



themelios

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THE GOSPEL COALITION

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DESCRIPTION

Themelios is an international evangelical theological journal that expounds and defends the historic Christian faith. Its primary audience is theological students and pastors, though scholars read it as well. It was formerly a print journal operated by RTSF/UCCF in the UK, and it became a digital journal operated by The Gospel Coalition in 2008. The editorial team draws participants from across the globe as editors, essayists, and reviewers.

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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 Hole in the Gospel

— D. A. Carson —

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

John complains, “I simply cannot resolve this calculus problem.” Sarah offers a solution: “Let’s read some Shakespearean sonnets.”

I’ve got a problem with my car: it won’t start. But no problem: I know what to do. I’ll go and practice my guitar. That will fix it.

My cakes always used to fall when I took them out of the oven. But my friend showed me how to fix the problem. He showed me how to adjust the timing on my car engine.

Ridiculous, of course. But this is merely a farcical way of showing that solutions to problems must be closely tied to the problems themselves. You do not have a valid solution unless that solution resolves the problem comprehensively. A shoddy analysis of a problem may result in a solution that is useful for only a small part of the real problem. Equally failing, one can provide an excellent analysis of a problem yet respond with a limited and restricted solution.

So in the Bible, how are the “problem” of sin and the “solution” of the gospel rightly related to each other?

One of the major theses in Cornelius Plantinga’s stimulating book is that sin “is culpable vandalism of shalom.”¹ That’s not bad, provided “shalom” is well-defined. Plantinga holds that shalom resides in a right relation of human beings to God, to other human beings, and to the creation. Perhaps the weakness of this approach is that shalom—rather than God—becomes the fundamental defining element in sin. Of course, God is comprehended within Plantinga’s definition: sin includes the rupture of the relationship between God and human beings. Yet this does not appear to make God quite as central as the Bible makes him. In Lev 19, for example, where God enjoins many laws that constrain and enrich human relationships, the fundamental and frequently repeated motive is “I am the LORD,” not “Do not breach shalom.” When David repents of his wretched sins of adultery, murder, and betrayal, even though he has damaged others, destroyed lives, betrayed his family, and corrupted the military, he dares say, truthfully, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps 51:4). The majority of the approximately six hundred OT passages that speak of the wrath of God connect it not to the destruction

¹That was the expression he used in a 2011 address he delivered at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. For analogous expressions, cf. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): “sin is culpable shalom-breaking” (p. 14); “Sin is culpable disturbance of shalom” (p. 18). Cf. *idem*, *Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be* (ed. D. A. Carson; Christ on Campus Initiative; Deerfield, IL: Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding, 2010). Cited 1 November 2013. Online: <http://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/cc/Pantinga.pdf>.

of shalom, but to idolatry—the de-godding of God.² Human sin in Gen 3 certainly destroys human relationships and brings a curse on the creation, but treating this comprehensive odium as the vandalism of shalom makes it sound both too slight and too detached from God. After all, the fundamental act was disobeying God, and a central ingredient in the temptation of Eve was the incitement to become as God, knowing good and evil.

To put this another way, the tentacles of sin, the basic “problem” that the Bible’s storyline addresses, embrace guilt (genuine moral guilt, not just guilty feelings), shame, succumbing to the devil’s enticements, the destruction of shalom (and thus broken relationships with God, other human beings, and the created order), entailments in the enchaining power of evil, death (of several kinds),³ and hell itself. However many additional descriptors and entailments one might add (e.g., self-deception, transgression of law, folly over against wisdom, all the social ills from exploitation to cruelty to war, and so forth), the heart of the issue is that by our fallen nature, by our choice, and by God’s judicial decree, we are alienated from God Almighty.

For the Bible to be coherent, then, it follows that the gospel must resolve the problem of sin. What is the gospel? In recent years that question has been answered in numerous books, essays, and blogs. Like the word “sin,” the word “gospel” can be accurately but rather fuzzily defined in a few words, or it can be unpacked at many levels after one undertakes very careful exegetical study of εὐαγγέλιον⁴ and its cognates and adjacent themes.⁵ We could begin with a simple formulation such as “The gospel is the great news of what God has done in Jesus Christ.” Then one could adopt an obvious improvement: “The gospel is the great news of what God has done in Jesus Christ, especially in his death and resurrection” (cf. 1 Cor 15). Or we could take several quantum leaps forward, and try again:

The gospel is the great news of what God has graciously done in Jesus Christ, especially in his atoning death and vindicating resurrection, his ascension, session, and high priestly ministry, to reconcile sinful human beings to himself, justifying them by the penal substitute of his Son, and regenerating and sanctifying them by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, who is given to them as the down payment of their ultimate inheritance. God will save them if they repent and trust in Jesus.

The proper *response* to this gospel, then, is that people repent, believe, and receive God’s grace by faith alone.

The *entailment* of this received gospel, that is, the inevitable result, is that those who believe experience forgiveness of sins, are joined together spiritually in the body of Christ, the church, being so transformed that, in measure as they become more Christ-like, they delight to learn obedience to King Jesus and joyfully proclaim the good news that has saved them, and they do good to all men, especially

²Cf. D. A. Carson, “The Wrath of God,” in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives* (ed. Bruce L. McCormack; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 37–63; idem, “God’s Love and God’s Wrath,” ch. 4 in *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 65–84, 88.

³As Augustine rightly observes in *City of God* XIII.xii.

⁴E.g., D. A. Carson, “The Biblical Gospel,” in *For Such a Time as This: Perspectives on Evangelicalism, Past, Present and Future* (ed. Steve Brady and Harold Rowdon; London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996), 75–85; idem, “What Is the Gospel?—Revisited,” in *For the Fame of God’s Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper* (ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 147–70.

⁵E.g., the editorial for *Themelios* 38:2 briefly reflects on what “kingdom” means: D. A. Carson, “Kingdom, Ethics, and Individual Salvation,” *Them* 38 (2013): 197–201.

to the household of faith, eager to be good stewards of the grace of God in all the world, in anticipation of the culminating transformation that issues in resurrection existence in the new heaven and the new earth, to the glory of God and the good of his blood-bought people.

Once again, as in our brief treatment of sin, much more could be said to flesh out this potted summary. But observe three things:

1. The gospel is, first and foremost, *news*—great news, momentous news. That is why it must be announced, proclaimed—that’s what one does with news. Silent proclamation of the gospel is an oxymoron. Godly and generous behavior may bear a kind of witness to the transformed life, but if those who observe such a life hear nothing of the substance of the gospel, it may evoke admiration but cannot call forth faith because in the Bible faith demands faith’s true object, which remains unknown where there is no proclamation of the news.

2. The gospel is, first and foremost, *news about what God has done in Christ*. It is not law, an ethical system, or a list of human obligations; it is not a code of conduct telling us what we must do: it is news about what *God has done in Christ*.

3. On the other hand, the gospel has both purposes and entailments in human conduct. The entailments must be preached. But if you preach the entailments as if they were the gospel itself, pretty soon you lose sight of the reality of the gospel—that it is the good news of what *God has done*, not a description of what we ought to do in consequence. Pretty soon the gospel descends to mere moralism. One cannot too forcefully insist on the distinction between the gospel and its entailments.

So now I come to the fairly recent and certainly very moving book by Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel: What Does God Expect of Us?*⁶ This frank and appealing book surveys worldwide poverty and argues that the American failure to take up God’s mandate to address poverty is “the hole in our gospel.” Without wanting to diminish the obligation Christians have to help the poor, and with nothing but admiration for Mr Stearns’s personal pilgrimage, his argument would have been far more helpful and compelling had he observed three things:

First, “what God expects of us” (his subtitle) is, by definition, *not* the gospel. This is not the great news of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Had Mr Stearns cast his treatment of poverty as one of the things to be addressed by the second greatest commandment, or as one of several entailments of the gospel, I could have recommended his book with much greater confidence. As it is, the book will contribute to declining clarity as to what the gospel is.

Second, even while acknowledging—indeed, insisting on the importance of highlighting—the genuine needs that Mr Stearns depicts in his book, it is disturbing not to hear similar anguish over human alienation from God. The focus of his book is so narrowly poverty that the sweep of what the gospel addresses is lost to view. Men and women stand under God’s judgment, and this God of love mandates that by the means of heralding the gospel they will be saved not only in this life but in the life to come. Where is the anguish that contemplates a Christ-less eternity, that cries, “Repent! Turn away from all your offenses. . . . Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone” (Ezek 18:30–32). The analysis of the problem is too small, and the gospel is correspondingly reduced.

Third, some studies have shown that Christians spend about five times more mission dollars on issues related to poverty than they do on evangelism and church planting. At one time, “holistic

⁶Nashville: Nelson, 2009.

ministry” was an expression intended to move Christians beyond proclamation to include deeds of mercy. Increasingly, however, “holistic ministry” refers to deeds of mercy *without* any proclamation of the gospel—and that is not holistic. It is not even halfistic, since the deeds of mercy are not the gospel: they are entailments of the gospel. Although I know many Christians who happily combine fidelity to the gospel, evangelism, church planting, and energetic service to the needy, and although I know some who call themselves Christians who formally espouse the gospel but who live out few of its entailments, I also know Christians who, in the name of a “holistic” gospel, focus all their energy on presence, wells in the Sahel, fighting disease, and distributing food to the poor, but who never, or only very rarely, articulate the gospel, preach the gospel, announce the gospel, to anyone. Judging by the distribution of American mission dollars, the biggest hole in our gospel is the gospel itself.

* * * * *

Charles Anderson began serving as managing editor of *Themelios* shortly after The Gospel Coalition began producing *Themelios* in 2008. We announce with regret that he is stepping down and acknowledge with gratitude his singular contribution.

Our new managing editor is [Dr Brian Tabb](#), assistant professor of biblical studies and assistant dean at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis. Some readers will recognize his name from the reviews he has already written for *Themelios*. Dr Tabb may be contacted at brian.tabb@thegospelcoalition.org.

OFF THE RECORD

Liberty, What Crimes Are Committed in Thy Name?

— Michael J. Ovey —

Mike Ovey is Principal of Oak Hill College in London.

Does someone have the right to harm their own soul? Or if you don't much like the talk of 'soul', does someone have the right to do themselves moral harm?

For many years the assumption in the UK has been that the individual does have the right to do themselves spiritual harm. This came to a very visible head in the controversy in the British Parliament this year about laws permitting same sex marriage, but it had been coming for some time. Thus, in immediate post-WWII England and Wales, it made sense and had public support to have criminal offences of conspiracy to corrupt public morals (for example, by publishing a directory of call girls), but by the late 1970s this had changed. And the question put rhetorically in the public debate was in these terms: 'Why prohibit victimless behaviour?' More straightforwardly, 'Who other than the perpetrator is actually harmed?'

This line of argument strongly defends the liberty of the individual and has a strong European post-Enlightenment feel to it. In my country it was expressed by John Stuart Mill, the highly influential Victorian essayist, in his *On Liberty* (1859). It is not, though, an exclusively English idea, for Mill drew most of his fundamental argument from Wilhelm von Humboldt's *The Limits of State Action* (1791–1792). Mill's point was that the state was justified in limiting someone's freedom to act only if the action resulted in harm to others. In fact, Mill's argument extended to social disapproval as well as state action. He nuanced this by accepting that some societies might not be at a stage where this approach to liberty was feasible. He writes (and this may surprise some), 'Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.'¹

Similarly, liberty did not apply if the individual was, for instance, a minor. This nuancing clearly resembles Immanuel Kant's claim in his 1784 essay 'What Is Enlightenment?' that since 'we' are now mature, we no longer need others to make our judgments for us but should make them ourselves. Our 'maturity' confers both the *capacity* for and the *right* to autonomy. Mill's point is that this autonomy must in human society be exercised without harm to others.

For Mill, therefore, his own conduct in alienating the affections of Harriet Taylor from her husband and setting up house with her (possibly without consummating until Taylor's death) was not 'harm' to Mr. Taylor or the two children she had by him. Logically it should not be subject either to legal sanction

¹J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (repr., London: Penguin, 1974), 69.

or public disapproval. He and Harriet were entitled to do as much harm to themselves and each other as they wished, for they were mature consenting adults whose actions only dealt with themselves.

Behind this position lay a conception of what a human being is. Mill quotes von Humboldt: '[T]he object "towards which every human being must ceaselessly direct his efforts, and on which especially those who design to influence their fellow-men must ever keep their eyes, is the individuality of power and development."² This strong version of individual self-realisation rests in turn on this view: 'Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.'³

But while Mill has been hugely influential in my country and elsewhere, he has had critics, both non-Christian and Christian. A lot of that criticism has centred on the idea of harm and how Mill actually smuggles in his own value judgments at that point and covertly imposes them. Take the unfortunate Mr. Taylor, for instance. Very few men like being cuckolded, even if the cuckolding is at an emotional rather than consummated level. They experience it as 'hurt' or 'harm' as do wives whose husbands philander. And those of us who are their friends and companions have no doubt that the harm is savagely real.

I think this line of criticism about harm *to others* is important and well-taken. But it doesn't tackle the question with which we started. Do I have the right to harm *myself*? Mill's rationale for saying we do as individuals have that right is that we are sovereigns. The image is political with the individual as a little kingdom whose boundaries coincide with our bodies and our thoughts. Within those boundaries, we are rightly independent, little perhaps, but genuinely sovereign entities.

Of course Christians who are committed to the lordship of Christ immediately sense the difficulties here. How does the lordship of Christ, which shows Christ's sovereignty, interact with my sovereignty over myself on Mill's view? The issue here is cast in *political* terms: two competing sovereignties, one of which may be subordinate and derivative. But at the end of day, when Christ says I am to use myself (whether it is my body or my mind) in certain ways, do I have the right to say no?

On this political model, where I am my own little kingdom, we readily talk of sin in similarly political terms and describe sinners as 'rebels'. I think this is clearly right, but I want to make two supplementary points about it.

First, sin and the self-harm that it sometimes shows is not just rebellion. It is also *theft*. Second, the language of *theft* helps de-glamourise sin. Let me explain.

First, theft. Why speak in terms of theft? Because this is the necessary implication of passages such as Ps 24:1–2. The little phrase 'the earth is the Lord's' carries huge freight. The language is that of possession or ownership. This extends our understanding of what it means for God to be the Lord beyond simply a political image ('king') to that of property and ownership. The earth *belongs* to God. It is his *possession*.

This puts a different complexion on my acts of spiritual self-harm. They do affect more than myself, and they affect in other ways than 'political': they compete with God's rights as *owner*. This ownership is grounded in God's creation of all things from nothing, as Ps 24:2 makes clear, grounding God's claims as owner of all things in the fact of his creation of all things.

On this view, defying God is not just an act of political rebellion; it is a 'property-act'—it is stealing something that belongs to someone else. My use of gifts or talents for purposes other than those for which God gave them is an act of robbery. And when someone commits fornication with another

²Ibid., 121.

³Ibid., 68–69.

consenting adult, there is the double theft of stealing the gift of sexuality both with regard to oneself and with regard to the other person.

In one sense this idea of sin as theft is implicit in Augustine's famous phrase that sin is 'lust for mastery' (*libido dominandi*), for the Latin word for 'master' (*dominus*) can certainly carry the idea of political power. But it is also strongly used for the right of property, the master who *owns*. Lust for mastery obviously can be manifested in the way I treat others, treating them as if I have rights to ownership. But in view of Ps 24:1–2, lust for mastery is also something I have with regard to myself. I long to cheat my rightful owner and creator of his rights as my owner and creator. In short, I long not to be a creature.

This takes me to the second point: de-glamourising sin. Apologetically, speaking of sin as rebellious sovereignty seems to me to risk glamourising sin in our culture. Given our anti-authoritarian pose in Western culture and our affinity for the rebel, to describe sinners as rebels risks letting people see themselves as heroes. For rebels overthrow governments, and governments are, as a rule of thumb, authoritarian. Aside from Chuck Norris movies, few films glamourise upholding order.

But theft is often different. It smacks of deceit and dishonesty, and our experience of it is its sneakiness. In a modern Western society, perhaps more of us have been victims of theft in its various forms than of the ins and outs of political rebellion. Of course, it is possible to glamourise theft too—as the *Ocean's 11* series did. But I find it significant how strongly those acts of theft are cast in terms of stealing from someone who deserves it and who has significant deceit and dishonesty in their own lives. And it does focus the question, 'Did God *deserve* to have me steal from him?'

This article starts with the oft-quoted question, 'Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name?' We are right to say that with respect to God, sedition against him is committed in the name of liberty. But there is another crime that is somehow much more mean-spirited: theft. My allegedly harmless actions towards others can be thefts of those others from God, their owner. And my allegedly harmless actions include stealing myself.

Jesus, the Theological Educator

— Keith Ferdinando —

Keith Ferdinando teaches in the theology faculty of Shalom University in Bunia, DRC.

Jesus was a theological educator. He was, of course, much more than that, but certainly no less. He taught the twelve, and he taught the crowds. The Gospels frequently call him ‘teacher’ or ‘rabbi,’ suggestive of the popular reputation he gained for teaching. Indeed, more than once he identified himself as a teacher, confirming the assessment of others: ‘You call me “Teacher” and “Lord”, and rightly so, for that is what I am’¹ (John 13:13; cf. Matt 23:10; 26:18). It was also the role that Josephus and the Talmud associate particularly with him.² Moreover, Jesus’ teaching provoked reactions, hostile on the part of the authorities but usually much more positive from the crowd. People came in huge numbers to hear him. They were amazed at his teaching (e.g., Matt 7:28; 13:54; 22:22, 33) and delighted with it. ‘He was the teacher par excellence.’³

What then were the characteristics of his teaching, especially of the twelve? For it is in teaching his disciples, a small group he individually selected for training and to whom he devoted immense time and energy, that we may discern the earliest model of what we might term Christian theological education. It was for those few men a richly varied experience and one which would have an immense impact not only on them but also, as they continued Jesus’ own mission, on the whole of human history. For this reason the manner of Jesus’ teaching—his pedagogy—merits attention from anybody engaged in whatever way in the formation of Christian believers, rather more attention indeed than it has tended to receive.⁴ Just why leaders of the church over the centuries have made so little attempt to understand and appreciate the teaching techniques and environments used by Jesus will likely remain one of the great mysteries.⁵ Moreover, serious consideration of Jesus’ approach is especially important in the case of theological and biblical educators whose purpose is to train the future leadership of God’s people, as Jesus did. The university model of education which emerged early in the last millennium has spread across the globe, and forms of theological education are everywhere increasingly patterned after it. There are advantages no doubt in such an approach but by no means unequivocally so. While it would

¹Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible: New International Version[®]. NIV[®]. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by International Bible Society. All rights reserved worldwide.

²H. Blocher, ‘Jésus Educateur’, in *Ichthus* 128 (1985): 3, referring to *Ant.* 18.3 and *Sanh.* 43a.

³D. Macleod, ‘The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg’, *Them* 25:2 (2000): 41.

⁴Blocher (‘Jésus Educateur’, 3–4) notes that Jesus’ pedagogy has been strangely neglected: ‘Les travaux consacrés à son enseignement s’intéressent davantage au contenu de sa doctrine, qu’aux méthodes et principes éducatifs’ (‘The works devoted to his teaching are more concerned with the content of his doctrine than with the educational methods and principles’ [my translation]).

⁵T. Ward and S. F. Rowen, ‘The Significance of the Extension Seminary’, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 9:1 (1972): 17–27. See also, however, Joe Carter and John Coleman, *How to Argue Like Jesus: Learning Persuasion from History’s Greatest Communicator* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009); Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus’ Teachings* (2d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

perhaps be naïve to suggest that Jesus' model of training should directly transfer to our own hugely different contexts, we nevertheless may gain much from discerning the principles which underlay it and reassessing current values, pedagogies, and structures of theological education in the light of what Jesus did with such indisputably successful effect.⁶ To that end, this article explores aspects of Jesus' work as theological educator and then suggests some implications for our practice today.

1. Fishers of Men: The Goal of Theological Education

Jesus' teaching was focused and purposeful. He summoned and then taught his disciples with a specific end in view, the nature of which emerges early in the narratives of the Synoptic Gospels. He understood his own ministry very much in terms of calling sinners (Mark 2:17), seeking and saving 'what was lost' (Luke 19:10), summoning men and women to repentance. And in rather similar terms he expressed the purpose behind his calling of the first of the twelve: "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt 4:19). The notion of 'fishing for men' was not a common one, and Jesus' use of the metaphor was doubtless inspired simply by the occupation of those he was calling at the time: fishing. Nevertheless, it implies seeking, calling, winning men and women—in short, following the pattern that they would see repeatedly demonstrated in Jesus' own ministry. Moreover, it sets him apart from the Jewish rabbis of his day who trained disciples not to become fishers of men but to learn and transmit their 'teaching of the Law.'⁷ Accordingly, over the next few years he trained them to 'catch men' (Luke 5:10) and finally commissioned them at the moment of his own departure: 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them . . . and teaching them' (Matt 28:19–20). The initial summons, therefore, always had that final commissioning in mind: 'there is a straight line from this commission to the Great Commission.'⁸ It was an educational programme with a specifically *vocational* intent. The three years during which they followed, watched, and heard the Lord Jesus Christ were therefore a period of theological apprenticeship whose purpose was the continuation of Jesus' own mission once he had gone. Jesus trained missionaries, and he did so from the very beginning of his ministry. 'The initial objective of Jesus' plan was to enlist men who could bear witness to his life and carry on his work after he returned to the Father.'⁹

Further, Jesus constantly kept the goal of their training before them. Simply by following him, the purpose for which they had been called was at all times dynamically present in the form of his own ministry. Not only that, but the missionary expeditions on which he sent them (e.g., Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–23) were themselves exercises in 'fishing for men' which anticipated the final realisation of their call in the commission they would receive from Jesus between his resurrection and ascension (Matt 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–18; Luke 24:44–49; John 20:19–23; Acts 1:8). Moreover, through such trips Jesus fostered the skills and gifts they would need to fulfil that commission. They learned to fish not only by watching the great fisherman at his work but also by fishing themselves: 'Adults learn far better when they see and

⁶ Blocher ('Jésus Educateur', 4) notes, 'en se proposant comme notre Modèle [au cours d'un épisode très pédagogique, Jn 13,15], il n'a pas exclu cet aspect de son œuvre' ('in offering himself as our model (during a very pedagogical episode, Jn 13:15), he did not exclude this aspect of his work' [my translation]).

⁷ R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2002), 51.

⁸ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Matthew–Mark* (2d ed.; Expositor's Bible Commentary 9; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 148.

⁹ R. E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Revell, 2010), 21.

do ministry.¹⁰ And when they returned, they reported and reflected with Jesus on what took place (Luke 10:17–24). The training Jesus gave them constituted by its very nature a continuous and inescapable communication of the purpose for which it was taking place.

2. Following Jesus: The Model of Theological Education

Jesus called his disciples to follow him. In the Jewish culture of his day the disciple invariably took the initiative and attached himself to his preferred teacher, but Jesus was exceptional in calling the disciples he wanted.¹¹ Implicit in becoming a disciple of Jesus and learning from him was a radical act of commitment to him which implied a renunciation of ‘status and prestige, possessions and security.’¹² It became tangible as the first of the disciples responded to Jesus’ call, leaving boat, nets, and family. The notion of ‘following’ a teacher was also a distinctive one, for the metaphor was not used at the time of those who learned from a rabbi.¹³ It implied many things, among them that Jesus’ disciples would indeed physically journey with him, submitting to his leadership, applying themselves to his teaching, and learning from his ministry which was to become theirs. ‘Learning occurred as they responded to Jesus’ needs, modelled themselves on his way of life, assisted in his public teaching and ministry to the crowds and received private tuition as a group.’¹⁴

Accordingly, Jesus trained his disciples first of all by having them accompany him and observe his own life and ministry. Indeed, his character and lifestyle were to be central to their training. In rabbinic schools ‘the primary task was to learn the Torah.’¹⁵ For Jesus’ disciples the primary task was to learn *him*. ‘Knowledge was not communicated by the Master in terms of laws and dogmas, but in the living personality of One who walked among them.’¹⁶ His explicit intention was for them to become like him: ‘A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher’ (Luke 6:40). Accordingly, Jesus’ pedagogy was highly relational, reflective of the fundamentally relational nature of the truth which he incarnated in his own person. Far from pursuing the detachment sometimes characteristic of scholars who ‘relate better to books than to people in the midst of life,’¹⁷ he lived in constant contact with his students. In their turn they followed him, not only in the sense that they heard and learned his words, but also in that they would imitate his life. They watched him teach and preach

¹⁰ P. R. Gupta and S. G. Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision: Training Leaders for a Church-Planting Movement* (Winona Lake: BMH, 2006), 38.

¹¹ J. Kapolyo, ‘Matthew’, in *Africa Bible Commentary* (ed. T. Adeyemo; Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006), 1117.

¹² E. J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Volume One, Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 275.

¹³ M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 51–52; cited in Guelich, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 51.

¹⁴ S. W. Collinson, *Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus’ Methods for Today’s Church* (Carlisle: Pater-noster, 2004), 32.

¹⁵ Collinson, *Making Disciples*, 48.

¹⁶ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 34.

¹⁷ B. Hill, quoted by M. Griffiths, ‘Theological Education Need Not Be Irrelevant’, in *Vox Evangelica* 20 (1990): 12. T. Ward, ‘Evaluating Metaphors of Education’, in *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st Century* (ed. D. Elmer and L. McKinney; Monrovia, CA: MARC, 2006), 51, refers to seminaries that produce ‘intellectual wizards and relational dwarfs.’

and pray. They were present when he healed the sick, raised the dead, and liberated the demonized. They listened in as opposition and insults confronted him, and they heard how he responded. They saw how he related to family, friends, enquirers, authorities, and adversaries. They witnessed his attitude towards hypocrites, the poor and rich, the broken and abandoned of society, notorious sinners and tax collectors despised for their collaboration with Rome. They accompanied him when he ate, when he journeyed, when he slept. They observed him hungry, thirsty, exhausted, exultant, indignant, and distressed. There is a striking transparency, indeed a vulnerability, in the way he lived before them; and every moment of the years they spent with him was part of their training as he came under their constant scrutiny.

Moreover, Jesus explicitly pointed to his own values and priorities as the focus of that specific discipleship which he aimed to instil. This is especially evident at perhaps the most crucial moment of the training of the twelve, when they articulated an explicit awareness of Jesus' messianic identity. In each of the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus specifically raises the question of his identity with his disciples, apparently in 'privacy from the crowds'¹⁸ (Matt 16:13–17; Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–20). Peter's confession of Jesus' messianic status was immediately followed by Jesus' explanation of his role as Messiah: 'that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life' (Matt 16:21). Thus, once they understood who Jesus was, the disciples needed to learn what he had come to do. That lesson was of immense relevance to their own future because as disciples of the Christ, if his mission was one of suffering, then following him meant that they must embrace the same: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Matt 16:24). Following meant suffering, for the Christ they followed was a suffering Christ: 'the call to be a disciple becomes a call to follow Jesus in the way of the cross . . . a challenge to have one's whole existence determined by and patterned after a crucified messiah.'¹⁹ Or in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'When God calls a man he bids him come and die.'²⁰ Indeed, it ran diametrically counter to the expectations of peace and security fostered in Jewish rabbinic schools.²¹ The theological education of a follower of Jesus would mean knowing 'the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings' (Phil 3:10).

The same principle occurs at numerous points in the Gospels and beyond. When Jesus wanted to teach the disciples about service, he took the servant's place and washed their feet, a powerfully emotive gesture in a society where 'disciples were expected to serve their master.'²² By reversing accepted roles and serving his followers in the humblest fashion, Jesus 'radically departed from the tradition' and taught an unforgettable lesson, reinforced verbally, that they should follow his example in serving (John 13:14–15). He taught the value of children by allowing them to be brought to him for blessing and taking them in his arms, while rebuking the disciples when they had other plans. Again, the act was arresting because it repudiated accepted cultural norms where 'children were held in little regard' and listening to them was 'a waste of time.'²³ Examples could be multiplied: Jesus demonstrated dependence

¹⁸J. Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2002), 452. There is some ambiguity in the text as according to Mark Jesus' teaching about discipleship as cross-bearing is addressed to the crowds (Mark 8:34).

¹⁹Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 482.

²⁰D. Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM, 2001), 44.

²¹Collinson, *Making Disciples*, 51.

²²*Ibid.*, 36.

²³C. A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2002), 61.

on God through his prayer life and evident disregard for material security (Luke 9:58), confidence in and submission to God's Word by constantly referring to Scripture (e.g., Matt 4:1–11), compassion by ministering to crowds and individuals (Matt 9:36), obedient faith as he walked steadily to Jerusalem (Mark 10:32), and the extravagance of God's grace in the welcome accorded to the outcasts and despised of society (Matt 9:10–13). In all these ways, he trained his disciples by his own life and example.

It is significant that in the epistles Jesus' own life and ministry continue to be a focus of discipleship. The teaching of future disciples in new situations and contexts still centred on following Jesus, although his presence was now mediated through the Spirit and his illumination of the oral and, later, literary traditions of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Paul's writings, for example, often allude or explicitly refer to Jesus' life or words.²⁴ Paul told the Philippian Christians that the sacrificial, servant attitude of Christ Jesus should characterise their relationships with one another (Phil 2:5–11); he sought to stir the Corinthians to generosity by reminding them of 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Cor 8:9); he taught Ephesian husbands to love their wives as 'Christ loved the church' (Eph 5:25); he invoked the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ' as a guiding principle of his own ministry (2 Cor 10:1); and he called on disputing church factions to recognise that Christ 'did not please himself' (Rom 15:3). Hays points out that in most such examples, Paul's exhortation focused particularly on Jesus' death on the cross, 'an act of loving, self-sacrificial obedience that becomes paradigmatic for the obedience of all who are in Christ.'²⁵ In this Paul echoes Jesus' teaching that following him would mean taking up the cross; and indeed, he seeks himself to imitate Christ by pursuing conformity to his death and encourages his readers to imitate him as he thus imitates Christ (e.g., Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6).²⁶

The one group Jesus most condemned was the Pharisees, and he did so particularly in terms of a single dominant accusation: hypocrisy. He reacted to those who presumed to teach others while their lives contradicted what they taught and thereby undermined it—who failed to 'practise what they preach' (Matt 23:2–3). The same problem can show up today among those theological students and scholars for whom a largely academic approach to their subject may too easily coincide with a failure to integrate it with their own lives. David Clark has highlighted the problem: 'A seductive temptation for me—and for religious professionals generally—is to think that I am mature in Christ because I am knowledgeable about theology or skilled in ministry.'²⁷ A theological education focused primarily on the merely cognitive without addressing character, attitudes, ambitions and priorities will tend to produce Pharisees. In contrast, there was a transformational dynamic in Jesus' theological education, which flowed from the total consistency and transparency of his life. The disciples' learning was not simply a cognitive process, but a reorientation of life, values, and character, through experiencing the *life* of Christ quite as much as through hearing his words. 'The teachings of Christ suggest relatively little emphasis on testing of knowledge. He screens people not on what they know but on what they do.'²⁸ As

²⁴ See, for example, F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), ch. 11, 'Paul and the Historical Jesus,' 95–112, and David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

²⁵ R. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁷ David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 239.

²⁸ T. Ward, 'Servants, Leaders and Tyrants,' in *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st Century* (ed. D. Elmer and L. McKinney; Monrovia, CA: MARC, 2006), 40.

an educator Jesus offered not just intellectual understanding but incarnated in his own life the vision he taught.

After they had themselves been transformed by following Jesus, the disciples were in turn sent to make disciples. ‘The missionary activity of the disciples as fishers of people is based upon following Jesus.’²⁹ They too were visibly and tangibly to demonstrate the reality they had experienced and now taught. Nor was this confined to the twelve alone. The same principle becomes explicit when Paul urges the Corinthians to imitate him: ‘Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ’ (1 Cor 11:1; cf. 4:16). Indeed, Paul defended his ministry by highlighting not only the content of his teaching but also the character of his life (1 Thess 2:1–12; Acts 20:18–35). In brief, teachers always model: their lives communicate to their students, whether intentionally or not, and thereby shape their students’ character one way or another. The effectiveness of theological educators depends in large measure on the teaching carried out through their lives; it is about the silent language of a godly character. Faithful, seriously Christian, theological education is at heart a demonstration of Christ and not just endless words about him. It is about being more than talking, as Paul expressed to Timothy: ‘You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings . . .’ (2 Tim 3:10–11). Students must see as well as hear if transformation, as opposed to mere cognitive input and the creation of an ‘intellectual meritocracy,’ is to take place.³⁰ Men and women will not be effectively ‘fished’ and disciplined, unless those engaged in the task embody something of the reality which they are seeking to communicate, as Jesus did.

3. Learning from Jesus: The Means of Theological Education

Teachers do, nevertheless, use words. Jesus taught verbally, and all four Gospels emphasise that and give significant space to his teaching. Some of his teaching was more formal in nature. Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount portrays Jesus sitting down to teach, the ‘correct posture for formal teaching,’³¹ with his disciples sitting around him. Meanwhile, the crowd, somewhat in the background, listened in with amazement (Matt 5:1–2; 7:28–29). It also seems likely he crafted some of his sayings for easy memorization by his disciples. ‘Learning through memorization was a basic pedagogical method in first-century Judaism . . . as well as in antiquity as a whole.’³² Stylistic devices like repetition, parallelism, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, symmetry, suggest Jesus too designed his discourses ‘for easy memorization.’³³ So, for example, speaking of the beatitudes (Matt 5:3–10), France notes that the ‘finely balanced structure of these eight sayings is one of the best examples of the way Jesus designed his teaching for easy memorization.’³⁴ Such an approach implies the importance Jesus attached to the

²⁹ Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 1:274.

³⁰ Ward, ‘Servants, Leaders and Tyrants’, 29.

³¹ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: IVP, 1985), 113. France notes similar descriptions of the teaching posture in Matt 13:2; 23:2; 24:3; 26:55; Luke 4:20. See also D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2002), 86.

³² R. Riesner, ‘Teacher’, *DJG*, 810. See also C. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Leicester: IVP, 1987), 25–28; and Collinson, *Making Disciples*, 69.

³³ Hagner, *Matthew*, xlvi. Hagner continues, ‘It is estimated that 80 percent of Jesus’ sayings are in the form of *parallelismus membrorum* (Riesner), often of the antithetical variety.’ See also pp. 104, 127, 156.

³⁴ France, *Matthew*, 113.

essential body of theological and ethical content he wanted his followers to grasp, and it helped to assure its faithful transmission to subsequent generations.

Jesus' teaching, however, is not always of this sort but is often informal, occasional, dialogical in nature. He cultivated an atmosphere which expected and welcomed questions, discussion, and debate. His purpose was not simply to impart content in structured monologues, although he undoubtedly communicated truth which his followers needed to grasp. Much more than that, he wanted to engage their intelligence and have them wrestle with the issues which arose in the course of ministry. 'With him the learned atmosphere of the school . . . is wholly lacking, with its stage-by-stage build-up of teaching . . .'³⁵

Accordingly there were innumerable and well-known occasions on which some event or dispute or question became a moment of spontaneous education and enlightenment. When Jesus' disciples tried to prevent children from being brought to him, Jesus' reaction not only affirmed their value but at the same time illuminated the nature of the kingdom of God (Mark 10:13–16). The Gospels refer to the disciples' apparently frequent disputes about relative positions of status and power, even during the last supper (Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45; Luke 22:24–30). On each occasion Jesus rebuked the attitudes that lay at the heart of the quarrel, but also turned the moment to advantage by teaching about power and service and especially drawing attention to the character of his own mission as the paradigm of true discipleship: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45).

Questions brought to Jesus invariably led to teaching. When an expert in the law asked Jesus how he might inherit eternal life (Luke 10:25), Jesus' initial response (to obey the two great commands) prompted the follow-up question: 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus seized the opportunity to tell a story that confronted the corrosive ethnic animosity between Jews and Samaritans. And typically, having responded to the questions brought to him, Jesus then addressed his questioner with one of his own: 'Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?'³⁶ Similarly, Peter's question, 'how many times shall I forgive . . . ?' (Matt 18:21), prompted a parable in which Jesus rooted his answer in the infinite grace of God. And again, when Pharisees raised the contested issue of marriage and divorce, Jesus took them back to the origin of marriage as recounted in Genesis and drew out the implications of the narrative. Responding to further questioning, he dealt with the regulation of divorce in the Mosaic law and, finally, responded to his disciples' stunned retort: 'If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry' (Matt 19:10).

All of these interactions demonstrate that Jesus' teaching was repeatedly rooted in reality—in the lives and questions of his own disciples and of their society. 'Almost anything could become grist to Jesus' mill.'³⁷ Its relevance was immediately apparent to those who listened because far from being mere classroom theory it emerged directly out of the concerns of life and human relationships.

Sometimes Jesus created rather than responded to the teachable moment. He not only responded to questions but also asked them. When Peter raised the issue of the temple tax, he asked, 'What do you think, Simon? . . . From whom do the kings of the earth collect duties and taxes—from their own sons or from others?' (Matt 17:25); in the face of challenges to his own identity and role during the

³⁵ Hengel, quoted by R. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 106.

³⁶ Similarly, see Matt 19:1–12.

³⁷ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 106.

week leading to his death, he asked his opponents, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?’ (Matt 22:42); in answer to those scandalised when he declared the sins of a paralytic man forgiven, he said, ‘Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven,” or to say, “Get up and walk?”’ (Mark 2:9); and in one of the many debates about his use of the Sabbath, he challenged his critics to say whether it was lawful on the Sabbath ‘to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?’ (Luke 6:9). The list could go on, but the point is that Jesus sought constantly to engage the minds of his hearers. He knew that endless talking is not the same as effective teaching and did not simply give lectures. Instead he raised questions, provoking reflection, challenging assumptions and prejudices, with the purpose of stimulating a serious response to truth. As Blocher says, he strove repeatedly to open the minds of his listeners and seized or created opportunities to do so.³⁸

The same is visible in the didactic style most characteristic of Jesus’ teaching. Although he was not the only person to use parables in first-century Palestine, the evidence suggests that he used them much more than anybody before him. Their roots are found in the *māšāl*, a Hebrew term which embraces not only parables as commonly understood, such as that told by the prophet Nathan following David’s adultery and subsequent murder of Uriah (2 Sam 12:1–4), but also proverbs, riddles, and figures of speech. Indeed, a ‘*māšāl* is any dark saying intended to stimulate thought,’ including ‘a taunt, a prophetic oracle or a byword.’³⁹ So Jesus used antitheses, paradoxes, hyperbole, metaphor, and, indeed, humour. These were ‘utterances aimed to tease the imagination and to fill the mind with ideas which no propositions could exhaust.’⁴⁰

Jesus’ parables were deftly crafted and subtle stories to which he obviously gave careful attention.⁴¹ ‘These were not blurted out ad hoc but show every indication . . . of being very deliberate and condensed formations.’⁴² A central feature, however, is that they teased and tantalised. They spoke of everyday, well-known realities—a sower sowing, a merchant trading, fishermen hauling in their catch, a traveller attacked by brigands, labourers waiting for work in the marketplace, and so on. While the ultimate purpose of using parables, however, was to illuminate truth, there is more than that going on, and the deeper meanings could not be simply read off the surface. Jesus communicated his message in a way that was culturally familiar, but also deliberately enigmatic, puzzling, and for many hearers essentially opaque. He obliged those of his hearers (as well as later readers) who wanted to understand his message to engage deeply with what he said. They had to make a mental and spiritual effort to penetrate the surface and grasp the deeper levels of meaning; indeed, they had in a sense to become part of the story and find their own place within it. Only through such a profound engagement did real understanding become possible. Such a requirement also meant that ‘those on the outside’ stayed there, entertained perhaps,

³⁸ Blocher, ‘Jésus Educateur, 7: ‘. . . il accorde un soin particulier à l’éveil et à l’ouverture de leur esprit. Il saisit ou crée les occasions . . .’ (‘he gives particular care to the awakening and the opening of their mind. He seizes or creates opportunities . . .’ [my translation]).

³⁹ K. R. Snodgrass, ‘Parable’, *DJG*, 593.

⁴⁰ Macleod, ‘The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg’, 41.

⁴¹ On parables generally, see J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1963); C. L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); C. L. Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); K. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁴² R. Riesner, ‘Teacher’, *DJG*, 809.

but strangers to the secrets of the kingdom being transmitted—‘ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding’ (Mark 4:11–12).

Modern research into the human brain suggests that educational approaches similar to Jesus’ informal, questioning, challenging approach are the most effective for bringing about real learning. When students remain passive in a programme of study, simply listening or reading with little interaction, then serious learning is much less likely to take place, and most of what is taught is quickly forgotten. It is when they are engaged—asking and answering questions, discussing issues and arguing a case—that their brain cells fire into life. ‘Just as muscles improve with exercise, the brain seems to improve with use.’⁴³ In the course of Jesus’ teaching, he engaged his disciples actively and thus fostered profound and long-term learning including the capacity to reason biblically and theologically. Moreover, learning is more likely to take place when people see the relevance of what is taught. ‘Students learn best not in an abstract or remote environment, but in the actual experiential context in which the knowledge must be applied.’⁴⁴ Given that Jesus’ teaching took place in response to the real situations he faced, the disciples could immediately recognise its relevance. They were not engaged in a theoretical or abstract exercise; on the contrary, Jesus taught them through encountering real people and problems. ‘Jesus structured their lives and activities in such a way that they were constantly being challenged to question and learn from a multiplicity of informal situations.’⁴⁵

There are clear implications for theological education. Jesus communicated to his disciples a body of truth to grasp and transmit, in large part by means of memorization. His teaching undoubtedly had a cognitive content, transmitted by somewhat formal methods. He did more, though, than just that. He also enabled them to learn through the situations they encountered and participation in a constant flow of questions, debates, and challenges. They learned from observing Jesus’ own ministry, participating in it, and afterwards reflecting on and discussing what had taken place. They also learned from their own mistakes and wrong reactions and from the rebukes and corrections they received (e.g., Mark 9:14–29). Implicit in the whole process was making connexions between the mission to which Jesus had called them and the realities of their world. The schooling process characteristic of so much of contemporary theological education might well try to approximate more closely the richly diverse approach of the master theological educator. Or to put it another way, ‘Why do we assume that what we do in three years of formal instruction in seminaries is in some way more appropriate than what Jesus did in three years on the road, in villages, and through discourse coupled with reflection on real experience?’⁴⁶

⁴³ D. A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2006), 78. See also, J. E. Zull, *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2002); P. Wolfe, *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2001). I am very grateful to Dr Duane Elmer for drawing my attention to this literature and for many other insights into theological education.

⁴⁴ Ward and Rowen, ‘The Significance of the Extension Seminary’, 17–27.

⁴⁵ Collinson, *Making Disciples*, 55.

⁴⁶ L. Cannell, *Theological Education Matters: Leadership Education for the Church* (Newburgh, IN: ED-COT, 2006), 55.

4. The Community of Jesus: The Context of Theological Education

Jesus taught a community of disciples and not a mere group of individual learners. Indeed he called them *in order that* they should become members of a community with himself.⁴⁷ He also structured them (and was clearly their leader) but without any repressive discipline or stifling rules.⁴⁸ This communal dimension was an intentional and not just an incidental element of the disciples' training as fishers of men: 'the discipling relationships that were formed between Jesus and others in the Gospels were rarely one-to-one encounters.'⁴⁹ The very teaching posture which Jesus adopted, seated with his disciples sitting around him as in the synagogue, suggests a community debating and learning together rather than a lecture hall of isolated and largely passive individuals.⁵⁰ We see them '[w]alking together, eating together, and sitting together, always accompanied by talking together in a dialogic manner.'⁵¹

Of course, each of the disciples learned individually from Jesus, but their learning took place in the context of their mutual relationships and their interactions with one another. They were a mixed group—fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot, and so on—who had not chosen one another. Only the call of Jesus united them, and as they followed him they were obliged to learn to live and work with those from whom they might have kept their distance, whether for personal, social, economic, or political reasons. The fellowship no doubt widened their horizons, as well as moulding their characters as they rubbed up against one another. It was an enriching experience and a preparation for the realities of their future ministries which would embrace men and women of every ethnicity and social class.

In consequence, there were occasional disputes and angry words, but that too gave Jesus opportunities for teaching and correction. Indeed, the constant communal living brought an inescapable reality to their learning experience. Continuous exposure to one another made concealment of their real motives and attitudes difficult (although Judas evidently managed to conceal his), which may have brought out the worst in them but, for that very reason, also forced them to confront negative attitudes and reactions. For example, this element came to the fore when they argued over their relative positions in Jesus' entourage (e.g., Mark 9:33). Similarly, when Jesus rebuked James and John for proposing to call down fire on an unreceptive Samaritan village, all the disciples heard the suggestion and the response (Luke 9:52–56). Moreover, they discussed among themselves what they saw and heard. When Peter responded to Jesus' enquiry about the disciples' understanding of his identity—"But what about you [*plural*]?" he asked. "Who do you [*plural*] say I am?" (Matt 16:15)—he seems to have been voicing the conviction of the group as a whole rather than just his own opinion. Indeed, after the earlier calming of the storm, the disciples were already pondering the issue together: "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and waves obey him!" (Matt 8:27). As they lived and worked together, serving one another as well as Jesus, so too they learned from one another. Indeed, the most fruitful learning experiences are invariably collaborative: iron sharpens iron.

However, there was something much more profound taking place than the mere advantages of a group learning experience. At the deepest level reality is relational and so communal, for the ultimate reality is that of the creator God himself who exists eternally in a Trinitarian communion of the deepest

⁴⁷ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 99.

⁴⁸ Blocher, 'Jésus Educateur', 5.

⁴⁹ Collinson, *Making Disciples*, 102.

⁵⁰ See France, *Matthew*, 113 in n. 31 above.

⁵¹ T. Ward, 'Foreword', in Cannell, *Theological Education Matters*, 15.

love and fellowship. In calling the disciples, Jesus was bringing them into fellowship with the Father through himself and at the same time with one another. He was recreating human communion, fractured as a result of primeval alienation from the Creator, by restoring fellowship with God in whom all true relationship is grounded. This comes to vivid expression in Jesus' prayer for his present and future disciples: 'that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me' (John 17:21). He prays for their unity, a unity that arises from the fact that they are 'in us', Father and Son. The restoration of community, vertically with God and, thereby, horizontally with one another, was at the heart of his mission, incarnated first in the fellowship of the twelve and, beyond them, in a renewed people of God of which they were firstfruits. Moreover, through that unity, the conviction of the truth of the gospel was to be brought home to a warring world. It is striking how successful Jesus was in forging unity from such a disparate band of men. Although they all abandoned him at the moment of his arrest, trial, and execution, they nevertheless stayed together rather than dispersing. They may have hidden themselves in a locked room, but they hid themselves *together*. Christian theological education is about the creation of the people of God through an ever deepening appropriation of the great story of the gospel—the whole counsel of God; it is concerned with 'nurture into a distinct community'⁵²—and not simply with the cognitive development of isolated individuals. And as they continued in ministry after the ascension, the NT indicates that maintaining the community of God's people was of the utmost importance to those who had followed Jesus.

The theological education that Jesus engaged in was thus carried out both *through* and *for* community. Community (and the relationships implicit in that concept) was an absolutely fundamental value in Jesus' approach to formation and one that should be recognised in any enterprise of Christian theological education. Such an approach challenges the highly problematic individualistic mentality and values of most models of Western schooling, now spread throughout the world, with their emphasis on personal achievement and the consequent divisive competition for individual prizes on the part of both scholars and students. 'Perhaps the greatest drawback of the church-school dichotomy is that theological education takes on the individualistic mentality of Western culture, rather than the community model of Scripture.'⁵³ Such a community emphasis also raises a question mark over the implications of distance learning, which tends to isolate learners from one another as well as retaining a heavy emphasis on the cognitive dimension of education to the exclusion of more or less everything else.

5. Reflecting on Contemporary Practice in Theological Education

The style of Jesus' teaching, his educational approach, was obviously rich and varied. Banks refers to 'the forethought and preparation, flexibility and spontaneity, versatility and directness, instruction and participation, verbal and nonverbal character of the teaching that occurred' in just one section of Mark's gospel.⁵⁴ There is a breadth and depth in the 'theological education' he carried out which make it far richer than the few preceding paragraphs can possibly suggest, embracing as it does not only the

⁵² The phrase comes from W. Brueggemann, 'Passion and Perspective: Two Dimensions of Education in the Bible', in *Theology Today* 42 (1985): 173.

⁵³ Yau-Man Siew, 'Theological Education in Asia: An Indigenous Agenda for Renewal', in *With an Eye on the Future* (ed. Elmer and McKinney), 61.

⁵⁴ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 105.

mind, but also character, relationships, ministry, the whole of life. Its distinctive features—the dynamic and informal didactic approach, communal character, missional goal, and, most important of all, the transparent integrity of Jesus’ own life at its very heart—must surely challenge our own often rather anaemic efforts in Christian training. Nor are these just isolated features of a random, *ad hoc* pedagogy; they constitute an integrated, holistic approach. The purpose for which he calls the disciples—fishing for men—shapes the methods he uses to train them as well as the communal context in which the training takes place while Jesus himself embodies all that he seeks to foster in his followers. The contrast with the often remarked fragmentation of contemporary theological education is noticeable.

No doubt our cultural and historical distance from first-century Palestine makes a simple transfer of Jesus’ approach to our own varied situations problematic. But the way in which he prepared ‘fishers of men’ must surely raise questions as to what we are about in theological education—and that the more so if we believe we should be following him in this as in other respects—and challenge us to a radical review of the values and principles underlying our practice. Where, indeed, might all this lead us? Our multiple and diverse contexts admit perhaps of no simple answers to the many questions we could raise, but it is nevertheless worth considering some possible implications of Jesus’ pedagogy for our own practice of theological education.

1. Jesus’ call of the earliest disciples focused from the beginning on outcomes: they were to become ‘fishers of men’. Any programme of theological education intentionally modelled on that of Christ will, therefore, be essentially missionary or missional in purpose and character. The programme as a whole as well as *every* individual course and dissertation topic will be designed and critically evaluated in terms of that specific purpose. Indeed, not only the explicit curriculum but the hidden and null curricula will also be deliberately and consciously shaped to reflect that single outcome above all else.

For many institutions this may require a quite drastic reshaping—even ‘breaking’—of tradition if the formation offered is faithfully to reflect the dynamic vision of the Lord Jesus Christ and the sort of ‘theological education’ he carried out. Simply tinkering with isolated elements of the programme will not do since the problem lies frequently ‘in the fundamental design or paradigm of learning in the institution,’⁵⁵ which too often reflects the dominantly cognitive approach characteristic of the tertiary education exported by the West.⁵⁶

Among other things this certainly means that the practical dimension of theological formation should not be the understaffed, underfunded, and largely neglected appendix to the ‘real’ academic work of schools as often seems the case. Skills are learnt by practice ‘in the field’ rather than by instruction in the classroom: learning *about* ministry is not the same as learning *to do* ministry. Training involves helping students to develop and put their gifts to use.

⁵⁵ Gupta and Lingenfelter, *Breaking Tradition to Accomplish Vision*, 25. While not denying the importance of formal theological education, Gupta and Lingenfelter describe the way in which leadership of the Hindustan Bible Institute (HBI) in India acted decisively to draw that institution back to its original missional purpose by reversing the movement towards a university paradigm of education which they had embarked on.

⁵⁶ J. Frame, ‘Proposal for a New Seminary’, *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 2:1 (1978): 10–17, takes a particularly radical approach to the question: ‘I propose first that we dump the academic model once and for all—degrees, accreditation, tenure, the works.’ He argues that the ‘academic machinery’ cannot measure what really matters, that it distracts from the proper purpose of theological education, and that it conveys a false impression of how the knowledge of God is really attained. Cited 11 August 2012. Online: <http://www.frame-poythress.org/proposal-for-a-new-seminary/>.

This is not to minimise the value of the academic dimension of programmes of theological education, including advanced postgraduate and postdoctoral theological study and research. The education Jesus gave his disciples certainly had cognitive content. It does mean, however, that all such study will be intentionally undertaken with a view, at some point present or future, directly or indirectly, to the actual making of disciples—the fishing of men. The seriously *Christian* scholar or student should be able to justify his or her work from such a perspective. In terms of Jesus' own agenda, academic theological study pursued *simply* for the intellectual diversion of the student or, worse still, the establishment of his or her reputation within the academy, must be judged an unjustifiable cerebral indulgence—an extravagance in terms of time, energy, and money. The pursuit of answers to obscure questions—questions which nobody is asking nor need ask and the answers to which will not assist the people of God in their engagement in God's own mission—has no place in authentically *Christian* theological education. The vital issue—and the filter through which, both in whole and in part, programmes of Christian theological education must pass—is that of their usefulness to God's mission as carried on by his people.⁵⁷ Missiology 'is at the very centre of the entire theological education enterprise.'⁵⁸

2. A logical entailment of the preceding point is that the place and 'measurement' of the purely academic and cognitive in theological education should be reassessed, especially in relation to other necessary outcomes. Certainly Jesus communicated a body of knowledge to his disciples, and as they listened to him and joined in argument and debate, they learned also to think biblically and theologically—perhaps much more so than many of those who have undergone theological education since. He did not, however, assess their fitness for ministry by the quality of their term papers or their performance in examinations whether written or oral.⁵⁹ In consequence, Peter and John remained 'unschooled, ordinary men' (Acts 4:13), but they had apparently become quite skilled in the task Jesus had called them to do.

Their example leads, indeed, to the issue of theological students obliged to do academic work in which many are not particularly competent and which may often contribute little to their preparation for ministry, while even the most academically capable will quickly forget much of what they 'learn'. And in any case, the brilliance or otherwise of the grades achieved is unlikely to have any significant long-term impact on students' actual ministries: more than anything else it is the quality of the person's relationship with Christ and of the life which flows from that relationship which will make the difference, and that is an area largely neglected and unevaluated in probably most programmes of theological education.

Henri Nouwen suggests that there is in fact an inherent absurdity in this whole dimension of theological education with its apparatus of credits, examinations, due-by dates, and the like:

⁵⁷ An expression of this concern is found in the 'Beirut Benchmarks', drawn up by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) in March 2010, which affirm that doctoral studies should be 'missional', and include 'missional impact' as one of seven qualities which should be expected of doctoral students within evangelical theological institutions. For the document see <http://www.icete-edu.org/beirut/>, accessed 03/03/2012.

⁵⁸ S. F. Rowen, 'Missiology and the Coherence of Theological Education', in *With an Eye on the Future* (ed. Elmer and McKinney), 99.

⁵⁹ F. A. Hayek's remark raises an interesting question about our contemporary obsession with academic 'results': 'Often that is treated as important which happens to be accessible to measurement.' Cited in Rory Sutherland, 'Why I'm hiring graduates with thirds this year', *Spectator*, 6 July 2013.

As teachers, we have become insensitive to the ridiculous situation in which adult men and women feel that they 'owe' us a paper of at least twenty pages. We have lost our sense of surprise when men and women who are taking courses about the questions of life and death, anxiously ask how much is 'required'. Instead of spending a number of free years searching for the value and meaning of our human existence with the help of others who expressed their own experiences in word or writing, most students are constantly trying to 'earn' credits, degrees and awards, willing to sacrifice even their own growth.⁶⁰

3. Such a reorientation of teaching priorities as this might suggest, implies in turn a reevaluation of the criteria used for teacher selection. Teachers tend to pursue the replication in their students of the qualities for which they were appointed as teachers. Consequently a more or less exclusive focus on academic criteria for staff appointments apparently implies that the purpose of the training is primarily to develop students' cognitive skills. While such a goal is by no means inappropriate, in the light of our discussion it is scarcely adequate. An holistic approach to theological formation necessarily requires staff who model all the outcomes desired to the widest extent possible, not least the possession of relational gifts, a rich and varied pedagogical competence, and, most important of all, a profound and evident love of Christ and active commitment to his worldwide mission. They will care about students and their growth into Christlikeness more than they care about books, academic papers, and international conferences. Indeed, professional research scholars may not always be the best equipped to train fishers of men. Jesus himself did not belong to the intellectual elite of his day; Paul perhaps did, but the visible priority of his life was to know and declare Christ crucified with all that that entailed (1 Cor 2:1–2; Phil 3:7–11). Every theological educator brings a unique blend of gifts to the task; the point is that academic 'excellence' is only one of many possible talents and not the most crucial.

4. Moreover, in terms of pedagogy theological educators would do well to build flexibility into their courses and escape somewhat the straitjacket of schedules and the need to 'cover the material'. As Jesus readily responded to the issues and problems that arose in the course of his ministry, so teachers might set their notes aside from time to time in order to address theologically and pastorally the questions that preoccupy their students and societies. They might indeed periodically set their classrooms aside and take to the road with their students, entering more fully into their own lived experience. A dynamic approach of this sort profits from the fact that student interest is already engaged and reflects not only the flow of Jesus' own ministry and teaching but also the occasional nature of each of Paul's epistles. In so doing the teacher would be responding to questions people were really asking and connecting timeless truth to contemporary realities.

5. The individualism of Western education and its global offspring—along with the accompanying pedagogy—is so often reflected even in the layout of the traditional classroom; these days it is even more evident as learners sit isolated and alone, each engrossed by an impersonal computer screen. The great purpose for which theological education exists, however, is that men and women who have been 'fished' should be baptised and integrated into Christ's body, so becoming functioning members of a community in the midst of which God himself dwells. Such an outcome demands that theological

⁶⁰H. Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (London: Fount, 1976), 59. (I am grateful to Dr Graham Cheesman for sending me his unpublished paper, 'A Conversation with Henri Nouwen about Theological Education', which contained part of this quotation, and for commenting on my own article.) See also Frame, 'Proposal for a New Seminary,' in n. 56 above.

formation intentionally embrace and actively pursue community, which means not only teaching a course on ecclesiology, important as that undoubtedly is, but seeking to live together as a people of God. The *ICETE Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education* suggests merely a few of the directions this might take:

it is biblically incumbent on us that our programmes function as deliberately nurtured Christian educational communities, sustained by those modes of community that are biblically commended and culturally appropriate. To this end it is not merely decorative but biblically essential that the whole educational body—staff and students—not only learns together, but plays and eats and cares and worships and works together.⁶¹

6. In conclusion, we might consider whether the widespread university model of theological education with its predominantly cognitive and individualistic emphases is really adapted to the primary missional purpose for which Christian theological education should exist. Unquestionably there is a place in the church for the scholar and researcher,⁶² and the university ethos and structure may in some respects provide a suitable setting for such a vocation. But most of those being trained in theological schools are not called to the life of academe. Perhaps then, as well as wrestling with the scholastic structures actually in place in order to bend them to the purpose Jesus had in view, we might seriously ask ourselves whether more radical, even iconoclastic, approaches are needed. Indeed, we might warily ponder the implications of Linda Cannell's challenging observation:

Jesus chose not to found a school (even though schools existed in the ancient world) or to establish a structured curriculum leading to a degree. Further, even after their three years of education at Jesus' side, Peter and John were still identified as ignorant and untrained, but nonetheless feared and honored and able to turn their world upside down (Acts 4).⁶³

⁶¹The quotation comes from the brief but substantial document, *ICETE Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education*, first adopted by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education in 1983. N.p. [cited 11 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.icete-edu.org/manifesto/index.htm#4>.

⁶²See, for example, A. F. Walls, 'World Christianity, Theological Education and Scholarship', *Transformation* 28 (2011): 235–40.

⁶³Cannell, *Theological Education Matters*, 212.

“The Voice of His Blood”: Christ’s Intercession in the Thought of Stephen Charnock

— Gavin Ortlund —

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The nineteenth-century Scottish Presbyterian theologian William Symington wrote concerning Christ’s intercession, “in a practical and consolatory point of view, its interest is not exceeded even by the Atonement. The two are, however, inseparably connected; although we fear that, in this instance, men have not been sufficiently aware of the evil of putting asunder what God has joined together.”¹ It seems that in much contemporary evangelical thought the doctrine of Christ’s intercession has been underappreciated or neglected, despite its rich “practical and consolatory” significance.² In circles where people *have* explored the intercessory work of Christ, there has been considerable disagreement as to its relationship to the broader saving work of Christ and especially Christ’s atoning death. William Milligan, another nineteenth-century Scottish Presbyterian theologian, argued that just as the high priest’s sprinkling blood in the Holy of Holies marked the completion of the Day of Atonement sacrifice in Lev 16, so Christ’s heavenly intercession marks the completion of his earthly atoning death. As with the type, so with antitype: the work of atonement is not complete until the *presentation* of the sacrifice.³

Some contemporary evangelical theologians have followed in this train of thought. I. Howard Marshall, for example, writes, “the work of atonement was not completed until something had been done in heaven that ratified what has been done on the cross; at that point the sacrifice is complete.”⁴ In an important new monograph, David Moffitt goes a step further, arguing that in the book of Hebrews, Jesus’ heavenly presentation is not merely the completion of atonement, but itself the complete act of

¹ William Symington, *On the Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ* (Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1864), iv.

² As examples, consider the relatively brief systematic treatment of Christ’s intercession in the otherwise helpful works of Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 787, 844–45, and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 627–28.

³ William Milligan, *The Resurrection of our Lord* (New York: Macmillan, 1881; repr., 1927), 136–42.

⁴ I. Howard Marshall, “Soteriology in Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, et. al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 271.

atonement.⁵ Noting that in Leviticus, the blood of an animal represents its life (Lev 17:11), Moffitt argues that in Hebrews, Christ's offering his blood refers to his post-ascension heavenly presentation.⁶ While Christ's death is an essential preparatory step for his heavenly atonement and exemplifies righteous suffering *par excellence*, it is not itself atoning.⁷ Moffitt concludes that Christ's resurrection has greater soteriological significance in Hebrews than has previously been detected in contemporary scholarship since it marks the crucial transition point leading to Christ's heavenly atonement.⁸

The purpose of this article is to examine the treatment of Christ's intercession by the Puritan theologian Stephen Charnock, particularly as it stands in relation to Christ's death⁹ and particularly with a view to its practical and devotional use.¹⁰ Charnock's treatment of Christ's intercession provides a helpful model for how to neither divorce intercession from atonement (thus, as Symington warned, "putting asunder what God has joined together") nor overwork their relationship (as I argue below that Milligan, Marshall, and Moffitt do). Stated positively, Charnock preserves both the unity of Christ's saving work and the distinctness and interrelation of its various components. For him, Christ's heavenly intercession and his earthly atonement stand together in an inseparable relationship as the two correlate components of his priestly ministry, serving the same great end of the salvation of sinners. Nevertheless, by construing Christ's intercession as the *application* of atonement rather than the *completion* of atonement, Charnock maintains the finality and centrality of Christ's atoning work at the cross. Although an examination of Charnock's treatment of Christ's intercession will not constitute a thorough refutation Milligan's or Moffitt's view, it may shed light on this neglected but valuable doctrine and open up new avenues of thought concerning its relation to the broader work of Christ.

1. Christ's Intercession in Relation to Atonement

1.1. Accomplishment and Application

At the beginning of his exposition of 1 John 2:1, Charnock defines Christ's intercession: "Christ is an advocate with the Father in heaven, continually handling the concerns of believers, and effectually prevailing for their full remission and salvation *upon the account of the propitiation made by his death.*"¹¹ Already in the italicized portion of this definition appears the dominant theme or emphasis that

⁵ David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (NovTSup; Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 229–85. Moffitt also interprets Christ's offering of his "body" and "self" in Hebrews as referring to this heavenly act.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸ Moffitt summarizes his case in *ibid.*, 2–3, 41–43.

⁹ Space does not permit detailed interaction with Charnock's doctrine of atonement considered in its own light, but Charnock held to a propitiating model of atonement in which Christ's death absorbed the wrath of God for the sins of his people. Readers who hold a different understanding of atonement may nevertheless benefit from Charnock's treatment of Christ's intercession.

¹⁰ I focus on his treatise on 1 John 2:1: "Christ's Intercession," in vol. 5 of *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock* (5 vols.; Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1866).

¹¹ Charnock, "Christ's Intercession," 99, italics mine. Cf. Charnock's Puritan contemporary John Owen, who defined intercession as Christ's "continual appearance for us in the presence of God, by virtue of his office as the 'high priest over the house of God,' *representing the efficacy of his oblation*, accompanied with tender care,

emerges throughout Charnock’s treatment of Christ’s intercession, namely, its close relationship with Christ’s atoning death. Early on Charnock writes that intercession “is a commemoration of the sacrifice which he offered on earth for our expiation; and the whole power of intercession, with the prevalency of it, is wholly upon this foundation. . . . He speaks by his blood, and his blood speaks by its merit.”¹² Charnock reiterates this close atonement-intercession relationship again and again so that at every angle he shows the significance of intercession in relation to atonement, and the images and metaphors that describe intercession draw heavily from atonement. Specifically, as Charnock’s argument deepens, he teases out the significance of intercession in terms of the *application* of atonement: at the cross, Christ accomplishes a perfect atonement; now, from his heavenly throne, Christ continually applies the benefits of that accomplishment to believers “to preserve by his life the salvation he had merited by his death.”¹³

Thus, for Charnock, the movement from Christ’s *earthly* priestly work to his *heavenly* priestly work is not best represented as a movement merely from the part to the whole, from the inauguration of a work to its consummation, from “phase 1” to “phase 2” of one continuous process, as implied by the more staunch assertions of those in the Milligan tradition. Rather, for Charnock, the movement from Christ’s earthly priestly work to his heavenly priestly work is better represented as a movement from accomplishment to application, from deed to consequence, from event to implication, from “merit” to “preservation.” In other words, the movement is not *begun* → *finished*, but *finished* → *spoken*. This conception of the atonement-intercession relationship is evident in the legal language Charnock uses to describe atonement and intercession. He calls them, respectively, “bill” and “answer;” “acceptation” and “negotiation;” “purchase” and “suing out [of that purchase];” “payment” and “plea.”¹⁴ He can also use the language of “made/managed” and “done/performed” to describe their relationship,¹⁵ or the image of foundation and superstructure.¹⁶ A sample quotation gives a flavor of Charnock’s treatment:

Because he paid the debt as our surety, he was fit to plead the payment as our attorney; what he finished on earth, he continually presents in heaven. By shedding his blood, he makes expiation; by presenting his blood, he makes intercession; in the one he prepares the remedy, and in the other he applies it. They are not the same acts, but the first act is the foundation of the second, and the second hath a connection with the first.¹⁷

The most obvious consequence to construing the atonement-intercession relation as an accomplishment-application relation is that the two become very tightly related, such that the significance of intercession becomes impossible to conceive of apart from the atonement. Thus, to provide one

love, and desires for the welfare, supply, deliverance, and salvation of the church” (John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* [8 vols.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991], 5:541, italics mine).

¹² Charnock, “Christ’s Intercession,” 113. Charnock may draw this image of “speaking blood” from Heb 12:24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 100. Cf. John Murray’s similar usage of terminology for redemption as a whole in *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), and especially Murray’s discussion of the finality of Christ’s atonement in relation to his eternal priestly office (53–55).

