area of the sufficiency of scripture. He also was light on the depravity of man, and because of this, he could contradict himself in the battles he fought against injustice. Alas, such was not the scope of Sabella's presentation. Still, the clever reader can ascertain where Niebuhr had his weaknesses. Sabella accurately depicts the formidable influence Niebuhr held during the two decades of his active academic career. He demonstrates well the effect Reinhold Niebuhr had upon the American conscience.

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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. \$46.00.

In his first book, Andrew Christopher Smith, an assistant professor of religion at Carson-Newman University, posits 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 considers the perspective of other denominations in the South (e.g., 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 contemporary scholarship continues to lack a clear description of how Fundamentalist ideas affected the South.



Related to his first argument, Smith 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. However,

thanks in large part to the postwar depression, the SBC only collected about \$59,000,000 of their pledged money, leaving the SBC mired in debt for decades as they tried to cover the shortfall. While the fundraising campaign did not meet its goal, SBC leaders continued to insist upon the need for a professionalized and educated bureaucracy that could raise and allocate funds efficiently. The leaders’ emphasis upon centralization and an educated, professional class of bureaucrats mirrored progressive movement trends in government 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 cemented centralization in SBC life.

Perhaps Smith’s most valuable contribution to the historiographies 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 they 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. However, on the whole, they found the Northern Fundamentalists’ penchant for separation from their denominations to be repugnant, and they used their own lack of doctrinal controversy to illustrate SBC denominational unity and superiority.

Smith’s book is unique because he is the first to analyze in any sort of detail the impact of the Seventy-Five Million Campaign on the SBC and how the corresponding move toward centralization and professionalization reflected tendencies in the wider Progressive milieu. Smith also provides an extensive analysis of approximately twenty state convention newspapers to show how Southern Baptist denominational leaders like E. Y. Mullins and Lee Scarborough published letters and essays in newspapers to cajole lay members to fulfill their pledges out of obedience to God and 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 thought about centralization but also whether or not the average church members approved of the changes in SBC. His detailed examination of Baptist newspapers breathes life into the story for this reviewer.

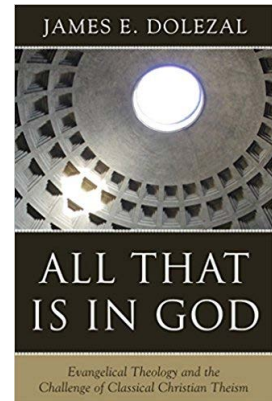
Despite some minor yet distracting editing errors, I would highly recommend this well-researched and beautifully-written book to undergraduate and graduate students, pastors, historians of Baptists, historians of the American South, and historians of American religion.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

James E. Dolezal. *All That is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2017. xviii + 164 pp. £12.90/\$18.00.

Christians worship the Triune God—one God in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We might assume that, if we hold that affirmation in common, we hold in common an entire doctrine of God. Not so, according to James Dolezal (assistant professor of theology, Cairn University). In his assessment, some contemporary evangelicals are abandoning what he calls the traditional doctrine of God, or classical Christian theism (CCT), in favor of a new trend in theology proper, what Dolezal refers to as theistic mutualism (TM). For Dolezal, this departure from the classic formulation of the doctrine of God, in which God is not moved and does not change, in favor of an account of God’s being that gives room for him to change in time in response to his creatures is a grave one. In Dolezal’s understanding, moving from CCT to TM brings with it quite a bit of theological baggage, baggage that is too heavy and has too many ill effects to continue being held by evangelical Christians.



Before moving on, it’s important to understand the definitions of and differences between CCT and TM. On the one hand, Dolezal defines classical Christian theism as “marked by a strong commitment to the doctrines of divine aseity, immutability, impassibility, simplicity, eternity, and the substantial unity of the divine persons. The underlying and inviolable conviction is that God does not derive any aspect of His being from outside Himself and is not in any way caused to be” (p. 1) On the other hand, “In an effort to portray God as more relatable, theistic mutualists insist that God is involved in a genuine give-and-take relationship with His creatures” (pp. 1–2). In other words, CCT emphasizes God’s unchangeableness, whereas TM emphasizes that God changes, even if in a limited fashion that retains his divinity, in response to his creatures in time.

For those who may be unfamiliar with the terms Dolezal uses to describe CCT, “aseity” refers to “God’s self-sufficiency” (p. 11); that is, he does not need anything, including creation, to be caused or actualized in any way. “Immutability” and “impassibility” are terms that refer, respectively, to the fact that God does not change in his essence or character and that he cannot be caused to change by his creatures. “Simplicity” is a term used to describe the fact that “all that is in God is God” (p. 41); God is not composed of parts, he is not complex, and his attributes are identical to his essence and therefore to one another. The term “eternity” means that God is always who he is. He does not become Creator or Redeemer or Sustainer, but is always the same. He does not acquire or give up any of his attributes. (Obviously this confession has to be related to aseity, and it is in CCT through the distinction between necessary and contingent actions. On this see Dolezal’s remarks in chapter five.) Finally, God is substantially one. He is one God in three persons, not divided in substance, attributes, or volition (will).

The book’s organization is straightforward. After raising the initial point about theologians departing from CCT in favor of TM in the introductory chapter, Dolezal spends the remainder of the book discussing particular aspects of CCT and TM’s departure from it. Immutability is covered in chapter two, simplicity in chapters three and four, eternity in chapter five, and substantial unity in chapter six. The conclusion reiterates how TM departs from CCT in these areas and restates the

theological implications of those departures. Each chapter contains a definition of the aspect of CCT under discussion, biblical warrant and historical support, the way(s) in which and reason(s) why TM departs from CCT in that area, and the theological implications for that departure. (Simplicity gets two chapters in this regard: chapter three contains the CCT definition, biblical warrant, and historical support, and chapter four compares CCT with TM and the explains the implications of TM's departure from simplicity as defined by CCT.)

Dolezal's common historical conversation partners are Aquinas, Wilhelm á Brakel, Herman Bavinck, and John Owen, while he frequently relies on Gilles Emery's work on Aquinas and Steven Duby's recent book on divine simplicity for contemporary support. He also typically makes appeal to a handful of biblical passages for each doctrine before spending the substantive part of the chapter engaging with TM. In that respect, he most often uses the euphemism "some evangelical Calvinists," but he usually has in mind Bruce Ware (SBTS), and sometimes Ware's former doctoral student Rob Lister (now at Biola). John Frame also receives a relatively large portion of Dolezal's attention, and other contemporary philosophers and theologians such William Lane Craig, Alvin Plantinga, K. Scott Oliphint, Wayne Grudem and John Feinberg are mentioned as representing a TM position with respect to various doctrines. Even Kevin Vanhoozer is mentioned, as Dolezal believes he is part of the group who has revised the doctrine of divine simplicity (p. 72).

I do not want to spend time working through whether or not Dolezal has, in every one of those instances, accurately portrayed and critiqued those writers' positions. The book is by nature polemical, so there are going to be various reactions to the way certain persons' positions are portrayed. Some of those mentioned have responded to the book (e.g., John Frame, "Scholasticism for Evangelicals: Thoughts on All That Is In God by James Dolezal," <https://tinyurl.com/yauj98jo>). What I am willing to say is that I think Dolezal has accurately identified an area of theology—the doctrine of God—that is relatively neglected in evangelical life, that is being revised and rejected in various ways in evangelical circles, and that has massive implications for the rest of Christian dogmatics and for pastoral ministry.

In that regard I want to emphasize that this is an important book for pastors. We often assume a minimal doctrine of God (one God, three persons) and neglect the important aspects of who God is and the implications of those properties for preaching and shepherding. This was definitely true of me in seminary. The doctrine of God was merely a checkmark for me—I affirmed one God in three persons, and I knew the definitions of the various heresies and how to avoid them, at least minimally, in my preaching and teaching. But I didn't care to study how or why Christians had affirmed God is immutable, simple, or eternal Creator. Honestly, I don't know that those terms even registered with me until I was done with doctoral work and teaching at an institution of Christian higher education.

I suspect that this experience is not unique among my fellow conservative evangelical pastors and vocational ministers. The doctrine of God, full as it is of obscure terms, philosophical issues, and the like, is a box I needed to check before moving on to what I considered to be more important during my seminary training—homiletics, pastoral ministry, and maybe a couple of classes in biblical languages or biblical theology to fill out my M.Div. electives. As Dolezal argues, though, there are important ways in which adopting CCT or TM impacts our understanding of Scripture and how we shepherd or minister to God's flock. For instance, Dolezal ably demonstrates that God's immutability, or unchangeableness, lies at the heart of our ability to trust in God's promises. He doesn't change *in any way*, which means when he promises something he won't go back on it, he will bring it to completion, and so on. Surely this applies, for instance, to pastoral care; if a sister or brother in Christ comes to a pastor grieved

over their seeming lack of sanctification, stuck in a rut in obedience, and the like, one of the reasons we can trust that “he who began a good work will bring it to completion in Christ Jesus” is because God is unchanging. He does not waver on his promises, promises that he makes precisely via appeal to his unchangeableness *in his essence*. It is not just that he is unchangeable in some respects, but in every respect. We can remind those under our care in God’s flock, then, that while they may not feel as though they are progressing in the Christian life, the God of the gospel of Jesus Christ has promised certain benefits that we inherit, namely that those whom he has justified he will also glorify. And the foundation of that promise is that the God who promised it doesn’t change; he is immutable, to use the classic terminology.

I want to stress that I am sympathetic to Dolezal’s project. By and large I do believe that evangelicals have ignored, and in some instances attempted to revise or reject, CCT. I also believe that the theological and pastoral implications of doing so are too great. To give one example, Luke Stamps and I at our blog “Biblical Reasoning” (<https://secundumscripturas.com/>) have repeatedly pointed to the dogmatic implications of moving away from the classic means of speaking about God’s substantial unity, especially with respect to the unity of the divine will and the equality of the three persons. I therefore cannot overemphasize how important it is for evangelicals, whether they be academics or pastors or lay persons, to read and engage with this book.

I do wonder, though, how much this book advances the conversation. Much of the rub for scholars like Bruce Ware and John Frame is that, in their opinion, CCT has not paid enough attention to biblical theology or advances in our understanding of biblical hermeneutics in the last one hundred and fifty years or so. And yet, Dolezal begins the book by essentially moving past these concerns, saying that biblical theology is not equipped to address the issues related to CCT. In one respect I agree wholeheartedly with him and with his critique of biblical theology at this point. If we rely exclusively on understanding God in a narrational fashion, that is, if we take the language in the Bible that speaks of his interactions with the world, particularly in his covenants, as necessarily implying that he changes in response to his creatures, is not always Creator, is composed of various attributes rather than simple, and is a colloquium, so to speak, of divine persons, then we have missed the point both of biblical theology and of Scripture. Dolezal is right to emphasize over and over throughout the book that revelation, including the inspired biblical revelation, is accommodating; that is, God condescends in using human speech to reveal himself. Human speech is, like anything human, limited and finite, and so our talk about the eternal and infinite God is necessarily analogical. In this respect I agree with Dolezal that “biblical theology, with its unique focus on historical development and progress, is not best suited for theology proper. The reason for this is because God is not a historical individual, and neither does His intrinsic activity undergo development or change” (p. xv).

I do not agree, however, with Dolezal’s next statement, that, “This places God beyond the proper focus of biblical theology” (p. xv). Biblical theology as a discipline is concerned, some might say supremely, with understanding the Bible’s narrative shape, and of understanding particular passages in light of that shape. If we take this to mean that biblical theology insists on understanding “God as one of the historical characters in the narrative of redemption” (p. xv), then yes, we have failed to understand the methodological limitations of biblical theology as a discipline. But if we take it that biblical theology insists on understanding particular passages in light of the biblical canon as a whole then certainly this applies to understanding passages about God. This is, unfortunately, something that Dolezal does not do in his limited attempts to deal with the biblical text. His citations rarely cite the canonical context of

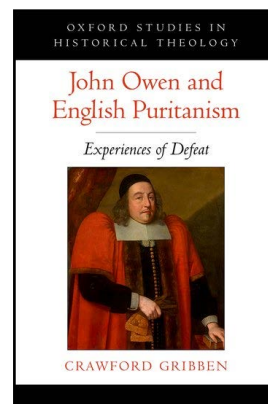
a passage, and rarely use concepts like inner biblical allusion to bolster his analysis. Interestingly, this is the same kind of methodological critique often made of TM—its proponents are frequently accused of proof-texting. It is unclear to me that Dolezal always avoids this methodological error. Further, if we believe that God stands outside of the theater of creation and redemption but willingly enters into it through the incarnation, then we are necessarily saying something about the biblical story—it is held up, so to speak, by the eternal, immutable, simple, one God who creates and redeems through his Word and by his Spirit.

I spend some time here at the end of this review because, again, I am afraid, given this lack of methodological nuance and attention to the particular *hermeneutical* reasons TMs have for departing from CCT, that *All That Is in God* speaks past at least part of its intended audience. (I should note here that Dolezal's book is composed of a series of lectures he gave at the 2015 Southern California Reformed Baptist Pastors' Conference, and is also described as a sequel to his previous work, *God Without Parts*. It is possible that these pastoral and literary contexts for the book explain some of the neglect of methodological and exegetical conversations.) I think Dolezal is right that CCT is biblically, theologically, and philosophically necessary. I think he is right about the ramifications of departing from it in the various ways he notes by proponents of TM. And I believe CCT is vital for the life and health of Christ's Church. I believe, therefore, that pastors, church staff, academics, and engaged lay persons need to read this book. In order to see a full swing back toward CCT, though, I think we will need some more methodological reflection, exegetical analysis, and biblical theological argumentation for CCT and against TM.

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Crawford Gribben. *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. xiv + 424 pp. £23.99/\$35.00.

