



# themelios

*An International Journal for Students of  
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# themelios

## DESCRIPTION

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

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## REVIEWS

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EDITORIAL

# Seekest Thou Great Things for Thyself?

— D. A. Carson —

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

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Probably it's a sign of my advancing years, but not infrequently a young pastor or a theological student asks me the question, "What choices did you make to get to where you are today?" I fear I always have to disabuse the questioner. No one is more surprised than I am at the turns my life has taken.

Not as frequently, but far from rarely, I hear a variation on that question. In the following paragraphs, I consolidate several different questions that have come to me recently, questions that can usefully flock together. Some of them spring from zealous young Christians who spring from a somewhat charismatic background. Nevertheless, similar questions, with variations, are posed by zealous young Christians with cessationist commitments. If I had to make a composite of these questions, they'd run something like this:

Several times during the last few years, brothers and sisters in Christ have prayed over me or prophesied over me, saying that they see me one day ministering to "masses" or "vast crowds" or "preaching to the nations" or the like. Some have told me that I have the potential to be the next Spurgeon [or Whitefield or Billy Graham or whoever]. One person simply prayed the word "fame" over me.

Frankly, I find these voices both exciting and unsettling—exciting because I would like to minister to large numbers of people, and, if I am honest, I would enjoy their approbation; yet unsettling because I know I am vain, and could easily pursue public recognition for sinful reasons—less to serve and more to win adulation. Yet it has to be said that I know of men and women of God who have unabashedly leveraged their means, gifts, and reputations to gain "spotlight" roles in history that wonderfully glorify God.

So now I find myself wrestling with God, afraid of my pride, but wondering if I should redouble my efforts to be as useful as I can be. So one part of me wants to hide and serve in as small and secret a place as possible, avoiding the temptations associated with the spotlight. But on the other hand, if I am to take seriously what some have told me, should I be trying to network, study certain things, ask advice from people who have been around power without, apparently, being corrupted by it? I fear that pride could drive me to avoid a more visible ministry; I fear that pride could ruin me in a very public

ministry. Please direct me if you can, and pray that I may gain clarity and increased humility.

The questions these folk are asking are important and multi-faceted. Any response, even an inadequate response like this one, will necessarily require a bit of nuance. I might respond along the following lines, enumerating several points, in no particular order of importance.

(1) Let's begin with your words, "I know of men and women of God who have unabashedly leveraged their means, gifts, and reputations to gain 'spotlight' roles in history that wonderfully glorify God." It's the word "leveraged" that troubles me, for it implies that these believers have cleverly worked things out, played their cards, chosen their courses, made their decisions—in short, leveraged their "means, gifts, and reputations"—so as to play "spotlight" roles in history, roles "that wonderfully glorify God." Obviously the motives of Christians can be embarrassingly mixed, but that doesn't make the mixture a good thing! Those who are truly godly will be very hesitant to "leverage" their gifts and means to play "spotlight" roles: they will be too afraid of their own motives. By contrast, their greatest desire will be to be found faithful.

(2) Moreover, not a few leaders who have transparently sought out spotlight roles have ended up in moral and spiritual shipwreck. God does not give his glory to another. We do not need to mention names: it is easy to think of some of them. By contrast, John Calvin did not set out to make a name for himself in Geneva. Guillaume Farel had to persuade him to stay there in 1536. After they were both expelled, Farel had to badger him to return in 1541. So be very careful about using verbs like "leverage."

(3) Pragmatically, if the Lord does lay a large vision on your heart, feel free to think big, but start small: small assignments, small crowds, faithful relationships. Tim Keller spent the first dozen years of his pastoral ministry in the blue-collar town of Hopewell, VA. That, Tim says, is where he learned to preach and to give simple, straightforward answers. Lloyd-Jones spent eleven years as pastor in Sandfields, in the working-class town of Aberavon in Wales, and frankly expected to be there all his life, before he was called to London. At one crucial point in Spurgeon's life, he was tempted to turn aside from his ministry to gain more education. Education can be a very good thing, of course, but it can also be a stimulus to arrogance. Spurgeon records how he walked across Jesus Green, late at night, returning from Waterbeach to his digs in Cambridge. He writes, "Methought I heard a voice behind me saying, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not! Seek them not'"—referring, of course, to Jeremiah 45:5 in the KJV. If God is in fact going to thrust you into spotlight ministry, do your best to ensure it is clearly God's doing, not your machination. You will then be much more likely to respond with gratitude than with pride.

(4) For what it is worth, and at a much smaller scale, I made a vow a long time ago never to accept or reject an invitation on the basis of either numbers or money. When students ask me how I "planned" to be in this position at this time of life, I simply have to laugh. Again and again, the Lord surprised me, and plunked me into situations which, in time, were rich in blessing. True, I sometimes asked what would be most "strategic," but I tried to avoid measuring "most strategic" in terms of numbers and money and fame, but rather in terms of need. I did not plan to be a pastor; I did not plan to get a Ph.D.; I did not plan to move to the US; I did not seek out a spot on the TEDS faculty; when Tim Keller and I first started talking about what would become TGC, we had no idea it would have anything like the present configuration; and so on and so on. I'm not saying that any one of these plans would have been evil, but I am saying that the arc of my life testifies to God's surprising grace rather than to my planning!