¹⁴ Charnock, “Christ’s Intercession,” 101–2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

example of this method of argumentation, Charnock's treatment of what kind of intercessor Christ is in section II of his piece is anchored on every point in Christ's atoning death:

- Christ is an *authoritative* intercessor because of the merit of his death and its claims upon divine justice.¹⁸
- Christ is a *skillful* intercessor because of his experience being tested to the extreme during his earthly life, including Gethsemane and Calvary.¹⁹
- Christ is a *righteous* and *faithful* intercessor because what he pleads for is not contrary to God's will, but in accordance with the benefits of his death.²⁰
- Christ is a *compassionate* intercessor because "his intercession springs from the same tenderness towards us as his oblation, and both are but the displaying of his excessive charity."²¹
- Christ is a *ready* and *diligent* intercessor because after his death he passed into heaven and thus remains always at the right hand of God to observe our needs.²²
- Christ is an *earnest* and *pressing* intercessor because he has died once for all and now has nothing to divert his attention from securing the happiness of his people.²³
- Christ is a *joyful* and *cheerful* intercessor because "his death was sweet to him after his resurrection."²⁴
- Christ is an *acceptable* advocate because his sacrifice is like a sweet incense to God.
- Christ is the *sole* advocate (contrary to the doctrine of Rome) because "he only hath the right to plead for us, who had the right to purchase us."²⁵

1.2. Perfect Atonement Entails Effectual Intercession

But for Charnock it is not merely the fact of atonement that establishes Christ's intercession, but its nature.²⁶ Charnock does not say merely that atonement entails intercession, but that *perfect* atonement entails *effectual* intercession. As Charnock writes, "the efficacy of his plea depends on the value and purity of his sacrifice."²⁷ And elsewhere: "he could not have been a prevailing pleader if he had not first been an appeasing propitiator. His standing up as a solicitor for us had been of little efficacy, if the

¹⁸ Ibid., 103–4.

¹⁹ Ibid., 104–5.

²⁰ Ibid., 105.

²¹ Ibid., 106

²² Ibid., 107.

²³ Ibid., 107–8.

²⁴ Ibid., 109.

²⁵ Ibid., 110. Cf. his later and lengthier argument against the Roman Catholic doctrine of saintly intercession (138–39). Here Charnock also argues from atonement to intercession: "the right of intercession belongs only to him who hath made the propitiation" (139).

²⁶ Charnock argues (contra Calvin) that intercession consists not merely of a presentation of his scars to the Father but also of vocal pleading accompanying this presentation. Nevertheless, he argues that Christ's vocal pleading is effectual only in connection to his "presenting the memorials of his death." As he puts it, "the petitions of his lips had done us no good without the voice of his blood" (113).

²⁷ Ibid., 102

atonement he made on the cross had not been first judged sufficient.”²⁸ Nor is it sufficient in Charnock’s thought to say that atonement makes intercession merely *possible*. For Charnock, atonement *ensures* the reality and success of intercession. Christ *must* intercede for us, for his blood is by its very nature a speaking blood: “his blood must be speechless blood before he can be a silent advocate.”²⁹ Charnock makes this point later at greater length:

His intercession must be as powerful as his satisfaction His death may as soon want its virtue as his intercession its efficacy If his blood be incorruptible, as being precious in the eyes of God, his intercessions are undeniable, as having an equal value in God’s account There is a necessary connection between the perfection of the one and the prevalency of the other His merit must be deficient before his intercession can be successless; and his blood will not want a voice while his death retains a satisfactory sufficiency.³⁰

1.3. Creation : Providence :: Atonement : Intercession

Charnock also highlights the close relationship between atonement and intercession by comparing it to the relationship between creation and providence:

Christ is as much an advocate as he is a sacrifice, as God is as much as governor as he was a creator. As we say of providence, it is a continued creation, so of intercession, it is a continued oblation. As providence is a maintaining the creation, so this intercession is a maintaining the expiation, and therefore is by some called a presentative oblation.³¹

This analogy highlights the close, organic relationship between atonement and intercession as well as the importance of intercession in Christ’s priestly work, for here intercession becomes not merely the application of atonement but its extension and continuation. It is a “continued oblation . . . a maintaining the expiation . . . a presentative oblation.”

But even here Charnock’s treatment differs from that of Milligan and Moffitt (as well as Roman Catholic and Socinian models of Christ’s priestly ministry). Specifically, Charnock may speak of intercession as an *extension* of atonement, but not as part of the *act* of atonement. To make the distinction at its most razor-sharp edge, Charnock refers to intercession as a *continuation* of atonement but not as the *completion* of atonement. The definite, completed nature of atonement in Charnock’s thought may be detected in his opposition, along with Owen and his other Puritan contemporaries, to the Socinian overemphasis on Christ’s heavenly work as a priest. With this danger in view, Charnock writes,

a propitiation and his advocacy are not one in the same thing (as the Socinians affirm) but distinct; the one is the payment, the other the plea; one was made on earth, the other is managed in heaven; the one was by his death, the other by his life; the one was done but once, the other performed perpetually: the first is the foundation for the second.³²

²⁸ Ibid., 137.

²⁹ Ibid., 115.

³⁰ Ibid., 124.

³¹ Ibid., 99.

³² Ibid., 102.

Similarly, elsewhere Charnock rejects the idea of eternal sacrifice because Christ “cannot die again.”³³

For Charnock, the perpetual duration of Christ’s intercession, its heavenly location, and its historical distance from Christ’s death all signal points of discontinuity with its typical precursor in Lev 16. Charnock may speak of intercession as the application of atonement and even the extension of atonement, but the actual accomplishment of atonement belongs to Christ’s earthly work as priest.³⁴ By the same token, and to locate Charnock’s language within his own metaphor, providence may be called the sustaining of creation, but it is not best conceived of as the *completion* of creation. We must therefore construe Christ’s priestly ministry as follows:

priestly ministry = atonement (earthly death) + intercession (heavenly life)

Rather than this:

priestly ministry (atonement/intercession) = earthly death + heavenly life

This distinction may appear fine-tuned, but it preserves for Charnock the definite nature of atonement as presented in the NT, as represented in the decisive finality of Christ’s cry at the cross, “it is finished.”³⁵

1.4. Meritorious and Applicational Causes

The close relationship between atonement and intercession in Charnock’s thought is also evident in their respective causal relationships with regard to justification. For Charnock, both atonement and intercession cause justification, but in different ways:

though our propitiation made on the cross by the blood of Christ be the meritorious cause of our justification, yet the intercession upon the throne made by the same blood of Christ, as a speaking blood, is the immediate moving cause, or the *causa applicans*, of our justification The propitiation Christ made on the cross, made God *capable* of justifying us, in an honourable way; but the intercession of Christ, as pleading that

³³ *Ibid.*, 115.

³⁴ A more recent proponent of this view in the reformed tradition is Herman Bavinck. Bavinck interacts with Milligan’s view and argues that while Christ’s heavenly intercession is essential for his priestly service, even Hebrews attributes Christ’s death with expiatory power. Discontinuities in typology on this point spring from the imperfection of the OT ritual, which was only a partial picture of the heavenly things it symbolized. In Bavinck, as in Charnock, intercession is conceived as the application, not the completion, of atonement. As Bavinck puts it, “in his intercession his sacrifice continues to be operative and effective” (*Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ* [ed. John Bolt; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 478; cf. 476–79).

³⁵ Charnock’s concern on this point stems from his conviction that the NT portrays Christ’s death as a completed act of atonement. Both Milligan and Charnock draw much from Rom 5:10, and Milligan in particular makes much of the “how much more” amplification from Christ’s reconciling death to his saving life. Yet in Charnock’s more restrained treatment, it is evident that even here reconciliation with God is the accomplishment specifically of Christ’s death: “we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” Similarly, Moffitt (*Atonement*, 276–77, 289–94) acknowledges that in Hebrews Christ’s death is associated with sacrificial language in two texts (Heb 9:15;13:12), but argues that it is not necessary to assume that Christ’s death was specifically a means of redemption in these texts. However, it is difficult to reconcile Moffitt’s reading of 9:15–22 with the fact that Christ’s death is spoken of in this passage as initiating a new covenant guaranteeing the forgiveness of sins: “a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (9:15). It is also difficult to suppose that Christ’s death and Christ’s blood are not associated in the two halves of this passage. I am grateful to my friend Bobby Jamieson for helping me think about Moffitt’s reading of Heb 9:15–22.

propitiation for us, *procures* our actual justification. The death of Christ *accepted* made justification *possible*, and the death of Christ *pleaded* by him, makes justification *actual*.³⁶

In an extended legal metaphor, Charnock portrays the Father as judge, Satan as prosecuting attorney, the believer as the accused criminal, sin against God’s law as our crime, our conscience as a witness, and Christ as our advocate. In the imagery of this courtroom setting, Christ is both the satisfaction of the law on our behalf (atonement) as well as the attorney who pleads the case of that satisfaction to the judge, in opposition to the prosecutor’s case (intercession). The satisfaction of the law makes the believer’s acquittal possible, but it still requires the advocate’s case to actually bring about the judge’s sentence.

Elsewhere Charnock employs the metaphor of written letter versus personal appearance to illustrate the difference between these two causes of justification:

A letter from a friend is not so successful as a personal appearance for gaining a suit. This death were meritorious, his prayer must be so too, as being put up in virtue of his meritorious blood; and though we are reconciled by his death, we are saved by his life, with *a much more*, Rom. v. 10; not formally in regard of merit, for that was the effect of his death, but in regard of application of that merit, the end for which he lives, to render it efficacious to us, as it had been in his passion valuable for us.”³⁷

Thus for Charnock, Christ’s death is like a formal written notice of sorts, meriting a certain outcome (justification), and his intercession is like the personal appearance and delivery of that notice to secure that outcome. Without both of these causes, the merit and application, the law’s satisfaction and the advocate’s case, the formal letter and the personal appearance, there would be no actual justification of sinners.

And not only this, but what is said of justification here may also extend to every other aspect of our salvation. Atonement is the meritorious, objective cause of our adoption, our cleansing, our indwelling, our inheritance, etc.; but intercession is the applicational and moving cause of these same realities. Every good blessing we receive from God was purchased for us at the cross, but we receive these blessings on a moment-by-moment basis as a direct result of Christ’s intercession from his throne: Christ’s “intercession for believers is as large as the intent of his death for them. Whatsoever privilege he purchased for them upon the cross, he sues for upon his throne.”³⁸ And from this it follows that, in Charnock’s thought, no saint has ever received any saving mercy or benefit from God that has not come as a result of Christ’s intercession as well as his atonement. Without Christ’s intercession, there would never be a single instance of justification or any saving blessing in the world. Christ’s death would have, despite infinite saving potency, zero actual effect on anyone.

1.5. Protasis and Apodosis

As his treatment of the subject progresses, Charnock does not argue merely for a close atonement-intercession relationship, but this point becomes so axiomatic in his thought that he also argues *by* this

³⁶ Charnock, “Christ’s Intercession,” 131, italics his.

³⁷ Ibid., 116–17, italics his.

³⁸ Ibid., 129.

relationship for *other* points. The two become “fused together” and thus are related to other doctrines *in the same way*, such that not only does an argument for one constitute an argument for the other, but each can be used interchangeably in an argument for another point. So, for example, in one place limited atonement entails limited intercession,³⁹ while in another place the efficacy of Christ’s intercession is an argument for the perfection of his sacrifice (whereas prior the order of argumentation had been the reverse).⁴⁰ Thus also, in arguing (with Calvin) for Christ’s pre-incarnate intercession, Charnock appeals to Rev 13:8: “as he was a lamb slain from the foundation of the world, so by the same reason he was advocate pleading from the foundation of the world.”⁴¹ Similarly, to establish the holiness of the content of Christ’s intercessory prayers, Charnock appeals to 1 Pet 1:19: “if [Christ’s] blood were ‘without blemish’ . . . his intercession must be without spot, because the one is the sole foundation of the other.”⁴² In addition, it is significant that in distinguishing between Christ’s intercession and the Spirit’s intercession, Charnock can speak of “Christ’s intercession” and “Christ’s blood” interchangeably.⁴³ Thus for Charnock, Christ’s atonement and intercession are, as it were, the protasis and apodosis of his priestly ministry—the *if* . . . *then* logic of his saving work, necessarily ordered together.

And yet although Charnock’s emphasis here is on the close relationship between intercession and atonement, the categories and images he uses to describe this relationship preserve their distinctness. For an accomplishment and application are not two equally weighted stages of one event; nor are creation and providence, a payment and a plea, a protasis and an apodosis, a foundation and superstructure, a meritorious cause and an applicational cause. In all these images, the former is distinct from the latter and has its own definite shape that determines the latter. So also for Charnock, it is not as though atonement amounts to 50% of his saving work and intercession fills in the remaining 50% that is lacking. Rather, Christ’s atonement is a definite, 100% completed accomplishment; and intercession does not augment it but *applies* and extends it. Intercession is the *voice* of Christ’s blood, for the blood of Christ has been shed once for all time with eternal value (cf. Heb 9:11–14) and now needs only to be *spoken* (cf. Heb 12:24).

2. Christ’s Intercession in Broader Context

Considering intercession in relation to atonement clarifies their specific relationship. But we may further understand Charnock’s doctrine of Christ’s intercession by considering it in a broader soteriological and christological context.

2.1. Christ’s Intercession in Relation to His Priestly Office

For Charnock, Christ’s intercession is a specifically *priestly* activity, and it cannot be understood without reference to its priestly background in the OT, especially the Day of Atonement ritual in Lev 16. Like Milligan and Moffitt, Charnock notes that the high priest’s responsibilities on this occasion were

³⁹ Ibid., 127.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁴¹ Ibid., 125. For Charnock, Christ’s pre-incarnate intercession looked forward to his death as much as his ascended intercession looks back on his death: “he interceded before as a promiser, he intercedes now as a performer” (126).

⁴² Ibid., 122.

⁴³ Ibid., 102–3.

not limited to slaying the animal in the outer part of the tabernacle (Lev 16:5–11, 15), but also included burning incense (Lev 16:12–13) and sprinkling blood on the mercy seat (Lev 16:14–15) inside the Holy of Holies. It is not the sacrifice of the animal in itself but this sacrifice together with sprinkling blood and burning incense inside the Holy of Holies that constitutes the act of atonement (Lev 16:16).

For Charnock, the high priest’s activity on the Day of Atonement in Lev 16 prefigured Christ’s priestly ministry in at least three ways. First, his sacrificing animals outside the tent was a type of Christ’s death. Second, his entrance into the Holy of Holies was a type of Christ’s ascension to heaven. Third, his sprinkling blood and burning incense inside the Holy of Holies was a type of Christ’s intercession, both in his presentation of his wounds to the Father (sprinkling) as well as in his pleas for the saints (incense).⁴⁴ The unity of this OT type reflects the unity of their NT reality. Moreover, without the continual exercise of his heavenly intercession, there is no basis for Christ’s retaining after his death this eternal and unchangeable office of priesthood (Heb 6:16–20).⁴⁵ He would be a priest in name only, without any priestly *function*.⁴⁶

This OT background highlights the close connection between atonement and intercession in Charnock’s thought. For just as in Lev 16 there was such a close connection between the killing outside the Holy of Holies and the sprinkling inside it that the two *together* constituted the priestly ritual, so for Charnock the earthly death and heavenly intercession of Christ *together* comprise his priestly work. Thus for Charnock while atonement and intercession can be properly be conceived of as two separate but closely related realities, from another angle they are better viewed as two components or phases of *one* great reality. They are two parts of one whole, more than two related wholes. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the “whole” that they comprise is not atonement *per se*, but Christ’s priestly work in sum, for Charnock draws out discontinuities between Christ’s intercession and Lev 16 inherent in the fact that Christ’s intercession takes place in heaven. Standing between Christ’s atonement and his intercession is the pivotal event of his ascension, which separates them in time and realm, unlike the high priest’s work on the Day of Atonement.

2.2. Christ’s Intercession in Relation to His Whole Saving Work

In addition, Charnock portrays Christ’s intercession as an integral piece of Christ’s saving work, and helps us view it in relation to its broader soteriological context. Specifically, among the various phases of Christ’s saving work in history, it is the chief purpose of the ascension: “as his death was the end of his incarnation, so his intercession was the end of his ascension; his dignity in heaven was given him for the exercise of this particular office.”⁴⁷ In other words, Christ’s intercession does not have an accidental relationship to the historical events in Christ’s life surrounding it, but it coheres with them in mutually explanatory ways, as a fitting piece of a puzzle coheres with the pieces around it. As Christ’s incarnation must be seen from the vantage point of his atoning death, so his glorification through bodily resurrection and bodily ascension, the second great phase of transformation in the life of the God-man, must be seen from the vantage point of his intercessory work. The saving deed throws light back on the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 100. Charnock notes that incense in Scripture frequently symbolizes prayer (e.g., Ps 141:2; Rev 8:4).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 100–101.

⁴⁶ Elsewhere, Charnock considers Christ’s intercession in relation to other OT typical precursors, such as Moses’ intercession for the Israelites in Exod 32:10–14 (120).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 102.

historical event that undergirds it and helps explain its nature and purpose. From this viewpoint, the nature of Christ's current heavenly session is suited largely for his intercessory work: "[Christ] cannot look upon his own glory, the robe he wears, the throne he sits on, the enemies prostrate at his feet, but he must reflect upon the reason of his present state, and he is excited to a redoubling his solicitation for his people."⁴⁸

Thus, for Charnock, Christ has undergone two fundamental changes in his life for the salvation of believers. First, at his incarnation, he entered creation, the chief aim of which was atonement. Second, at his exaltation (resurrection + ascension), he entered heaven, the chief end of which was intercession. He first entered a body (without leaving heaven); he then entered heaven (without leaving his body): both were priestly and saving acts.⁴⁹ Or better: both were *one* priestly, saving act in its accomplishment and then its application.

2.3. Christ's Intercession in Relation to His Person

Furthermore, Charnock teases out Christ's intercession in relation to Christ's person, particularly with a view to his divine and human natures and their relation. As his earthly death required the union of human and divine natures in one person in order to be effectual, so his heavenly life requires the same union of a human and divine nature. Anselm's logic from *Cur Deus Homo?* may equally apply to the question *cur Deus deprecator?*⁵⁰ As Charnock puts it, "he was God-man on earth, man to suffer for us, and God to make that suffering valuable; he is God-man in heaven, man to pity us, and God to render that compassion efficacious to us."⁵¹ Specifically, Charnock argues for a kind of dual knowledge on the basis of Christ's divine and human natures that equips him to perform his intercessory office with perfect skill. All intercessors or advocates must, he argues, have a thorough knowledge of their client's situation in order to know how to intercede for them. Christ uniquely has this knowledge, even among the persons of the Godhead, for he has "an infinite knowledge as God, and a full and sufficient knowledge as man."⁵² Charnock does not flesh out what exactly he means by "full and sufficient knowledge as man," but likely he has in view Christ's experiential acquaintance with human grief and weakness and struggle (cf. Heb 2:17–18; 4:14–16), which complements his infinite divine knowledge. But for Charnock Christ's human and divine knowledge do not equally complement one another, for such a relation could be viewed as a sort of diminishing of the scope of divine knowledge, as though it were lacking and in need of some external supplement. In this back-and-forth movement of divine and human knowledge, the divine knowledge takes prominence: "His deity communicates the knowledge of our cause to his humanity, and *excites the compassion of his nature*."⁵³ Thus even in a duty more typically associated with his human experience, Christ's divinity stands in the background and controls the relation. The

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁹ The complementary nature of the extra-Calvinisticum and the bodily ascension of Christ is an insight rarely made and worthy of further exploration. Cf. Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: IVP, 2009), and his discussion of the ascension as "the reverse of the incarnation" on pp. 287–88.

⁵⁰ I.e., *why the God intercessor?*

⁵¹ Charnock, "Christ's Intercession," 106.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

result of this divine and human knowledge is for Charnock *a knowledge that is perfect for the purpose of intercession*: “[Christ] knows our case better than we do ourselves.”⁵⁴

Later, however, in an interesting twist, Charnock associates Christ’s intercession specifically with his human nature. While his deity makes his intercessory work effectual, it is not the work of his deity as such, for intercession implies a kind of inferiority in the person interceding to the person being addressed, and God the Son is not inferior to God the Father with respect to his deity.⁵⁵ Thus, Charnock insists, “Christ as God, essentially considered, doth not intercede.”⁵⁶ But lest he be charged with a kind of Nestorian division of Christ into two persons at this point, Charnock quickly qualifies this assertion, and it is here that we see the close relationship of Christ’s earthly cross-work and heavenly intercession:

[Christ’s] intercession as well as his passion belong indeed to his person: and as his deity is in personal union with his humanity, so his prayers and intercessions may be called the intercessions of God, as well as his blood was called the blood of God. As the human nature suffered, and the divine nature made it valuable, so the human nature intercedes by way of motion, and the divine nature makes it prevalent. The person of the Son of God suffered, but only in the human nature, the divine not being passible; so may we not say that the person of the Son of God intercedes, but the human nature only supplicates? He is our advocate, as he was our propitiation.⁵⁷

Thus, Charnock would apparently say that there is a sense in which Christ’s intercession belongs to his human nature alone, and there is a sense in which it belongs to both natures in “personal union” with one another. From this Charnock draws a distinction between *intercession* (apparently proper to both Christ’s human and divine natures) and *supplication* (proper to his human nature only). Without taking judgment on Charnock’s distinction here, it is fascinating yet again to consider the tight correlation between atonement and intercession implicit in Charnock’s argumentation, such that the relation of Christ’s person to one becomes the basis for the relation of his person to the other.

2.4. Christ’s Intercession in Relation to Its Biblical Foundations

In explicating his doctrine of Christ’s intercession, Charnock establishes it within a firm biblical bedding. In surveying Charnock’s usage of Scripture, it is evident that in virtually every instance where Scripture teaches, demonstrates, prefigures, or alludes to Christ’s intercession, it figures closely related to Christ’s atoning work. Thus, Charnock notes, Christ’s intercession for believers in Rom 8:34 follows immediately on the heels of Christ’s death and resurrection (8:34) imbedded within a larger context of justification (8:33), reconciliation with God (8:31–32), and inseparability from God’s love (8:34–39). Charnock also draws repeatedly from Rom 5:10 and its amplification from reconciliation by Christ’s death to salvation by his life.

In 1 John 2:1–2, Charnock’s foundational text, Christ’s advocacy with the Father (2:1) is predicated upon his being the propitiation for our sins (2:2). According to Charnock, the righteousness of his

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

atoning death on the cross is the principle intended meaning in his title, “Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (2:1).⁵⁸

In Heb 9:24–26, Christ’s once-for-all sacrificial death is the basis for his entrance into heaven on our behalf, just as throughout Hebrews Christ’s atoning work (2:17; 9:11–12) is interlaced with his heavenly intercessory work (6:19–20, 7:24–25). Similarly, in 2:17–18 and 4:14–16, Christ’s propitiating death is closely related to his sympathetic help to believers, and in 5:8–10, Christ’s being made perfect through obedience and suffering is the basis for his appointment to heavenly priesthood.

In Isa 53:12, Christ’s intercession is one piece of a much larger portrait of atonement, sin-bearing, justification, and guilt offering (52:13–53:12). Its close relationship with atonement is evident in its parallel placement with “[bearing] the sin of many,” as well as the fact that Isaiah can conclude this entire section with a reference to intercession without evidencing any awareness of a shift of focus.

The two most notable portraits of intercession in Christ’s earthly ministry, John 17 and Luke 22:31–32, which Charnock refers to as the “map”⁵⁹ and “model”⁶⁰ of intercession, respectively, both immediately precede a passion narrative. The angel of the Lord’s vindication of Joshua the high priest from Satan’s accusations in Zech 3:1–2 turns on his justification and cleansing of Josh in 3:3–5. And atonement and intercession during the Day of Atonement’s annual sacrifice in Lev 16 are closely associated (see §1.3 and §2.1 above).

Space does not permit a more thorough examination of Charnock’s usage of Scripture in explicating the doctrine of Christ’s intercession, but it is fascinating to note the texts he draws from that are not often associated with Christ’s intercession, such as Exod 28:29,⁶¹ Ps 2:7–8,⁶² Zech 1:11–12,⁶³ Song 8:6,⁶⁴ and Ps 21:2.⁶⁵ All in all, Charnock’s employment of Scripture once again draws out the close relationship between atonement and intercession.

3. Devotional and Practical Use

Charnock’s treatment of intercession as the application of atonement provides a helpful vantage point from which to view the devotional and practice use of this doctrine. In particular, three themes may be drawn out.

3.1. “Omnipotent Compassion”: Highlighting Christ’s Tenderness and Warmth

The doctrine of Christ’s intercession is of particular value for highlighting Christ’s compassion and warmth toward believers in their weakness and struggle. Inherent in the very nature of intercession is compassion and tenderness, for one cannot effectively intercede with a cold indifference toward those for whom one intercedes. As Charnock puts it, “if he be not tender in misery, he is not faithful to God

⁵⁸ Cf. Charnock’s exposition of this verse in *ibid.*, 91–98.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 101.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

in the exercise of his office.”⁶⁶ At times the atoning death of Christ can feel distant and impersonal, and the believer’s forgiven status can feel formal and static. Christ’s intercession channels the compassion of Christ displayed at the cross to believers in their present state in dynamic, personal, and relational terms. It is virtually impossible to conceive of the risen Christ, exalted in heaven above all angels, and yet in earnest prayer for believers amid all their sins and failures, and fail to be moved at his compassion and tenderness. Thus can John Murray refer to this doctrine as “omnipotent compassion”⁶⁷ and argue that when we truly grasp it “we shall be humbled to the point of being speechless, in a true sense exasperated.”⁶⁸

3.2. “The Top of Our Comfort”: Freshly Appropriating the Cross

Charnock writes, “it is the top of our comfort that he is in heaven a pleader, as it was the foundation of our comfort that he was once on earth a sufferer.”⁶⁹ In other words, the cross is the ground of our comfort, but Christ’s intercession is our point of contact with that comfort. Atonement is the bottom of our comfort, and intercession is the “top.” Thus Christ’s intercession is the point of intersection between the benefits accomplished for believers at the cross and the “real time” needs of believers. It is the place where our weakness and sinfulness *meet* Christ in his atoning merit and mercy. It is the mediating link between the accomplishment of Friday afternoon on Calvary and any other moment of faith in history. It is the storage place of grace and mercy and help, which believers experience afresh as often as we draw near to God (Heb 10:22).

Thus the doctrine of Christ’s intercession provides a vantage point by which to see how the grace of God meets particular sins at particular points in time. It doesn’t merely cover my life as a whole, leaving the details to work out on their own. Christ meets us again and again in our particular moments of lust, resentment, fear, negligence, coldness—and says, “Father, forgive them, for the sake of my blood.” As Charnock puts it,

it is upon every sin he doth discharge this office, and by his interposition procures our pardon thousands of times, and preserves us from coming short of the full fruits of reconciliation at first obtained by him.⁷⁰

Faith in Christ must be exercised as often as we sin. . . . Every man ought to make reflections on his conscience, lament his condition, turn his eye to his great Advocate, acquaint him with his state, and entertain him afresh in his case.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Ibid., 105–6. The depth of Christ’s compassion for the believer does not entail a general softness in his character, for Christ’s intercession is for believers alone, and as Symington emphasizes, “not to have his prayers *for us* is to have them *against us*” (*On the Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ*, 301). Christ’s intercession is as terrible for those outside its scope as it is wonderful for those inside it. At the same time as he is compassionate priest toward the church, he is reigning king, making war on his enemies and destroying them (Pss 2:9; 110; cf. also the imagery in Rev 1:16 of a sword coming out of his mouth). Nor are Christ’s prayers beneath his divine and exalted dignity, for he pleads as one with authority, as a king.

⁶⁷ John Murray, “The Heavenly, Priestly Activity of Christ,” in *The Claims of Truth*, vol. 1 of *The Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 50.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁶⁹ Charnock, “Christ’s Intercession,” 140.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 131.

⁷¹ Ibid., 97.

3.3. “An Unquestionable Support”: Cementing Our Assurance of Salvation

Symington writes, “[believers’] security springs not from anything naturally indestructible in the principle of the new life of which they are possessed, nor from any want of criminality in the sins they commit, nor from anything less dangerous in the circumstances in which they are placed: but wholly from the intercession of Christ.”⁷² The doctrine of Christ’s intercession directs our eyes to Christ in his continual intercession on our behalf as our only security and assurance. It cements our assurance of salvation by demonstrating that Christ has a greater commitment to our salvation than we do—a greater concern for our welfare, a greater pity for us in distress, a greater zeal for our advancement, a greater acquaintance with our needs. As Charnock puts it, “our pity to ourselves cannot enter into comparison with his pity to us.”⁷³ Our faith ebbs and flows, rises and sinks, waxes and wanes. His intercession is marked by the constant attention and power of his resurrected life and never wavers for an instant. Christ’s intercession assures us that God will supply all of our spiritual needs. John Murray explains,

The intercession of Christ is interposed to meet every need of the believer. No grace bestowed, no blessing enjoyed, no benefit received can be removed from the scope of the intercession, and the intercession is the guarantee that every exigency will be met by its efficacy. The security of salvation is bound up with his intercession, and outside of his intercession we must say that there is no salvation.⁷⁴

And as Charnock puts it,

What could comfort itself, saith one, wish more for her children, had she been our mother, than to have so great a person our perpetual advocate at the right hand of God? His death is not such a ground of assurance as this, because that is past; but when we consider how the merit of his death lives continually in his intercession, all the weights of doubts and despondency lose their heaviness; faith finds in it an unquestionable support.⁷⁵

4. Conclusion

There is much thought and discussion in contemporary evangelical circles concerning “gospel-centered” and “Christ-centered” and “cross-centered” approaches to theology and spiritual life. But what do these terms exactly mean? Does being “Christ-centered,” for example, necessarily entail being “cross-centered?” How do we maintain the centrality of the cross without downplaying other aspects of our salvation or oversimplifying our focus?

Charnock’s treatment of Christ’s intercession can help inform what “cross-centeredness” *means* by demonstrating how a focus on other aspects of Christ’s saving ministry can itself lead us back to the cross, as a mirror reflecting its source or a stream its river. Christ’s saving ministry is one great interrelated work, one great spider web of intricately interconnected strands. In other words, Charnock’s treatment of Christ’s intercession in relation to his atonement signals the *unity* of Christ’s work and the reciprocal,

⁷² Symington, *On the Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ*, 298–99.

⁷³ Charnock, “Christ’s Intercession,” 106.

⁷⁴ Murray, “The Heavenly, Priestly Activity of Christ,” 55.

⁷⁵ Charnock, “Christ’s Intercession,” 140.

mutually reinforcing nature of its various components. As we examine the hill of Calvary, we are led into other arenas—the nature of Christ’s incarnation, his sinless life, resurrection, ascension, session, second coming, to say nothing of related doctrines in theology proper or broader soteriology—which then in turn lead us back to the cross. Thus a rigorous “cross-centeredness,” rightly understood, need not entail a focus on the cross *instead* of other aspects of salvation—but rather the cross at their center, as in a great spider web.

The Ministerial Ideal in the Ordination Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: Four Theological Portraits¹

— Robert Caldwell —

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As Jonathan Edwards's reputation for defending moderate New Light revivalism grew in the 1740s, others increasingly sought him to preside over the ordination of ministers in nearby churches. Edwards used these occasions to explore the various dimensions of gospel ministry and the solemn responsibilities that both minister and congregation embrace when joining in an ecclesial union.² What Edwards took to be the ministerial ideal shines forth brightly in these sermons, an ideal that was deeply conditioned by his contemplations of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the line between Christology and his portrayal of the ideal minister is sometimes hard to discern in these sermons.

This study presents four theological portraits of the Christ-like minister that appear in Edwards's ordination sermons. As good art evokes response, these portraits not only portray the beauty of Christ and his ministry but also call the ministerial candidate to the solemn responsibilities entailed in being a minister of Jesus Christ. Each of these portraits represented to Edwards both a *picture* of Christ and *calling* to ministerial fidelity. (1) As Christ is the bridegroom betrothed to the church, so the faithful minister of the gospel is called to be united to his congregation. (2) As Christ is the light of the world, so the faithful minister is called to be a burning and shining light in this world of darkness. (3) As Christ suffered for the church voluntarily giving his life for her, so the faithful minister is called to abasement, suffering, and sacrifice that souls may be saved. (4) As Christ is the final judge, so ministers and their congregations are called together before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their eternal reward. This article examines each of these relationships that Edwards envisioned in the ministerial ideal.

¹This article updates a paper first presented in November 2006 at the national meeting for the Evangelical Theological Society in Washington D.C. For a recent study that addresses Edwards's ordination sermons and their potential for spiritual formation, see Sean Michael Lucas, "Divine Light, Holy Heat': Jonathan Edwards, the Ministry of the Word, and Spiritual Formation," *Presbyterion* 34 (2008): 1–11.

²For a comprehensive analysis of Edwards's understanding of the ministry, see Helen Westra, *The Minister's Task and Calling in the Sermons of Jonathan Edwards* (Studies in American Religion 17; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1986). For a shorter account that analyzes Edwards's evangelistic sermons, see Richard A. Bailey and Gregory A. Wills's introductory essay to *The Salvation of Souls: Nine Previously Unpublished Sermons on the Call of Ministry and the Gospel by Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 16–26. For an excellent study detailing Edwards's ministry of teaching Scripture, see Douglas A. Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009).

1. Called to Officiate a Marriage: The Portrait of the Minister “Marrying” the People of God

Part of the aura associated with Edwards’s portrayal of the ideal minister can be explained by his theological vision that emphasized the close connection between creation and Creator.³ Because God is the only true reality and because creation is in some sense a shadow of divine being, the created order is not radically distinct from God. Rather, Edwards understood creation to be a vastly intricate system of ideas subsisting in the divine mind.⁴ This close relationship between God and the created order dramatically affected his understanding of the universe. Every aspect of creation—every creature, event, symmetry, or relationship—reflects or magnifies the grand themes of God, whether it be his trinitarian excellency, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the necessity of holiness, or the work of redemption and judgment. Consequently, typological correspondences abound in his thought, not merely in his reflections on the biblical text, but also in his reflections on nature and world history. The silkworm for instance is a type of Christ, for in its death it yields “such glorious clothing” for human beings just as Christ’s death clothes us with his righteousness.⁵ The beautiful rose budding atop of the briars signifies that people attain eternal life only through a life of faith characterized by mortification and self-denial.⁶ Edwards expands this typological reasoning to his reflections on the nature of the ministry. Consequently, we should expect to find him illuminating many typological and symbolic relationships between the minister and Christ that the modern exegete might find surprising.

Marriage was a prominent theme that conditioned Edwards’s understanding of the ministry. Scripture often compares the relationship between Christ and his church to a marriage (John 3:29; Matt 9:15; 25:1; Eph 5:23–27; Rev 21:2, 9), and Edwards found this connection particularly fruitful when he pondered the ministerial ideal. In his 1746 sermon “The Church’s Marriage to Her Sons, and to Her God,” he encouraged ministers to envision their calling in two ways. First, the minister is to consider himself as being married to the particular congregation he serves. Second, he is to prepare his congregation for their marriage with Christ at the eschatological consummation of all things.⁷

³Edwards’s doctrine of God has long been a fascination for philosophers and historical theologians who have tried to categorize the way he distinguished God and creation. For works that explore Edwards’s doctrine of God from different angles, see Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (2nd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Stephen Holmes, “Does Jonathan Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology? A Response to Sang Hyun Lee,” in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian* (ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 99–114; and Oliver Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴This does not mean that Edwards blurred the ontological distinction between God and creation. Edwards was no pantheist. All it means is that he portrayed a very close relationship between God and nature. For writings that explore his philosophical idealism, see Wallace A. Anderson, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6 of *Scientific and Philosophical Writings* (ed. Wallace E. Anderson; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 52–136. After initial citation, individual volumes in the Yale edition of Edwards’s works will be indicated as *WJE* followed by the volume and page numbers.

⁵Jonathan Edwards, “Images of Divine Things,” no. 35 in *Typological Writings*, vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Wallace E. Anderson and Mason I. Lowance Jr. with David Watters; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 59.

⁶Edwards, “Images,” no. 3, *WJE* 11:52.

⁷Jonathan Edwards, “The Church’s Marriage to Her Sons, and to Her God,” in *Sermons and Discourses, 1743–1758*, vol. 25 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Wilson H. Kimnach; New Haven: Yale University Press,

*“The uniting of a faithful minister with Christ’s people in the ministerial office, when done in a due manner, is like a young man’s marrying a virgin.”*⁸ So reads the first half of the sermon’s central idea. For Edwards, embracing the responsibilities of leading a congregation is an occasion of great solemnity. As one should not enter marriage lightly, so one should not enter into the pastorate lightly for the simple reason that God has established the relationship between a minister and his congregation. Edwards unpacks this thesis in two ways: (1) with regard to the minister’s relation to the universal church and (2) with regard to the minister’s relationship with his particular congregation.

Edwards is very clear that Christian ministry is a calling that is distinguished from every other vocation. A man who “takes upon him the sacred work and office of a minister of the gospel, . . . does in some sense espouse the church of Christ in general.”⁹ The emphasis here is on the words “in general.” While he is not a universal pastor, the gospel minister does have a special regard for all the church “wherever he is providentially called to preach the word of God,” a concern that is “different than other persons have that are laymen.” The faithful minister is “under obligations . . . to love the church,” to “prefer Jerusalem above [as] his chief joy,” to have “tender concern” for her wherever he may minister. He even uses language that echoes phrases used in a wedding ceremony:

And as he, in taking office, devotes himself to the service of Christ in his church, so he gives himself to the church, to be hers, in that love, tender care, constant endeavor, and earnest labor for perfection, comfort and welfare that is proper to his office, as a minister of the church of Christ, by the permission of divine providence, as long as he lives.¹⁰

The way Edwards describes the church’s reception of the minister reveals his traditional attitude toward gender roles. As the bride, the church of Christ in general is to “embrace the ministry of the church [i.e., the ministers of the gospel, the groom] with endeared affection and high honor and esteem, for Christ’s sake.” She is to “joyfully commit and subject” herself to the teaching and leadership of its ministers “as the bride doth in marriage cleave and deliver up herself to her husband.” This articulation of different roles in the relationship between ministers and laity reflects Edwards’s hierarchical understanding of the Christian ministry: Christian ministers are over the church in that they teach, love, and protect it. While they are fellow believers in Christ, the two groups are distinguished in the economy of salvation. Collectively, he suggests that gospel ministers may even be “considered one mystical person, that espouses the church as a young man espouses a virgin.”¹¹

While there is a sense where ministers “marry” the church “in general,” Edwards noted that the parallels between marriage and ministry are most clearly discerned in the pastor’s union with his own congregation. The union between minister and congregation reflects the relationship between newlyweds in their great affection for one another. “The young man gives himself to his bride in purity, as undebauched by meretricious embraces; and she also presents herself to him a chaste virgin. So in such an union of a minister and people as we are speaking of, the parties united are pure and holy

2006), 167–96.

⁸ *WJE* 25:171, emphasis in original.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25:172.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25:173.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25:173. Edwards points to Rev 2:1 and 14:6 as support for this point.

in their affection and regard one to another.”¹² Great joy and sympathy is shared between them. The minister takes it upon himself to know his flock intimately and care for its needs. As such,

The conjugal relation leads the persons united therein to the most intimate acquaintance and conversation with each other; so the union there is between a faithful pastor and a Christian people leads them to the intimate conversation about things of a spiritual nature.¹³

This intimate knowledge of each other leads to offspring, the new-born children of God who come to faith in Christ in the context of a fellowship where grace abounds.

While ministers “marry” their own congregations, their greatest joy is derived in preparing the church for its own marriage to Christ. “[The] union of [a] minister with the people of Christ, is in order to their being brought to the blessedness of a more glorious union, in which Christ shall rejoice over them as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.”¹⁴ Though the faithful minister loves his church with tender affection, his hope is not so much that she loves him back but that her love for Christ increases. Edwards likens this kind of affection to “Abraham’s faithful servant, [who] was sent to fetch a wife for his master’s son, [and] was captivated with Rebekah’s beauty and virtue; but not with reference to an union with himself, but with his master, Isaac.”¹⁵ Practically, ministers prepare their people for marriage to Christ through preaching. “The preaching of the gospel by faithful ministers is the principle means that God makes use of for the exhibiting Christ and his love and benefits to his elect people, and the chief means of their being sanctified, and so fitted to enjoy their spiritual bridegroom.”¹⁶ Consequently, ministers are God’s unique instruments who fit the church for her glorious wedding day with the Lamb. They clothe the church in wedding garments, they lead her “in the way of heaven,” and they “*present her [as] a chaste virgin to Christ*” all through preaching which exalts the beauty and splendor of the great bridegroom, Jesus Christ.¹⁷

It is this marriage union, the church’s union with Christ, which occupies the largest portion of this sermon. Edwards in a sense is illustrating what he is commending: portraying Christ as a glorious bridegroom who loves his church in such a way that the listener is lovingly drawn to the Savior. “[E]verything that is desirable and excellent in the union between an earthly bridegroom and bride, is to be found in the union between Christ and his church; and that to an infinitely greater perfection, and more glorious manner.”¹⁸ Christ and his church have chosen each other as their greatest joy; though Christ be “infinitely above men and angels, yet he has chosen the elect to be his companions.”¹⁹ While Christ rejoices over his people at all times, there are seasons where his church experiences the joy of this union more deeply, periods such as one’s own conversion, the outpouring of the Spirit of God in

¹² Ibid., 25:174.

¹³ Ibid., 25:174.

¹⁴ Ibid., 25:176.

¹⁵ Ibid., 25:184.

¹⁶ Ibid., 25:185.

¹⁷ Ibid., 25:186, emphasis in original.

¹⁸ Ibid., 25:178.

¹⁹ Ibid., 25:178.

revival, or glorification.²⁰ The greatest heights of joy shall be at Christ's last coming where there shall be "a joyful meeting of this glorious bridegroom and bride indeed," the saints "shin[ing] forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Then will come the time, when Christ will sweetly invite his spouse to enter in with him into the palace of his glory, which he had been preparing for her from the foundation of the world, and shall as it were take her by the hand, and lead her in with him: and this glorious bridegroom and bride shall with all their shining ornaments, ascend up together into the heaven of heaven; the whole multitude of glorious angels waiting upon them: and this Son and daughter of God shall, in their united glory and joy, present themselves together before the Father; when Christ shall say "Here am I, and the children which thou has given me": and they both shall in that relation and union, together receive the Father's blessing; and shall thenceforward rejoice together, in consummate, uninterrupted, immutable, and everlasting glory, in the love and embraces of each other, and joint enjoyment of the love of the Father.²¹

With these words we quickly approach the nerve center of Edwards's theology: God's end (or purpose) in creating the world. Creation was for the ultimate purpose that "the eternal Son of God might obtain a spouse, towards whom he might fully exercise the infinite benevolence of his nature."²² How marvelous it is, Edwards goes on to say, that Christ should select some to aid him in obtaining this joyous great end. What a high honor it is for ministers to "treat and transact for him with his dear spouse, that he might obtain this joy . . . to be married to her in his name, and sustain an image of his own endearing relation to her."²³ As they faithfully carry out their duties, ministers of the gospel directly advance creation to its ultimate goal by preparing the church for its grand wedding day.

²⁰ Ibid., 25:181–82.

²¹ Ibid., 25:184. Edwards was fascinated with the increasing degrees of glory and joy the church partakes of in the future progression of salvation history. For sermons where Edwards explores this, see "The Pure in Heart Blessed," in *Sermons and Discourses, 1730–1733*, vol. 17 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Mark Valeri; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 59–86; "Heaven Is a World of Love," in *Ethical Writings*, vol. 8 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Paul Ramsey; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 366–97; and "The Portion of the Righteous," in vol. 8 of *Works of President Edwards* (ed. Sereno E. Dwight; New York: 1829), 227–79. For studies that explore Edwards's understanding of heaven, see Paul Ramsey, "Heaven is a Progressive State," *WJE*, 8:706–38, and Robert W. Caldwell III, "A Brief History of Heaven in the Writings of Jonathan Edwards," *Calvin Theological Journal* 46 (2011): 48–71.

²² Edwards, "The Church's Marriage to Her Sons," *WJE* 25:187. Edwards elaborates more on this theme in his private notebooks; see "Miscellanies," no. 104, in *The "Miscellanies" a–500*, vol. 13 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Thomas A. Schafer; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 272–74; and "Notes on Scripture," no. 235, in *Notes on Scripture*, vol. 15 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Stephen J. Stein; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 185–87.

²³ Edwards, "The Church's Marriage to Her Sons," *WJE* 25:189.

2. Called to Be a Burning and Shining Light: The Portrait of Light and the Ministerial Ideal

One of Edwards's favorite themes he employed when discussing the Christian ministry was that of light. In "The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister," Edwards explored this theme in depth. The text for the sermon, John 5:35 (where Jesus refers to John the Baptist as a "burning and shining light"), segues evenly into the sermon's central idea: "'Tis the excellency of a minister of the gospel to be both a burning and shining light."²⁴ The sermon is an excellent example of Edwards's typological exegesis and demonstrates his ability to connect natural, theological, and biblical concepts.²⁵

"There is an analogy between the divine constitution and disposition of things in the natural and in the spiritual world."²⁶ As God has established the sun as the main light for our world, towering above all other lights throughout the universe, so has he established one primary light in the spiritual world: Jesus Christ, the "sun of righteousness." Ministers of the gospel are "as it were the stars that encompass this glorious fountain of light, to receive and reflect his beams, and give light to the souls of men."²⁷ He indicates that in the physical realm light discovers, refreshes, and directs; we find the same thing in the spiritual realm. A minister of the gospel therefore discovers things, eternal divine things, to people's souls "imparting divine truth to them . . . and assisting them in the contemplation of those things that angels desire to look into."²⁸ He refreshes the souls of his flock by refracting Christ's light into their lives, and he directs them in their ways, guiding their feet in the way of peace, and showing them their way through "the night" in Christ's absence (John 9:4).²⁹ Yet ministers are not just "lights" as Scripture indicates, they are "burning and shining lights." How does this inform Edwards's understanding of the gospel minister? In his answer he first examines what it is for a minister to be a burning light and then what it is for a minister to be a shining light. Along the way he reveals the trinitarian foundations of his reflections on the ministry.

As a "burning light" the faithful minister of the gospel must be filled with "holy ardor" and a "spirit of true piety." He must be acquainted with true grace, the power of godliness, and that participation in the divine nature which spills over into affective love for God. "[H]is soul [is] enkindled with the heavenly flame; his heart burns with love to Christ, and fervent desires of the advancement of his kingdom and glory." This fervency naturally overflows; "his spiritual heat and holy ardor is not for himself only, but

²⁴ Edwards, "The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister," *WJE* 25:87.

²⁵ For studies on Edwards's typological exegesis and hermeneutical strategies, see Stephen J. Stein, "The Spirit and the Word: Jonathan Edwards and Scriptural Exegesis," in *Jonathan Edwards and the America Experience* (ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 118–30; Kenneth P. Minkema, "The Other Unfinished 'Great Work': Jonathan Edwards, Messianic Prophecy, and 'The Harmony of the Old and New Testament,'" in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation* (ed. Stephen J. Stein; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 52–65; and Douglas A. Sweeney, "'Longing for More and More of It?' The Strange Career of Jonathan Edwards's Exegetical Exertions," in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth* (ed. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Caleb J. D. Maskell; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 54–64.

²⁶ Edwards, "The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister," *WJE* 25:89.

²⁷ Edwards notes that ministers are likened to stars in Rev 12:1; 1:16, 20 and also in Zech 4:2. See *ibid.*, 25:89.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 25:90.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 25:91.

is communicative, and for the benefit of others.”³⁰ He strives with diligence and earnestness to labor for the souls of the lost. Edwards’s portrayal of the minister as a burning light intersects points of his doctrine of God, particularly his pneumatology. The minister, filled with the Holy Spirit, participates in God’s trinitarian love because he is united to the third person of the Trinity. The Spirit “unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new, supernatural principle of life and action . . . [He] communicates himself there in his own proper nature.”³¹ Elsewhere he indicates that the Holy Spirit is the eternal love that arises between the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the “most pure act, and [the] infinitely holy and sweet energy [which] arises between Father and Son” who “quicken[s], enliven[s] and beautif[ies] all things.”³² Putting this altogether, Edwards notes that because the true minister is united to the Holy Spirit, he possesses the same affections that animate the third person of the Trinity. In short, the Holy Spirit is responsible for the *burning* of a true minister.

Whereas the minister as a “burning light” underscores the theme of *agape*, the minister as a “shining light” centers more on the theme of *logos* which Edwards relates to the minister’s role as a teacher of the Word. “A minister is set to be a light to men’s souls, by teaching, or doctrine,” Edwards writes, “his doctrine must be bright and full; it must be pure without mixtures of darkness; and therefore he must be sound in the faith.”³³ The true minister must be able to teach, be acquainted with experimental religion, and shine in his “conversation” (i.e., his Christian lifestyle). As a shining light, he highlights the person and work of Jesus Christ and conveys divine truth to his listeners. In short, the person of God the Son is fundamentally responsible for the *shining* of the faithful minister.

It is only when a minister is both a burning and shining light that he can become an effective minister of the gospel. Heat and light go together in gospel ministry as they do in the natural world. The physical sun would be useless, Edwards notes, if its light were not accompanied with heat, for nothing would grow on the earth without it. The light of the sun gives life to the plants of the field, and in the same way “the souls of the saints will be likely to grow, and appear beautiful ‘as the lily,’ and to ‘revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and their scent to be as the wine of Lebanon’ [Hos 14:5, 7]; and their light will be like the light of Christ, which is the ‘light of life’ (John 8:12).”³⁴

While Edwards does not make the connection explicit in this sermon, his portrait of the minister as a burning and shining light reflects the contours of his trinitarian theology. Throughout his writings, Edwards was deeply conscious of how the doctrine of the Trinity shaped his thinking. He maintained an Augustinian version of the doctrine where the divine persons are understood to be the two processions of the divine mind: knowledge (Word) and affection (love, or Spirit).³⁵ Thus, the Father is the deity

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 25:92.

³¹ Edwards, “A Divine and Supernatural Light,” *WJE* 17:411.

³² Jonathan Edwards, *Discourse on the Trinity*, in *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, vol. 21 of *The Works of Jonathan Edward* (ed. Sang Hyun Lee; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 121, 123.

³³ Edwards, “The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister,” *WJE* 25:92.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25:96–97.

³⁵ For further study on this topic, see the recent literature on Edwards’s trinitarian theology: Amy Plantinga Pauw, *“The Supreme Harmony of All”: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Sang Hyun Lee, “Editor’s Introduction,” *WJE* 21:1–111; Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 193–206; and Steven M. Studebaker and Robert W. Caldwell III, *The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards: Text, Context, and Application* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

subsisting as the unbegotten fountain of the Godhead; the Son is the deity subsisting as the perfect, eternally begotten, substantial idea of the divine essence; and the Spirit is the deity subsisting as the infinite and eternal love that arises between Father and Son.³⁶ This pattern of God's triune being becomes, for Edwards, the blueprint for God's ultimate goal in redemption: God desires to communicate his trinitarian fullness to the redeemed (1) through a communication of the divine knowledge of himself to the church in the person of Jesus Christ and (2) through a communication of the divine love of God to the church in sending the Holy Spirit.³⁷ Consequently, the minister who is a shining and burning light shines with the light of God's truth (i.e., the knowledge of Christ) and burns with a holy affection and ardor for God and Christ (i.e., the Holy Spirit). In short, ministers who are burning and shining lights participate in God's trinitarian life and invite others to participate in it through their ministries.

3. Called to a Life of Sacrifice: The Portrait of Christ's Sacrifice and the Minister's Suffering

While marriage and light conjure positive images of the ministerial task, Edwards was well aware that Christian ministry can be extremely difficult and rife with conflict. His sermons repeatedly call the minister to look to Christ's suffering to find encouragement in times of great difficulty. His portrayals of Christ's agony are some of the more vivid that we come across in Protestant literature:

Look into the garden of Gethsemane, and there behold him lying on the earth, with his body covered over with clotted blood, falling down in lumps to the ground, with his soul exceeding[ly] sorrowful even unto death, and offering up strong crying and tears together with his blood: and look to the cross, where he endured yet far more extreme agonies, and drank up the bitter cup of God's wrath, and shed the remainder of his blood, lingeringly drained out through his tortured hands and feet, and extravasated out of his broken heart into his bowels, and there turned into blood and water; through the vehement fermentation occasioned by the weight of grief and extremity of agony of soul, under which he cried out with that loud and lamentable and repeated cry. Thus he travailed in birth with his seed; thus he labored and suffered for the salvation of those souls that the Father had committed to him. This is the example of the great Shepherd.³⁸

While ministers are not called to die for the sins of the world, Edwards does indicate that Christ expects his co-workers to undergo similar sufferings for the salvation of those committed to their care.³⁹ In a sermon entitled "Christ's Sacrifice an Inducement to His Ministers," he offers three "inducements" that ministers should take from the example of Christ's death.

³⁶For two places where Edwards succinctly summarizes his understanding of the Trinity, see *Discourse on the Trinity*, WJE, 21:131, and *Treatise on Grace*, WJE 21:185–86.

³⁷For further reflections on this trinitarian theme in Edwards's theology, see "Miscellanies" nos. 448, 1066, 1082, 1084, 1094, and 1142. See also the last section of Jonathan Edwards, *Dissertation I. Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*, WJE 8:526–36.

³⁸Edwards, "The Great Concern of a Watchman for Souls," WJE 25:72.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 25:72.

First, Christ's example should lead gospel ministers to "exert themselves and deny themselves, and suffer for the sake {of saving the souls of men}."⁴⁰ It is their duty to be "ready for the greatest condescension and abasement of themselves" even to the point of death if called by divine providence. They are to bear in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor 4:10) and lay down their lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16). They must endure difficulty as soldiers of Christ, not partaking of the enjoyments of this world, but embracing a life of disciplined denial so that they might maximize their effectiveness in the salvation of souls. "[Be] ready to be conformed to Christ, and as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify [it] by the word, so the minister should be ready to give what they have, and give themselves, to spend and be spent."⁴¹

Second, ministers ought to regard the "manner and circumstances" related to Christ's death and embrace a similar attitude. His sacrificial service was done willingly "not as forced or driven." He was resolute in his determination to accomplish the task that his Father gave him: "He went forward towards Jerusalem, as being greatly engaged, ascending up to Jerusalem. Going before [us to make a way]. He seemed, as it were, to forget him[self] in his great concern for the souls of men."⁴² This stands out all the more when we consider the unworthiness of those for whom he died. Edwards spends considerable time here portraying the realm of light God the Son left when he took on flesh and began the work of redemption. He "is infinitely above any need for us," for he enjoyed that "infinitely blessed union and society of the persons of the Trinity."⁴³ Yet he willingly came for the sake of *sinners* to procure for them eternal life, the Holy Spirit, and infinite joy. "That he should shed his blood for sinners was on this account more wonderful, in that he not only suffered such great things for those that were so unworthy, but that as having a perfect view of all the sins of the whole world and of all the odiousness, vileness, and ill dessert that there is in sin."⁴⁴

Lastly, Christ's example should induce ministers to cultivate the same virtues that he evinced in the midst of his sacrificial labor. "He died in the exercises of a supreme love to God and a regard to his honor and glory." When difficulties arose, Jesus responded with charity and benevolence. "[He was] of the most superlative charity and benevolence to mankind, of the most admirable meekness towards his most injurious, spiteful, and contemptuous enemies, when they were in the highest exercise of their cruelty and when he was the subject of the most terrible efforts of their view malignity and infinitely horrible contempt."⁴⁵ For Edwards, Christ's example can galvanize a minister's sense of vocation in the midst of difficulties from within one's congregation and persecutions from without.

⁴⁰ Edwards, "Christ's Sacrifice an Inducement to His Ministers," *WJE* 25:668, editorial brackets included by the Yale editors for clarity.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 25:670.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 25:670–71.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25:662.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25:665.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 25:671.

4. Called to Give an Account: The Portrait of the Minister before the Judgment Seat of Christ

True to his popular image as the fire and brimstone preacher of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Edwards had sobering words for the minister who proved to be unfaithful to his calling. Peppered throughout his ordination sermons are glimpses of the end where Edwards takes both the minister and his people before the judgment seat of Christ. The purpose of these sections is to drive home the solemn realization that ministers and their people are accountable to each other before God and that God will judge all of their deeds.

To the minister, Edwards’s words are direct: he must live up to his high calling or else he will be greatly surprised at the judgment. “[I]f we are unfaithful in this office,” he warned, “and don’t imitate our Master, our offense will be heinous in proportion to the dignity of our office, and our final and everlasting disgrace and ignominy proportionably great; and we who in honor are exalted up to heaven, shall be cast down proportionably low in hell.”⁴⁶ Edwards likens this to the fall of the demons, who, like ministers, were called to occupy a high position in God’s economy yet were cast down from heaven after their rebellion.⁴⁷

The devils in hell are so much the more odious to God, and more the objects of his wrath, because he set them in the dignity and glory of the angels, the excellency of which state they are fallen from. And ’tis likely that those in hell that will be nearest to the fallen angels, in their state of misery, will be those that Christ once set to be angels of the churches, but through their unfaithfulness, failed of their proper excellency and end.⁴⁸

In other places Edwards focuses these warnings on the congregation where he contrasts a faithful minister with his unfaithful congregation before Christ’s judgment seat. In “The Great Concern of a Watchman for Souls,” he explores this theme individually. If it is discovered that the minister had been faithful and that the layperson has made an “ill improvement” of his ministry “and so failed in the grace of God,” then one can only expect the worst. Edwards’s words here to the unfaithful congregant are chilling:

the sight of the devil won’t be so terrible to you at that day as the sight of your minister; for he’ll rise up in judgment against you, and your pastor that above all other persons in the world, excepting yourselves, is concerned to endeavor your salvation, will then above all other persons appear against you before the Judge to witness against you and condemn you.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Edwards, “Christ the Great Example of Gospel Ministers,” *WJE* 25:345.

⁴⁷ For Edwards’s theology of the fall of Lucifer and the origin of demons, see his numerous treatments in his “Miscellanies” notebook, nos. 681, 702 corollary 3, 936, and 938. See also Caldwell, “Brief History of Heaven in Edwards,” 55–57.

⁴⁸ Edwards, “The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister,” *WJE* 25:98.

⁴⁹ Edwards, “The Great Concern of a Watchman for Souls,” *WJE* 25:75. While this is a somber warning, Edwards immediately follows this comment with something more positive: “But how joyful will it be to you, as well as to him, if he renders his account with joy, for these reasons, that he has been both faithful and successful with respect to you, and appears with you in glory at the right hand of Christ, and has to say to the great Judge

The theme of an entire congregation meeting its pastor at the judgment is the centerpiece of his well-known “Farewell Sermon,” preached on the occasion of his dismissal from Northampton in the summer of 1750.⁵⁰ The doctrine of the sermon runs as follows: “Ministers and the people that have been under their care, must meet one another, before Christ’s tribunal, at the day of judgment.”⁵¹ In an effort to encourage reconciliation while it is still possible, Edwards details several differences that exist between the congregation’s present state of affairs and final judgment. Currently pastor and people meet in a mutable state where repentance is possible; at the judgment they shall meet in an unchangeable state where repentance is impossible. Now ministers and their people may disagree; then Christ’s infallible will shall be made known. Now ministers guide people to see the truths of their hearts with much doubt and uncertainty; then the secrets of every heart shall be clearly exposed before all.⁵²

Edwards gives several reasons for this solemn meeting between pastor and people. Citing Luke 14:16–21 and Heb 13:17, he first notes that God generally calls his servants to give an account for their actions. Ministers and congregants likewise will be called before Christ to account for their deeds at the end of the age.

Faithful ministers will then give an account with joy, concerning those who have received them well, and made a good improvement of their ministry. . . . And at the same time they will give an account of the ill treatment, of such as have not well received them and their messages from Christ: they will meet these, not as they used to do in this world, to counsel and warn them, but to bear witness against them, and as their judges, and assessors with Christ, to condemn them.⁵³

Second, Christ summons all together in order to settle specific issues of controversy. It will be “the great day of finishing and determining all controversies, rectifying all mistakes, and abolishing all unrighteous judgments, errors and confusions, which have before subsisted in the world of mankind.”⁵⁴ It will also be a day where ministers shall be rewarded for their labors performed in the face of severe resistance. “Ministers shall have justice done them, and they shall see justice done to their people: and the people shall receive justice themselves from their Judge, and shall see justice done to their minister. And so all things will be adjusted and settled forever between them.”⁵⁵

concerning himself and you, ‘Here am I, and the children which thou has given me!’ What a joyful meeting of minister and people there will be!”

⁵⁰ Edwards, “A Farewell Sermon Preached at the First Precinct in Northampton, After the People’s Public Rejection of Their Minister . . . on June 22, 1750,” *WJE* 25:462–93. For an overview of the circumstances surrounding his dismissal from Northampton, see chs. 21–22 of George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 341–74.

⁵¹ Edwards, “A Farewell Sermon,” *WJE* 25:463.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 25:464–70.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25:470.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 25:471.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25:472.

5. Concluding Remarks

Edwards's reflections on the Christian ministry may seem like alien advice to our modern ears. The reason for this may be that our contemporary ideals of pastoral ministry are too saturated with images drawn from the world rather than from the other-worldly wisdom of Scripture. Edwards's portraits of the ideal minister doubtlessly provided him with inspiration as he shepherded his Northampton and Stockbridge congregations.

First, the portrait of a minister "marrying" his congregation may have kept Edwards from viewing the ministry as a stepping stone to personal fulfillment and success. Those familiar with his personal writings, especially in his youth, know that Edwards struggled with pride. His intellectual gifts were uncommon and he knew it. Yet he did not use these gifts merely to pursue a path of upward mobility in his denominational world. The image of a minister marrying his congregation may have prevented him from easily entertaining ideas of leaving his congregation when ministry got difficult. Simply put, Christian ministers do not break a marriage bond lightly.

Second, the portrait of a minister as a burning and shining light no doubt led Edwards to preach rich, sound biblical doctrine. Edwards was convinced that the primary pathway to Christian transformation was through teaching the great truths of Christianity. Only when the mind is sufficiently informed with biblical theology can heart and life be transformed by the gospel. As a shining light, he devoted long hours to studying the Scriptures so that his congregation could benefit from his rich meditations on biblical doctrine. Yet preaching biblical doctrine was not enough. The minister must know God and his ways through prayer, the mortification of sin, and the pursuit of communion with Christ. In short, he must burn as well as shine, for heat and light necessarily go together.

Third, the portrait of the minister suffering on behalf of his people may have sustained Edwards through years of ministerial turmoil. Toward the end of his Northampton years, Edwards knew the bitterness of having a church turn on him. At Stockbridge he experienced the hardships associated with intense opposition by powerful community leaders. Surely the image of Christ's sufferings sustained him in pressing forward in his duties during such times. In the end, Edwards moved on from both of these places (for different reasons). He did so with much reserve after seeking the wisdom of friends and family, not merely because there was suffering associated with the job. As Edwards understood it, suffering was a fundamental part of ministering the gospel.

Lastly, the portrait of the minister and his congregation before the judgment of God may have propelled Edwards to pursue justice in his pastoral duties. Ministers likewise can zealously pursue righteousness in their congregations. In the midst of this pursuit they will experience defeat and be taken advantage of. Yet faithful ministers can take courage in the fact that justice shall be done to them in the sight of all at the end of this age.

Though Edwards's own ministry was not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, his reflections on the Christian ministry possess a timelessness drawn from his life-long meditations on Jesus Christ. True ministers are "beams of light of the Sun of Righteousness," he wrote.⁵⁶ Like art aficionados in a great museum, Christian ministers today would do well to ponder these portraits with care, attention, and joy.

⁵⁶Edwards, "The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister," *WJE* 25:100.

Secularisation: Myth or Menace? An Assessment of Modern ‘Worldliness’

— Melvin Tinker —

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In 1983 the Christian social critic Os Guinness commented, ‘Christians are always more culturally shortsighted than they realise. They are often unable to tell, for instance, where their Christian principles leave off and their cultural perspectives begin. What many of them fail to ask themselves is, “where are we coming from and what is our own ‘context’?”¹

This observation is particularly pertinent when it comes to the matter of ‘secularisation.’ Many Christians bemoan that we live in what is often referred to as a ‘secular society’ and that this somehow constitutes a threat to the church as well as endangering the spiritual and moral health of society as a whole. But apart from having some vague notion that this is not a ‘good thing,’ personal experience would seem to suggest that the level of ignorance concerning the impact of secular thinking and the secularisation process seems relatively high among pastors and those engaged in theological studies. This is not surprising. Working pastors have so many people to meet, sermons to prepare, and meetings to attend, that trying to keep abreast with major theological developments, let alone cultural shaping factors, is a major challenge (and headache!). Similarly, theological students not only have endless books to read and assignment deadlines to meet, but with increasing specialisation in academia, it is so easy to find oneself ‘running in order to keep standing still!’ And yet, if pastors are going to enable those in their care to ‘be in the world but not of the world,’ and if evangelical theological students are going to effectively ‘contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints,’ then it is vital that there is an adequate grasp of the context in which they operate. Integral to that context is secularisation.

This article seeks to act as a ‘primer’ by unpacking some of the major concepts and identifying some key players in the world of secularisation theory as well as assessing its alleged impact upon Christianity in the West. The hope is that by making some of the material which is ‘out there’ more accessible to busy pastors and students, God’s people will be better equipped to serve their Master in the places and times he has sovereignly put them.

1. Definitions and Distinctions

Dr Denis Alexander issues this warning: ‘The secularisation debate is a minefield and those who enter it should tread gingerly. This is not to say that some reasonably well based conclusions cannot be drawn once the topic has been thoroughly discussed, but it’s a subject on which sociologists and

¹Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1983), 42, 45.

historians frequently disagree, so some caution is called for.² With that warning in mind, we carefully take our first few delicate steps into the minefield!

Our starting point is to note the distinction between *secularism* and *secularisation*. The former is a philosophy while the latter is a process. Etymologically both derive from the Latin word *saeculum*—meaning the present age.³ Eric Mascall defines the secular as ‘that whole body of thought and activity which is concerned with man’s life in what is sometimes called “this world”. . . . Thus there is excluded from the sphere of “the secular” any concern which man may have with a possible future life after death and any concern which he may have, even during “this life”, with an order of reality (if such there be) which transcends the experience of the senses.’ He adds, ‘Of course, a man may believe in the reality and importance of the secular without being a secularist.’⁴ This means that many of our contemporaries are *functional* secularists, however much they may pay lip service to having some form of “spirituality”. The same could be said of some Christians. However, the full-blown secularist philosophy as represented by, say, the Secularist Society of Great Britain tends to be openly aggressive and therefore easily recognisable by Christians and so unlikely to deceive. This cannot be said of secularisation.

This all-pervading process may be defined as ‘the process through which, starting from the centre and moving outwards, successive sectors of society and culture have been freed from the decisive influence of religious ideas and institutions.’⁵ Similarly, Peter Berger defines it as ‘the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.’⁶ In other words, this is a movement of change which takes place through the structures of society, especially the spheres of science, technology, bureaucracy, and the media which results in religious ideas becoming

² Denis Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix: Science and Faith in the 21st Century* (Tring: Lion, 2001), 47.

³ Craig Calhoun, ‘Rethinking Secularism’, *The Hedgehog Review* 12:3 (2010). Cited 1 November 2013. Online: http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/THR_article_2010_Fall_Calhoun.php: ‘The root notion of the secular is a contrast not to religion but to eternity. It is derived from *saeculum*, a unit of time reckoning important to Etruscans and adapted by Romans after them. For example, the lives of children born in the first year of a city’s existence were held to constitute its first *saeculum*. The succession of *saecula* was marked with ritual. While some ancient texts held this should be celebrated every 30 years, making the *saeculum* roughly equivalent to the notion of generation, more said every 100 or 110 years, reflecting the longest normal duration for a human life. The latter usage dominated as calendars were standardized, and the *saeculum* became roughly a century. It is worth noting that already in this ancient usage there is reference both to the natural conditions of life and to the civil institution of ritual and a calendar. Each of these dimensions informed the contrast drawn by early Christian thinkers between earthly existence and eternal life with God. For many, this was something that would come not simply after death but with the return of Christ after a thousand years, a millennium, ten *saecula*. The succession of *saecula* counted the time until Christ’s return and the end of history. In a very important sense, this was not what later came to be called secular time. It was temporary, a time of waiting, not simply years stretching infinitely into the future.’ See also, William H Swatos and Kevin J. Christiano, ‘Secularisation Theory: The Course of a Concept’, *Sociology of Religion* 60 (1999): 209–28. Cited 1 November 2013. Online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3711934>.