Owen has been the subject of a number of excellent studies in recent years, most notably in the writings of Carl Trueman and Tim Cooper. Perhaps one of the reasons why interest in Owen shows no sign of abating is because he has been, as Geoffrey Nuttall observed, 'strangely elusive' and therefore generations of very diverse evangelical readers have 'reinvented his legacy' and found in him 'a tool for their self-fashioning' (p. 272). Crawford Gribben, professor of early modern British history at Queen's University Belfast, writes as a cultural historian of religious ideas with a keen historiographical awareness of the importance of social, political, literary and material contexts. This is the second volume that he has contributed to the Oxford Studies in Historical Theology series. Believing that too much of the scholarship has been guilty of a 'static' reading of Owen's millions of words, Gribben's chronological account takes the reader on a journey across the decades of Laudian, Revolutionary and Restoration Britain to show both continuity and change in his thought. Consequently, in this intellectual, religious and theological biography a 'more complex, subtle, and this-worldly' figure emerges (p. 17): a pragmatist whose theology evolved, sometimes in a manner that undermined the very Reformed orthodoxy that he was



assumed to champion. In light of Gribben's consistent application of a rigorous historical method it is hard to maintain the objection that his approach is any way speculative. Rather, Gribben's commanding treatment provides a fluent, judicious and compelling account of this imposing figure.

The evolution in Owen's thought is charted through what the subtitle of the book describes as Owen's experiences of defeat; Gribben argues that Owen's whole life was one 'in which every success had been undone in defeat' (p. 262) and which, despite all his significant achievements, ended with him feeling an 'enduring sense of failure' (p. 271). This adapts a motif from the Marxist historian, Christopher Hill, who used it to explore how John Milton and other revolutionaries came to terms with the crushing failure of the English Revolution.

The chapters present nine diachronic portraits of Owen: (1) the 'Apprentice Puritan' from Laudian Oxford coming to assurance of salvation amongst the godly in London; (2) the 'Emerging Theologian' vying for attention whilst still developing his ecclesiology in an England at civil war; (3) the 'Frustrated Pastor' battling apathy in the flock and heresy from the wolves; (4) the apocalyptic 'Army Preacher' standing before Parliament and serving as an expeditionary force chaplain; (5) the belligerent and at times underhand 'Oxford Reformer'; (6) the increasingly marginalised 'Cromwellian Courtier' with ambitious plans for a national church settlement; (7) the shocked and 'Defeated Revolutionary'; (8) the 'Restoration *Politique*' whose writings 'simultaneously concealed and revealed his intentions' (p. 233); and (9) the 'Nonconformist Divine' producing literary works like his massive Hebrews commentary whilst ministering illegally to a small congregation of saints.

Generally, the references in the endnotes are taken from the readily available mid-Victorian twenty-four volume edition of Owen's works edited by William Goold, but it is clear throughout that the research has been conducted in the original print sources and the unpublished manuscripts held in Dr Williams's Library, London. In the Goold edition Owen's corpus is arranged thematically, but in this study Owen's works are dealt with chronologically, with each treatise being carefully located in its various contexts and, where possible, viewed in light of modern research, e.g., the renewed scholarly interest in Socinianism. This approach allows Gribben to highlight some of the significant changes and developments that took place in Owen's theology, e.g., his move from presbyterianism to congregationalism (p. 65), his change of position on the question of the necessity of the atonement (pp. 88–89), his expansion of the Western Trinitarian consensus (p. 173), and the refinements that he made to his eschatology (pp. 241–42). Perhaps one of Gribben's most significant claims is that in the last decade of his life this great Puritan theologian actually subverted the Reformed tradition by 'an increasing tendency to prioritise the subjective over the objective' thus failing 'to root the Christian life within the church's means of grace' (p. 271). This claim, and the legacy that surely would have flowed from it, invites further examination.

This critical biography will be of immense value to anyone seeking to develop their skills in historical theology because it provides an excellent model of an experienced scholar grappling with the development of ideas by a careful reconstruction of the varied contexts in which they were 'produced, disseminated, and received' (p. 19). What is so exceptional is twofold: first, Gribben does this in a manner that is both sympathetic and charitable whilst avoiding the potential dangers of a hagiographical approach; and, secondly, this is drawn from an archive that, at first glance, seems so sparse in biographical details. Furthermore, this accessible and stimulating biography will reward any student of the seventeenth century because it is clear throughout the narrative that Owen's 'changing fortunes reflected boarder changes in the political landscape' (p. 169). Those with a particular interest in

Owen now have a significantly fuller portrait of the theologian than that possessed by earlier generations of scholars (and not simply in the form of the recently rediscovered painting of him that adorns the dustjacket). Without doubt, this sophisticated work has consolidated the new turn in Owen studies and raises numerous research questions (doctrinal, historical and literary) that can be addressed by those still captivated by this most controversial and compelling of theologians.

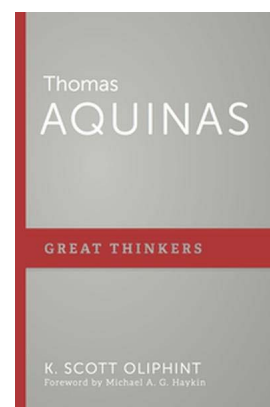
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K. Scott Oliphint. *Thomas Aquinas*. Great Thinkers. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018. xiii + 145 pp. £10.87/\$14.99.

Thomas Aquinas falls into that bucket of authors you know you should read at some point. (Augustine, Aristotle, and Foucault would fall into this same bucket.) But you hesitate because you feel like you're wading into an abyss. My first experience with Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* amounted to several hours of reading and feeling like I had not spent the past few hours reading. For such readers, this P&R series "Great Thinkers" will prove helpful because the books in this series bring to light key features of important thinkers and suggest ways for thinking through these features from a biblical and theological perspective. And all this is done in a fairly concise and accessible manner. So as a general—but not unqualified—endorsement, I recommend the books in this series.

Oliphint's work is especially helpful for those interested in the important subject of epistemology. This cumbersome word may leave the impression that the subject is relevant only for heady Christians who have an innate interest in philosophical matters. This is not at all the case. As Oliphint suggests, developing an epistemology that is rooted and controlled by the Bible is critical not just for theologians but for "everyday" Christians. In the end, everyone is a theologian; therefore, it is imperative to get right a methodology for biblical and theological reflection that in itself is informed and shaped by Scripture. In this book, Oliphint not only asserts Aquinas's failure to do so but also proposes what it means to have an operative Christian epistemology through his critique of Aquinas's supposed commitment to the neutrality of natural reason and natural theology.

But I digress. First, some orienting comments. Given the parameters of the series, Oliphint's treatment of Aquinas is brief, focused, and accessible. Because of the subject matter, some theological and philosophical jargon is necessary. But Oliphint provides a glossary that explains key terms and phrases (pp. 127–32). In this sense, the book accomplishes the goals established by the editors of the series (though it is admittedly still a challenging read). The book is divided into four chapters—Introduction, Foundation of Knowledge, Foundation of Existence, and Conclusion. The middle two comprise the bulk of Oliphint's discussion, focusing on Aquinas's epistemology and doctrine of God, specifically God's existence and character. Finally, Oliphint's overall negative assessment of Aquinas is clear. Plainly put, Aquinas is presented as an example of how *not* to do theology: "Whatever else is said ... must take into account the methodological problems that underlie *everything* that Thomas wrote ... the value of reading Thomas—which is significant in terms of its historical and theological impact—must always be measured against this *initial, seminal, foundational, theological misstep*" (p. 120, italics



mine). At the risk of oversimplifying Oliphint's analysis, his basic argument is that because Aquinas apparently got the first step wrong in a long mathematical equation, nothing else could be correct. At one point, Oliphint quotes Aquinas himself, "A small error at the beginning of something is a great one at the end," and then comments: "An error in *principium*, however, is anything but small. It influences more or less everything else that is said from that point forward" (p. 119).

To more than a few readers, Oliphint's critique will feel unduly harsh. To be sure, throughout his analysis he uses forceful language. When describing Aquinas's concession to the "absolutes" of Greek philosophy, Oliphint writes, "he lost the Christian God altogether and was left with concepts just as useless as theirs" (p. 124). Similarly, he writes, "with respect to the ways in which Thomas sets forth the knowledge and character of God, confusion reigns" (p. 124). Even in his conclusion, he offers—at best—a qualified recommendation to read Aquinas's writings: "there are elements of Thomas's work that *could* be instructive and useful, at least from a historical perspective. *Even so*, every word and doctrine must be read through the grid of Thomas's two ultimately incompatible *principia*—the neutrality of natural reason, on the one hand, and the truth of God's revelation, on the other" (p. 126, italics mine; see also pp. 118–19).

Oliphint has done a great service in reminding us that no one is untouchable: even the greats were prone to error (sometimes, as Oliphint suggests, serious error). However, his sweeping and unambiguously negative assessment of Aquinas leaves the reader wondering: Is it possible that Aquinas really got everything wrong? That is, does one apparent error—even if it is on the foundational level—mean that good and helpful theological reflection is now impossible? Also, is it possible that so many have been so wrong about Aquinas? Given the pervasive and profound impact that Aquinas has had on many traditions and many great minds, it seems unlikely that Aquinas could be of such "little value" (p. 121). Given the goals of brevity and accessibility in this "Great Thinkers" series, generalizations are inevitable. But one wonders whether the overall tone and sweeping remarks could have been better qualified.

Oliphint does outline the basis for his conclusions. He points to Aquinas's apparent disregard for more promising teachers of the Bible (e.g., John of Damascus); his neglect of careful biblical exegesis, especially as the primary means for knowing God; his low view of sin and its comprehensive impact on human beings; his overall lack of "biblical instincts"; most of all, his fateful decision "to try to synthesize 'purely' philosophical with theological *principia*" (pp. 121–24). Here, too, one wonders whether some qualification would have been helpful. To assert that Aquinas was negligent of careful biblical exegesis seems to disregard the fact that he wrote many insightful commentaries on both the Old and New Testaments. Many will, of course, question aspects of Aquinas's hermeneutical approach and some, if not many, of his exegetical conclusions. But even a perusal of these commentaries portrays a man committed to careful and thoughtful engagement with God's revelation. Moreover, his comments on various biblical texts (e.g., Romans 1) indicate that—not unlike the Westminster Confession—he understood and promoted a biblical view of human finitude and depravity. As a NT exegete, I have found many of Aquinas's commentaries stimulating and insightful and rarely felt like I was "encountering" a negligent exegete. Perhaps a wider representation of Aquinas's works might have led to a more moderate conclusion, namely that he exhibited tendencies suggestive of a low view of sin, an excessive dependence on human reason, and so forth.

In conclusion, this book "humanizes" Aquinas and is a timely reminder that careful thought must be given to what it means to have a consistent Christian epistemology when embarking on theological

reflection. Moreover, Oliphint's application of the presuppositional method to such a seminal thinker will help elucidate the methodology to all interested parties. Finally, this critical work will likely engender further discussion on what Aquinas "really" said. Despite the possible imbalances noted above, this book is a helpful challenge to consider Aquinas against the Westminster Confession of Faith.

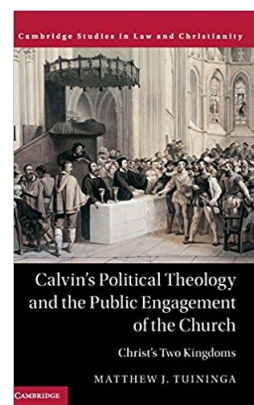
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Matthew J. Tuininga. *Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church*. Cambridge Studies in Law and Christianity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xiv + 386 pp. £69.99/\$110.00.

The combined religious and political shifts in the United States over recent years have led to a fair amount of soul-searching among Christians who find that their models of political engagement appear no longer to provide a coherent framework. This eclipse of any sense of consensus around biblical morality leaves many followers of Jesus wondering how to serve as an ambassador of Jesus Christ in a post-Christian society. Whereas during the era of Christendom the State might have seemed to be a partner in preparing the way for the Gospel, imagining such a relationship today comes at best with far weaker expectations and is at worst an exercise in nostalgia. This apparently new environment in the West has led some Christians to argue that the tradition's resources for understanding the relation between Church and State are no longer helpful. The question is now asked with greater urgency: what is the shape of Christian political engagement?

Matthew Tuininga's *Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church* is a meticulously researched and carefully argued answer to this query. In the thought of John Calvin, Tuininga identifies a number of resources in the Genevan Reformer's thought that are not only of significant historical interest for Calvin scholars but that also can continue to guide men and women trying to live faithfully in the time between Christ's first and second Advent. Calvin's understanding of the relation between Church and State, his careful deployment of covenant theology, his restrained use of natural law, and above all his unique two kingdoms doctrine together provide an example that, with some development, can demonstrate a path forward for Christians today. Perhaps most significantly, Tuininga argues that Calvin's political theology, far from being held prisoner within the restraints of his own age, provides particular resources of living within a contemporary liberal democracy: "[Calvin] offers us the theological resources to reject the ideal of Christendom, in which all citizens are expected to worship and live as Christians, on the one hand, and to affirm the value of political liberalism and principled Christian participation in pluralistic democratic societies, on the other" (p. 1).

Tuininga, assistant professor of moral theology at Calvin Theology Seminary, begins by placing Calvin's thought within the context of the tradition and his contemporaries with respect to the relation of the earthly, political kingdom and Christ's divine kingdom. In remarkable contrast with nearly every other major Reformer—Luther, Zwingli, Karlstadt, Bullinger, and Bucer—Calvin argued for the relative autonomy of the church from the authority of the magistrate. Calvin's convictions here distinguished him from figures such as Zwingli, who argued that, according to the Old Testament example of Israel,



under Christian magistrates the offices of elder and deacon were no longer needed. Calvin, on the other hand, consistently argued for the independence of ecclesial authority from the magistrate. Calvin's judgments here, while certainly bearing the marks of the world of Christendom, are distinct within his own Reformation contemporaries.