(5) While most of us go through life afraid that people will think too little of us, one cannot help but notice that Paul goes through life afraid people that will think too much of him (2 Cor 12:6). If you grow in your knowledge of sin and of your own heart, and of the matchless grace in the cross, your fear will increasingly run in the same direction as Paul's—and then so-called "spotlight" ministry will increasingly become something you fear more than lust after.

(6) To be frank, I am slightly suspicious of people who utter prophecies pronouncing fame and success on certain people. I'm not saying such prophecies cannot possibly be valid, but I worry that they sound suspiciously like a spiritualized version of HWPG—health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. After the Damascus Road experience, God tells Paul not how influential he will be, but how much he must suffer for Jesus's sake. Paul tells the Philippians that it has been *granted* to them (!) on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, *but also to suffer for his sake* (Phil 1:29). Why is it that so few ostensible prophecies tell people today how much they must suffer for Jesus's sake?

(7) In the relatively few instances in the Bible where God promises greatness to an individual, invariably there are constraints or tough entailments. Yes, Abraham is told that he will become the father of a great multitude, of many nations. But that is a promise he must grasp in faith, for the promise is certainly not fulfilled in his lifetime. God tells David that he will establish through David's heirs a dynasty that will never pass away. David rightly responds with grateful awe (2 Sam 7:18–29)—but one must also remember that his position of leadership did not prevent him from committing grievous, horrible sins. Yes, God told Paul that he would become the apostle to the Gentiles, but that crucial ministry was accompanied by the life-sapping batterings he lists in 2 Corinthians 11:23–33. Read that list slowly, and ask how much you want a "spotlight" ministry. In most cases, large public ministries paint you as large public targets.

(8) God's calculations of what is "important" ministry is rarely ours. When the saints go marching in, the widow who gave her mite will doubtless stand closer to the head of the queue than many a multi-millionaire Christian philanthropist. And (dare I say it?) pastors of some tiny churches, pastors like my Dad,<sup>1</sup> I am certain, may well be preferred above names that are better known in merely human courts. God's gifts and graces are his to distribute as he wills: some workers put in twelve hours, and seem to be mighty in the land; others work for one hour—and if the master decides to give both the same "reward," it is a salutary reminder that the "rewards" are his to give, and all of us are debtors to grace. I am fully persuaded that on the last day, there will be countless brothers and sisters in Christ, unknown to the annals of history, many of them illiterate or semi-literate, who have been starved, maligned, beaten, imprisoned, mocked, and finally killed ("the world was not worthy of them," Heb 11:38), brothers and sisters who never enjoyed one day of spotlight ministry, who will be given the crown of martyrs never earned in spotlight ministries.

Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not; seek them not.

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<sup>1</sup> See D. A. Carson, *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor: The Life and Reflections of Tom Carson* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

OFF THE RECORD

# Choose Your Fears Carefully

— Michael J. Ovey —

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**T**he defining feature is the belief that humanity is confronted by powerful destructive forces that threaten our everyday existence.<sup>1</sup>

‘Terror is the order of the day’—so decided the Convention in 1793 during the French Revolution, meaning that opponents of the Revolution would face terror. Looking out over western Europe you wonder whether fear has not become the order of the day. Secular and Christian writers alike have been commenting for over 20 years that western culture has an ambience of fear, as well as an air of brash self-confidence. It predates the attacks on the Twin Towers, although those terrorist crimes undoubtedly accelerated and inflamed it, and it has been only too evident in the cultural west over the last year. My own country, the UK, has opted to leave the European Union, but the manner of its doing so has been striking. Whether you were Exit or Remain, both sides in the referendum campaign invoked our fears. The issue could have presented as: ‘Which fear do you prefer?’ Going back to the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, again fear played such a large part, whether it was fear of going it alone or fear of Westminster. Western Europe more generally so often sees the plight of the refugee through the lens of fear of the other, and where fear can almost legitimate racist violence and fertilise the growth of far-right groups in mainland Europe. One of the dominating notes of our discourse about public safety and security in the UK is fear of so-called non-violent extremists, prompting a government that was none too sympathetic to liberty for dissident voices anyway to propose levels of surveillance that would have been unthinkable 30 years ago. We are fearful to let our kids walk home from school let alone go out after dark. And as a European I look bemusedly at an American election where one candidate complements his extraordinary choice of hair-style with a ruthless playing on the fears of ‘the Other’ in US life as immigrant and potential terrorist, while his opponent plays on the fears this candidate inspires. The list of fears is extensive: our pensions, the level of the dollar or euro or sterling (take your pick), whether our children will be able to afford a house or repay their student loans, terrorism, whether what we have been eating turns out to be carcinogenic, and the list just goes on.

This ‘environment’ of fear, as Paul Virilio calls it,<sup>2</sup> has some important features. First, it is exacerbated by the speed of movement of our culture,<sup>3</sup> which heightens a sense that we do not know what is coming

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Furedi, “The Politics of Fear,” 28 October 2004, <http://www.frankfuredi.com/articles/politics-fear-20041028.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> Virilio, *The Administration of Fear* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Virilio speaks of a ‘dromosphere’ created by this phenomenon (*ibid.*, 16).

next, but—whatever it is—it is coming quickly and will be followed equally quickly by something else. Such speed cuts down our time to analyse, react and cope.