⁴ Eric Mascall, *The Secularisation of Christianity: An Analysis and Critique* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965), 190–91.

⁵ Guinness, *Gravedigger File*, 51.

⁶ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 107. Similarly Bryan Wilson defines secularisation as ‘the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their social significance’ (quoted in Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* [London: Watts, 1966], xiv).

less meaningful and religious institutions more marginal.⁷ Of course, there is a subjective/intellectual side to secularisation, what is sometimes called the ‘modern mentality’. This has been described as ‘man turning his attention away from worlds beyond and towards this world and this time (the *saeculum*)’⁸ Since secularisation is a gradual process, its influence is often subtle and therefore tends to catch Christians unawares.⁹ Christians and churches are not immune from this process, as we shall see, and the upshot is that the net effect of secularisation upon the church is instilling a form of worldliness.

The prophets of secularisation which saw themselves as ushering in the enlightened secular age have been around a long time. In France, Auguste Comte (1798–1857) declared that as a result of modernisation, human society was outgrowing the ‘theological stage’ of social evolution, which he called ‘the fictitious age’, into a truly scientific one.¹⁰ In 1968 Peter Berger announced that by ‘the 21st century, religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture.’¹¹ This presupposes what has come to be known as ‘The Secularisation Thesis’, the view that with the rise of modernity (which embraces industrialisation, urbanization, and rationalisation) there will be an inevitable corresponding decline in religion, resulting not only in the institutional separation of church and state and the reduction of the church’s social power on society as a whole, but the decline of personal piety itself, i.e., religious belief will wither on the vine.¹²

The process (secularisation) relates to the philosophy (secularism) by providing the ideal environment in which the philosophy can flourish almost unchallenged. Os Guinness illustrates this point: ‘Imagine’, he says, ‘a sports shop in a ski resort that wanted to improve its sales of ski wear. What would help it most would be not only to have attractive designs but good snow conditions. Even the best designs would sell poorly in the Sahara. Similarly, secularisation provides the perfect conditions for secularism. It’s the new context which enhances the old concept, making the latter seem natural, even necessary.’¹³ The resulting effect is that secularisation compounds secularism and restricts religion. Guinness warns, ‘Secularisation is the acid rain of the spirit, the atmospheric cancer of the mind and the imagination. Vented into the air not only by industrial chimneys but by computer terminals, marketing technique and management insights, it is washed down in the rain, shower by shower, the deadliest destroyer of religious life the world has ever seen.’¹⁴

⁷ Similarly, D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 116: ‘In more popular parlance, however, all three words—“secular,” “secularisation,” and “secularism”—have to do with the squeezing of the religious to the periphery of life. More precisely, secularisation is the process that progressively removes religion from the public arena and reduces it to the private realm; secularism is the stance that endorses and promotes such a process.’

⁸ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (London: SCM, 1965), 2.

⁹ The term ‘secularisation’ was given to sociologists as a concept by Max Weber in 1930 and picked up and developed by his one-time associate Ernst Troeltsch in 1958.

¹⁰ Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 58.

¹¹ Peter Berger, ‘A Bleak Outlook Is Seen for Religion’, *New York Times* (April 25, 1968).

¹² Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 59.

¹³ Guinness, *Gravedigger File*, 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

One is reminded of the question once asked by Malcolm Muggeridge: ‘How do you boil a frog?’ The answer is that you don’t boil a frog by dropping it into a pan of hot water, for it immediately jumps out. Rather, the way to boil a frog is to place it in a pan of cool water and gradually raise the temperature on an incremental basis, that way the frog will die without even having been aware of what was happening. The secularisation effect is like that. Indeed, David Wells drawing upon this illustration goes so far as to claim, ‘In the same way, the Church often seems to be blithely unaware of the peril that now surrounds it.’¹⁵

2. Two Underlying Dynamics of the Secularisation Process: The Acid Rain Effect

2.1. Rationalisation

The first dynamic is what Max Weber calls *rationalisation*. This refers to religious ideas becoming less and less meaningful and religious traditions becoming more and more marginal as other modes of thinking and traditions replace them. With the advance of modernity, God is increasingly squeezed out of the picture. So if you are ill, you call a physician not a priest; if you want good crops, you get a better fertiliser, you don’t offer sacrifices to appease an angry deity. This is the hallmark of modernity, a ‘bottom up’ causation of human designs and products to replace the ‘top down’ causation of God and the supernatural.¹⁶

Nothing is left to chance. By the same token, nothing is left to human spontaneity or divine intervention. This is typical of the acid rain effect of the second trend: the modern movement toward *extensive rationalization*. Far from being an incidental consequence of modernisation, this is one of its essential characteristics. . . . As modernisation drives forward, more and more of what was formerly left to God or human initiative or the processes of nature is classified, calculated and controlled for the use of reason. This is not a matter of philosophical rationalism but functional rationality.¹⁷

This in turn results in what Weber calls *disenchantment* (*Entzauberung*), where the ‘magic’ or ‘mystery’ of life is not just removed but unwanted; we simply apply reason and technology with the consequence that matters of faith are deemed irrelevant. The social scientist Philip Rieff sums up this modernist outlook: ‘What characterises modernity, I think, is just this idea that men need not submit to any power—higher or lower—other than their own.’¹⁸

Think for a moment of the effect this has in terms of the church’s task of commending the Christian faith. We are dealing with what Peter Berger calls ‘plausibility structures’, those background assumptions, beliefs, and ways of thinking and acting which are taken as ‘given’ by any society. If the rationalisation process has made inroads, then the assumptions and beliefs of the church will simply not be ‘seen’ by many people; they are rendered more or less invisible, off the conceptual radar. It is not that Christianity is considered to be untrue, but rather it is considered to be meaningless. When the church is strong in

¹⁵ David F Wells, *No Place for Truth: or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 91.

¹⁶ Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Mega Church Movement Flirts with Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 41.

¹⁷ Os Guinness, *The Last Christian on Earth* (Ventura: Regal, 2010), 67.

¹⁸ Guinness, *Dining with the Devil*, 49.

terms of its influence, then it will at least *seem* to be true and thus relevant, and conversely, when it is weak, it will appear to be untrue and irrelevant.

Barry Barnes helpfully sets out the role of background beliefs in society:

For most people, whatever their way of life, the beliefs they accept and utilize are held unselfconsciously, and are rarely reflected upon. Moreover, when reflection does occur, it tends to depict these beliefs as natural representations of 'how things are.' Critical analytical examination of beliefs, their origin, functions, and claims to validity, is the province of specialised, academic roles in modern societies, and is a phenomenon of little general significance. The 'western layman' lives in a taken-for-granted world: solid, objective intelligible; on the whole he thinks with his beliefs, but not about them.¹⁹

Of course, it follows that if those beliefs are secular, then the Christian faith will seem implausible. It is not simply a matter of arguing for the cogency of the Christian faith; many think that there is nothing to argue *about*. In a postmodern setting, people are not particularly interested in the credibility of Christianity but its plausibility; and to be frank, in the current social milieu it doesn't seem all that plausible. Such are the effects of rationalisation.

2.2. Differentiation

The second dynamic is *differentiation*. Here the dominance or hegemony of religion collapses, and there is a differentiation in society into secular spheres (state, economy, media, and education), with the whole being greater than the sum of its individual parts. A popular view is that the medieval church had an ideological monopoly and influenced significant institutional control over the state, economy, and education. Pluralism has now replaced ideological uniformity, and institutional cohesion has given way to differentiation. As José Casanova describes it, the modern era has witnessed 'the transformation of the church from a state-orientated to a society-orientated institution. Churches cease being or aspiring to be state compulsory institutions and become free religious institutions of civil society.'²⁰ This is evidenced by glancing at the architecture dominating many Western cities:

Have you ever seen the silhouette of the London skyline in the eighteenth century? Compare it with the same skyline today. . . . What is dramatic about the earlier skylines is the dominance of Church architecture. Abbeys and cathedrals tower above the other buildings, representing the social power of the church, while spires and steeples, symbolising the human spirit, thrust upward to a world beyond. Today, by contrast, the churches are dwarfed by skyscraping office blocks and crouch down somewhere between the banks and the insurance buildings, cramped and overshadowed by a host of competing institutions. Here is a vivid picture of the effect of the first trend: the movement in modernisation towards *explosive diversification*. . . . Specialised, separate areas are thrown up, each with its own premises, its own priorities and procedures—in a word, its own autonomy.²¹

¹⁹ Barry Barnes, *Scientific Knowledge a Sociological Theory* (London: Routledge, 1974).

²⁰ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 220.

²¹ Guinness, *The Last Christian on Earth*, 65.

It is often claimed that one by-product of the secularisation process is *privatisation*—the restriction of religion to the realm of the private. To ascertain whether or not this is the case, we need some clarity about what is to be understood by the ‘private sphere.’ As we have seen in the matter of differentiation, it is true that in the West religious institutions no longer have the social clout they used to have, but having acknowledged that, in England there is still an established church with Bishops sitting in the House of Lords. To be sure, some Christians react to secular pressure by withdrawal, adopting a siege mentality or a new pietism devoid of cultural engagement. What is more, as D. A. Carson argues, the result of secularisation is that ‘the religious side does not matter very much anymore in the public square and therefore in the direction of the nation, in its public pulse.’²² However, if it is being claimed that Christianity has relinquished the public square altogether and has become something which is purely personal, then the situation on the ground would suggest otherwise. One only has to consider organisations like CARE or the Christian Institute, and the effect of local churches up and down Britain as rehearsed by Sir Fred Catherwood to see how Christian social engagement is occurring and shows no sign of abating.²³

3. Secularisation, Secularism and the Church

It has been argued that by virtue of being a process, secularisation can have a far more insidious influence on society than secularism as a philosophy. This is particularly important when it comes to assessing the secularisation of the church. If secularisation is a means of making people more ‘worldly,’ how do Christians respond?

3.1. Resistance

One stance which can be taken is what Peter Berger designates as ‘cognitive and cultural *resistance*.’ This tends to be associated with the more conservative elements of the church, for example, fundamentalism. On the face of it there appears to be a retreat from the world and the formation of a subculture. Sometimes whole ‘alternative’ communities are formed (e.g., the Amish community in the USA or the Jesus Army in the UK). The success of this approach is open to question, for there are signs that the conservative church has engaged in cognitive and cultural surrender; that is, there is worldliness barely concealed in Christian guise. This is because the effects of secularisation are so pervasive.

Take the case of the church-growth movement. Some argue that certain expressions of this movement exhibit a new form of worldliness which results from secularisation squeezing it into a practical secular mould. Here we have an ecclesiastical manifestation of the ‘bottom up’ causation of human designs and products that Guinness describes.²⁴ The emphasis on the quantifiable and the ‘doable’ (what can be achieved) is, of course, a key feature of secularisation. In this movement we have both in bucket loads, especially in the United States. Having encountered this, a visiting Japanese businessman commented to an Australian, ‘Whenever I meet a Buddhist leader, I meet a holy man. Whenever I meet a Christian leader, I meet a manager.’²⁵ Bearing in mind Rieff’s chief characteristic of modernity (‘men

²²D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Nottingham: IVP, 2012), 71.

²³Fred Catherwood, *It Can be Done: The Real Heroes of the Inner City* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2000).

²⁴Guinness, *Dining with the Devil*, 41.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 49.

not wanting to submit to any power—higher or lower—than their own’), the following citation from a church-growth manual voices the modern mentality only too clearly:

The church is a business. Marketing is essential for a business to operate successfully. The Bible is one of the world’s great marketing texts. However, the point is indisputable: the Bible does not warn against the evils of marketing. So it behooves us not to spend time bickering about techniques and processes. Think of your church not as a religious meeting place, but as a service agency—an entity that exists to satisfy people’s needs. The marketing plan is the Bible of the marketing game; everything that happens in the life of the product occurs because the plan wills it. It is critical that we keep in mind the fundamental principle of Christian communication: the audience, not the message, is sovereign.²⁶

One is reminded of the story concerning Harry Cohn’s funeral. Harry Cohn, the head of Columbia pictures, died in 1958, and a huge crowd showed up at his funeral service. This was rather mystifying to many because although a genius, Cohn was hugely unpopular because he was something of a tyrant. When a reporter spoke to the comedian, Red Skelton, about how surprised he was that such a large number of people turned up for Cohn’s funeral, Skelton retorted, ‘It just goes to show you, if you give people what they want, they’ll show up.’²⁷

The result, as David Wells argues, is that truth shrinks and the church eventually disappears:

There is a yearning in the evangelical world today. We encounter it everywhere. It is a yearning for what is real. Sales pitches, marketed faith, the gospel as commodity, people as customers, God as just a prop to my inner life, the glitz and sizzle. Disneyland on the loose in our churches—all of it skin deep and often downright wrong. It is not making serious disciples. It cannot make serious disciples. It brims with success, but it is empty, shallow, and indeed unpardonable.²⁸

The irony is that the soul-destroying effect which secularisation has on society in general is being introduced into the church in particular.

3.2. Adaptation

The second way the church has reacted to secularisation is ‘cognitive and cultural *adaptation*’, which when pushed to the extreme results in Christian thought assimilating the world’s assumptions.²⁹ While such an orientation may begin with laudable motives, ‘being all things to all men in order to win some’, the trajectory can result in simply becoming ‘all things to all men.’ Here flexibility for the sake of Christ becomes faithlessness to Christ by denying defining Christian beliefs. The celebrated

²⁶ George Barna, *Marketing the Church* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 33.

²⁷ Cited by Dale Ralph Davies, *The Way of the Righteous in the Much of Life* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2011), 107.

²⁸ David F. Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Nottingham: IVP, 2008), 57–58.

²⁹ Os Guinness, *Prophetic Untimeliness: A Challenge to the Idol of Relevance* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 61–62: ‘It is assimilated without any decisive remainder. The result is worldliness, or Christian capitulation to some aspect of the culture of the day. No longer missionary, the church “goes native” in some foreign culture or among foreign ideas.’

statement of Rudolph Bultmann captures how some are abandoning traditional Christian faith like this under the weight of modernisation: 'It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless [radio] and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of demons and spirits.'³⁰

The secularisation of religion began to gather momentum in the 1960s with Bishop John Robinson's *Honest to God* (1963), Paul van Buren's *Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (1963), Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* (1965), and Ronald Gregor Smith's *Secular Christianity* (1966) paralleling the 'Death of God' movement. It is here with liberalism that the corrosive effect of secularisation is most potent, for, as Gresham Machen argued in the 1920s, liberalism is another religion entirely. It is not merely (using a phrase of Karl Barth to describe biblical interpretation) 'saying the *same* thing in *other* words'; it is saying something *different* with the *same* words. Here, the secularising of the church is almost complete as theology is reduced to anthropology: 'talking about man in a loud voice' (Karl Barth).

Stark and Finke have drawn attention to the self-destructive nature of theological liberalism in relation to the work of Don Cupitt: 'Why should religion without God have a future? Cupitt's prescription strikes us as rather like expecting people who continue to buy soccer tickets and gather in the stands to watch players who, for lack of a ball, just stand around. If there are no supernatural beings, then there are no miracles, there is no salvation, prayer is pointless, the commandments are but ancient wisdom, and death is the end. In which case, the rational person would have nothing to do with church. Or, more accurately, a rational person would have nothing to do with a church *like that*.'³¹

4. The Secularisation Thesis Revisited

In recent years sociologists have subjected the secularisation thesis to a sustained critique, especially the axiom that modernisation invariably leads to religious decline in belief as well as in the influence of religious institutions. In Europe the picture is somewhat mixed. In 1990 10% of the French attended church compared to 40% of the Italians and 81% of the Irish. The USA, the most modernised country in the world, still has an attendance of 40% on a regular basis, which provides the greatest stumbling block to the thesis.³²

The secularisation thesis has largely exercised an appeal because it *assumes* that there was once a golden religious age from which decline has taken place with the rise of industrialisation. Such a view has, however, been challenged.

Stark and Finke use the year 1800 as a benchmark when church membership was higher in Britain than it is now. In 1800, 12% of the population belonged to a specific congregation. This rose to 17% in 1850 and then stabilized; the same percentage is found in 1900.³³ Guinness captures the misleading and damaging effects of having a false 'base line' from which to view religious declines:

³⁰ Rudolph Bultmann 'New Testament and Mythology', in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (ed. H. W. Bartsch; trans. R. H. Fuller; New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 5.

³¹ Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 146.

³² Grace Davie, 'Europe: The Exception to the Rule?' in *The Desecularization of the World: The Resurgence of Religion in World Politics* (ed. Peter Berger; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 65–84.

³³ Davie, 'Europe', 67.

A real present (which is highly secular) can be falsely contrasted with an imaginary past (which is highly religious). Quite ludicrous and unhistorical, but the stuff of which invaluable myths are made. Take a period like the 17th century in England, ‘the golden age of Puritanism.’ Granted, the Puritan revolution reached its zenith then. But at the same time the sales of almanacs exceeded those of the Bible, and for all the intense spiritual devotion and theological discussion of the period, superstition, astrology and witchcraft were rife. It was hardly a consistent spiritual age, let alone a golden one. Yet like earlier periods (such as the 12th or 15th centuries), it is convenient to use in suggesting that prior to secularisation all was well in the world of faith. . . . Dramatise secularisation through distorting history, and you achieve two things at once. You confirm the scepticism of the disbeliever and reinforce the discouragement of the believer.³⁴

Alexander Murray asks, ‘Where did the notion of an Age of Faith come from?’ Having shown from original sources the near unanimous irreligion in medieval times, he concludes, ‘The scientific enlightenment was tempted to conceive faith not as a virtue but as an original sin, from which the Messiah of knowledge came to rescue it. It follows from that view that, in the olden days, men must have believed all the Church told them.’³⁵

The second reason this thesis is questionable is that subjective religious (but not necessarily Christian) belief remains high. If the thesis were correct, these rates should be low. Thus Grace Davie concludes, ‘What is clear is that most surveys of religious belief in northern Europe demonstrate continuing high levels of belief in God and some of the more general tenets of the Christian faith but rather low levels of church attendance.’³⁶

Furthermore, if the secularisation thesis hold true, then of all the sectors of society where one would expect the effects of secularisation to show up the most, it would be among scientists. Professors Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris can only wish it were so! In 1914 the American psychologist James Leuba, sent questionnaires to a random sample of people listed in American Men of Science. He hoped to show that scientific thinking people would *not* be very religious and that in due course society as a whole would grow out of such superstitious beliefs. Each was asked to select one of the following statements:

1. I believe in a God to whom one may pray in the expectation of receiving an answer.

³⁴ Guinness, *Gravedigger File*, 119–20. Similarly Michael Watts writes, ‘Both the early Victorians and many later historians assumed that there was a mythical golden age in the past when everyone went to church of his or her own free will. But there is little evidence that this golden age ever existed’ (*Why Did the English Stop Going to Church? Friends of Dr. Williams’s Library 49th Lecture* [London: Williams’s Trust, 1995], 4–5).

³⁵ Alexander Murray, ‘Piety and Impiety in 13th century Italy’, *Studies in Church History* 8 (1972): 83–106.

³⁶ Cited in Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 72. Wells (*No Place for Truth*, 114) draws attention to the downside of this for the church: ‘In a study that was done in Britain in 2000 . . . it was discovered that during approximately the final decade of the twentieth century, regular attendance at church dropped from being a practice of 28% of the population down to 8%. During this time, however, those who described themselves as spiritual, or who had spiritual experiences, rose from 48% to 76%. . . . It is not clear from this study itself whether the sharp rise in spiritual experience reflects the fact that people are being more spiritual or that they have become more willing to talk about it, but either way there is a belief that there needs to be a spiritual component to life, one that the Church is not the place to find it.’

2. I do not believe in God as defined above.
3. I have no definite belief regarding this question.

This is so stringent it would exclude some modern clergy! To his dismay Leuba found that 41.8% of these prominent scientists selected option one; 41.5% (many whom Leuba acknowledged did believe in a supreme being) opted for two; 16.7% took the third vague alternative. Larson and Witham repeated the exact same study in 1996, and the results were unchanged. This means that over an 82-year period which has seen an accelerated modernisation of society, there has been no decline even amongst the most liberal of beliefs. Put simply, there does not appear to be a simple cause-and-effect relationship between modernisation and secularisation or a reciprocal relationship between secularisation and religious belief.³⁷

The proponents of the inevitability of the secularisation process are now more muted, and some have recanted altogether. Harvey Cox writes,

The world of declining religion to which my earlier book was addressed has begun to change in ways that few people anticipated. A new age that some call the 'post-modern' has begun to appear. No one is quite sure what the postmodern era will be like, but one thing seems quite clear. Rather than an age of rampant secularisation and religious decline, it appears to be more of an era of religious revival and the return to the sacral. No one talks much today about the long night of religion.³⁸

In an interview in 1997, Peter Berger admitted,

I think what most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960's about secularisation was a mistake. Our underlying argument was that secularisation and modernity go hand in hand. With more modernisation comes more secularisation. It wasn't a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it's basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious.³⁹

The situation is a little more complex. It would be unfortunate to give the impression that because the more robust version of the secularisation thesis is tottering (even though there are still some advocates like Steve Bruce) that this means that there has not been significant secularisation in both the USA and Europe. More recently Berger announced,

I would say that America is less religious than it seems because it has a cultural elite which is heavily secularised, which, if you will is Europeanised. The cultural elite is the minority of the population but it has great influence through the media, the educational system, and even the law to some extent. Europe is less secular than it seems because of the kind of thing Davie has been writing about, believing without belonging. . . . In central and western Europe, no question, the churches are in bad shape by any indicator

³⁷ Stark and Fink, *Acts of Faith*, 73.

³⁸ Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 20.

³⁹ Peter Berger, 'Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger', *Christian Century* 114 (1997): 972–78. Berger underscored the same view in his article, 'Protestantism and the Quest for Certainty', *Christian Century* 115 (1998): 782–96. He argues that societies are influenced by pluralism, which, while undermining religious certainty does not necessarily lead to secularisation, but just produces different ways of being religious.

of either behaviour or expressed belief and also institutionally in terms of recruitment of clergy, the financial situation, and public influence, certainly very much compared to the United States, but a lot takes place outside the churches and that has to be taken into account.⁴⁰

5. *Not Giving Credit Where Credit Is Not Due*

While the secularisation thesis in its more original, strident form no longer holds sway as it once did, there is no denying its effects on Western society at large and the Western church in particular. However, it is important not to give too much credit to secularism because other factors have been at work which have contributed to lower church attendance, and some of this may be a result of the success of evangelicalism! For example, falling baptism rates in the Church of England may not represent merely fewer parents becoming Christians but ministers being much more rigorous in the standards being applied for eligibility for baptism.⁴¹

Hugh MacLeod has argued that it is *Christendom* that has been in decline for at least two centuries and that it was in the early 1960s that the crumbling became more marked.⁴² According to McLeod, it may not be putting it too strongly to suggest that the period may eventually be regarded as seeing a ‘rupture as profound as that brought about by the Reformation.’⁴³ He argues that there was not so

⁴⁰ Charles T. Mathewes, ‘An Interview with Peter Berger,’ *The Hedgehog Review* 12:3 (2010). Cf. David Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant*, 186: ‘In the 1970’s secular humanism seemed poised for triumph. Certainly its advocates thought it was. . . . It must have seemed a foregone conclusion to them that it was only a matter of time before their views would triumph. The map would be wiped clean of all religions and all spiritualities. The world would soon become wholly “rational” and all “superstition” would disappear. This was not to be. Even while the US was modernising, a considerable amount of Christian believing was also going on in the 1970’s, 1980’s and 1990’s. America, at one and the same time, is both highly modernised and full of believing. This fact prodded theorists to ask whether their understanding of how secularisation works had not been a little too wooden. They had assumed that the process of modernisation would push all things religious to the periphery of life, marginalising them, and make God irrelevant to everything important. However, something a little different from this has been happening in America. So it was that in the 1970’s, a more subtle understanding of secularisation began to emerge. The way it works, it came to be seen, is not necessarily by eliminating all religions and all spiritualities but rather by forcing a sharp divide between what is public and what is private.’

⁴¹ See also Tim Larsen, ‘Dechristendomization as an alternative to Secularization: Theology, History, and Sociology in Conversation,’ *Pro Ecclesia* 15 (2006): 328–29: ‘In nineteenth-century England, the functions of the religious establishment were reduced in large measure because evangelical Nonconformists campaigned for this to happen—a campaign that was informed by a free-church ecclesiology. This ecclesiology called for the church to be a gathered company of disciplined followers of Jesus Christ that renounced any use of the power of the state to attempt to advance the gospel on the grounds that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal” (2 Corinthians 10:4 AV). In other words, one could argue that one of the processes that is labelled “secularization” happened because people of faith tenaciously demanded it for theological reasons.’

⁴² Hugh MacLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960’s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). He takes Arthur Marwick’s ‘long’ 1960s (i.e., 1958–74) as the outermost frame. Callum Brown (*The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000* [London: Routledge, 2001], 9, viii) makes a similar claim: he draws attention to a renewed religious vitality in the 1850s and ‘rebrands Britain of 1800 to 1963 as a highly religious nation, and the period as the nation’s last puritan age.’ He further pronounces, ‘Secularisation is happening, yet secularisation theory is wrong.’

⁴³ MacLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, 1.

much an intellectual defeat of Christianity, as the Secularists would have liked to be the case, but with coercion being used less, people could simply *choose* the faith (think for example of the nineteenth-century farm workers in Britain having to attend church as demanded by many landowners).⁴⁴ The decline of Christendom meant that a lot of people who used to be nominal Christians through legal or social pressures broke away from the church and its teachings. As Tim Keller has commented, we now have less of the ‘mushy middle.’⁴⁵ Instead, people are more polarised towards choosing a religious or secular way of life rather than drifting by default into a nominal Christian ‘blah’ zone.

Macleod argues that in the 1960s affluence increased, and rather than actively rejecting religion people simply began to neglect it. Affluence also meant that free-time options became much more diverse and diverting. Church attendance gradually lost out to more entertaining pursuits. Different attitudes to parenting also had an effect. Generations of parents had insisted that their children were going to Sunday school whether they wanted to or not, but the 1960s broke that cycle. By and large, these youths did not stop going because they had formulated new views on the question of God: they simply wanted to stay out late on Saturday night and then sleep in on Sunday morning! Linked to this was the increased number of women entering the workforce. Prior to the 1960s, men tended to leave the spiritual formation of the children to the women. With less time available, something had to give; one such thing was teaching children to pray. Macleod argues that Christendom declined in part because the young were not being socialised into Christianity. This is illustrated by the incident when a journalist asked the English footballer David Beckham if he was planning to have his son christened, and he replied that he liked the idea but ‘didn’t know into what religion.’

Another important point Macleod makes is that we need to keep control groups in view lest we wrongly infer from declining church attendance an informed critique of religion. Marxist and socialist organisations lost a greater percentage of their members than the churches did, despite Marxism being intellectually fashionable in both the universities and the liberation movements which were energizing young people. That is to say, what has been in decline are *organisational commitments generally*. Relative to this, Macleod maintains that churches have done fairly well, ‘Yet, in the pluralist and relatively secular societies of the later twentieth century, the Christian churches continued to have an important role. At a time when many other voluntary organisations had also suffered serious decline, they remained the largest in numbers of active members, and the widest-ranging in social influence.’⁴⁶ The point being made is that secularism is not the only force at work. Nonetheless, when the result of whatever factors are in operation and church attendance declines, it does help create the *impression*, especially when

⁴⁴ The Act of 1559 imposed a fine of 12 pence for every absence from church, and the *Act of Retaining the Queen’s Subjects in Their Due Obedience* of 1593 imposed a prison sentence for failing to attend church for a month and exile or death for failing to conform within three months (Watts, *Why Did the English Stop Going to Church?* 5).

⁴⁵ Tim Keller, “The Death of the Mushy Middle,” Resurgence, video [cited 5 May 2011]. Online: <http://theresurgence.com/2011/05/05/the-death-of-the-mushy-middle>.

⁴⁶ A parallel can be drawn with political commitment: ‘People are arguably just as “political” or “politically conscious” as they ever were, yet they are less likely to join a political party. I lived in the Midlands market town of Loughborough during the late 1990’s and it was hard to find a more run down, fading institution than the Labour Club. It finally closed, even though the country was being run by a Labour MP at the time. People are free to create new political parties as well, but when they do so they do not seem to be able to gather a significant membership. Nevertheless, this does not add up to a depoliticized population’ (Timothy Larsen, ‘Dechristendomization as an alternative’).

aided and abetted by the chattering classes, that secularism is a viable option and is the main, if not sole, explanation for reduced religious commitment.⁴⁷

6. Conclusion

If secularisation is another example of the world trying to squeeze the Christian mind into its ‘mould’ (Rom 12:1–2), how might this be overcome and, in some measure, reversed?

There is the employment of what has been described as ‘resistance thinking’, a term adopted from an essay by C. S. Lewis.⁴⁸ This is

a way of thinking that balances the pursuit of relevance on the one hand with a tenacious awareness of those elements of the Christian message that don’t fit in with any contemporary age on the other. Emphasize only the natural fit between the gospel and the spirit of the age and we will have an easy, comfortable gospel that is closer to our age than to the gospel—all answers to human aspirations, for example, and no mention of self-denial and sacrifice. But emphasize the difficult, the obscure, and even the repellent themes of the gospel, certain that they too are relevant even though we don’t know how, and we will remain true to the full gospel. And, surprisingly, we will be relevant not only to our own generation but also the next, and the next and the next. . . . Resistance thinking, then, is the way of relevance with faithfulness.⁴⁹

Similarly Harry Blamires writes, ‘Christians have always accepted that their spiritual and moral position vis-à-vis the unbelieving world does not in essentials change. Our reliance upon the Bible as the Word of God presupposes that advice given in one age is valid for another. The pattern of Christian preaching established over the centuries is based on the assumption that the Christian message is

⁴⁷In order to find a less ideologically loaded term to describe the diminishing social significance of Christianity, with contributory processes such as differentiation and outcomes such as reduction in church attendance, Larsen suggests the rather cumbersome term ‘Dechristendomization’ (ibid., 330).

⁴⁸Os Guinness, *Prophetic Untimeliness: A Challenge to the Idol of Relevance* (Baker, 2003). Cf. C. S. Lewis, ‘Christian Apologetics’, in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (ed. Walter Hooper; Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1994), 89–103. This stance is the ‘third way’ the church might relate to culture, ‘cognitive and cultural negotiation’. The former student of Lewis, Harry Blamires, argues that Christian believers have much going for them in exposing the inadequacies of secularist philosophy provided they don’t try to play the liberal game of having it both ways, “If it is the prime Christian duty to shake people from their reliance upon secular criteria (as we should say today) from setting their hearts on things beneath (as our forefathers would have put it), then we should take note that the intellectual environment is not wholly unfavourable to our case. . . . Distrust of current secular criteria is prevalent over fields of thought little touched by Christian thinking. If one were to represent by diagram the relationship of two bodies of people in our Western world—firstly, Christians; secondly, people who distrust secular criteria—we should find ourselves with two rectangles only partially overlapping. The grey area of overlap alone represents healthy thinking, for it represents Christians who reject dominant secularist philosophies. Of the two “white” areas, the one represents critics of the modern world who have no faith to give a positive meaning to their distrust and can therefore only resort to cynicism and despair. The other “white” area represents Christians who are trying to have it both ways, to worship God and Mammon together, to serve the kingdom of God and to acquiesce in the values of a hedonistic and materialistic society’ (Harry Blamires, *Where Do We Stand? An Examination of the Christian’s Position in the Modern World* [London: SPCK, 1980], 10).

⁴⁹Guinness, *Prophetic Untimeliness*, 20.

unalterable in its essentials.⁵⁰ Both the feasibility and desirability from a biblical viewpoint of ‘going against the flow’ is borne out by various studies. In 1972, Dean Kelley showed that by and large conservative churches grow and liberal churches decline because liberal churches offer commodities such as ‘fellowship, entertainment and knowledge’ which are also provided by secular institutions, while conservative churches offer ‘the one incentive which is unique to churches’: salvation, ‘the promise of supernatural life after death.’⁵¹ This doesn’t mean that simply by remaining ‘sound’ in terms of theological orthodoxy without being culturally engaging, growth will follow; patently that is not the case, but it does underscore the importance of maintaining Christian distinctives in belief and behaviour as God’s chosen people living as strangers in the world (1 Pet 1:1).

The challenge then for theological students and theologians is to engage with and critique contemporary secularist writings and theories, even in theological guise, from a biblical standpoint.⁵² There are signs, in the UK at least, of a withdrawal in conservative evangelical circles from apologetics. However, if our survey is at all correct, what is required is a more vigorous approach in providing a thoroughly rounded biblical apologetic.⁵³ The plausibility of the Christian faith alone requires this be so.

The challenge to pastors is to ‘know the times,’ which, in part at least, means knowing the life-situations of their flock and relating the Bible pertinently to them.⁵⁴ This will not only give Christians increased confidence that the Bible is God’s book for today (and every day), but will hopefully enable them to counteract secularist influences in their own lives as well as witness more effectively and more knowledgeably to their neighbours. What is more, this will enable the pastor himself to become increasingly self-aware of any secularising shaping which might be going on in the way he is approaching gospel ministry and especially when it comes to matters of techniques which claim to promote church growth. This is not to say that we can learn nothing from the world of management, for example, but it should make us more cautious and critical in adopting any method wholesale.

Some see the dismantling of ‘Christendom’ as a fresh opportunity to be the church, calling Christians to embrace the challenge. Stanley Hauerwas urges Christians to just get on with living the gospel and let the chips fall where they may.⁵⁵ From an earlier century, Søren Kierkegaard, railing against the moribund Danish State Church, saw the distinguishing features of a church’s obtaining Christ’s favour as being one of ‘cross and agony and suffering, crucifying the flesh, suffering for the doctrine, being salt, being

⁵⁰ Blamires, ‘Where Do We Stand?’ 139.

⁵¹ D. M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion* (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1972), 92.

⁵² Examples of this include, D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Nottingham: IVP, 1996); David F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Nottingham: IVP, 2005); Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Nottingham: IVP, 2000).

⁵³ See Melvin Tinker, ‘Reasonable Belief? Providing Some of the Groundwork for an Effective Christian Apologetic,’ *Churchman* 124 (2011): 343–58.

⁵⁴ See Melvin Tinker, ‘Bridge Building in Preaching,’ n.p. [cited 1 November 2013]. Online: <http://beginningwithmoses.org/preaching/246/bridge-building-and-preaching>.

⁵⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, John Berkman, and Michael Cartwright, eds., *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

sacrificed.⁵⁶ The call for the church in the secularised West to be prepared to suffer rounds off D. A. Carson's treatment of the corrosive effect of secularisation in producing a more intolerant society, together with the challenge, 'Delight in God, and trust in him. God remains sovereign, wise and good. Our ultimate confidence is not in any government or party, still less in our ability to mould the culture in which we live.'⁵⁷

Our calling is really the same as the calling of any Christian living in this *saeculum* with its idolatries and various expressions of rebellion against its Creator: remain faithful and true. The promise of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus is unequivocal and firm: 'To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations' (Rev 2:26).

⁵⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *Attack upon "Christendom," 1854–1855* (trans. Walter Lowrie; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 34–35.

⁵⁷ Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 176.

PASTORAL PENSÉES

12 Reasons You Should Pray Scripture

— Andrew David Naselli —

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I don't want to give the impression that I'm a prayer-expert. I'm not. But that's one reason I find praying Scripture so helpful (more on that later).

My argument is simple: *You should pray Scripture.*

Three qualifications:

1. I don't mean merely that you should pray. That's a given.
2. I don't mean that you should merely pray scripturally *informed* prayers. That's also a given. I'm arguing specifically that you should pray Scripture itself.
3. I'm not arguing that you should pray *only* Scripture every time you pray. Rather, I'm arguing that you should pray Scripture itself often.

So why should you pray Scripture? For at least twelve reasons:

1. You should pray Scripture because God's people in the OT and NT did.

It's not always logical to argue that we should do something merely because the Bible records God's people doing it. Sometimes OT narratives or the book of Acts *describe* practices without *prescribing* them. But I can't think of a one good reason that we shouldn't emulate these two examples.

First, an example from the OT: When the Israelites confess their sins in Neh 9, the Levites lead the people in prayer (Neh 9:5–37). The entire prayer is scripturally informed (e.g., 9:11),¹ and verse 17 quotes previous Scripture:

They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, *gracious and merciful, slow to anger and*

¹ Another example is Daniel's scripturally informed prayer in Dan 9:2–3 (ESV, emphasis added): "In the first year of his [i.e., Darius's] reign, I, Daniel, *perceived in the books* [NIV: *understood from the Scriptures*] the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. *Then* [NASB, NET, NIV, HCSB, NLT: *So*] *I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*" (Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2011 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.) So Daniel read his Bible (specifically, Jeremiah) and therefore responded with earnest prayer. And his prayer in Dan 9 is scripturally informed. For example, he prays in v. 13, "As it is written in the Law of Moses."

abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, ‘This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,’ and had committed great blasphemies . . . (Neh 9:17–18, emphasis added)

In the middle of their prayer, they quote Exod 34:6. They apply that Scripture to their specific context.

Second, an example from the NT: After the antagonistic Sanhedrin release Peter and John in Acts 4, how does the early church respond?

And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“‘Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’ . . .” (Acts 4:24–26)

In the middle of their prayer, they quote Ps 2:1–2. They apply that Scripture to their specific context.

2. You should pray Scripture because Jesus did.

I need to develop this further because it’s not always logical to argue that we should do something merely because Jesus did. Jesus did a lot of things that we *can’t* do—like walk on water and forgive people of their sins. And Jesus did some things that we *shouldn’t* do—like die on the cross to satisfy God’s righteous wrath against sinners. But Jesus did many things that we should imitate, and praying Scripture is one of them.

Both the Gospel according to Matthew and Mark record that Jesus prayed this to the Father when he was dying on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). That quotes the first line of Ps 22.

We have to be careful here because Jesus fulfills Scripture in a way that we don’t. Jesus is unique.² My point is that Jesus prayed Scripture. For him to do that, he had to read Scripture, correctly understand Scripture, meditate on Scripture, and then apply Scripture to his specific situation. We don’t typologically fulfill Scripture in the same way that Jesus does, but we can and should pray Scripture appropriately with reference to our contexts. For example, we can appropriate God-breathed prayers in Scripture as

²The NT applies Ps 22 typologically. Jesus repeats David’s experience in Ps 22 at a deeper, climactic level in the history of salvation. Because of passages like 2 Sam 7 and Ps 2, David became a “type” or model of his greater Son, the promised Messiah. This does not mean that everything that happened to David must find its echo in Jesus, but the NT understands many of the broad themes of David’s life that way (cf. Ps 16:8–11 in Acts 2:24–28 or Ps 45:6–7 in Heb 1:8–9), especially those that focus on David’s suffering, weakness, betrayal by friends, and discouragement (e.g., Ps 22 in the passion narratives).

Jesus repeats David’s experience in Ps 22 at a deeper, climactic level in the history of salvation. Jesus draws attention to Ps 22 by quoting Ps 22:1 while on the cross. And the Gospel according to John connects Jesus’ passion with Ps 22 by referring to the righteous sufferer’s thirst (cf. John 19:28 with Ps 22:15) and pierced hands and feet (cf. John 19:18, 34, 37; 20:25–27 with Ps 22:16).

they match our own circumstances. God's people have been doing that with the Psalms for thousands of years.

3. You should pray Scripture because it glorifies God the Father.

Jesus told his disciples in John 15:7–8, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”³ What is the “fruit” in the context of John 15?

I won't take the time to demonstrate this here,⁴ but here's how I understand John 15:4: “Abide in me, and I in you” essentially means “Obey my words, and let my words remain in you.” Therefore, Jesus abides in us (believers) to the degree that his words abide in us, and we abide in Jesus to the degree that we obey his words. Every believer abides in Jesus to some degree, resulting in different degrees of fruitfulness.

So when we internalize Jesus' individual utterances (i.e., his words remain in us), we will make scripturally informed requests, and God will answer them. So what is the “fruit”? I think that the fruit in this context is the answers to those prayers. That does not refer exclusively to when we pray Scripture; it refers to scripturally informed prayers. But that certainly includes our praying Scripture. When we pray Scripture, we demonstrate explicitly that Jesus' words are remaining in us.

And when we are bearing much fruit through our praying Scripture, that is a way that we glorify God the Father: “By this my Father is glorified.”

4. You should pray Scripture because it helps you focus on what is most important.

We can so easily drift into praying lists of requests that concern mainly issues such as sickness or anxiety or money or wisdom for decision-making. And it's right to ask about concerns like that. But what can happen is that those legitimate concerns become the dominant and almost exclusive content of what we pray.

But what about praising God? And exulting in glorious truths about God and his world? And thanking God for specific blessings? And asking God to forgive us? Prayer is about much more than merely asking God for stuff (though it's not less than that). Praying Scripture helps us focus on what is most important.

5. You should pray Scripture because it helps you focus on praying.

We humans are weak. We can be like Peter, James, and John when they were with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and fell asleep three times instead of praying. Jesus acknowledged, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:41 NIV).

³John Piper says of John 15:7, “There is a direct connection between the degree to which our minds are shaped by Scripture and the degree to which our prayers are answered” (“Tips for Praying the Word,” January 9, 1984, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/tips-for-praying-the-word>).

⁴See Andrew David Naselli, *Let Go and Let God? A Survey and Analysis of Keswick Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 236–47.

We can have the best intentions in the world and then not pray or pray without really praying. Our mind may wander, or we may even fall asleep. Praying Scripture is a practical way “to impede mental drift.”⁵

John Piper shares,

If I try to pray for people or events without having the word in front of me guiding my prayers, then several negative things happen. . . . [One] negative thing is that my mind tends to wander, and I think instead about what I’m wearing, or that there is a Venetian blind that is halfway open, or that there is a siren out on the street and I’m wondering what is happening. I’m jerked all over the place by my inattentiveness. But the Bible holds my attention because I’m looking at it and reading it. . . . I’ve said to people, “You can pray all day if you pray the Bible.” Some people wonder how you can pray longer than five minutes, because they would lose things to pray for. But I say that if you open the Bible, start reading it, and pause at every verse and turn it into a prayer, then you can pray all day that way.⁶

6. You should pray Scripture because it is entirely truthful.

Scripture is like no other book because it’s without error and incapable of error. So this protects you from error. You can’t go wrong when you pray Scripture!⁷

7. You should pray Scripture because it helps you pray confidently.

Since Scripture is entirely truthful, you should pray confidently when you pray Scripture. It’s safe, secure, firm ground. You don’t need to wonder, “Is this a good thing or a bad thing to pray?” Scripture expresses God’s will, God’s character, and God’s promises. So if you are praying Scripture, then you don’t need to worry about being self-deceived or that you’re working yourself up for something ephemeral (like praying to become a billionaire overnight). Obviously, you’ll need wisdom regarding how to pray Scripture with reference to specific people and circumstances, especially in light of Jesus’ extravagant promises about what we ask for with faith (see Matt 21:22; Mark 11:24). When you’re praying Scripture, you can be sure that what you’re praying is in keeping with God’s will, that you’re asking in Jesus’ name: “Whatever you ask *in my name*, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything *in my name*, I will do it” (John 14:13–14, emphasis added). “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything *according to his will* he hears us” (1 John 5:14, emphasis added).

⁵ D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 20–21.

⁶ John Piper, “Should I Use the Bible When I Pray?,” September 28, 2007, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/ask-pastor-john/should-i-use-the-bible-when-i-pray>.

⁷ Actually, you can go wrong when you pray Scripture if you mishandle Scripture. So you can’t go wrong when you pray Scripture *if you are rightly handling the Scripture that you’re praying*.

8. You should pray Scripture because it kindles your affections.

Ray Ortlund writes, “I have learned to see the Bible as kindling for a holy fire. Scripture is meant to inform us, and thus to inflame us. It is meant to illuminate our thoughts of God, and thus to ignite our affections for God.”⁸

John Piper’s chapter on Scripture in *Desiring God* is called “Scripture: Kindling for Christian Hedonism.”⁹ He closes by sharing from George Müller’s autobiography how he started his day:

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. . . .

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning. *Now* I saw, that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental, communion with the Lord. I began therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning.

The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord’s blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God; searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake or preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that though I did not, as it were, give myself to *prayer*, but to *meditation*, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer.

When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me, that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.¹⁰

⁸ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *A Passion for God: Prayers and Meditations on the Book of Romans* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), xiv.

⁹ John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (3d ed.; Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003), 143–58.

¹⁰ *Autobiography of George Müller* (comp. Fred Bergen; London: Nisbet, 1906), 152–54; quoted in Piper, *Desiring God*, 155–56.

9. You should pray Scripture because it helps you express yourself appropriately.

When you pray, you are addressing the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. How can you appropriately praise such a person? How can you appropriately repent of your sins and ask him to forgive you? How can you appropriately thank such a person? Yes, you should sound like yourself. There's no inherent virtue in reciting Shakespearean-style prayers. But when you pray Scripture, you can use God-breathed verbs and nouns and adjectives and adverbs and prepositions and connectives. You could pray, "God, you're really big and kind and powerful." And that's good. There's nothing wrong with that. But you could be more expressive. You could express yourself even more vividly, more richly. For example, you could pray Psalm 145:1–3:

I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.

Or after you ask God to act in some specific ways, you could quote Daniel 9:18: "We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy."

Or if you're not quite sure what to do, you could pray 2 Chr 20:12b: "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

10. You should pray Scripture because it keeps your prayers fresh and specific.

People tend to sit in the same spot in their church's auditorium each week. Students tend to sit in the same spot for classes. Google can predict with scary accuracy what sites you will visit online and when. Grocery stores that use special grocery cards can predict with alarming precision what each customer will buy and when. Those who know me fairly well can predict with almost 100% accuracy when I will wake up every morning and what I will order when I eat at Chipotle.

We are creatures of habit. And that's not a bad thing. But sometimes that can be a bad thing. Sometimes we can get in bad rut when it comes to spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading and prayer: our routine may become dull and boring and even unproductive.

A helpful way to avoid a bad prayer rut is to pray Scripture. It keeps your prayers fresh and specific. John Piper shares,

If I try to pray for people or events without having the word in front of me guiding my prayers, then several negative things happen. One is that I tend to be very repetitive from day to day and hour to hour, and I just pray the same things all the time. . . . But the Bible . . . gives me biblical things to pray for so that I'm not praying with empty and vague requests like "God bless them" and "God bless that." Rather, I'm asking for specific things that the Bible commends.¹¹

Likewise, Don Whitney observes,

¹¹ Piper, "Should I Use the Bible When I Pray?"

One of the reasons Jesus prohibited the empty repetition of prayers is because that's exactly the way we're prone to pray. Although I don't merely recite memorized prayers, my own tendency is to pray basically the same old things about the same old things. And it doesn't take long before this fragments the attention span and freezes the heart of prayer. The problem is not our praying *about* the same old things, for Jesus taught us (in Luke 11:5–13; 18:1–8) to pray with persistence for good things. Our problem is in always praying about them with the same ritualistic, heartless expressions.

In my experience, the almost unfailing solution to this problem is to pray through a passage of Scripture—particularly one of the psalms—instead of making up my prayer as I go. Praying in this way is simply taking the words of Scripture and using them as my own words or as prompters for what I say to God.¹²

11. You should pray Scripture because it keeps your prayers in scriptural proportion.

One of the many reasons that expository preaching is wise is that it systematically explains and heralds Scripture proportionally. Topical preachers tend to talk about the same few issues over and over and over. Expository preachers are forced to talk about a rich variety of issues *in scriptural proportion*, namely, every time the text addresses various issues.

Similarly, we may tend to pray about the same few issues over and over and over. But if we pray Scripture as we read through the Bible, that will force us to pray about a rich variety of issues *in scriptural proportion*.

12. You should pray Scripture because it helps you understand Scripture better.

When you pray Scripture, you must think carefully about what you are saying. In order to pray Scripture, you need to have an idea of what Scripture means in its context. The process of praying Scripture forces you to ask questions about Scripture that you might not ask if you were merely reading it. Instead of just reading a passage of Scripture to understand what it meant then, when you pray that same Scripture, you must understand both what it meant then and what significance that has for you now. This often requires that you use biblical theology, especially when reading the OT.

John Piper explains that when you pray Scripture,

you will be surprised how many insights come as you really take Scripture seriously and try to pray it into your life. If you run into theological or interpretational problems, tell the Lord you will work on that later and move on. If we seek hard to obey what we *do* understand, more light will come on the hard parts.¹³

¹² Donald S. Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life: Spiritual Disciplines for the Overwhelmed* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003), 80.

¹³ John Piper, "How To Pray For Half-an-Hour," January 5, 1982, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/how-to-pray-for-half-an-hour>.

Conclusion

Strategies

You may be thinking, “OK. I’m convinced. I should pray Scripture. But I’m not sure how.” It’s pretty simple. As you read and study the Bible, you might respond by (1) praising God, (2) exulting in glorious truths, (3) thanking God for specific blessings, (4) asking God to forgive you, or (5) asking God to help you or someone else regarding a specific issue.

Kevin DeYoung uses “3 R’s” as a mnemonic device: (1) rejoice, (2) repent, (3) request. He argues that you can pray just about any verse in the Bible with that strategy.¹⁴

John Piper remarks that once you learn to pray the Bible as you read it, “You can pray all day once you catch on.”¹⁵ He suggests a ten-step procedure for beginners.¹⁶

One way to learn how to pray Scripture is to pray the prayers in Ray Ortlund’s book on Romans as you read Paul’s letter to the Romans.¹⁷ Ortlund paraphrases Paul’s letter to the Romans and then prayerfully meditates on it passage by passage. He doesn’t always pray through the text using the language of Scripture itself, so it’s a little different from what Piper and DeYoung suggest. But this approach may serve you as you go and do likewise with the rest of Scripture.

A Closing Prayer

This prayer is adapted from Pss 25:4–7; 31:3, 15; Rom 15:13; and Phil 1:9–11:

Show us your ways, Yahweh,
 teach us your paths.
 Guide us in your truth and teach us,
 for you are God our Savior,
 and our hope is in you all day long.
 Remember, Yahweh, your great mercy and love,
 for they are from of old.
 Do not remember the sins of our youth
 and our rebellious ways;
 according to your love remember us,
 for you, Yahweh, are good.
 Since you are our rock and our fortress,
 for the sake of your name lead and guide us. . . .
 Our times are in your hands. Our future in is your hands.
 May you, the God of hope, fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in you, so that we
 may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴ Kevin DeYoung, “How to Pray Using Scripture,” January 4, 2013, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2013/01/04/how-to-pray-using-scripture/>.

¹⁵ John Piper, “How To Pray For Half-an-Hour.”

¹⁶ Piper, “Tips for Praying the Word.”

¹⁷ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *A Passion for God: Prayers and Meditations on the Book of Romans* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994).

12 Reasons You Should Pray Scripture

This is our prayer: that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

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— OLD TESTAMENT —

John E. Anderson. *Jacob and the Divine Trickster: A Theology of Deception and YHWH's Fidelity to the Ancestral Promise in the Jacob Cycle*. Siphrut 5: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011. vii + 210 pp. \$42.50.

John Anderson's book is a revision of his PhD thesis completed at Baylor University (2010) under the supervision of W. H. Bellinger Jr. The thesis Anderson develops is that God is portrayed in the Jacob Cycle as the divine trickster who uses deception to fulfil his promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3).

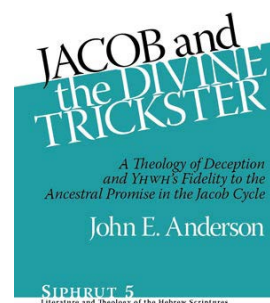
The book is well structured and clearly presented. A useful bibliography offers readers a good resource for further study in the book of Genesis. There are also indices of authors and biblical references.

In chapter 1 Anderson identifies a problem in Jacob's prominence as a deceiver and asks how this can be reconciled with "Jacob as elect patriarch (25:23), recipient of the ancestral promise (28:13–15), namesake for the people Israel (32:28; 35:10), chosen, accompanied and protected *by God?*" (p. 1). His answer is that it is not only Jacob who is portrayed as a deceiver but YHWH is "at times complicit in Jacob's deception" (p. 1). Jacob succeeds as a trickster because the divine trickster supports him. However, this trickery should not be understood negatively because it is "intimately tethered to God's concern for the perpetuation of the ancestral promise (Gen 12:1–3)" (p. 2).

Chapter 2 is entitled "A Trickster Oracle: Reading Jacob and Esau between Beten and Bethel." This deals with the section that begins with God's promise to Rebekah (Gen 25:23) and ends with the theophany at Bethel (Gen 28:10–22). Anderson argues that "the divine oracle in Gen 25:23 announcing God's preference for Jacob over Esau serves as the hermeneutical key to comprehending the larger Jacob cycle" (p. 50). He calls this "the trickster oracle" and regards it as responsible for the deceptions that take place. It is this oracle that "impels the narrative's human actors to set in motion the deceptive means by which the divine wish comes to fruition" (p. 50). A lengthy explanation is given to support the contention that the final line of the oracle is ambiguous and could be translated as "the greater will serve the lesser" or the "lesser will serve the greater" (p. 64).

Chapter 3 is titled "Divine Deception and Incipient Fulfillment of the Ancestral Promise (Genesis 28–31)." Anderson argues that YHWH involves himself in the deception of Jacob by Laban in order to ensure that the ancestral promise would be fulfilled. The deception was, according to Anderson, part of God's plan to fulfil the promise to Abraham of many descendants. For this to happen Jacob had to marry both wives, but without the deception, he would only have married Rachel. Thus the deception furthered God's promises, and Anderson describes YHWH as "a character with an agenda" (p. 102). Following the birth of the children the focus of YHWH's deception is against Laban to ensure Jacob's prosperity and ultimately to enable his escape from Laban (pp. 109–129).

Chapter 4 is "Replaying the Fool (Genesis 32–35)." Anderson argues that the theme of deception is prominent in the accounts of Jacob's wrestling and of the meeting with his brother Esau. YHWH deceives Jacob during the wrestling and he is complicit in Jacob's deception of Esau. Thus the reconciliation of the two brothers is "orchestrated by the trickster God" (p. 170).



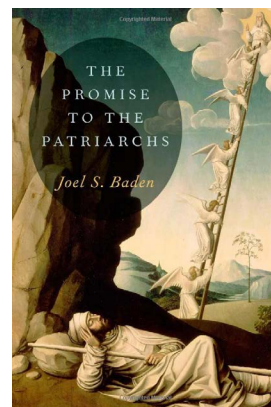
The final chapter deals with the question about how YHWH can be trustworthy if he is a trickster. Anderson considers passages that clearly indicate that YHWH does not lie (deceive) and that he is a God of truth and faithfulness (1 Sam 15:29; Ps 31:6; Deut 32:4). Anderson argues that this is a tension that we should not attempt to resolve (p. 186). He suggests that Walter Brueggemann's distinction between core testimony and countertestimony provides a helpful template for understanding how Yahweh can be considered both trustworthy and deceptive.

Anderson's approach is interesting and it provides helpful insights, but his argument that YHWH is implicated in the deception of Jacob is not convincing. YHWH's choice of someone deceptive does not mean that YHWH is deceptive. YHWH used King David and his son Solomon to further his purposes, even though Solomon was born to someone whom David should not have married. However, this does not mean that God was complicit in David's adultery (2 Sam 11:27). God used Jacob in spite of his deception and not because of it: Jacob's wrongdoing is not covered up or condoned and the blessing that he acquired deceptively is shown to be ineffective (Gen 27:29 cf. 33:3). Deception in the book of Genesis is viewed in a negative light: it breaks up a family and destroys relationships (Gen 27:41–45). To characterise God as deceptive requires a transfer of human weakness and failure to the deity, and there is no evidence of this in the Jacob cycle or in Genesis as a whole (cf. Gen 1–3; 6–9; 28:10–16). There is a great deal of deception in the Jacob Cycle, but I see no evidence that the narrator intended to imply that YHWH was a trickster.

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Joel S. Baden. *The Promise to the Patriarchs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 224 pp. \$74.00.

This is a very well-written book. I found it clear and refreshing to read, partly because of the author's attempts to make the criteria and rationale of the classic documentary (nineteenth century; Julius Wellhausen) and non-documentary (twentieth century; Gerhard von Rad, Martin Noth, and Rolf Rendtorff) approaches to the Pentateuch explicit, along with his critique of both positions and his own documentary proposal. Furthermore, the author makes a cogent argument and diligent attempt to bring his own particular documentary approach together with a canonical reading of the Pentateuch as a unified whole. This is a lot to do in a relatively short book (only 162 pages of main text with 38 pages of notes following). The goal of the book is "to examine the patriarchal promise as it functions in the Pentateuch" (p. 3) both in terms of the history of the text and its present form. Baden is proposing "a source-critically informed canonical theology of the Pentateuch, centered in this case on the patriarchal promise" (p. 6).



The first chapter of the book focuses on how the patriarchal promise defines the pentateuchal story as a narrative canonical whole. The trans-generational patriarchal promise actually consists of one promise in two parts: progeny and land (p. 12). This supplies not just the central theme of the Pentateuch but also the very plot of the whole story. Baden masterfully shows how the patriarchal promise works its way through the Pentateuch from Gen 12:1–3, 7 to Deut 34:4.

The second chapter is devoted to the weaknesses of the classical documentary and non-documentary approaches to the composition of the Pentateuch, specifically regarding the promise texts. We cannot detail the criteria and rationale here. Basically, the classical documentary approach undercuts the emphasis that the narratives place on the promise by removing some of the non-P promise texts from the main sources and treating them as secondary editorial additions. The non-documentary approach, on the other hand, takes the non-P promise texts to originate either very early, in the pre-Yahwistic oral traditions of the patriarchs, or very late, as the theological rationale for redacting the disparate patriarchal traditions together. Throughout the chapter Baden shows how these proposals were based on faulty criteria that were subjectively and inconsistently applied.

Chapter 3 sets forth Baden's own proposal. He argues that all the promise texts belong to the documentary sources J, E, and P. They are not secondary editorial additions. The only exception is Gen 22:15–18, which is a special case (pp. 97–99). He argues that when they are analyzed within their respective source divisions the promise texts fit well into their narratives and, in fact, are integral to them. There is no good reason to excise them.

In chapter 4 Baden walks through the promise texts from the point of view of the three main sources: J, E, and P. He argues that the promise is well-integrated into each of these sources, respectively. Reading the text this way causes the narrative contradictions to disappear, and the literary expressions and theological centrality of the promise texts is maintained (pp. 125–26).

Finally, in chapter 5 he comes back to the patriarchal promise in the Pentateuch in terms of its theological canonical setting. He includes in his discussion some of those scholars who have historically critiqued the source-critical approach for its lack of attention to theology (pp. 128–30). In response, Baden suggests that his own source-critical reading actually adds insights to the canonical reading. He argues that “the compilation of the Pentateuch is nothing less than a bold statement of theological impartiality” (p. 142). The compiler(s) did not intend to eliminate the tensions between the sources, but simply let the diversity stand. The various theologies are all very important in the history of Israel and therefore were maintained in the Pentateuch as we now have it.

The final chapter has caused the present reviewer to wonder once again about the adequacy of the point of departure. When Baden discusses J, E, and P as separate sources, he refers to narrative “confusion” or “contradictions” between them (e.g., pp. 22–23, 143, and throughout chs. 3–4). But when he comes to the canonical reading at the end of the book (ch. 5) he refers to the same as “tensions,” “distinct emphases,” or “divergent perspectives” and such (e.g., pp. 141–57). Why would they be confusions or contradictions when treated according to the separate sources, and then tensions or perspectives when treated from a canonical perspective, especially when it is the canonical reading of the text in the first place that causes one to read them as contradictions? Why not treat them as tensions or perspectives from the beginning, in their canonical context and in relation to each other?

This would not need to be any more of a “flattening of the canonical Pentateuch” (p. 162) than Baden's source-critical, canonical reading. Nor would it need to involve illegitimate resolution of the “tensions” to make the text uniform. There are tensions in the reality of life, and divergent perspectives from which one could legitimately look at them. For example, a person can have true faith and yet sometimes struggle deeply with that faith. Compare Gen 12 with Gen 15 to see this in Abraham's experience (contrast Baden's reading, p. 22).

Other challenges could be raised concerning, for example, his way of managing the distinction versus the connection between the promise of multiple progeny and the individual promise in the narratives

(e.g., pp. 11–12 and elsewhere). None of these concerns, however, should be taken to undermine the value of this book. I found it very helpful not only for the penetrating summary and analysis of historical-critical methods and conclusions, but also for some of the profound theological discussions spread throughout the book and especially in the last chapter. This is a valuable contribution to the scholarly discussion and worthy of serious consideration by all those who take part in it.

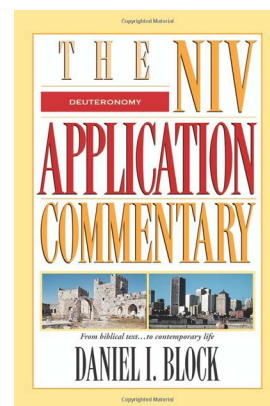
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Daniel I. Block. *Deuteronomy*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 880 pp. \$39.99.

William Tyndale wrote that Deuteronomy is ‘a book worthy to be read in day and night and never to be out of hands. For it is the most excellent of all the books of Moses. It is easy also and light and a very pure gospel that is, to wete [wit], a preaching of faith and love: deducing the love to God out of faith, and the love of a man’s neighbour out of the love of God.’ Daniel Block’s superb commentary echoes such an assessment. He calls Deuteronomy ‘the gospel according to Moses’ (also the title of a collection of Block’s essays on Deuteronomy) and suggests that Deuteronomy is Jesus’ favourite book.

This understanding of Deuteronomy, and the OT in general, is key to this commentary and a welcome corrective to the all-too-common view that OT theology is based on law in contrast to the grace theology of the NT. Block appeals several times to John 1:16–17 arguing that the contrast in these verses is not between law (OT) and grace (NT) but between ‘mediated grace’ through Moses and ‘embodied grace’ in Jesus Christ (e.g., p. 57). While his interpretation of John 1:16–17 is all too brief, Block rightly (in this reviewer’s opinion) seeks to recapture Deuteronomy and its law for the Christian. He disputes the view that many OT laws have no binding authority for Christians, appealing to Jesus’ words about fulfilling the law in Matt 5:17 (p. 588). Block follows Calvin rather than Luther on the uses of the law, arguing that Deuteronomy knows only the so-called third use of the law, namely, ‘to offer believers a guide for life in conformity with the will of God’ (p. 201). I wonder if Block is too dismissive of the first use of the law, to convict of sin, in, say, Deut 27, though it is true the law does not ultimately condemn, and it is true that the function of law in Deuteronomy is overwhelmingly positive. He reads OT law in a principlizing way: the Ten Commandments are described as ‘the principles of covenant relationship’ (p. 159). The principles expressed in the law largely still apply for Christians, though they are sometimes modified in the light of the Christ (e.g., Christians are to ‘understand the permanent values reflected here and find contemporary ways of applying those values’ [p. 532]).

This reading of Deuteronomy also reflects one of the great strengths of this commentary. Unashamedly Christian, Block consistently shows the trajectory of the texts through the OT and into the NT. In the format of the NIVAC series, this is the role of the middle part of each section of the commentary called ‘Bridging Contexts.’ Here Block shows masterful biblical theology based on an



overarching unity of the Bible. These sections will save preachers and readers from poor interpretations of Deuteronomy.

The first part of each section, 'Original Meaning,' summarises Block's exegetical analysis of the text. He admits that much of his exegetical work is not included in the commentary (Block had to edit this commentary down from over 1,200 pages), so at times I wished he had given more detail in support of his conclusions. For example, while agreeing with Block's conclusion, discussion of the notorious passage in Deut 32:8–9 could have been expanded to make clearer the debate over interpretation of these verses. The advantage for the reader, however, is that you do not get bogged down in exegetical detail and scholarly opinions. Block only rarely mentions a scholar's name in the main text of the commentary, so his commentary comes across as lucid, fresh, and succinct. Sufficient footnotes refer to scholarly articles but do not usually rehearse the arguments.

The third part of each section, 'Contemporary Significance,' provides relevant and helpful suggestions for the application of Deuteronomy. No doubt preachers will find these sections of great benefit. The extended discussion on warfare, for example, is very helpful (pp. 481–86), though some might quibble with the application of the Sabbath to Sundays (pp. 172–74). One caution is that the contemporary significance is overtly American, referring to contemporary issues in American society (e.g., Bernie Madoff [p. 553]). The commentary may feel dated before long. Readers in the developing world will need to be careful in drawing out contemporary significance appropriate for their own contexts.

In the past I have found this series to be wordy, with repetition between the three sections. I expected the same here in a commentary of 880 pages. To my delight, this is never the case. In fact, I frequently wanted more, especially in the first section, 'Original Meaning.' Block's style is succinct and easy to read, his argument clear and to the point, and the distinctions between the sections consistent and helpful.

While Block's Christian reading is a strength, it can also be a weakness. One of the features of his commentary is his frequency of calling Moses a pastor rather than a legislator. While this terminology helpfully aims to capture the sermonic style and rhetorical function of the book, perhaps it is a little anachronistic to imply that Moses' role is that of pastor-teacher in Eph 4:11 (p. 117). Perhaps also that emphasis seems to sideline Deuteronomy's own acknowledgement of Moses as prophet. While Block's demonstration of a grace theology in Deuteronomy is right, his distinctions of 'affectionate grace,' 'electing grace,' 'saving grace' and 'redemptive grace' appear artificial and overly systematized (p. 210). One lovely feature is Block's Christian adaptation of some parts of Deuteronomy, such as 4:32–40 (pp. 148–49) and 6:20–25 (p. 202).

Block's analysis of structure in texts is straightforward, sensible, and practical (though I was unconvinced occasionally, such as breaking ch. 28 at verses 19–20 and not 14–15). There are no lengthy, complex chiasmic structures or complicated panels to confuse readers. Preachers will find great help here in breaking down the text in a straightforward way that will surely aid sermon structures.

In a very brief section Block summarises a few points regarding the dating of the book, concluding that in addition to the speeches of Moses which reliably originate from him, the rest of the book most likely was produced between the time of Joshua and Elijah (p. 31). Overall Block reads the book synchronically with only minor comments on editorial matters (e.g., p. 646 on chapter 28 originally following chapter 26; p. 786 on the later insertion of chapter 33).

I spotted only a few typographical errors (18:1 should be 28:1 on p. 152n1; minor typos on pp. 244, 568, 603, 632, 741; a wrongly-formatted heading, p. 730; a missing section heading, p. 310).

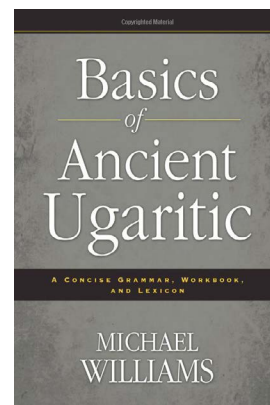
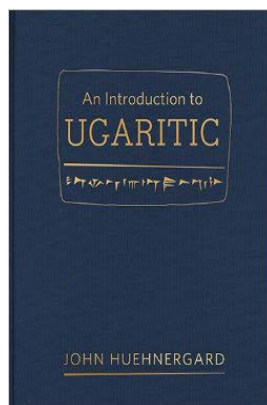
In conclusion, this is a wonderful commentary that is written deftly with passion and feeling. Knowledge of Hebrew is not required. For details on exegesis, some readers may need to look elsewhere. For preachers and readers of Deuteronomy in general, this commentary is outstanding. The glorious gospel according to Moses shines brightly, expounded by one who is an experienced scholar with a strong pastor-teacher's heart. I have no hesitation in recommending this commentary.