The book's argument then turns to a description of Calvin's understanding of the two kingdoms. Tuininga argues that the doctrine that unlocks Calvin's particular articulation of the two kingdoms is his eschatology. Specifically, Christians are to live out the tension between the two kingdoms as those who live in the establishment, but not the consummation, of Christ's kingdom. Calvin marks out a description of the space between these two kingdoms by way of a cluster of doctrines, including a full-throated defense of restoration of the created order and an appeal to natural law. Tuininga convincingly argues that for Calvin obedience in the two kingdoms is not a flight from or spiritualization of the created order but rather a life of hope that strains toward the promised new creation, even while simultaneously expecting that faithfulness within the constraints of the present age will lead inevitably to suffering and tempered expectations.

In his discussion of the two kingdoms, Tuininga identifies the ways in which Calvin distinguishes between the ends of the political order and the spiritual kingdom. Here Calvin's thought is helpfully contextualized within its aforementioned eschatological tenor, its Reformation concerns (particularly the doctrine of Christian liberty), and proper expectations about what might be accomplished by the authorities of each kingdom. This discussion segues into a chapter on the nature of the Church's government and how Christian ministry participates in Christ's spiritual kingdom. The ministry of Word, Sacrament, and discipline is the essential means by which Christ's Kingdom is administered in the world. Christ's reign, Calvin states, is also exercised through the political order but primarily in the restraint of evil. Interestingly, Calvin both advocated for the involvement of Christians in political service and also rejected the idea that the Mosaic law was normative for Christian politics.

The ways that Calvin utilizes Scripture to make these various arguments is described in a chapter on Calvin's covenant theology. Tuininga's work here is remarkable in its attention to Calvin's commentaries and the reasoning Calvin deployed to guide Christians in their attempts to be obedient to the full counsel of the Bible. Calvin's covenant theology provides the framework for how Christians can both give an account of the abiding witness of the Old Testament—particularly the political instruction to the nation of Israel—and yet also apply it in light of the New Testament. Calvin's important distinctions between the substance of the one covenant and its accidents, between the timeless principles of natural law and the spiritual promises fulfilled only in Christ's Kingdom, and between law and gospel are all explored and detailed. This chapter in particular is of significance for Christians searching for a framework with which to guide their reading of the political claims of Scripture.

Tuininga brings his book to a close with two chapters and a conclusion that move Calvin's thought toward its application in our own pluralistic Western culture. A number of surprising aspects of Calvin's thought are convincingly demonstrated: that natural law (and not merely direct exegesis of Scripture) is central to Christian participation in the public square; that civil government is to care for religion indirectly rather than directly; and that punishment for religious heresy or idolatry should only take place in contexts where orthodox faith is embraced by the consensus of the population. Tuininga then argues that Calvin's thought offers an abundance of resources for Christians in pluralistic societies: how they might put natural law to use in a pluralistic political order, how the doctrine of the two kingdoms

might be utilized to both energize and chasten our political hopes, and how Christians might understand their responsibility to alternately submit to and resist the political order.

Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church is a standard-setting piece of scholarship, persuasively argued by the highest standards of Calvin scholarship and defended at every turn with appeals to Calvin's extensive exegesis, the historical context of his work, and the larger fabric of his thought. Tuininga's own suggestions for how Calvin's thought might be applied in contemporary contexts are equally impressive and deserve to be considered by those outside of and within the Reformed camp, perhaps particularly by those already holding to some form of Two Kingdoms theology. Within the field of Calvin studies and Reformation political theology it is a work that scholars will reckon with for years to come, and for pastors in the Reformed tradition it helpfully dispels various popular arguments made about a central figure in the tradition. As a work of superior scholarship with particular relevance to our own troubled times, it deserves the highest recommendation.

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Richard Weikart. *The Death of Humanity: And the Case for Life*. Washington, DC: Regnery Faith, 2016. 348 pp. £18.99/\$27.99.

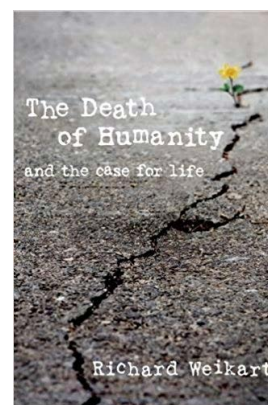
Richard Weikart, who teaches history at California State University at Stanislaus, gave a fateful talk in 2011 to a campus group at his university. In his preparation, he was inspired by C. S. Lewis's twin masterpieces, *The Abolition of Man* and *That Hideous Strength*. The focus of his lecture was the crusade among secular intellectuals, started centuries ago and now proceeding at a rapid clip, to radically devalue mankind from the God-crafted acme of creation to something along the lines of "mere complex matter."

Weikart showed how, in the hands of modern thinkers who have great sway in contemporary scholarship and policy-making, humanity is no longer viewed as a sacred mirror of deity. Rather, man is now properly viewed as a mere animal sculpted by genes and environment, a machine driven by pleasures and oriented toward simple bodily perfection, a reinvention project of man himself.

Inspired by the enthusiastic response to his talk, he extended his research and crafted an entire book on the topic, and we are the beneficiaries. *The Death of Humanity* has delivered to our doorstep a mini-course on the modern intellectual history of this deadly movement—we might call it "the Demolition Crusade"—among intellectuals in the West to redefine downward the wonder and sacred value of humanity.

Rarely if ever have I read such a fiercely energetic yet rigorously academic book. Here we find the informational density of an encyclopedia, alongside the verve and periodic twists of a mystery novel, combined with the urgency of a biblical critique and manifesto for action.

Weikart's 287-page mini-course is well organized, but it can be a bit overwhelming if taken in too fast. Ultimately, it is a thoroughly equipping experience for anyone who possesses a strong desire to understand our culture and to live out and defend the biblical worldview. This book should be priority



reading for every pastor, campus worker, health giver and apologist and—in the ideal world—every college student who wants to think clearly about the Judeo-Christian case for humanity in the face of the ongoing Demolition Crusade. This is a story that everyone needs to know, and Christian leaders, alongside the rising generation of disciples, are among the few who (shocked awake by Dr. Weikart) will stand up and tell it.

It is a daunting task to retell this saga of the Demolition Crusade, which can be traced through diverse schools of thought and a virtual galaxy of thinkers over three centuries. Yet on the opening leg of Weikart's tour, it dawned on me that he chose not to hold back in the breadth and depth of coverage. In fact, he spans the entire 300 years of the Crusade. Thus what is particularly astonishing is the chronological depth attempted: crusaders range from Enlightenment radicals such as La Mettrie, through August Comte and Charles Darwin in the 1800s, all the way to Peter Singer, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard in recent decades. In each case he avoids glib generalities; only rarely did I notice a move to oversimplify. The most forgivable slip is his unqualified reference to "Nietzsche's rejection of morality" (p. 212) when referring to the writings of Foucault's biographer. Technically, as the late Walter Kaufmann stressed in his celebrated course on Nietzsche I took at Princeton, the stated goal in *The Antichrist* was to introduce a "transvaluation of all values" based on a life-affirming ethic distinct from that of Christianity.

How does he manage this coverage? Wisely, he employed smart organizing and "story-telling" strategy that made an otherwise cumbersome mass of information manageable. Nearly every page is filled with flashes of insights, surprises, and touches of human pathos. I found myself frequently moved and sufficiently motivated that I started writing my own manifestoes on the margins of my pages.

Let me voice here my two main critiques of Weikart's complex matrix of scholars and stories within the vast Crusade. Over and over, in spite of occasional mentions of which century we were in, I found myself wondering, "Where is this in the timeline? How much time has passed since the previous figure or story—a decade, or a century?" To be fair, Weikart does install in various places a number of chronological signposts, yet it seemed that such signage was often missing just at the spots where it was needed the most.

Second, there were places where a simplification or retranslation of obscure terms would have helped the reader, such as Charles Darwin's quote (p. 67) where evil in nature counted heavily in his mind against his accepting the design argument. Weikart includes an excerpt of Darwin's letter to a fellow naturalist, saying that he cannot persuade himself that "a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars." It is a safe bet that 99% of readers, without an internet search, would have no idea what this unfamiliar word Ichneumonidae means, so the quote is a mixed bag at best. A simple insertion of [scorpion wasps] in the place of the unknown term would have solved the problem here completely.

With those critiques aired, it is time to assess not only what Weikart has accomplished, but also to note five shrewd moves that enabled him to do so with such élan.

The first and second moves are teaching master keys that go together, like threads woven together in a Scottish plaid: story-telling, coupled with effective critique of flawed concepts. This teaching approach is what makes Weikart's *Death of Humanity* so accessible and compelling. He has honed the narrative/critique art to a fine edge, since each chapter develops story-with-critique with its own unique character. This is done with deft touch, whether it be major philosophers of yesteryear like Jeremy Bentham or current icons such as Peter Singer. The reader is factually grounded in the pleasure-focus of Bentham

or the assumptions of Singer that man is best viewed as “animal-shaped-by-evolution.” Yet the story of their crusades is skillfully interwoven with critique. The fact-laden pages seem to turn themselves. I stopped counting at a dozen places where the crusaders against humanity’s sacredness had used *self-refuting reasoning*, as laid bare by Weikart.

Third, the book is smartly organized by themes and each chapter captures a major line of attack. I might have been tempted to put the book down after the second chapter if the account had gone chronologically. Rather than moving era-by-era, he traced the Crusade through themes that spring typically from Enlightenment figures (such as the “machine” metaphor), but then are traced as we are catapulted quickly into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, following along the chosen theme.

Fourth, there is throughout the book a proper sense of what I call “deep-shock” to see what these secular thinkers have actually said in writing. Many of the vignettes and quotes from secular crusaders moved me, stopping me in my mental tracks. These shocks were hammer blows of reality—wake up calls that prompted me to jot my reaction and resolve on the margins of many pages.

One shock, from US Supreme Court jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., was especially stunning. Holmes, in commenting on a recently published book he had read, said, “[I] think morality a sort of higher politeness, that stands between us and the ultimate fact—force.... Nor do I see how a believer in any kind of evolution can get a higher formula than organic fitness at the given moment” (Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. to Harold Laski, May 13, 1926, in *Holmes-Laski Letters: The Correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Harold J. Laski, 1916–1935*, 2 vols., ed. Mark DeWolfe Howe [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953], 2:837). Is it any wonder, then, that Holmes, holding such power as a jurist, was a pivotal figure in some of the most embarrassing moves in US history—moves designed to promote a new world of racial purity through eugenics and sterilization of the “unfit” among us?

Fifth and finally, the wake-up experience of Weikart leads out of a nightmarish web and in a positive direction. Both at the outset of the book, as well as throughout and in the conclusion, those holding to the sacredness of humanity are equipped with tools of criticism and are *called to action*. We are enabled to stand for the truth in a time of erosion and attack; we are called on to live the truth in love, at a time that “love” and “truth” are being hammered flat as meaningless constructs of a mankind that has faded from existence as a loving and truth-seeking being.

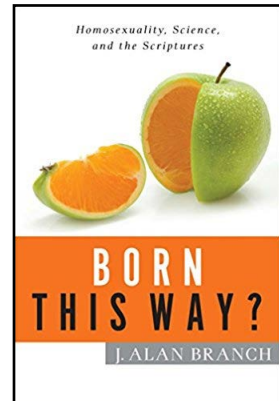
If there ever were an important, and woefully overlooked, side of the intellectual history of modern man, this is it: the crusade against the Judeo-Christian view of mankind as crafted brilliantly by God. Pascal’s balance here is so helpful: we are “noble” as God’s handiwork, but we are “wretched” in our sin and rebellion, which corrupts our ability to see the logical incoherence of our own ramblings. If Christians do not understand the three-century crusade to redefine our essence, then we will be ill-equipped to point the way back to the source of our sacredness. Weikart’s torch of truth beckons us to learn that way back and to point others to the ultimate purpose of humanity—the Way, Truth and Life for whom we were masterminded in the first place.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

J. Alan Branch. *Born this Way? Homosexuality, Science, and the Scriptures*. Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2016. 224 pp. £10.68/\$14.99.

J. Alan Branch, Professor of Christian Ethics at Midwestern Seminary, has written a succinct analysis of some of the major psychological and scientific support for the argument that homosexuality is an innate characteristic. In *Born this Way? Homosexuality, Science, and the Scriptures*, Branch argues that “while there are genetic and biological factors that *correlate* with a higher incidence of same-sex attraction and homosexual behavior, as of yet there is no proof of genetic or biological *causation* for homosexuality” (p. 2). He begins his argument by surveying some key developments in psychological theory that paved the way for the American Psychiatric Association to revise its view on homosexuality in 1973.



In chapter 1, Branch discusses Freud’s view of psychosexual development in broad outline. He finds the data available in Freud to be somewhat mixed with respect to the origin of homosexuality. Ultimately, Branch concludes that “taken as a whole, Freud’s thought substantiates certain aspects of born-this-way arguments” (p. 13). But, his larger effect on the discussion was the way in which contributed to the sexual revolution. In chapter 2, Branch discusses the “father of the American Sexual Revolution,” Alfred Kinsey (p. 16). Although the data available in Kinsey’s studies from the 1940s and 1950s are still used in advocating for born-this-way arguments, Branch considers Kinsey’s findings suspect because the samples were not representative and he failed to distinguish between different types of data. He also notes that Kinsey’s writings discuss “what can only be called child molestation as a mere scientific observation, dignifying a horrendous crime” (p. 23). The main objections to Kinsey’s data is that his methodology is informed by his own libertine sexual ethic in a way that skews both his collection sample and his interpretations of the data. Furthermore, more recent research undermines his conclusions, especially his claim that 10% of people are gay. In chapter 3, Branch connects the social scientific research of figures like Kinsey to the removal of homosexuality as a disorder in the DSM-III (a diagnostic manual for psychology). In particular, he credits the work of Evelyn Hooker in showing that homosexual and heterosexual men score equally well on tests of mental health. However, Branch also argues that political action and intimidation played a significant role in the revision of the manual due to protests at the 1970 APA meeting. The effect of the change led to a focus solely on biological or genetic causes for homosexuality, in many cases ignoring social factors. “Psychiatry now assumes homosexuality is innate” (p. 39).