Secondly, that speeding, accelerating culture is also a very liquid culture and that, as Zygmunt Bauman remarks,<sup>4</sup> reconfigures our relationships: how do I have long term relationships with you when you are a liquid and shifting individual and so am I? Relationships can have their edge of anxiety and fear—no wonder the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* became so iconic when it included the theme of a commitment-phobic generation. The tragic trajectory, no matter what that film's closing scenes suggest, is that in that kind of 'liquid mass individualism'<sup>5</sup> we cut ourselves off both from loving others and receiving love from them.

Thirdly, this environment of fear relates to a more general sense of powerlessness. Somehow we have become a society open to the 'blows of "fate"'.<sup>6</sup> Bauman goes on:

'Fate' stands for human ignorance and helplessness, and owes its awesome frightening power to those very weaknesses of its victims.<sup>7</sup>

This impression of powerless stands closely with the perception that the blows of 'fate' are random, creating a cumulative picture of an environment where huge, unknowable, unmanageable forces afflict us haphazardly and randomly, both as individuals and as collectives. Oddly enough, there is a parallel here with the Hellenistic principle of *Tychē*.<sup>8</sup> While *Tychē* is certainly something ineluctable that grinds remorselessly on, she is also deeply connected with randomness and the way some-one can be lifted up one moment and cast helplessly down the next. L. H. Martin aptly comments on *Tychē*:

Embodied in a single image, the goddess' ambiguity or capriciousness, her double nature, positive and negative, is her most characteristic trait.<sup>9</sup>

*Tychē* at the end of the day is irresistible and unpredictable but also literally implacable. One may fear her, but it does little good.

In terms of Christian analysis, the view that fear relates to lack of power is central for Thomas Aquinas. He writes:

[W]hatever is entirely subject to our power and will, is not an object of fear; and that nothing gives rise to fear save what is due to an external cause.<sup>10</sup>

To this extent, our fear rises directly in proportion to our perceived lack of power to deal with whatever the threat may be. Fear can of course therefore be a good thing in that it leads one to recognise a situation or person one cannot control. But it certainly also does help reveal our perceptions. This in turn prompts some intriguing reflections.

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<sup>4</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Combining Bauman's theme of liquidity with Virilio's comments about mass individualism.

<sup>6</sup> Bauman *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Fortuna in Latin. Fate/Fortuna in her capricious, irresistible aspects is hymned in the mediaeval poetic cycle *Carmina Burana* as *Fortuna imperatrix mundi*—Fortune, empress of the world

<sup>9</sup> L. H. Martin, *Hellenistic Religions: An Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 22.

<sup>10</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.42.3, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/2042.htm#article3>.

First, the earlier list of what our culture fears has one conspicuous absentee. Our culture does not have fear of God on its worry list. Neither, come to that, does an awful lot of what passes for Christianity in the UK and mainland Europe. That's not necessarily because of full-blown commitment to atheism. But if one looks at Aquinas's account of fear to the effect it reflects my perceived lack of power, then my lack of fear readily reflects my perceived ability to 'handle' whatever the threat may be. The underlying logic is that God is not a threat in the way that global economic downturn is, or a random encounter with a road-rage driver.

Unfortunately, such a lack of fear of God is ultimately despairing. Think of the list of fears as one considers the terrorist incidents over the summer: isn't there the feeling that even if we cut out 99 out of the 100 bomb plots, it only takes one bomb on the subway or metro line to terminate us? Ultimately our culture has no answer to its fears, does it? With all those health and safety measures, accidents still happen. Some things remain beyond our control and power. And when we ceased to fear God, we ceased to have someone who could actually finally save. A God I need not fear is a god the terrorist need not fear either.

In fact, one way or another, the assumption is that we need not fear God because we can deal with him: perhaps we think we have earned security before him, or that we are simply entitled to it or that he will never do anything we would find uncongenial. Of course, the more we articulate this assumption, the more problematic it appears. If God is God at all, then, as the Beavers remark in C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he will not be 'safe,' as in controllable by us. He may be good, but he is not tame or domesticated.

This has two consequences. First, it takes us back to the instructions God gives his people through Jeremiah and other prophets (E.g. Jeremiah 10:1- 16 . We are not to fear the idols and elemental principles that people without God do fear. We need not fear them because the God who is infinitely more powerful than us can deliver where we cannot. One current challenge for us is whether we fear God enough so that we need not fear the things that 'the nations' do. What we fear reveals a lot about where we think power truly lies. What, exactly, do we fear and in what order?

Second, one way of reading the environment of fear is that our culture would rather fear our modern version of *Tychē* with her grinding, ineluctable randomness than fear a God who providentially controls human affairs with purpose. I think it is indisputable that so many in the cultural do prefer *Tychē* to Jesus of Nazareth: but why?



# Fulfilling the Heroic Ideal: A Triperspectival Approach to Christian Moral Heroism

— Matthew Lillicrap —

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**Abstract:** The Human fascination with the heroic is evident from ancient mythology to the heroic epics of modern cinema. Real-life heroes, those deemed morally heroic, are no less fascinating, but arouse unease. What does the heroic have to do with the ordinary? ‘Common sense’ morality defines heroism as beyond ordinary, with minimal moral authority. Meanwhile Christians also feel uneasy. Talk of heroes appears to risk marginalising Christ, the hero of Scripture and history. This essay engages these issues, utilising John Frame’s tri-perspectival approach to Christian ethics, to find that far from resisting the heroic, the gospel would have us both embrace Christ as hero and strive for the unexpected heroism he calls for.