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John Huehnergard. *An Introduction to Ugaritic*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012. \$69.95.

Michael J. Williams. *Basics of Ancient Ugaritic: A Concise Grammar*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. \$49.99.

Gifted and motivated language students have always been able to learn a new language from almost any sort of grammar. Indeed, I suspect that some of us who actually enjoy language learning much prefer the non-nonsense format of a reference grammar, where we can more quickly access comprehensive treatments of the structure of the verb system, the nominal system, the adjectival and verbal patterns, and so on, instead of having to wade through graded exercises and lesson-specific vocabulary lists, waiting impatiently for the time when we can actually get on to reading real original texts.



In 1965, as a grad student at Yale, I was introduced to Ugaritic inductively. We started reading the Keret Epic (as it was then called; “Kirta” was virtually unheard-of) not only without vowels but also without much concern for vocalization, and we had only Cyrus Gordon’s pioneering but imperfect *Ugaritic Grammar* to work with. When we needed a meaning for a set of consonants, Arabic, with its seemingly endless combinations of vocalizations and wildly differing meanings for the same set of consonants, usually provided a plausible option if Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, and other Semitic languages failed us. As we went along we got better and better at feeling out the language, and we self-corrected. But all the while we were reading what the ancients actually wrote.

However, most of us also realize that many of our students simply can’t wrap their minds around a language that way. They’re not incompetent; they simply need the incremental approach that an elementary, deductive grammar provides if they are going to learn a new language. They need the gradual introduction of complex concepts and elements; they need a progressive series of lessons of roughly the same length with vocabulary lists and exercises to test their progress; and they need to take baby steps with simple verbs, and then gradually more complex ones, before they can handle a full overview of a verbal system.

It seems to me that the study of an ancient language comes of age when beginning students have the luxury of choosing among several introductory grammars that do those very user-friendly things just

described. This has now happened for Ugaritic. Although a variety of sophisticated scholarly reference grammars for Ugaritic and studies of various aspects of its grammatical structure have appeared in the last half-century, it is only in the last few years that true first-year Ugaritic learning grammars have appeared in English that reflect both a sophisticated understanding of the language and pedagogically solid methods.

The first of these to appear was by William Schniedewind and Joel Hunt, *A Primer on Ugaritic* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). It is an excellent beginning grammar, and in many ways has set a high bar for all successors. It is now joined by two worthy competitors on either side of it on the continuum from basic to advanced. Michael Williams's *Basics of Ugaritic*, as its title hints, is truly a beginner's grammar, but a good one. John Huehnergard's *An Introduction to Ugaritic*, gives beginners a starting point, but also moves its readers well beyond the first semester, and provides considerably greater detail in a variety of areas.

First, an overview of Williams's *Basics*. Did you ever see one of those books in the "for Dummies" series like *Windows 7 for Dummies* or *Investing for Dummies*? They really aren't for dummies at all and actually do a pretty good job of making sure that their readers aren't dummies when they finish the book. What they do, even via their titles, is to *start* with concepts, explanations, writing style, and vocabulary that are so simple and clear that they reassure rather than intimidate someone who is anxious about having to try to learn about a given subject. Williams does the same for Ugaritic. His grammar has only 143 pages, but he does a fine job of taking the student through the essentials of Ugaritic, introduced by a chapter titled "Ugaritic in a Nutshell" written in an easy-to-follow outline/bullet point format, and concluded by a set of appendices that include a vocabulary list and exercise answer key. In between are twelve lessons, as follows: Lesson 2, Language Basics, including writing/deciphering the alphabet; Lesson 3, Nouns; Lesson 4, Adjectives; Lesson 5, Prepositions; Lesson 6, Pronouns; Lesson 7, [Strong] Verbs; Lesson 8, Moods; Lesson 9, Infinitives; Lesson 10, Thematic Stems; Lesson 11, Weak Verbs; Lesson 12, Adverbs; Lesson 13, Conjunctions, particles, etc.

Williams consciously tries to be simple, but is never simplistic. He regularly eases the student into the terminology of grammar. For example, the first sentence in Lesson 4, Adjectives, is "Adjectives modify (i.e., tell us something about nouns and pronouns)." The second and third sentences in that lesson, under the title "Inflection," read "Don't panic. 'Inflection' simply means the way a word looks with all of its extra endings . . ." If you think those sorts of explanations are too elementary, you haven't taught today's graduate students. But Williams also moves students quickly on to the serious concepts, paradigms, and important explanations. He also offers regular guidance via annotated bibliographies, so that a motivated student knows where to find and what to expect from relevant articles and other resources in various languages—not merely English.

What Williams does not do is make students read much Ugaritic. The exercises are extremely short—just a few phrases or short sentences in each lesson, usually from isolated bits of the Baal and Anat cycle, and there is no reading through any actual Ugaritic text. I think this is a limitation. Williams obviously has designed the book to be finished in a single semester via a once-a-week class, but a few more pages at the end, containing some complete texts, would ease students into the language as it actually looks in extended passages. Of course, any of us who teach Ugaritic can make up our own chrestomathy for our students easily enough, but why not include a basic one as part of the appendix to a beginning grammar? After all, the student must start reading texts once he or she has covered all the basics, since that's the purpose of covering the basics. It's possible that Williams felt that a section of text

readings would only clutter an otherwise clean and crisp presentation of the essentials, but surely that would not happen if the readings were placed in an appendix. Indeed, a self-learner relying on Williams' grammar would not necessarily finish the book with any confidence about where and how best to start reading the actual literature of Ugarit.

Huehnergard's *Introduction* is considerably more extensive in its presentation of grammatical forms and its discussion of grammatical concepts, spends much more time on phonology, has a varied chrestomathy of Ugaritic documents, an extensive bibliography, twenty-three pages of photographs of tablets and excavation sites, and several times more material in each of the exercises accompanying the lessons. But it's also much more likely to be daunting to a beginning student.

Huehnergard has organized his *Introduction* as follows: Chapter I introduces the language and its Semitic connections, text finds, types of texts, tools and resources, and the connections of Ugaritic to biblical studies. Chapter II reviews the orthography of the language. Chapter III addresses phonology. Chapter IV extensively covers morphology (parts of speech, numerals, the verb system, prepositions, adverbs, particles, and conjunctions). Chapter V treats syntax briefly, and Chapter VI discusses succinctly the nature of Ugaritic poetry. At the conclusion of that chapter (p. 87) the grammar of the language has been covered.

Then come three fairly extensive learning lessons, i.e., vocabulary lists and practice exercises, in Chapter VII. The following chapter, VIII, introduces a varied selection of actual Ugaritic texts for reading, subdivided as follows: a group of letters, a group of legal texts, a group of administrative/economic texts, the Kirta story, and, finally, the Baal and Yamm story. Each of the reading texts is accompanied by a thorough set of explanatory notes. Chapter IX provides a glossary covering, as far as I can tell, every word appearing in any of the reading texts or exercises texts. A strength of this glossary is its systematic inclusion of attested cognates from biblical Hebrew and other Semitic languages.

The book finishes with a bibliography of about 270 entries on all things Ugaritic, but especially the grammar, followed by appendices on the nature of the alphabetic script (this appendix is written by John Ellison), a key to the practice exercises and reading texts, paradigms, an index of texts cited, and the aforementioned set of photographic plates.

So which of the two grammars would work best for a beginning student, seeking to learn the language on his/her own? If the student is anxious about the challenge, knows some Hebrew already but is not especially gifted at language acquisition, Williams' *Basics* would be an excellent choice. It's the patient, ultra-clear, simple, user-friendly option. On the other hand, for a self-learner who already knows one or two Semitic languages well and has no fear of plunging into another, Huehnergard's *Introduction* gives more, demands more, and takes the student much farther into the ancient texts.

Finally, a suggestion for teachers of Ugaritic. If you've got a class of students of mixed ability in a one-semester Ugaritic course, students whose only other Semitic language is Hebrew, and their comprehension is only at an intermediate level at best, and you want most or all of them to be able to get through Ugaritic grammar responsibly in that single semester, Williams' *Basics* would be a fine, solid choice. For a class lasting a full year, or for a highly motivated and competent group of students with the time and energy to put in the necessary effort in one semester, Huehnergard's *Introduction* will likely

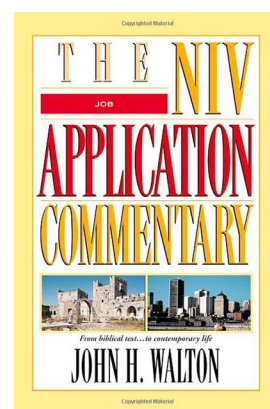
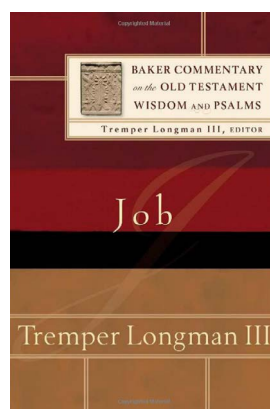
ensure a somewhat more detailed mastery of the grammar and considerably more skill at reading the texts.

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Tremper Longman III. *Job*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012. 491 pp. \$44.99.

John H. Walton with Kelly Lemon Vizcaino. *Job*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 480 pp. \$29.99.

The book of Job is a sharp, double-edged sword. On the one hand, the piece resonates with human experience and provides fertile soil for the interpretive imagination, inspiring countless works of art, music, literature, and poetry (on which see C. L. Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary* [Eerdmans, 2013]). On the other hand, the document is a Pandora's box. Here the reader unleashes vexing questions concerning innocent suffering, God's justice, and the enigmatic nature of the cosmos. And here the interpreter encounters an untameable literary masterpiece, characterized by semantic uncertainties, generic riddles, polyphonic voices, philosophical conundrums, and theological misgivings. Despite the complex and unruly nature of the document, however, readers find a sure guide, an able handler in both Tremper Longman III's and John Walton's commentaries on Job. Together, these works combine interpretive insight with theological acumen to provide the church with invaluable insight into the message(s) of Job and its enduring significance. While each volume deserves independent treatment, this review will offer a comparative analysis of these commentaries. It will begin with a summary of the methodological orientation and substance of each work, and then move to an evaluation of their value and contributions to the life and witness of the church.



In accordance with the agenda and intended audience of the Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, Longman focuses on the final form of Job and attends to the interpretive and theological dimensions of the piece. This hermeneutical posture is a hallmark of Longman's work; it pervades his treatment of conventional matters within the introduction and drives the constituent sections within the commentary proper. In the former, Longman addresses the interpretive and theological (in)significance of the document's date, language, genre, structure, and message as well as the history of interpretation, ancient Near Eastern backdrop, and contribution of Job to an understanding of Jesus. Throughout the latter, Longman moves from a fresh, insightful translation of the text under investigation to a clear summary of the unit's content, literary texture, meaning, and theological implications. In so doing, he offers a rich, holistic reading of Job that combines grammatical, historical, literary, and rhetorical concerns with inter-textual, intra-textual, and theological reflections.

The same is true of Walton's commentary. Similar to the Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, Walton's NIV Application Commentary addresses the grammatical, historical, cultural, literary, and rhetorical dimensions of the text as well as its theological and contemporary significance to provide readers with a means by which to cross Gotthold Lessing's "ugly, broad ditch" and contextualize the message of the biblical witness. While the substance and methodological orientation of Walton's commentary are comparable to Longman's, it is distinct in at least three respects. The first concerns the conventional issues discussed in the introduction. Whereas Longman classifies the book of Job as a wisdom debate, that is, as an exploration of who is wise, Walton categorizes the piece as a "thought experiment" (p. 26), that is, as a realistic literary construction that is employed to explore God's policies with regard to innocent suffering within the world. Whereas Longman gives particular attention to the content of many ancient Near Eastern texts that illuminate the world out of which Job speaks, Walton devotes considerable attention to the conceptual world painted by these texts as well as the similarities and differences between Job and its ancient Near Eastern counterparts. Whereas Longman includes a brief discussion of the retribution principle in Job, Walton provides a thorough, nuanced discussion of the motif within the OT canon and captures the friends' heterodox use of its corollary, viz., those who prosper are righteous; those who suffer are wicked. And whereas Longman reflects on the book of Job through the Christ event, Walton reflects on the document's relation to open theism. In some respects, the differences between the introductory issues treated in the volumes are due to certain nuances or matters of emphasis. Nonetheless, these nuances and emphases highlight the unique character of each work.

This is also the case in the second distinction between Longman's and Walton's commentaries: their conception of the message of Job. As intimated above, Longman contends that the fundamental question raised by the book of Job is, who is wise? In response to this question, Longman asserts that the piece illuminates the limitations, even the failure, of human wisdom. Against this backdrop, the message of the book comes to the fore: true wisdom is with God, and a correct understanding of God's wisdom and power will cultivate a proper perspective on life as well as a disposition of trust in suffering.

Similar to Longman, wisdom plays a formative role in Walton's conception of the message of Job. According to Walton, however, the fundamental question raised by the book is not, who is wise; rather the principal questions are, "Is there such a thing as disinterested righteousness?" (Job 1:9; p. 23). And, why should righteous people prosper? In response to the former, Walton contends that Job 1–27 answers the question in the affirmative: the protagonist proves that his righteousness is not rooted in the expectation of reward. As a result, the "Challenger's" accusation against God's policies is resolved. And in response to the latter, Walton concludes that the remainder of the book (chs. 28–42) seeks to provide Job as well as the reader with a coherent worldview, a vision of life that can account for the suffering of the innocent in God's economy. For Walton, this worldview stands in sharp contrast to the vision of life articulated by Job and the friends. Within their respective speeches, Job and the friends betray a vision of life founded upon God's justice (i.e., the retribution principle). In Yahweh's speech from the whirlwind, however, Job receives a vision of life founded upon God's wisdom. In this respect, the book demonstrates that God's wisdom serves as the lens through which to understand his justice, his policies, and his governance of the world. Again, like Longman, wisdom remains a prominent motif within Walton's conception of the message of Job. Nonetheless, for Walton, the questions raised by the book are different. God's policies are the center of attention within the piece, rather than the issue, who is wise?

The third distinction between Longman and Walton's works is their treatment of certain texts that are integral to an understanding of the message of the book. Among these texts, the wisdom hymn (Job 28), Elihu's speech (Job 32–27), and Yahweh's speeches (Job 38–41) may be the most significant. Longman and Walton's discussions of each deserve a brief comment.

While both Longman and Walton recognize the literary, rhetorical, and theological significance of the wisdom hymn within the plot of the Joban drama, they reach different conclusions concerning the speaker as well as the function of the hymn within the literary architecture of the book. Longman follows Alison Lo's "psychological explanation" of the hymn and attributes the words of the piece to Job (*Job 28 as Rhetoric: An Analysis of Job 28 in the Context of Job 22–31* [Brill, 2003]). From this interpretive perspective, the poem functions not only to reveal a moment of calm and theological insight in the midst of the protagonist's emotional turmoil, but also to illuminate the chasm that separates Job's "stated theology" from his "functional theology" (cf. J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* [Eerdmans, 2010], 13–15). In this respect, Longman concludes that the poem plays an important rhetorical role within the book: it confirms Job's intellectual affirmation of the necessity of fearing the Lord (i.e., his stated theology), but indicates that, "he does not really believe it in his heart" (i.e., his functional theology; p. 334). In contrast, Walton attributes the words of the hymn to the Joban poet. From this interpretive perspective, the poem functions in a distinctive way: it marks the conclusion of the dialogue proper, serves as a critique of the wisdom promoted by Job and the friends, signals the transition from the book's concern with disinterested righteousness to its concern with constructing a worldview that can account for innocent suffering, and sets the stage for Yahweh's contention that the world is founded upon wisdom rather than a notion of justice propounded by the retribution principle. Both Longman and Walton affirm the literary and theological significance of the hymn within the context of the Joban drama, but their readings yield quite different results.

The same is true with regard to Longman and Walton's treatment of Elihu's speech. While both maintain that Elihu's discourse contributes to the theological message of the book, they formulate this contribution in distinctive ways. On the one hand, Longman contends that Elihu represents a brand of "spiritual wisdom" (p. 368); he not only parrots the best arguments of the friends, but he seeks to legitimize these arguments by parading them under the banner of divine inspiration. In this respect, he represents a different form of wisdom: he moves beyond the friends' epistemological dependence upon tradition and observation by grounding his argument in "a false kind of spirituality" (pp. 367–68). On the other hand, Walton contends that Elihu represents a mature brand of Israelite wisdom. In contrast to the friends' dependence upon conventional answers from ancient Near Eastern tradition, Walton argues that Elihu offers a cogent, "educative theodicy" (p. 350), as well as a nuanced defense of God's justice—a defense founded upon God's character rather than a mechanical system of retribution peddled by the friends. In this case, Elihu serves as a "federal mediator" (p. 356), who describes God's character and Job's offense accurately (i.e., self-righteousness), but misrepresents God's policies. The differences between these readings are stark. But, in light of Longman and Walton's distinct conceptions of the message of the book, they are understandable.

The final representative text is Longman's and Walton's treatment of the climactic discourse within the book: Yahweh's speeches. Though both offer comparable readings of the initial divine speech, their treatments of Behemoth and Leviathan in the second speech are distinct. Whereas Longman understands Behemoth and Leviathan as mythical embodiments of cosmic chaos, Walton concludes

that these creatures serve as illustrations of Job and Yahweh, respectively. The former represents a more conventional reading of the text; the latter offers a more innovative reading of the discourse. And each reading makes a unique contribution to Longman's and Walton's respective interpretations of the speech's rhetorical function and contribution to the message of the book.

More could be said concerning the differences between Longman's and Walton's treatment of the discrete materials within Job. Nonetheless, this attention to the differences between the works should not overshadow their striking similarities. Both Longman and Walton offer an interested, theological reading of Job that is rooted in the final form of the text. Both allow the OT text to retain its distinctive voice, warning readers against transposing a NT conception of Satan, the afterlife, and resurrection back into the meaning of Job. Both contend that Job's suffering is not the issue; rather it serves as a foil for teaching a more fundamental lesson. And both evaluate the rhetorical function of the constituent sections within the book in comparable ways.

In light of the similarities and differences between the works, it appears that the commentaries counterbalance one another. Whereas Longman offers a fresh translation of the text, Walton offers extensive explorations of its theological significance and concretizes its contemporary relevance through the testimony of a former student, Kelly Lemon Vizcaino. Whereas Longman devotes considerable attention to the way in which the text relates to the Psalms and contributes to a broader, intra-wisdom dialogue, Walton gives particular attention to the text's distinct contribution to the conceptual world of the ancient Near East. And whereas Longman offers insightful observations on the theological implications of text, Walton addresses additional theological and contemporary matters to provide a more robust reflection of the text's enduring message.

Together, Longman's and Walton's commentaries provide seminary students, ministers, and those within the academy with an invaluable resource. While David J. A. Clines may offer the best philological commentary, Norman Habel and Carol Newsom may offer the best literary commentaries, and Samuel Balentine as well as C. L. Seow may offer the best blend of interpretive reflection and reception history, Longman and Walton's works offer a useful theological commentary on Job.

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Abigail Pelham. *Contested Creations in the Book of Job: The-World-as-It-Ought-and-Ought-Not-to-Be*. Biblical Interpretation Series 113. Leiden: Brill, 2012. x + 261 pp. £93.00/\$149.00.

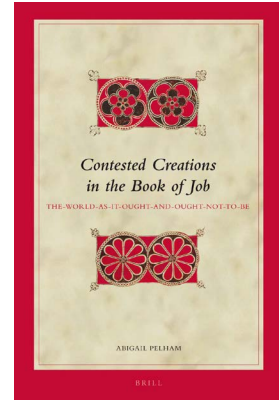
“[T]he book that follows both is and is not a blank page” (p. 1). With this assertion the author, an adjunct lecturer at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, introduces a work written with wit and verve in a resoundingly postmodern key. The book, of course, includes no blank pages, but very effectively raises questions about how texts are read, used, and perhaps effaced.

The introductory chapter situates the study methodologically and theoretically. While admitting that meaning is located in the text (p. 8), Pelham argues that reading involves more than finding meaning. Not only does the text’s meaning exceed the author’s meaning (p. 12), but Pelham urges that readers could (and ultimately should) *use* a text rather than simply reading it. She wants to be as free an agent in the reader-author dialogue as is the author. Thus speaking of the *reading* process, Pelham asserts that “the scholar writes her own text” (p. 15). Further, Pelham favors a multiplicity of meanings rather than a fixed one for theoretical as well as pragmatic reasons: “a Bible that can mean anything has the potential to mean *everything*. It is in the generation and exploration of new ideas that progress is made, not merely in the explanation of the text” (p. 16).

It seems that a significant portion of Pelham’s theory of reading is derived from her experience of reading Job. As her opening words show, she has written, effaced, and re-written a number of attempts to interpret/use the book of Job. The precise location of hermeneutical indeterminacy remains vague, however: her own experience shows it to be true (for her), and she infers from the variety of interpretations of Job that “their sheer volume points to their arbitrariness” (p. 21).

These thoughts lead Pelham to treat the Book of Job as a space in which to think, and she does so using the categories of relationships (Chapter Two), time (Chapter Three), and space (Chapter Four). A final chapter examines the epilogue of Job, and a short epilogue closes the work. Pelham uses a binary world-as-it-ought-and-ought-not-to-be polarity to grasp the various perspectives in the Book of Job. While there are many helpful insights sprinkled through these chapters, this binary optic nearly obscures the message of the book. On the one hand, the human characters use this optic to view the binary classes of wicked and righteous: “The righteous are those who live in the world-as-it-ought-to-be and who benefit from the blessings intrinsic in it. . . . [But] although wicked people may be technically present in the world-as-it-ought-to-be, they do not really live there. Instead, the wicked live in a kind of anti-world—the world-as-it-ought-not-to-be—which, nevertheless, is where they belong” (p. 43). The prose is rather thick, but the point seems to be that the ideal world (“ought”) is free of either wicked persons or of the non-blessing which they typically receive.

On the other hand, God does not recognize this bifurcation: “For God, there is only *the* world, which is *his* world, and this is the world he describes to Job in chapters 38–41” (p. 73). Quite right—but in the following chapter Pelham tries to undo this affirmation. Her argument against it is based in large part on the possibility that God does not control Leviathan, behind which runs the idea that if some agents in the universe have volitional capacity, then God cannot be in ultimate control (pp. 123, 237). “If the life of . . . Leviathan. . . is not in [God’s] hand, perhaps the life of every human being is not under God’s thumb. . . . If this is the case, God is not the agent of change in the world, Job included. God’s creation, then, is a world over which he has relinquished control, over which he is not king. . . .” (p. 137).



Pelham finds equally strong reasons in the epilogue to deny to the book a fixed overall message. In her opinion, the epilogue refutes God's assertion that his world, with all its moral complexity, is the only one (p. 188) because "Although God tells Job that the world works in one way, for Job, in the epilogue, it turns out to work in a completely different way" (p. 236). That is, Job's restoration is the contrary of the world that God presented in Job 38–41 because in Job's restoration we see "the righteous man . . . reaping reward for his righteousness" (p. 237).

At this point critique seems unavoidable. Does not this interpretation of the epilogue overlook the fact that God is the sole agent (i.e., verbal subject) in Job's restoration (42:10)? And while God's speeches do include the thought that "the righteous are not rewarded as a matter of course" (p. 237), does not the qualification "as a matter of course" prevent us from seeing God (cf. the first critique) as the creator of a world *other than* the one God described? Conclusions like these seem to be part of a larger pattern in which Pelham misunderstands some key aspects of the book, or at least pays no heed to genuine ambiguity. Some examples: "God knows he *ought not* to have caused Job to suffer for no reason" (p. 54), a statement which need not, many commentators have argued, imply God's guilt; God might "not abase the proud and tread down the wicked" and his power instead "sets free" (p. 91), overlooking the progressive nature of the realization of God's righteousness (cf. N. Habel's treatment of 38:12–14 [*Job*, John Knox, 1985], p. 540); Leviathan is not subject to God's control (p. 137), a conclusion that seems impossible to sustain in light of the nature of the rhetorical interrogation to which God subjects Job, in which the answer is always something like "I can't, only you can;" and so on.

One might suggest that Pelham's interpretation of Job is simply one more disharmonious voice in the crowd of Joban interpreters, and therefore is arbitrary and bears no further examination (cf. p. 21). But this approach to reading is immoral and nihilistic, since it un-creates the author's text by ignoring it. Instead, I want to take Pelham's words seriously in recognition of the value of verbal communication.

It seems that Pelham has created more ambiguity in her reading of Job than exists in Job, and that in a number of cases she does so without exploring contrary interpretations. The short bibliography, which contains only one non-English work, is evidence of a selectivity that is difficult to justify: not only recent works like T. Krüger et al. (eds.) *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen: Beiträge zum Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monta Verità* vom 14.-19. August 2005 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2007) but nearly the entire sea of Joban literature that has accumulated over the past two millennia play no constructive role in Pelham's study. She has clearly generated new ideas in her study of the text, but their distance from the textually-based, linguistically-grounded interpretations offered by generations of scholars makes it difficult to judge much of the work to be substantial or convincing.

In her opening discussion of theory, Pelham suggests that biblical texts in dialogue with other biblical texts, but also with the reader, "can be made to say things that, on their own, they would not say" (p. 17). Pelham offers a number of "conclusive" statements (something she forbids to Job's author, p. 40), but despite posing some helpful questions for less-authoritative interpreters, it seems clear that she has written not about Job, but about a book of her own creation.

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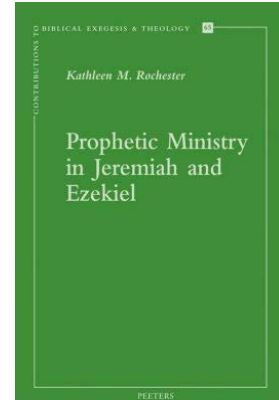
Kathleen M. Rochester. *Prophetic Ministry in Jeremiah and Ezekiel*. Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 65. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2012. xiv + 261 pp. £46.00.

Kathleen Rochester tutors for North-Western University, South Africa, and is also involved in itinerant ministry in Asia and elsewhere. This book is a revision of her PhD thesis, completed at Durham University. It compares and contrasts the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in six chapters. An introductory chapter is followed by four chapters discussing different aspects of prophetic ministry, then a conclusion. A bibliography, and author, subject, and Scripture indexes complete the book.

The introductory chapter outlines the aim and methodology of the book. It aims to contribute to the understanding of OT prophecy, in particular its theology. Through a comparison of texts in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Rochester focuses on the texts' depictions of Yahweh, as well as his interactions with and the roles he gives to each prophet (p. 10). As such, her approach falls within what is known as "theological interpretation of Scripture" (p. 9). The term 'ministry' is chosen to describe the work of the prophets as it indicates "service of a subordinate to a divine superior where divine purposes and commands" are authoritative (p. 1). Rochester notes the lack of a comprehensive comparison of the ministries of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in scholarly literature. She aims to help fill this gap by using a canonical approach, reading the books in their final form (p. 5). Just as she works with an 'implied author' instead of a 'historical author', she also deals with "the texts' portrayal . . . of each prophet" (p. 7). Nonetheless, the historical and geographical settings found in the books are considered to be significant in evaluating the ministry of the prophets (pp. 8–9).

Chapters 2–5 follow a similar structure: close exegesis of a selected text in Jeremiah followed by one in Ezekiel, then a comparison of the prophetic ministries. Chapter 2 deals with the call narratives. A discussion of Jeremiah's call (Jer 1:1–19) is followed by a discussion of Ezekiel's call (Ezek 1–3), including a sustained but helpful treatment of Ezekiel's 'speechlessness' (Ezek 3:26; 8 pages). In the comparative section Rochester comments that the superscriptions (mention of 'words' in Jeremiah, 'visions' in Ezekiel) and different religious contexts (Yahweh is nearby in the temple in Jeremiah, distant in Ezekiel) anticipate differences that will be played out in the books (pp. 62–63). Although both prophets come from priestly families, only the book of Ezekiel is overtly priestly, in that it is characterized by "place, order and cultic worship" (p. 63). Moreover, while Jeremiah's call is like a private conversation, Ezekiel's is theatrical, which is consistent with "cultic worship on a grand scale" (p. 63). In Jeremiah, Yahweh is portrayed as one who reveals himself primarily through his word, whereas in Ezekiel, Yahweh is presented in 'visions of God' (pp. 64–65). The response of the prophets is contrasted: Jeremiah is spontaneous and candid, while Ezekiel makes no spoken reply in the call narrative (pp. 65–66). The last comparison is between the roles of the prophets: Jeremiah speaks as a prophet to Israel and to the nations; Ezekiel functions as a watchman for the house of Israel (pp. 66–68).

Chapter 3 compares and contrasts worker images. Worker images are examined because these metaphors have a capacity for multivalence in meaning, and the images are an "outworking of the prophetic ministries" (p. 69). Rochester discusses Jeremiah as an assayer (Jer 6:27–30) and then Yahweh as a potter (Jer 18:1–12). Ezekiel as a watchman is outlined (Ezek 33:1–20). Rochester plausibly suggests that the second watchman passage is not necessarily either a re-commissioning or the end of an *inclusio*,



but instead could serve a janus function (p. 91). In the comparison section Rochester discusses the prophet in relation to Yahweh, the prophet in relation to the people, working for a response, the tools of the trade, destruction and hope, and working with perseverance. Similarly to Chapter Two, she highlights the context of the prophets as critical for understanding their roles. Jeremiah, as an assayer and potter, needs to work closely with his material, which represents the people. By contrast, Ezekiel as a watchman maintains a distance from both Yahweh and the people (p. 100).

The next chapter deals with the prophet in relation to the temple. Jeremiah's 'Temple Sermon' (Jer 7:1–15) and then Ezekiel's first temple vision (Ezek 8–11) are discussed. The comparison section covers these topics: the place of the temple; divine presence in temple and land; temple terminology; the focus on Yahweh instead of the temple itself; metaphors of hearing and seeing; temple worship; divine anger, jealousy and judgement; and message of hope. Noteworthy insights in this section include the suggestion that the more elaborate visual images of Yahweh's presence counter the "visual lure of the idolatries" (p. 149), and the idea that Ezekiel presents judgement not as the opposite of salvation but the vehicle for salvation (p. 152). Again, Rochester finds that the different contexts of the prophets influence their presentation of their message. In this chapter, it is their proximity to the temple (p. 153).

Chapter 5 discusses deviant prophets in Jeremiah (Jer 23:9–23) and Ezekiel (Ezek 13:1–23). Rochester covers both deviant male and female prophets, and includes a short excursus on the thorny issue of God's involvement in 'deceiving' a prophet (Ezek 14:9; pp. 178–81). The comparison section covers the gender of the prophet, a prophet's 'heart' as not the true source of prophetic message, the divine council; prophetic visions and dreams, divination, objects associated with prophecy, the lifestyle of the prophet, the role of the prophet, standing against opposition, deception of a prophet, and the language of emotion and metaphor. As anticipated in the call narratives of the prophets, Jeremiah focuses on the 'word' of Yahweh and relational language. Ezekiel, by contrast, uses visual language instead of emotional expression and cultic transgressions over Decalogue breaches (p. 219). Rochester draws her conclusions in a succinct final chapter (pp. 221–224).

This book is clearly written and maintains good momentum. The exegesis of the chosen texts is cogent and sensible. Overall, her thesis that the contexts of the prophets strongly influence the form and content of their messages is demonstrated convincingly. Her conclusions are carefully worded and do not claim too much. Yet I was longing for further elaboration on some points. In particular, since this book's approach falls within the general stream of 'theological interpretation of Scripture', I was looking for more discussion about the interaction between Yahweh placing 'stumbling blocks' (p. 47) and his involvement in deception (pp. 178–81), and the individual's responsibility. More discussion about how Ezekiel's historical and geographical situation necessitates the embodiment of his message in sign-acts would also be welcomed. Nonetheless, these minor points do not detract from a book containing helpful insights into the prophetic ministries of OT prophets, insights that await further development and application to contemporary situations.

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Andrew G. Shead. *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 29. Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2012. 321 pp. \$27.00.

Andrew Shead is the head of the OT department at Moore College in Sydney, Australia. In this new addition to the New Studies in Biblical Theology series edited by D.A. Carson, Shead expounds the doctrine of the Word of God as it is presented in the book of Jeremiah. After a helpful introduction to biblical theology, Shead distinguishes in chapter 1 between the “Word” of God and the “words” of God. In the book of Jeremiah, the Word of God (sg.) comes to Jeremiah, which Jeremiah then speaks in particular words (pl.). The words are then usually rejected by the listeners, but are also written down. For Shead, the Word of God “is effectively the main character in the book of Jeremiah” (p. 62).

Shead begins his character sketch of the Word of God in chapter 2 by arguing that the book of Jeremiah is a narrative about the Word. He makes penetrating observations about the structure of the book, arguing that the book is logically ordered if one pays attention to the disjunctive headings (e.g., in 7:1; 11:1; etc.). The book tells the narrative about the Word in several movements. First, Jeremiah 1–24 gives an intimate view of the Word from the prophet’s perspective. The next three movements (Jeremiah 25–34, 35–44 and 45–52) show its powerful outworking in history.

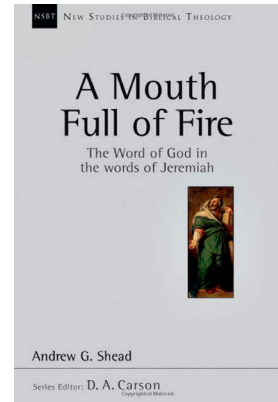
In chapter 3, Shead discusses the prophet Jeremiah and his relationship to the Word. Jeremiah embodies the Word in an intimate way in that his pain and tears are a presentation of God’s own pain to the people. However, this communication provokes deep tension in the prophet since he not only represents God but also the people as a whole, two parties who are at deep enmity with each other.

Next, Shead discusses in chapter 4 the hearers of Jeremiah’s words and the problem of false prophecy. Interestingly, Shead observes that Jeremiah does not defend the authenticity of his words; he merely reiterates them and lets the words do what work they will. Even so, his audience is fully accountable for their failure to recognize his words for what they are: the very words of God.

Shead then deals in chapter 5 with the apparent failure of Jeremiah’s ministry in that the people did not accept his preaching. However, the Word of God is always efficacious; Jeremiah’s failure “turned out to be no failure, but the exercise of a ministry of destruction” (p. 229). And even this ministry of destruction has an ultimately redemptive purpose, for “[s]uch is the depth of Judah’s depravity that for restoration to be real it must be marked by a fundamental discontinuity with the present order” (p. 99).

The spoken words of Jeremiah eventually become the written words of Scripture. In chapter 6 Shead shows how John Goldingay’s distinction between models of Scripture based on their mode of revelation (*Models for Scripture* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994]) is actually unhelpful: prophecy is not so much a mode of revelation but the “unmediated directness” of the word of God that comes (by whatever mode) to the prophet. Written books can also be prophetic insofar as they convey the Word of God in effective words of God. For Shead, Jer 36 is an especially important illustration, because it identifies the written words of Jeremiah (and Baruch) with the very words of God.

Finally, Shead embarks in chapter 7 on theological reflections concerning the doctrine of Scripture. His main interlocutor is Karl Barth. Against Barth, Shead insists that the written words of Scripture are the words of God (pl.). But the Word of God (sg.) is “never anything less than God himself made present among us” (p. 285), and hence cannot be bound to the written words.



Shead's book is a model of excellent biblical theology. He combines deep exegetical reflections with attentiveness to the larger theological issues at stake, all expressed in clear prose. The following questions are offered by way of constructive criticism.

Given the close association between Jeremiah and the Word of God, what exactly is the distinction between the prophet as "the words of God embodied" and Jesus as "the Word of God made flesh"? Clearly, Jesus is identified with the Word in a way that surpasses Jeremiah, but Jeremiah is still a powerful foreshadowing of Jesus as the Word. How precisely does Jesus surpass Jeremiah?

On a related note, Shead overplays the prophet's union with the Word. At times Shead implies that the prophet's identity has been completely absorbed into his role as a bearer of the Word. But surely a key theme in Jeremiah's confessions is his resistance to his prophetic role. In this respect, the intense conflict between Jeremiah and God that concludes ch. 20 deserves greater attention.

Finally, at the heart of Shead's proposal is the distinction between the words of God and the Word of God. At least one key difference between the two is that the Word of God is inherently efficacious, while the words are not. Certainly God is not constrained always to be savingly present whenever the words of Scripture are read. But Shead seems to drive too wide a wedge between the Word and the words of God. The Word of God may be a message that surpasses any particular wording (hence the possibility of translation), but one must also insist that *just these words* and no others perfectly convey the divine message, suggesting a deeper identity between the Word and the words. Also, Shead shows the effectual power of the *words* of God; for even when God's words are rejected, they nevertheless bring about Judah's judgment. Hence God's presence accompanies his words, calling into question Shead's distinction between the words and the Word.

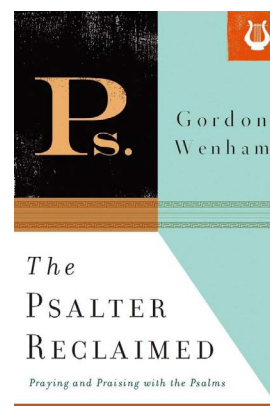
Shead's interpretation of Jeremiah brings a wealth of insight and deserves a wide readership. His book incorporates detailed scholarly work, but presents it in a way that would be approachable by pastors, seminary students, and educated lay people (a knowledge of Hebrew is not required).

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Gordon J. Wenham. *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 205 pp. \$15.99.

In this collection of essays Gordon Wenham continues to publish his work on the Psalter. Although many of the essays are available elsewhere, some were previously unpublished. This collection stands out as a digest of recent psalms scholarship originally delivered as presentations to audiences in diverse contexts from Tyndale Fellowship in Cambridge to Scotland, Rome, and Nairobi, Kenya.

The first chapter ("What Are We Doing Singing the Psalms?") explores the Psalter from the perspective of speech act theory. Originally published in *Irish Biblical Studies* (2010), this essay provides a brief overview of how the psalms have been used through history, starting with Chronicles and covering the Dead Sea Scrolls, the early church (including Athanasius), and the Reformation. Wenham argues that the Psalter would have originally been a collection to be



memorized since ordinary ancient Israelites would not have had access to their own written copies of the Bible. As poems memorized and used for worship and prayer, the psalms not only teach us but also commit us to certain attitudes and beliefs. From a theoretical perspective, this should be the case; but we may also wonder whether we should speak of the effect of prayed psalms with more reserve, recognizing that people often pray something without total commitment to the content of their prayers.

The second essay on “Praying the Psalms” is the most accessible. Originally presented in Nairobi, Kenya, this essay provides reasons why Christians should pray the psalms regularly. He begins once again by tracing the history of this practice from ancient Israelite priests and Levites to Jesus and the church through the ages. He summarizes the various kinds of psalms, including praise psalms, lament psalms, penitential psalms, and messianic psalms. On the lament psalms Wenham tackles the practical question of how lament psalms can and should have a place in the prayer life of Christians and churches. In this valuable essay Wenham has distilled some wonderful pastoral advice that both students and lay readers will find edifying.

“Reading the Psalms Canonically” is a reprint of an essay from *Canon in Biblical Interpretation* (Paternoster, 2006). It summarizes the change in psalms study initiated by Gerald Wilson’s seminal work, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Scholars Press, 1985). In addition to summarizing Wilson, Wenham discusses R. N. Whybray’s critique of the canonical approach to the Psalter, tackles the question of the psalm titles, and summarizes the approach of Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger in their commentary on Psalms 51–100, which has been translated into English (Augsburg, 2005).

“Reading the Psalms Messianically” challenges the critical rejection of many psalms as messianic. Wenham reviews the history of interpretation up to the point messianic readings went “on the retreat” in the nineteenth century. He rescues messianic readings by noting that the very canonical shape of the Psalter drives us to envision a future victorious reign of God’s king. Davidic psalms later in the post-exilic collection in Book V suggests that the psalms are not simply artifacts of Israel’s past experience but embody its future hope. In addition, Davidic psalms present both the ideal David (Pss 2, 72, 110) and the suffering David. These two pictures of David fit together well in the mission of Jesus. Although many psalms may not have been understood originally as messianic prophecies, that does not mean that a historical interpretation is the last word.

“The Ethics of the Psalms” is a reprint from Wenham’s essay in *Interpreting the Psalms* (InterVarsity, 2005), which itself was a precursor to *Psalms as Torah*. Wenham offers an initial foray into the ethics of the Psalms by identifying material that relates to the Decalogue and summarizing the Psalter’s presentation of the righteous and the wicked, the imitation of God, and steadfast love (*hesed*). Wenham rightly notes the priority of the righteous/wicked dichotomy as the Psalter’s approach to ethics, but rather than make that primary he begins with the Decalogue. Had he begun the other way around, perhaps “the abundance of passages” on misuse of the tongue (p. 115) would have fit more easily.

Wenham’s essay on “The Imprecatory Psalms” was not previously published. Wenham admits to presenting nothing original but rather summarizing classic evangelical responses to these psalms and tracing some recent Catholic and mainline Presbyterian responses. As a digest of views on these psalms, the essay is valuable for students and pastors. However, we may wish that Wenham had offered a summary of his own view in light of his encouragement to pray the psalms in his second essay and his discussion of the Psalms as commissive speech acts in the first. Should we pray these psalms, and to what does this commit us?

The last two essays provide examples of working with the psalms. “Psalm 103: The Song of Steadfast Love” models exposition of a particular psalm in light of the Psalter. This psalm celebrates God’s steadfast love following the question in Psalm 89 about God’s steadfast love for David and in advance of Psalms 104–106, which describe Israel’s exile-inducing sins. As such it provides hope for Jews in exile (and for sinful believers today). “The Nations in the Psalms” completes the collection of essays but sits less easily in the book. It offers a thematic summary of the nations in the Psalter, starting in Book I by treating the theme in canonical sequence. However, mid-way through Book I, Wenham speeds up considerably on his way to Ps 148 without providing a thematic framework.

Thanks are due to Crossway for publishing this volume. Although not all of the essays are equally stimulating, much of the book would serve well as supplementary reading for an English Bible course on the Psalms or as a book for discussion in a church setting.

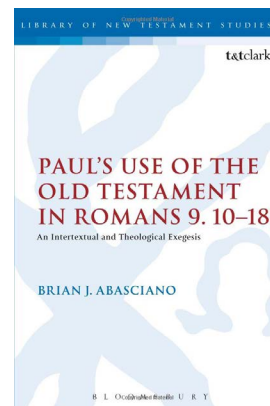
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— NEW TESTAMENT —

Brian J. Abasciano. *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.10–18: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis*. Library of New Testament Studies 317. New York: T&T Clark, 2011. xiv + 252 pp. \$120.00.

Brian Abasciano has already published a study of Rom 9:1–9 and plans to publish a concluding volume on 9:19–33. Hence, this work on Rom 9:10–18 is the second part of a three-volume work. This book consists of an intense analysis of Rom 9:10–18 informed by an intertextual exegesis of OT texts that Paul uses in these verses. When Abasciano speaks of intertextuality, he has in mind the historical and grammatical meaning of the OT texts in their historical contexts. He then proceeds to investigate the reuse of these texts in Romans. Much of the book, then, consists in studying the OT texts in their original context. For instance, chapter 2 considers Gen 25:23, chapter 3 Mal 1:2–3, and chapter 4 the use of Gen 25:23 and Mal 1:2–3 in later Jewish literature. Similarly, chapter 6 examines Exod 9:16 and the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, and chapter 7 the appropriation of Exod 33:19b and 9:16 in later Jewish traditions. Abasciano has two chapters on the exegesis of Rom 9 itself: chapter 5 on Rom 9:10–13 and chapter 8 on Rom 9:14–18. The two chapters that interpret Romans are informed by the examination of the OT and the interpretive traditions in subsequent Jewish literature. The book is framed by an introduction and conclusion.

Abasciano argues that Paul’s reuse of the OT accords with the original historical context and meaning of the OT texts, maintaining that the OT played a formative influence in Paul’s thinking. He also concludes that there is some support for the New Perspective in a close reading of Rom 9:10–18, but at the same time he also finds support for the traditional notion that Paul inveighs against works-righteousness, and thus he defends the notion that some Jews fell into legalism, even if such legalism was contrary to their theology. Abasciano says that God’s covenant promises and election are due to



God's sovereign call and not by works or ancestry. Still, God's election is ultimately conditional and based on faith.

The argument is tightly constructed and well-done, consisting of careful exegesis of the text in conversation with other scholars. A short review cannot trace out the details of the argument, so the review will set forth some of the main conclusions Abasciano advances. The election of Jacob instead of Esau in Gen 25 has individuals in view but is primarily corporate, and hence it applies especially to the peoples of Israel and Edom. God didn't choose Jacob and reject Esau based on their works or lack thereof, but Esau's rejection of the birthright and Jacob's treasuring of it "is a sort of justification for God's choice" (p. 13). In the same way, the election of Jacob instead of Esau in Mal 1:2–3 is also fundamentally corporate. Individual Edomites could choose to join Israel and be saved, and hence unconditional election isn't taught here.

In Rom 9:6–13 Paul teaches that the promise doesn't belong to those who are merely ethnic descendants of Abraham but to those who have faith in Christ. Paul also defends God's right to name those who have faith in Christ as the children of Abraham instead of those who were ethnically Jewish and observed the law. "God has sovereignly determined that faith in Christ is the basis for participation in the covenant and that unbelief is the basis for exclusion from the covenant" (p. 53), and this means that "faith" is "a condition of election on some level" (p. 53). Even though Rom 9:6–18 does not mention faith, Abasciano thinks faith is implicit in these verses since justification is clearly by faith in Paul. Furthermore, God's calling isn't efficacious but refers to God's "effectual naming/declaration based on faith" (p. 54). "So Paul's calling language strongly supports faith as the assumed basis of election in 9.12" (p. 55).

Abasciano also argues that election is primarily corporate in Rom 9:10–13: "the locus of election was the covenant community," and "individuals found their election through membership in the elect people" (p. 59). Individuals are elect as a result of their membership in the elect people and their corporate representative. Such a view fits with the OT where election is primarily corporate and operates in a similar way. Individuals enjoy the benefits of election by faith, and thus one could be a corporate member of Esau but choose to identify with Israel and be saved, and Jews who refuse to believe cut themselves off from the covenant people (p. 67). One of the surprising elements of Paul's argument is that Israel has now become like Esau and the Gentiles like Israel.

When it comes to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Abasciano maintains that Exod 2:23–25 demonstrates that the hardening is conditioned upon his sin against Israel. God didn't actually cause Pharaoh to refuse the divine demand to let Israel go. The hardening means that God strengthened Pharaoh's will to carry out what he already desired to do. Psalm 105:25 seems to indicate that God directly hardened the Egyptians, but Egypt was hardened against Israel when they saw that God blessed the latter (Ps 105:24). The hardening of Pharaoh was contingent upon signs, and thus the Lord hardened Pharaoh at the first miraculous sign in Exod 7:13, showing that the hardening was conditioned upon Pharaoh's past and continued oppression of Israel. In other words, the hardening wasn't irresistible, and Pharaoh could have chosen otherwise.

According to Abasciano, Paul responds in Rom 9:14–18 to those who question whether it is just for God to choose people apart from works or ancestry since such a state of affairs seems to fly in the face of his choice of Israel. God's claim that he would have mercy on whomever he wishes (Exod 33:19 cited in Rom 9:15) isn't unconditional, for we see from Exod 34:6–7 that God grants mercy to those who love and obey him and rejects those who hate him and abandon their covenant relationship with him. God

shows mercy, according to Exod 33:19, to those who repent of their sin. God is not unrighteous, “for choosing his people based on faith in Christ” (p. 181), for he can set whatever conditions he chooses for dispensing mercy and isn’t obligated to choose them based on works or ancestry. The willing and running in Rom 9:16 refer to the desire and effort to keep the law. Hence, “neither human resolve to keep the Law nor works in actual wholehearted and vigorous keeping of the Law can command God’s mercy” (p. 193). Israel is hardened because God made election contingent upon faith in Christ instead of works and ancestry (p. 209). Hence, divine hardening is reversible, for those who are hardened can still turn to the Lord and be saved. This seems to fit with Rom 11, where Paul tries to win over hardened Jews so that they are saved, and thus the hardening, like election, must be conditional.

In a short review I can scarcely interact with the details of Abasciano’s argument. His attention to the OT context in Rom 9–11 is helpful, and there are many excellent exegetical insights as he explores the various texts. The later Jewish traditions don’t play a major role in the thesis, but it is instructive to see how other writers appropriated and understood the texts cited here.

Those from an Arminian tradition are more likely to be convinced by Abasciano than those from a Reformed background, though he makes a vigorous case for his view. Detailed discussion is needed to arbitrate these matters, but space is lacking for such here, and thus a few abbreviated comments without a fuller explanation must suffice for this review.

First, calling in Paul isn’t merely an effectual naming based on faith, but is an effective action that creates faith (Rom 8:30). Faith is a consequence of calling, not a presupposition for it (cf. 1 Cor 1:23–31).

Second, it seems unlikely that the Roman *Christians* would question God’s justice/righteousness/fairness if Paul’s argument in 9:10–13 is that God elects based on faith instead of works or ancestry. Unbelieving Jews may have thought their works could commend them to God (Rom 2:1–29; 3:9–20; 9:30–10:4), but we have no evidence that *believers* thought God was unrighteous for justifying his own by faith. On the other hand, if Paul teaches unconditional election, we immediately understand why the question of God’s justice or fairness arises. In addition, Rom 9:16 speaks of the human will and effort in general terms. Paul studiously avoids any reference to “works of law” in Rom 9. Thus in Rom 9:30–10:4 he speaks of “works” in general, and nary a word is said about circumcision, food laws, or Sabbath.

Third, Abasciano rightly says that justification is by faith and that faith is necessary for right standing with God. Still, he wrongly smuggles faith into the equation in Rom 9:6–18 because Paul intentionally leaves faith out in his exposition, for he digs deeper and locates the foundation of faith: God’s unconditional sovereign choice. Paul intentionally contrasts works and calling in Rom 9:12 instead of works and faith. What the text actually says and doesn’t say must be heeded.

Fourth, Abasciano doesn’t distinguish between corporate election in the NT from corporate election in the OT. The discussion ties into one’s understanding of the differences and similarities between Israel in the OT and the church in the NT. Suffice it to say that untangling these differences and similarities would produce clarity, for election in Israel isn’t *necessarily* tied to salvation in the OT, but it is tied to salvation in the NT. In the latter instance, all those who are elect will also be preserved until the last day. Abasciano’s understanding of corporate and individual election suffers from ambiguity, but that discussion would take too much time to pursue here.

Fifth, the point of Exod 33:19 in its historical context is that all of Israel deserves to be destroyed because of their sin in making and worshiping the golden calf. The sparing of any is due to God’s mercy, and thus the text fits nicely with the notion of unconditional election. God elects some for salvation

even though they deserve judgment because of their sin. Exodus 34:5–7 doesn't convey the basis for God's election of Israel but describes the condition for remaining in the covenant.

Sixth, Abasciano's understanding of the hardening of Pharaoh has merits and demerits. It seems we do have an example of judicial hardening here, but at the same time Abasciano minimizes the divine role in Pharaoh's hardening. Nor is it clear that hardening is reversible, so that some of those hardened are ultimately saved.

Vigorous and friendly discussions on Rom 9:10–18 are important since our goal is to understand God's word. We can be thankful for Abasciano's commitment to the Scriptures, for his careful exegesis, and for a fine defense of the Arminian reading. The debate will continue, and those of us who are Reformed can be thankful for interlocutors like Abasciano who take the biblical text seriously.

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Accordance 10 Ultimate Collection. Oaktree Software, Inc.: Altamonte Springs, FL, 2012. \$1,999.99.

Accordance 10 combines powerful, intuitive biblical studies software with a substantial library of primary and secondary resources delivered in an easy-to-manuever, attractive package. Historically, Accordance has run natively on Macs or on Windows machines using a Mac emulator, though now it also offers free apps for iPad and iPhone and has recently launched a native Windows version. This review first summarizes new features in Accordance 10 and overviews the Ultimate Collection. Second, it evaluates how pastors, scholars, and students might utilize this collection. Third, it offers some points of constructive critique of Accordance 10. Finally, it compares the Accordance 10 Ultimate Collection with other commercial Bible software offerings, particularly Logos 5 Platinum, and assesses its value for potential users.



Accordance 10 offers a number of improvements and new features from previous versions. First, Accordance 10 now offers a unified workspace with flexible layouts, meaning that users may open multiple texts or tools in parallel panels and may stack multiple search windows in tabs (as before), but may also add additional windows that appear alongside the first search and can then be adjusted according to their preferences. Second, Accordance 10 offers an enhanced library search, allowing users to search for a resource by typing a key word (e.g., *Greek* or *Grammar* or *Wallace*) or by clicking on the folder where that reader is located (e.g., General Tools). Third, Accordance 10 now allows users to perform either a flexible or exact search on an English text. Thus, a flex-search for *law* or *laws* yields hits for Law, law, and laws together, while a search for "laws" or =laws yields only hits that match exactly the search term.

Accordance 10 features a range of collections for new users and current users seeking to upgrade: Starter (\$49.99), Bible Study (\$199.99), Original Languages (\$299.99), Essential (\$499.99), Advanced (\$999.99), and Ultimate (\$1999.99). The Ultimate Collection features a substantial library of texts, dictionaries, commentaries, maps, photo collections, and other resources that would serve well the various needs of pastors, students, and scholars. This package features 27 English Bibles, including

ESV, HCSB, KJV, NASB, NKJV, and NRSV with Strong's Numbers, which users may cross-search with Greek or Hebrew parallel texts. This collection includes the BHS Hebrew, Rahlfs LXX, and NA28 texts with morphological tagging and apparatus, as well as a number of additional tagged Greek Bibles and manuscripts such as the Textus Receptus and Codex Sinaiticus. Also included are tagged original texts and English translations of the OT Pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus, the Apostolic Fathers, and the Apocryphal Gospels. This collection includes BDAG and HALOT, along with other useful Greek and Hebrew lexicons. Among the many commentary modules in the Ultimate Collection, the following stand out as particularly important for *Themelios* readers: New American Commentary (38 vols.), Pillar New Testament Commentary (14 vols.), New International Biblical Commentary (18 vols., NT only), New International Greek Testament Commentary (13 vols.), and Tyndale Commentary (49 vols.). Notable dictionaries include twelve IVP reference volumes and the ISBE.

Having summarized some features of Accordance 10 and notable resources included within the Ultimate Collection, let us now consider how a pastor could use this software to prepare a sermon on Gen 1:26. First, the pastor could quickly set up a workspace to display several English Bibles—for example, NIV and ESV with Strong's—alongside the morphologically tagged Hebrew Bible (BHS-W4). Moving the cursor over the Hebrew text automatically highlights the corresponding word in the parallel texts, which clearly draws attention to key translation differences, such as *mankind* (NIV) and *man* (ESV), rendering אָדָם, and *rule* (NIV) and *dominion* (ESV) for מְרִדָּה. Key terms such as צֶלֶם and דְמוּת may be studied by triple clicking on the word to open the preferred Hebrew lexicon (HALOT) in a new panel next to the text search or by right clicking on the word to reveal various search options (more on this below). The pastor could then consult various reference tools, such as “Cross References,” which yields 48 (!) parallel passages, or “ESV Cross References,” which lists twelve parallels, each of which may be instantly viewed by hovering one's cursor over the reference. For further study on “image of God,” the pastor could consult the substantial entries by Merrill in the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (IVP) and Bray in the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (IVP), as well as Genesis commentaries by Matthews (NAC) and Kidner (Tyndale). The pastor could utilize the user notes module (Command+U) to keep track of notes for particular verses and could copy and paste relevant quotations and verses into a word processor or presentation slideshow.

How might a scholar or graduate student studying Mark 1:1 employ the Accordance 10 Ultimate Collection? One interested in text-critical matters could begin with the NA28 Greek text and apparatus in parallel columns and then add Codex Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Washingtonensis underneath the NA28 as interlinear texts. This view clearly shows that Sinaiticus and Vaticanus lack the superscription εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μάρκον and the disputed reading υἱοῦ θεοῦ at the end of verse 1, both of which are included in Washingtonensis. The scholar could create a custom group of favorite reference works and then perform a single search within that group for the reference Mark 1:1. This simple search effectively takes a dozen or more books off the shelf and automatically turns to the relevant page in major commentaries by France (NIGTC), Brooks (NAC), Hurtado (NIBC), and Edwards (Pillar) and highlights 43 references to Mark 1:1 in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (IVP). The user could then amplify the *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* to instantly compare the four gospel prologues in any Greek or English version. Additionally, college and seminary instructors could utilize Accordance 10 in the classroom, quickly looking up, displaying, and interacting with texts, grammars, and lexicons, while modeling for students the process of biblical exegesis.

There are several minor ways Accordance could improve in future updates. First, Hebrew word searches are somewhat challenging because of the large number of conjoined prefixes and suffixes. For example, the user who right clicks on **בְּצִלְמִנּוּ** in Gen 1:26 and selects lemma search will return only two hits (instances of **בְּ** with **צִלְמִ** and a pronominal suffix), though the noun **צִלְמִ** occurs 15 times in the Hebrew Bible. To search for all occurrences of **צִלְמִ**, one should highlight only the relevant portion of the word and then perform a lemma search. Alternatively, one may open up a new search window and type in the lexical form (which requires familiarity with the Accordance Hebrew keyboard), or the user may correct the initial search by deleting unwanted components. It would be helpful to have the option to right click on a compound word and search for one particular lexeme. Second, while generally reliable, the instant details feature for parsings, glosses, and cross-references includes some idiosyncrasies. For example, the NA28 Cross References suggests an allusion to Ezek 37:5 in Rev 11:11, but users are taken unexpectedly to Ezra 10:5 rather than Ezek 37:5. Third, while page numbers have been incorporated into many dictionaries and other reference works in recent updates, some resources such as the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* and *Dictionary of New Testament Background* still do not include page numbers. This means academic users must consult print editions for these works to correctly cite references for publication. Similarly, section headings for English Bibles are not included.

In terms of price, Accordance 10 Ultimate Collection is roughly comparable to the Logos 5 Platinum package (\$2,149.95). While the latter includes more total volumes in its massive library, it does not include some very important biblical studies resources such as HALOT, NIGTC, Pillar, Tyndale Commentaries, and the IVP reference dictionaries that are featured in the Accordance 10 Ultimate Collection. Logos 5 is organized around a user's library, whereas Accordance 10 is organized around a powerful text search engine like BibleWorks 9, which is itself developing a native Mac version. Further, Accordance 10 opens and runs very quickly. In comparable operating conditions on the same MacBook Pro, Accordance 10 opened in 6–8 seconds, while Logos 5 opened in 28–47 seconds. It took 14 seconds to open Accordance, find BDAG in the library, and look up a word; the same process took over a minute using Logos 5. This speed difference may be particularly important for instructors utilizing Bible software in classroom settings.

The Ultimate Collection is particularly well-suited for seminary-trained pastors, NT scholars, and seminary or graduate students able to make the initial financial investment. Those specializing in OT or Hebrew studies would likely need to supplement this collection with additional texts (including BHQ and Dead Sea Scrolls) and reference works (including the grammars by Waltke and O'Connor and by Joüon and Muraoka). Alternatively, those focusing in OT or Hebrew may prefer to combine the Hebrew Master set (\$2,199.99) with the Original Languages, Essential, or Advanced Collection.

I have used Accordance for ten years and have found it invaluable for personal Bible study, sermon preparation, academic writing and research, and classroom instruction. There are currently a number of excellent Bible software options available for Mac, PC, and tablet users. However, Accordance 10 remains an outstanding option because of its ease of use, enhanced searches and flexibility, and elegant design.

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Herbert W. Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston. *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012. 527 pp. \$36.99.

Jesus the Messiah attempts to trace the development of messianic ideas in Scripture from their introduction in the OT, through reflections in the second temple period, and finally through their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus. In the introduction Bateman sketches a common approach to messianic passages in the OT. In this approach messianic passages have one unambiguous meaning, and the authors of those texts clearly understood what they were predicting.

Contrary to this approach, Bateman sketches out the methodology of the present work. He argues that the implications of many messianic texts only become clearer in light of further revelation from God. This later revelation includes reflections in later canonical material and the life and teaching of Jesus. The three authors take turns assessing messianic passages in light of its original meaning in its historical setting, reflections on this material in extra-biblical literature, and finally Christological readings of the “First Testament” in light of Jesus. This work only deals with texts that deal with the Messiah as a regal figure.

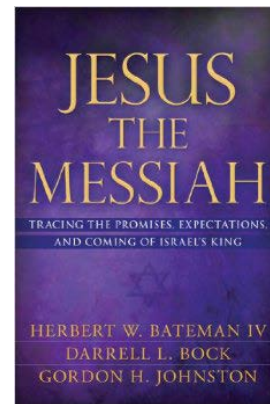
In chapter one Johnston deals with messianic material from Genesis through Numbers. Johnston begins his discussion with God’s promise to Abraham regarding a singular seed and kings who would come from his line (cf. Gen 12:7; 17:6). Johnston also deals with Jacob’s statements regarding the scepter in Judah (Gen 49:10), and Balaam’s oracle regarding a coming “star” and “scepter” (Num 24:14–19). In an approach that is common throughout his interpretation of these passages Johnston says that while these texts are, “not exclusively and directly prophetic of the eschatological Messiah, they were ultimately prophetic about the One to come” (pp. 57–58).

In chapter two Johnston assesses God’s covenant promise to David (2 Sam 7:8–16). Like chapter one, Johnston sees the opportunity for initial and ultimate fulfillments of this passage. By looking at later reflections on this material the OT points to an initial fulfillment in Solomon (1 Kings 8:15–21), but this imagery is also expanded and developed in later revelation (e.g., Isa 9:6; 11:1, 10).

This pattern of interpretation continues into the Psalms. Johnston argues that a text like Psalm 2 could have originally celebrated the enthronement of David or Solomon, but that the vagueness of the text created a “divinely designed openness.” These themes would come to express the hope of a new Davidic dynasty (e.g., Jer 33:14–26). Early prophetic material highlighted the ways in which the promises God made to David came to refer to a coming eschatological messiah. In several of these passages (e.g., Amos 9:11–15; Micah 2:5–6) Johnston argues that the “idealized imagery and universal tenor” of the prophecies point beyond the realities of the postexilic community.

In Johnston’s treatments of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel he highlights the developing messianic expectations. In light of the destruction of Jerusalem there were heightened beliefs in a messianic figure who would save or deliver God’s people. At the conclusion of his treatment on OT material Johnston declares: “as the Hebrew canon came to a close, the future eschatological expectation of the postexilic community was fixed on the coming of Yahweh as a universal king” (p. 209).

In chapter eight Bateman assesses various problems interpreters face in understanding the messianic views of the second temple period. He believes that the limited amount of texts that speak of a royal messiah, readers’ familiarity with NT imagery of Jesus, and a lack of historical sensitivity to this period



all impede one's understanding of second temple messianic ideas. He attempts to change a common misconception by highlighting that not every Jewish sect or individual was yearning for a messiah at this point. Bateman notes that Jewish hope in a messiah was dormant for a period of time because of a lack of outside interference from political authorities in the life of Israel. It was only later because of political oppression that messianic hopes were reignited.

Chapters nine through eleven assess Jewish messianic ideas in the second temple period. Bateman notes a major difference of opinion in the relevant literature as to whether there would be two messiahs, a priest and a king, or simply one messianic figure. He attributes this belief in a diarchy to interpretations of Zech 6:9–14 and dissatisfaction with the Hasmoneans, who had combined the role of priest and king. He also notes the messianic imagery of “branch,” “prince,” and “son language.” This language helped create a picture of the Messiah as a victorious ruler who had a unique relationship with God.

Bock assesses messianic developments in the NT in chapters twelve through fourteen. He begins with Revelation and the Catholic Epistles, which both emphasize the authority of Jesus. These works also focus on the suffering of Jesus as Messiah.

In chapter thirteen Bock turns his attention toward the Pauline Epistles. Bock argues that one of the major contributions of this material to Christology revolves around “in Christ” language. Bock also emphasizes the role that Ps 110 and the promises to Abraham played in Paul's understanding of who Jesus was.

Finally, Bock looks at the contribution that the Gospels and Acts make to messianic beliefs. He argues that Acts was an attempt to legitimize the early church and its roots, and this led to an emphasis that focused on Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish expectations. The gospels also focus on the identity of Jesus primarily by displaying his deeds. Mark focuses on Jesus as one who came to suffer and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Because a suffering messiah was unexpected Bock sees this as Mark helping finish the “messianic puzzle.” Matthew attempts to connect Jesus to Israel's promises to David and Abraham. Again, Jesus is discovered to be the Messiah not so much by what he says, but because of what he does (e.g., the connection of Isaiah 61 and the ministry of Jesus). In his chapter on John, Bock shows how seemingly contradictory messianic beliefs of the second temple period (e.g., where did the Messiah come from?) were being synthesized in Jesus (John 7:40–44).

The work concludes with a final chapter on the question of Jesus and his messianic identity. Specifically, Bock takes time to address the debated question of whether or not the confession of Jesus as Messiah goes back to Jesus himself. Bock argues that there was a necessary ambiguity involved in the way that Jesus described himself because he knew there was potential to misunderstand his messiahship in light of his suffering. While Jesus never personally used the title “Messiah” himself, he made his understanding of his identity clear in his deeds.

Bateman, Johnston, and Bock have written a volume that is incredibly helpful for tracing the development of messianic thought from Genesis through Revelation. There has been a recent trend to discover the ways in which the OT points to Jesus. This is not a bad trend, but in the process of finding Jesus in the OT readers run the risk of missing the historical and contextual meaning of many OT passages. There may be instances where readers disagree with the authors on specific points of exegesis or methodology. For example, some may disagree with Bock's decision to begin his study of messianic claims in the NT with Revelation and the Catholic Epistles. While he does explain this approach, beginning with the finished messianic picture of these books can feel disjointed for the reader who has been placing the “messianic puzzle pieces” on the board for eleven chapters. This study could have had

stronger continuity if the reader was able to continue to look at the trajectory of messianic beliefs before having to wrestle with a synthesized and completed messianic picture. Specific disagreements aside, if readers will take seriously the conclusions of this work, they will understand the relevant OT passages more clearly, the various ways that these messianic ideas developed, and they will gain a much deeper understanding of what it means to claim that Jesus is the Messiah.

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Michael F. Bird. *Jesus Is the Christ: The Messianic Testimony of the Gospels*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012. xi + 207 pp. \$14.40.

When did Jesus become the Messiah? Did Jesus ever personally claim to be the Messiah? In the opening pages of *Jesus is the Christ* Michael Bird summarizes a common answer to these questions in biblical scholarship. He argues that Jesus never took this title for himself, and that his earliest followers ascribed the title “Messiah” to him after he had died. This desire to honor Jesus as Messiah could have come from a vision, belief that he had risen from the dead, or an expectation that he would return.

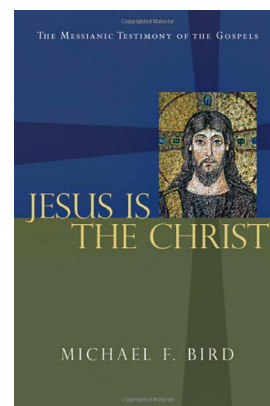
Jesus is the Christ is Bird’s response to this line of thinking. He notes that this work is a follow-up to his previous study, *Are you the One Who is to Come?* In his first book, Bird argued that Jesus did claim to be Israel’s Messiah. The present book builds on that claim. It argues that Jesus’ identity as the Messiah was a foundational truth for early Christian thinking, and that it dramatically impacted the shape and focus of the canonical gospels. As Bird says, he believes “that the messianic identity of Jesus is the earliest and most basic claim of early Christology” (p. 7).