In chapter 4, Branch argues from the plasticity of the brain against born-this-way arguments. Because experiences, choices, and activities actually affect the structure of the brain, Branch argues that we remain morally accountable for our actions regardless of our temptations. In chapter 5, Branch builds on this case to respond to born-this-way arguments that hold that prenatal hormones are the cause of homosexuality. A seminal theory to that effect (the Ames-Ellis hypothesis) holds that the level of testosterone exposure prenatally has a profound effect on later sexual attraction. Branch concedes that “CAH, CAIS, and 5-Alpha Reductase Deficiency do demonstrate prenatal hormones can possibly play a modest role in the sexual identity of homosexual adults,” but such conditions are “the exception

and not the rule” (pp. 63–64). Branch holds that in contrast to experiments on rodents often used to analyze hormonal effects on sexual behaviors, “humans are *volitional*: we make choices based on many factors which are often difficult to interconnect” (p. 65). Further, the evidence available from studies on disorders of sexual development do not prove that “homosexual males are born with female brains” or vice-versa (p. 65). These arguments are further developed in chapter 6. Studies simply do not provide evidence that would allow someone to conclude on the basis of a brain scan what someone’s sexual orientation was, or that there is clear sexual dimorphism in human brains.

In chapter 7, Branch switches gears to address twin studies, which are used to argue for a genetic basis for homosexuality. He argues that modest evidence available for born-this-way arguments due to higher incidences of homosexuality among co-twins is often exaggerated. Furthermore, the twin studies demonstrate more clearly that “homosexuality *is not* a trait similar to hair color, skin color, or eye color” since its concordance rates is no similarly 100% as it is for such traits (p. 92). In chapter 8, he develops this analysis in a review of DNA studies, and in chapter 9 he discusses other arguments that attempt to link homosexuality with a measurable cause, such as birth order. Chapter 10 surveys some major studies of sexual orientation change efforts, finding the results ambiguous. These chapters are handled well and survey the relevant data in a way accessible to non-specialists.

Chapter 11 is the most important chapter of the book because it summarizes his findings and offers an evaluation from the Christian ethical perspective. The psychological and scientific data available on homosexuality is unable to identify necessary and sufficient causes for homosexuality although it has discovered correlates. This means, Branch notes, that no one is “predetermined to engage in homosexual behavior” (p. 139). Underlying conclusions to the contrary, Branch holds, is a worldview inconsistent with Romans 1, in particular because it suggests that one’s actions are outside of one’s control. He concludes by saying that that “a life of moral virtue requires more than the vacuous excuse, ‘I was born this way.’” (p. 152).

This book is succinct and well-organized. Branch handles the data fairly and clearly outlines his approach and his presuppositions. He is content to provide difficult answers and let the conclusions be ambiguous when the data is ambiguous, something both sides of this debate rarely are willing to do. He should be commended for his work in this regard, especially because he addresses a hot-button cultural issue in which nuance is not often appreciated. I would recommend the book for the lay reader or the classroom. Even non-Christians would benefit from an engagement with a winsome analysis of the scientific studies from the Christian perspective.

My only criticism is that he does not spend more time in developing the themes of his final chapter. Underlying the entire question whether biological or genetic factors causes homosexuality is the assumption that, if they do, then the homosexual person cannot be culpable for engaging in homosexual behavior. But, that is wrongheaded even on a non-Christian view since a genetically induced desire does not force me to act upon the desire. To say otherwise is, as Branch puts it, morally vacuous. The more penetrating apologetic difficulty to be addressed on this topic is why God should allow us to have desires upon which we would never be in a position to act without wrongdoing, but this is no longer a problem for homosexuals: it is a problem for all sinners. Of course, to address such things would have required Branch to depart from his immediate purpose, which I believe he handled well, so this criticism is less

a reflection on what he has produced than it is a desire to see some further discussion and direction for the reader on these matters. Perhaps, he may address such things in a later volume.

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Andrew M. Davis. *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017. 221 pp. £11.99/\$15.99.

“A church that stops reforming is dying. And a church that has been in that state for a long time will be rescued only by revitalization” (p. 22). Andrew M. Davis’s book, *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* arrives at a much needed time. Interest has grown, particularly among young pastors, to reclaim dying churches for the glory of Christ. However, once pastors enlist on the front lines, they see that the battle rages and the enemy is wreaking havoc. The work is tough, and much counsel is needed. With pastoral care and biblical precision that is both refreshing and instructive, *Revitalize* is a must read for any pastor/elder who labors toward the revitalization of a local church. Davis’s aim is clear. He desires to help pastors in church revitalization “restore biblical means [to] a once healthy church, from a present level of disease to a state of spiritual health, as defined by the Word of God” (p. 20). While this book is arguably a resourceful tool for every pastor, Davis states, “Churches in need of revitalization differ from healthy churches that simply need maturing in that toxic forces are at work that will make ministry there a particular challenge, and if left unchecked, will finally result in the death of the church” (p. 20).



When it comes to revitalization, experience counts. Readers should know that Davis writes from personal experience. He led First Baptist Church of Durham, North Carolina, where he has served for nearly twenty years, through the slow process of biblical revitalization.

In chapter 1, Davis makes a convincing argument that revitalization of local churches is a necessary and noble work because Jesus was “zealous for the ongoing revitalization of the church in every age. Revelation 1–3 clearly indicates that the slide of local churches from health toward death has been an ongoing issue for twenty centuries” (p. 15). Having established this biblical precedent, he then summarizes fourteen biblical keys for revitalization. These fourteen keys make up chapters 3–16. However, skipping over chapter 2 would do the reader a disservice. In this chapter, Davis puts his theological convictions on the table. He writes, “But all this information will do nothing to renew a dying church unless the Lord breathes life into it. God alone has the power to do this” (p. 46). Thus, this book is not for the impatient, entrepreneurial, “I’ll fix it” kind of pastor. Rather, this book is for the brother who is willing to do the labor-intensive work of breaking the ground, preparing the soil, forming the rows, planting the seed, continually watering, and removing the weeds in order to watch God give healthy growth.

What does Davis put forward as the keys church revitalizers should embrace? For a summary of each, the reader can skip to pages 22–27. But as listed, the keys are: Embrace Christ’s ownership of the church. Be holy. Rely on God, not on yourself. Rely on God’s Word, not on techniques. Saturate the church in prayer. Cast a clear vision. Be humble toward opponents. Be courageous. Be patient. Be

discerning. Wage war against discouragement. Develop and establish men as leaders. Become supple on worship. Embrace the two journeys of disciple-making.

Whether intentional or not, keys 1–5 primarily have a vertical focus and keys 6–14 a horizontal focus. In key 1, Davis establishes that God is sovereign over his Church, and his Son is Head of the Church by blood payment. The pastor’s aim is to lead the congregation toward spiritual vitality that exalts Christ. Davis explains, “A passion for the exaltation of Christ as head over the church must enflame the heart of all revitalizers” (p. 48). How can pastors do this if they aren’t pursuing Christ-likeness? Davis answers with key 2: be holy. How can pastors do this if they are self-reliant? Davis answers with biblical keys 3–5: Rely on God, which is to rely on his Word and prayer. He expounds this point with the example of the Apostle Paul illustrating how God taught Paul “to stop relying on himself, [and] to rely on God, who raises the dead” (p. 72).

In keys 6–14, Davis shifts his focus primarily toward the revitalizer’s relationship with the congregation. Casting a clear, compelling, biblical vision is essential to a church’s revitalization. He writes that a church in need of revitalization is “overwhelmed. It has a track record of increasing weakness, a downward spiral of dwindling fruitlessness” (p. 107). Thus, the kind of vision Davis argues for is not of a worldly kind, described in chapter 8. Rather, it’s a vision that helps the congregation see what is “true, godly, real, and ultimately, biblical. A godly visionary leader relies on Scripture and by faith sees the timeless truths of God and his plans and purposes for all Christians generally” (p. 108).

Reader beware. If you heed Davis’s counsel, especially in the context of an unhealthy church, you will most likely encounter some level of opposition. Thus, Davis addresses the humility, courage, discernment and patience you’ll need, along with the ability to wage war against discouragement, to endure in this worthy work. As a pastor, who by God’s grace has endured, Davis rightly states that “a pastor who is too thin-skinned and cannot bear patiently the hostility of people who will murmur and complain against what he is trying to do in revitalization will not last long” (p. 151). In chapters 14–16, Davis focuses on specific areas where a biblical vision must be applied, and will most likely face opposition: raising up a plurality of male leaders, honoring God with our corporate worship, and embracing the commands to grow in Christ-likeness and help others do the same. He then concludes his book with a chapter devoted to the future glory that we will celebrate together over what we labored for faithfully here on earth.

Davis’s book provides a clear and compelling biblical argument that adds even more color from his use of church history. Anecdotes from Davis’s journey in revitalization at FBC Durham and historical figures, such as Martin Luther, Adoniram Judson, and William Tyndale demonstrate the biblical approach to church revitalization spans generations.

Another significant strength of this book is its usefulness. As Mark Dever notes in the foreword, *Revitalize* “joins a fairly elite group of books—like C. H. Spurgeon’s *Lectures to My Students* and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones’s *Preaching and Preachers*—that combine theology and practice as only a learned and experienced pastor can” (p. 11). The chapters address individual topics that pastors will likely face, and are easily read as standalone chapters.

Finally, it should be noted that each chapter ends with a section labeled “Practical Advice” that helps the reader think about how the biblical truths presented might apply to his own situation. The mixture of statements and questions are thought provoking. Just think of this as the “theology applied” section.

Book Reviews

Davis argues that this book is specifically for church revitalizers. While that may be the intent, all pastors would benefit from Davis's wisdom. Unfortunately, the title might prevent some from reading this book. I want to urge any pastor laboring toward the health of a local church to read this timely, and eternally rewarding book.

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Abraham Kuyper. *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto*. Edited by Harry Van Dyke. Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015. 432 pp. \$49.95.

Abraham Kuyper. *Common Grace (Volume 1): God's Gifts for a Fallen World*. Edited by Nelson D. Kloosterman. Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015. 672 pp. \$49.95.

Abraham Kuyper. *On the Church*. Edited by Ad de Bruijne. Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016. 544 pp. \$49.95.

Abraham Kuyper. *Pro Rege (Volume 1): Living Under Christ the King*. Edited by John H. Kok. Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016. 528 pp. \$49.95.

Abraham Kuyper. *Pro Rege (Volume 2): Living Under Christ the King*. Edited by John H. Kok. Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017. 528 pp. \$49.95.

Abraham Kuyper's life was marked by the conviction that Christ's lordship covers all of life and culture. He not only believed that all spheres of culture should be submitted to Christ and directed toward their creational design, but he built and led institutions in accordance with these convictions. Throughout his life, he led a political party, a church denomination, several local churches, a university, a newspaper, and the entire Dutch government. From local church pastor to prime minister, from the classroom to the halls of parliament, and from the writing desk to the public lecterns of government, Kuyper sought to view all of life through a distinctly Christian lens.

As the North American church moves out of a place of cultural dominance and into the cultural margins, we are faced with an important question: What is the church's public calling? This question drove Kuyper's life and writings, and his answers provide a compelling and constructive path forward for the contemporary church. Until now, Kuyper's ideas have come through only a smattering of English translations. However, under the direction of general editors Jordan J. Ballor and Melvin Flikkema, Lexham Press and the Acton Institute have embarked on a project to translate into English, for the first time, all of Kuyper's key works on public theology. Available in hardcover and digitally on Logos Bible Software, the *Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology* project has ushered in an unprecedented time in Kuyperian studies. While only five



of the twelve volumes are currently in print, these translations should allow Kuyper to instruct a new generation of Christians on how to view all of life under the lordship of Christ.

Written in 1879, *Our Program* is a summary of Kuyper's political vision for the Netherlands, covering topics such as education, national defense, finance, and public hygiene. While there are certainly parts of *Our Program* that are outdated, it is striking to see how relevant the issues Kuyper dealt with still are. Particularly important is Kuyper's discussions of religious liberty. Against those who wished to exclude religion from the public square, Kuyper argued that religion was essential to the flourishing of a nation: "Only where the religious element is still the mainspring of national life can there be strong government" (p. 53). At the same time, Kuyper rejected any attempt to establish legal and political hegemony for Christianity. He argued for freedom of conscience, stating that the conscience is a "boundary that the state may never cross" and the "immediate contact in a person's soul of God's presence" (pp. 69, 73). Thus, freedom of conscience is "the root of all civil liberties, the source of a nation's happiness" (p. 73).

Our Program also provides an invaluable look at how Kuyper applied his doctrine of sphere sovereignty to concrete policy situations. According to Kuyper, God delegates his authority to certain spheres of life that have their own sovereignty and independence from the state: for example, the family, the church, the arts, business, and education. Each of these spheres ought to be free from being absorbed by another sphere. Long time students of the Kuyperian tradition will benefit from seeing Kuyper's thought process as he works through the relationship of the state to the different spheres of society.

In the initial volume of the three-part work, *Common Grace*, Kuyper helpfully shows the biblical foundations of common grace—the belief that God's grace restrains the worst effects of sin, allowing the unbeliever to achieve a degree of moral virtue and insight into the arts and sciences. Kuyper begins with Adam and traces how common grace works itself out through redemptive history. Kuyper sees common grace already at work in Adam and Eve, whose lives are spared instead of immediately dying after eating the forbidden fruit. God eventually binds himself, in the Noahic covenant, to extending common grace to the creation. In contrast to much modern theology, one of the most refreshing aspects of this volume is seeing a theologian take the biblical stories—especially the creation account in Genesis—literally and historically, and readers will benefit from Kuyper's creative and insightful exegetical moves.