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From ancient tales told and retold at countless fire-sides to the legends of our age enthralling innumerable cinema-goers, humanity has been held spellbound by an enduring fascination with the heroic. From Achilles to The Avengers, from Hercules to Luke Skywalker, our best-loved stories are shaped by the heroic narrative, focussed on one endowed with almost god-like power, a transcendent figure nonetheless immanently active in their world. From Homer to Marvel, Ovid to Lucas, storytellers enchant us with the hero’s complexities and triumphs.

With moral heroism, fascination collides with reality. ‘Moral heroism’ here is defined a morally noteworthy act understood to be ‘going above and beyond one’s duty’, thereby apparently transcending a deontological ‘ought’. The agent of moral heroism, the moral hero, becomes a focus for debate. How does their heroic act relate to ‘ordinary morality’? In answer, ethical theories tend to be dominated by a two-tier vision of morality, separating the ordinary and the hero. Evangelical ethics, however, has had little input. Undoubtedly this results from an awkwardness with heroic language, given the understanding of the human condition as helplessly bound in sin, unable to please God, and dependent on him for salvation. Who can be a hero? Nonetheless, given the human fascination with the heroic and the debate arising therefrom, should evangelicals remain aloof an opportunity to communicate the gospel will be lost.

Moreover, the heroic challenge may be closer than we admit. Jesus calls his followers to go the extra mile, to love neighbour and even enemy, to give up everything to follow him. Many of these exhortations are given as examples in debate, or even taken up by common parlance as synonymous with heroism. The hero, for example, is one who 'goes the extra mile' for others. An unthinking response may promote a Christianised two-tiered morality, applying Jesus's commands only to 'heroes' while the 'ordinary' stand further off. Consequently, the Christian response to the many apparent heroes of scripture becomes muddled. We shrink from moralistic errors, calling people to 'be a Daniel' and treating the bible as a catalogue of heroes to emulate,<sup>1</sup> yet both Jesus's commands and these scriptural examples are designed to effect all. For example, Paul himself exhorts imitation of his imitation of Christ (1 Cor 11:1).<sup>2</sup> The question posed by dominant theories of moral heroism is, how should this be understood? This study, therefore, engages both with our fascination for the heroic and the debate surrounding the moral hero. The call to moral heroism found in scripture will be examined following John Frame's triperspectival approach to Christian ethics.<sup>3</sup> Although Framian triperspectivalism has not been without critique,<sup>4</sup> his argument that ethics involves 'the application of a norm to a situation by a person'<sup>5</sup> is compelling. From these features he draws three perspectives relating to his 'lordship theology'. Thus, the normative arises from God's authority as lord from whom lived norms flow, the existential from God's role as covenant Lord, drawing near and transforming his people,<sup>6</sup> and the situational from God's lordship attribute of control, remembering both his sovereignty over every situation and his goal as the telos to which morality should conform.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in his introduction to the normative, Frame is one evangelical theologian who has briefly discussed moral heroism.<sup>8</sup> This study will expand this normative discussion and apply existential and situational perspectives. Doing so will demonstrate that the call of Jesus to know and follow him represents a normative 'duty to go beyond the call of duty', consummated in the existential call to become like him in everyday situational realities. In Christ, the ordinary is drawn into the heroic, both subverting and fulfilling the human fascination. Our heroic dreams are shattered by the unattainable vision of what the morally heroic represents in Christ, yet granted a Spirit-enabled transparency to Christ as believers become like him, to his glory.

<sup>1</sup> How to teach children the Old Testament without resorting to 'dare to be a Daniel' moralism is a challenge for Sunday-schools across the church.

<sup>2</sup> In many ways this study could be viewed as an extended reflection on this verse, asking how Paul's call to imitate his imitation of Christ finds purchase in the believer's life.

<sup>3</sup> See generally, John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2008), and pp. 19–37 in particular.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Douglas J. Moo, "A Review of John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, New Orleans, LA, November 2009); Meredith Kline, "A Paper Pursuant to the Faculty Forum of February 28, 1986 at Westminster Theological Seminary in California" (Westminster Theological Seminary, 28 February 1986), <http://www.meredithkline.com/klines-works/articles-and-essays/kline-on-multiperspectivalism/>.

<sup>5</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 196–99.

### *1. The Hero and Me: A Fascination Born of Frustration*

Joseph Campbell famously sought a meta-narrative lying behind centuries of heroic myth by arguing that ‘it has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward.’<sup>9</sup> According to Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* drives us onwards, inspiring maturity such that an encounter with the heroic presents a transformational challenge to our view of ourselves and others. The locus of this challenge lies in the tension between heroic transcendence and immanence. Campbell describes the hero’s common path, beginning with separation from their world of origin and engagement in a realm of supernatural wonder, followed by a triumphant return to the benefit of their fellows.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the hero arises from the real world, subject to the human condition, yet simultaneously stands in the realm of the extraordinary.<sup>11</sup> Although consistently transcending humanity, the hero remains immanently connected to the ordinary. The degree to which we sense this connectedness motivates emulation and gives the heroic its inspirational quality. Once the ordinary being relates to the hero, they begin to seek an every-day heroic ideal. Yet in this transcendent-immanent tension, discomfort germinates. We may attempt to emulate, yet the heroic remains unattainable. The hero is, by definition, different. Thus fascination grows, revealing a paradoxical unspoken frustration at our limitations.