In the introduction, Bird addresses the topic of when the title “Messiah” started to be applied to Jesus. He offers a brief sketch of messianic hopes in the first century, and shows how Jesus’ words and deeds made clear his messianic claims even if he never used the title Messiah for himself. Specifically, Jesus’ focus on the kingdom of God, performance of messianic activities (e.g., riding into Jerusalem on a donkey), and the charge he faced at his death all contributed to this picture.

In the rest of the introduction Bird responds to several competing views about how Jesus came to be known as Messiah. In particular, he addresses the idea that a vision of Jesus or belief in his resurrection could lead to messianic beliefs. In particular he notes, “There is nothing about a resurrection that would automatically imply messiahship” (p. 22). Calling Jesus Messiah would not have been the natural or expected reaction to a belief that he had risen.

Following the introduction Bird turns to the content of the individual gospels and Acts. In particular, Bird sets out to show that the structure and content of the gospels highlight how central the belief that Jesus was the Messiah was to the authors. Because of this he also highlights the ways in which the gospels answer objections to Jesus as the Messiah, or seek to persuade their readers of Jesus’ messiahship.

Bird begins with a study of Mark’s Gospel. Throughout he argues that one of the main purposes of this gospel is to answer Jewish objections to the belief that Jesus was the Messiah. Bird assesses the



narrative flow of Mark, and sees Jesus as the crucified Son of God at the center of Mark's purposes. He also highlights the prominence of messianic themes in Mark through a focus on "king" language, rhetorical strategies (e.g., Jesus' passion as an anti-type of a Roman triumphal procession), and attention to the messianic titles that occur throughout.

In his chapter on Matthew, Bird argues that this is a gospel concerned with placing Jesus squarely in the story of Jewish history. The genealogy and birth narratives are read as a whole that presents Jesus as, "the Davidic King who brings deliverance to Israel in exile and encompasses Gentiles in the scope of the salvation that he achieves" (pp. 66–67). Bird also gives attention to Jesus as the "Son of David." He argues that, for Matthew, Son of David was a term that highlighted the therapeutic ministry of Jesus, based on Isaiah 61, and his role as the shepherd of Israel. Finally, Bird notes that the works of Jesus throughout this gospel align with expected signs of the messianic age.

The following chapter on Luke and Acts has a similar emphasis on Jesus and his Davidic lineage. Bird argues that this focus comes from a desire to "show the continuity of the church with the promises of Israel, and to demonstrate how the work of Jesus and his followers represents the fulfillment of those promises" (p. 79). The infancy narratives are an important piece of evidence in this regard. Throughout that narrative Luke draws connections between Jesus and the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. A similar focus is apparent in the sermons throughout Acts. Those early sermons show a clear emphasis on declaring Jesus to be the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.

In chapter four, Bird addresses the issue of Jesus' messiahship in John. Bird situates the messianic Jesus in John within the framework of other eschatological-messianic figures found in second temple literature. This type of exalted figure is apparent in John's discussion of the pre-existence of the Messiah. Bird is quick to point out that belief in a pre-existent Messiah would not have been unheard of at the time and that it could be implied from a number of Jewish texts. He also emphasizes the role the signs in John's Gospel play in achieving John's purpose of convincing readers that Jesus is the Messiah (John 20:30–31). While John's Jesus may look different than the Jesus of the Synoptics, it is a presentation of the Messiah that is squarely within early Jewish beliefs.

Bird makes a number of helpful contributions in this volume. First, he clearly demonstrates that the messiahship of Jesus was a predominant focus for the gospel writers. Rather than being a peripheral issue, Jesus as Messiah was a core Christian conviction; these authors wanted to convince their readers of that fact and answer objections to it.

He also gives attention to the multi-faceted nature of messianic belief in the second temple period. Throughout his work on the gospels he shows the unique interest that each author had on showing how Jesus fulfilled various aspects of this expectation. This allows the readers to develop their understanding of what it means to say Jesus is the Christ. Bird offers an explanation of this statement that is informed and shaped by Jewish messianic expectations of the first century.

In a book that introduces and discusses so many debated issues it is likely that the reader may disagree with Bird on specific points of exegesis or historical reconstruction. For example, in the introductory chapter Bird attempts to demonstrate that messianic expectations in the first century were not as wide spread as is commonly believed. To prove this he argues that only Jesus of Nazareth and Simon bar Kokhba were ever unambiguously called "Messiah." He then notes that there were other figures who "emerged from time to time who excited hope for future deliverance, set themselves up as royal claimants, and echoed biblical traditions in their actions, but few as far as we know were explicitly hailed as messianic leaders" (p. 5). However, is it necessary to divide these two categories of people as

definitively as Bird has? Would first century readers have seen a clear division between those explicitly called messiah and royal claimants who excited hope for deliverance? Even without evidence that these people were explicitly called “Messiah” they were performing the kinds of actions that would have incited messianic hopes.

While there may be specific instances where the reader disagrees with Bird, his main argument is persuasive throughout. The confession “Jesus is the Christ” was central to early Christian belief, and it played a crucial role in how the gospel writers framed their narratives. This work would also be helpful for readers trying to gain a better understanding of messianic expectations and conceptions in the second temple period.

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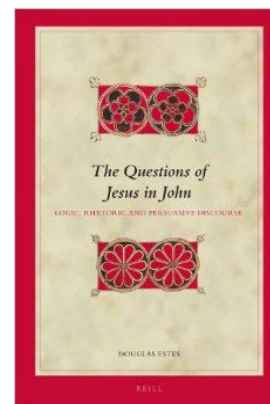
Douglas Estes. *The Questions of Jesus in John: Logic, Rhetoric, and Persuasive Discourse*. Biblical Interpretation Series 115. Leiden: Brill, 2013. xvi + 214 pp. £101.00/\$140.00.

Because Jesus’ (1) first words (“What do you seek?”), (2) first post-resurrection words (“Woman, why are you weeping?”), and (3) last words (“What is it to you?”) recorded in John’s Gospel are all questions, Douglas Estes takes note that this is hardly coincidental or insignificant. This observation offers credibility to his claim that the use of questions is the most frequently recurring narrative device in John’s Gospel with structural qualities. Nevertheless, scholars generally overlook John’s questions as they incline toward treating Jesus’ questions as propositions, reading them to identify what Jesus *says* rather than what he *asks*.

Do we not overlook the importance of the questions John’s Jesus poses? Western readers are “*biased* against questions” (p. 3), despite classical scholars who realized that the “logic and rhetoric of questions . . . can often convey more truth and meaning than naked propositions” (p. 9). Questions assist a narrative’s development by (1) structuring narratives, (2) carrying dialogue between characters but also between narrator and reader, and (3) rhetorically engaging readers in the classical sense to persuade them. John uses questions to convince readers to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” that they might have life in his name (pp. 11–12).

The title captures the author’s objective, to examine the questions of Jesus in John in light of their logical, rhetorical, and linguistic virtues (p. 13). While the questions John’s Jesus poses keep the dialogue moving and advance the narrative, they do more. John selects Jesus’ questions to use them structurally so that questions put to characters also target readers. Estes identifies all of Jesus questions in John’s Gospel and makes the case that two themes emerge: (1) “Whom do you seek?” and (2) “Do you believe in me?” (pp. 164–65). He tabulates all the questions (pp. 164–65), but he devotes discussion to selected questions as models for understanding the rest.

Chapter 1, “Why Questions,” introduces Estes’ case that Western readers have a bias for reading questions as propositions. He offers illustrations to warrant his complaint that scholars privilege propositions over other “language forms such as questions, exclamations, commands, wishes, hopes



and beliefs” (p. 6). His thesis builds upon and expands the concepts of language games and speech acts with correctives where needed. The chapter forecasts the contents of the remaining chapters.

In “Perspectives on Questions” (chapter 2), Estes inquires how questions work, particularly in John’s Gospel. He considers the impact of the confluence of the Hebraic, Greek, and Roman contexts with regard to questions. He concludes that the Fourth Gospel discloses “the Johannine Jesus to be an experienced orator (at least in a general sense of the term)” (p. 27). Then he shifts orientation to modern logic and linguistics with brief segments devoted to how questions relate to answers, to truth, and to speech. Estes critiques and corrects modern approaches to questions.

In chapter 3 (“How Questions Work”) Estes considers the functions of questions: “At its root, propositional . . . thinking is *binary* (true or false) whereas interrogative logic is by nature *modal* (multiple possibilities)” (p. 33). Defining questions is difficult, but Estes identifies fences that contain the discussion. He distinguishes questions and interrogatives (the former focuses on an illocutionary act’s *object*, the latter on the act’s *force*). Another difficult distinction is the difference between direct and indirect questions (p. 35).

According to Estes, with regard to discussions of questions, relevant current literature presents four ways to define what question entails: reductionist, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. He weighs them for helpfulness. He examines questions traditionally reduced to two types: informational and rhetorical. The latter is too expansive and too nondescript to be helpful.

Chapter 4, “John’s Use of Questions,” focuses attention upon the book’s core by asking, “Why did John include the questions of Jesus that he did, and why include those questions instead of other questions (or just more statements)? What do these questions mean and what are their purposes for being asked?” (p. 57). Questions enhance narrative dynamics and inform dialogues between Jesus and other characters more than propositions would. Questions assist characters to inform readers concerning one another by revealing much concerning “the character’s purpose, intent and perspective” (pp. 60–61). Questions confront readers: Jesus’ questions in John are raised in order to influence its readers (p. 62).

Estes tackles obstacles for understanding the questions of John’s Jesus. He fills the need for charting a route into the field of study. Questions within John’s Gospel are an overlooked narrative device. Because attempts to correct shortcomings concerning Jesus’ questions are larger than any introductory book can manage, Estes restricts his scope to “glimpses and examples of how we can better come to terms with the questions of Jesus in John” (p. 66).

In chapter 4 Estes identifies question types and pairs them with case studies within his next five chapters: chapter 5, “Open Questions,” chapter 6, “Reflective Questions,” chapter 7, “Decisive Questions,” chapter 8, “Responsive Questions,” and chapter 9, “Coercive Questions.” For each category Estes offers examples from ordinary conversations and identifies examples within John. He offers assistance for recognizing the various kinds of questions such as syntactical or semantic indicators as well as which words are likely to be attached to particular kinds of questions.

Estes shows how inattentiveness to Jesus’ questions leads exegetes to misdirect their readers as with Jesus’ open question that seeks an answer: “Why is it me you seek to kill?” (John 7:19c; pp. 73–76). Again, with regard to “Which of you convicts me of sin?” Estes challenges exegetes who explain the question as rhetorical. Instead, he argues that it “very much does seek an answer” (p. 78), for it is an information-seeking question. Noteworthy is Estes’ discussion of “Whom do you seek?” (John 18:4b, 7a), where the narrator informs readers that Jesus knew everything that would take place; yet he asks the question when the ragtag army, navigated by Judas, came upon him in the Garden to arrest him.

Particularly engaging is Estes' consideration of the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate. With his charge against Jesus, which he frames as a polar-question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33), Pilate thinks he pins Jesus down to respond with a simple "Yes" or "No." Jesus, however, recognizes the trap. As Estes observes, "Jesus ups the ante with an even more wily trap" (p. 122) by asking, "Do you say this on your own behalf, or did others say this to you about me?" (John 18:34). Jesus' opposing-turn question is information-seeking at its core, for with an alternative-question he calls upon Pilate to decide whether he makes his charge on his own or on behalf of Jewish officials who are using him. Because Pilate is skilled in argumentation he does not answer Jesus but responds by asking a polar opposing-turn question that uses the verb εἰμί. Pilate prevails; Jesus concedes by acknowledging his kingship (18:37).

In a final chapter, "Answers and Questions" (chapter 10), Estes argues that questions in John's Gospel are a literary motif much like "Word," "living water," or "light of the world" (p. 163). Jesus' questions are not "simple grammatical devices" that have little or no importance. John's Gospel is dialogically and rhetorically artful. Estes' investigation beckons further serious research by scholars and thoughtful exegesis among commentators. "As modern scholars, we are trained to ask the questions and seek out the answers, we're not trained in providing answers to questions we don't ask" (p. 172).

Anyone who engages serious research in the Fourth Gospel will want to read *The Questions of Jesus in John* if not add it to one's personal library. Estes' work sheds light upon the numerous passages he addresses and incites fresh thoughts concerning how questions provide structure for John's Gospel. All who are willing to read through *The Questions of Jesus in John* will surely appreciate the genius with which the Fourth Gospel was composed. Readers' senses will doubtless be heightened to pause for reflection upon the import questions contribute to John's narrative.

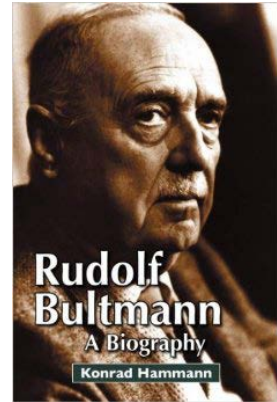
Reading Estes' book reminds me of a devotional offered during a session of the Institute for Biblical Research in Boston a few years ago that focused upon a series of questions in dialogical exchanges Jesus had with his disciples and with Bartimaeus within Mark 8–10. As those insightful observations transformed my teaching of Mark's Gospel, Estes' provocative book has already begun to have a similar impact upon my current teaching of the Fourth Gospel.

For graduate and post-graduate students who ponder topics for prospective theses or dissertations, Estes offers both a model of original research in the Fourth Gospel and provocative insights worthy of further research. He points the way by saying, "As case studies, I hope these will prove to be samples for future exegetical work in not only John but also other biblical books as well. I believe further work in how questions inform the dialectical and rhetorical functions of ancient narrative would prove valuable to the study of all of the gospels" (p. 171).

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Konrad Hammann. *Rudolf Bultmann: A Biography*. Translated by Philip E. Devenish. Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2013. xii + 611 pp. \$60.00.

About ten years ago, as an MDiv student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, my professor Bob Yarbrough once gave the wise counsel that one of the best ways to grasp modern Western history of NT research was to strive to understand the figure of Rudolf Bultmann. [Editor's note: See Yarbrough's [review](#) of Labron, *Bultmann Unlocked*, in *Themelios* 36:3 (2011).] As a pioneer of form criticism of the Gospels, popularizer of the results of the history of religions school, interpreter of Paul's theology, writer of the most significant twentieth-century NT theology *and* commentary on the Fourth Gospel, not to mention his explicitly theological contributions, there is no doubt that Bultmann casts a long shadow upon the field of NT studies.



No friend of historic Christian orthodoxy, the shadow is one that interpreters do well to understand and learn from before criticizing. Hammann's biography provides not only interesting historical and personal information on his subject; but also presents a detailed, comprehensive presentation of his NT research, his forays into positive theological contributions, and the controversies that ensued.

In what follows I primarily limit my review to interacting with the relationship between Bultmann's historical research and its interconnection with his theological contributions, for it is precisely Bultmann's methodological commitment to do theology *through* history that continues to make him such an influential figure.

Bultmann's childhood was a happy one. However, although his mother was committed to historic Christian orthodoxy, his father adopted numerous liberal positions that led to his alienation from many friends and family. It may not, then, come as a surprise that as a young child Rudolf "likewise freed himself from a number of old notions," including "the orthodox concept of faith mediated by his religious education, which held that any religion must necessarily contain objective content" (p. 11). Thus, very early on as a young theological student, unwilling to abandon Christianity and faith, Bultmann committed himself to re-envisioning theology and freeing it from its captivity to such things as the Trinity, atonement, and miracles. Theology cannot simply present the intellectual doctrines and faith claims of the NT, but, because the NT is a historical, temporal phenomena, it must rather come to recognize its distinct witness to "the new religious experience of the human person as he discovers his new relation to God" (p. 60). Already at this early point in his career (ca. 1913), Bultmann had jettisoned the task of dogmatics as one of reconstructing objective historical events and facts or theological-doctrinal concepts and had committed himself to "an existential participation" in "the eternal forces that reveal themselves in the temporal events of history" (p. 63).

Since history and facts do not, for Bultmann, have any foundational significance for faith, historical investigation of Christian origins is free to employ radical and skeptical historical methods. Revelation consists in the NT witness to the event whereby humanity is awakened to a "longing for the true self, [which] also leads to self-reproach arising from a sense of conflict between a willing and doing like that described in Rom 7:15. Out of this conflict, only the self that becomes aware of itself as gift, as a thought of God, is able to achieve true selfhood" (p. 120). One sees from his essay on Rom 7, his sermons, and his early book on Jesus that the seeds of Bultmann's existential interpretation of the NT

pre-date his interaction with the philosopher Martin Heidegger. Though the skeptical results of his historical research are legion, what occupied the bulk of controversy and critique was his radical stance toward the dispensability of the historical Jesus as an object of faith. For Bultmann, Jesus belongs to the history of Judaism, never envisioned the possibility of worship or faith in him, does not witness to any deep religion, and whose primary significance is found in his consciousness of the moral demand upon humanity (pp. 121–29). Therefore, his *The History of Synoptic Tradition*—an incredibly influential classification of the forms, original life-setting, and history of the oral tradition of which the Synoptic Gospels are composed—“provides *no valid reports about the life and activity of the historical Jesus*” (italics mine, p. 116). Why? Again, the answer is related to another of Bultmann’s radical conclusions about early Christianity. The bulk of the Synoptic traditions stems from the Hellenistic-Gentile church, a community that was not concerned with history but with the present experience of the risen Lord. For two reasons, then, the historical Jesus cannot be the object of Christian faith: the historical task is impossible, and history is not the true subject matter of Christian faith.

Similarly, Paul is no salvation-*history* thinker who witnesses to God’s saving acts within history. Paul’s articulation of the cross of Christ is not significant as an objective historical event that achieved reconciliation between God and humanity, but is rather a call to abandon the belief that one’s existence is at her disposal and realize that the Christ present in the preaching of the kerygma is lord of their existence. What of Paul’s cosmic and apocalyptic statements, then, which speak of flesh, sin, cosmic powers, the pre-existence of Christ, and the decisive intervention of God within human history to achieve humanity’s liberation in Christ’s cross and resurrection? Bultmann understands all of Paul’s statements about God as mythological language used (taken from Gnosticism or Jewish apocalyptic) to express human existence. Since the entire NT worldview and its witness to the salvation-occurrence are mythological, the appropriate method for reading the NT is demythologizing. Myth is not only obsolete and demands a sacrifice of the intellect for the modern human, but it also objectifies God (i.e., imprisons God by turning God into an historical-empirical report). Christian interpreters, then, must understand that the real subject matter of myth is human self-understanding of its existence. Statements about God, then, must be seen for what they really are—anthropological statements.

Hammann’s biography is a valuable contribution as it situates Bultmann’s research within its historical context, provides judicious discussion of his NT scholarship, and presents both its positive and negative reception from both the academy and church. Hammann gives a sympathetic but by no means sycophantic presentation of Bultmann, and thereby enables the reader of any theological persuasion to evaluate Bultmann and his influence upon NT studies. Though Bultmann has elicited numerous critiques, I was surprised to find no mention of the role that Marburg neo-Kantian philosophy played upon his epistemology and his essentially “atheistic methods” (to borrow a phrase from Adolf Schlatter). On Bultmann’s influence by the Marburg neo-Kantian philosophers, see Roger Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologizing* (Brill, 1974) and Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation-Historical Fallacy?* (Deo, 2004). Sadly, in my view, the consequences of his epistemology, his historical skepticism regarding Christian origins, and his anthropological interpretation of Paul are matters with which students and scholars of the NT must reckon. Hammann’s biography presents an incredibly valuable resource to do just that.

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Jason B. Hood. *The Messiah, His Brothers, and the Nations: Matthew 1.1–17*. Library of New Testament Studies 441. London: T&T Clark, 2011. xi + 193 pp. \$110.00.

Attempting to understand Matthew's genealogy can feel like shoveling snow in the midst of a snowstorm; as hard as you work, you wonder if you will ever see the end. In his published dissertation (University of Aberdeen, 2009), Jason Hood contributes to this seemingly unending task by addressing two specific questions: why Matthew appended "and his brothers" to Judah and Jechoniah (Matt 1:2, 11) and why he included the four annotations about the women (1:2–6). To resolve these issues, he employs composition criticism, a method that focuses on the final form of the text while giving attention to historical extra-textual referents.

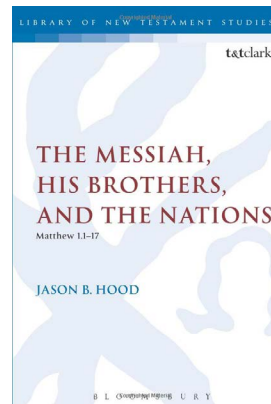
Having laid the groundwork in chapter one, Hood focuses on the literary form and function of the genealogy in chapters two and three. He emphasizes how the narrative component of genealogies (including Matthew's) is inextricably tied to their legitimizing or sociological function. He argues, as others have done, that Matthew's genealogy retells the story of Israel, placing it into the literary category of "summary of Israel's story" (SIS) along with texts like Acts 7, 13, and Heb 11.

In chapter four, Hood specifically addresses the annotations "Judah and his brothers" (1:2) and "Jechoniah and his brothers" (1:11) and argues that both serve the same purpose: to point to *Jesus' self-sacrificing messianic vocation*. Hood argues that Judah and Jechoniah are characterized in the OT and early Jewish literature as positive models of royal figures who sacrificed themselves "in order to remove or mitigate the threat of danger to their brothers" (p. 86). He suggests that these annotations point to Jesus' own royal act of self-sacrifice for the sake of his own brothers, Israel.

Chapters five and six are devoted to the annotations of the "women." Based on his presentation of the genealogy as an SIS, in which continuity is found among various characters, Hood understands (with most scholars) these four annotations as a unit, excluding the reference to Mary in verse 16. He argues, however, that the focus is not on four *women*, but on four *Gentiles*. Moreover, the fourth reference does not spotlight Bathsheba but *Uriah*. What unites these four (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Uriah) is that they are all *Gentiles who are praised in the Jewish literature for their righteousness*. This coincides with Matthew's emphasis on the messiah's vocation to the Gentiles, while still viewing two stages in Jesus' messianic work: Israel first, Gentile second. As Hood states, "This interpretation fits with the move in recent scholarship to distinguish between two aspects of messianic restoration, that for Israel and a subsequent restoration for the nations" (pp. 161–62).

In chapter seven, Hood connects his arguments on the genealogy to the book's conclusion, particularly the reference to Jesus' *eleven* disciples worshipping him (28:16) who are called "brothers" (28:10). He sees an intentional allusion to the "brothers" in the genealogy and to Judah's eleven brothers worshipping him in Genesis (cf. Gen 37:9–10; 49:28). The reference to the nations is another connecting thread. The naming of the Gentiles in the genealogy foreshadows Jesus' messianic vocation to the nations; likewise, at the end of Matthew, the messiah and his brothers (Israel) call the nations to obey Jesus (an allusion to Gen 49:10).

Hood's work is insightful and does a great deal to advance the current state of scholarship on the genealogy. Appropriately drawing out its narrative element, his categorization of it as an SIS is fitting.



He makes a very convincing argument connecting the annotations in the genealogy with the conclusion of the gospel. Moreover, Hood's overall sensitivity to Matthew's attention to theological detail is right on the mark.

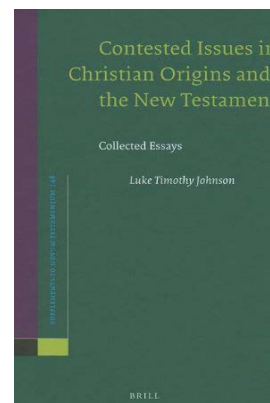
I do, however, have a few criticisms. While Hood does a thorough job of critiquing others' arguments, he occasionally exaggerates the strength of his own, going so far as to say that his analysis of the four women "has no weaknesses" (p. 118). He also spends too much time on the categorization of the genealogy as an SIS, a categorization that does not always help his argument. For example, in using this category to argue for *unity* between the four Gentile references, Hood misses the fact that SIS texts often include individuals with the intention of evoking memories of *different* events along the trajectory of Israel's history (Acts 7, 11; Hebrews 11). Thus, one might use this same categorization to argue against Hood's attempt to unify these references. Moreover, by uniting their meaning simply as "praiseworthy Gentiles," Hood may actually be diminishing Matthew's theological storytelling intent. For example, by arguing that Matthew primarily sees Uriah as a praiseworthy Gentile, he misses the importance of David's sin, the consequences of his actions, and the effect within Israel's story. Regarding the scope of his work, and considering Hood's criticism that the genealogy is too often interpreted apart from the entire book, it is surprising that he did not pay more attention to the *entire* book. The middle portion of Matthew's gospel receives only passing references. Hood would have done well to trace his argument throughout the whole of the book.

Despite these criticisms, Hood offers a measure of clarity on one of the most challenging pericopes in Matthew. His work is as important to those focusing narrowly on the genealogy as it is to those looking more broadly at the gospel as a whole. It is a helpful move forward in getting to the bottom of Matthew's daunting genealogy.

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Luke Timothy Johnson. *Contested Issues in Christian Origins and the New Testament: Collected Essays*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 146. Leiden: Brill, 2013. 694 pp. £214.00/\$297.00.

In our day of ever-increasing specialization, it is refreshing to read the work of a scholar whose expertise truly spans the breadth and width and depth and height of NT and early Christian studies. In this lengthy compilation, we have essays by L. T. Johnson ranging from "The Jesus of the Gospels and Philosophy" to "Paul's Ecclesiology," to "The Bible after the Holocaust." In all, the volume includes thirty-five essays in five categories: Jesus and the Gospels, Luke-Acts, Paul, Other NT Compositions, and Issues in Christian Origins. Nearly all of these essays have been previously published, so let the reader beware: its contribution is its accessibility, not its originality. A review of this nature can hardly cover each essay in detail, and a short sentence on each is not likely to be useful, so I will instead offer more thorough comments on one or two essays from each of the sections listed above.



The first, titled “A Historiographical Response to Wright’s Jesus” (orig. pub. 1999), is a rather scathing critique of N. T. Wright’s *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Fortress, 1996). His concluding statement: *JVG* “yields neither a rendering of Jesus nor an account of the Gospels that is convincingly historical” (p. 70). Johnson argues that Wright places an overarching narrative framework on the gospels that is insufficiently attested in historiographical data, conveniently ignores such data as lies outside his thesis, and in the end reduces the diverse witnesses of the synoptic gospels (Wright says very little, apparently, about John) into a single “presumptive master story” (p. 67). Wright has often enough been a lightning rod for both affirmation and criticism, and this essay is certainly worth reading for anyone interested in his work (or in historiography in general).

The second, “Narrative Criticism and Translation: The Case of the NRSV” (orig. pub. 2008), explores the intersection of narrative criticism—reading texts in light of broader narrative themes presented by the whole of a single work—and translation theory, bringing together in particular the NRSV’s rendering of Luke-Acts. Johnson argues that the NRSV committee did *not* take narrative criticism into account, thus resulting in “inadequate and at times erroneous translation” (p. 220). He juxtaposes two principles of translation: that “diction should always respect the immediate context” and that “diction should attend to the rhetorical effects embedded in the Greek by an author” (pp. 223–24), and suggests that the NRSV has leaned heavily on the first at the expense of the second. While much of the textual analysis was helpful, I found the two translation principles to be less so, inasmuch as they assume that an author’s use of a word in its immediate context necessarily differs from what he/she meant by that word when taking the whole work into account.

The third, “1 Timothy 1:1–20: The Shape of the Struggle” (orig. pub. 2008), demonstrates the critical divide between those who take 1 Timothy as authentically Pauline—that is, “produced in the apostle’s lifetime under his authorization”—and those who see it as the “pseudonymous production of a later generation” (p. 384). After dealing briefly with the history of the authorship question, he offers a reading of 1 Tim 1:1–20 that ought to be valid whichever way we turn on that question. Then, however, he demonstrates the continuity of the “Pauline” rhetoric and theology in that text (according to his reading) not only with the other pastorals, but with the rest of the Pauline corpus as well, especially Galatians. This was a useful essay insofar as he sheds much-needed light on the logical and exegetical fallacies underlying arguments against Pauline authorship of the pastorals and 1 Timothy in particular.

The fourth, “The Scriptural World of Hebrews” (orig. pub. 2003), asks the question “What does it mean to enter into the symbolic world of a New Testament composition like Hebrews?” (p. 407), and concludes that on Hebrews’ own terms it means, fundamentally, to enter a world that is “entirely and profoundly Scriptural” (p. 418). This is true in three ways: first, Hebrews draws its readers into the world of the OT, which Hebrews identifies as God’s own speech; second, God’s speech now extends to the “life, death, resurrection, and priestly enthronement of Jesus” (p. 420); and third, Hebrews’ own “word of exhortation” (13:22) is thereby in continuity with these earlier divine speech acts. This was one of my favorite essays in the volume; much ink has been spilled on the particularities of Hebrews’ use of the OT, while more synthetic pieces such as this are rare.

The fifth, “The Bible After the Holocaust: A Response to Emil Fackenheim” (orig. pub. 2002), responds to Fackenheim’s insistence upon recognizing the holocaust as hermeneutical *novum*—that is, all interpretation of the OT prior to 1945 is defunct and useless and need not be taken into account because the Shoah has so reshaped our perspective on God, his (Jewish) people, and his world. Johnson ultimately rejects Fackenheim’s thesis insofar as an experienced *novum* is not necessarily an *historical*

one. As a historian, he argues, “one cannot declare one’s own or anyone else’s experience unique, for the rules of historiography do not allow that sort of declaration” (p. 631). This essay typified the volume: gracious, personal (Johnson offers numerous personal anecdotes), logically sound, and ultimately committed to the *novum* that is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Finally, “The Complex Witness of the New Testament Concerning Marriage, Family, and Sexuality” (published here for the first time) examines the diverse and “often enough conflicting” ways that the canonical texts of the NT depict the relationship between Christian faith and the nuclear family (p. 659). Less synthetic than those discussed above, this new essay is basically a biblical-theological data dump. If you are looking for a basic overview of NT statements concerning marriage and family and sexuality, this is the essay for you—but if you are seeking constructive theological analyses of these texts, look elsewhere. Johnson, I should note, states that homosexuality falls outside the NT’s parameters for Christian sexuality, but he is clearly on record elsewhere as rejecting Scripture’s teaching on homosexuality and advocating for a move beyond Scripture to a higher authority (i.e., cultural experience and the ongoing creative work of God). [Editor’s note: E.g., see <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/homosexuality-church-1>.] He also refers readers (on p. 677n94) to another article of his for further comment.

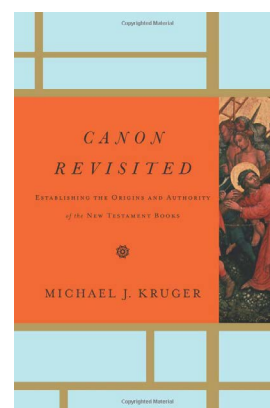
In all, this volume offers an excellent window into the life and scholarship of Luke Timothy Johnson, one of the premier NT scholars of our era. Few are likely to pick up the \$285 price tag, but by all means check it out from your library (or track down individual essays in their various original publications).

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Michael J. Kruger. *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 362 pp. £19.50/\$30.00.

Michael Kruger has provided an important, well-written, and well-researched book that has potential to meet the needs of biblical scholars (evangelical and otherwise), ministers, and lay Christians of all sorts. The style is very accessible with nicely composed transitions, and the content is intellectually rich. Kruger is deeply familiar with all the important issues, literature, voices, and controversies surrounding the subject of the NT canon (note the extensive footnotes). He presents the information and argument in a manner that is theologically responsible, mature, humble, and persuasive. Kruger is also keen to acknowledge his Christian presuppositions in his scholarly work. This means that his approach is both theological and historical.

The main purpose of the book is to address the question of “whether Christians have a rational basis (i.e., intellectually sufficient grounds) for affirming that only these twenty-seven books rightly belong in the New Testament canon” (p. 20). In other words, “is the Christian belief in the canon *justified* (or warranted)” (p. 20)? In addressing this question, Kruger is aiming to answer what he calls the “*de jure* objection” which “argues not so much that Christian belief in the canon is false (the *de facto* objection), but that Christians have no rational basis for thinking they could ever know



such a thing in the first place” (p. 20, parenthesis added). Therefore, Kruger develops his argument not so much to persuade skeptics of the canon’s truth as to provide an “*accounting* for our knowledge of canon” (p. 21). Can Christians really know which books belong in the NT canon? Does Christianity provide sufficient grounds for knowing? Kruger has provided a compelling case for a positive answer to these questions.

The book is divided into two main sections. In the first section Kruger explains and responds to different canonical models on offer. In doing so, he provides good and fair descriptions as well as penetrating evaluations. He engages with the important voices representing the various views and offers well-reasoned critiques when he disagrees. These evaluations are very helpful to the non-specialist who might be susceptible to accepting the models that he challenges. His evaluation of the “criteria-of-canoncity” approach is especially helpful since it is likely one that attracts many evangelicals.

The broad categories of canonical models challenged in this section include “community-determined” models (where some response from a community establishes canonicity) and “historically-determined” models (where “historical merits” have the controlling influence in a book’s canonicity). The problem with both types of models is that “they authenticate the canon on the basis of something external to it” (p. 289). This section also introduces the “self-authenticating model,” which is the one for which Kruger argues.

The second main section explores the self-authenticating model in more detail and addresses objections one might have against it. He discusses the special qualities of canonical books as well as some of the important historical issues. As part of his argument that “God has created the proper epistemic environment in which belief in the canon could be reliably formed” (p. 290), Kruger highlights three key aspects which he names as: providential exposure, attributes of canonicity (divine qualities, corporate reception, and apostolic origins), and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (see pp. 94 & 290). Initially a reader might be suspicious of the argument for “divine qualities,” as though this were a naïve assumption or irrational claim. However, as the book progresses, this argument becomes more clear and compelling.

He spends three chapters covering the “lengthy historical process by which each of these twenty-seven books was recognized and received as canonical Scripture by the early Christians” (p. 24). Along the way he argues that controversies in the early church should not discourage us from accepting the present canon as correct. Understanding the historical process is very helpful to specialist and non-specialist alike. Readers will learn a great deal from this section, even if one doesn’t agree with Kruger’s argument. Many often wonder at this process but are not provided with adequate information. This is especially problematic if one is given the revisionist’s narrative, rooted in Bauer, that the historical winners exercised their power in silencing any competing versions of Christianity. Kruger effectively demonstrates that this version of the story cannot support the weight of the actual evidence.

Kruger believes that his book’s structure makes a “distinctive contribution to the study of canon” (p. 24). This is because he deals more with the theology of canon than other treatments, which focus more on historical issues. By addressing both theology and history, with theology functioning as a type of worldview lens through which to view the historical information, his work makes a unique and valuable contribution, especially to scholars, pastors, and other believers who are committed to the authority of the NT as we have it. Kruger argues, rightly I think, that the “Canon has an ecclesiological dimension, a historical dimension, and an aesthetic/internal dimension” (p. 293). This is one of the primary positive implications of his study. The self-authenticating model, as Kruger has explained it, brings together the

various canonical models by uniting “them by combining their greatest strengths into one system” (p. 293).

Kruger is a serious scholar. He is careful not to overstate his claims, and yet his argument is deeply compelling. His account will help readers get a much clearer picture of the story of the NT canon—one that is not afraid to be honest about controversies, and yet can also properly address those controversies. I highly recommend this book to anyone who genuinely cares to understand and trust the authority of the NT books.

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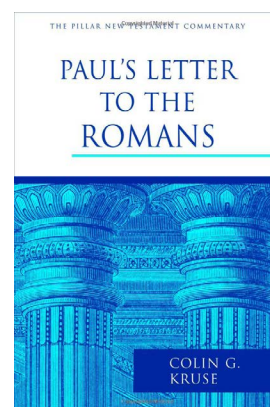
Colin G. Kruse. *Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. xlii + 627 pp. \$52.00.

Colin Kruse previously wrote a commentary on 1–3 John in the Pillar Series, so those who are familiar with these volumes know him (see also his commentary on John's Gospel in the TNTC series). He is also well-suited to write on Romans since he earlier composed a work on Paul's view of the law. Kruse's Romans fits well with the intention of the series, for we have an accessible but learned exposition of the letter. Naturally, the author can't delve into issues in depth given the size limitations of the volume, but he dialogues regularly with modern scholarship. At the same time (in one of the most beneficial features of the volume) he often quotes ancient sources as well.

Readers will naturally be interested in Kruse's understanding of the letter, and a survey of some of his conclusions will be shared here. The letter is addressed to both Jews and Gentiles with the latter being the majority. The primary purpose of the letter was to minister to the readers in Rome and to share with them as an apostle his understanding of the gospel. At the same time, the Pauline gospel articulated in Romans would also address the divisions in the Roman churches between Jews and Gentiles and prepare for the hoped-for Spanish mission. The letter was written between AD 54–59, and chapter 16 is considered to be part of the letter as well.

Kruse has a nuanced view of the New Perspective; he acknowledges its strengths but he also claims that there is a polemic against legalism that can't be washed out of the letter. The focus of the letter is not justification by faith but the gospel. Justification is understood forensically, and the notion that righteousness also has transformative dimensions is rejected.

The Gentiles who keep and observe the law in Rom 2, including those described in Rom 2:13–15, are Gentile Christians transformed by the Holy Spirit. The *hilastērion* in Rom 3:25 includes both the notions of expiation and propitiation, and the latter is supported by the emphasis on God's wrath and judgment in Rom 1:8–3:20 (cf. 1:8). In Rom 7:7–25 Paul uses the rhetorical technique of impersonation (*prosopepoia*) where he uses the first person to present “speech in character.” Romans 7:7–12 are fiercely contested in Romans scholarship, and Kruse argues that Paul describes Israel's experience before and after it received the Mosaic law. Romans 7:14–25 continues Paul's speech in character rhetoric as he continues to describe the experience of Israel. Thereby Paul portrays in vivid terms what it means to live



under the law, and hence what we have here is a presentation of pre-Christian experience under the law. The utter failure and bondage depicted in Rom 7:13–25 doesn't accord with the victory believers enjoy according to Rom 6 and 8.

Kruse surprises somewhat in maintaining that the reference to “God” in Rom 9:5 refers to God the Father, not to Jesus Christ. Israel's election in Rom 9–11 is not only corporate but also individual, and hence the chapters teach individual election to salvation, as Paul explains how God's promises to the Jewish people were fulfilled. Interpreters have long debated what Paul means in saying that “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26). Kruse rejects the notion that this refers to both Jews and Gentiles (the church of Jesus Christ), arguing that ethnic Jews are intended here. The salvation of the Jews here doesn't refer to the salvation of Israel near or at the Parousia but refers to the salvation of Israel all throughout history, to the salvation of a Jewish remnant throughout history. At the same time Israel is not saved by adhering to the law but only through faith in Jesus Christ.

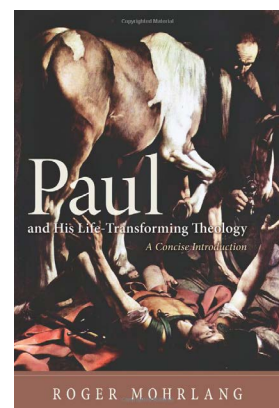
Paul addresses the weak and the strong in Rom 14:1–15:6; the weak are mainly Jewish Christians while the strong are mainly Gentile Christians. Kruse dissents from the notion that we have an anti-imperial message in the letter.

Kruse's work is sane, one that pastors and teachers will use with profit, and one that stands within the Reformed tradition in Romans commentaries. Sometimes his discussions are quite brief and laconic. For instance, further discussion on the theological significance of Adam's sin for humanity would have been helpful, and I would have liked to see more of a defense of his reading of Rom 11:26. But one can hardly complain about this lucid and learned work, for we all know the limitations of space in writing commentaries, and we can be thankful for Kruse's excellent addition to commentaries on Romans.

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Roger Mohrlang, *Paul and His Life-Transforming Theology: A Concise Introduction*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013. xii + 170 pp. \$21.00.

According to the author, this book “is designed to be a concise, inviting introduction to the greatest of the early Christian missionaries, the Apostle Paul” (p. ix). The book largely succeeds in achieving this aim. It has obviously grown from the author's lifetime of work in Pauline scholarship, yet it is written in a non-technical style which renders it accessible to a range of audiences. Mohrlang engages with alternative views on a number of key issues, yet writes as a convinced and unashamed evangelical. He keeps the text of Paul's letters as the primary focus of his work and does not allow himself to be distracted by unnecessarily detailed debates. He frames his discussions in an engaging and relevant manner, emphasizing the element of personal / moral transformation in Paul's theology. Furthermore, at the end of each chapter, he provides insightful suggestions for ways in which Paul's theology might challenge modern evangelical culture.



In the first three chapters, Mohrlang discusses the relevance of Paul for today (ch. 1), introduces Paul's letters—accepting all thirteen as authentic—(ch. 2), and provides a brief biography of Paul's life, largely drawn from Acts (ch. 3). Unfortunately, the discussion of the individual letters in ch. 2 is a little too brief. Mohrlang himself warns that much of Paul's writing “is not abstract theology but advice for specific issues that must be interpreted contextually” (p. 5). However, in these opening chapters he provides very little discussion of these specific issues, and his approach in the rest of the book is largely synthetic—various themes are discussed, quotations are used to illustrate the themes, and footnotes are provided to demonstrate places in the letters where the themes appear. A more detailed overview of the specific issues behind each of the letters in chapter 2 would have greatly helped readers to understand the context(s) of the subsequent discussion. Nevertheless, there is a helpful appendix on pp. 161–68 with details on the specifics of Paul's letters. I suggest that teachers recommend that their students read this appendix between chapters 2 and 3.

The book treats the following themes in order: the person of Christ (ch. 4), the work of Christ with a focus on his death and resurrection (ch. 5), sin and judgment (ch. 6), the nature of salvation (ch. 7), divine election and human responsibility (ch. 8), justification (ch. 9), the Law (ch. 10), apocalyptic eschatology (ch. 11), the Spirit's work in the Christian life (ch. 12), sin and assurance (ch. 13), motivation for ethical living (ch. 14), the church as the family of Christ (ch. 15), Christian hope (ch. 16), Paul's mission and ministry (ch. 17), and finally—and quite helpfully—suffering in the Christian life (ch. 18).

Mohrlang is generally judicious in his choice of how much detail to enter into on debated issues. His choice of detail in each case depends on how close the issue is to his overall purpose to expound the life-transforming nature of Paul's theology. On some issues, he provides little or no discussion at all: e.g., the role of women in church and family (he mentions women involved in gospel ministry, but claims that Paul largely conformed to the restrictive cultural norms of his day which are no longer seen as relevant by many Christians today, pp. 124–25). On the nature and future of “Israel”, he maintains that Paul has two quite different notions of “Israel” in mind: national Israel, for whom Paul enigmatically holds out some hope for salvation, and the “real” Israel, i.e., all believers in Christ (pp. 48–49). On the use of the Law, he provides a nuanced discussion of the Pauline texts themselves and affirms a moderate reformed position (the Law is not the means of salvation nor the comprehensive guide for daily living; it convicts people of sin and points them to Christ; nevertheless the moral commandments are still God's will and as such are eternally valid), but does not enter into discussion on the various other views in Christian tradition and scholarship (pp. 69–80). On the meaning of debated phrases such as “the works of the law”, “the faith of Christ”, and “the righteousness of God”, he expresses his own views in the main text (“works of the law” refers to careful observance of all the commandments; “the faith of Christ” includes an objective genitive and refers to trust in Jesus Christ; “the righteousness of God” is the righteousness God attributes to people when they put their faith in Christ) but also provides a relatively extensive discussion of alternative views in footnotes (pp. 62–63). On the meaning of the “I” in Romans 7:14–25, he provides a detailed discussion of the alternatives in the main text before presenting his conclusion that the passage is not about the experience of believers (pp. 95–99). On the question of the relationship between divine election and human responsibility, he seems to give equal weight to the respective emphases of Calvinism and Arminianism (p. 53), concluding that Paul has a valuable yet “paradoxical” perspective (p. 59).

A very nice feature of the book is the plethora of extensive quotations from Paul's letters. The translations are Mohrlang's own, and are rendered in clear contemporary English. This translation style

fits in well with Mohrlang’s aim to provide an accessible introduction to Paul’s letters. At times, however, Mohrlang’s translations over-interpret Paul’s words in such a way that theological conclusions are placed directly on Paul’s lips without sufficient warrant from the text at hand—for example, Mohrlang translates Romans 1:17 (lit. “the righteous one by faith will live”) as “the person who is *considered* righteous by faith will live” (p. 64, emphasis mine).

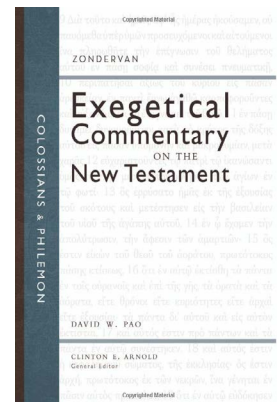
Overall, this book is a careful yet highly readable and concise summary of Paul’s theology. It is recommended for new students or ordinary Christian readers who are seeking an introductory-level overview of Pauline theology.

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David W. Pao. *Colossians and Philemon*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 464 pp. \$36.99.

The new Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series has produced a handful of volumes to date (Matthew, Luke, Acts, Galatians, Ephesians), and Colossians, by Dr. David W. Pao, is one of the latest, and certainly a model for the series. While the market is flooded with every kind of Biblical commentary imaginable, the ZECNT has managed to find a helpful niche, offering a textbook-looking design and streamlined format that aims to serve the busy evangelical pastor. Three features of this commentary series are distinct and notable. First, the series is designed to interact closely with the Greek text, but intentionally avoids esoteric grammatical and syntactical jargon. Second, the editors desired to simplify and clarify the biblical text using “main point” statements for each passage, as well as charts showing the structure and flow of the text. Finally, the discussion of each passage ends with



brief reflections on the theology and points of application from the author’s perspective. For the sake of brevity, I will focus my comments on the larger portion of the commentary, the material on Colossians.

The study of Colossians is already well-served by excellent commentaries by Peter O’Brien, Markus Barth, F. F. Bruce, James Dunn, Ben Witherington, and many others. Pao’s work, though, is welcome as he has interacted with the most recent research and demonstrates judicious exegetical choices.

The introduction to the commentary covers the expected issues of authorship, dating/provenance, and background. Pao offers a brief defense of Pauline authorship. He questions the validity of basing a decision (against authenticity) on vocabulary or even style, since Paul may have used an amanuensis. More importantly, he addresses the theological peculiarities of Colossians. He urges that differences between Colossians and the undisputed letters are exaggerated, and the similarities are underappreciated. He also accepts that “development” in Paul’s thought is not only possible, but even expected and natural. As for when and where Colossians was written, Pao tentatively places Paul in Rome writing around 60–62 AD.

What about the situation behind the letter? Pao surveys a number of hypotheses regarding the identity and concerns of the false teachers and their philosophy: “Pagan Philosophy,” “Jewish Legalism,”

“Jewish Mysticism,” and “Syncretism.” While he offers the merits and drawbacks of each theory, he is most persuaded by the notion that the teaching was “a syncretism with Jewish elements providing the controlling framework” (p. 31). Pao believes this reflects most accurately the complexity of religious life in first century Phrygia.

The commentary itself is too long for detailed engagement, so I will address a handful of key texts of Colossians that Pao discusses. One of the earliest textual challenges one faces in the study of Colossians is the meaning of 1:24 where Paul refers to filling up the lack regarding Christ’s afflictions. Pao supports a common interpretation that associates early Christian suffering with “predetermined messianic afflictions that are taking place in the eschatological era” (p. 123). While this reading is popular (and possible), it is hard to see how it relates to or fights against the false teaching.

A second key interpretive challenge is the translation and identification of the *stoicheia tou kosmou* (Col 2:8, 20). Pao accepts translations such as “elemental spirits of the world” or “elemental forces/powers,” based on the frequent references in the text to angels, as well as Paul’s linking of the false teaching with “evil spiritual forces” (p. 161). I think Pao makes a good case and offers the strongest reading of this phrase.

What about the thorny phrase “worship of angels” in 2:18? Pao leans heavily towards the objective genitive interpretation arguing, “angel veneration has been shown to have existed in Phrygian Judaism” (p. 189). In my own study of the word for “worship” (*threskeia*), though, I am not convinced it means “worship” as much as “religious practice” (see the recent work of Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the Gentiles*). Angels were believed to have been celibate and did not eat or drink (see Tobit), which fits in rather well with the asceticism of the false teachers. Pao does not entertain this possibility, nor does he explore the meaning of *threskeia* in the kind of depth I had hoped.

Finally, we turn to the household code and its proper interpretation for today (3:18–4:1; see pp. 262–285). When it comes to the command, “Wives, submit to your husbands” (3:18), there is the matter of whether or not that should be understood as a universal Christian ethic (i.e., wives of every time, culture, and stage of salvation history should submit to their husbands). Pao appears to treat this as a universal ethic, especially in view of Paul’s “reference to the submission of Christ to God or the church to Christ as models for wives’ submission” (p. 263). However, he does not dwell on this subordination, and even sees the following clause “as is fitting in the Lord” as limiting and relativizing (see p. 267). While I had hoped for a more nuanced discussion here, I appreciated that Pao kept the focus on the family’s submission to Christ as Lord. Note Pao’s apt gloss of the whole code (from the subordinate’s end): “A wife/child/slave must put the Lord first” (p. 263).

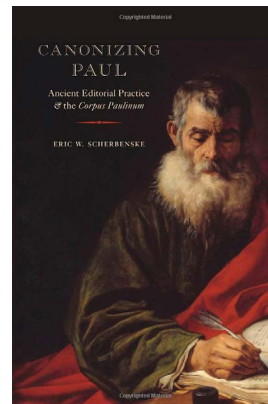
I feel quite comfortable commending this commentary to pastors who want to consult a reliable commentary for Bible study, preparation for sermons, and even personal study. Pao always presents the interpretive options, and offers a rationale for his preference. My favorite part of the volume, the element I felt made it stand out among available Colossians commentaries, is the section on theology and application. Plenty of commentaries re-hash the same exegetical conundrums. But preachers often get stuck making the leap from the first century to today. Commentaries like the ZECNT, including Pao’s volume, offer the kind of counsel that preachers desperately need.

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Eric W. Scherbenske. *Canonizing Paul: Ancient Editorial Practice and the Corpus Paulinum*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. xii + 383 pp. £47.99/\$74.00.

Once thought to be a dying discipline, NT textual criticism has experienced an unexpected revival in the last few decades. Into this lively atmosphere comes Eric Scherbenske's published doctoral dissertation completed under the supervision of Bart Ehrman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Despite the title, the book has little to do with either the process or the results of canonization. The subtitle points to Scherbenske's real interest which is to show that interpreting Paul's letters and editing Paul's letters were mutually influencing activities. For Scherbenske, "editing" includes everything from copying and correcting a text to the inclusion of introductory material, section headings, and even formatting. "Interpretation" includes both interpretations that influenced editors and interpretations that grow out of the resulting editions.



Scherbenske situates his work within two recent trends in the discipline: (1) the focus on variant readings as windows into the social world of Christianity and (2) the importance of the material aspects of manuscripts themselves (pp. 7–8). Unfortunately, the book never mentions the criticisms leveled against the first of these trends by Ulrich Schmid and others (see especially *Textual Variation: Theological and Social Tendencies?* ed. H. A. G. Houghton and D. C. Parker [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008], pp. 3–8; 173–84). But, since most of the book covers the second of these trends (only ten points of variation are discussed in all), the effect is small.

After a brief introduction, the book unfolds in four chapters. Chapter one sets the discussion in the broader context of editing in antiquity. Scherbenske considers how the works of Homer and Hippocrates were edited and concludes that editors were comfortable with textual changes but within certain limits. He also explores how the unavoidable questions of authenticity were resolved and justified by editors who had to choose which books to include and exclude. The chapter concludes with discussions of "paratextual material" such as introductions, prefaces, section headings and the like.

The last three chapters comprise the meat of the book. Here we are given tours of three major editions of Paul's letters: those of Marcion, Euthalius, and the Latin Vulgate. Marcion's edition is the best known of these but also the least accessible, available only through patristic citations. We do know, however, that he placed Galatians first, excluded the Pastorals and Hebrews, wrote an accompanying tract (the *Antitheses*), and included his so-called prologues at the beginning of his Pauline corpus—all designed to lead the reader to Marcion's interpretation.

Where the evidence for Marcion's edition must often be pieced together from other sources, the Euthalian edition is extant in numerous Greek manuscripts. Scherbenske pays special attention to the earliest of these, the sixth century Codex Coislinianus (Gregory-Aland 015). Euthalius's edition includes the typical 14 letters (the Pastorals and Hebrews included) and begins with Romans. It also includes a prologue, introductions to each letter, section headings, a list of citations, an account of Paul's martyrdom, and a description of Paul's travels. Most interesting is how the Euthalian material explains the order of Paul's letters. Romans stands first, not because of length or theological depth, but rather because "it has been written for those beginning in reverence for God" (p. 127). The list of quotations,

or “divine testimonies,” includes a unique cross-referencing system for OT quotations but surprisingly includes citations of extra-biblical material as well.

The final chapter shifts attention to the Latin Vulgate as represented in our earliest witness, the sixth century Codex Fuldensis. As with the Euthalian material, Scherbenske finds little editorializing in the text itself but does find it in the paratextual material. In Fuldensis, the editorial material has been culled from numerous sources, with some awkward results. For instance, the *Primum Quaeritur*, an introductory prologue found in many Vulgate manuscripts, mentions only the 10 Pauline letters found in Marcion’s edition, but the codex itself has the same fourteen letters found in the Euthalian edition plus the apocryphal letter to the Laodiceans. What’s more, the prologue explains Paul’s ten letters as Paul’s way of showing his continuity with the OT (Ten Commandments = ten letters). Other odd juxtapositions occur as well. The book closes with a short conclusion and appendix followed by endnotes, bibliography, and subject, name, and literature indexes.

A few concerns are worth mentioning. Scherbenske is generally careful to show where the evidence is too slim or unclear to allow conclusions. But in some cases, his desire to connect editorial practices and interpretation gets the better of him. In discussing the formatting of Codex Coislinianus, for example, he argues that the shorter-than-usual line lengths are the editor’s way of highlighting the virtues and vices in these passages (pp. 159–73). But Scherbenske overlooks 2 Cor 11:20 in Coislinianus, a text that lists Paul’s suffering with the same short line lengths. The simpler explanation is that these one- or two-word lines are due to the staccato syntax of these verses not their moral content. One can see the same pattern in Rom 8:35 in Codex Sinaiticus.

Scherbenske also suggests that there is a shift by the fourth century from controlling interpretation by changing the text itself to changing the paratextual material instead (pp. 229, 231, 236). Although he never tells us what caused this shift, this simplistic description obscures the fact that textual alteration occurred well after the fourth century (see Codex Bezae) and that textual transmission before then could be quite free from editorializing (see P75 and B).

Despite these concerns, Scherbenske has produced a well-researched volume. Particularly helpful is his survey of ancient editorial work in chapter one and his subsequent investigation of two fascinating codices. In this reviewer’s opinion, he has succeeded in his goal to stimulate “further exploration of the physical aspects of early Christian manuscripts both as material culture and as repositories of texts and interpretations ripe for social history” (p. 13).

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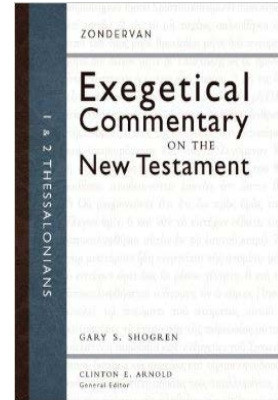
Gary S. Shogren. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 375 pp. £20.99/\$32.99.

Gary Shogren of the Seminario ESEPA in San José, Costa Rica, has produced a commentary that every student and professor of the Greek text of the NT can love. The volume is wonderfully concise, clear, and cogent. And it's cheap. Thankfully, the good folk at Zondervan understand that the pockets of students, and their professors, are not always deep. Despite its relatively low price, both the content and production values are very high indeed. This is a good read that takes us through the paces in our study of the Thessalonian correspondence in a print format that is well-organized and easy on the eyes.

The content of this commentary, as that of the other volumes in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, is not exactly what one would expect given the moniker “exegetical.” Shogren is deeply concerned with helping the reader understand the text within the authors and first readers’ horizon of meaning (he regards these letters as principally the work of Paul and Silas). The author includes topical outlines of each book and a detailed structural analysis, in English, of each major section of the letters. While such structural analyses are common fodder in exegesis courses, rarely does this means of analyzing the flow of an author’s argument appear in commentaries. Lexical studies abound in these pages and Shogren, who has written a small grammatical guide to insert in a Greek NT, explains significant parts of the letters’ Greek grammar, a feature often missing from contemporary commentaries. If a student wants to see the exegetical principles expounded in handbooks like Gordon Fee’s *New Testament Exegesis* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2002) demonstrated, she need not look further than this study. While the commentary aims at those who have had some Greek, the English-bound reader will find this work accessible as well.

Yet this and other volumes in the series have a curious feature that betrays the name. At the end of each section Shogren talks theology to us. The “Theology in Application” sections discuss the emerging theology within the setting of Thessalonica, then arcs over to biblical theology, and finally rounds out the discussion with a section on the “Message of This Passage for the Church Today.” Moreover, at the very end of the volume Shogren includes a section entitled “Theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians” (pp. 344–54). In other words, Shogren and the editors of the series (Clint Arnold as General Editor) have an eye on the church and the way these letters speak today. This is much more than an “Exegetical Commentary” but a work that, to a degree, understands the necessity of hermeneutics.

Shogren is well abreast of current scholarship on the Thessalonian letters and discusses crux passages with careful, though not labored, diligence. First Thessalonians 2:1–12 is not apologetic but rather a presentation of the apostles’ character that the Thessalonians should imitate. First Thessalonians 2:7 is about the apostles being as “little children” not “gentle” among the believers. The “one who now restrains” (2 Thess 2:7 and 2:6) the “Man of Lawlessness” is a great angel. Those not working (2 Thess 3:6–15) were not lazy but “disorderly” since, unlike the apostles, they required support for their evangelistic work. Shogren often uses the “In Depth” sections of the commentary to discuss these controverted passages. If the reader wants to follow the argument down to the bottom, she may do so by carefully working through his argument.



While there is much to commend this commentary to students, pastors, and teachers, some areas could use further development. Shogren is careful with lexical studies but at times displays a less than robust understanding of the cultural milieu of these letters. The philosophical traditions that are essential for understanding 1 Thess 2:1–12 do not receive robust treatment (compare Abraham Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004]). The discussion of patronage as a possible context for interpreting 2 Thess 3:6–15 is not fully examined (compare Bruce Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994]). Since language is our gateway to culture, lexicography should lead to a more robust engagement with the cultural milieu of these letters.

Shogren's work to bridge the gap between the ancient and contemporary world more often than not derives from the main points of the biblical passage. For example, the discussion about judgment after 2 Thess 1 tightly ties together ancient and contemporary discussions. In contrast, should our contemporary reflection on 1 Thess 1 run principally around the topic of prayer? Paul summarizes the letter's whole message in that chapter, a fact we miss in this "Theology in Application." All our students, pastors, and teachers need a robust orientation to hermeneutics so that we do not remain mere historians. The commentary acknowledges as much but wants more careful hermeneutical work to match the volume's high-level exegesis.

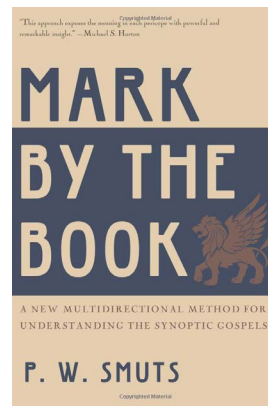
Shogren has put together an admirable commentary that deserves a place on the student and teacher's shelf. His bibliography is up-to-date, although absent are any of the works emerging from the Majority World on these letters (such as that of Nestor Míguez, available to Shogren in Spanish before the English edition *The Practice of Hope* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012], or K. K. Yeo in *What Has Jerusalem to Do with Beijing?* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998]). This is a careful and fresh reading of the Thessalonian correspondence that does not simply reiterate previous scholarship but works through the text and seeks to make the apostles' voice heard within our contemporary world.

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P. W. Smuts. *Mark by the Book: A New Multidirectional Method for Understanding the Synoptic Gospels*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2013. xxv + 260 pp. \$17.99.

Peter W. Smuts's *Mark by the Book* is a valuable addition to the fields of Markan studies and hermeneutics. It succeeds where Rhoads and Michie's *Mark as Story* lacks in offering a unified biblical theology as part of Markan analysis. It provides accessibility and pastoral sensitivity for the lay reader that is wanting in intermediate exegetical works and analyses of the evangelist's theological artistry.

Smuts seeks to address three challenges facing any reader of the Synoptic Gospels: (1) how Jesus fulfills the OT in the Gospels, (2) the relationship between the various Gospels—whether to emphasize harmonization or distinctions, and (3) the application of the teaching of the Gospels to the Christian. Smuts desires to avoid the little emphasis placed on the distinctives of each evangelist, as is common in works on general and specific hermeneutics.



The author prescribes four types of readings necessary to understand the Synoptics: (1) a *downward* reading interprets the text in light of what precedes and follows it; (2) a *sideways* reading makes comparison to parallel accounts; (3) a *backward* reading factors in the OT quotations, references, and allusions; and (4) a *forward* reading looks at the themes a particular passage emphasizes, traces their development in the remainder of the NT, and through these themes applies the passage to the believer. The intention is not to write a commentary; the work examines selective passages.

In the opening chapters of his interpretive method, one discerns the author's emphasis on the centrality of the person and work of Christ in his approach to the Synoptics. Smuts views Mark as establishing the Deity of Christ and a messianic expectation in Mark 1:1–8 rather than a simple humanity. This is a strand that he sees running throughout Mark as an explanation of the later "messianic confusion" in the Gospel account (p. 11). The remainder of the work is an overview of Mark and how one should examine a Synoptic account.

The *downward* reading reflects common exegesis of a pericope within its narrowest context. The author demonstrates that a good reading of a Gospel's text recognizes that literary features of a passage are signposts pointing toward meaning. The non-academic reader will gain insight into Mark's sandwiching technique, themes of authority and the kingdom of God, and "doctrinal links" between passages on items like justification by faith in Mark and Paul.

In *backwards* readings, Smuts cautions the reader against seeing an analysis of the OT relationship to a passage as exhaustive. He manifests this third of his four reading elements as a Biblical Theology-reading of a passage in the Gospels, developing the "new exodus" and other typological themes for the lay reader.

In the *sideways* reading, the author draws upon nuances of the parallel accounts for the sake of rightly reading what each author emphasizes in his text. His method works diligently to prevent an over-reading of the parallels into any one Markan passage.

On the *forward* reading, Smuts suggests that the reader "ask how developments in the subsequent New Testament-era canonical writings may qualify or modify Jesus' teaching for the churchgoer" (p. xx). The forward reading is more of a canonical reading than the backward component.

The goal of Smuts' technique in an account is not a singular meaning. Although he speaks of the author's intention, he will "pursue a number of motifs" in passages (p. 78). Yet the writer provides great theory and examples on how to read the Gospel text for main emphases. His four strategies work in tandem to follow the same theme or themes in a passage rather than offer readings that distinguish textual, Christological, social, and devotional as separate or disparate.

On particular passages, the theory of application in the forward readings is not clear or consistent. For example, Smuts's application of the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2:1–12 "should also motivate Christians to prioritize forgiveness in their various relationships" (p. 29). This, however, does not derive from exegesis of the passage, but from systematics. Of related note, the author does not spend time explaining how one legitimately discerns what he suggests is implied by a text.

Other criticisms are few. One is to ask to what degree the Fourth Gospel should be included in this hermeneutic, even as scholars debate the degree to which any of the Synoptics influenced John—if at all. Smuts recognizes John's parallels in sideways readings of the accounts of the baptizer, the feeding of the 5000, and Peter's denial, but will not permit John to "detain" the exposition of the crucifixion episode (p. 210).

Smuts does not discuss the influence of intertestamental and first century literary milieus on our reading of the Synoptics. Also, this reviewer would encourage an additional chapter offering an exposition of Mark 16:1–8 separate from the application of Smut’s hermeneutic to the problem of the ending of Mark.

Nevertheless it is important to note that Smut’s reading of the Synoptic Gospels emphasizes the gospel: the death and resurrection of Jesus is primary in this work and the author’s understanding of Mark’s account. This is the best thing about *Mark by the Book*: it is about the one story of Scripture. All would do well to learn to read Mark in this manner. I hope that Smuts and others produce introductions akin to this one for the other three Gospel accounts.

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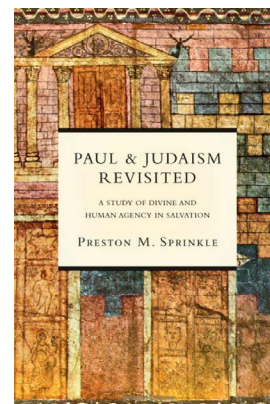
Preston M. Sprinkle. *Paul and Judaism Revisited: A Study of Divine and Human Agency in Salvation*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013. 256 pp. £17.99/\$24.00.

Is it true that Jews believed that they were saved by works, whereas Paul insisted that salvation is by faith alone? Traditionally, Christians have answered in the affirmative, but much recent scholarship, known as the New Perspective on Paul, has made things more complicated.

Despite the amount of scholarly ink that has been spilt on this issue over the past 36 years, Sprinkle succeeds in moving the discussion forward. What makes his contribution stand out is his attention to the methodological challenges involved in comparing what Paul has to say about salvation with statements from Jewish literature, statements that may have been intended to address very different questions than the ones Paul is wrestling with in his letters. To ensure a meaningful comparison, Sprinkle has been looking for writings of a genre that is comparable to Paul’s letters and for statements that address similar questions. He finds that the writings of the Qumran community are the ones that are best suited for such a comparison.

Sprinkle argues that OT and Jewish views of salvation (including those of Paul) may be understood within the tension between what he calls the deuteronomic and the prophetic perspectives. On the deuteronomic perspective, God promises salvation in response to human repentance; whereas, on the prophetic perspective, God’s salvation is viewed as a unilateral act. Sprinkle’s way of analyzing this material corresponds to the focus on divine and human agency in salvation, a distinction that has been highlighted by scholars such as John Barclay, Simon Gathercole, and Francis Watson. Applying these categories, Sprinkle examines the view of Israel’s restoration, the granting of the Spirit, human ethical ability, justification, and judgment according to works.

Sprinkle’s examination should be commended for allowing the complexity of the material to stand. One might have suspected that he would have placed Qumran squarely in the deuteronomic category and Paul in the prophetic category, but Sprinkle does not fall into the temptation to “juke the stats” and make his findings appear more decisive than they are. While Sprinkle finds a strongly prophetic perspective and a clear emphasis on one-sided divine action in Paul’s writings, he does not read the



writings from Qumran as examples of the opposite tendency. The realm of views expressed in these writings covers a broad spectrum, ranging from deuteronomic to prophetic perspectives.

Sprinkle finds some degree of continuity between Paul and the hymnic writings from Qumran, and he classifies several passages from Qumran within the prophetic category. Similar to Paul, the *Words of the Luminaries* (4Q504) and the *Thanksgiving Hymns* (1QH^a) attribute restoration to a one-sided divine action, look forward to God's unilateral act of granting the Spirit, and hold a very pessimistic view of human capacity for doing good. Sprinkle observes an important distinction, however, in that Paul's emphasis on transformation is not paralleled in the Qumran scrolls. (Sprinkle does not read Rom 7:14–25 as a description of the Christian believer; he thinks such an interpretation corresponds to the views of the *Thanksgiving Hymns*.) Whereas Paul understands believers as having gone from darkness to light, the members of the Qumran community are described as “sons of light,” but never as former “sons of darkness.”