For Kuyper, particular grace and common grace are part of an integrated whole, constituting a unity that flows from Christ. Common grace makes special grace possible, and special grace gives common grace its goal. For example, without God's common grace to Noah's family, the line of the elect would have been cut off. One of the larger points of *Common Grace* is Kuyper's belief that there is continuity between this world and the next. The new heavens and the new earth doesn't mean that God completely destroys this world—a "germ form" of the original creation will eventually blossom into the fullness of glory in the eschaton (p. 595). As a result, Kuyper rejects the view that the church should separate itself from the world and that Christ's significance for the church is only as redeemer of souls. Christ redeems by restoring *this* world—grace restores nature. *Common Grace* should certainly give pause to those who wish to co-opt Kuyper for a two kingdom perspective of Christ and culture (or at least popular versions of the two kingdom view), in which the creation is completely destroyed.

On the Church is an anthology of some of Abraham Kuyper's most important writings on ecclesiology. Although Kuyper is well known as a public theologian, this work demonstrates that his ecclesiology undergirded the rest of his public work. As he labored as a politician, editor, professor, and public intellectual, he was living out his core convictions about the nature of the church. This volume

shows how Kuyper's understanding of the church developed throughout his life but also demonstrates his overarching emphasis on the need for the church to participate in all of spheres of society.

Two writings from this collection are especially important to understanding Kuyper's ecclesiology. First, "Rooted and Grounded" is one of Kuyper's most thorough articulations of the institute/organism distinction. Kuyper argues that there are two modes of the church's existence. The institutional church is the gathered church, organized under pastoral leadership for teaching the Bible, administering the sacraments, and exercising church discipline. The organic church is scattered throughout the culture as Christ's ambassadors. These two modes of the church's existence are interdependent yet distinct and are both critical to its life and mission. The institutional church provides structure, direction, and support for the organic church as it flows out into all parts of society.

Second, "Twofold Fatherland" clearly lays out Kuyper's understanding of how the church must relate to culture. Kuyper argues for the existence of three societies: the earthly homeland, the heavenly homeland, and the sinful world. Kuyper attempts to give dignity to Christians' lives in the earthly homeland, while warning of the complete brokenness of the sinful world. Christians must be good citizens of their heavenly *and* earthly homes. Although a Christian's earthly home has been distorted by sin, the Christian's life can either be lived in harmony with the heavenly fatherland and in worship to God or lived in rebellion toward God's design.

Towards the end of his career Kuyper produced a second trilogy, which draws and expands upon his work in *Common Grace*. First published in 1911, *Pro Rege* witnesses Kuyper revisiting various themes such as family life, church, the arts, science, and politics. His aim is to explore the implications of Christ's rule, as both Creator and Redeemer, over the spheres of "everyday life" (2: xviii). Compared to his previous trilogy, the antithesis between the believer and unbeliever is emphasized to a greater degree. Common grace may create a shared cultural life between Christian and non-Christian; however, sin ultimately renders this shared life a zone of conflict. Whereas *Common Grace* stresses that God's creational design is not aborted by sin, *Pro Rege* stresses that, in light of sin, all things must be brought under the redemptive lordship of the King.

In the initial volume of *Pro Rege*, Kuyper argues that while Jesus is Lord over all facets of life, his rule occurs in two different ways. Over the church, Christ's rule is direct: He is the church's origin and head, uniquely dictating the patterns and purposes of its earthly life. However, his rule over the rest of created life is indirect, mediated through creational structures, whose origin and design were established by Christ as Creator. In comparison to bringing the institutional church under Christ's authority, bringing the rest of the spheres under Christ's rule is much more challenging. After all, one must discern the original creational design of each sphere of life in order to "heal" them from the sickness of sin (p. 313). Both regenerate and unregenerate humanity, through common grace, can draw out the potencies of the created order and work alongside one another for the common good. However, the light of the gospel can further assist Christians in perceiving the proper structure and direction of God's creation. Indeed, such is the calling of the church as organism: With the light of the gospel, the church is scattered into each sphere of life in order to redeem it.

No doubt readers will take issue with Kuyper at some points, for example his language regarding race and colonialism. Additionally, Kuyper's doctrine of sphere sovereignty, while a powerful conceptual tool, will need to be contextualized to concrete political situations. Nevertheless, these volumes not only provide helpful instruction on how to construct a theological lens through which to view all of life, but they also provide a much-needed example of innovative orthodoxy. Kuyper skillfully takes the rich

resources of orthodox and historic Christianity, applying them with theological creativity to his unique cultural moment. Kuyper's example should give the contemporary church hope that we can do the same. We look forward with great anticipation to the completion of this series, including the remaining volumes of *Common Grace* and *Pro Rege*, and the forthcoming works *On Charity & Justice*, *On Islam*, *On Business and Economics*, and *On Education*.

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Brian Matz. *Introducing Protestant Social Ethics: Foundations in Scripture, History, and Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 252 pp. £15.99/\$24.99.

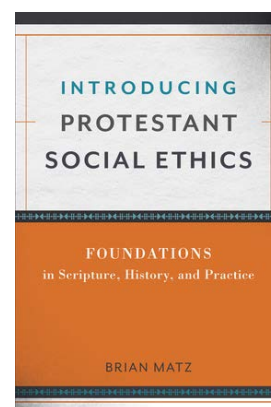
Introducing Protestant Social Ethics represents a culmination of Dr. Brian Matz's teaching and research on social ethics at Fontbonne University, Carroll College, Seattle University, and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Indeed, such a description offers an essential insight into the organization and tone of this work. Namely, it is clear the content of this work represents the collection of Matz's pedagogical and research expertise engaging the breadth and scope of social ethics. Matz seeks to improve Protestant social ethics while also situating any suggestions within the larger discipline of social ethics (p. xvi), an admirable and ambitious goal. After offering a brief survey, several points of discussion warrant specific attention here.

Introducing Protestant Social Ethics is divided into three main sections: social ethics and Scripture, social ethics in Christian history, and principles for Protestant social ethics. Section one traces various interpretations of social issues through the Pentateuch, historical, poetical, and wisdom literature, the New Testament, and the early church era. Each corresponding chapter traces important themes from each genre (e.g., grace, judgment, hope, etc.) that apply directly to social ethics.

Section two moves from Scripture to Christian history, picking up from the early church and moving into late antiquity, through the Middle Ages, Reformations era, Post-Reformations era, and contemporary Catholic social ethics. In these chapters, Matz seeks to more clearly situate Protestant social ethics within the larger Christian tradition. Through an analysis of the history of social ethics from the early church through modern Roman Catholic social thought, Matz traces the path of Christian social thought through history while noting particularly important contributions from each era (e.g., wealth, usury, poverty, political engagement, etc.).

Finally, section three develops five key principles in social ethics: human dignity, common good, justice, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Each chapter defines each term, summarizes the biblical and theological basis for each term, and illustrates each term through a unique case study. Matz points back to exegesis from part one and significant figures developed in part two as a means of explaining and rooting section three within the larger flow of *Introducing Protestant Social Ethics*.

While titled as an introduction to Protestant social ethics, such a naming misrepresents the overall structure of this work. Certainly, Matz includes analysis of the ethics of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other prominent Protestant theologians in section two of this work. However, to position this book as



an introduction to a distinctly Protestant vision of social ethics misleads the reader, misrepresenting the thorough and helpful content found within.

Rather than introducing Protestant social ethics, Matz develops a *de facto* Christian social ethic in order to encourage and enable the reader to practice social ethics (p. xvi). Indeed, Matz introduces the reader to the contours, communities, and shared history of the broader discipline of social ethics (pp. xiv-xv, pp. 157–219) as well as encouraging a thoroughly biblical worldview (p. 67–68). Furthermore, *Introducing Protestant Social Ethics* does well to integrate a broad range of denominational communities, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike yet fails to offer the promised reimagining of Protestant social ethics (p. xvi–xvii). Beyond a historical survey tracking the theological, social, and ecclesial changes of the European Reformations, Matz offers a surprisingly small amount insight on Protestant ethics specifically. In the end, rather than a close examination, development, or structuring of a particular stream of Christian social ethics (i.e., Protestant social ethics), Matz greatest contribution is his efforts to integrate themes he sees as vital in Protestant thinking (e.g., Scripture, two kingdom theology, etc.) with established principles in Roman Catholic social ethics (e.g., human dignity, common good, justice, etc.).

Matz's work might also warrant further clarification concerning what constitutes Protestant social ethics through more careful attention to cited representatives of the politicized Protestant social ethics he seeks to improve (p. xvi–xvii). While he might not be wrong about the fractured and unsystematic presentation of Protestant social ethics at larger (p. xvi), it is hard to know what he is referencing due to a total lack of citations. A criticism that could serve as a strong case for a better social ethic ends up sounding a bit anecdotal or politicized itself.

Of specific interest to this point, Matz does state an emphasis on Scripture and two-kingdom theology (p. xvi) as the distinct contributions of Protestants to social ethics but does so without citations or without referencing any of the other defining principles of the European Reformations even as he offers a historical review of this period (pp. 96–113). In contrast to Matz, Protestant theologians historically point to more than *sola Scriptura* as a defining principle in Protestant thought. *Sola Scriptura* stands alongside *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *solus Christus*, and *solus Deo gloria* as defining principles of Protestantism and Protestant social ethics. It is impossible to fully appreciate a Protestant vision of human dignity, the common good, or any other social principle without addressing their direct connection to fundamental Reformation principles. Any given thread in the tapestry of Reformation commitments cannot be pulled loose without distorting the larger theological, social, and moral vision.

Even greater than this first point of clarification, Matz's emphasis on two-kingdom theology must be questioned. In no way does two kingdom theology represent the whole of Protestant theology. Rather than a monolithic representation of the entire stream of thought, two-kingdom theology represents only one side of an intramural debate within Protestantism. Indeed, Matz seems totally unaware of the ongoing discussion between prominent theologians such as David VanDrunen, James K. A. Smith, Michael Horton, and others regarding two kingdom theology. Sadly, due to a lack of footnotes identifying Matz's basis for his claims regarding Protestantism and two-kingdom theology, it is difficult to know for sure why he makes such a strong statement.

Despite these points of improvement, Matz successfully develops a sweeping and helpful introduction to Christian social ethics as a discipline. As a matter of fact, much of Matz's work wonderfully integrates biblical, theological, situational, and philosophical concerns. At this point, Matz deserves much credit as he points to the importance of crafting a distinctly *Christian* social ethic rather than reinforcing

social ethics divided along distinctly Protestant or Roman Catholic theologies (pp. xvi–xvii, 153–54). If given a clearer recognition and explanation of Matz’s actual contributions to a unified Protestant and Catholic moral vision, this book could serve as an insightful handbook treating the biblical, historical, and practical concerns of practicing Christian morality in contemporary society. As well, Matz’s work might also facilitate further conversations to develop Christian unity on social, cultural, and political concerns in an era of increased marginalization and cultural pressures.

Overall, *Introducing Protestant Social Ethics* offers a timely and helpful introduction to Christian social ethics. Noting the disconnect between the book’s titling and content as well as the necessary clarifications on Protestantism and two kingdom theology, readers are well served by Matz’s clear expertise and teaching experience. In an era where Christians cannot afford to ignore the social realities of our living faith, Brian Matz provides an important contribution to this conversation.

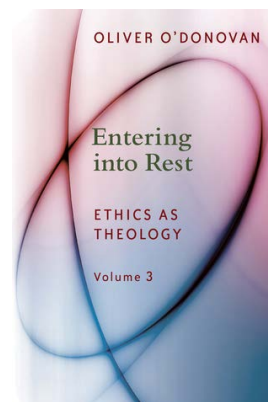
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Oliver O’Donovan. *Entering into Rest: Ethics as Theology, Volume 3*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 246 pp. £26.99/\$25.99.

Entering into Rest is the third and final volume of Oliver O’Donovan’s seminal Ethics as Theology trilogy. It is in my estimation the best of the three. I say “best” with a proviso, however, because I think the editorial decision to make Ethics as Theology a trilogy in some way disrupts the integrity of the work as a whole. *Entering into Rest* is better read as the *culmination* of the preceding two volumes, and perhaps also of a scholarly career. As such, it represents a sagacious, original contribution to Christian theological ethics. Before remarking on the substance and efficacy of *Entering into Rest*, a brief reminder of what the first two volumes set out to accomplish.

In *Self, World, and Time* (volume one), O’Donovan addresses “the study of Ethics itself as an ordered reflection on moral thinking and on its place within the life of faith” (p. vii). I describe it as a mapping book. It sets the trajectory. In *Finding and Seeking* (volume two), O’Donovan shifts from the study of thinking to thinking itself, exploring “its progress from the original consciousness of agency, to the world as the structure of value, and to the time that determines the moment of decision” (p. vii). With this final volume, the exploration turns “from the progress of moral thinking to its object, the forward horizon with which moral thinking engages.” Moral experience is “two-directional”: consciousness of responsibility, on the one hand, and goals to be pursued on the other. Ethics describes a way of *thinking*, a thinking toward action.

This is not an especially fashionable line of inquiry in Christian ethics today. The discipline has had other preoccupations. It has certainly disfavored the Kantian legacy. This overreaction has in turn fostered neglect of some otherwise longstanding moral concepts. But knocking the dust off moral reason doesn’t make one a rationalist. In fact, O’Donovan repudiates the whole tendency toward “methodological monism.” Christian ethics isn’t reducible to a virtue ethics, command ethics, or love ethic. As he puts it, “the last thing that could benefit theological ethics at this point would be another reduction of the moral



message of the Christian gospel to a single word” (p. viii). A holistic ethics will therefore draw from the whole of the Christian theological tradition, especially the holy scriptures. Readers will be pleasantly surprised to discover that references in the Scripture index *outnumber* sources in the index proper, and even here sources are drawn from across the tradition!

The trilogy began by reasserting the relevance of the theological virtues, and here with *Entering into Rest* we arrive finally at “the greatest of these,” love. “The sequence in which faith is followed by love, and love by hope, reaches its conclusion in action,” states O’Donovan (p. 1). Theological virtues represent the shape of the Christian life itself—baptism, church membership, and endurance.” In *Finding and Seeking* these Trinitarian coordinates mapped onto “responsibility, attention to the world, and deliberation.” The trilogy has always been about the shape of the Christian moral life. But what did Paul mean, asks O’Donovan, by giving *love* special priority?