In the moral sphere, this tension is accentuated, for we are no longer in the imaginary realm. Confronted with real-life figures whose actions surpass the bounds of the ordinary, we are no less fascinated, yet more personally challenged. In response, modern, ‘common-sense’ morality follows J. O. Urmson, who brought the moral hero to prominence in modern moral philosophy.<sup>12</sup> Concerned that the bar of duty not be set so high as to cause the ordinary moral agent to despair of reaching it,<sup>13</sup> he argued against the presuppositions behind the moral philosophies of his day which assumed any morally good deed to be obligatory by definition.<sup>14</sup> Thus, he appealed to the moral hero, defined as an agent enacting their moral duty where most others would ordinarily not do so, or more pertinently, as going above and beyond duty, performing deeds which should never be understood as obligatory for the ordinary moral

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*, 3rd ed. (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2012), 7. Campbell’s seminal work was hugely significant in birthing the ‘mono-myth’ theory of comparative mythology. As such he continues to influence the conception of the hero today. Indeed he influences even the creation of new heroic tales within popular culture. He has, of course, had a significant impact on the perception of Christianity for many, since mono-mythology folds religious ‘myth’, including, in Campbell’s view, that of Jesus Christ, together with heroic myth and legend. We can only refer to him in passing here, recognising that, while there is much that should prompt interaction from the Christian perspective (indeed there is scope for further study in this area) there is also much in Campbell’s work which is helpful for the purposes of this study in understanding the psychology of the human fascination with the heroic.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–25.

<sup>11</sup> Mike Alsford, *Heroes and Villains* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006), 23.

<sup>12</sup> See generally, J. O. Urmson, “Saints and Heroes,” in *Essays in Moral Philosophy*, ed. A. I. Melden, new ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 198–216. Although a relatively short essay, Urmson initiated something of a seismic shift in modern philosophical conceptions of deontic morality. This was his seminal work, and has found significance right down to ‘street-level’ ethics, as we shall see.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Michael Flescher, *Heroes, Saints and Ordinary Morality*, Moral Traditions Series (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 36.

agent.<sup>15</sup> Thus he brings us face-to-face with the soldier who throws himself on the live grenade in order to save his comrades, insisting that none could possibly argue that such a man merely ‘did his duty’ nor hold any soldier failing to do the same morally culpable. In his short essay Urmson laid the foundation for a theory which allows for a category of acts which are simultaneously morally good *and* ‘optional’. Upon this philosophers such as David Heyd build a secular theory of supererogation.<sup>16</sup> Although a term better-known in religious contexts, supererogation is re-employed to describe that class of heroic act which goes beyond the call of duty.<sup>17</sup> Supererogation, although not universally obligatory, remains morally valuable. Our frustrated fascination with moral heroism now wears philosophical clothes. Consequently, the bar of duty has been lowered. Ordinary moral agents need not feel despair at their inability to emulate the transcendent supererogatory acts of the moral hero. Yet the tension is not resolved. Urmson and Heyd’s arguments raise questions. Once an act is understood to transcend the ordinary, should ordinary agents consider it beyond reach? What motivation remains for the ordinary to seek ‘higher’ morality? Is the moral hero, lauded though they may be, left devoid of any moral authority?

The Urmsonian theory must answer, yes. We may watch the moral hero, but only from a distance. Consequently, in the paradox of the transcendent-yet-immanent moral hero, ordinary morality finds a defence of the moral status-quo. Our fascination remains, however the very figures we view as surpassing our limitations provide grounds for justification of those same limitations. Just as the heroes of legend remain different in substance, so common-sense morality, underpinned by Urmson and those following, argues that moral heroism be reserved for extraordinary moral agents different from ‘us’. We ordinary agents may perhaps be inspired on occasion, but ultimately must remain content with our lot. A hero is born as such, while ‘what makes someone morally ‘ordinary’ is precisely that one does *not* go above and beyond . . . it is considered praiseworthy for the morally ordinary person merely to avoid falling below the minimum.’<sup>18</sup> Hence, in his efforts to keep the deontological bar attainably low, Urmson paved the way for a complete reconsideration of moral duty. The assumption became that any duty must imply any agent’s ability to perform it. Ought must equal can. Hence, for ethics on the street today, duty remains an important pillar. The goal of being an ordinary ‘good’ person is met in doing one’s duty, now defined well within the realms of ability, for the maxim ‘ought equals can’ must be universally applicable to be deontologically coherent. Moral exertion is admirable but unnecessary. Meanwhile, the moral hero, performing praiseworthy deeds with which the ordinary need not be concerned, becomes perplexing. Their motivations a mystery, any authority they may have had to inspire change is explained away because, in the final analysis, they are ‘different’ to us.

For the Christian faced with scripture’s many apparent heroes, the tension increases. The writer to the Hebrews provides an archetypal example in chapter 11. Figure after figure fills the so-called

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<sup>15</sup> Urmson, “Saints and Heroes,” 201–3. In particular, Urmson gives the example of a soldier throwing himself upon a grenade in order to protect his fellows. Had none done so, Urmson argues, one could not hold any morally blameworthy.