I wonder, however, if Sprinkle's account is completely adequate here. In the *Hymns*, God's grace is not only manifested in forgiveness, but also in teaching the faithful to walk in the right path and in keeping them from sinning. The hymnist confesses, “I have understood that [you smoothen] the path of the one whom you choose and by the insight [of your knowledge you pre]vent him from sinning against you, you [re]store his humility through your punishments” (1QH^a 4:21–22). Later, we read, “I have enjoined my soul with an oath not to sin against you [and n]ot to do anything which is evil in your eyes” (1QH^a 6:17–18).

Concerning justification, the contrast between Paul and Qumran is much clearer: Paul's God justifies the ungodly, whereas the God of the Qumran writings justifies the righteous. Regarding judgment according to works, Sprinkle maintains that such judgment is essential to Paul's theology and that it does not contradict his teaching on justification by faith. Sprinkle follows Simon Gathercole in arguing that this judgment is based on God's own work in the believers (his argument here is particularly strong). Unlike Gathercole, however, he does not read Rom 2:13 in this light, but defends the view that the justification described here is purely hypothetical at this stage in salvation history.

Sprinkle's findings provide an important corrective to the New Perspective on Paul, as they show some important differences between the views of salvation in Paul and in Judaism (especially that of the Qumran scrolls, but Sprinkle also includes a chapter that surveys other writings of the Second Temple period). Paul is more single-minded in his emphasis on God's one-sided action in saving human beings.

Sprinkle's attention to the spectrum of Jewish views also shows, however, that we cannot simply conclude that Paul's theology was monergistic and Jewish theology was (consistently) synergistic. The question remains, therefore, if the focus on divine and human agency is able to take us to the heart of the differences between Pauline and Jewish theology. Sprinkle also concludes, “Paul's emphasis on divine agency is not unparalleled,” and “the most unique element in Paul's soteriology” lies elsewhere, namely, in “the sacrificial death, bodily resurrection, subsequent enthronement, and personal indwelling, intercession and love that the risen Messiah accomplishes in and for wicked people” (p. 249).

In sum, the book is to be recommended, but I am not completely sure for whom. It appears that the implied reader is a beginning student, as the use of Greek and Hebrew is limited (and always transliterated) and as Sprinkle does not assume that the reader is familiar with the scholarly discussion. But the book is not written as an introduction to the subject, as the overview of the state of research is quite brief (but the footnotes are extensive). Sprinkle also skips crucial topics, such as election, with the explanation that he has nothing new to add to them, which would imply that his goal is to advance

the scholarly discussion (he succeeds). The book will probably be most useful to advanced students and scholars.

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Beth M. Stovell. *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John's Eternal King*. Linguistic Biblical Studies 5. Leiden: Brill, 2012. xv + 381 pp. \$203.00/£146.00.

The question of the prominence of the kingdom or kingship of God in John's Gospel is a pertinent one and not least with regard to the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics as well as to questions relating to the historicity of John. It is almost universally accepted that the reign of God is of key importance to the first three evangelists and that this emphasis reflects the centrality of this theme in the historical ministry of Jesus. But what of John? Can a Gospel in which the common synoptic phrase *hē basileia tou theou* (the kingdom/reign of God) appears only twice and within the same discourse (John 3:3, 5) be regarded as placing a similar emphasis on the theme of the kingship of God?

The question is tackled admirably by Beth M. Stovell in this study, which is a revision of her doctoral dissertation for McMaster Divinity College. Stovell takes a linguistic approach and analyses the centrality of metaphors relating to the kingship of God in John. She argues that to speak of Christ as king *is* to discuss the kingdom of God in a very real way (p. 18). She, therefore, aims to show the centrality of the theme of the kingdom of God in John by demonstrating that metaphors relating to Jesus' kingship can be constantly identified throughout the Fourth Gospel.

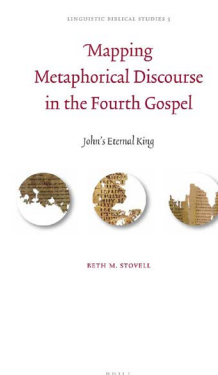
In chapter 1, Stovell introduces her study and places it within the context of foregoing scholarship on the question of the kingdom of God in John's Gospel and notes that there has been a shift in recent years towards a greater recognition of its presence in the Fourth Gospel.

Chapter 2 then discusses Stovell's methodology for this study by describing the linguistic-literary approach she uses to analyse metaphors of kingship throughout John. She analyses the place of kingship metaphors within the discourse at hand, then considers the internal structure of the metaphor and its relationship to other metaphors culminating with a discussion of the implications of these metaphors.

In Chapter 3 Stovell lays further groundwork for her study by analysing the metaphors associated with kingship in the Hebrew Bible. She shows that Yahweh is described metaphorically as the divine-warrior, the judge and the shepherd-king from whom the human-king derives his authority and whose character the ideal human king should reflect.

Stovell then conducts a metaphorical analysis of the Fourth Gospel in Chapters 4–8. She begins in John 1 and moves throughout the gospel to John 18–19 in order to show the presence of kingship metaphors relating to Jesus' identity throughout the gospel.

In Chapter 4 she examines the metaphorical conception of the Messiah and shows that it is used in close proximity to the title Son of God and to the theme of Jesus' authority over life arguing that in the



'blending of these anointing, familial and life metaphors' Jesus is described as king in a manner similar to Yahweh the Great King (p. 136).

In Chapter 5 Stovell focuses on John 3 and discusses the 'blending' that has occurred between the metaphors of kingdom of God and eternal life in the Nicodemus discourse. She argues that 'the kingdom of God and eternal life function as blended metaphors through the conception of Yahweh the King's reign as eternal and directly dependent on his own eternal life for its character and for its ability to give life to others' (p. 199). Stovell then argues again that Jesus is described as king in the manner reminiscent of Yahweh, i.e., the king who possesses and grants life.

Chapter 6 then considers the metaphorical description of Jesus as the good shepherd and how this relates to the shepherd-king of the Hebrew Bible. Stovell argues cogently that in John 10 Jesus equates himself with Yahweh 'in terms of his role as the good shepherd-king' (p. 233).

In Chapters 7 and 8 Stovell demonstrates how this developing theme of Jesus' kingship culminates and climaxes in John 12 and John 18–19, chapters which are widely recognised to be replete with kingship metaphors and which are ironically juxtaposed with expectations of the Jewish leaders and Pilate. Chapter 9 then concludes the study.

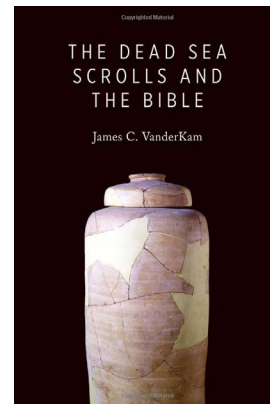
Stovell's thesis is an important step forward in demonstrating the centrality of the theme of the reign of God in the Fourth Gospel. She has clearly demonstrated that metaphors of kingship are a prominent part of John and that the Fourth Evangelist is concerned to convey Jesus' identity as the divine king in a manner that is reminiscent of Yahweh. This is an excellent and well written thesis, but I must respectfully offer the following critical observations of the study. First, Stovell's methodology can be hard for a non-linguist to get to grips with, and this may deter some readers who would otherwise be interested in the theme of kingship in John. Second, the study reads rather repetitively at times, particularly throughout chapters 4–8. However, this may be understandable given that it is a revised doctoral dissertation. Lastly, Stovell designates as metaphorical certain aspects of the Fourth Gospel that do not seem to be functioning metaphorically within the narrative. This seems most apparent with regard to the theme of eternal life. Jesus' eternal possession of life and his authority to grant eternal life are indeed the primary ways in which his kingship is conceived of in the Fourth Gospel, and Stovell is correct to emphasise this. Does this mean, however, that the eternal life which Jesus has within himself, or which he grants to his followers, is itself a metaphorical conception?

These criticisms aside, this study gives some fascinating insights into John's representation of a theme that is so widely recognised in the first three Gospels, and I would recommend this study to anyone wishing to examine the theme of the kingship of God in the Gospels.

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James C. VanderKam. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. 202 pp. \$25.00/£16.99.

Most of this book originated as the Speaker's Lectures at Oxford University in 2009 and seeks to provide "up-to-date, accessible overviews of major subjects in the area of the scrolls and the Bible." The first chapter pertains to "The 'Biblical' Scrolls and Their Implications." Here VanderKam surveys the manuscript copies of books that would become part of the Hebrew Bible. This includes the number of copies of respective books found among the caves as well as other Judean desert sites. In general, these finds provide the oldest original language evidence for many passages and indicate the care with which texts were transmitted in antiquity. Though they offer a very limited set of data, they are nonetheless important for providing Hebrew evidence for readings previously known only from other versions such as the Septuagint. The author reviews the "textual picture" through surveys of orthography, select textual variations, interpretative insertions, as well as new and expanded editions of biblical books attested among the scrolls. From this data VanderKam suggests that the documents attain a considerable degree of textual uniformity perhaps as early as the first century C.E. He then illustrates contributions the scrolls make for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible.



Chapter two, "Commentary on Older Scripture in the Scrolls," examines more explicit aspects of scriptural interpretation in the scrolls—cases in which the writers overtly explain the meaning of an older text or derive support from it. The natural presumption is that these older texts were thought by Qumran writers to have extraordinary value for their present concerns. VanderKam finds precedent in the Hebrew Bible itself, where later texts such as Jeremiah (Jer 26:18) cite earlier texts such as Micah (Mic 3:12). Similarly texts outside the Hebrew Bible found at Qumran (e.g., *Jubilees*, *Aramaic Levi*, and *Enoch* literature) provide exposition of texts from older works, both within the Hebrew Bible and without, in formal *pesharim* and other forms of interpretation. The natural conclusion is that scriptural works were available to the communities, were the "objects of intense scrutiny" (p. 47), and bore authority for the deepest concerns of the communities that study them.

The third chapter, "Authoritative Literature According to the Scrolls," deals with the questions of which texts were authoritative works for the writers of Qumran scrolls, and how one can tell. Though VanderKam finds no clear evidence for a canon of Scripture in the strict sense of the term, he nonetheless finds evidence for a "core group of books on which all could agree . . . that was a functional collection of authoritative texts" (p. 55). He draws this conclusion from a set of criteria, including the attestation of a work in several copies and a clearly authoritative function among the corpus of scrolls. By the latter VanderKam looks for a clear attribution of a book's contents to God, the employment of recognized citation formulas, and the existence of a commentary written on it. This would certainly include works like Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and a number of the Psalms, but also Psalms 154 and 155.

The fourth is the only chapter not presented as one of the Speaker's Lectures. In "New Copies of Old Texts," VanderKam focuses on works outside the Hebrew Bible that were known before the Qumran discoveries for which the caves yielded the earliest copies and in their original language. These include *Jubilees*, *Aramaic Levi*, the *Book of the Giants*, the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, *Tobit*, *Enoch* (especially the Greek fragments from cave 7 that may contain fragments of the Epistle of Enoch), the Epistle of

Jeremiah, and Psalms 151, 154, and 155. VanderKam concludes that all of these, with the possible exception of Psalm 154, were likely older works, copies of which were brought to Qumran at a later time. In this respect they indicate the people responsible for the scrolls inherited literature. For scholars they provide important textual data for inquiry of the works they preserve.

Long-standing debates about “Groups and Group Controversies in the Scrolls” are examined in chapter five, where VanderKam advocates an Essene authorship. He does so by saying the groups behind the texts are more similar to the Essenes than to any other fellowship about which the ancient writers report. Yet the authors do not identify themselves by that name, which is typical of them. Instead, VanderKam suggests their self-identification is found in the epithet “Doers of Torah” and similar expressions. Furthermore, the author finds clear references to Pharisees in the scrolls where, as in the NT, they fare rather poorly. Though reference to the Sadducees as such is less clear, VanderKam does find evidence for a “Sadducean” approach to the law attested in the scrolls.

The final two chapters relate to the Scrolls and the NT, specifically the Gospels (chapter six), the book of Acts, and the letters of Paul (chapter seven). Generally he finds the world of the scrolls to be vastly different from that of the NT in two key respects. First, whereas both the NT and the Scrolls are deeply concerned with fellowship among their adherents, NT people are eager to draw others into their fellowship and engage in intentional discipleship. Both are absent in the scrolls. Second, early Christianity was diverse, and the role of the law in it, especially in Paul, differs considerably from the scrolls. Nevertheless, the scrolls offer important “backlighting on the New Testament” (p. 120). They provide independent primary source evidence for messianism in first century Palestine, as well as scriptural interpretation, legal disputes, and community life. Furthermore, the scrolls exhibit profound parallels with the opening chapters of Acts on matters such as community goods and reflection on Moses at Mt. Sinai. They also offer some important points of comparison with Paul’s interpretation of Scripture and his notion of “works of the law” (e.g., 4QMMT), among other matters. Overall, the writers of the NT “worked in a world in which the ideas found most clearly in the scrolls enjoyed a wide accessibility. Those ideas they at times combated and at others adopted in the service of their proclamation of Jesus the Messiah” (p. 166).

The value of this work is in its stated purpose to summarize the most recent discussion in a highly accessible manner. It is not comprehensive in its scope nor does it break new ground. In this regard one familiar with a work such as VanderKam’s *Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) would stand to gain the most by the present work. Yet with characteristic caution and clarity of expression, VanderKam enlightens readers of ground most recently tilled in scholarly discourse.

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H. H. Drake Williams III. *Jesus Tried and True: Why the Four Canonical Gospels Provide the Best Picture of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013. 168 pp. \$22.00.

The thesis of this book by the academic dean and professor of New Testament at Tyndale Theological Seminary in Amsterdam is simple and straightforward. This comparison of canonical and non-canonical gospels argues for “the superiority of the canonical gospels over the non-canonical ones for understanding the person of Jesus” (p. 132). It might seem as if this is so transparent that writing an entire book on the topic is a case of severe overkill. However, the attention these other works have received in recent decades makes necessary the need for an accessible treatment of the issues raised.

Williams begins with a look at gospel dating. He sees Mark as the earliest gospel, placing it in either the 50s or 60s. Matthew also is first century, possibly before AD 75. Luke is dated either in the 60s or in AD 75–85. The key point is that all three of these Gospels belong to a period long before the end of the first century. John fits better in AD 80–85 and is certainly also written in the first century. Contrast the non-canonical gospels. Although the *Gospel of Thomas* is disputed, the rest of these works date almost exclusively from the second or third centuries. Williams then looks at claims that *Thomas* and the *Gospel of Peter* are early and finds them wanting, preferring dates for these works also in the second century.

Next comes a discussion of eyewitness testimony. Both internal evidence from the gospels and the testimony of key figures like Papias and Eusebius are examined. The recent work by Richard Bauckham also is summarized. Also treated is what evidences the titles to the Gospels yield. The non-canonical gospels do not have the same kind of eyewitness pedigree.

Gospel reception comes next. It shows how quickly the four gospels made an impact through the time of Irenaeus. Once again the non-canonical sources come out poorly in this regard. They are not very well attested in second century sources we have.

The fourth chapter presents a survey of the other gospels for contents and theology. *Thomas*, *Mary*, *Phillip*, *The Gospel of Truth*, *Peter*, *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, *The Protoevangelium of James*, and *Judas* are treated along with briefer looks at Jewish Christian gospels, Papyrus Egerton 2, and Oxyrhynchus 840. He argues that one cannot maintain claims that these gospels were unfairly excluded from the canon. A conclusion and appendix on the *Secret Gospel of Mark* completes the study.

This summary is a solid treatment of the state of the discussion. It does lack a treatment of the role of memory. This is an important issue in claims tied to eyewitnesses because many argue even if we have eyewitnesses, memory is not reliable. Robert McIvor’s work *Memory, Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels* fills that important gap. [Editor’s note: See Craig Blomberg’s [review](#) of McIvor’s work in *Themelios* 37:2 (2012).] The study also copes less well with claims that our entire collection is skewed because it is a history collected by winners. This argument is often raised, but leaves one wondering how we assess what we do not have and cannot know even existed.

So what has Williams shown? Williams has given in one place almost all of the relevant ancient texts. He has shown that in terms of what we have, the canonical Gospels have the claim of a pedigree the non-canonicals cannot touch or even begin to build. To debate Williams’ thesis one has to argue that what the Gospels and the tradition claim about its roots has problems, another area on which Williams probably spends too little time. Nonetheless, what he has shown is that the case for the roots of the



H. H. DRAKE WILLIAMS III

JESUS TRIED AND TRUE

Why the Four Canonical Gospels
Provide the Best Picture of Jesus

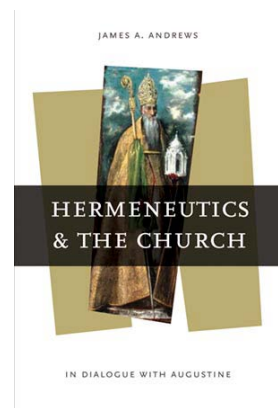
Gospels going back to Jesus at least exists, something the non-canonicals really cannot even begin to claim.

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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

James A. Andrews. *Hermeneutics and the Church: In Dialogue with Augustine*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. xv + 303 pp. £29.95/\$35.00.

What profit might come from reading the Church's past biblical interpreters in the context of contemporary theological interpretation? This is the question that James A. Andrews seeks to answer in *Hermeneutics and the Church*, a revision of his thesis written at the University of Aberdeen under the supervision of Professor Francis Watson. Andrews is particularly concerned to participate in contemporary theological dialogue by utilizing the discrete voices of the past. He is hopeful to show how one might responsibly "appeal to the tradition, read it well, and also apply its insights to the contemporary context" (p. 12). Andrews, however, notes rightly the danger in allowing contemporary concerns to mute the voices of the past. Thus, he hopes in this work to read Augustine through the questions of the present while simultaneously responding to these current issues "in Augustine's voice." In this way, Andrews may offer a new method for interacting with ancient texts, one in which Augustine himself may be permitted to set the parameters of the theological discussion on biblical interpretation through his classic text *De doctrina christiana* (*DDC*).



Accordingly, Andrews begins *Hermeneutics and the Church* by analyzing the context of *DDC*. He reminds his readers of *DDC*'s composition in two stages: the first (Books 1–3) written in 396/7 and the second (Book 4) in 426/7. Andrews suggests that one ought to read *DDC* in the context of other works written early in Augustine's career, notably *Ad Simplicianum*, *Contra epistulam Manichaei*, and *De agone*. These early texts provide two key details to understanding Augustine's early writing (including *DDC*): (a) "the overwhelming attention to Scripture" and (b) "the sense that Augustine can write for the average person" (pp. 21–22). Not only, for Andrews, does this explain Augustine's focus on Scripture in *DDC*, but it shows that *DDC* is probably written for clergy rather than the average person, as it reads quite differently than *De agone* in this regard (p. 22). Andrews catalogues the various interpretations of *DDC*—from an explicit biblical hermeneutics to a rhetorical handbook—before suggesting that it in fact falls somewhere in between. It is an "expanded hermeneutics," defined as an interpretation of the text that, beyond a simple search for understanding, involves a turn to rhetoric (p. 39).

In his second chapter, Andrews offers his own close reading and subsequent outline of *DDC*. He shows how Augustine's articulation of signs (*signa*) and things (*res*)—and how signs relate to things—promotes the process of understanding God's divine message. Contrary to those who emphasize the

semiotic theory of *DDC*, Andrews argues that such a concern comes only at the expense of Augustine's overall focus: a true understanding of the ambiguities of Scripture, which requires both an understanding of the whole of Scripture (*regula fidei*) and of how one should fulfill the command to love both God and neighbor (*regula dilectionis*).

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Andrews's work may be found in the third chapter, where Andrews moves his discussion into the realm of contemporary theological hermeneutics. After noting the benefits (and deficiencies) of both general and local hermeneutics (i.e., spatial categories), Andrews asks the hermeneutical question that frames his subsequent dialogue with contemporary theologians: "Is it more important to develop a theory before moving to practice, or does theory serve a subsidiary role to interpretive practice?" (p. 77). By arguing that the more significant question for interpretation is *when* a hermeneutical theory is employed, Andrews develops two innovative *temporal* categories: (1) "*a priori* hermeneutics" (i.e., theory is the fundamental grounding to make interpretive practice more secure) and (2) "*a posteriori* hermeneutics" (i.e., hermeneutical theory develops *within* an existing tradition of interpretation) (pp. 78–82).

Having given these new categories, it becomes clear that the distinctions implied by "general" and "local" hermeneutics cannot be neatly applied to Augustinian interpretation. After all, Augustine gives what appears to be a general semiotic theory (Books 1–2) and general hermeneutical rules (Books 2–3), but he provides these within a treatise intended for the process of biblical interpretation (a local hermeneutics). In other words, Augustine specifically employs his semiotic theory in a "theological web," using these philosophical hermeneutics for explicitly theological ends (p. 94). Thus, Augustine's interpretation employs thoroughgoing *a posteriori* hermeneutic, only engaging in theory to support a preexisting theological dialogue (contra Werner Jeanrond, Andrews' dialogue partner in chapter four, who appeals to Augustine as an exemplar of *a priori* hermeneutics). For Andrews then, Augustine's theory is "subordinate to the ongoing theological practice of interpretation within a relationship with the triune God, in which love for God and neighbor are of supreme importance" (p. 99). After discussing Augustine's seven stages of progression to God (*DDC* 2.7.9–10)—giving special attention to stage three and the process of scriptural interpretation—and his illustration on the actual process of learning to walk (*DDC* 2.37.55), Andrews claims that Augustine's point is clear: "it is better to practice than to learn rules" (p. 114).

Chapter five moves to the rhetorical turn of *DDC* 4. Augustine's *a posteriori* interpretation presupposes a particular community (the Church), and thus the two-fold act of discovery (*modus inveniendi*) and delivery (*modus proferendi*) is properly required for a full-orbed interpretation of Scripture (*tractatio scripturarum*). Moreover, if one must understand the biblical text and then deliver this understanding to others in the group, it naturally suggests that "the sermon is the paradigm for all scriptural interpretation" (p. 149). In this way, the rhetorical nature of *DDC* 4 is shown to be intimately related to the discovery process outlined in Books 1–3. Though Andrews' arguments on the role of the sermon for Augustine are strong, one might have hoped for more interaction here with some of Augustine's actual homilies. Do they clearly display the interpretive paradigm Andrews sees in *DDC*?

In his final chapter, Andrews sketches some similarities between Augustine and Stephen Fowl, a contemporary interpreter who also articulates an *a posteriori* hermeneutics: both interpreters focus more on the function of Scripture than its ontology, both emphasize the community in which interpretation occurs, and both speak of God's voice coming through Scripture. Nevertheless, while Fowl speaks less of "meaning" and more of the community's "interpretive interests," Augustine moves

beyond any such dichotomy. For Augustine, Scripture and community are simultaneously caught up in the divine economy, making this dichotomy between “meaning” and “interests” superfluous. Thus, reading Scripture rather requires a proper understanding of what Scripture *does*: “it engenders the double love of God and neighbor when interpreters come to it in order to share with others the will of God as it is expressed in the words of the prophets and apostles” (p. 207).

Hermeneutics and the Church is a fresh and compelling reading of Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*. Andrews’ focus on Augustine’s rhetorical turn is a welcome addition to recent scholarly contributions which have rightly noted Augustine’s indebtedness to his rhetorical training. Moreover, Andrews’s innovative temporal categories should prove useful to ongoing discussions centered on theological interpretation. This book would make a profitable companion text for a course on Augustine and his hermeneutics (especially as a supplement to a reading of *DDC*), and others who seek an entrance into the world of Augustinian hermeneutics might find it a good starting point. In the final analysis, one may not be fully persuaded by all of Andrews’ arguments, but one can hope that the model Andrews offers in *Hermeneutics and the Church*—a theological hermeneutics enhanced by the discrete voices of the Church’s past—will provoke others to bring fresh patristic voices to bear on current biblical interpretation.

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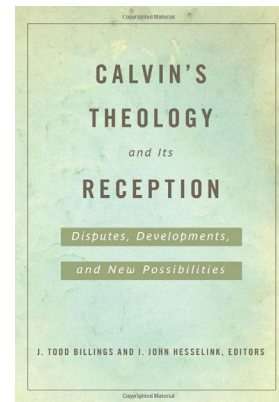
J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink, eds. *Calvin’s Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New Possibilities*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012. xvi + 224 pp. \$30.00.

What should we do with John Calvin? What if, on the way back from dinner, we drove through a wormhole into a parallel universe and found John Calvin sitting on our sofa when we arrived home? What would we do with him once we discovered his identity? What would he do with us? These are the sorts of questions this volume explores. The book is organized in five sections: (1) Revelation/Scripture, (2) Union with Christ, (3) Election, (4) The Lord’s Supper, and (5) Theology of Church and Society. Each section has two essays, the first giving an account of Calvin’s teaching on the topic and the second seeking to suggest how moderns might appropriate Calvin’s theology, piety, and practice.

I. John Hesselink gives a generally helpful survey of Calvin’s doctrine of revelation and Scripture and of its reception by the early Reformed tradition.

His essay seems to treat Calvin as a baseline by which to judge orthodoxy and writes as if it is still an open question whether Theodore Beza corrupted Calvin’s theology (p. 19). I thought that question had been settled long ago. In this regard and in others, his account of the scholarship of Reformed orthodoxy is out of date (e.g., pp. 19–23).

Calvin’s doctrine of union has been a matter of considerable interest for decades, and Todd Billings’ work has been clear, insightful, and faithful to the sources. This essay is a good summary of that research. The only minor criticism might be that, were one looking for an early orthodox theologian of union, Jerome Zanchi would seem to be a strong candidate as he was more overtly interested in union than



most of his contemporaries. Michael Horton's survey of and interaction with the secondary literature on union with Christ is a valuable contribution.

Carl Trueman does a fine job of orienting the reader to Calvin's doctrine of election, to the historiographical issues, and to the early Reformed development. His reminder of the problem of anachronism (p. 106) might have been heeded by other contributors, but more on this below. His brief survey of the differences between Amyraut and the orthodox is especially useful.

Sue Rozeboom's survey of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper is a useful entry point to Calvin and to the literature on the question. Her reliance on Jill Raitt's 1972 research on Beza, as important as it was, is puzzling. If one is going to set Calvin against Beza, even if cautiously (p. 163), should it not be done on the basis of primary sources?

Jeannine Olson's essay on Calvin's view of church and society is as clear as it is professional and helpful. She is clearly at home with this topic, and the reader will benefit from her expertise. I appreciated her dig at the Weber caricature (e.g., p. 213). David Little's companion piece is interesting, and he's surely right that there is a connection between Calvin's constitutionalist, legal background and later developments. Still, I could not shake the sense that I was reading a bit of Whig historiography. Perhaps it was the claim that Calvin was "unquestionably an apostle of constitutionalism" (p. 225) and the way the American Revolution was made to succeed Calvin's theory of lesser magistrates?

To those familiar with Calvin and Calvin studies, the topics seem like familiar territory. However, these essays, though brief, are dense and more challenging than one might expect.

From a historian's perspective, however, the volume raises questions that demand further exploration. The question, "what should we do with Calvin?" is not a historical question. It is a constructive, systematic, ethical question. The editors commend the work of historians in correcting abuses, but they insist that we must "blur boundaries" between history and theology (p. xiii). They write, "there is no tradition-free location from which to interpret Calvin's writings," and "[t]here are no disinterested readers of Calvin" (p. xi). The second claim is true enough, but the first and third are debatable.

For all the emphasis of on the reader's situatedness, the historian's job is still to call balls and strikes as best he can no matter what his own tradition or his own theological commitments. If that is no longer possible, then departments of history should be put to better use. Further, as significant as Calvin has become in the modern period (far more so than he was during the periods of Reformed orthodoxy), he is not Scripture or even confession. The Reformed orthodox had a healthier view of Calvin: as an important writer but one writer among many. Perhaps it is time to remove Calvin from the perch on which Barth and company placed him and return him to his proper place? The past and present will be better served when we let the past be the past and allow our contemporary projects to stand on their own two exegetical and theological feet.

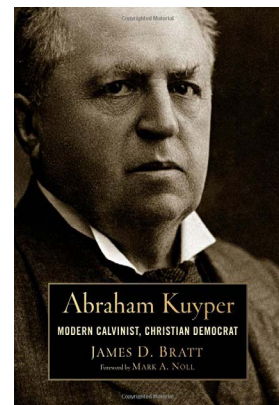
Nevertheless, taken on its own terms, is the book helpful? Yes, for the most part. The entries are generally engaging. It succeeds well in introducing readers to basic questions in Calvin studies, to the literature, and to some of the questions percolating in contemporary systematic theology. Certainly I wouldn't hesitate to recommend several chapters in the volume.

What should we do with Calvin on the sofa? The answer to that question depends on one's job description. The historian and the systematician will ask him different questions, and that is as it should be.

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James D. Bratt. *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 499 pp. \$30.00.

Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) is probably best known by the majority of evangelical Christians for the stirring quote from his address “Sphere Sovereignty” with which he opened the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880. In this address, Kuyper boldly asserted, “In the total expanse of human life there is not a single square inch of which the Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare “That is mine!” Unfortunately, few evangelicals are familiar with the theological and political views that produced this famous quote or the remarkable career of the man who held them. Kuyper’s low profile among evangelicals is ironic because much of his thought in regard to what he called “sphere sovereignty” and what Neo-Calvinists often identify as the “cultural mandate” has had a significant impact on the evangelical academy over the last forty years. That impact has unfolded through the work of evangelical scholars, particularly in the disciplines of history and philosophy, whose work was shaped to varying degrees by the Neo-Calvinist legacy of Abraham Kuyper. For the first time, we now have a comprehensive biography of Kuyper in English that provides an incisive and balanced study of the man, his ideas, his contributions, and his times.



James Bratt has contributed an important addition to the Modern Library of Religious Biography series with *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. He currently serves as professor of history at Calvin College, where much of his teaching and research focuses on religious and intellectual history. Bratt is well qualified to provide insight into Kuyper’s career given his previous work on Dutch religious groups in North America and his familiarity with the Kuyperian intellectual/theological tradition in Europe and America.

Abraham Kuyper was a complex figure. One of the great strengths of this biography is Bratt’s ability to capture that complexity and render it both understandable and relatable. No mere hagiography, *Abraham Kuyper* chronicles the personality and contributions of a great man who does not always appear to be a nice man. The astonishing variety and volume of his achievements stand alongside the tremendous toll those successes exacted on Kuyper and those closest to him. His expansive theological and social vision rests honestly alongside his nineteenth-century views of race and the inferiority of nonwestern cultures. Noting one of the compelling ironies of such racial views among nineteenth century Christians, Bratt writes, “Without ever explaining the anomaly of his allegiance to the African Augustine over the pale Brit Pelagius, in *Common Grace* Kuyper bluntly set the white race over the yellow and the yellow over black, with red doomed to extinction in the wilds of North America” (p. 200).

Bratt's honest appraisal of his subject does not prevent him from fully appreciating the astonishing array of achievements that secured Kuyper's influence in the Netherlands and internationally as well. From Kuyper's early career as a Dutch parish minister to the apex of his career as Dutch prime minister (1901–1905), Bratt unfolds the narrative of Kuyper's career and details the development of his thought in a readable and thorough account. Significant signposts in Kuyper's career included his conversion from a modernist understanding of theology to a staunchly conservative Reformed theology, his development of the weekly and daily newspapers which gave him a public voice, his advocacy for Christian education which resulted in the development of the Free University, his service as prime minister of the Netherlands, and his delivery of the famous Stone Lectures at Princeton University in 1898 where he argued for the preeminence of Calvinism as a theological system and worldview.

Any biographer of Kuyper writing in English is faced with a number of difficulties. The first is finding and utilizing sources that are primarily written in Dutch. Translations of Dutch theological and philosophical works have been notoriously difficult to render in readable English text. Bratt displays a talent for producing or locating translations of Kuyper that are not only understandable but also engaging to read.

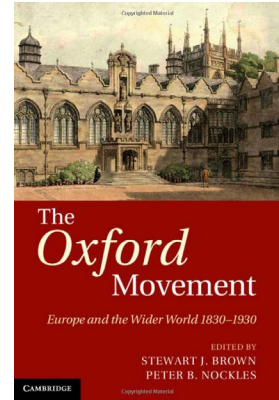
Another challenging issue for Kuyper biographers writing in English is the burden of making the complex religious and political situation of the Netherlands in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries comprehensible to the uninitiated. Those sections of the text in which Bratt seeks to clarify the positions of various parties and leaders are the most difficult portions of the biography. While Bratt is conversant with all of these factions and describes their essential proclivities well, the reader who is unfamiliar with Dutch culture and politics may find these sections slow plodding.

The rewards are worthwhile for those who invest the time to get to know Abraham Kuyper. Above all, Kuyper represents an important example of a faithful Christian who honestly believed that faith matters in the public square. He sought to creatively implement that vision in his own political and social context. In the course of working to promote Christian ideals in the broader culture, Kuyper was aware of the reality of his pluralistic context and the need for Christians to work in light of it rather than pretend that pluralism could be eliminated. His example of principled Christian advocacy in the midst of a pluralistic context can serve as a valuable corrective to the unhealthy and unrealistic "culture war" models of cultural engagement that have driven many Christian political movements in contemporary North America. Kuyper's concepts of common grace and cultural mandate underscore the importance of including the whole of human experience as part of our ministry to persons both within and outside the Christian fold. His ideas regarding sphere sovereignty teach us that we should not push God-given institutions to serve purposes they were not intended to serve or distort them to compensate for the failures in other spheres. Abraham Kuyper's life and career is a vivid reminder to those evangelicals who have expressed frustration with the visibility of "white Reformed guys" in Christian academia that those guys are prominent because their ideas are important. James Bratt has given us a valuable study of an important thinker who demands to be rediscovered in *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*.

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Stewart J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles, eds. *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World 1830–1930*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press: 2012. xii + 288 pp. \$99.00.

Writing in the year 2000, Professor David Bebbington maintained that the Oxford Movement, which both energized and roiled the Christian world of the nineteenth century, lived to exert an even more pervasive influence in the second century of its existence. As if to underscore that assessment, two distinguished historians of nineteenth-century Christianity, Stewart J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles, have assembled a spectrum of writers who aimed to explore the diffusion of the influence of the Oxford Movement—led by and associated with John Henry Newman, Edward B. Pusey, and John Keble—in its first century of existence within Britain, into Europe, and across the world’s oceans. This is an admirable project, which substantially succeeds in enabling a reader to grasp both the wider impact and the diverse reception afforded this movement.



Not to be passed over (because not pertaining to an identifiable geographic “destination” to which the movement travelled) is the opening prelude provided by Peter Nockles. It pertains to the Oxford college (Oriel) in which the Oxford Movement was birthed in the 1830s and which stood most to be affected by the controversies which ensued. There were intellectual influences at work in Oriel that, though they did not spawn the movement, certainly affected the cast of mind of the major players in it. We learn also that the heads of this college correctly appraised J. H. Newman as a man of great singularity—urging along tendencies they could not endorse—while this movement was in its early stages. The actual birth and expansion of the Oxford Movement stirred up in the college heads such determination to root it out that their approach may have harmed the overall standing of the institution for years thereafter.

Wales, as described by John Boneham, and Scotland, as described Stewart J. Brown, responded to the Oxford-birthed movement in comparable ways. In contrast to England, each country had Episcopalian minorities, overshadowed by Independent (Wales) and Presbyterian (Scotland) religious majorities. Greater reserve and circumspection therefore characterized the introduction of the emphases of the Oxford-based movement. Thus, for instance, while the English movement uttered sentiments hostile to the Tudor Reformation (provoking, for one, the erection of the still-standing Martyr’s Memorial at Oxford), neither the Welsh nor the Scottish expression of the movement gave out such “uncertain sounds.” Even so, the introduction of Oxford emphases into each respective nation proved disruptive, inasmuch as the Anglican evangelicalism—so loathed by Newman and his associates—was also present in the neighboring realms. The unforeseen consequence of the movement’s diffusion was the strengthening of cross-border evangelical solidarity, one symptom of which was the founding of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846. Nevertheless, in Scotland especially the Oxford Movement had a notable effect in spurring liturgical modification in the various Scottish Presbyterian churches by late century.

Rowan Strong, an Australian church historian who is known for his research in this period, demonstrates what a dilemma was posed for the friends of the Oxford Movement by the joint determination of England and Prussia to place a Protestant bishop in Jerusalem in 1841. As this was a step motivated both by Prussian-English desire to counter growing Russian influence in the Middle East and by a missionary interest, on what grounds might Newman and his circle take objection? In

a word, it was prejudicial to the existing claims to Christian jurisdiction in that region exercised by Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions (which actually had adherents there). Moreover, this arrangement drew the Church of England into formal cooperation with Lutheranism, a movement that they abhorred. The case of the Jerusalem bishopric is important to the story of the Oxford Movement for what it forced into public view: the religious instincts of the movement were other-than-Protestant and contrary to Britain's growing imperial aspirations.

Two chapters (by Austin Cooper and David Hilliard) explore the spread of the movement to Oceania. Given an acknowledged passing over of Canada and New Zealand (see p. 8) and an unacknowledged passing over of South Africa, it is a little difficult to justify this disproportionate emphasis on Australia. English-trained clergy sympathetic to the movement were present there early on, but as in Wales and Scotland, circumspection was the rule as the unbridled emphases of Newman and his associates would have proved counter-productive. Certain Anglican dioceses were, however, quite rapidly identified with the movement in an open manner and remain influenced by it to this day.

A chapter which held great promise, that of Peter Nockles on the Oxford movement's influence in America, displays the disadvantage of having been written from the distant vantage point of the UK. One looked for, but did not find an exploration of the similarity of tendency shared with another expression of religious romanticism: the theology of Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. Research has made it plain enough that John W. Nevin, theologian of that movement, read the Oxford *Tracts for the Times*, and corresponded with E. B. Pusey. Again, one looked for but found no mention made of Charles P. MacIlvane (1799–1873) the doughty Episcopal bishop of Ohio, who went into print with *Oxford Divinity Compared* (London and New York, 1841), taking strident exception to developments in England which were by then trickling in to the USA. Such were the forces of Evangelicalism in the American Episcopal Church at this time than an inquiry was launched into the infiltration of Tractarian influence into the General Theological Seminary of New York. In sum, we are given the story of the diffusion of the movement's ideals to young America, but little about the repercussions that followed.

The entire second half of this volume is taken up with chapter-length treatments of the relation of the Oxford Movement to various affinity groups on the Continent. This territory has not gone unexplored in past. As long ago as 1933, the Anglican bishop of Manchester, E. A. Knox, had drawn attention to J. H. Newman's contacts with the French Catholic pro-papal Ultramontane party in his *The Tractarian Movement*. But the treatment is, as is to be expected, richer in the new volume under review. Readers will find especially rewarding the chapter of Albrecht Geck, "Pusey, Tholuck and the Reception of the Oxford Movement in Germany," which demonstrates that the pietistic German theologian Tholuck (also the bosom friend of Princetonian Charles Hodge, who like Pusey had studied in Germany) was a regular correspondent with Newman's co-laborer, E. B. Pusey, who managed to visit him in England while—on the same journey—addressing evangelical mission societies assembled at London! Tholuck was by no means the only German following English developments. Particularly in the Catholic theological faculty at Tübingen, events in England were followed most closely. A corresponding chapter by Jeremy Morris, "'Separated Brethren': French Catholics and the Oxford Movement," illustrates how avidly observers within French Catholicism monitored cross-channel developments, reading Newman's treatises when available in translation.

In sum, while this fine volume draws together many pieces of first-level research, it might have been of still-greater usefulness if it had unfolded on a different plan. The primary impact of the Oxford Movement was in English-speaking lands that were culturally and linguistically linked to Britain. When

Anglican movements in Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa were in fact polarized by the arrival of Tractarian teaching and disciples on their shores, it cannot fairly be maintained that such questions require less attention than do investigations of relations with post-1870 European “Old Catholics” or empathetic Catholics in nineteenth century Belgium (subjects to which whole chapters are devoted). This focus problem will strike the non-European reader as odd. Again, the Jerusalem bishopric controversy (alluded to above) is the primary subject of two different chapters, and touched on in a third. The concern is about proportionality.

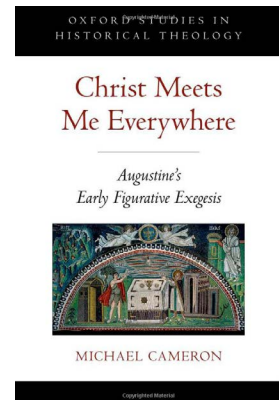
As well, one might have wished to find a greater curiosity within the volume for the question of the place of the Oxford Movement in nineteenth-century theology, troubled as it was by rationalism, higher criticism, and the expansion of the claims of science. In this matrix, E. B. Pusey’s biblical commentaries on the OT Minor Prophets would astonishingly become a standby of English-speaking evangelicals. A later Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, was sufficiently influenced by Tractarian thinking that he opposed the inclusion of nominally Catholic Latin America within the purview of the important 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference. Such questions of wider influence were as worthy of attention as some given whole chapters in this volume.

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Michael Cameron. *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine’s Early Figurative Exegesis*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012. xvii + 410 pp. \$74.00.

Far too often, evaluations of Augustine’s biblical exegesis limit themselves to certain theological principles, such as the *totus Christus*, or the formal articulation of his hermeneutical theory in *De doctrina christiana*. While certainly valuable, analyses of Augustine’s fully developed interpretive practice or hermeneutical theory fail to convey the particular historical developments undergirding his approach. In this book, Michael Cameron seeks to remedy these limits through a close analysis of the early development of Augustine’s figurative method of interpreting the OT; in so doing, as he informs his readers in the introduction, he hopes to move beyond “abstract statements about Scripture” and instead to attempt to “catch his hermeneutic in the act of rising out of his practice” (p. 11).

Cameron divides the book into three chronological periods ranging from 386 to ca. 400. For each of these periods, he provides a title summarizing how its contribution to Augustine’s progressive education on how to read the Bible: *Novice: Rhetor, Convert, Seeker of Wisdom (386–391)*; *Journeyman: Priest, Apprentice, Student of Paul (391–396)*; and *Master: Teacher, Defender, Pastor of Souls (396–ca. 400)*. Amidst the many insights he brings, two themes in Cameron’s treatment deserve special mention: the influence of Augustine’s rhetorical education and the centrality of his developing Christology. It is important to remember that, while Augustine was certainly adept in the world of philosophy, his vocation prior to conversion was a teacher of rhetoric, and he brought his rhetorical sensibilities with him to the task of reading and interpreting the Bible. It was through the language of rhetoric, Cameron



argues, that Ambrose made his impact on Augustine. While previous scholars have often emphasized Ambrose's philosophical influence, underlining his role in inspiring a shift in Augustine away from Manichean materialism, Cameron argues that Ambrose's principal contribution lay in unveiling the rhetorical coherence and beauty of the scriptural text in terms that the rhetor Augustine was already well familiar with. Whereas Augustine once scorned the crude language and lack of rhetorical sophistication he found in the Christian Scriptures, under Ambrose's tutelage he came to see that the rhetorical genius of the Bible lay in the suitability of its humble language to its rhetorical end. Furthermore, Cameron also illuminates the historical background to Augustine's early attempts at figurative exegesis by showing the continuity between Augustine's methods and various rhetorical strategies outlined in Quintilian and Ciceronian rhetorical handbooks.

Cameron's second and central theme, as reflected in the title, is the relation between Augustine's Christology and his figurative interpretation. Augustine had been deeply influenced by Manichean Christology and, later, Platonic philosophy. Cameron argues that the conceptual break from these earlier influences can be found in Augustine's developing understanding of the incarnation and its soteriological function around the year 390. By understanding the incarnation as "divine Wisdom stooping all the way to earth," Augustine's Christology "had crossed a frontier" (p. 117). This provides the paradigm for how Augustine can appreciate the function of the biblical text, so that "the key to understanding Scripture was replicating Christ's incarnate humility by reading 'low to the ground,' so to say, in the humility of faith." (p. 120). While Cameron has argued this thesis before in published articles, he furthers his previous work by interpreting this incarnational paradigm operative in 390–391 as incomplete and fatally weak due to its almost complete avoidance of the crucifixion.

Chapters five and six narrate Augustine's encounter with St. Paul, an encounter that Cameron cites as *the* decisive factor in enabling a more mature Christology and interpretative practice. Through his reading of Romans and Galatians, Augustine came to discover both the overriding importance of Christ as the crucified one and the depth of Christ's embrace of the human crisis. Whereas Augustine had previously been hesitant to impute sin or curse to Christ, in his commentary on Galatians in 394–395 he came to view the removal of human sin as a direct effect of Christ voluntarily taking up (*suscipere*) the penalty for human transgression (pp. 153ff). Cameron finds evidence for this shift in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* as well. While the first fourteen psalms evince Augustine's desire to hear the voice of Christ and the Church together, he still feels the need to make distinctions between the voice of divinity and the voice of humanity. However, in Augustine's treatment of Psalms 15–32, which occurs concomitant with his reading of St. Paul, we find a change as Augustine not only identifies the *ego* in the psalm with Christ, but specifically with Christ speaking from the cross.

This book achieves its aims and proves a delightful read along the way. Readers will appreciate the clear organization of chapters and helpful use of headings and subheadings, as well as the illustrative charts Cameron provides in his comparison of Augustine's practice with ancient rhetorical handbooks. Through admirable attention to historical detail and the influences in Augustine's intellectual development, Cameron will undoubtedly aid his readers in forming a subtler and more historically informed appreciation for Augustine's figural method. Perhaps most importantly, Cameron excels in precisely what he sets out to do: catching Augustine's hermeneutic as it rises out of his practice. While some may perceive Augustine's exegetical practice as the ineluctable conclusion to a formally developed semantic theory or the uncritical reception of ancient allegorical technique, Cameron effectively demonstrates that the origin of this practice was more complex and far more theologically

grounded. Augustine learned to read the Bible as he sought to understand Christianity against his latent Manicheism, applied the skills of his rhetorical training, strove to pass on his understanding of the Scriptures to those under his pastoral care, and wrestled with the letters of the apostle Paul. While the book's intended audience is primarily students and scholars of the history and theology of late antique Christianity, it is highly recommended for any who, like the venerable bishop, seek to discover the face of Christ in the pages of the biblical text.

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Thomas G. Guarino. *Vincent of Lerins and the Development of Christian Doctrine*. Foundations of Theological Exegesis and Christian Spirituality. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. xxix + 192 pp. \$26.99.

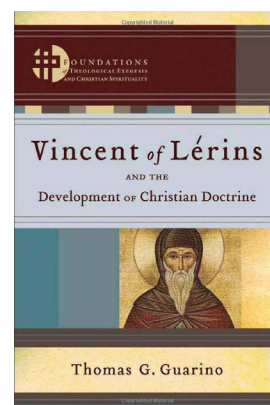
If readers of *Themelios* have earlier encountered the quotable “canon” (“we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all”) or name of Vincent of Lerins (d. 450), they are likely to have done so in literature composed by former evangelical Protestants setting out the reasons for which they have embraced Roman Catholicism. For such latter-day apologists, Vincent’s “canon” has been reckoned to supply the criterion by which Protestantism’s innovations may be identified for what they are: substantive departures from the faith as “once delivered.”

Yet it would be preferable for modern readers to encounter Vincent and his “canon” in less over-heated sources, such as in this small but fascinating work by Thomas Guarino, professor of theology at Seton Hall University. Guarino, a Roman Catholic writer, provides a less angular assessment of Vincent, his times, and his longer-term impact. One finds here unlooked-for surprises, as well as explorations of how Vincent’s “canon” has “traveled” across the centuries.

As for surprises, consider that Vincent, an accomplished Latin monk-theologian, while the contemporary of Augustine, was not (as has so often been suggested) the theological critic of that North African bishop and theologian. The latter theory is one passed down to us by the seventeenth century Protestant Dutch patristic scholar, Gerardus Vossius in 1618 (p. xxiv). Vincent’s dictum about theological constancy was not, on Guarino’s reading, intended as a curb against perceived excesses in Augustine’s understanding of predestination and grace (excesses which Vincent may actually have reckoned to exist), but a curb against the recurrence of serious heresies such as Arianism. Vincent aimed to show that it is the church’s stable received interpretation of its supreme standard, Holy Scripture, which provides a bulwark against errant appeals to Scripture by the heretical.

If that is one misconception needing to be laid aside, another is that Catholic theology has invariably endorsed Vincent’s stance on the question of doctrinal development. Within the last century for instance, some Roman Catholic thinkers have faulted Vincent’s stance on the unchangeableness of Christian belief as “untenable” and as tending to “mummify doctrine” (xii).

Again, there is the misconception that it is chiefly Catholic apologists who have sought to use Vincent as a hammer against Protestants. While Guarino might have explored this much further in



his first chapter, he tantalizingly discloses that during the sixteenth-century Reformation, Protestant writers showed themselves highly conversant with Vincent's "canon" (drawn from his work, the *Commonitorium*). Protestants regularly alleged that, by Vincent's standard, medieval Catholicism stood condemned for its serious doctrinal innovations. Papal supremacy, purgatory, and the theology of the Mass were to be held suspect, precisely because they had not been maintained "always, everywhere, and by all." Protestant writers continued to make such appeals to the "Vincentian canon" into the nineteenth century as part of their insistence that Protestantism had intentionally reverted to earlier and less-encumbered doctrinal convictions.

Finally, for the many who have been content to draw attention to Vincent as no more than a kind of vigilant guard against doctrinal innovation, Guarino does his readers the great service of highlighting Vincent's cautious attempts to describe what might constitute legitimate refinement or re-statement of Christian doctrine. Legitimate developments must be clear extensions rather than alterations of what is already believed. There was an attempt at seeing doctrinal refinement as an organic process.

Above, this reviewer alluded to the fact that Protestantism continued to appeal to Vincent's canon against Roman Catholic doctrinal innovation into the nineteenth century. Guarino's second major section of the book concerns itself with what curtailed those Protestant appeals. In a word, such appeals were restrained by the appearance of John Henry Newman's 1846 volume, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. This built upon the minor, but still-present emphasis in Vincent's work as to what would constitute legitimate extension and refinement of Christian belief. Newman's own considerable research had driven him to the conclusion that both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies had expanded considerably beyond the assertions of the early ecumenical creeds. He found in Vincent's hints as to what might constitute legitimate doctrinal expansion a path forward for adjudicating such developments. Employing it, he was able to defend papal supremacy, Mariolatry, and purgatory as outworkings of earlier Christian convictions.

Yet this helpful section shortchanges the reader, for it does not adequately indicate the intensity of opposition initially offered to Newman's scheme from within Roman Catholicism (which in 1846 still preferred to uphold the notion that there had been no development of doctrine to speak of) and from within Protestant theology (from whose ranks Newman departed, even as he completed the *Essay*). Newman's over-readiness to suppose that the early Church, guided by the Spirit in early contests with heretics, would inevitably be led to sound conclusions in all further questions involved a chain of reasoning that effectively ruled out the possibility of defection. The reviewer knows of no work that highlights the extent of trenchant nineteenth century criticism of Newman's *Essay* (indebted as it was to Vincent) better than Peter Toon's *The Development of Doctrine in the Church* (Grand Rapids, 1979). In a word, critics faulted Newman for relying so extensively on the idea of *organic* development, that all possibility of exaggerated or erroneous development was eliminated. Sadly, it is no purpose of Guarino to explore the contested application of Vincent's idea by Newman to his times.

The weakness just noted may also be said to characterize the third and final section of the book, concerned with the ongoing significance of Vincent and his canon for current ecumenical theology. One might infer that Guarino conceived of his readership as largely Roman Catholic. Yet this volume constitutes a part of a designedly ecumenical series, Foundations for Theological Exegesis and Christian Spirituality, and so it is far from obvious why this extended discussion about the gradual re-appropriation within modern Catholic theology of Vincent's idea of organic theological development (as mediated by Newman's *Essay*) is of significance for a Protestant reader. While Protestant readers can note, with

gratitude, the author's reminder that Vincent was crystal clear on the primary authority of Scripture (p. 93), there is such a determination to avoid a position which might be called "bare Scripture" that one does not find an adequate readiness to allow Scripture to stand in judgment over inherited theological tradition. Modern Roman Catholic theology, while acknowledging, in principal, Scriptural supremacy, has not moved to prune away the long-standing and more recent exaggerated beliefs and practices which fuel Protestant dissent; its failure to do so is adequately explained by Kevin Vanhoozer, who cautions against "the presumption that church tradition and Scripture coincide" (p. 94).

All this being said, we can be grateful to Thomas Guarino chiefly for the opening historical segments of this work. The subsequent segments demonstrate inadequate interest in Protestant interest in and reckoning with Vincent and his "canon." Yet, the fresh light shed on Vincent, his times, and the actual thrust of his principles of doctrinal development should, by itself, ensure that both Catholic and Protestant writers appeal to his "canon" more responsibly. Let a reading of this work serve as the needed stimulus to many to read Vincent's *Commonitorium* (readily accessible in English in the Library of Christian Classics series) and his later disciple John Henry Newman's *Essay on Development*.

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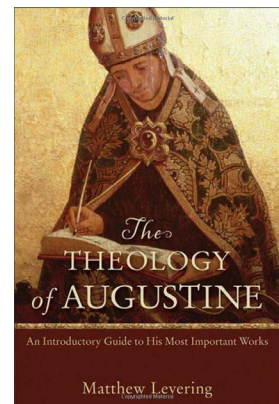
Matthew Levering. *The Theology of Augustine; An Introduction to His Most Important Works*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. xviii + 224 pp. \$24.99.

Introductions to Augustine have proliferated in recent years as interest in his theology, and in how he should be read, have intensified from both Protestants and Catholics. Matthew Levering joins this revival with his new book focusing specifically on the *theology* of Augustine from "his most important works."

Levering sets up the book well with a brief overview of Augustine's life and an introduction to the major disputes in which Augustine was involved. Levering is rightly sensitive to the chronology of Augustine's life when choosing which works to include in his book; though he carefully orders them, not in chronological order, but in a way that best introduces the mature theological thought and priority of Augustine.

The first four chapters seek to lay the groundwork of "Love" from different angles. Levering begins with *On Christian Doctrine* in order "to give a sense of Augustine's main preoccupations as an interpreter and preacher of Scripture" (p. xvii). He then moves to *Answers to Faustus, a Manichean* to highlight Augustine's "insistence upon the unity of God's salvific teaching" (p. xvii) in both the OT and NT. Third, Levering attends to Augustine's *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* because these homilies "underscore the christological, ecclesial, and eschatological context of Christian love" (p. xviii). The fourth work, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, highlights Augustine's teaching that God loves and saves due to His goodness, not ours.

This groundwork of Love provides a proper place from which to consider Augustine's three best known, and arguably most important works: *Confessions*, *City of God*, and *On the Trinity*. Levering suggests that *Confessions* considers the individual aspect of coming to know and love God. *City of God*



considers the individual in light of the communal participation in the Triune God and the whole of human history. *On the Trinity* is an inquiry into the “communion-unity of God the Trinity.” As Levering argues, “All wisdom, all history, and every aspect of our life find their fulfillment in God and his love” (p. xviii).

The greatest strengths of the book are, first, how it “majors on the majors” in Augustine. There are manifold themes in Augustine one could attend to in an introductory text, and the theme of love is a major one that is sure to shine a pure and true light on Augustine. Secondly, a sound birds-eye-view summary of Augustine’s major works is priceless for students of Augustine; Levering’s book is precisely that. He manages to properly explain Augustine’s important works at the macro level, while dealing closely and carefully with the seams and important themes. This alerts readers both to the shape and direction of Augustine’s thought. Thirdly, Levering did his homework, as evidenced by the many footnotes on almost every page. His sources are up to date, and representative of the major voices and movements in current Augustinian research. Levering packs into 200 pages what feels like 500 pages of solid research and scholarship—and for a great price.

Two weaknesses of the work are worth noting. First, as expected for any introduction to Augustine, every topic and work cannot be discussed. Thus, readers should be aware that while Levering’s introduction is very good, it does not (and cannot) cover everything about Augustine. Critics will doubtless point out that this or that book or theme was left out, and rightly so. Nonetheless, Levering is up front about the works he chose to cover, and handles them well. Second, while encouraged by the strength of secondary sources and citations, I was disappointed in the lack of primary source interaction. While Levering does, in my opinion quite faithfully represent Augustine, his work would certainly have been strengthened if he had injected it with a few more quotes per chapter from Augustine’s own words.

Recommended? Yes. Needed? Yes. Levering’s book serves as a good supplement for William Harmless’ recent introduction, for example, by orienting readers to the *forest* of Augustine’s work and thought before leading them too far into the thick *trees* of *De Trin.* or *civ. Dei.* that so often overwhelm. I would gladly give this book to the interested parishioner, undergraduate, or beginning graduate student.

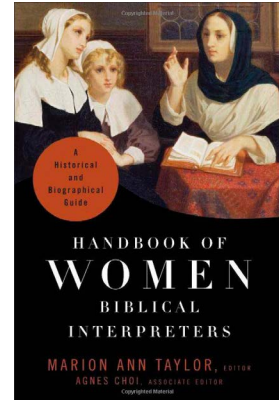
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Marion Ann Taylor, ed. *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. xvii + 585 pp. \$44.99.

Several years ago Marion Ann Taylor, professor of Old Testament at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, was teaching a course on the history of OT scholarship when a student sought to write a paper on a woman interpreter of the Bible. This set Taylor to wondering about women Bible interpreters and turned her own studies in a new direction. Though women were not included in the standard texts on the history of biblical interpretation, surely women had been reading and interpreting Scriptures throughout Christian history. Taylor began a search for female interpreters of Scripture. Her research at first focused on the interpretive work of nineteenth-century women. A fruit of that study was *Let Her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth Century Women Writing on Women in Genesis*, a collection of interpretations of Genesis by nineteenth century women co-edited with Heather Weir and published by Baylor University Press.



Taylor has now edited, along with associate editor Agnes Choi, the *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters*, a most valuable reference guide to Christian women and their interaction with Scripture throughout the Christian era. Articles on one hundred and eighty women, from Proba in the fourth century through Achtemeier at the end of the twentieth century, are alphabetically arranged for easy reference. Each entry begins with a short biography, providing context for the woman's contribution. An analysis of the woman's work follows, focusing on her biblical hermeneutics, key themes in her works, and especially on how her womanhood might have influenced her biblical interpretations. Many articles note how the subject dealt with specific biblical texts or themes relating to women and women's issues. Each entry concludes with comments on the woman's influence or legacy as well as a helpful bibliography of both primary and secondary sources. Many of the 125 scholars who contributed to the *Handbook* were previously Taylor's students at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto; but Taylor also sought out scholars in the Americas, England, and Europe who had expertise in a particular woman's writings.

Few of the women biblical interpreters wrote biblical commentaries, though women were writing commentaries by the nineteenth century. The genres of the women's writings include travel journals, poetry, plays, dialogues, letters, addresses, advice manuals, devotional pieces, and academic works. Some are written specifically for other women, while others are for a mixed audience. The *Handbook* does not include biblical interpreters in art or music. The vocations of the women interpreters include everything from queens to wives, mothers, teachers, social workers, archaeologists, health givers, mystics, preachers, and more. The interest they have in common is that each one in some way was reading and interpreting the Bible.

Though the *Handbook* is comprehensive in spanning the centuries, there are understandably more abundant sources available to study women's biblical writings from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. Two additional women who could be included from these later centuries are Mary Rowlandson, whose captivity narrative *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* is replete with Scriptural reflections, and Mary Lyons, the founder of Mt. Holyoke College who deeply imbibed her thinking from the Scriptures and imparted them to the ladies at the college. The third century martyr Perpetua,

whose writings are the earliest we have by a Christian woman, could also well have been included in the *Handbook*.

Though most of the women included in the *Handbook* are Christians from varied backgrounds and traditions, a few, are included who attack Scripture as a tool to oppress women; examples include Annie Besant and Elizabeth C. Stanton. A few women, such as Margaret Beaufort and Claire of Assisi, certainly were involved in Christian work, but we cannot clearly discern at this date their biblical hermeneutic.

Some analyses of the women's works address more of the women's theology or stance on women's issues than biblical interpretation. Yet, most of the entries provide insights into the interpretive perspective of the Bible the various women held. The entry on Queen Elizabeth I of England, for example, notes at least twenty specific Bible passages referenced by Elizabeth and analyzes how she personally applied these.

Several features at the end of the *Handbook* enhance its usefulness as a textbook or handy reference. An alphabetical List of Entries includes the dates for each woman. A Chronological List of Women Biblical Interpreters is most useful in studying the women of a particular era. Such a chronological list also shows how the culture of an era, such as the Middle Ages, influenced the method of biblical interpretation. A search of particular topics women addressed in their works is made easy with the comprehensive Subject Index. The Scripture Index allows one to find works in which women dealt with particular passages of Scripture, as well as to notice which passages of Scripture women most frequently discussed.

The *Handbook* is a beginning in the restoration of a missing voice to the history of biblical interpretation. In this volume, many women and their writings on the biblical text have been brought to light that were previously forgotten, hidden, or lost. Since most of the women were not members of the clergy or the academy, the writings of these women also open for us a window into a lay or popular understanding of biblical interpretation. These women provide examples of an individual's biblical understanding and the influence of the Scripture on her own life and thought. Though it includes feminists in its entries, the *Handbook* does not espouse a feminist agenda, but is a useful tool and resource for both men and women in the study of history, theology, and biblical hermeneutics.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen. *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. 304 pp. £14.99/\$22.99.

In this introduction to Christian philosophy, Bartholomew and Goheen (hereafter BG) offer stimulating analyses of the relationship of philosophy to faith. Anyone interested in that topic should take account of this book. I have not read an introductory book equal to this in clarity as well as breadth and that also is able to negotiate some of the central topics of tension and interest with respect to the history of—and a *Christian* approach to—philosophy.

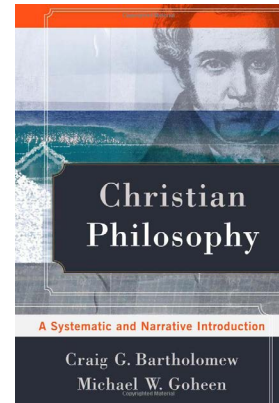
In a rare move for literature of this sort, BG give due (and warranted!) credit to Plantinga and his philosophical colleagues (especially Nicholas Wolterstorff) for the resurgence of Christian philosophy in the latter part of the twentieth century. Not only so, but they give a very useful and adequate summary of those aspects of Plantinga's (and Wolterstorff's) epistemology that seek to include, affirm, defend, and incorporate some of the basic truths of Christianity. BG's sympathies, with respect to a Christian approach to philosophy, have their focus, however, in the so-called "Reformational" philosophy pioneered by Herman Dooyeweerd and D. H. Th. Vollenhoven (more of which below).

The book begins by laying out the relationship of faith and philosophy: "Philosophy is thus never approached neutrally Broadly speaking, we work in the Augustinian tradition of Abraham Kuyper and his followers. Central to this tradition is the view that redemption involves the recovery of God's purposes for all of creation and that no area of life, including philosophy, is neutral and exempt from religious presuppositions" (p. 24). This is a welcome note on which to begin a book on philosophy, and is all too rare in philosophical, even *Christian* philosophical, literature.

The authors then move to the "Narrative" introductory material, in which they survey some of the main ideas and proponents in the history of western philosophy. This survey takes its cue from Dooyeweerd, in that it shows that every philosophy has some kind of faith foundation, and that any philosophy that is not Christian is inexorably tied to a dialectic, at root, in which there can be no real reconciliation. Thus, philosophy that is not Christian is rooted in an irresolvable tension, a tension that shows itself within the philosophy itself. As a survey, BG have done a masterful job of highlighting some of the most important "systems" of philosophy without bogging down in minutiae. As with Dooyeweerd's own work, the analysis of the history of philosophy penetrates more deeply than almost any others.

It is when BG begin their more positive construction of Christian philosophy that problems surface. For example—and there are a few of these that space will not allow—in their discussion of Wolterstorff's critique of foundationalism, they note: "Wolterstorff is adamant that the Bible cannot save foundationalism. Scripture, as he rightly points out, does not provide us with a set of 'indubitably known propositions' that can function as a foundation for our theorizing" (p. 218).

This view—that the Bible does not provide us with a set of indubitably known propositions—cannot be reconciled with the best of what the Reformation affirmed. As a matter of fact, with all of their good and necessary references to *Christ* and to *Christian*, and not just *theistic*, philosophy, it is not easy to tell exactly how they might know of this Christ, or of what it means to be Christian. Not only so, but, as Richard Muller points out, it was the very problem of *epistemology* that was the "single most important



contribution of the early Reformed writers” to the area of prolegomena (see his *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics. Volume 1: Prolegomena to Theology* [Baker Books, 2003], 108). This was the case because of the recovery, during the Reformation, of the central and determining place of God’s revelation for all of knowledge. If that is true, and I think it is, then it seems any “Reformational” philosophy worthy of the name must take its starting point—not simply in an “Origin” (as in Dooyeweerd), nor in “Christ,” but in the inscripturated Word of God, which alone is able to tell us who this Christ is. Without an infallible and authoritative, self-attesting Word, any attempt at Christian philosophy will itself be fraught with dialectical tension.

A final thought or two: I wonder why BG did not even mention the efforts of Hendrik Stoker or Cornelius Van Til, both of whom were instrumental, with Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, in these early developments of a “Reformational” Christian philosophy. In my view, Stoker’s essay in *Jerusalem and Athens* would go a long way toward an appropriate structure for Christian philosophy, especially as that philosophy must relate itself to God’s revelation (see his “Reconnoitering the Theory of Knowledge of Professor Dr. Cornelius Van Til,” in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan [Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977], 25–70). As Stoker argues, a philosophy that properly accounts for God’s revelation (as, he argues, Van Til’s does) is able to move to a height and depth that Dooyeweerd’s own philosophy never could; this was the case, no doubt, because of Dooyeweerd’s own deficient view of Scripture.

Second, and less central, any philosophy that purports to be Reformational should give adequate account of Calvin’s notion of the *sensus divinitatis*, in that such an account is necessary properly to interpret who man is and why he thinks as he does. There is mention of this in their analysis of Plantinga, but it does not seem to occur to them that the *sensus* is not simply an anthropological *mechanism* (thereby important for “proper function”), but the *actual* knowledge of God that all men have by virtue of God’s ever-present and dynamic revelation of himself.

As with Dooyeweerd’s work, I am pleased to commend this book, especially (unlike Dooyeweerd) for its clarity and conciseness. But, as with Dooyeweerd’s work, there are some potentially fatal flaws that can only be remedied by pressing the adjective “Reformational” to its consistent conclusion. That, unfortunately, has yet to be done.

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Thomas Bénatouïl and Mauro Bonazzi, eds. *Theoria, Praxis, and the Contemplative Life After Plato and Aristotle*. Leiden: Brill, 2012. viii + 295 pp. £104.00/\$171.00.

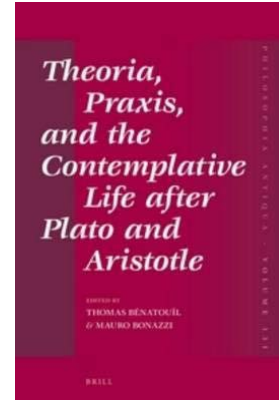
Thomas Bénatouïl and Mauro Bonazzi's stated goal in their edited edition *Theoria, Praxis, and the Contemplative Life after Plato and Aristotle* is to reconstruct the history of the topic of *theoria* and *praxis* in detail. The editors intend to do this by laying out four characteristics of contemplation that are found in Plato and Aristotle and not in previous thinkers and, using this criterion, to compare various positions. The introduction chapter sets the volume off by giving a brief and helpful historical account of the intellectual terrain at the time period of the volume as well as the history of *theoria* and *praxis*.