Love is the end of action. “Resting” is what agents do when satisfying ends. This rest comes through active accomplishment and is *eschatologically* conceived. Paul’s Corinthian correspondence is taken as emblematic in this respect, where questions he faces draw him to two “converging lines”: the life of the church, and the expectation of the end. Love describes the point of their intersection. In 1 Corinthians 13 love is also characterized in various ways as deferential. “Negative or positive,” claims O’Donovan, “these features of love move around a well-described circle: restraint of competitive self-assertion, acceptance of others’ activities and initiatives, flexibility in waiting upon them, and readiness to give them time and space” (p. 2). Later he describes this as resting in others’ labors. Notice, then, when love is relocated to the summit of the triad, “it is a statement about the *finality of community*.” A Christian theological ethics must have love as its end, acknowledging the Kingdom “drawing-near” and suffusing the church with joy. As O’Donovan puts it, the logic of Paul’s triad is a logic of *salvation* and *eschatology* (p. 4).

Practical reason therefore has an “eschatological extension” and “ecclesiological orientation.” Following Augustine, O’Donovan suggests community constitutes the essential content of moral reason. Community is a moral purpose of agency. Love is to rule God’s people, and its sovereignty is “bound up with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, the decisive pledge within history of our last end” (p. 9). The love O’Donovan has in mind goes by a special name: *devotion*, “the love that rests in its object and is wholly fulfilled in it” (p. 14).

All this emphasis on the authority and order of love, and yet *Entering* is disproportionately occupied with the Church and its “communications.” Membership in the faith community makes a claim upon us. Here “our works are to be part of the whole,” works that aren’t ours or some else’s, “but God’s, working within his redeemed creation” (p. 19). A people neither independent nor dependent, but *interdependent*. We are given to one another for communicative love, a sharing in and of the good. The church is a community for the common good. To this end, O’Donovan appends several theses about the scope of practical reason and set scope for chapters to come.

The chapters that follow are exquisitely argued, full of moral clarity and pastoral wisdom. Each expands in its own way upon the love’s discreet sovereignty; how we are together, who we are for, and in what we share. The church as a community rests in the love of God, a gift of the Holy Spirit. As O’Donovan notes, “Ethics after Pentecost ... concerns what transpires between love and love, between reflection and reflection” (p. 228). The first reflection takes in all that the world displays to us in its meaning; the second takes that meaning in again as “a theatre in which God has finally worked his purpose, and will disclose it fully, a scene on which our gaze may rest with praise and thanksgiving” p.

229). *Devotion* is the mode of our participation, where the clarity of our knowledge and impulse of our energy are one, and is thus a necessary love for sanctification.

I have come lately to describe O'Donovan's trilogy as sort of phenomenology of discipleship. It points to that which is finished and unfinished. It reasserts the theological truth about human belief, commitment, and agency. It tells of *God's* love. It evokes. It extols. As has become characteristic of O'Donovan's corpus, it poses decisive questions and reframes terms of theological discourse. *Entering into Rest* brings to conclusion perhaps the most magisterial work in Christian theological ethics of the last half century. Whether it may also hint at the resting of a scholarly career is yet to be seen. I pray not yet!

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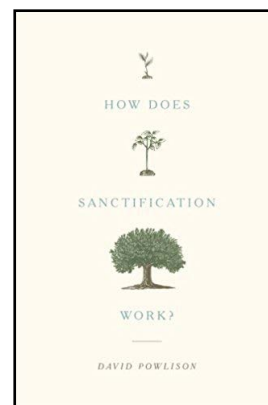
David Powlison. *How Does Sanctification Work?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017. 123 pp. £7.46/\$9.99.

The doctrine of sanctification has foundational importance in the Christian faith. It is the way Christians speak of being conformed to the image of Christ by God's grace. This book by well-known biblical counselor and CCEF executive director David Powlison packs a considerable explanatory punch in a brief number of pages. Powlison weaves "stories and interpretation" as an explanatory framework for many chapters in this book, reminding the reader that each person has a story of their own, and God speaks his Word into their story. He aims to show the progressive nature sanctification as God's kingdom wins out in the world by transformation in the hearts of believers.

In his teaching on sanctification, Powlison gives case studies from his own life and the lives of others, unpacks theological truths and promises, and applies biblical truth to everyday life. He illustrates how real Christians relate real promises from Scripture in situations that have caused distress of various kinds, depression, and insecurities. Powlison offers no quick fixes or a "distilled formula" for how God works in the believer's life. This is a strength of the book. There is no one way sanctification works out in each life, only that God's grace is at work in each believer's story no matter how similar or different they may be.

The eleven chapters combine sound theological reflection on sanctification with real-life examples of God's work in sanctification. The first six chapters, which give some autobiographical sketches of God's sanctifying power in Powlison's own life, offer a general framework for thinking about sanctification both theologically and personally. Chapter one makes it clear that there are not "one-size-fits all messages telling me how I can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" (p. 20). Chapter two brings an important question to the readers' mind, which also serves of the chapter title, "is there one key to sanctification?" In brief, his answer is "no." Powlison warns of messages that promote one key ingredient to successful progress on the road of sanctification. However, he promotes a timely word from the Lord in Scripture, with specific application to one's situation.

In chapter three Powlison gives his reader a working premise of applying God's word: "Ministry 'unbalances' truth for the sake of relevance; theology 'rebalances' truth for the sake of comprehensiveness"



(p. 33). In other words, one cannot speak every theological truth in the moment of ministry, but upon reflection afterward, one's theology can bring balance to the overall picture of the needs of the situation. Powlison does not claim this insight comes from him but uses it as a foundation for telling stories that illustrate this point. Chapter four brings the explicit commands of God to love him and others to bear on the believer, and that these commands are not just moral obligations but they are *good* for the believer and promote sanctification. Chapters five and six discuss the need to remember our justification and how it relates to our sanctification, as well as thinking deeply about what really changes us in. Powlison does well to warn his readers of making generalizations about sanctification. Instead he invites them to speak or hear or remember a timely word of God's acceptance by the justifying work of Christ. Chapter 6 expands upon another question: "What really changes you?" He again is quick to point out that there is not one simple formula for sanctification, but sanctification can be defined better by patterns in the believer's life. It is here that Powlison introduces five factors that influence godly change in one's life: "God, Scripture, other people, life circumstances, and the human heart" (p. 63). The author focuses considerable attention on God, who is the decisive agent of change, and then he addresses the other four factors that one experiences as sanctifying variables.

Chapters seven through ten are half autobiographical, showing how the process of sanctification has played out in the author's story, and the other half accounts for the work of God in specific examples in the lives of others. This last half of the book is critical for Powlison's understanding of sanctification, namely that there is not one way, one message, or one doctrine that is central to sanctification; rather, biblical sanctification accounts for all of the variables mentioned above.

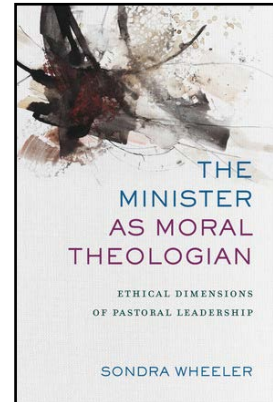
In the final chapter, Powlison considers "the meaning of sanctification, which is Christ's working purpose on our journey" (p. 105). He calls his readers further to think on their relationship with God and others as sanctifying influences. His two sections on faith and love in this chapter rightly make the claim that one must have true, reliant faith in God, and that sanctified love must be more than "moral self-improvement"; love must be godly hope brought to others.

This little book is deeply insightful and uses real life cases to make theological points, driving the reader to the theological relevance of Scripture and human experience for sanctification.

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Sondra Wheeler. *The Minister as Moral Theologian: Ethical Dimensions of Pastoral Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. xvi + 144 pp. £12.99/\$21.99.

There are many different roles that a pastor or minister fills, such as preacher, teacher, leader, shepherd, and counselor. Recent works have sought to reclaim the pastor's role as a "theologian," and this volume by Wesley Theological Seminary Professor of Christian Ethics, Sondra Wheeler, highlights the pastor's role as a "moral theologian." Wheeler defines moral theology as the "exposition of how [one's] theological commitments shape [one's life] in the world" and contends that any person engaged in ministry does this sort of theology (p. 2). While there are other works that discuss ethics for ministers (such as Joe Trull and James Carter's *Ministerial Ethics* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004]), this book is unique in that it explores how a minister serves as an ethicist (pp. xi–xvi).



The opening chapter of the book (pp. 1–25) explores what it means for the minister to serve as an ethicist for a local, moral community in what he says and does and doesn't say and doesn't do. This discussion lays the foundation for the following chapters that address the moral components found in preaching (ch. 2), teaching (ch. 3), counseling (ch. 4), and one's living example (ch. 5). The opening chapter also gives a "brief and nontechnical" (p. 13) overview and evaluation of various ethical theories (duty, consequence, and virtue) to help pastors think about ethics.

Chapter 2 (pp. 26–58) focuses on how preaching is an important element in the task of moral theology. The author offers some guiding thoughts on preaching when there has been a tragedy and on texts that give seemingly impossible demands on a follower of Christ, trouble modern readers, or address issues around which there is moral controversy in the community. Wheeler notes that there is great danger in preaching on moral issues, but that this danger should lead one to do it carefully rather than avoid doing it, as failing to say something makes a statement as well. The chapter contains great practical suggestions, such as the importance of providing other places besides the Sunday sermon for further discussion on difficult texts and issues since preaching is monological and good ethical consideration often requires some dialogue and discussion for proper understanding. Above all, Wheeler stresses the need to speak about difficult topics and in tough times, acknowledging hard texts and troubling situations rather than ignoring them or glossing over them.

The chapter on teaching about moral issues (pp. 59–84) focuses on helping people think and talk about ethical issues, something that seems to be greatly needed in the current climate in which people rarely engage in thoughtful, civil debate about issues. Since Wheeler comes from a Wesleyan background, it is not surprising that she advocates using the four elements of the Wesleyan quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience) as resources for ethical thought. She does not state that these four elements have equal authority, and she notes that all theological traditions draw upon them in some way even when they articulate and emphasize *solā Scriptura* (see p. 67). In the course of her discussion, Wheeler addresses some potential misnomers about some of the categories, for example noting that reason is more than science and that experience is not simply individual experience but also that of communities. In addition to gaining insights into ethics, a non-Wesleyan reader may gain a new appreciation for the method of that tradition through this chapter.

In discussing the role of the minister in counseling in the fourth chapter (pp. 84–110), Wheeler highlights that pastoral counseling is different from other forms of counseling in that it truly is a

moral task; one does not have to stay objective like other counselors but should seek to speak about ethics and right and wrong. That said, pastoral counseling should not be telling people what to do as much as helping them to think properly, asking questions that might help them understand the moral implications of their choices. Among the helpful strategies in this chapter are seeking to engage the counselee's imagination (pp. 104–7) or asking him to write a letter explaining his choice to someone whom it will hurt (pp. 108–9).

The final chapter (pp. 111–37), dealing with the moral example of the pastor, does not call for perfection in the pastor but highlights the need to have an overall pattern of growth that can be seen by others. It is a reminder that there is power not just in the words of the minister but also in the life. Major sections of this chapter examine how love (as defined by 1 Cor 13) can serve as a guiding principle in ministry, the importance of leading through conflict, and some practical pieces of advice for pursuing godliness in the midst of the unique challenges in ministry. At multiple points in this chapter, Wheeler points to further discussion of issues that will appear in a forthcoming companion volume, *Sustaining Ministry: Foundations and Practices for Serving Faithfully*.

Overall, this book is a welcome addition to the field of pastoral theology, as it addresses an issue underexplored in other works in a readable style featuring many practical insights. At times, Wheeler's stance on particular ethical issues is unclear (e.g., see p. 48 and mention of texts discussing divorce and sexuality as texts that are troubling to modern readers). However, even if one would disagree with Wheeler in terms of a particular issue, one can learn from the overall approach to the issue of moral theology as well as the guiding principles and practical wisdom she offers. The book is about *how* to think about issues and not *what* to think about issues. Therefore, this would be a great book to read in a course on pastoral ministry or Christian ethics, and the chapters on preaching and counseling could also serve as additional reading for classes on those subjects. Seasoned pastors would also be wise to consider this volume, as it helps ministers gain a greater understanding and appreciation of their role as a local ethicist or "moral theologian" and also offers new tools to address ethical issues and help congregants think about ethics.

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Steve Wilkens, ed. *Christian Ethics: Four Views*. Spectrum Multiview. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 221 pp. £16.30/\$21.00.

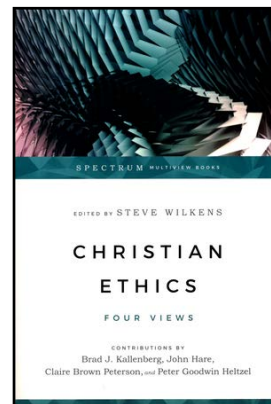
The application of Christian ethics is a primary concern in contemporary debates, however theoretical discussions are often significantly absent. When dialogue about ethical schema occur, they are often difficult for those without significant training to understand. This recent volume from IVP Academic provides lucid and accessible presentations of four common approaches to ethics, which are, in this case, framed as being consistent with Christianity.

The volume opens with an introduction that outlines the scope of the book and briefly describes the four views presented. Brad Kallenberg, professor of theology and ethics at the University of Dayton (OH), opens the argument by presenting his version of virtue ethics. He outlines his understanding of the positive qualities of an ethics of virtue, drawing largely from Aquinas and heartily illustrated with passages from Scripture. The emphasis on character formation is healthy, as is his insistence on developing a “thick” perspective of virtue, which helps prevent the abuse of so-called virtue to justify vicious actions. Kallenberg also wrestles with the inherent subjectivity of virtue ethics, which leads to apparently opposite behaviors by different people in similar situations. Kallenberg’s presentation is robust and articulate.