<sup>16</sup> See generally, David Heyd, *Supererogation*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy, reprint ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Heyd’s work self-consciously builds upon that of Urmson. He was among the very first to apply the term ‘supererogation’ in this relatively alien secular context. See also, Gregory Mellema, *Beyond the Call of Duty: Supererogation, Obligation, and Offence*, SUNY Series in Ethical Theory (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Flescher, *Heroes, Saints and Ordinary Morality*, 2.

'hall of heroes,' exemplifying lives of single-minded faith and obedience, enabling wondrous deeds. Yet chapter 12 exhorts, 'let us *also* lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race set before us' (Heb 12:1). These 'heroes of faith' are depicted to inspire *our* race, that we might live with similar single-mindedness for God. The implication is, 'you can see these heroes of faith. You go and be a hero too.' Perhaps with common-sense morality ringing in our ears, we may be tempted to discount their example. After all, they are not 'ordinary.' This is not all, however. Further investigation of these 'heroes' reveals their ordinariness. Indeed, they are barely moral heroes at all. Abraham, who offered up Isaac when put to the test (Heb 11:17), lied repeatedly to save himself (Gen 12:10–20; 20:1–18). Moses, who considered abuse for the sake of Christ more valuable than Egypt's riches (Heb 11:26), fled after murdering an Egyptian (Exod 2:11–15). The emphasis for the writer to the Hebrews appears to be precisely that these figures *are* ordinary. The more unpalatable parts of their back-stories are required to emphasise that their accomplishments are by faith in Christ.<sup>19</sup> Could it be that imitation of these figures is possible after all, even encouraged?

This question is surely answered by Paul's encouragement to 'be imitators of me as I am of Christ' (1 Cor 11:1). Yes, we *are* to look to figures who have gone before, even those who live around us, and emulate them. Yet it is not *their* deeds we imitate. Rather, there is one standing behind, both inspiring and enabling their heroism. This is the crux of the Christian relationship with moral heroism. Scripture and subsequent history abound with those who go above and beyond duty. Martyrs go to their deaths, others excel in compassion, resist oppression or stand for truth. Yet, although we may instinctively focus on *the hero themselves*, the Christian hero points beyond themselves to Christ.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the key challenge for the Christian comes when we find ourselves face to face with Christ. Here is the one painted as *the* hero of Scripture. The one who is both ultimately transcendent as the 'image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15) and perfectly immanent, Immanuel, God with us (Isa 7:14, Matt 1:23), the one who experienced the fullness of the human condition, was tempted in every way and yet transcended the imperfections of our humanity by remaining entirely without sin (Heb 4:15). From the Bible's perspective there is no other true hero. Yet Christians are called to *follow* him by faith. As we listen to Jesus, what effect should his commands have on us, the ordinary?

### *2. Normative Moral Heroism: An Heroic Duty?*

If one were to conduct a street-survey of scripture's 'moral heroes,' the Good Samaritan would surely feature high up the list of results. The question of whether 'Good Samaritan' acts are obligated is debated, however, whichever opinion one holds, at the basic level Jesus demonstrates that the Samaritan does what the priest and Levite were not prepared to do. Thus, whether he does his duty when others fail, or goes above and beyond, the Samaritan meets the Urmsonian definition of the moral hero.<sup>21</sup> However, it is easily forgotten that Jesus does not tell his parable to inspire his hearers through an heroic example, but to illustrate the *command* to love one's neighbour. *Duty* is necessarily implied, and as a result common-sense morality struggles. Bringing a normative structure into the realm of helping

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<sup>19</sup> Michael S. Horton, *Ordinary: Sustaining Faith in a Radical, Restless World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 152–54.

<sup>20</sup> Brian S. Hook and Russell R. Reno, *Heroism and the Christian Life: Reclaiming Excellence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Again, see Urmson, "Saints and Heroes," 201–3.

others appears to diminish the action. Far better a volitional act than an imposed duty, surely. But, as Wright argues, for Jesus the Samaritan's actions entail no more than the law required,<sup>22</sup> a demonstration of the duty to love one's neighbour as oneself (Luke 10:25–37, especially vv. 27–29). Indeed, Jesus even exhorts his interlocutor, “‘you, go and do likewise’ (Luke 10:37).

From here the thoughtful Gospel reader may turn to the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus encourages those who would follow him to perpetually greater acts of self-denial. Common parlance picks up his words as though synonymous with moral heroism. The hero is one who ‘turns the other cheek’ or ‘goes the extra mile’ (Matt 5:38–42). Urmson helps the ‘ordinary’ agent justify their moral status-quo once more by refuting Jesus. He remarks that this call simply cannot be obligated, since the command's spirit entails that, after going a second mile, one goes a further two miles, such that ‘by repetition one could establish the need to go every time on an infinite journey.’<sup>23</sup> Yet denying obligation here is simply an outright denial of the clear normative force of Jesus's teaching. If we are to take Christ at his word, we must seek another explanation.