One of the interesting chapters related to the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic debate is Thomas Bénatouïl's fascinating look at one of Aristotle's successors in the Peripatetic school of thought, Theophrastus. He argues that there is a different evolution of contemplation from the testimonies of the Lyceum that lead to doubts concerning Aristotle's ideas on *theoria*. Michael Eler shows that the changes in the Lyceum resemble the Epicurean and Stoic criticisms of Plato and Aristotle while giving an interpretation of the *Timaeus*. Another fascinating chapter by Margaret Graver gives a close analysis of Seneca's *De otio*, thus engaging with the Stoics on Contemplation. She argues that Seneca gives considerable emphasis to *theoria* as reflecting on a variety of issues by emphasizing the moral benefits. There is much in Seneca that sounds like Plato and Aristotle.

The second part of the book focuses on early imperial Platonism and Neoplatonism. David Sedley argues in his chapter that Alcinous is heavily influenced by the Aristotelian concept of *theoria* and thus tries to read Aristotle into the *Republic*. This attempted imposing of Aristotle onto Plato's dialogues results in Alcinous emphasizing *theoria* over *praxis*. A very interesting section of Gerd Van Riel's chapter on Damascius and the contemplative life is his argument that in the Neoplatonists there is still a heavy Aristotelian influence as seen in the connection between contemplation and pleasure. Van Riel uses Damascius' *Commentary of the Philebus* to make his argument.

This volume concludes with two chapters on the contemplative and practical life in early Christianity. Giovanni Catapano's chapter on Augustine looks at *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, where Augustine refutes Faustus' claim that the OT, and parts of the new, should not be taken as authoritative. In this work, Augustine gives a defense of Jacob's two wives found in Genesis 30.1–16 and interprets the passage both literally and spiritually. Catapano investigates Augustine's spiritual reading of what the two women represent in the passage looking specifically at Leah and Rachael's appearance as well as the significance of their ability, or inability, to bear children. Augustine argues that Leah represents the practical life while Rachael represents the harder to attain life of contemplation. According to Catapano, it was Augustine who set the trend of seeing Leah as the active life and Rachael as the contemplative life.

Carlos Steel's chapter on Maximus the Confessor, the last Platonic thinker of late antiquity, explores his thoughts on the relationship between *theoria* and *praxis* in *Ambigua ad Johannem VI* (10). Here Maximus gives a clearly Platonic version of *theoria*, which includes a necessary practical condition that was not mentioned earlier by Gregory of Nazianzus in his *Oratio*. Maximus claims that right action depends on true insight into the nature of things, but runs into a characteristically Platonic problem.



Just as it is impossible for the Platonists to properly contemplate the forms, so it is a problem to properly contemplate a transcendent and superior God.

One of the positives of this volume is how it engages an impressively wide range of scholarship. This volume would be well worth having on the shelf simply as an index to other important literature that deals with the subject matter. If a particular topic is not addressed in this volume the authors and editors seem to have made sure that the reader is directed to other helpful scholarship on the topic. Also, within the volume itself, the multiple indexes at the back of the volume are hugely helpful.

However, there are some things of which to be aware. This volume is not an introduction and requires significant understanding of the time periods and the authors under discussion. The language is highly specialized and technical, and also requires that the reader have at least an intermediate knowledge of classical Greek. But this alone should not keep scholars fascinated with the topic and time period from the volume. There are also a few chapters that are not written in English.

The editors, in the overview, state that they hope that many other volumes on contemplation after Plato and Aristotle will follow. This reviewer certainly agrees with this sentiment. It would be great to see more volumes on *theoria* and *praxis* that extend into the medieval times and beyond, and that these future studies are at the high level of research represented in this volume.

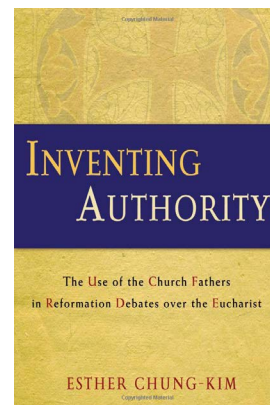
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Esther Chung-Kim. *Inventing Authority: The Use of the Church Fathers in Reformation Debates over the Eucharist*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011. x + 197 pp. £41.95/\$49.95.

In her book *Inventing Authority*, Esther Chung-Kim takes on the formidable task of documenting the use of patristic sources by Lutheran and Reformed theologians in the sixteenth-century battles over Eucharistic doctrine. Examining thousands of pages of various treatises and the records of two major colloquies, she detects familiar patterns of argument over several key issues. Her conclusions prove to be illuminating on several fronts, while at the same time failing to provide a contribution to understanding positive ways the patristic fathers might have offered validity to Lutheran and Reformed positions.

Chung-Kim sets the stage for the controversy in chapter 1 with an analysis of what happened at Marburg in 1529 when the growing differences between Luther and the Swiss reformers culminated in a painful fracture in the young Reformation movement. Despite both sides claiming that Scripture supported their position, no agreement could be reached over the interpretation of Christ's words "This is my Body." Since the debate centered on the interpretation of Scripture, both sides by necessity turned to the historical interpretation of these passages by the church fathers to lend authority to their position. Differences over how to interpret Christ's dominical words in Scripture then descended into differences of opinion over how to interpret the statements of the church fathers over these same passages.

Chung-Kim charts the progress of these debates throughout the ensuing decades of the sixteenth century. The two main sources of disagreement are (1) the mode of Christ's presence and (2) the nature



of “unworthily partaking” by unbelievers. But first she examines the significance of the entrance of John Calvin into the fray in chapter 2. She successfully delineates Calvin’s position from Zwingli’s, while charting Calvin’s increasing use of citations from the church fathers in his successive editions of the *Institutes* and his biblical commentaries. Calvin cited patristic sources, especially Augustine, to build his case against not only Luther and the medieval Catholics, but also Zwingli. Calvin did not agree with transubstantiation or Luther’s consubstantiation, but he also had little use for Zwingli’s empty signs. Whether Calvin fairly appropriates Augustine’s semiotics in his unique understanding of the sacramental union of a sign with that which it signified, Chung-Kim does not venture an opinion. Rather she dwells on the ways in which she thinks Calvin uses Augustine and other patristic writers with little regard for the context in which they were writing. According to Chung-Kim, Calvin cares little if he quotes a patristic writer out of context or only partially divulges the text of a passage if it suits his argument. Or, worse yet, Calvin will set up “an image of a common ancient doctrine even when he knows it did not exist” (p. 76).

The Lutherans do not fare any better in her account. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the battle over patristic sources between Calvin and Joachim Westphal from 1555–1558; chapter 5 presents the debate between Calvin and Tilemann Hesshusen between 1560–1561, and chapter 6 reports on the debate between Theodore Beza and Jacob Andrae at the Colloquy of Montbéliard in 1586. The Lutherans scale the heights when it comes to finding quotations from the church fathers to support their position and enlist an army to do so: Cyril, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Gregory Nazianzus, Hillary, and Basil, to name just a few. The documentation is extensive as Chung-Kim does a remarkable job of summarizing the arguments in treatise after treatise of both Calvin and the Lutherans and the ways in which they quoted the church fathers to prove their point. She points out the various tactics each side uses: comparing opponents with a figure denounced by the early church, highlighting the “bad” arguments of a figure such as Origen and how their opponent’s view is similar, dismissing the opponent’s quotations as out of context or irrelevant, and on it goes. Further, Chung-Kim is quite correct in maintaining that the Lutherans confuse Calvin’s theology with Zwingli’s. Contrary to Zwingli, Calvin believed in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements; he just disagreed with the Lutherans over *how* Christ is present. Thus while we are not sure if Calvin really understands the church fathers any better than the Lutherans, we do know for sure that the Lutherans didn’t understand Calvin.

It is true that the church fathers “are centuries removed from the sixteenth-century eucharistic debates” (p. 96) and therefore the reformers might have exercised much more care in contextualizing patristic arguments against their own. But Chung-Kim’s analysis begs the question: did anyone get the church fathers right? Early on we get the idea that hurling patristic texts back and forth didn’t change anyone’s mind. So rather than investing the entirety of her project in summarizing treatises which contained repetitive arguments and lines of argumentation, it might have been more helpful to engage in one or two specific case studies. When both sides used the same quotation to prove their point, a closer read of the text the quotation was lifted from might have provided some insight into the larger issues of the Eucharistic debate itself. For example, Christology played an important role in Eucharistic doctrine for both the church fathers and the reformers. In that sense, their questions were not necessarily separated by centuries.

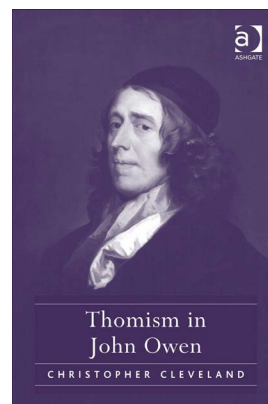
Nonetheless, Chung-Kim’s work is very helpful in demonstrating the uncompromising entrenchment of the Lutherans and Reformed in the Eucharistic debate. That both sides appeared to “invent” patristic

authority to maintain these differences casts a different light indeed on a movement that championed *sola Scriptura*.

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Christopher Cleveland. *Thomism in John Owen*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. 173 pp. \$80.96/£47.59.

The last two decades have seen a revival of academic interest in the theological movement now known as Reformed Orthodoxy, a period in the development of Reformed theology which stretched from the early seventeenth century through the eighteenth century, the theological writings of which period were characterized by their confessionalism and a rigorously scholastic methodology. The work of historical theologian Richard A. Muller has been particularly influential in its attempt to break modern stereotypes that have regarded this period in Reformed thought as relatively insular, monolithic, and speculative. Muller's work has launched a movement of very industrious Reformed thinkers returning to the sources of Reformed Orthodoxy in order to develop an increasingly complex account of the intellectual and social influences under which Reformed thinking of this period developed.



This recent turn in the historiography of Reformed thinking has coincided with a revival of Trinitarian theology. Both these movements—one historical and one theological—are a testament to the wide-ranging influence of Karl Barth in the twentieth century; and both have benefited the legacy of John Owen, whose thought has been experiencing something of a revival of late. Owen is widely regarded as the most accomplished theologian of the period, and his Trinitarian theology has become a welcomed resource to many working in modern, constructive dogmatics. The last few years have thus welcomed several specialized studies of Owen—both historical (e.g., Carl Trueman's, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*) and theological (e.g., Kelly Kapic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen*). Christopher Cleveland's *Thomism in John Owen*, which is a published version of his PhD thesis at the University of Aberdeen, contributes to this growing body of literature.

The express purpose of Cleveland's study is to "examine how Owen's use of Thomism contributed to his Reformed theology," and in this way "expand the inquiry" into the extent of Thomism's influence upon Reformed Orthodoxy (pp. 17–18). In particular, the study examines Owen's use of three generally Thomist concepts. The first relates to Owen's doctrine of divine simplicity and the designation of God's being as *actus purus* (ch. 2). Cleveland examines the function of divine simplicity as it relates to Owen's doctrine of divine providence and his ongoing disputes with Socinianism and Arminianism. Though the scope of this chapter is perhaps a bit too narrowly focused on the doctrine of providence alone, Cleveland does some original work here in an attempt to show the extent to which the *De Auxiliis* controversy proved determinative for the shape of Owen's thought on the nature of divine and human agency.

Chapter 3 focuses on the sources of Owen's appropriation of the concept of infused habits, which is the gracious communication of a new principle by which creaturely powers may be ordered to the service of God. In chapter 4, Cleveland attends to the way in which Owen's doctrine of infused habits further forms and gives shape to his vision of sanctification and, briefly, justification. I think Cleveland's study would have benefitted here from a fuller account on the place of infused habits in Owen's doctrine of union with Christ, since Owen, like Thomas, argues that by the Spirit the Christian becomes "one mystical person" with Christ. This would have given greater depth and complexity to the relationship between Owen and Aquinas on matters of anthropology and applied soteriology. However, in the main, it is a faithful reading of Owen's theology of redemption.

Before his conclusion, Cleveland's fifth chapter explores the way in which Thomas informs Owen's Christology. Cleveland actually does a fair amount of correction to contemporary readings of Owen's Christology, here—Owen appears much more traditionally "Western" in Cleveland's account than he does in Spence's *Incarnation and Inspiration*. But, Cleveland does not draw much attention to it. And while such humility is perhaps admirable in an academic culture where reputations are often built by inflated claims to originality or the errors of colleagues, it would have been beneficial to the reader had he distinguished his own interpretation somewhat more.

On the whole, Cleveland's approach is more historical in nature, sharing a similar orientation to the work of Muller and Trueman. His analysis shows a great deal of interest in the intellectual sources of Owen's writings, focusing its attention primarily upon a careful exposition on the text itself, attending to matters of intent and immediate context, rather than venturing very far into more synthetic descriptions of Owen's theological thought. The nature of its concerns make it a kind of a specialist's work, more immediately relevant to historians of Reformed Orthodoxy or scholars studying Owen than to someone with a general interest in Reformed theology. But scholarly treatments of Owen are still very few, and at these early stages, this kind of spadework into the intellectual sources behind Owen's thought is important and essential along the way to a fuller appraisal of his dogmatic utility. In that respect, Cleveland's work will certainly be of considerable use to any interested in the thought of John Owen, or the intellectual development of Reformed Orthodoxy more generally.

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Millard Erickson. *Christian Theology*. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. xiv + 1186 pages. £31.49/\$49.99.

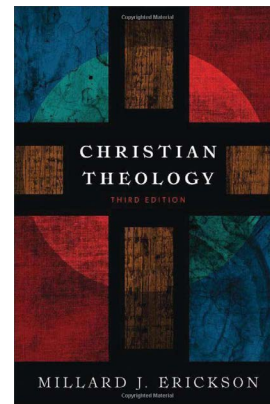
“Wisdom is with the aged,” asserts Job, “and understanding in length of days” (Job 12:12). Holy Scripture is repeatedly clear that God’s people are blessed with his own wisdom and understanding through those of the community he grants many years of experience and insight. In the person of Baptist theologian Millard Erickson, the American evangelical movement has one of those blessings. The fact that we have a theologian working into his eighties and doing work of the caliber of this latest edition of *Christian Theology* is an occasion for gratitude.

Christian Theology is not a work of “constructive” theology; it is, in the best sense of the term, an introduction to theology. This does not imply that the material is dumbed-down, just that its main function is to give readers the lay of the land and a general description of the right paths to take on their theological journeys. First published in 1983, the book has been refined a second time to better achieve its original aims: to familiarize students with all the major points of Christian doctrine from Scripture so as to “enhance the reader’s awareness of the greatness and grandeur of God” (p. 1145). Erickson shaped the work in order to be used well in a classroom setting, complete with helpful chapter outlines, summaries, objectives, and study questions. For the most part, Erickson ably accomplishes another of his explicit aims for the book: to “depict the differing parties as fairly as possible” (p. xiii). Helpfully, the author does this while still taking definite positions on each issue, arguing cogently from Scripture for each conclusion. While Erickson is evenhanded with his presentation of the many views on each doctrinal point, readers should not expect to find detailed refutation of those views with which he disagrees; that level of engagement is simply beyond the scope of the book’s aims.

Erickson rightly notes that the “starting point” of systematic theology is a two-sided reality: that God is and that he has revealed himself so that we can truly know him (p. 18). Following some prolegomenal ground-clearing, Erickson begins his exposition with the doctrine of revelation. While this follows the traditional “order of knowing,” the author is careful to keep the doctrine of God operative throughout his depiction of God’s self-revelation. From this point, Erickson moves through the traditional loci of theology proper, creation, humanity, sin, the person and work of Christ, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, salvation, the church, and the last things. His conclusions are solidly evangelical, “moderately” Calvinist, baptistic, and premillennial.

A number of updates strengthen this third edition, many in response to professors and students who offered the author feedback from their use of the second edition. First, materially, Erickson has added new content in the form of chapters, sections, paragraphs, and footnotes to important areas of theology, reflecting the continued work he has done in the past fifteen years since the second edition. (His work includes authoring or contributing to ten volumes on issues like divine foreknowledge, the divine attributes, the Trinity, postmodern epistemology, evangelicalism’s accommodation to postmodern thought, and eschatology.)

In those added sections, Erickson brings analyses of topics like Islam’s doctrine of God, Intelligent Design, categories of providence, relative authority in the inner life of the Trinity, theosis, and a very good section on justification in conversation with Sanders and Wright.



Chapter 41 on “Recent Issues regarding the Holy Spirit” is a particularly welcome addition, presenting a handful of current topics and briefly evaluating the more controversial proposals. These include the validity of “continuing prophecy” today, Pannenberg’s account of the Holy Spirit as analogous to a dynamic field, the missiological application of a broad pneumatology to world religions, and new interpretations of “spiritual warfare” and the Christian’s relation to other spirits. His presentation is fair and charitable, his evaluation clear and accurate. Despite those analyses’ brevity, the author gives the reader both good direction to do further research on the controversial topic as well as good initial judgment to guide biblical reflection.

The third edition also condenses and omits material from the second edition. It shortens and combines two large initial chapters on biblical criticism and theological language, while it reworks the chapter on theology and philosophy to address the “Possibility of Theology.”

One of the most valuable characteristics of the book is the author’s desire to give students real tools and processes to use in life and ministry. While other systematic theologies include a section on process, Erickson’s is not brief or simplistic but detailed and rigorous enough that the theological student is guided more thoroughly in her pursuit. In this, Erickson rightly includes the use of historical theology to inform, correct, and humble the contemporary student. The reader will also learn by example to think through opposing viewpoints and argue for one’s own position cogently from the Scriptures.

Seemingly small choices make the work stronger: Erickson’s reflection on the biblical concept of the gospel in the midst of the “Role of the Church” chapter, having addressed evangelism, edification, worship, and social justice, is a fitting and wise place to do this. From a design perspective, the third edition is a dramatic improvement in its readability. The new text font is far gentler on the reader, and though the type is smaller (which increases the number of characters per line), the leading is essentially equal, making for less dense but fewer total pages.

Christian Theology has clearly stood the test of time and remains, after thirty years, one of the most used introductory texts in evangelical seminaries. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings when the book is viewed in light of its purpose and genre. The chapter on the Trinity is itself solid, yet the doctrine of the Trinity is not often operative in a systematic sense in some of the later topics. Erickson calls the doctrine of divine simplicity “strange” and “at best problematic”; yet he wants to retain its values, and he offers no reason that the tradition has esteemed simplicity so highly (p. 269). These are examples of places where Erickson allows topics to feel isolated from the whole rather than leading the student to think systematically about the topic at hand and how light might be shed by viewing, say, simplicity in its important systematic connections. The reader is left wanting other additional sections to improve the book’s usefulness in the face of some current theological issues such as reflecting on the theological interpretation of Scripture, social trinitarianism, and a properly theological response to philosophical challenges to the possibility of theology.

In spite of these few weaknesses, Christian Theology remains an excellent choice for professors to introduce their students to Christian theology and to love and serve the Triune God more deeply. This updated edition is only an improvement upon the second edition.

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John Baptist Ku. *God the Father in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*. American University Studies VII: Theology and Religion, vol. 324. New York: Peter Lang, 2013. xviii + 378 pp. £63.08/\$95.95.

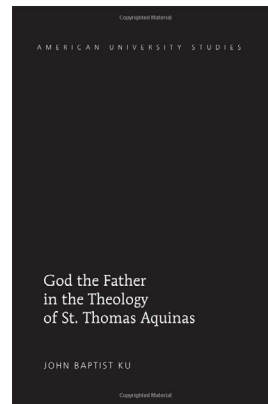
Few theologians dispute the importance of Christology, much less the need for more robust accounts of the Holy Spirit. Yet, aside from appearances in debates about supposed differences between Eastern and Western approaches to the Trinity, it is God the Father who really draws the short stick. This is partly why John Baptist Ku's book on Thomas Aquinas' theology of the Father is so wonderfully timely.

Ku's treatment includes chapters on Thomas' scriptural foundation for patrology, the Father's innascibility, his role as 'principle' of the Son and Spirit, his paternity, relation to the Spirit, and his distinct role in the economy. All of this is prefaced by a fairly helpful introductory section, laying out the current state of research and defining technical terms like 'property' and 'notion.' This impressive and thorough study of Thomas' patrology offers much fodder for discussion, but I limit myself here to a few salient snapshots.

Thomas's thought on the Father in question Ia.33 of the *Summa Theologiæ* begins on a negative and positive note, in that order. He distinguishes the strict negation of 'innascibility' (meaning 'unbegottenness') from the positive property of 'paternity' (the Father's relation to the Son). Thomas believes that only by distinguishing these two, rather than collapsing them, do we retain the decisive advantage over Arian and Sabellian arguments that the Father's being is incommunicable to the Son and Spirit. Indeed, if the Father's personhood were constituted by not having an origin, then the Father's relation to the Son or Spirit could be an afterthought. Thomas therefore prefers to describe the Father as the 'principle not from a principle,' which contains the respective elements of paternity and innascibility. This technical language is better than saying the Father is the 'first person' or 'first principle' in the Trinity because it highlights how there is no temporal succession or hierarchy and therefore no first, second, or third in God. It follows that 'principle' simply implies *order without priority or hierarchy* (pp. 147–49).

Intriguingly, at this point Ku investigates Thomas' use of the terms 'author' (*auctor*) and 'authority' (*auctoritas*) closely. Thomas again shows a sincere desire to avoid any and all language that implies hierarchy or subordination between the divine persons. Bonaventure was willing to assert that the Son possessed a 'sub-authority' in relation to the Father, but he meant no more than to say the Son was *from* the Father. Thomas affirms the same thing—the Son is eternally from the Father—without the messy language of 'sub-authority.' Indeed, so strong is the association of subordination in this term that Thomas restricts its use to creatures. The English word 'authority' bears meanings of having power over another, whereas the Latin *auctoritas* simply means having a relationship of principle to another. It is in this respect alone that Thomas says the Father has 'authority' over the Son, who both have 'authority' over the Spirit. In other words, the scholastic language of *auctoritas* simply expresses the order of the relations of origin and bears considerably less significance than the English 'authority' would imply. Ku's contribution to our understanding on this point should prove useful to current evangelical debates in Trinitarian theology.

In chapters 4–5, Ku offers a clear definition and summary of the importance of Thomas' analogy of the 'word' and 'love' in God, which is particularly helpful towards explaining what Thomas means by the



Holy Spirit being the ‘nexus’ or ‘mutual love’ of the Father and Son (Ia.37.1–2). Analogous to our own creaturely acts of knowing, God’s self-knowledge is a perfection of his essence and yet there is a ‘concept’ of that self-knowledge that is personal. The Father eternally ‘speaks his Word of self-knowledge,’ which is the eternal generation of the Son (p. 218). None of this nullifies the unity of essence—it only describes how each divine person possesses the essence according to their mode of subsistence: the Father knows as the one who speaks the Word, the Son knows as the Word spoken, and so forth. The analogy’s facility for understanding what is fundamentally indescribable also applies to the Spirit’s procession *as* Love. Analogous to creaturely acts of willing and loving, God’s self-willing belongs to his essence, but the ‘momentum’ or ‘impulsion’ of the object loved/willed is personal—the Spirit proceeds as the *impression* of God’s love for himself. Since the Spirit’s procession as Love is the Father *and* Son’s act of self-willing, he is their ‘mutual love’ insofar as he proceeds from both as from one principle. The subtleties of this account are too fine for adequate summary here, but the broad stroke is that Thomas’ analogy of ‘Love’ provides the main context for understanding the likeness of the Spirit as the ‘mutual love’ or ‘bond of love’ uniting the Father and Son (pp. 260–78). Consequently these expressions do significantly less lifting than we might expect since they are not quite analogies. While the reader may still have several questions when the dust settles, this is no fault of the interpreter; rather it is one of those enduring virtues of Thomas’ respect for the unknowability of God himself. Remarkably, Ku’s is perhaps the best treatment of this issue available in English.

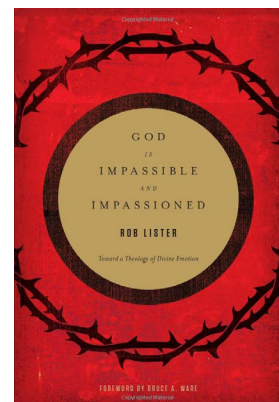
In the end, Ku establishes how Thomas conceives the Father as ‘the unoriginate source and ultimate end of all things, in the order of origin among the divine persons and in the relationship of God to his creatures’ (p. 324). Much more awaits the eager student of Thomas Aquinas in this extensive study, which serves as further proof that one’s Trinitarian theology is only as strong as its account of the Father. Perhaps the book’s only drawback is the unfortunate use of endnotes, which, given the target audience, simply baffles. Nevertheless, we are indebted to Ku for his deep reflections on Thomas’ even deeper thought and can only hope that we see more from his pen.

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Rob Lister. *God Is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 333 pp. £16.99/\$22.99.

Rob Lister’s *God Is Impassible and Impassioned* is a compendious study of the difficult subject of divine impassibility. It is an informative book that surveys the eras of development and criticism of this doctrine starting from the Patristic era to the modern day. While this doctrine still suffers from much misunderstanding in both passibilist and impassibilist camps, Lister does the church a great service by recovering the early church fathers’ understanding of this perfection of God. While this work is worthy of high praise, there are some areas that perhaps need calibration.

First, one who is well-versed in this conversation may be initially disappointed with the lack of interaction with the wider breadth of scholarship



(e.g., Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, liberation theology, feminist theologians, etc.). The monograph, however, is geared towards, and successfully accomplishes, representing underrepresented evangelical voices (e.g., Gerald Bray, Paul Helm, John Stott, John Feinberg, John Frame, and Millard Erickson). Lister aptly suggests that even some evangelicals have misrepresented divine impassibility by operating with passibilists' assumptions regarding this attribute, namely, that an impassible God has no emotional capacity. This insight warrants commendation.

Chapter one begins with the thesis that the doctrine of God has undergone many revisions in the modern day due to false assumptions about impassibility. Passibilists have chided classic theists' adherence to this "archaic" doctrine on the basis of (1) biblical depictions of divine passions, (2) the love of God, (3) a suffering Christ, and (4) objections based on the problem of evil—a God who does not suffer with us cannot be loving. This chapter takes the audience into historical debates concerning patricianism and theopaschitism, though however brief, which builds the platform for the author's main thesis: impassibility historically meant that God cannot be manipulated, overwhelmed, or surprised, not that God is devoid of proper affections. Lister thus far falls squarely within the orthodox camp.

Chapters two and three, however, are where experts in the Greco-Roman world and the early church may begin to second-guess Lister's reading of these areas. Lister is correct to note that the Hellenization hypothesis—the early church fathers were taken captive to Greek metaphysics that contorted the identity of God as static—is a misrepresentation of the fathers. In order to prove his thesis, the author first surveys the Stoics, Middle Platonists, and Neo-Platonists along with a brief section on Philo. While the overall thesis is sound, the author's dependence on secondary literature leads him to state that the Stoics never attributed apatheia to their god and that the Stoic deity knew no joy. Seneca's *Moral Essays* (e.g., "On Providence"), however, reveal a different story. While an explicit application of the term is difficult to locate, the concept was clearly attributed to their deity.

In chapter three, Lister contends that Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Lactantius, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory Nyssa, Augustine, and Cyril of Alexandria believed that impassibility and God's self-determined affections work together—"The Qualified-Impassibility Model." The reader, however, comes to wonder why Augustine is included in this model when it is well known that Augustine viewed God's emotions as acts of providence which later theologians adopted (e.g., Anselm, Aquinas, and Calvin). Furthermore, in an attempt to demonstrate theological diversity in the early church, Lister categorizes Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria under "The Extreme-Impassibility Model"—impassibility and divine emotions cannot work together—which I find injudicious. A closer inspection of Justin's works (e.g., *First Apology*, 28) along with Clement's (e.g., *Stromata*, 2.16) reveal that these theologians deserve to be treated under the former heading while Augustine should go in the latter.

In chapter four, Lister surveys notable figures such as Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Stephen Charnock. He rightly concludes that for many of the early fathers divine emotions were movements of the mind while for Anselm, Aquinas, and Calvin, God's emotions were acts of the will. Yet, confoundingly, he still contends that the medieval and early church fathers' views are similar. In chapter five, he addresses passibilists' (e.g., Jürgen Moltmann) take on issues regarding theodicy, biblical interpretation, presuppositions regarding divine love, and their appropriation of Rahner's Rule—"The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity" (p. 135). While Lister faults Moltmann for his "dependence" on Rahner's rule, it is more accurate to critique

Moltmann's "radicalization" of Rahner's *Grundaxiom* as Rahner himself evidenced areas in his writing that defended divine impassibility.

While chapter six surveys evangelical theologians, chapters seven through ten comprise his constructive sections. I concentrate on chapter ten, his Christological reflections. Lister's main thesis is that "Jesus experienced human emotion during the incarnation, not because the divine nature is incapable of emotion, but . . . *as a man* in dependence on God" (p. 262). Two critiques can be raised. First, while Lister is correct to note that Jesus' emotions are human emotions, he states that at Gethsemane Jesus was "overwhelmed" at the prospect of bearing the wrath of God. After advocating Cyril's paradoxical Christology, one wonders why he contradicts it at this point. Second, Lister advocates "A Spirit-Regulated, Asymmetrically Accessing, Two-Minds Model," where the Spirit regulates and restricts the human mind from accessing the divine mind. While this model is certainly interesting, it is difficult to prove exegetically and actually drives a wedge between the two natures of Christ.

While I have raised quite a number of critiques, to be frank, I find Lister's book both informative and well-done. It is a recommended read for both novice and expert. The conversation on divine impassibility is a difficult one that crosses into many challenging subjects such as time and eternity, theodicy, hermeneutics, and so forth. Lister has brought these subject matters to a level that is both accessible and persuasive. I thank him for his valuable contribution to the academy and to the church.

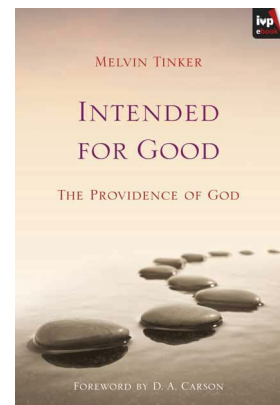
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Melvin Tinker. *Intended for Good: The Providence of God*. Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2012. 176 pp. £8.99.

Melvin Tinker is the Vicar of St. John Newland in England. He has published several books and over fifty articles on a wide range of topics, including writings on the providence of God. He believes that for much of Christian history, the providence of God was central to the life of the believing community. Today, it is treated as a fringe doctrine in both Christian thought and practice today. In *Intended for Good*, Tinker wants to show that "providence shines as a glorious jewel in the crown of the Christian faith" (p. 13). Therefore, this is not an academic work, as much is already written in that field; rather this book's aim is sharply pastoral and practical.

Chapter 1 is foundational. Tinker introduces providence as "God our heavenly Father working in and through all things by his wisdom and power for the good of his people and the glory of his name" (p. 19). His definition is grounded in Rom 8:28, which provides the framework for the rest of the book. Tinker lays out three helpful principles here, opposing false notions of God's providence: 1) God defines good, over against prosperity gospel, 2) we respond, over against fatalism, 3) we must have a long-term view, over against an immediate understanding. He excels throughout the book in addressing other ways we wrongly approach God's providence.

Chapters 2 and 3 address two of the most challenging topics regarding God's providence, God's sovereignty and human responsibility and God's providence in relation to time. These topics are the



source of all kinds of philosophical debates and issues. Tinker rightly avoids the debates and various positions surrounding them, as his focus is to provide a starting point to understand how these truths apply in the everyday lives of ordinary Christians. He provides an appendix on these issues for those who are interested in delving deeper. Tinker stays firmly grounded in Scripture to show that God is in control, he does not take any risks, but we have a responsibility to respond. The results for the believer are qualities like trust, faith, rest, and thanksgiving.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the Christian individual. Chapter 4 employs the life of Joseph as an illustration of God's providence in action, pointing to the fact that it is personal, purposeful, and pervasive in all areas of life. This fact is then brought into chapter 5 where Tinker applies it to the life of the believer using Psalm 139. In an odd two paragraphs, Tinker flirts with the notion of God's providence and British privilege (pp. 81–82). While this is an attempt to stir up gratitude in his readers, it ends up being a distraction in an otherwise decent chapter for those not from Britain.

Chapters 6 through 9 look at four key areas of the Christian life: prayer, guidance, suffering, and conversion respectively. These chapters show Tinker's pastoral sensitivity and theological maturity. For example, he walks through the difficulty of praying to God as Father for those who haven't grown up with one (pp. 91–92). Readers are shown in the chapter on guidance that knowing God's will is not some mystical experience; instead God's will is wrapped up in the person and work of Jesus Christ (p. 108). God's will frees the Christian "to get on . . . where he has put me" (p. 110). On our suffering, the life of Job is masterfully illustrated to remind us that we only know and see in part what God knows and sees in whole, therefore even our worst suffering shows God's good intentions. The chapter on conversion includes Tinker's personal testimony as an example of the lengths to which God orchestrates conversion through providential means.

Chapter 10 attempts to use the book of Ruth as the case study to tie together many of the concepts of God's providence discussed earlier. Tinker accomplishes this goal with mixed results, sometimes forcing his exegesis to make it all fit. If one has not picked up on the central theological message of the book by this point, Tinker provides the clearest explanation here, "namely, that of the hidden and active God who *is* continuously at work amongst his people even when it *appears* that nothing is happening" (p. 158).

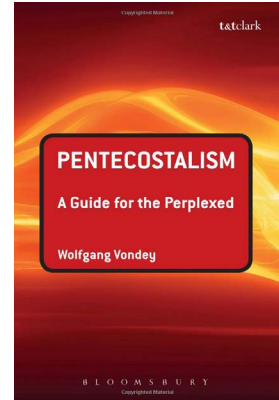
Two brief critiques are warranted. First, though the "central theological message" includes "God's people," there is little in this book for us *collectively*, save the discussion questions. The chapter on guidance only has what amounts to a parenthetical mention of seeking wisdom from pastors or Christian friends (p. 104). Instead, the book's lens is individualistic. How is God's providence applied to *us*? Stating the central theological message earlier and teasing it out more for God's people would strengthen it. The second is with the newer Christian brother or sister in mind. While the book has an accessible style, Tinker gets wordy at times and is inconsistent in defining technical terms when he uses them. This can prove frustrating for those exploring this topic for the first time.

Overall, *Intended for Good* achieves its goal to show off the beauty of God's providence. It is a needed practical book on a neglected aspect of God's involvement with his people. It should not be read alone but in community, so that small pockets of God's people all around can have their eyes pried open to God's good intentions in all aspects of their lives for his glory.

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Wolfgang Vondey. *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: T&T Clark, 2013. x + 197 pp. £14.99/\$24.95.

Wolfgang Vondey, currently an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Director of the Centre for Renewal Studies at Regent University, Virginia Beach, USA, is an able guide who introduces the reader to the perplexing and often misunderstood nature of Pentecostalism. In this fine work Vondey employs a phenomenological approach to Pentecostalism with the aim of presenting the many facets of Pentecostalism rather than simply “reducing the movement to one of its elements or distorting the image with a homogenous account that does not reflect the movement’s perplexing reality of often conflicting beliefs and practices” (p. 2). In pursuing this goal Vondey explores seven key tensions and themes that characterise Pentecostalism, corresponding to the seven chapters of the book. These different discords within Pentecostalism, as well as possible resolutions, are underscored in each chapter by Vondey’s dialectical structure where in Hegelian like fashion he first presents a Pentecostal *thesis*, follows this with a Pentecostal *antithesis*, and offers his own Pentecostal *synthesis*.



In the first chapter Vondey portrays Pentecostalism as both a “local” and “global” movement, where neither aspect can be ignored. Thus, suggests Vondey, Pentecostalism should be seen as a “glocal phenomenon” which acknowledges the interdependence “between the local and the global” (p. 25). He moves on to juxtaposing in chapter two “holistic spirituality” and “charismatic extremism” perceivable in this ‘glocal movement’, a conflict Vondey seeks to resolve through the “Pentecostal imagination”, which captures “pneumatic activity [experience], pneumatological reflection [discernment], and charismatic practice [praxis]” (p. 44). The third chapter explores both the ecumenical roots, as well as the sectarian attitudes, within Pentecostalism. The synthesis stated here is one of generous acknowledgement of the “unity and diversity” in the movement, which, nevertheless, according to Vondey, can happen only if a more robust Pentecostal ecclesiology is developed. In the fourth chapter the discussion focuses on the doctrine of God with a particular emphasis on the disagreement between Trinitarian and Oneness Pentecostals. To mediate between these opposing doctrinal views, Vondey looks at how theological beliefs have been, and seem to be, formed in Pentecostalism and the extent to which this might illuminate the future dialogue. Chapter five marks the history of social engagement among Pentecostals vis-à-vis the triumphalism of “health and wealth” advocated by others. Vondey remarks here that these differing social attitudes are “highly dependent on the contextual history and development of social, economic, and political circumstances” (p. 108), and therefore it is likely that no one social consciousness will emerge among Pentecostals. The penultimate chapter examines the “egalitarian impulse of Pentecostalism”, based on the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh, and the practical reality of “institutionalism in the Pentecostal movement”, which has commonly been authoritarian, racist, and sexist. Vondey concludes that in the light of these contradicting sentiments Pentecostalism should be seen “as an egalitarian movement-in-development” (p. 125). The final chapter describes the “anti-intellectualism in classical Pentecostalism” in contention with “the rise of Pentecostal scholarship”, before Vondey articulates the future of Pentecostal studies as being “Renewal scholarship”.

Vondey finishes his discussion with an epilogue, rather than a conclusion, because he believes that “Pentecostalism has just started” (p. 155) and consequently to end with the latter would be premature. Having said that, in his epilogue Vondey does offer his concluding comments by noting that

Pentecostalism is best seen as a “Renewal movement . . . with a constant tendency to go beyond itself” (p. 156); a disposition that contributes to its many inner tensions. Moreover, he reinforces another of his central convictions, presented in the book, that Pentecostalism should not simply be seen as a fringe religious phenomenon but as a global movement impacting the very nature of contemporary Christianity. Hence, claims Vondey, in understanding Pentecostalism one understands “the changing face of the Christian world” (p. 3, see also p. 157).

Vondey’s insightful work is a welcome addition to the increasing array of introductory books on Pentecostalism. Three particular strengths can be identified. Firstly, Vondey adopts a thematic and a theological approach, which means that this book helpfully supplements the more historical approaches to Pentecostalism (e.g., Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* [1997], Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* [2004] and Kay, *Pentecostalism: A Very Short Introduction* [2011]). Secondly, Vondey provides a generous yet critical, and broad yet specific reading of Pentecostalism, leading to a nuanced description of this “glocal” movement. Thirdly, as well as providing a theological and a balanced analysis of the Pentecostal phenomenon, Vondey also makes his own contributions to these various Pentecostal tensions, displaying his acumen as a constructive theologian.

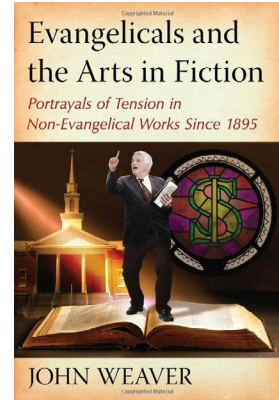
Nevertheless, Vondey’s overall project does seem to have a “tension” of its own. That is, in depicting Pentecostalism in a broadly inclusive manner, as he tries to do justice to the movement’s multifaceted expressions and beliefs, it is not wholly clear what actually makes one a Pentecostal. It seems that for Vondey the Pentecostal common denominator is a shared worldview, spirituality and imagination (chapter 2). However, this appears problematic in the light of the conflicting beliefs and practices noted by Vondey to exist among Pentecostals. My point is that Pentecostalism is not only a worldview, spirituality, and imagination that shape beliefs and practices, but also that beliefs and practices play their part in constructing a worldview, spirituality, and imagination. If this relationship is indeed mutually informing, which I believe it is, then in the midst of conflicting beliefs and practices among Pentecostals, it is arguably difficult to speak of a common Pentecostal worldview, spirituality, and imagination.

Having said that, in summary, Vondey’s *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed* is a commendable resource on Pentecostalism and particularly valuable to those, students and scholars alike, seeking a nuanced thematic and theological overview of this global movement.

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John Weaver. *Evangelicals and the Arts: Portrayals of Tension in Non-Evangelical Works Since 1895*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013. vii + 215 pp. £40.95/\$40.50.

This book is as disturbing as it is fascinating. Contained in its eight chapters, as well as the preface and introduction, is a presentation and critique of some thirty novels and films that interact in different ways with evangelical Protestantism, mostly in twentieth-century America or Great Britain. Specifically, both in his assertions and in his analyses of these works, Weaver addresses evangelicals' attitudes toward the arts. His thesis is straightforward: Evangelicals made a huge tactical (and theological) mistake by developing a "worldview" approach to culture. Instead of "engaging" or "transforming" culture, they ended up so accommodating the "world" that they unwittingly blended in with it, and thus became culturally ineffective. They would have been better served by keeping to the agenda of saving souls than engaging in cultural transformation. This mistake is particularly evident in their posture toward the arts, but is characteristic of every implication of worldview thinking.



Enter fundamentalism. Somehow fundamentalism is more honest than evangelicalism. Weaver believes that there are important similarities between dispensationalist fundamentalism and Marxist historiography. He employs the expression "spiritual capitalist impulse" to identify the chief reason for their ineffectiveness in the project of transforming the arts for Christ. Whereas the fundamentalists hoped for the "rapture of the arts," wherein finally their anti-art views would be accepted, and predicted there would be a dictatorship of the "spiritual proletariat," rather than the success of worldview people, so far it has not borne fruit (p. 5). A major disappointment? The failure to achieve these ends is the subject of Weaver's book. The ascendancy of evangelicals over the fundamentalists is to be blamed.

One of the reasons Weaver advances for this failure is that evangelicals do not have a credible way of distinguishing art from non-art. In this way they cannot rise above the surrounding relativism. Weaver cites the subversive work of Marcel Duchamp, the arbitrary importance of tattoo art, and the misnomer of "the Holocaust as art" as examples of this liminal dilemma. To those who think you "just know" when an object is a work of art or not, he answers, but "how?" He blames Arthur Danto, the premier art critic of the twentieth-century, for the self-refuting relativism that says, "art is in the eye of the expert beholder." Such a view cannot hope to survive without becoming elitist, since in the end, for Danto, only the expert can legislate what is art and what is not (p. 15). Apparently evangelicals, in order to counter modern relativism, unwittingly bought into another kind of anti-relativism, different on the surface from Danto's, by positing absolutes in the arts based on the reality of God's revelation. They are no better, though, in effect, than anyone else who imposes arbitrary absolutes, including the Nazis, the Soviets, and the McCarthyite approaches to the arts (p. 17).

Although he fits in with the reprehensible "worldview" approach, Francis Schaeffer is treated with considerable sympathy, as is his controversial son, Franky. I am guessing there may be some psychohistory here. Nevertheless, in the end the worldview advocates, including the Schaeffers, cannot help but be triumphalists, and also naïve about why modern art developed the way it did. Along the way, it must be said, Weaver renders some helpful insights into the Schaeffers, and their associate Hans Rookmaaker, who are the best of a bad lot.

Thus, there is truth in these judgments. Surely there can be an unhealthy triumphalism among certain worldview advocates. And Weaver is right to highlight some of their shallow views of modern art. For example, he faults Francis Schaeffer for only seeing in the art of the twentieth century a reflection of the “fragmentation” of the contemporary epistemology of many contemporary people (p. 22). But surely modern art is about much more than “fragmentation.” And Weaver rightly questions worldview people for advocating a sort of pure art, free from the constraints of money or other practicalities. Such a view, he says, is advocated by Franky Schaeffer, by Hans Rookmaaker, and by Tim Keller, for whom Weaver has particular antipathy (pp. 25–27).

The shadow of John Carey is strong here, as Weaver gladly admits. Carey, the former professor of literature at Oxford, is known for his anti-elitism. His *What Good Are the Arts?* (Faber & Faber, 2006) attacks the spirit of aesthetic privilege from every conceivable angle. Carey’s culprits are Ruskin and Kant, who described beauty in quasi-religious terms, leading to an attitude of “superiority” over the Philistine populace. For this reviewer Carey’s work is frustratingly simple and singularly lacking in balance. For Weaver it provides the background for his critique of both evangelical and secular advocates of high art.

The most interesting portions of Weaver’s text are his reviews of various works of literature and a few films. Here he is the professor of literature (which he teaches at SUNY Binghamton in New York). His analyses are thorough and engaging. He addresses works such as Harold Frederic’s *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, Sinclair Lewis’ *Elmer Gantry*, Nathaniel West’s *Miss Lonelyhearts*, James Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Frank Schaeffer’s *Portofino Trilogy*, and a host of others, each time not only teasing out the critique of evangelicalism they contain, but commenting on the fairness or unfairness of such critiques.

I have to say that Weaver’s commentary is penetrating and at times even riveting, which is an accomplishment for anyone going through so many novels and films. He avoids sounding like Cliff Notes, because his main theme is constantly in the purview. What so many of the novelists get wrong about evangelicalism, he argues, is the caricature that such Christians are anti-art, or simplistic in their cultural analysis. The novelists are wrong, and Weaver demonstrates where and how. And yet he believes there is a grain of truth in their assessments. For here is precisely where evangelicals have not been well-directed. They cannot disavow the accusations against them because they are guilty of the same sort of paternalism as their critics, although their ultimate norms are somewhat different. And in the process, therefore, they have become incapable of making a difference in contemporary culture as they had hoped to do.

While it is not clear whether Weaver has read any of the “Two Kingdoms” literature, he often echoes the point of view held by its adherents. He tells us he is no longer a member of the evangelical community, but at the same time he appears quite familiar with much of evangelical thinking. The problem is that he engages in some caricature of his own. Comparing as he does the supposed elitism of evangelicals with the secularists’ Kant-based snobbery about aesthetics is not convincing. First, because although certainly Kant is not an apologist for biblical Christianity he has made important contributions to finding ways of describing aesthetic judgment that are far more complex than Weaver imagines. He was concerned in his *Critique of Judgment* to distinguish the judgment of beauty from that of pure cognition, a point not considered by Weaver. Second, Kant also wrestles intensely with the term “beautiful,” going far beyond the simple view that makes beauty merely a matter of taste. For example,

Kant argues that not every predicative use of the word “beautiful” signals the making of a judgment of beauty, at least in the paradigmatic sense with which he is concerned.

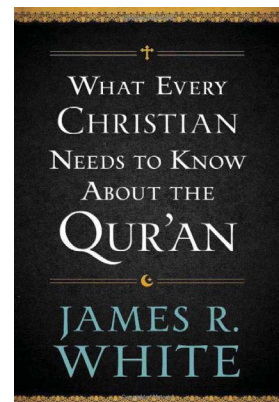
Furthermore, the various advocates for worldview thinking are not all as simplistic or triumphalist as Weaver maintains. For example, Calvin Seerveld, whom he cites in the bibliography but does not interact with in the text, certainly qualifies as a worldview thinker when it comes to the arts. Seerveld’s subtle, nuanced philosophy of modern art does not fit Weaver’s image of the hegemonic classicist. Another example is the remarkable New York novelist Larry Woiwode, a Reformed believer who follows Cornelius Van Til, and writes in powerful prose about family issues and the problematics of living in the matrix of the modern world. Woiwode and other Christian writers of his ilk are simply not mentioned. In answer to many Christians who have hitched their aesthetic wagons to the star of the British literary movement known as the Inklings, Weaver is most critical. He does not care for the likes of Tolkien and other “mythopoeics,” and yet he does not give them much of a chance. As to painters, he dismisses Makoto Fujimura’s views as mimicking secularists “like parrots.” And yet he does not venture into the rich contributions of Fujimura’s Nihonga Abstract Impressionism except to call it an inadequate alternative to contemporary aesthetic standards (p. 18).

A better way to approach the subject of evangelicals’ often admittedly insufficient approach to aesthetics would be to take a second look into worldview thinking and see whether it could not be salvaged and enriched rather than panned as equivalent to theocracy. There is much more than meets the eye. To ask the church to restrict its agenda to saving souls in the end ties its hands behind its back, and prevents it from doing the kind of cultural critique Weaver does rather well in this perplexing book.

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James R. White. *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur’an*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2013. 311 pp. £8.99/\$16.99.

Christians and Muslims are much too ignorant about each other’s sacred texts, and Reformed apologist James White aims to remedy the situation. Having debated no less than 25 Muslims over the past two decades (see <http://www.aomin.org/aoblog/index.php/about/> [accessed September 30, 2013]), White has compiled his research into a book on how the Qur’an informs the most crucial issues at the heart of Christian-Muslim dialogue. His primary purpose is to equip Christians to engage in fruitful interfaith conversations with Muslim neighbors, “so that we who are commanded to bring the message of the gospel to all can obey our Lord’s mandate with reference to the Muslim people” (p. 14). White also addresses a secondary audience of Muslim readers, who may read “to know how a Christian apologist, theologian, and minister ‘hears’ your sacred text and religious beliefs” (p. 14).



Summary. The first three chapters set the stage, beginning with the life of Muhammad (ch. 1), which White says provides the indispensable context and starting point for understanding the Qur’an (pp. 19–20). After a brief orientation to some basic features of the Qur’anic text (ch. 2), White launches

into the Islamic confession of the oneness of God, including similarities and differences with Christian monotheism (ch. 3).

Chapters 4–7 form the heart of the book, addressing four Qur’anic themes that challenge core aspects of the biblical gospel. First is the Qur’anic denial of the Trinity, which White argues misunderstands the orthodox doctrine (ch. 4). Next is the Qur’anic portrayal of Jesus, with an accompanying contrast with the traditional Islamic belief in the intercession of Muhammad (ch. 5). Moving from the *person* of Christ to the *work* of Christ, White next examines how Muslims use the Qur’an to defy history by denying that Jesus died on the cross (ch. 6). White next moves from *Christology* to *soteriology*, examining the nature of “salvation” in the Qur’an, its teaching on the final judgment, predestination, and how divine mercy/forgiveness functions in the Qur’an as opposed to the gospel (ch. 7).

The final four chapters are devoted to foundational issues related to the reliability of the sacred texts of Christianity and Islam, respectively. White first tackles the Islamic claim that the Bible has been corrupted, showing how the Qur’an does not justify the allegation, and even undermines it at points (ch. 8). Next White focuses on the claim that the Bible speaks about Muhammad, exegeting the various biblical texts often cited by Muslims as foretelling his coming (ch. 9). White then turns the tables and applies a critical eye to the reliability of the Qur’an, with a chapter on problematic parallel passages both within and outside the Qur’an (ch. 10) and a chapter on the messy transmission of the Qur’anic text (ch. 11).

Evaluation. This work is thorough and highly informative, straddling the line between an introduction and a reference text. White does not shy away from lengthy block quotes (there are many) and key Arabic terms (with a helpful glossary at the end), and he cites often from the *hadith*, traditional Islamic commentaries, and even medieval Christian apologist al-Kindi. It would have been ever better had White interacted more with contemporary Qur’anic scholarship, which could have enhanced and nuanced his analysis of the Qur’an; one notable exception is his interaction in ch. 8 with Gordon Nickel’s work on the Muslim charge that the Bible has been corrupted. (For a sampling of contemporary Qur’anic scholarship, see Michael Cook, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000]; Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur’an* [2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009]; Hanna Kassis, *A Concordance of the Qur’an* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985]; and Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur’an* [Oxford: Oneworld, 1995].)

As expected, there is plenty of solid apologetic material on the key Islamic challenges to the gospel. White equips readers to not only defend Christianity against Islamic arguments, but to turn each *defense* of the gospel into an *offense* that challenges the veracity of the Qur’an. At times, White is quick to jump into apologetic mode before spending adequate time helping readers to first grasp what the Qur’an is actually saying on its own terms; however, for the most part, White provides a fair and accurate assessment from a Christian viewpoint.

There are a few exceptions. For instance, White gives too much credence to the life of Muhammad as the historical context for Qur’anic interpretation (pp. 19–20, 47), even endorsing the official Islamic “chronology” of the suras as “perhaps the best possibility for reading [the Qur’an] in the fairest and most accurate way” (p. 52). This is puzzling since the earliest sources for Muhammad’s life come from an Islamic biography written 130–200 years after the fact (which White acknowledges on p. 20), which neither historians nor Christians have to accept as historically or theologically binding. Muhammad purportedly died in 632, while the earliest biography of Muhammad was written by Ibn Ishaq—who

died in 767—and edited by Ibn Hisham—who died in 833 (see Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* [3d ed.; London: Routledge, 2005], 45, 48).

Additionally, the material on Jesus in the Qur'an left something to be desired. The chapter devoted to the topic lacks the clear focus and solid analysis of other chapters and would have been better had it been more selective rather than surveying every text naming Jesus. The issue of the Qur'anic rejection of Jesus' divine sonship was much too brief, providing readers only three paragraphs of commentary to this major obstacle in Christian-Muslim dialogue (pp. 82–84), in which White regrettably continues the misunderstanding that the Qur'an always conceives of divine sonship in terms of God procreating with a female companion (p. 83). While this may be a predominant theme of later (and contemporary) Muslim polemicists, the Qur'an itself is much more ambiguous and multifaceted in its rejection of divine sonship. Of the seventeen passages in the Qur'an that reject the idea that God can or does have a son (*walad/ibn*), only two of them explicitly mention the idea of a female companion or wife (6:101, 72:3), while the more important/recurring reason for rejecting the notion is its threat to the absolute sovereignty and oneness (*tawhid*) of God (e.g., 2:116–17; 4:171; 6:101; 9:30–31; 19:35–36; 43:81–82, etc.).

Conclusion. On the whole, however, this work is immensely beneficial in equipping Christians to be informed on how the Qur'an is used to resist the gospel and how Christians might respond in a way that defends Christ and challenges the Islamic worldview. There is more to Christian-Muslim dialogue than apologetics, and thus this work should be supplemented with others that educate on the values and practices of Islam and how to winsomely engage Muslims in friendship (e.g., Phil Parshall's *The Cross and the Crescent: Understanding the Muslim Heart and Mind* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2000]; Keith Swartley's *Encountering the World of Islam* [Downers Grove: Caleb Project, 2005]; Thabiti Anywabile's *The Gospel for Muslims* [Chicago: Moody, 2010]; and Mateen Ellass's *Understanding the Koran: A Quick Christian Guide* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004]). Still, this book meets a huge need in the church at large and deserves a place on the bookshelf of pastors and witnessing Christians who seek to see Christ exalted among all peoples—including Muslims.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Mike Cospers. *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 224 pp. £9.99/\$15.99.

There has long been a tension between worship that is formal versus worship that is freely expressed. Mike Cospers's new book pleads for thoughtful worship service planning that derives its shape and goals from the gospel. It calls worship leaders to consider the strengths of introducing formal, liturgical service structures to local contemporary churches.

Cospers is a leading voice among young evangelical worship leaders. As one of the founding pastors of Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky, he brings practical credibility to worship service planners who are in the trenches. *Rhythms of Grace* is no missive from an ivory-towered academic; his writing is aimed at those who can implement gospel-driven services on a week-to-week basis.

Cospers begins by presenting the story of worship, which he asserts is the story of the gospel. In compelling narrative form, Cospers "tells the story" of worship in the garden, the wilderness, in Israel (primarily the temple), and with Jesus's coming. Readers seeking a propositional synthesis of biblical texts may find this approach off-putting (think Sally-Lloyd Jones's *Jesus Storybook Bible*, but pitched perfect for grown-ups). But while there is room for quibbling with some of the storytelling, Cospers's overall effect and point is strong: the church's biblical basis for worship does not come from forced proof texts or generic principles, but from a robust awareness and celebration of God's working through salvation history. *Rhythms of Grace* does exactly what Cospers wants worship services to do: it rehearses the gospel rather than assumes it.

Next, Cospers provides a helpful paradigm for considering worship gatherings, which he labels "Worship One, Two, Three." In brief, Christian worship has one object and author (God), two contexts (the church scattered and gathered), and three audiences (God, church members, and the world). Cospers's chapter entitled "Worship as Spiritual Formation" follows the work of James K. A. Smith and others to argue that our participation in worship services forms us in profound ways and to a surprising extent.

Cospers's next chapter outlines the major contours of church history and their effects on gathered worship services—not usually a topic of great contentiousness. However, while discussing the effects of revivalism on churches, Cospers critiques the "Temple Model" of worship. This influential model, principally advocated by John Wimber and others within the charismatic movement, parallels the worship experience with entering various locations within the OT temple. While it is difficult to fault the substance of Cospers's critique, the criticism is a bit misguided. After a brief page-and-a-half of insightful discussion, the revivalist Temple Model is compared with Roman Catholicism in ways that aren't fully fair. The Temple Model should instead serve as more of a conversation starter.

The book concludes with a discussion of music and then a call for worship leaders to embrace their pastoral function, including practicalities aimed at Cospers's target audience of service planners. The appendices are a treasure trove of sample service orders, recommended resources, and advice on topics



as diverse as congregational singing and audio amplification. It is difficult to think of a worship leader who will not benefit from Cospers work.

Throughout, Cospers is a model of careful sourcing and charitable dialogue. He cites standard works by well-known evangelical authors such as Don Carson, Bryan Chapell, Tim Keller, and Harold Best. Additionally, Cospers interacts generously and broadly with writers from the Christian Reformed and Anglican traditions. Those who clamor for evangelical pastors to become well-read can point to Cospers as proof that it can be done.

I wonder whether the chapters in *Rhythms of Grace* that are devoted to church history would benefit from a historical discussion about why so few liturgical churches are still gospel-focused churches. Pushed to an extreme, liturgists can view services like recipes for baking mature believers, implying that if service planners get the ingredients right, the cookies will be delicious (*lex orandi, lex credendi* can slip into the potential abuses of *ex opere operato*). Gathered worship services, however, cannot benefit a churchgoer in abstraction. Church attenders must not confuse merely *rehearsing* the gospel by form with *receiving* the gospel by faith. Rehearsing should be embraced to the degree it helps our church receive.

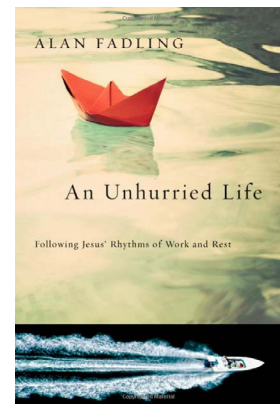
Rhythms of Grace is invaluable to the service planner seeking introduction to the merits of formal liturgical patterns, and I definitely will use it in my undergraduate classes. Many of my students begin with worship service paradigms borrowed from concert or stage venues, and their worship service orders revolve around tempos and keys rather than deep gospel truths. While few liturgical writers appeal to them, Cospers has hit them right between the eyes.

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Alan Fadling. *An Unhurried Life: Following Jesus' Rhythms of Work and Rest*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013. 198 pp. \$15.00.

When the Westminster divines described progressive sanctification, they spoke of God's grace and used words like, "enabled more and more" (Westminster Shorter Catechism 35). To say that one grows as a Christ follower "more and more" surrenders us to the plain and uncomfortable fact that Christian growth takes lots of grace and time. To admit that Christian maturity takes time fidgets us. Time taking slows us down. "More and more," involves a "not yet, not yet." The reality of gradual progress offers eventual hope but also forces us to face our current incompleteness at any given moment. Leaning upon grace, we must humble ourselves to acknowledge that we do not yet possess all that we hope for and no amount of speed can remedy that. Only grace and time in Jesus can do the work that growing to maturity in Jesus requires. Ironically, part of growing up is acknowledging that our growing up is itself a gradual thing.

Though Alan Fadling doesn't use these precise terms, his excellent book offers an extended meditation on what it means that in order to grow in Jesus we have to apprentice to a slower pace, what Fadling calls, "the pace of grace." After all, the Jesus we follow is "an unhurried savior." Add to this that



almost any aspect of maturing in Christ-like character that we seek requires a capacity for slowing, enduring and waiting (e.g., see the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5 or the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13). “When it comes to machines and technology, faster is always better. When it comes to love, the same is not true” (p. 77). “If hurry gets in the way of love, does hurry go or does love go?” (p. 75)

Fadling exposes the contradiction of hasty Christianity that ministry leaders and everyday Christians must navigate. Rarely do the things Jesus values call us into an apprenticeship with hurrying up in order to accomplish big things as fast as we can. Our mistaken notions about the work of God are negatively training many of us to be busy with things that God has not asked us to do or instead of what God has asked us to do. We prefer or are sucked into this kind of apprenticeship with speed. Fadling therefore gently, biblically, and persuasively seeks to recover us to an abiding and countercultural trust in an apprenticeship with Jesus’ pace.

To do this, Fadling sets Jesus and the Scriptures front and center. From these Scriptures, Fadling pastorally and personally invites us into a way of growing in Christ in which we believe that “Unhurried isn’t Lazy,” and that facing our temptations will require the grace that is “unhurried enough to resist, unhurried enough to care, and unhurried enough to pray.” Hurry works against true quality in productivity, active faithfulness in temptation, deep love for people, and the capacity for lingering with God.

But Fadling believes that Jesus bountifully provides us with rhythms of rest, a vision for suffering, and an eternal perspective for our growth in Jesus. All this provides joy, peace, endurance and true rest for the work set before us. Jesus abounds with grace to establish the pace of his working in us for the community in which he has placed us until he comes.

For some thoughtful readers, Fadling’s minor hint at his own practice of listening prayer and his attentiveness to immediate “nudging” from God’s Spirit might distract. But this ought not to detract from the broader contribution this book can make to our pace of discipleship. I’d say, don’t let it. The biblical, Christ-centered, and pastoral invitation to trust the slowness of Jesus for the growth he intends is substantial and well worth our attention.

In fact, this book is a must-read for many of us. For pastors, leaders, and professors, Fadling wants us to wrestle with how our ministry rhythm must change. The things we want to see take place in ourselves, our families, and among those we serve actually takes lots of grace and time. If God set it up this way, how does our way of life and ministry need to adjust in order to account for it?

For old and young, single or married, moms or dads or workers, Fadling wants us to know that Jesus’ call to discipleship is not to restlessly do the biggest things as fast as you can as anxiously as you can in order to please him. Instead, we are meant by his grace to do true things, no matter how small, steadily, over the whole of your life with him. True and good work that he enables results with the tasty fruit of gratitude, joy, and the quality of time given. Fadling desires that we will know the communion with Christ that we were made for, the pace of grace that Christ provided for, and the growth in Christ that we long for.

Filled with underlineable sentences, penetrating questions, and appropriately disruptive insights, this book positions itself well for personal, staff, small group, or community discussion.

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David P. Gushee. *The Sacredness of Human Life: Why an Ancient Biblical Vision Is Key to the World's Future*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. xvi + 461 pp. £23.99/\$35.00.

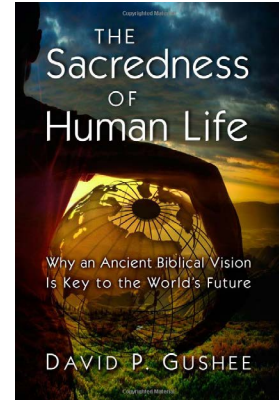
The theological significance of human life is a critical issue for the contemporary church. David Gushee's most recent book, *The Sacredness of Human Life*, attempts to take a holistic look at the unique worth of humans from a faith perspective, with Christianity as its foundational paradigm. Gushee's purpose in this book is "to persuade the reader to believe that practicing the ancient concept of the sacredness of human life is the key to the world's future" (p. 15).

Gushee's book consists of twelve chapters. The logical progression of this project is apparent from the start as Gushee begins by carefully defining his terms. Gushee argues that "sacredness" is a more compelling term to secular audiences than "sanctity" because it has a less religious overtone. In the second chapter, Gushee exegetes select Old Testament texts with the theme of the sacredness of human life. Gushee limits the texts he exegetes because, he writes, "I am not attempting to argue that the Bible offers perfect and unexceptionable resources for the development of a sacredness-of-life ethic" (p. 76). For Gushee, the process of "Scripture-sifting" to reclaim the text from perceived distortions is a project for the faith community (pp. 76–77). Gushee then moves to the New Testament in chapter three, focusing on sacredness of life themes in the Gospels followed by select commentary on the balance of the New Testament.

The fourth chapter is an analysis of passages of early church fathers who, according to Gushee, supported the sacredness of human life largely because they were a rejected minority of society. After the conversion of Constantine, however, the church lost its life-centered ethic because it became enamored of the power structure of the Roman Empire, as Gushee details in chapter five. In the sixth chapter Gushee covers three historical cases where Christians were on opposite sides of a debate over the sacredness of human life. He outlines the work of Francis of Assisi, the Spanish friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, and the early Baptist Richard Overton, in their unique defenses of human life.

The seventh chapter marks a shift in Gushee's presentation; he moves from a focus on explicitly Christian themes to broader Western philosophical themes. The seventh chapter outlines the changes in views on human life during and subsequent to the Enlightenment. Chapter eight focuses on Friedrich Nietzsche's outright rejection of Christian morality and the impact that rejection has had on Western views of human life. In the ninth chapter, Gushee outlines the Nazi's horrific desecration of human life and the acceptance of that desecration by much of the German population. Contemporary challenges to human life are the subject matter of the tenth chapter. There Gushee briefly discusses topics such as abortion, bioethics, the death penalty, human rights, and nuclear weapons. Chapter eleven records Gushee's attempt to bring environmental ethics under the umbrella of the sacredness of human life by arguing that what happens to the environment necessarily impacts human life. The final chapter is a summary and call to action.

Gushee does three things very well in this volume. First, he demonstrates a robust respect for Scripture through his careful exegesis of texts. Each text that Gushee references is used carefully and consistently with its context; he does not attempt to redefine terms in order to manipulate biblical texts, but approaches them with the appropriate context. He is, however, very selective about the texts that he uses and he seems to ignore texts that do not support his views. Second, Gushee does an excellent



job in tracing the philosophical developments that have fueled the desacralization of human life. The discussion of the evolution of the Nazi assault on the sacredness of human life is, perhaps, the most significant contribution of this volume; it is both historically detailed and philosophically insightful. The third strength is in Gushee's differentiation between the terms "sacredness" and "sanctity." This distinction is valid and seems to be helpful in more clearly communicating an authentic, Christian concern for human life across religious boundaries.

There are, however, several weaknesses to this volume. First, Gushee grants limited authority to Scripture. His call for faith communities to sift Scripture—choosing which parts are authoritative—diminishes the authority of Scripture, which makes this a less apt resource for evangelicals. Second, Gushee's attempt to classify environmental ethics as an ethics of human life is dubious. If all environmental concerns get addressed as issues of human life, then the discourse on legitimate life issues will be diluted. A third weakness is that at several points Gushee makes significant assertions without adequately supporting them. For example, Gushee calls for the church to support an expansion of governmental welfare and healthcare programs but does not clearly connect it to the sacredness of human life (p. 360). Additionally, his arguments about the supposed injustice of capital punishment ring hollow because his claim rests on statistics that he presents but does not analyze with rigor (pp. 367–72).

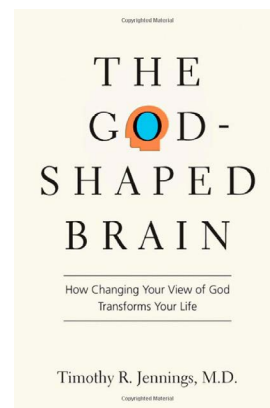
This book is helpful in providing terminology and explaining one stream of Christian thought regarding the sacredness of human life. His theory is worthy of thoughtful reflection, even if his proposed applications miss the mark at times. Overall, Gushee makes a significant contribution to this topic by providing helpful definitions and a well-traced history of the Christian perspective on the sacredness of human life. The book is a worthwhile addition to the library of pastors or scholars who wish to reflect further on what it means to live as a human made in God's image.