Following the various critiques offered by the other authors, Claire Brown Peterson, associate professor of philosophy at Asbury University, offers her interpretation of natural law. Notably, Peterson also builds on Aquinas, using his paradigm for the overlapping domains of laws to show how natural law is broadly applicable and largely demonstrable across civilizations over human history. Like Aquinas, Peterson gives significant credit to the human ability to rightly derive moral norms from natural inputs, and sees illustrations of this in Scripture.

The third position articulated in this volume is divine commandment theory. John Hare, professor of philosophical theology at Yale University, serves as the proponent of this view. Hare projects his ethical schema through a Kantian lens, though he argues that others could have served as well. A strength of divine command ethics in this presentation is that it takes seriously the clear commands of Scripture. At the same time, Hare’s presentation closely circumscribes the imperatives in the Bible, leading to fairly narrow applicability and a wide range of good options. Additionally, Hare’s divine command ethics insufficiently resolves the so-called Euthyphro dilemma, wherein the ethicist examines whether commandments were given because they were good (prior to their declaration by God) or whether they were made good through proclamation by God. Hare settles on the second option and attempts to defend his position from arbitrariness.

The final position articulated in this volume is that of prophetic ethics which is a flexible morality that the advocate argues “discerns and partners with the Holy Spirit’s movement in our world, transforming lives and communities, witnessing to Christ and the kingdom, and holding out hope for the restoration of God’s good creation.” (p. 165) Peter Goodwin Heltzel is professor of systematic theology at New York Theological Seminary, whose methodology reflects a desire to connect with the popular movements of the day to eradicate what are, often, real and obvious failures in society. Taking a page from various theologies of liberation, Heltzel’s ethics are prophetic in that they are intended to speak on behalf of marginalized communities to inculcate social justice. Kallenberg’s rebuttal is especially helpful here as



it applauds the motivation to fight injustice that may come from prophetic ethics, but notes there is no foundation for those who adhere to prophetic ethics to argue from. This is clearly illustrated by the failure to define social justice apart from being against the powerful for the weak, which can itself turn into a form of oppression.

As with other multi-view books, this volume includes a presentation of the position with interactions by the scholars with opposing positions. On the one hand, this helps ensure the presentation is fairly even-handed. On the other hand, the approach tends to leave the reader wondering which view is, in fact, preferable or even acceptable for a Christian to hold. Such books are useful primarily as heuristic tools for those seeking to understand the breadth of a discipline. The presentations in this volume are helpful toward that end and the critical dialogues demonstrate the points of contention, along with the many points of agreement.

Each of the four positions in this volume is representative of common streams of ethics. However, the methodologies for them are not distinctly Christian, but are simply recognized philosophical frameworks that happen to be shaped by a degree of connection to the Christian tradition. Absent from the list of offerings are ethics that begin with Scripture as the *norma normans* and then reason outward. Some may think Hare's essay on divine command ethics meets that intent, but there is little reference to exegesis, hermeneutics, or extensive application. Additionally, the volume ignores various Christian approaches to ethics within the evangelical tradition, such as the triperspectivalism found in John Frame's work (especially *Doctrine of the Christian Life* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008]) or the similar schema in David W. Jones (*An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013]).

A proper Christian ethics should begin with orthodox doctrines and ask how those should be lived out by the believer in various contexts so that the conduct, character, and goals of the believer best align with the God's self-revelation in Scripture, which is the task of Christian ethics. The Bible is not merely a sourcebook for ethical reasoning, but an interconnected historical account of God's work in this world. Beginning with Scripture is essential for Christian ethics, as the faithful seek to be holy as God himself is holy. This volume lacks that perspective, but is a helpful introduction to common approaches to ethics that are often associated with the Christian tradition. As such, *Christian Ethics*, makes a contribution to the discussion and may be useful in the classroom in some cases.

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Craig G. Bartholomew. *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. xii + 363 pp. £29.83/\$40.00.

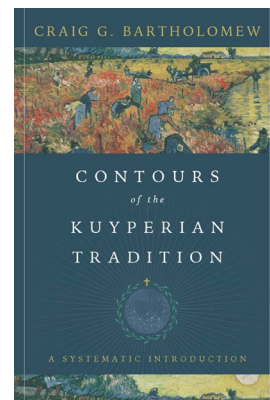
There was a time when knowledge of Abraham Kuyper or the Kuyperian theological tradition was limited to a few Dutch scholars with ties to Amsterdam or West Michigan. Today, that situation has changed. Major publishers are pumping out first-ever English translations of primary Kuyper works and a wide range of secondary literature on Kuyper's enduring relevance for global Christianity. Many Christians outside the Reformed tradition are turning to Kuyper for inspiration and help in making a constructive Christian contribution to the public issues of our day. We're living in the midst of a Kuyperian renaissance.

As pastor, theologian, professor, newspaper editor, political organizer, member of parliament, prolific author and public speaker, and prime minister of the Netherlands, Kuyper was a key public Christian at the turn of the twentieth century. He lived at a time of great technological, political, economic, and cultural change and sought to articulate the Christian faith for every area of life. In many ways, Kuyper slowed the secularization of the Netherlands and the leftward drift of the church and state. He was convinced that no area of life was outside the lordship of Jesus Christ.

In *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*, Craig Bartholomew has now provided an overview of Kuyper's magisterial world of thought, both in its historical context and potential contemporary application. Bartholomew uses his own South African context to illuminate how Kuyper has been misappropriated in the establishment and enforcement of apartheid. Moreover, he suggests multiple ways that a deeper and more robust engagement with Kuyper's thought can make civic healing and church renewal possible in our fractured world.

The chapter organization of the book roughly follows the chronology of Kuyper's life and work. Early chapters outline Kuyper's conversion, Reformed orientation, view of Scripture, and Christian worldview. Central chapters address Kuyper's socio-political theology (sphere sovereignty), ecclesiology (in a pluralistic world), and political philosophy. Bartholomew then engages Kuyper's relevance to mission, philosophy, theology, and education. The concluding chapter highlights some of the pitfalls that Kuyper's followers have fallen into and stresses the importance of holistic spiritual formation in the task of both Christian theology and civic engagement as witness. As Bartholomew argues, "In the absence of a deep spirituality, the Kuyperian tradition cannot be sustained without being distorted or collapsing in on itself" (p. 183). Extensive notes, resource lists, and bibliography allow readers to follow up with further study of primary Kuyper works or secondary literature within the expanding Kuyperian tradition.

The major strength of *Contours* is that it complements James Bratt's excellent *historical* work on Kuyper (*Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013]) with equally strong *theological* analysis. Bartholomew insightfully reveals the ways in which Kuyper not only retrieves Calvin and the Reformed tradition for his day but also introduces brilliant new



Christian arguments in response to the rise of historical-critical hermeneutics, theological liberalism, and revolutionary politics that have come to dominate the Western world.

One example of both Kuyper's theological richness and Bartholomew's insightful analysis can be found in his treatment of the church. Kuyper lived at a time when the secularizing liberal forces of modernity were beginning to marginalize the institutional church and Christian contributions to public life. We live today more than a century later into this cultural shift. As such, the church today is assumed by many Christians and non-Christians alike to be a voluntary association of private concern.

Kuyper's ecclesiology represents a retrieval of a biblical understanding of the church as both an official, gathered community for worship as well as a dispersed movement of public action. He refuses to engage the dilemma of privatized faith versus public/social action but consistently seeks to hold them together in a dynamic and productive tension. As such, Kuyper offers to Christians today a way to regain the centrality of the institutional church for the life of Christian faith and worship as well as a missional engagement of the Christian Gospel with the whole of life. Kuyper gives us a refresher on the sheer comprehensiveness of the Gospel.

Bartholomew's treatment of Kuyper at times can tend toward over-simplification. This is understandable given that the project is an "introduction" and ideal for those new to Kuyper's thought. While Bartholomew highlights areas where Kuyper's thought has been distorted by his followers in destructive or unbiblical ways, he glosses over some of the evolution and contradictions within Kuyper's own life and thought that still challenge scholars.

For example, historians have noted that while Kuyper was a genius, he was not a particularly nice man. Even his peers and opponents remarked during his lifetime that he tended to be rude, brash, and intolerant of differing opinions. Added to this are the apparent shifts in his thought once he gained political power and his personal exodus from church attendance as his popularity and output grew. It is precisely some of these areas of unresolved tension within Kuyper that have provided a doorway for a branch of Kuyperian scholarship to emerge which has embraced leftist agendas (e.g., sexual identity politics, revisionist biblical interpretations, and anti-ecclesial postures) that Kuyper surely would reject today.

Those new to Kuyper or the Kuyperian tradition may find themselves struggling to fully appreciate the explosive power of Kuyper's thought for life and ministry today. As Bartholomew notes repeatedly, specific retrieval and application of Kuyper's thought for today is still needed. Therefore, those looking for practical or application-oriented treatments of Kuyper's thought will need to consult the notes or postscript for other resources within the Kuyperian tradition. This is not a fault of Bartholomew's work but a sign of the rich resources that remain to be unearthed from this prolific public theologian. But Bartholomew's grasp and presentation of Kuyper's daunting genius is inspiring and full of the joy of working in the fields of the Lord.

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Charles Kraft. *Issues in Contextualization*. 2nd ed. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016. 332 pp. £16.44/\$21.99.

Anyone who reviews the second edition of Charles Kraft's *Issues in Contextualization* faces two challenges. First, one must evaluate whether the author provides significant additions to warrant a second edition. Second, a reviewer should reappraise the book's contribution in light of debates about contextualization following the publication of the first edition. After summarizing Kraft's main thesis and key ideas, this review will address each of the above challenges in turn.

Issues in Contextualization begins by distinguishing "faith" and "religion." For Kraft, the latter consists of cultural forms that are not essential to the gospel. "Faith" concerns allegiance to Jesus, which can be expressed in countless cultural forms. He says, "contextualization is the expression of Christian meanings and commitment in the cultural forms of the cultural insiders" (p. 73). The goal of contextualization is "to bring Jesus' presence into the lives of a people" (p. 8). Accordingly, Kraft thinks contextualization is an act of communication whereby the messenger adapts him or herself, not only the message.

The book warns against the tendency of foreigners to impose religious forms rather than incarnate genuine faith. An "incarnational" approach is one that is appropriate both to the culture and Scripture. Kraft explains, "Appropriateness to the Scriptures means appropriate scriptural meanings in the receptors' minds, with appropriate responses to those meanings" (p. 113). To illustrate what "appropriate contextualization" looks like, the latter portion of the book discusses ways to integrate spiritual "power" into contextualization practice.

Most readers will likely affirm Kraft's basic principles of contextualization, although many will object to his argumentation and use of Scripture. He is strongest when talking about culture. One should not expect a rigorous examination of the Bible. This reviewer suspects many readers will be wary of his anthropological conclusions due simply to his questionable exegesis of Scripture.

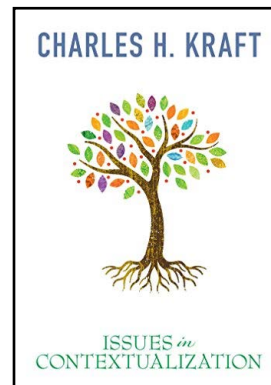
Kraft presents this book as an "update" of *Appropriate Christianity* (William Carey Library, 2002). This second edition adds five new chapters to the 11 chapters included in the first edition. However, he cites only one book concerning contextualization that was published after 2002. He appeals to only six books about contextualization from the 1990s. Of the few (more) recent publications he interacts with, they predominately concern spiritual warfare. In the opinion of this reviewer, a second edition of Kraft's book is hardly justified given the dearth of interaction with recent scholarship.

Because of the above observations, one finds reappraising this book difficult. Kraft writes,

I have therefore not interacted with much of the recent writing, choosing instead to deal with factors that enable us to understand what contextualization is and why it is needed.... this is a book of "issues," with an emphasis on what I see as important as we think about the subject of contextualization. (p. 240)

One must ask, "How can he do this without addressing recent conversations about the nature of contextualization?" His "light edits" only reaffirm his previous arguments. I have difficulty seeing how they develop further implications of his original thesis.

Contemporary mission texts largely echo his most basic principles, e.g., the need for indigenous contextualization that does not impose foreign patterns and practices. Since 2002, scholars have



increasingly turned their attention elsewhere. For example, if all theology is contextualized theology, what is the relationship between exegesis, theology, and culture? After all, contextualized practice is rooted in appropriate interpretation. Kraft does not address such questions. As a result, he reinforces the impression that contextualization primarily involves anthropology, not Scripture.

Kraft's ambition to highlight the importance of spiritual warfare is admirable. He rightly corrects Westerners' propensity to ignore such matters, which effectively de-spiritualizes Christianity. He states, "Western Christian witness, having largely ignored spiritual power issues, has tended to unwittingly recommend secularization as the antidote to traditional approaches to obtaining spiritual power" (pp. 176–77).

However, this narrow focus does not accord with the book's overall goal of helping people understand "what contextualization is and why it is needed." Unfortunately, his recommendations on spiritual power stem more from experience and speculation than thoughtful interaction with the Bible. He claims,

Material objects that have been dedicated to pagan gods can usually be "cleansed" simply by asserting the authority of Christ to break the power in them. If, however, the object has no other purpose than a religious or occult one, I recommend that it be destroyed as well. Land and buildings can also usually be disempowered relatively easily. (p. 128)

Assertions like these are typical and without biblical support.

This reviewer is concerned about an impression some readers might have when reading *Issues in Contextualization*. Given Kraft's stature, some people could mistakenly dismiss contextualization literature as though all missiologists advocated similar methods (which are based on culture more than the Bible). In fact, scholars and practitioners have broadened the conversation to integrate the best of biblical and exegetical studies.

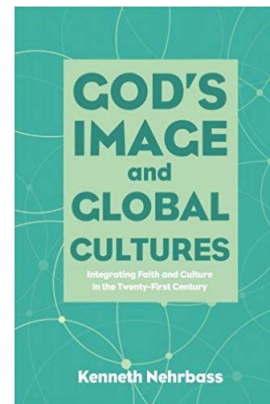
In short, Kraft's second edition will help readers understand the inner thinking of previous debates about contextualization. However, it has limited value for people already familiar with those discussions. For those less versed on the subject, other texts provide a stronger, well-rounded introduction to the topic.