This is yet clearer in the next few verses with the command to love one's enemies (Matt 5:43–48). Again, common-sense morality may object, “‘leave such outlandish love to the moral hero, it is not for the likes of us.’ The startling feature here is that in one sense, Jesus agrees. Enemy-love is *not* an ordinary action, yet this is precisely his justification for this command; ‘if you love those who love you, what reward do you have . . . and if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?’ (Matt 5:46–47a). Jesus is well-aware that the morality he commands transcends the ordinary. Hence, even after a brief overview of some of the more famous commands of scripture the conclusion is inescapable. According to Scripture, according to Jesus, that which Urmson and Heyd would define as moral heroism is obligatory.

In response we might simply seek to undo the work of Urmson and Heyd, reverting to high-bar deontology, dismissing moral heroism altogether. Perhaps the problem lies in the entire definition. Yet this would be inconsistent with scripture as a whole, for there are numerous further examples in its pages of acts which scripture itself defines as heroic in an Urmsonian sense, for they *do* go beyond duty. Frame argues thus in his own discussion of moral heroism,<sup>24</sup> which forms part of the introduction to his normative perspective. This perspective seeks to answer the question, ‘what is my duty before God?’ by finding obligations or norms for living arising from God himself.<sup>25</sup> He admits that one might expect to find such obligations by distilling the commands of scripture,<sup>26</sup> and, as we have seen, even a brief consideration of scriptural commands does leave us confronted with the question of the morally heroic. Scripture has more to say, however, as Frame demonstrates through examples of David's mighty men (2 Sam 23:13–17), the generous widow (Luke 21:1–4), and Barnabas (Acts 4:37). They are all commended for their deeds; however, in each case, their deeds are commendable but not obligatory. For example, Jesus commends the widow who gave all she had to live on, a morally heroic act above that obligated by the Jewish law of giving a tithe. Likewise, Barnabas is praised for selling his property for the sake of the church, an act which Peter tells Ananias is not obligatory for believers a few verses later (Acts 5:4).

<sup>22</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Human Rights: A Study in Biblical Themes*, Grove Booklets on Ethics 31 (Bramcote: Grove, 1979), 11–12.

<sup>23</sup> Urmson, “Saints and Heroes,” 205.

<sup>24</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 196–99.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 131–7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

Frame's question in response is the one we have been concerned with thus far; what motivated these morally heroic acts and how should we relate to them?

Citing the further example of Paul preaching without payment in Corinth, Frame argues that the Christian moral hero feels *bound* to act heroically. Paul admits that preachers have a right to receive payment (1 Cor 9:1–15), however, he renounces this right, declaring himself “under obligation’ as he does (1 Cor 9:16). What is this obligation? Frame answers by pointing to Paul’s language of “reward” and of “winning the prize’ in this passage.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere Paul makes this explicit. The ‘prize’ he strives for is that of knowing Jesus as intimately as possible by serving him as closely as possible.<sup>28</sup> Thus Paul’s moral heroism, expressed here as preaching without payment, expressed elsewhere as a readiness to suffer and die for the sake of Christ, even a desire to ‘depart and be with Christ’ (Phil 1:23) is a manifestation of his deep passion to know Jesus. This is why he can call believers to imitate his imitation of Christ (Again, see 1 Cor 11:1). Just as Jesus manifested the desire to serve and know his Father, so the believer should show the same longing to know God in Christ.

Hence, the Bible *does* obligate believers towards moral heroism, for it is contingent on all of us to know Jesus as best we can.<sup>29</sup> Frame points out that God commands his people to know him (Deut 7:9), and acts for the express purpose that people might “know that I am the LORD.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed we may add that, as creatures made in his image, this relationship with God is what humans were created for,<sup>31</sup> seen in the climax of the creation account in Genesis 1–2 with God’s *rest*, interpreted by Hebrews (and elsewhere) as God’s ultimate purpose in creation; right relationship between creator and creatures (Heb 3:7–4:14). As Jesus says himself, eternal life is to know him and the Father who sent him (John 17:3).

Further evidence may be added. This underlying duty to know God makes sense of Jesus’s assertion that obedience evidences love. Just as his own love for God is shown by his obedience (John 14:31), the obedience of those who follow him demonstrates their love for him (John 14:15). Such obedience *is* a fulfilling of obligations such as “going the extra mile’ out of a passion to know and love Christ as exemplified by Paul. Christ calls believers to this kind of heroism, manifesting obedience-shaped love for him by going beyond duty.

Thus, with Frame, we conclude that ‘God does expect some level of heroism from each of us.’<sup>32</sup> However, if this obligation is viewed only normatively, as a *duty* to exceed duty, it is oxymoronic, bursting its own boundaries. Yet, as we have seen, scripture does call us to go beyond ‘mere duty’ as exemplified by the mighty men, the generous widow, Barnabas, Paul and others. This is because its call is ultimately to a heroism like that of Jesus, born from the underlying call to *be* like Jesus. Hence, we must examine Christian moral heroism through Frame’s second lens, the Existential Perspective.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 198. See also 1 Cor 9:17–18 and 24–27.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, 2 Cor 12:10, Phil 1:19–23 and 3:7–16.

<sup>29</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 198–99.

<sup>30</sup> Frame cites Deut 29:6. See also Exod 6:7, 7:5, 10:12, 16:12; Isa 45:6; 49:23; etc.

<sup>31</sup> As Bavinck so beautifully puts it: ‘From the beginning creation was arranged, and human nature was immediately so created that it was amenable to, and fit for, the highest degree of conformity to God and for the most intimate indwelling of God.’ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 2: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 530.