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Timothy R. Jennings. *The God-Shaped Brain: How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013. 256 pp. \$16.00.

In *The God-Shaped Brain*, Timothy R. Jennings, M.D., claims that our view of God affects the health of our brain. If we embrace a "love-based God concept," we will have a healthier mind. If we embrace a "fear-based God concept," our actions become selfish, and the brain is actually damaged.

With accessible language Jennings explains that when we are afraid we go into a flight or fight mode, which activates certain parts of the brain and shuts down others. The more we are in that state of mind, the more our brain adopts a pattern of response that damages our brains and produces anxiety, depression, stress, and selfishness. What causes this permanent fear response is believing that God should be feared because he is filled with wrath, eager to cast us into hell for our sin.



This fear-fueled anxiety can be corrected by believing in a loving God, a God who delights not in punishing us but in healing us. Embracing a loving God activates other areas of the brain that calms the flight or fight area of the brain, restoring balance and health to the brain.

Certain insights into how the brain functions will prove illuminating to pastors and counselors today. Jennings shows, for example, how 15 minutes of prayer builds healthy brain patterns. He cites studies that prove how certain content, when it stimulates the entertainment part of the brain, increases violence even if the content is not violent. Jennings also explains how Eastern meditation affects the brain, throwing it out of balance to produce a euphoric state. He further defends biblical meditation that engages the mind and balances brain function.

All this is good and useful so far as it goes. The trouble, however, is that *The God-Shaped Brain* is not based on a sound theology. Jennings uses a defective hermeneutic that he calls “Integrative Evidence-Based Approach,” composed of three parts: Scripture, God’s law in science and nature, and human experience. Although Jennings claims that these are submitted to the Holy Spirit, he ignores the entire teaching of Scripture on the nature of God. He is only interested in understanding God as a God of love.

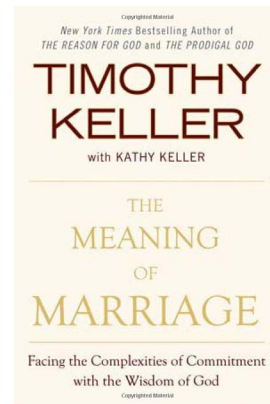
One example of his mistaken and forced interpretation of Scripture is when he cites Christ speaking of the dead as having fallen asleep to the effect that God never put anyone to death in the OT (but only put them to sleep). Another example of an unwillingness to submit to the whole counsel of God in Scripture is that according to Jennings the death of Christ is not propitiatory. God’s wrath does not need to be satisfied. A loving God, after all, requires no payment of sin. Those who are outside of Christ are annihilated upon death, not punished for eternity in hell. All this is an inadequate view of God that does not appropriate the many varied strands of biblical teaching, such as the truth that God is a God of both righteous wrath and unspeakable love. Also, sin seems to be confined to wrong thinking in the brain; salvation is thinking correctly about God. Finally, *The God-Shaped Brain* oversimplifies the complexity of what it means to be created in the image of God. One gets the impression that we are nothing more than physical beings. Dr Jennings refers to the soul only once.

Although I cannot recommend this book because of its unorthodox positions, it does hold some important insights worth pondering by evangelical pastors and counselors.

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Timothy Keller, with Kathy Keller. *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*. New York: Dutton, 2011. 288 pp. \$25.95.

Christian books on marriage are an abundant genre, and most tend to be *either* practical or theological (or at least better at one than the other). What makes Tim and Kathy Keller’s *The Meaning of Marriage* the new standard for books of its kind, in my judgment, is its *combination* of practical/cultural sensitivities with a clear theological foundation in the gospel. The book’s purpose is to present a vision for what marriage is according to the Bible (p. 12), although the Kellers work hard to demonstrate how the book is relevant for those who do not share their respect for the Bible (e.g., pp. 14–15). They also emphasize that the book is not merely for married couples, but also for single people. In fact, I would venture to say that the demographic that may benefit most from this book would be single people who either over-desire or disdain marriage. Chapter 7 addresses those called to be single and single people seeking marriage, and the entire book, having been shaped by the Kellers’ ministry at a largely single urban church (pp. 11–12), contains profound insight into how cultural idols (such as personal autonomy and fulfillment) have warped the way marriage is viewed in our setting.



A key text throughout the book is Eph 5:21–33. Drawing from Paul’s assertion in 5:32, the Kellers articulate the notion that marriage reveals the mystery of the gospel as “the message of the book” (p. 48). Much of the bulk of the book, and especially throughout chapters two through five, applies this gospel vision of marriage to practical issues in marriage such as how married partners can put aside self-centeredness and serve one another (pp. 56–60, 63–67), help one another grow spiritually (pp. 118–19), pray for one another’s sanctification (p. 121), engage in healthy conflict (pp. 155–56), communicate love to one another (pp. 158–61), bring healing into one another’s lives (pp. 147–48), fuel romance in their relationship (pp. 96–100), and grow in friendship (pp. 112–17). A particularly helpful section is “Pseudo-Spouses” on pages 127–30. Here the Kellers argue that, in order to keep a marriage healthy, it must be prioritized over kids, family, and career. Here’s a sample: “if your spouse does not feel that you are putting him or her first, then by definition you aren’t. And when that happens, your marriage is dying” (p. 128).

The single greatest strength of the book, in my opinion, is its cultural insight and application. Throughout the book, the Kellers’ dialogue partners include not only biblical commentaries and C. S. Lewis, but *The New York Times* and comedian Chris Rock. By my count, there are over 45 references to contemporary sociology and secular thought about marriage *in chapter one alone*. This means that the Kellers’ book is not simply a recounting of the Bible’s view on marriage, but an examination of how the Bible’s view on marriage confronts our modern Western idols of individual freedom and fulfillment. They especially emphasize the covenantal nature of the marriage relationship and how starkly it contrasts with our society’s consumeristic attitude toward marriage (e.g., 80–82). Many Christian readers may be surprised to discover (as I was) just how much our culture has shaped the way we think about marriage.

An important and helpful section of the book is chapter 6, which is written by Kathy and tackles the controversial issue of gender roles in marriage. The Kellers have already argued that marriage roles should be interpreted within the larger context of the sacrificial love and service that are to characterize all Christian relationships (pp. 52ff.). Now Kathy makes a case for a specifically complementarian

understanding of marriage. Two especially significant themes of her chapter are that complementary roles in marriage are to be considered in light of complementary roles within the Godhead and that *both* headship and submission are to be defined in light of the Son of God's redemptive work in the gospel. By setting complementarianism within a larger Trinitarian and christological framework, Kathy is able to distinguish complementarianism from traditional patriarchal views that *do* squelch the value and contribution of women. Kathy shows that both male and female roles require submission, since laying down your life for the good of another (the essence of biblical masculinity) is nothing if not an act of submission (p. 77). This is a vision of complementarianism that is beautiful and life-giving, not threatening or demeaning.

Kathy's case for complementarianism is courteous and forceful, but it also allows for "wobble room" in what complementarianism looks like within different couples and across different cultures (pp. 185–87). The principle of male headship does not vary, but the exact expression may. Another significant insight in this chapter is that sexism (along with racism, classism, etc.) is one manifestation of the broader problem of the sinful human drive for self-justification, which causes us to exclude "the Other" (p. 182). Kathy presents the gospel as the antidote to marriage problems based upon differences between the genders, showing that a grace-established identity empties our hearts of disdain or indifference towards those who are different from us (cf. pp. 182–84). This chapter also has an eye toward practical issues such as what to do when one partner within a marriage takes a different view on gender roles (pp. 190–91). An appendix extends some of the discussion into the realm of decision-making in marriage (pp. 241–44).

Chapter 8 addresses sexuality within marriage. It discusses a biblical view of sexuality, how to practice chastity until marriage, and what it means to pursue sex as "whole life self-giving" (p. 220) within the marriage covenant. The emphasis on sex as an apparatus for commitment and unification and self-giving, rather than merely for pleasure or self-expression, highlights an area where many Christians have been influenced by our hedonistic culture. As the Kellers say earlier regarding our culture's obsession with hook-ups and romantic thrills, "'the thrill of the hunt' is not the only kind of thrill or passion available, nor is it the best" (p. 79). The Kellers emphasize the importance of fighting to believe this truth in the moment of temptation (the *Jane Eyre* illustration on this point on pp. 229–31 is worthy of deep reflection).

One final point: The Kellers explain in the *Introduction* why they have not chosen to address the issue of gay marriage in this book (p. 16). That is understandable, given the book's purpose. However, I do not think that I would be alone in hoping for some treatment of how Christians should approach this issue from Keller in subsequent writings or addresses. If there is anything that seems likely to be a "battlefront issue" between polarizing trends of thought in our culture in the decades ahead, it is (to my mind) gay marriage. And if there is any helpful voice among evangelicals on how to engage the culture with truth and grace, it is (to my mind) Tim Keller. Since he has already reflected at such length about how a biblical view of marriage intersects with our cultural trends, perhaps in days ahead he will say more to help the church think about how to bring the gospel to bear on this issue.

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Keith Lamdin. *Finding Your Leadership Style: A Guide for Ministers*. London: SPCK, 2012. 160 pp. \$17.99.

This book represents a unique convergence of influences. Lamdin writes as a liberal catholic Anglican in strong positive interaction with Willow Creek and the Global Leadership Summit (GLS), while also significantly influenced by Freudian psychology and liberation theology. This convergence leads to some significant strengths. The GLS would benefit from more theological reflection on secular leadership models and much of the church would benefit from clearer thinking on leadership. Lamdin seeks to do both.

In chapters 1 and 2, Lamdin introduces the idea of leadership as “one human’s capacity to influence another,” and the need for leadership within the church. He introduces three necessary qualities for leadership: *discontent* to see what is wrong with the present situation, *vision* to see how it could be better, and *courage* to speak up and lead people forward. He also introduces six “paradigms for leadership,” which he unpacks in the rest of the book: the monarch, the warrior, the servant, the elder, the contemplative, and the prophet.

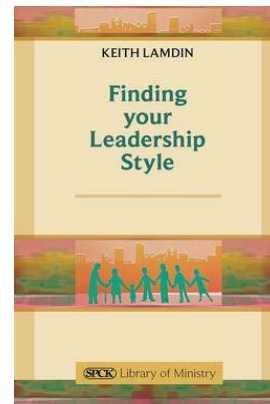
The final chapter, entitled “Taking the Strain,” shows a thoughtful engagement with both the traditions of Anglicanism and the business thinking so prevalent at the GLS—this time on how to do ministry in ways that are physically, emotionally, and spiritually sustainable. This chapter could certainly be read with profit by many in ministry. It ends with a powerful picture of ministry as a craft skill. Like carving or music, which comes naturally to some but can always be learned and improved on, ministry too can be mastered in several different ways but never perfected by us.

The largest and most problematic part of the book, however, is the central section, where Lamdin considers his six paradigms for leadership. He begins with the two paradigms he finds to be more common and also more dangerous: the monarch and the warrior. The monarch is the leader who is in charge, leading to the possibility of safety, stability, and effective organization. The warrior is the charismatic leader of a cause with passion and purpose, sometimes leading to significant growth and organizational achievement. Lamdin argues that neither of these paradigms is appropriate for a Christian minister.

His reasons are both pragmatic and theological. Pragmatically, Lamdin argues that these forms of leadership always resort to force and end up infantilising the followers—by taking away either their ability to decide or their ability to discern right and wrong.

Theologically, Lamdin argues that Jesus rejects the roles of monarch and warrior, instead adopting the persona of suffering servant. But in doing so Lamdin makes a serious christological mistake. He argues that God is fully revealed in the humanity of Christ, but restricts his view of Christ only to the crucifixion—Jesus is cast as suffering servant, not risen king. He sets this out most fully when discussing the idea of Jesus’ dual identity as suffering servant and lord of history:

It cannot be said that Jesus was enacting servanthood while on earth but that as Christ he is “lord” of all he surveys. The Jesus on earth has to fully embody the godhead for any view of incarnation to be viable, and so the God of all time has to be understood in terms of the kingdom teaching and living and dying of Jesus . . . while it is in the nature of God to be loving it cannot be in the nature of God to be “in charge.” (p. 59)



Lamdin doesn't state whether or not he believes in Christ's resurrection. However, if we understand that God is fully revealed in Jesus, who is both the Suffering Servant and the risen and ascended King who "will return in glory to judge the living and the dead," we get a rather different picture than the one presented here, whatever Lamdin's actual convictions. The truth is that it is inappropriate for us to adopt the role of warrior or monarch precisely because Jesus is our perfect warrior king. We should not act as if we are in control because God is in control. We should not go on a crusade against those we define as evil because it is for God to say what our purpose should be and who the enemy is (and our struggle is not against flesh and blood).

Lamdin then considers the other four paradigms for leadership. The key theme seems to be the relationship to power. The servant, obviously Lamdin's favourite, gives up power. The elder has only the power to ask questions and expose their own ignorance. The contemplative depends on God's power through prayer. The prophet stands against power with the downtrodden. None of these allows for a classic "church leader" in the sense of a man standing before the people of God with divinely sanctioned authority and proclaiming a sure word from the Bible. And several of them have troubling features such as the absence of any sense of a "word from the Lord" speaking into our human situation to either resolve ambiguity (the elder) or confront injustice (the prophet).

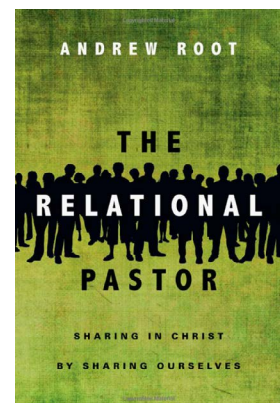
But the understanding of Christ as risen and ascended Lord opens up a new paradigm—the paradigm of the herald or of the under-shepherd. Both heralds and under-shepherds have no authority in themselves and do not point to themselves as saviour. They are sent by a Shepherd-King and are answerable to him, but under him can and do have delegated authority for the purpose of caring for the sheep and serving them by proclaiming the king's message to them. It seems that would be an altogether more fruitful paradigm to explore than what Lamdin adduces.

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Andrew Root. *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013. 255 pp. \$18.00.

Andrew Root's *The Relational Pastor* offers a corrective to pastors who have set out only to "use" relationships with the people in their congregations as means to other ends (greater attendance, increased giving, and the like). Root's stated goal is to show how relationship with human beings is itself the "end" of pastoral ministry, rather than the means to some other end. His goal, then, is to connect these relationships with a relationship to God—he writes this, for example, as he introduces his book: "Pastoral ministry can be nothing more and nothing less than making space for people to encounter the very presence of God. Here, in this book, I claim that space is created in the sharing of relationships of persons" (p. 10).

Root sets out to show how pastoral ministry must be grounded in real human relationships that are nurtured through "empathy" and "sharing as transformation" (p. 19). These kinds of relationships are, according to Root, the "end" of pastoral ministry, for it is through these



kinds of relationships that we actually “encounter Jesus Christ” (p. 19). In order to develop this idea throughout the book, he first traces the “development” and “transition” of pastoral ministry through the different “ages” of history, ending with the “new form of ministry” that our new age demands—a kind of relational ministry for the “arriving new world” (p. 43). The pastor, according to Root, is primarily a “convener of empathic encounter of personhood” (p. 44). It is this picture of a pastor that flies in the face of American individualism and the recent pastor-as-CEO model.

Root goes on to contrast “individuals” from “persons,” making the point that individuals are primarily defined by their wants, while persons really “are” their relationships with other persons (including Jesus). They are “embodied spirits” that can indwell one another (p. 84). It is “empathy” and “place sharing,” for Root, that nurtures the growth and development of these kinds of relationships in a vibrant church community. These relationships, for Root, actually show us Jesus; as he puts it: “This is the *place* where Jesus is present, in the space between persons. Jesus is in between us, sharing in the place created by our persons” (p. 158; emphasis original). He then goes on to apply this concept more broadly to the various aspects of pastoral ministry—preaching, prayer, church leadership, and evangelism. The latter of these is ultimately a “shared story” in the context of a growing relationship (p. 194).

With this book Andrew Root offers a sound warning to pastors who (wittingly or unwittingly) seek to “consume” their congregation for their own purposes, using relationships with their people merely as “tools” to get things done. Root describes this sad dynamic: “So when we speak of ‘relational,’ we usually mean it as another strategy, another buzzword, to get people to do what we want them to do. Relationship becomes a kind of glue that keeps individuals involved or coming. The point of our ministry isn’t the relationships between persons, but how the relationship wins us influence” (p. 17). He makes important points here. To be sure, our relationships with the people in our congregations must not be “tools” to somehow win us influence or foster personal ministry success. Pastors should constantly be testing their hearts, thoughts, attitudes, and motives.

Root also correctly puts a finger on the influence of selfish individualism that has plagued so many churches in the world today. His call to free pastors (and Christians in general) from consuming people for their own individual needs and wants is well taken. Indeed, all Christians are called to see people as valuable—made in the image of God, and thus inherently worthy of care, empathy, and understanding.

The author’s call to pastors, too, to help move people away from being “self-enclosed addicts” to actually sharing in the lives of other believers is an important one. His teachings and suggestions in this book can be helpful to pastors who seek to foster genuine and grace-filled relationships in their congregations, as members move away from infatuation with self and endless introspection.

This book does, however, have some problematic emphases. While Root has surely put his finger on a key problem in pastoral ministry today, he responds to a lack of focus on genuine relationships in pastoral ministry by narrowing in far too exclusively on human relationships as *the main end* in gospel ministry. At best, he has overstated his case to make a point. At worst, he comes dangerously close to presenting a vision of pastoral ministry that is far removed from the model of Word-centered ministry that the Apostle Paul put forward to young Timothy (2 Tim 4:1–5). It will be easy for young pastors to come away from a reading of this book thinking that relationships, if truly the final goal of ministry and the path to encountering Christ, are eternally valuable regardless of what end—spiritually speaking—they lead to in the hearts and souls of the people with whom they relate.

The first sign of this problem confronts the reader immediately in the preface, as Root states that “pastoral ministry at its base is about facilitating relational encounters” (p. 9). While facilitating

relational encounters is certainly part of pastoral ministry, it is misleading to say that this is what it is at its base. Pastoral ministry at its base, according to Scripture, is about speaking God's Word to God's people. Perhaps what we need in pastoral ministry is not a new model for a new age, but a return to the rich foundation laid by the apostles.

Root later makes another statement that reaches far outside the language that the Bible provides for us as we consider the fundamental commitments of Word-driven ministry: "The pastor's vocation is to help our people participate in this indwelling of spirit to Spirit. . . . In being a community of persons, a community of spirit to spirit, we share in the Spirit of Christ" (p. 86). He seems to mix up what comes first in a relationship with Christ. The path to a relationship with Christ does not come, biblically, through a relationship with another person, but through the hearing of the Word, the work of the Holy Spirit, and repentance and faith in Jesus. Root's language is vague, and can be misleading and potentially harmful to pastors who are insufficiently discerning to formulate their primary calling and focus in Word ministry.

Finally, while his point with regard to relationships being used as means to a selfish end is well taken, he may downplay the reality of sin and depravity that can infect even the best, most understanding, and empathetic human relationships. There is, ultimately, one relationship that should be central—a relationship that far surpasses all human relationships. That is the relationship between a holy God and a sinful human, made possible through Christ's substitutionary death for sin. Salvation by faith in this Savior is not mediated by any human relationship—even the best one!

To conclude, this is a book that correctly identifies the intense need for deep and authentic relationships that are at the very core of gospel ministry, but a book that mistakes both the means and the end of humanity's deepest relationship. The means: God's living and inspired Word, brought to bear in people's lives and hearts as the Holy Spirit does its work through preaching and teaching. The end: a gathering of believers who are caught up in a saving and restored relationship with God, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as they love and share life with one another under God's good Word. This is a book, therefore, which, while providing some valuable correctives, could mislead many regarding the Word-centered nature of pastoral ministry, as defined by Paul to Timothy, and therefore to us as pastors today.

Root's challenges to pastors who use relationships as means to their desired ends is valid. May none of us use people in these sinful ways. Yet those in gospel ministry do submit even the closest human relationships to the ultimate relationship—between sinful people and an infinitely holy God. This is a relationship that is made possible through a bloody cross, and one that is mediated to us through the living Word of God. Relationships with one another are not the end of pastoral ministry; proclaiming the life-giving hope of that cross-centered gospel, and seeing sinners restored to right relationship with their Creator, is the end of pastoral ministry. In this sense, human relationships—even in gospel ministry—can be means, if their end is the conversion of lost souls that leads to eternal saving relationships between humans and a gracious and powerful God.

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Derek C. Schuurman. *Shaping a Digital World: Faith, Culture, and Computer Technology*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013. 138 pp. \$18.00.

Since the works of Ellul, Postman, and McLuhan have experienced renewed interest in our digital age, examining the role of technology in contemporary culture requires insight from a variety of disciplines. Such a landscape demands an insightful response from the Christian community, and Derek C. Schuurman positions his book, *Shaping a Digital World* (hereafter *Shaping*), well. *Shaping* engages this discussion with a particular interest in computer technology. As an associate professor of computer science at McMaster University, Schuurman possesses a unique authority to provide perspective in a realm recognized for its foothold in our contemporary human experience.

Schuurman's work is accessible and coherent in the overall argument. *Shaping* seeks to tease out how the Christian uses modern technologies, specifically computer technology, for the glory of God. Beginning with a careful analysis of technology and computing in chapter 1, the discussion quickly transitions to the morality of technology. Tracing the four themes of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation supplies the structure from chapters 2 through 5, respectively. Schuurman brings the entire discussion to a very practical conclusion in chapter 6, challenging the reader with the weight of this dialogue, a dialogue engaging what it means to be human and how technology shapes human experience. As well, several pages of discussion questions give this book a strong appeal to any wanting to enter the discussion of technology and the Christian faith.

Several specific points should be emphasized from this work. First, Schuurman's second chapter covering norms and modal aspects in technology is superb and might be the most helpful section of the entire work. This section is helpful because the great challenges in discussing modern technology and the Christian faith lie in one's ability to connect the two worlds. Schuurman's work successfully lays a foundation for framing the entire discussion based on the interconnectedness of various laws of created order with a variety of norms in human existence. As a result, a theology of technology arises from Schuurman's use of the cultural mandate, the image of God, and Sabbath rest (pp. 32–39).

Second, Schuurman possesses a unique ability to establish terminology for understanding fallen man's misappropriation of technology. While *consumerism* is a familiar term, *technicism* and *informationism* provide the two essential categories in sinful misappropriation of technology (pp. 60–63). Because of the strong connection between theology and technology outlined in the first two chapters of *Shaping*, Schuurman's assessment of sin and technology in chapter 3 complements the balanced perspective sought throughout the work.

While the majority of Schuurman's content, theology, and application can be readily affirmed, one note of caution should be identified. *Shaping* tends to suffer from some confusion of terms as Schuurman constantly swaps between computer technology, technology, and media. As an example, Schuurman provides a helpful and quite specific definition of a *computer* as an electronic device that receives input, processes and stores data according to a program, and produces output (p. 22). By this definition, *Shaping* would seem to have a specific focus, yet this is not the case. That is, this work is less about computer technology specifically, and more about the general topic of *technology*. Right after stating very specific boundaries for his discussion, Schuurman analyzes responses to technology



in general rather than computer technology in particular (pp. 24–26). Such a shift happens several times throughout, mainly when Schuurman seeks practical application, and tends to be confusing to the general flow of thought.

It should be noted that Schuurman’s difficulty in definitions is a prevailing problem within the entire discussion of modern technology and Christian morality. That is, establishing a foundation of specific terms, conditions, and boundaries presents considerable challenge. Further, because Schuurman places a rather small number of specific references to computer technology in his work, *Shaping* is best seen as an introduction to a larger discussion of technology and the Christian rather than a work focusing narrowly on computer technology and the Christian.

In the end, *Shaping a Digital World* provides a useful introduction to how the technology of a digital age relates to Christian morality. Schuurman provides a helpful outline for framing this discussion through the grand redemptive-historical themes of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. However, there are times where more clarity on the use of technology, computer technology, and media would aid the reader. All in all, *Shaping a Digital World* makes strides in understanding how technology, as one part of God’s good creation, can be leveraged to the praise and glory of God.

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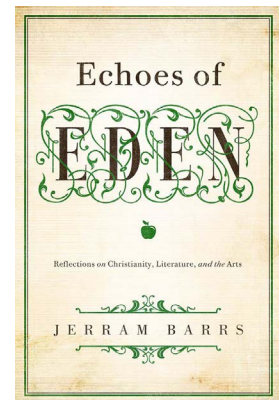
— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Jerram Barrs. *Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 208 pp. \$17.99.

In *Echoes of Eden*, Jerram Barrs argues that evangelicals shouldn’t fear art, but should instead selectively and joyfully embrace it. His main thesis is that all good art contains “echoes of Eden”—glimpses of humanity’s original creation, fall into sin, and ultimate redemption. To best appreciate the book, keep in mind that Barrs is writing from a Reformed (PCA) perspective for a lay audience that has been told to shun not only Voldemort, but Harry Potter, too.

The first five chapters make theological claims about art, while the last five offer case studies. Barrs begins by arguing that God and humanity are creative artists. A biblical doctrine of creation affirms the goodness of materiality. Materiality is further affirmed by the doctrines of common grace, the Incarnation, bodily resurrection, and the new creation, although sadly Barrs only expands on the first two. Additionally, God created humans in God’s image to be sub-creators, which means we’re to exercise loving “dominion” with our artistic gifts.

Chapter 2 calls for art to strive for “imitation” rather than the Romantic “self-expression” of god-like artists. For Barrs, “the true artist sees his or her work . . . as a subset of God’s larger and infinitely more creative work,” “values something more than self,” and “holds up a mirror to what God has made”



(p. 38). Art excels when it reveals some aspect of ultimate reality, visible or invisible, and therefore both representational and abstract art can answer this call.

The question of “Christian” versus “non-Christian” art comes up in chapters 2 and 3. Art by non-Christians can edify us because we learn from others’ perspectives, we’re created to need others, all are created in God’s image, all receive common grace, and non-Christians can have God-given gifts. Moreover, all art should be judged by the same standards: there’s no secular-Christian divide because all art can and should offer echoes of Eden (i.e., our creation, fall, or redemption).

As an aside, Barrs explains that the second commandment doesn’t forbid art; instead, it is principally concerned with idolatry. In fact, Barrs finds ample biblical affirmations of representations, even suggesting that they will exist “in heaven” (p. 47).

Chapter 4, on judging the arts, is perhaps the most problematic part of the book. Instead of asking if an artwork meets the criteria offered by its context, or how well it “echoes Eden,” Barrs offers eleven criteria that vacillate between judging the quality or moral status of an artwork to judging the qualifications or morality of the artist. Furthermore, it isn’t clear which of these are necessary or sufficient. His point here is that, although personal preference matters, there are also objective standards—a point that needs sharpening. He does helpfully note that moral and artistic giftedness are independent gifts.

Chapter 5 is the book’s keystone. According to Barrs, there are five locations of God’s *general* revelation: creation, humans, God’s providential care, God’s rule over history, and the “echoes of Eden”—i.e., “the pool of memories within the human race of the truth about our condition” (p. 74). These echoes resound throughout history like a Jungian collective memory, whispering that there’s one great God, we’re lost from a better place, something tragic happened due to rebellion, we must hope for a redeemer, and this requires sacrifice and atonement.

While I take issue with several of the arguments used here, the heart of the matter is unassailable. Christians can hear echoes of God’s truth as we know it in art and stories of diverse kinds—and this is true whether or not these echoes are carried on the winds of collective memory, God’s general revelation, or otherwise. God calls us to discern these echoes and respond with praise.

Chapters 6–10 heed the call to listen for these echoes, specifically in the Chronicles of Narnia, the Lord of the Rings, the Harry Potter series, and the works of Shakespeare and Jane Austen. I especially appreciate Barrs’s argument that these authors portray Christian-supported principles in ways that successfully witness to non-Christians. Christians also benefit from stories (aside from the Christian story): we can learn from whatever “truth” we find in art (p. 136), and a well-wrought narrative makes it “easier for us to be touched by the [story’s] moral issues” (p. 178).

Echoes of Eden is charitable, considered, accessible, and well-suited to its audience. That said, it would benefit from engaging “theology and the arts” scholars beyond Dutch Neo-Calvinist Hans Rookmaaker, even if sticking to Reformed-friendly thinkers. Paul Fiddes could bolster Barrs’s use of eschatology, balancing Barrs’s backward look to Eden with a forward vision of the new creation. Nicholas Wolterstorff could help Barrs distinguish artists, artworks, art-making, and art reception, and provide criteria for judging art based on context and function. Lastly, Jeremy Begbie could extend Barrs’s account of the arts as part of “the cultural mandate.”

Listening for echoes of reality in art is a worthy enterprise. *Echoes of Eden* is great for persuading laypersons who are wary about art from a conservative evangelical angle. My advice: use this text like a magical portal to enter the world of “theology and the arts,” and, once through, accept the guidance of authors already waiting there. Given that some of these authors’ works are demanding, I’d love to see

Barrs appropriate their ideas with his approachable style. Regardless, we'd do well not only to listen for Eden's echoes, but, like Lewis and Tolkien, to add our voices to the swell.

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Keith L. Johnson and Timothy Larsen, eds. *Bonhoeffer, Christ, and Culture*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013. 216 pp. \$20.

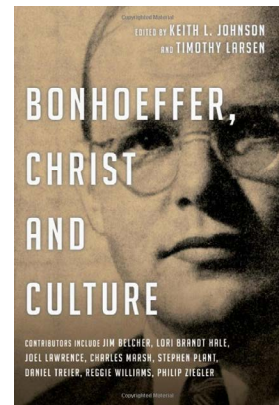
This book is a collection of papers delivered at the twenty-first annual Wheaton Theology Conference in April 2012. The editors suggest that evangelicals have appreciated Bonhoeffer's writing as "devotional," but that this book is intended to be an evangelical engagement with Bonhoeffer as a theologian (p. 13).

Philip K. Ziegler's chapter, "A Theologian of the Word of God," represents a good entry into this engagement. Ziegler points out that Scripture and Christ are central to Bonhoeffer's thought, but that he is not conventionally "evangelical," at least not in the way the term is understood in English theology (p. 20). Ziegler's article provokes the following two questions: Is Bonhoeffer's theology congenial to established evangelical theology? Or might Bonhoeffer, considering shared commitments, offer something to evangelicalism aside from a theological confirmation of what evangelical theology already is? For Ziegler, "his theology is a sustained effort to learn afresh the substance and significance of Pauline and Lutheran faith and to attain to a better witness to the gospel of God" (p. 20) and, in this sense, Bonhoeffer has something more to offer than a confirmation of what evangelical theology already is.

Other chapters, like Timothy Larsen's "The Evangelical Reception of Dietrich Bonhoeffer" and Daniel J. Treier's "Modernity's Machine," are more concerned with the former question. Larsen points to Eric Metaxas's recent biography as a revealing moment in the evangelical reception of Bonhoeffer. Larsen writes that Metaxas's biography of Bonhoeffer "has skewed things in an evangelical direction" (p. 50). But Larsen finds this "skewing" unnecessary because evangelicals should simply focus on what they admire, and this can help "provide valuable correctives that present a more accurate picture of a complex man and theological legacy" (p. 51). Treier is wary about Bonhoeffer's prison theology, and only optimistic if Bonhoeffer is read "as a source of apocalyptic proverbs" (p. 102). For both Larsen and Treier, the question is not about what Bonhoeffer can offer to evangelical theology, but what evangelical theology finds agreeable in Bonhoeffer.

Keith L. Johnson, in "Bonhoeffer and the End of the Christian Academy," offers another approach to the questions of engagement and reception. Like Ziegler, Johnson allows Bonhoeffer's voice to be critical of prevailing modes of theological thought. Johnson sees Bonhoeffer as a "conversation partner," which allows reading Bonhoeffer to be "both an enriching and unsettling experience" (p. 153). By engaging Bonhoeffer as enriching and unsettling, Johnson can employ Bonhoeffer in a constructive, generative, and practical theology of the "Christian academy."

In addition to the question of Bonhoeffer's reception, the book engages a number of other issues arising from Bonhoeffer's thought. For instance, Reggie Williams in "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Harlem



Renaissance, and the Black Christ,” pursues a fascinating question about what Bonhoeffer himself may have received from the Harlem Renaissance, and how that may have influenced his theology and practice of resistance. Ziegler’s chapter, apart from the question of reception, stands out in its own right as a penetrating look at Bonhoeffer’s theology of the Word of God. Stephen J. Plant’s chapter, “The Evangelization of Rulers,” stands out for the quality and clarity of his argument about the sources of Bonhoeffer’s political theology and their use in his preaching, Ethics manuscripts, and political action. And if Charles Marsh’s theological-biographical chapter “Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Under the Constraint of Grace” is representative of his forthcoming biography of Bonhoeffer (*Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Knopf, 2014), then we have much to look forward to indeed.

The book also includes some appropriately concrete readings of Bonhoeffer. Joel D. Lawrence writes on the value of the practice of confession for the life of the church. Keith L. Johnson (in the chapter mentioned above) writes on Bonhoeffer’s value for the “Christian Academy”; Lori Brandt Hale writes on how Bonhoeffer can offer a helpful way forward for students discerning vocations, and Jim Belcher offers an account of how important Bonhoeffer’s liturgical formation was to his well-being in prison and how that kind of formation might be of benefit in a contemporary church-planting context. (Readers new to Bonhoeffer might want to start here, as Belcher also offers a good overview of some important details of Bonhoeffer’s life and theology that are taken for granted in other chapters.)

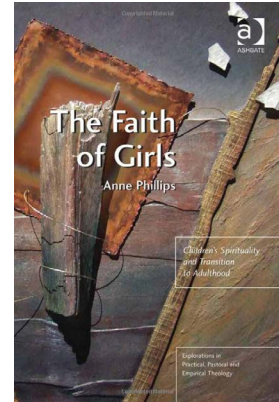
This is a book for Christians of all varieties, not only Evangelicals. It is scholarly enough to offer substantial readings of Bonhoeffer, though I would have no trouble recommending this volume to the non-specialist. It includes essays that develop Bonhoeffer’s thought in both academic and pastoral directions. As an introduction to contemporary theological questions and Bonhoeffer’s place in them—particularly the connection between theological reflection and contemporary Christian practice—this is a good place to start.

Apart from this more general contribution, the book also moves the more particular conversation about the evangelical reception of Bonhoeffer forward, asking a more fundamental question about how Evangelicals handle their own theological tradition. Is this tradition set, or can it engage constructively (rather than selectively) with voices like Bonhoeffer’s? The theologians most willing to be unsettled by Bonhoeffer, in this volume, have allowed their tradition to be constructively scrutinised, and have—for that reason—written the most productive and compelling chapters.

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Anne Phillips. *The Faith of Girls: Children's Spirituality and Transition to Adulthood*. Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011. 216 pp. £55.00/\$99.95.

Anne Phillips has correctly identified a significant dearth of academic research in the area concerning the faith development of pre-pubescent girls. *The Faith of Girls* was written by Phillips in response to this lack; her doctoral research significantly informing the content of this academic text. The book is published as part of the Ashgate series of Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology, and it is what it says! It's clear and commendable that Phillips has a strong desire to see the faith of tweenage girls (those between childhood and adolescence; approximately 10–13 years old) nurtured. And it is striking that she hopes her work will in some way further prevent girls in this age and stage from being marginalised in the church. There is a clear appeal from the beginning to the end of the book to recognize the distinction between girls and boys, particularly in the area of faith development, and to consider the impact that this knowledge should have on how we spiritually care for girls within our church families.



Phillips undertakes empirical research amongst a group of seventeen girls aged 11–13; the girls are described as belonging to Christian faith communities. Three questions, addressed to the girls, form the basis of her research: How do these girls understand themselves as girls and as Christian girls? How do they understand themselves in relationship with God and 'do their faithing'? What do they need from a church community to make it a healthy environment in which their faith can flourish? While Phillips is a British Baptist minister, her research was conducted across a variety of denominations and churchmanships.

Notably, but perhaps not surprisingly, the text displays a strong feminist agenda. Phillips laments the fact that feminist theologians rarely interact with the discipline of childhood studies and her work attempts in some ways to fill that void. The biblical exegesis throughout the book has an intentionally feminist hermeneutic, relying heavily on the works of feminist theologians and biblical scholars and consequently the thesis is influenced strongly in this direction.

In chapter 2 the varying disciplines of sociology, psychology and theology are employed in the analysis of what contemporary 'girlhood' is understood to be and how faith development relates to the physiological and psychological development of girls. We can here, with a clear understanding of common grace, benefit much from Phillips's study. Specific effects of the various waves of feminism on the development of girls are helpfully identified, allowing us to understand the societal narrative that is accompanying the maturation of the girls in our church families. It's also useful to note that the age group addressed by this study are statistically identified at the age where participation in organised religion declines most significantly thus highlighting the need to prioritise the spiritual care of girls within this age group.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology used by Phillips; she includes details of how she approached each stage of her research from recruiting the girls involved in the study to the processing and analysis of the data obtained. The fourth chapter begins to give a detailed insight into the experiences articulated by the girls in the study during the process of transition from childhood to adolescence. The areas discussed in this chapter are significant and important for those who minister amongst children and youth to be increasingly aware of: a greater awareness of their physical appearance; a sadness

at the loss of the innocence and freedom of childhood; an awareness of their own mortality; a great understanding of and appreciation for relationships (friendships); a physical bodily change; and the introduction of hormones! There is no doubt, as anyone who has contact with a prepubescent girl will testify, that these are all issues that are real and live for girls. There is also no question that there is much we need to do to help girls think Christianly during this period of their young lives. Whilst Phillips is keen to affirm and listen to girls as they go through this transition, she offers little by way of practical advice to churches as to how they can biblically and spiritually support girls through these tricky years.

Phillips reports on research that suggests a greater positivity amongst girls to faith in chapter 6; it is apparent, however, particularly in this chapter, that the girls may not be Christians, that is, people professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his work. The girls in the study are described as those who are ‘on a journey’, those who are theologising in a cerebral way, rather than a clearly relational way. Much of the discourse in this chapter is fascinating, particularly the sections concerned with how the girls articulate their understanding of God, the Christian faith, and their relationship with others in the community of faith, which Phillips calls ‘faithing.’

It is notable that Phillips makes little of the place and role of the nuclear family in the faith development of girls; she is primarily concerned to locate the faith development and the responsibility for spiritual nurture within the church. The final chapters of the book sees Phillips adopt metaphors of an ‘amniotic environment’ and ‘the womb’, originally found in the works of Tribble and Kegan, to describe this stage of a girl’s life. The metaphor identifies a secure environment that does not restrain unnecessarily, as the place of suitable growth for transition. Complementing the reproductive imagery, Phillips note that the girls cannot stay in the womb perpetually and describes the church as the midwife—the companion to the girl in midst of transition.

This is an expensive book and a demanding read, both of which will probably disincline the majority of those working with children and young people from engaging with it. I would suggest that it’s an important book for anyone engaged in the task of training children’s and youth ministers to read—not least because it draws together a large number of disciplines (developmentalism, sociology, psychology, and theology) and influential figures (Nye, Hay, Westerhoff, Fowler) pertinent to current trends and direction setting in both children’s and youth ministry. There is much that is interesting, stimulating and provocative contained in the pages of *The Faith of Girls*. There is a great emphasis on hearing the experience of the girls and using selected biblical accounts and narratives to exegete those experiences. From a sociological perspective this work is useful and significant, yet from a biblical perspective it is unsatisfactory. The feminist agenda distorts the beautiful biblical narrative that details the spiritual nature of the child, the capacity of the child to apprehend great spiritual truths, and the concern that our God has to see children (both boys and girls) brought into a vibrant, living relationship with Him.

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Lamin Sanneh. *Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. xx + 281 pp. £16.99/\$24.00.

Lamin Sanneh begins his memoir with a brief account of a visit in 2008 to the village of Georgetown on the island in the River Gambia where he was raised. This sets the stage for a fascinating account of his upbringing within an impoverished, polygamous Muslim Africa family in a community wholly circumscribed by Islam. This book's beginning creates the suspicion that the "homecoming" in the sub-title alludes to this return journey to Georgetown, but, in fact, the homecoming refers to his reception in the Roman Catholic Church some decades after his unlikely conversion from Islam to Christianity in 1961 while still a young man in Gambia.

There is a sense in which Sanneh's memoir is less personal than it is personal intellectual history. In a scant half page he recounts a brief failed marriage in 1968, a broken engagement that resulted in a child with whom his attempts to build a relationship have not succeeded, and then, more happily, his marriage in 1972 to his wife, Sandra. How he thought or thinks about these relationships in relation to his Christian faith, he does not say. He does reflect at some length on his experience of racial and elitist exclusion within the church and in the academy. By the end of the book, it becomes clear that for much of his life, his experience of church has proven disappointing. As disappointing as the exclusion he encountered as an African in the church were his experiences of uninspiring and insipid forms of liberal Christianity that he experienced in his early post-conversion attempts to grow in his understanding of his faith. In a fascinating turn, he critiques the liberal wing of Christianity from a Muslim perspective. From that point of view, the liberal loss of confidence in the possibility of revelation is devastating, rendering inter-faith dialogue virtually meaningless.

Though he speaks in mostly appreciative terms of his encounters with Evangelicals at various points in his life, not least for their serious sense of personal relationship with God, he never seems to have seriously considered becoming one, in part, it seems, because Evangelicalism never seemed to offer an intellectual home but also because it was too committed to American ascendancy. Nevertheless, it was, ironically, an encounter with a young "born again evangelical" that seems to have stirred him from years of personal spiritual slumber, resulting in his decision to join the Catholic Church.

Those familiar with Sanneh's writings will profit from seeing the way in which the ideas for which he has become justly well-known in his professional life converge with and sometimes emerge out of the extraordinary trajectory of his personal life. Those new to Sanneh will value the summaries of the major strands of his thought which have helped establish him as a major intellectual force in the study of both Islam and what he prefers to call "world" (as opposed to "global") Christianity.

In many ways, Sanneh's professional life mirrors his personal pilgrimage. Not long after his conversion his early academic pursuits focused on the religion of his birth. Here, Sanneh displayed his willingness to swim against the tide of received scholarly wisdom by focusing on a pacifist form of Islam in West Africa. At the time, the study of Islam was occupied with jihadist forms, often portrayed as the purer stream of Islamic belief and practice well removed from the muddied backwaters of "folk Islam," a phrase he reviles as condescending. This is not to say, as many do, that Sanneh regards jihadist Islam as a smallish eddy in the wide current of moderate Islam. He speaks, rather, of the "prevailing forces of jihad" against which pacifist Islam has had to hold its patch of higher ground.



Summoned
from the Margin
HOMECOMING OF AN AFRICAN

Lamin Sanneh
Foreword by KELEFA SANNEH
Illustration by [unreadable]

One suspects that Sanneh's early academic focus on Islam, together with his early life in Islam, made possible his later insights into the nature of world Christianity, Christian expansion and mission. Thus, for instance, did Sanneh intuitively resist the still common belief that Christian mission in Africa advanced within conditions made conducive by colonialism. Instead, his own experience was that the colonial powers much more readily accommodated the structures and strictures of Islam, encouraging Islam's natural identification with the state as a means of preserving the colonial order. So much was this the case, that having made the decision to convert, Sanneh struggled to find a missionary—Protestant or Catholic—willing to baptize him, for fear of disrupting the order. The continuing reality of Islam's identification with the state creates a situation in which "Muslims honor and celebrate their converts as trophies of faith, while Christians take their converts as charitable rations with a pinch of shame. It forces Christians underground to keep their faith quiet, or else makes them propitiatory tokens of a grateful church for Muslim forbearance" (p. 105). In Sanneh's experience, "Freedom of religion was a euphemism for a prickly status quo, code for observing the rule of causing no offense to Muslims" (p. 106).

Sanneh's conclusion that Christian expansion could not be explained as the twin of colonial advance, led him to search for another explanation. Here again, his early life in Islam helped set the stage for his later insight that key to Christian expansion is what he describes as its inherent embrace of the vernacular. Sanneh grew up in an environment in which "Muslim socialization effectively weaned us of any vernacular confidence" (p. 234). In contrast to the sacred status reserved for Arabic, Sanneh came to marvel at the way that Christianity "invests itself in all languages except the language of Jesus. It is as if the religion must disown the language of Jesus to be the faith Jesus taught" (p. 222). This runs quite contrary to the standard narrative which views the Christian missionary enterprise as an exercise in cultural imperialism. Instead, Sanneh vests the significance of the Western missionary movement in the massive linguistic achievements associated with vernacular Bible translation. If the rooting of Christian faith in vernacular languages has served both the cause of Christian expansion and cultural renewal, it has not achieved for vernacular forms of Christianity much of a role in the West. "The unwieldy term 'Two-Thirds World' gives the illusion of the West surrendering the quantitative argument without budging necessarily on its qualitative reservations" (p. 228).

If vernacular Christianity is the substance of world Christianity, Sanneh does not see this awakening as a kind of Christian *Umma*, the intended result of a top-down, carefully orchestrated master plan to achieve a global, religious monolith. This is why Sanneh rejects the term "global Christianity" which tends to evoke the culture flattening, market-driven impulses associated with "globalization." World Christianity is distinctive for its bottom-up, "culturally diverse polycentric character" (p. 238). For this reason, "Christian unity is now a matter of intercultural openness more than it is a question of doctrinal axe-grinding" in an environment where Christian communities are "characterized by an inclusiveness of idioms and practices" which do not "hew to [Christianity's] ancient roots" (p. 238).

All of this stands in obvious tension with, say, the recent call of Thomas Oden for the African church to return to the African roots of the Christianity and indeed with Sanneh's own affirmation of Catholicism's adherence to the "old teaching" and of its unwillingness to surrender revelation to uncontrolled contextualization. Doubtless intercultural openness is one important dimension of Christian unity, but it is not always clear how Sanneh reconciles his vision of a broadly inclusive, non-doctrinaire Christianity with faithfulness to the apostolic tradition. Sanneh's ecumenical instincts do

not always permit him to be clear about the limits of contextualization, but his commitment to the idea of revelation seems to suggest that there are limits.

Students of comparative religion are not generally disposed to speak of false religion or false teachers, and Sanneh is no different. Alongside the ambivalence he often experienced from the Church, perhaps that scholarly disposition helps explain those seasons of his life in which he was more an observer than an active participant in the Church. And perhaps these things, too, explain why there is very little indication that proclamation and persuasion play much of a role in his sense of mission. Indeed at one point he reports that he has pled with several Muslim friends not to convert. He reflects with melancholy on one such friend who died without making the “unforgiving choice” between the painful path of conversion and shutting his mind to the truth. Whether Sanneh also felt grief over this unmade choice, he does not say. Still, it is clear that many, including many Muslims, have been attracted by what he describes as a life of following the irresistible call of a sovereign God. Sanneh is well known as a perceptive student of religions. But when he speaks, as he does in this book, of his own profound experience in leaving the religion of his birth to follow the resurrected Jesus, he is at times also a powerful witness to the truth.

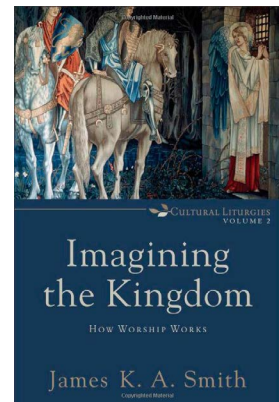
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James K. A. Smith. *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. Vol. 2 of *Cultural Liturgies*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. xx + 198 pp. £14.99/\$22.99.

This is a demanding but rewarding book, far-reaching in argument, with conclusions that demand attention and deserve consideration. Not a quick read—it wants to get under the skin, to lodge there and work powerfully on how we nurture and live out of our imaginations.

Smith’s argument, while sustained throughout, weaves widely and roams suggestively across his four main chapters. Being the second volume in a projected trilogy, this scope is expected and welcome. Resuming from *Desiring the Kingdom*, Smith here returns to a desires-based anthropology, developing it into the realms of the imagination and liturgy. These are, for Smith, vital yet frequently under-appreciated theatres for being human and learning how to be Christian.

Smith cast humans as irresistibly liturgical animals. As embodied creatures, our pre-cognitive wiring is fed and formed by storied rituals which school us in how to navigate and make sense of the world. Churches neglect this anthropology at their peril, for secular liturgies are alert to it and often capitalise all too well on the desires driving people. Smith laments how often the devil has the best liturgies: global capitalism and its localised forms such as shopping malls can be more effectual shapers of people than the church. This book calls both churches and Christian education institutions to a renewed attending to the imagination and its formation, within. It asks for liturgy and pedagogy to be taken seriously as embodied, pre-cognitive, action-oriented formation.



Smith begins with a lengthy engagement with two French philosophers, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Pierre Bourdieu. At ease with Jerusalem being in close engagement with Paris, Smith introduces these thinkers well and his exposition of them deftly illuminates their thinking and his own project. Illustrative side-bars drawing on literature, film and television use exemplars such as *Downton Abbey* and *The King's Speech* to help ease the reader into the theoretical intricacies in view. Other examples are drawn from literature, such as David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*. These add support for (and, at times, some relief from) the sustained intricacies of theory which characterise the first half of the book.

From Merleau-Ponty, Smith draws the insight that we develop a habituated know-how which fundamentally orientates us to perceive our way of being-in-the-world. This perception is carried in our bodies, and precedes and orders our reception of external stimuli. Such *praktognosia* is irreducible to propositions, and remains inarticulable even while it vitally forms our engagement with life. What, then, will a Christian 'perception' look like, and how will we teach our bodies such a mode of intentionality? These questions lead Smith towards Pierre Bourdieu.

From Bourdieu, Smith adds the notion of a *habitus*, that is, a disposition which is inscribed in individuals and in cultures, which is both personal and political. A *habitus* is bigger than any individual, even while it orients individuals. It is a practical sense, a proficiency by which people are 'native' within a culture's million micro-moments and movements. This comprehensive belief that conscripts the body is known by action and in action. It is a ritualised formation into a disposition which conveys ultimate concerns, a cosmic dimension. It trades on implicit pedagogies concerning rhythms and metaphors, both enabling and inclining human action. Crucially, Bourdieu asserts that *habitus* cannot be reduced down to propositions, but such an intellectualist reductionism is what Smith fears in advocacies of a Christian worldview which ignore desires-based shaping of a Christian imagination.

As this book switches into its second half, these theoretical foundations give rise to two more constructive chapters. Smith traces how stories are imbibed via liturgies, whether secular or religious, generating metaphorical universes which lead us to desire a particular telos, a view of the good life. As liturgical animals, Smith posits that poetics, stories and metaphors matter intensely as the modes by which imaginations are shaped and forge our pre-cognitive frames for interpretation and action. 'Liturgies are compressed, repeated, performed narratives that, over time, conscript us into the story they 'tell' by showing, by performing' (p. 109).

Charting our need for a 'sanctified perception', Smith projects a Christian mission which restores and re-stories the world, via the desire-leading and desire-feeding imagination. Calvin's Geneva provides a historical frame of reference for this, and Smith identifies the need for novelists and good story-tellers on the side of the gospel, such that we desire the kingdom of God above all other kingdoms. Smith condemns churches for their allergies to repetition, and for what he sees as a spurious distinction between form and content which ignores how we are wired as liturgical animals.

Such a summary hopefully captures something of the breathless and wide-reaching scope of this book. Was I persuaded?

Certainly I came away persuaded liturgies and pedagogies must address desire and formation, not simply knowledge and information. My formational practices are more intentional as a result. This book will feed teachers, church leaders, artists, and ordinary Christians. Hopefully, it will inspire more liturgists, broadly understood. Better composition and use of liturgy, in domestic and public spheres as well as in ecclesial settings, will harness the counterformative power of Christian worship for God's kingdom. Smith's third volume, *Embodying the Kingdom*, is an attractive prospect.

Yet two reservations leave me not completely persuaded. First, I remain uncertain regarding how Smith's desires-based anthropology connects with the propositional worldview-based anthropologies he reacts against. Certainly desires are cast as somehow prior to thought, but their interconnections within an integrated anthropology remained unclear to me at the close of my reading. Smith offers 'two cheers' for the worldview paradigm (p. 8); I would desire to know more about how these cheers would interact with his large third cheer for the imagination. As 'an incubator for the imagination' (p. 178), worship, especially liturgical worship, must still inhabit propositions (on one level, how else are metaphors strung into stories?). Sometimes I felt that Smith risked obscuring such inter-weaving within the anthropology he projects.

My second reservation relates to Smith's advocacy of 'historic' liturgy. The last chapter very helpfully promotes the need for teaching about liturgy (liturgical catechesis) and the importance of liturgical form. Form here means the logic of liturgy, and this risks analysis becoming shallowly structuralist. For instance, Smith parallels five communion liturgies, claiming that they share a common form. The differences between them—they range from Roman Catholic to various Protestant forms, both Reformed and otherwise—are not explored. Yet what is more interesting, more formative of imagination and desire: their commonalities, or their distinctives? I wish Smith had probed more regarding the power of distinctives: this would, to my mind, have tempered his appeals to 'the wisdom of historic Christian worship'. In what *particular* directions are desires being pointed and fed in particular liturgies? In itself, old is not inherently good. This links with my first reservation, especially within a Word ontology in which any biblical anthropology needs to be located.

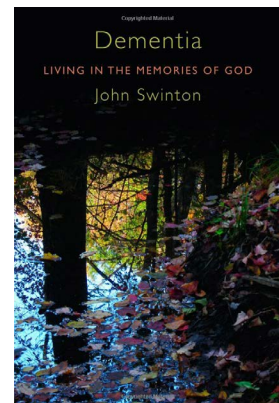
These reservations are real, but so too is my enthusiasm for this book. It has, in me, worked its purpose. My imagination is engaged by it, and hungry for the finale of Smith's stimulating trilogy.

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John Swinton. *Dementia: Living in the Memories of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. 298 pp. £25.00/\$25.00.

John Swinton is professor of practical theology and pastoral care at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and founding director of the Centre for Spirituality, Health, and Disability at Aberdeen. In addition to taking a PhD in Divinity from the University of Aberdeen, he is a Registered Mental Health Nurse and has also served as a mental health chaplain. His other publications include *Resurrecting the Person: Friendship and the Care of People with Mental Health Problems*, *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader* (ed. with Brian Brock) *Living Well and Dying Faithfully: Christian Practices for End-of-Life Care*, and *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil*. A quick perusal of these subtitles reveals that the author does not avoid difficult issues, even those for which no clear-cut answers are forthcoming.

The present work challenges readers to set the standard for "a truly Christian understanding of dementia and the development of authentically Christian modes of dementia care" (p. 6). He does not



propose easy, feel good solutions, but rather, real growth rooted in the truth about God's ways with his people and their illnesses.

Well-being, peace, health—what Scripture describes as shalom—has to do with the presence of a specific God in particular places who engages in personal relationships with unique individuals for formative purposes. Rather than alleviating anxiety and fear, the presence of such a God often brings on dissonance and psychological disequilibrium, but always for the purpose of the person's greater well-being understood in redemptive and relational terms (pp. 7–8).

This view of well-being (shalom) provides a more accurate theological framework for the methodology we use to engage medical, psychological, and neurobiological input. He states, "We do not do theological reflection on dementia within a medical, psychological, or neurobiological context. . . . These disciplines are practiced within the context of creation and under the providential sovereignty of God" (p. 8). Against the trend, cognitive and the medical models must be consistent with sound theology.

How great is the challenge? Based on current growth patterns, by 2050 Alzheimer's disease patients may triple in number. Pastors and other Christian leaders will look beyond astronomical healthcare costs to the more critical spiritual challenge: what will dementia mean for shepherding families and their churches? The financial repercussions for the families alone will be staggering. What is more, families overcome with a challenge that is beyond their comprehension will call upon pastors to help them understand and cope with an illness that may affect them in life-changing ways twenty-four and seven for many years. But that is not Swinton's focus in this book. The author wants us to care for the person who suffers most, the dementia victim. What happens to us spiritually when we forget who we are and whose we are?

The absence of the cognitive self raises many critical questions for our theology and praxis (pp. 91–98). For example, what is the relationship between our personhood and our ability to understand? To find answers, the author eschews the medical model as the primary perspective on understanding and treating dementia. This includes calling into question the defectological approach to the illness. The central issue, says the author, is less treating the illness and more living with it from a theological perspective (pp. 9–13). For example, what does it mean that a dementia patient can no longer understand and believe theological realities, say for example, substitutionary atonement? This takes us directly to the role of the heart in personhood.

Dementia is a heart issue. A pastor's commitment to God and service to his congregation is to provide shepherding care for the heart, which by biblical definition includes our thinking, feeling, and willing. Due to the complexity of the heart issues, dementia and other forms of mental illness may well be some of the most crucial challenges facing pastors, church workers and congregations. Heart questions include: What do we do with our virtual existence—i.e., what happens in our dreams and our memories? What do we do when our memories are gone? The author's aim toward a theology of memory takes us one step closer to the realization of whose we are (p. 259). When in the course of mental illness we forget whose we are, the realities of our faith continue on long after we have forgotten them, for we "remain tightly held within the memories of God" (p. 15). If this is the spiritual reality for dementia victims, then what should be the response of pastors, churches, and caregivers? Not surprisingly, visitation hospitality, and gestures of love top the list (pp. 276–84).

The author calls us to treat the mentally ill, and their families and friends with understanding and compassion that is theologically informed. But what if we are those families? How might God minister

to us? It is a moment of great blessing when a mentally ill person close to us speaks with near lucidity or does something with personal warmth that reminds us of who they are when the illness subsides, if even for a moment; but it is an exponentially more blessed moment when, amid the clouds of confusion, we realize that no matter how quiet and seemingly absent our loved one with dementia may be, they are safe in the arms of a loving Father who remembers them perfectly and will never let them go.

Because this study boldly explores an illness that is poorly understood, some readers may like the author's questions more than his answers. But the exponential increase in dementia cases alone should stiffen our resolve to understand and minister to victims and their families. This reader highly recommends John Swinton's study to all Christians, but especially pastors and other leaders.

David C. Deuel

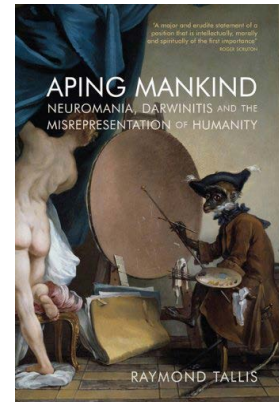
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Raymond Tallis. *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity*. Durham, UK: Acumen, 2011. 400 pp. £15.00/\$29.95.

It is a commonplace in orthodox Christianity that postlapsarian man is, above all else, to a great extent deceived about his own nature. Nearly all errors, it might be said in consequence, have their root in anthropological errors. If you are wrong about yourself, what then will you get right?

Since Lucretius wrote his first-century B.C. Latin dactylic hexameter poem *De rerum natura* it has been widely thought by some that man (along with everything else) is mere matter. This Epicurean/Democritean atomistic view of man is at the heart of what Raymond Tallis is arguing against two millennia later: a reductive, scientific, anti-humanist, mechanical view of humanity. Lucretius knew back then that strict materialism had what neuroscientist David Chalmers now calls the "Hard Problem." That problem is *consciousness*. How can stuff know that it is? According to Tallis, the neuroscientists and philosophers with strict materialist positions must engage in continual linguistic shell games and logical chicanery to evade the substantial evidence that man is more than a machine. Descartes called man *res cogitans*—a thinking thing. Tallis refers to those who think consciousness is an electrochemical process as "neuromaniacs"—thinking things that think wrongly about themselves. "There is at present nothing in matter as understood through natural sciences—no, not even in the wildest reaches of quantum mechanics—that would lead one to expect matter to assume forms in which it would become conscious, self-conscious and knowing, so that it might be able to formulate universal laws that encompass its own existence" (p. 356). And as Hamlet said while contemplating ending his own existence: there's the rub.

Raymond Tallis cuts an impressive figure: a medical doctor, professor, neuroscientist, philosopher, poet, novelist, critic . . . and an outspoken atheist. A true polymath and widely-praised Oxonian with a variety and staggering number of publications, he is also a confident and vigorous prose stylist. His turns of phrase are often charming—declaring weak arguments as "barmy" and "dodgy"; a straw man argument is actually a "straw homunculus" (a sly neuroscience in-joke); and one position he rejects



is euphemistically termed a “tide of CMTP,” dryly decoded by him as “colonic material of a taurine provenance.” One never wonders what Tallis’s opinion is!

A dense 361 pages, the book is rich with strong-handed prose and no-holds-barred attacks on (and in some cases hilarious mockery of) the brand of materialism he styles “Neuromania” and “Darwinitis”—the idea that all human experience is reducible to evolutionary biologism, and thus chemistry and physics. While sometimes technical, Tallis is always clear. Everywhere the author’s polymathy comes through: a typical page might feature knowledgeable and persuasive references to Hume, gene expression in mammals, John Searle, the physics of light perception, how a Bach concerto feels to the listener, Francis Bacon’s critique of Aristotelianism, the problem of *qualia*, why the computational theory of consciousness leads to panpsychism, our subjective experience of time, and even OT monotheism. Tallis is not pretentious: he is thorough, and has thought deeply on his subject.

This book is useful for Christian apologists simply as a catalogue of deeply problematic materialist assertions. Tallis’s work is heavily documented, crisply argued, and surprisingly entertaining. There is no fluff. He raises questions of the highest order in metaphysics, evolutionary theory, aesthetics, logic, and the phenomenal experience of self-perception. Yet he is eminently readable. Just when I felt left behind, a vibrant illustration or stunning logical turn brought lightning-bolt clarity to my muddled mind. Ultimately his questions are—as all great questions must be—theological ones. His penultimate assertion, that humans are not their brains, has implications ranging from high philosophy and neuroscience to how you hug your children when putting them to bed.

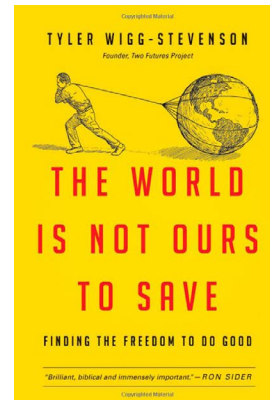
As with all humans, Tallis can be quite blind to his own errors. (I suspect this even happens to me occasionally.) He is not religious, and in fact tells us about how he shook off his earlier religious convictions, which he calls a “prison” (p. 10). He is an evolutionist but insists there is more to being man than being matter. Tallis confesses his argument is almost entirely negative. He shows how everyone else tends towards error regarding human nature, but offers no concrete alternative. For this brick wall he makes no apologies. He suggests returning to Philosophy, particularly epistemology. Neuromaniacs suffer from hubris, he argues: thinking they can know things in ways they cannot—not without smuggling in all their assumptions beforehand. We are all addicted to *petitio principia*—begging the question as often as we draw breath.

This wonderful book is in some ways the inevitable result of an intelligentsia that never solved the problems raised in C. P. Snow’s classic 1959 essay “The Two Cultures.” Of course the problem with reaching the truth about ourselves via philosophy is the problem identified by the Apostle Paul when writing to the Romans and to the Corinthians: we desperately use our reasoning to hide the truth about ourselves from ourselves. The title of the book, with its richly layered ironies, ironically recapitulates the simultaneous blindness and brilliance of its author. For Tallis himself apes mankind in his own way, assuming he can reach ultimate truths apart from God. The best books do not attempt to answer all questions at hand, but leave us pondering the most important ones. So what is man, then, that Tallis should be mindful of him?

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Tyler Wigg-Stevenson. *The World Is Not Ours to Save*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013. 220 pp. \$16.00.

Evangelicals seem to have a great capacity for arguing about activism of various kinds—mercy ministries, social justice efforts, and their place in the life of the church. Tyler Wigg-Stevenson is an anti-nuclear-weapons activist with a specifically kingdom-oriented vision for Christian activism, and this book has much to contribute to the conversation. It is divided into two halves: the first lays the theological groundwork for the activist task, the second develops that vision according to a particular biblical description of God’s kingdom.



The world’s problems are difficult and intractable. Wigg-Stevenson begins with the story of how he was forced to come to grips with the hopelessness of his goal (the global eradication of nuclear weapons). His crisis point provides the title for the book and one of its key insights: the world does not belong to those of us who are trying to right its wrongs. Activists who fail to realize this may be bound for ultimate discouragement: “Christians heaven-bent on saving the world make me fear for the church of ten, twenty, or thirty years from now—when, barring the Lord’s return, the world is profoundly different than it is now but still irretrievably broken, violent and wicked. I wonder what will happen to us in the process” (p. 13). He fears that this “failure” to change the world will result in the retreat from activism into a sealed-off suburban church life, or the reduction of the gospel to a social program in which a person’s eternal salvation plays no significant role.

An example of Wigg-Stevenson’s unique insight and refreshing humility is his discussion of the activist tendency to think in terms of heroes and heroism. Seen this way, activism can take our focus away from “our personal discipleship as followers of Christ” (p. 24) and place it more on being the one who made a difference in the world. But the Christian activist must think of herself first and above all as a follower of the true Hero, the one who has already won the victory over evil and who will one day bring that victory to its final crescendo.

Perhaps the heart of the book’s argument is found in chapter three. Here, Wigg-Stevenson embraces and applies the theological truth that the world’s problems are too big, complex, and systemic for humans to fix. Activists often present their appeals for support as solutions to their particular global problem, but our author admits that universal ills such as poverty, war, and slavery are just that—endemic and systemic in the fallen human race. In other words, we have all created the problem. Consequently, the (Christian) Good Samaritans of the world must realize two principles: “First, the fact that we are collectively culpable for global crises leads to the overestimation of our individual capacity to be a part of a solution”; and second, “our realization that we are collectively responsible for the stewardship of the world can lead to the belief that we can fix its brokenness altogether” (pp. 52–53). Wigg-Stevenson reminds us that the only complete solution to the universal problems we seek to solve through activism is the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ alone.

Our author presses this issue yet further when he discusses the problem of evil—not to “solve” it but to state it and situate it in the everyday thinking of the Christian activist. By telling biblical stories like the annihilation of the Amorites during the Canaanite conquest, Wigg-Stevenson shows that we cannot allow the truth of God’s saving love to negate the horror that we sometimes feel at the outbreaking of his unbending holiness. And we cannot wave aside this horror with the knowledge that God is sovereign

over history and can bring his good purposes about even through the evil that men do. The appropriate conclusion is to embrace the tension and fear God while we work to embody his kingdom on his earth.

The remainder of the book is an examination of Micah 4 and the characteristics of the Messiah's kingdom portrayed there, along with a variety of stories illustrating how Christians have embodied these characteristics, especially under the most trying circumstances imaginable. The goal, again, is not to "save the world" or eradicate its brokenness: "Our job is not to win the victory, but to *expose* through our lives that the victory has been won on our behalf. And as a result, we will see shoots of God's kingdom erupt in our midst" (p. 182). While at times his application of Micah's prophecy may outstrip his exegesis, the strategy as a whole is sound: Christians are citizens of a kingdom that has not yet come in its fullness, yet we must live as faithful citizens of that very realm.

This is a powerful book. The author is an expert storyteller, harnessing the power of narratives—some deeply personal—without being sensational or manipulative. For those who are skeptical of Christian activism for various reasons, Wigg-Stevenson offers an approach that is deeply rooted in a biblical worldview and richly informed by sound theology. He replaces the false dichotomy between activism and evangelism with an approach that incorporates both naturally in an exhortation to embody the kingdom of Jesus Christ now, wherever possible. For the burned-out activist, the author provides encouragement to be energized by the gospel and by a simple embracing of the fact that the victory over evil has already been won. The task of God's people is simply to inhabit that victory as we inhabit our broken world.

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