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Kenneth Nehrbass. *God's Image and Global Cultures: Integrating Faith and Culture in the Twenty-First Century*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016. xx + 229 pp. £23.00/\$30.00.

Kenneth Nehrbass of the Cook School of Intercultural studies at Biola University has produced a highly useful volume dealing with many of the leading issues in cross cultural ministry today. The work is essentially a treasure trove of anthropological information made practical by the lists of “reflection and review questions” that accompany each chapter.

The author begins with a discussion of the phenomenon of globalization and its implications for Christians in general. This chapter includes treatments of contemporary “hot button” issues such as immigration and the exportation of U.S. jobs overseas. He presents surprising statistics such as the fact that “during 35 years of increasing globalization, employment in the U.S. increased by over 80 percent” (p. 19).



Chapter 2 contains an excellent evaluation of “American exceptionalism” and explores many causes of anti-Western sentiment around the world. These topics are followed by an in-depth exploration of the relation of culture to biblical theology. Nehrbass includes an annotated list of the various theories regarding the classification of “culture” and “cultures”: the idealist, race/gene, functionalist, particularist, semiotics/structuralist, inclusivist, and Image Bearing explanations. Under this last topic are reflections regarding whether culture is essentially good, evil, or neither.

Chapter 5 offers tentative answers to such questions as whether God created an original, ideal culture along with speculations as to where Babel (Gen 11) fits into the scheme of things. Included here are some very helpful charts that allow for an instant comparison of several of the theories regarding the division of humanity into its various races and ethnicities.

Chapter 6 contains a very useful summary of the macro-explanations for why cultures differ: genetic determinism, unilinear evolution, functionalism, culture-trait theory, and environmental determinism. For those unfamiliar with the basics of modern cultural anthropology, this chapter will serve as an excellent introduction.

In Chapter 7 the author begins to explore some of the leading questions that divide Christian workers today: Are some cultures better than others? How do we make observations about cultures without stereotyping? Should we try to change cultures? Should we let other cultures change us? Chapter 8 continues this discussion, detailing various ideas regarding “the gospel and the role of Christians in culture.” Here we find H. Richard Niebuhr’s classic *Christ and Culture* critiqued, with the author finding fault with Niebuhr for “never conceiving of a God-directed cultural life” and believing that “culture [is] inherently against God” (p. 129). In conjunction with these criticisms, Luther’s “two kingdoms” approach to “the enduring problem” (i.e., the interface between Christians and culture) is dismissed out of hand in favor of a “holistic kingdom emphasis.”

Part III deals with “God’s thoughts about culture,” and ch. 9 details “God’s plan for culture” (politically, economically, religiously, technologically, socially, symbolically, medially, and medically). Nehrbass next examines “God’s plan for cultural variables,” including ideas regarding the variations that may be permitted with respect to individuals, society in general, being and doing, time reckoning, order and flexibility, risk and vulnerability, future planning, fate and personal efficacy, logic, hospitality,

hierarchy and equality, meritocracy, toughness and tenderness, and conflict resolution (ch. 10). The final chapter contains suggestions for how to become a “world changer.”

While I find the volume extremely useful in most respects, there are two aspects that I would personally view quite differently. First, with respect to Niebuhr’s *Christ and Culture*, I remain firmly convinced (even after reading a plethora of critiques) that this is one of the most brilliant expositions in the history of the church. Niebuhr is entirely correct when he observes that evangelicals’ enthusiastic adoption of the “Christ the Transformer of Culture” position is almost always in complete ignorance of what Niebuhr actually says about this approach. However, I am decidedly upon Niebuhr’s side with respect to the idea that “culture [is] inherently against God.”

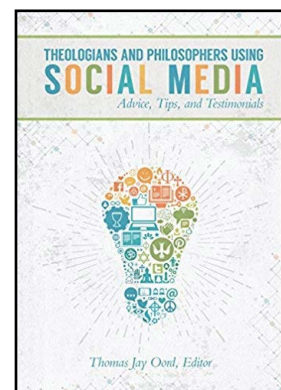
My basis for this conviction forms the essence of my second criticism. Where this work falls short—and where most such works fall short—is its failure to engage the Bible’s teaching regarding the effects of the Fall and the utter degradation that sin has brought to the human race. Indeed, the message of the Bible is that we as human beings are fallen to such an extent that we are unable to recognize how sinful we actually are. We read the Bible’s description of our depravity (hence our humanly-created cultures’ depravity), but our sin nature prevents us from grasping these truths to their fullest extent. When all is said and done, “Christ and Culture in Paradox”—the Two Kingdoms view of Martin Luther—most accurately reflects the teaching of the New Testament. The *imago Dei* remains in fallen humans, but it is a shattered, broken, ruined and wrecked-beyond-repair image that will remain until the end of the age. Any “good” that may be found in cultures is nothing more than a pale shadow of what humans were originally created to be and do.

I would recommend to all that *God’s Image and Global Cultures* be read together with David VanDrunen’s *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). These two works together would define well the parameters of the biblical “tension” regarding culture within which each of us is called to live.

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Thomas Jay Oord, ed. *Theologians and Philosophers Using Social Media: Advice, Tips, and Testimonials*. San Diego: SacraSage Press, 2017. ix + 447 pp. £19.95/\$29.88.

As the new media of the Internet age continue to unfold, many scholarly Christians have tried to share their work and expertise effectively, particularly in the rambunctious world of social media. This concern is the primary subject of *Theologians and Philosophers Using Social Media: Advice, Tips, and Testimonials*. The book can best be described as a massive crowdsourced volume featuring ninety-one contributors, all edited by Thomas Jay Oord. While most of the authors are in the academy, several are simply effective users of social media who deal with theology or generally religious matters. The choice of writers is fairly diverse, but a majority of them seem to frequent or inhabit the progressive-revisionist circles. Oord himself is a self-described open theist and process theologian.



To encourage coherence among this broad spectrum of authors, Oord asked them six questions to answer in their essays:

1. What forms of social media/platforms do you use, and which forms are primary?
2. Why did you begin using social media in relation to your scholarly interests, publication, or teaching? Is this the same reason you continue to use social media?
3. What have you been surprised to discover or learn when using social media?
4. What great idea, conceptual breakthrough, or interesting project emerged through or because of social media?
5. How do you manage your time and other obligations in relation to time spent on social media?
6. What three things would you recommend to scholars considering using social media? (p. 4)

While most of the contributors respond in a direct and orderly manner to these prompts, others outright ignore them, sometimes with amusing results. Otherwise, the book has a fairly repetitive tempo.

Three matters of perpetual importance and interest do pop up in the book. The first is how to use social media well, particularly how to build a large platform, effectively reach a desired audience, and how to blog or share work sustainably. The second is how to use social media without losing one's soul through distractions and other vices that commonly arise in the digital environment. The third is deep theological reflections, appreciations, critiques, and warnings about what social media does to the individual person and the society at large. All three of these matters show up in brief flashes throughout the book.

This book doesn't really elaborate on any of those elements in depth. The authors can be incredibly profound when they address these subjects, but, unfortunately, it takes a lot of work and time to find them. This book is long—well over four hundred pages. It is debatable whether the quality of the insights merit the effort required to find them.

It is also obvious that some contributors have a better grasp of social media and its uses than others. The result is that the quality of advice and tips widely varies, which is not surprising in a crowd-sourced project. The only way to sift the wheat from the chaff is to gain knowledge from other sources, which throws the overall usefulness of this text into question. For instance, as Patheos progressive channel manager, Benjamin Corey advises in his essay, "Read up on social media best practices and do your best to follow at least some of those recommendations" (p. 78). The implication is that one should probably look *elsewhere* for such resources. If one is looking for a handy, well-researched, go-to practical guide to the field of social media, this book is not it.

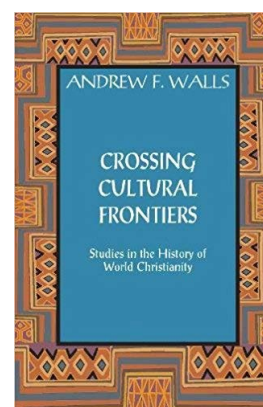
Of course, the communications industry provides a dizzying array of articles, workshops, and other venues that can provide an excellent crash-course in social media usage. Experts keep track of significant changes in the field, such as algorithm shifts on important platforms. A single book like *Theologians and Philosophers Using Social Media* cannot keep pace with the rapidly changing environment. The book has a similar weakness when it comes to the other two concerns of personal discipleship and weighty reflection. There are other books and resources that provide focused, in-depth attention to these issues instead of brief comments, observations, and opinions. Thus, the book is of limited use and desirability for its being a desultory jack-of-all-trades but master-of-none. A handful of typos and grammatical errors also reduce the quality of the text.

That is not to say that the book is worthless. It may well serve as a helpful time capsule. Historians will be able to use it as a resource to help understand how academics and scholars dealt with the fairly new phenomenon of social media in AD 2017. It is important that such matters be chronicled for future generations. However, aside from this future potential, the text need not be at the top of anyone's "to-read" list.

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Andrew F. Walls. *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017. xii + 284 pp. £26.99/\$32.00.

Crossing Cultural Frontiers is the most recent work from Andrew Walls, an eminent scholar of history of Christian mission and world Christianity. Previously a missionary to Sierra Leone, Walls's academic career has included professorships at the University of Edinburgh, Liverpool Hope University, and Afroki-Christaller Institute (Ghana). The present work is a "best of Walls" compilation comprising works published in other journals and books. In fact, it is the third such "best of" compendium, following *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (1996) and *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (2002).



The essays in the volume are grouped into three sections. In the first, "The Transmission of Christian Faith," Walls argues for the multi-cultural and global nature of early Christianity (ch. 1), presents Origen as the father of mission studies (ch. 2), and discusses worldview, including how much of a believer's culture and previous religion stay with them at Christian conversion (ch. 3). By juxtaposing Adamic (forced out) versus Abrahamic (voluntary going) migration, Walls offers a theology of migration (ch. 4). Finally, he argues that studying Christian history is a cross-cultural exercise (ch. 5).

In part two, "Africa in Christian Thought and History," Walls explores world Christianity in the region of the world that he knows best. He explores a history of African discipleship through suffering (ch. 6), the eighteenth-century "Christian experiment" of the Sierra Leone colony (ch. 7), and nineteenth-century attempts to cultivate Christianity in the vernacular in West Africa (ch. 8). He completes the section by showing how African traditional religions began to be studied (ch. 9), and how the Ghanaian scholar Kwame Bediako exemplified African Christian scholarship (ch. 10).

In the final part, Walls focuses on "The Missionary Movement and the West." He dedicates chapters to how western missions and missionaries are portrayed in English literature (ch. 11), John and Charles Wesley's theology and practice of mission (ch. 12), and the legacy of mission literature—particularly Jonathan Edwards's *Life of Brainerd* (ch. 13). In the remaining chapters, Walls discusses an African (Tiyo Sago) and Indian (Behari Lal Singh) scholar living in Britain as exemplars of world Christianity (ch. 14), western missionaries in China committed to vernacular and indigenous Christianity (ch. 15), and the work of Harold Turner, who sought to grasp indigenous Christianity with an eye toward traditional

religions (ch. 16). In a brief concluding chapter, Walls reflects on the vocation of missiology. As only Walls can put it,

Missiologists are the magpies of the academic world; they invade the scholarly territory of their neighbors and steal their topics ... the biblical field, the theological field, the historical field, and the practical field in the name of the study of mission.... This also makes them academic subversives, upsetting harmony by raising new issues; introducing new perspectives and new data; identifying new questions and problems within established fields. (p. 259)

There is much to appreciate in this collection of Walls's essays. I will highlight two areas. First, Walls's lifelong exploration of indigenous Christianity—the gospel at home in every culture—is well teased out in this volume. Beginning with the question, *what does it mean to be a Greek (or African or other) Christian?*, he illustrates this reality through a survey of the early church in general and also individuals such as Antony, Origen, Kwame Bediako, Tiyo Sago, and Behari Lal Singh (ch. 1–2, 10, 14). He explores the eighteenth and nineteenth-century vernacular translation work of missionaries in West Africa and also China, including the struggles and failures to achieve local Christianity (ch. 8, 15). In his study of conversion (ch. 3) and Harold Turner's study of pre-Christian religions (ch. 16), he wrestles with the authentic cultural and religious identity of local Christians. In short, this volume offers a rich collection of case studies for indigenous and world Christianity.

Second, Walls's discussion on theology of migration (ch. 4) contains fresh insights. His paradigm of forced (Adamic) versus voluntary (Abrahamic) migration sets a framework for peoples on the move in Scripture and throughout history. Further, his emphasis on Greater European Migration from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries is important because it offers a context for understanding colonialism and the founding of new nations while also offering context for the reverse migration to Europe and the West, which has taken place in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These historical and theological reflections are needed by the church in the West today.

To these points of appreciation, I raise two questions for critique. First, I applaud Walls for highlighting Origen as the father of mission studies (ch. 2). Origen showed how one could be thoroughly Christian, thoroughly Greek, and thoroughly Egyptian. Origen also praised the work of itinerant evangelists. However, can we call someone the father of mission studies who lacked personal and practical experience in cross-cultural mission engagement?

Second, Walls helps readers understand the identity of a Christian believer situated in a local culture with a pre-Christian past (ch. 3). Conversion is a messy process wherein the gospel makes its home in a given culture. However, I think Walls could have given more space to discussing how and when local Christianity turns into idolatry or syncretism. To borrow from Walls, what does it look like for the gospel to be a *pilgrim message* (exhorting, critiquing, being prophetic) within a given context?

All said, it was a pleasure to sit with Professor Walls on this journey. His call to do church history as a global, cross-cultural exercise (ch. 5) has certainly shaped this reader's academic and professional path.

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