<sup>32</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 199.

### 3. Existential Moral Heroism: An Heroic Meta-Duty

Frame's existential perspective examines Christian morality from the perspective of moral character. *Doctrine of the Christian Life* has been critiqued for lack of depth regarding this perspective, particularly regarding the sanctification of the believer by the indwelling of the Spirit.<sup>33</sup> Frame admits as much,<sup>34</sup> although he justifies the brevity of his final section examining the existential perspective by arguing that his three perspectives are not separate. Rather, they each function to provide a view of the other two. Regarding moral heroism, whereas the normative asks, 'what is my duty before God?', prompting an apparently oxymoronic duty to exceed duty, the existential asks, 'how must I be changed if I am to please God?', the emphasis falling on character rather than behaviour.<sup>35</sup> The existential perspective, then, moves us towards virtue, shifting from an examination of heroic norms to the heroic character.

The work of ethicist Andrew Flescher is instructive.<sup>36</sup> Working from virtue ethics, Flescher challenges Urmsonian supererogationists by arguing against a universally applicable definition of supererogation. Rather, Flescher asserts that different moral agents demonstrate differing capacities. Hence, a more developed character issues in an enlarged perception of duty or, put negatively, the realm of the supererogatory diminishes for a person of greater virtue. Flescher points to heroes such as the residents of Le Chambon, hiding Jews from the Nazis, and Paul Rusesabagina, the hero of the Rwandan genocide.<sup>37</sup> Whereas an Urmsonian view would describe their deeds as supererogatory, Flescher points to their own frequent self-assessment of merely 'doing their duty.' The tension of the ordinary faced with the heroic arises once more. These 'heroes' do not recognise themselves as 'different.' The Urmsonian defence is to deny the hero moral authority by arguing that such self-assessments arise from excessive modesty or defective moral outlook.<sup>38</sup> However, Flescher contends that to make such accusations is contrary to the hero's self-evident moral praiseworthiness. He recognises the vested interest of ordinary morality in dismissing the hero's moral authority, for 'if heroes . . . were moral authorities, then *our* way of seeing things would be in need of correction.'<sup>39</sup> Instead he argues that their self-assessment demonstrates their virtue, which has expanded their concept of duty, driving their heroic deeds. 'Heroes have different duties from the rest of us because of their especially virtuous character.'<sup>40</sup>

Were Flescher to halt his argument here, we would be left with a variation of the two-tiered moral theory. Urmsonian morality classifies *acts* on two tiers: duty and supererogation. Alternatively, Flescher suggests two tiers of *agent* with corresponding duty: the ordinary and the hero. However, Flescher makes a final, critical move by assuming an underlying obligation to moral development, resulting in

<sup>33</sup> See generally, Moo, "A Review of John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*."

<sup>34</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 911–12.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>36</sup> See generally, Flescher, *Heroes, Saints and Ordinary Morality*. Flescher is relatively unique among secular ethicists in his application of an ethical theory of virtue to the traditionally deontological issue of moral heroism. His thesis arises from a considered critique of the supererogatory theories of Urmson and Heyd, and is thus highly relevant for this study.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 141–44.

<sup>38</sup> See Urmson, "Saints and Heroes," 203.

<sup>39</sup> Flescher, *Heroes, Saints and Ordinary Morality*, 49, italics original.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.



a ‘developmentalist’ theory.<sup>41</sup> Far from being ‘the lot’ of ordinary morality, an engrained satisfaction with ‘mere duty’ and failure to aim beyond reveals morally blameworthy character shortcomings.<sup>42</sup> Put more positively, ‘the maxim to go beyond the call of duty is, in effect, a virtue-based imperative . . . which bids one to improve one’s character over time and thereby to re-conceive the nature and scope of one’s first-order moral obligations.’<sup>43</sup> To paraphrase; we have a *meta-duty* to heroism, an obligation to reach beyond the scope of duty, thereby expanding our *particular*-duties to individual acts. Flescher, therefore, reconnects us with the moral hero, no longer transcendent other, but ‘persons who ascend to lofty heights without fully climbing out of the human situation.’<sup>44</sup> Rather than standing far-off, he draws close to re-establish moral heroes as exemplifying the character to which the ‘ordinary’ ought to aspire.

However, Flescher only takes us so far. Problems arise when one asks why the ordinary agent embarks upon moral development. The argument becomes inevitably circular. What motivates change if the desire for change arises from a virtuous character in the first place? Flescher suggests a natural inclination to character improvement providing initial momentum.<sup>45</sup> However this is inconsistent, for he has already asserted that ‘common-sense’ morality has the opposite inclination, to maintain the moral status-quo and avoid the heroic challenge. Furthermore, he suggests that a ‘moral beginner’ should inculcate attitudes leading towards independent development by trusting and imitating a hero.<sup>46</sup> However, from where does this trust come, and since the qualification for identifying virtue is one’s own virtue, how may a moral beginner identify such figures?

Thus, Flescher’s moral ‘developmentalism’ is compelling, but lacks transformative power. To reach clarity we must view his arguments through the lens of scripture. His focus on character chimes with the biblical understanding that God is most concerned with the human heart – the seat of personality, emotion, and motivation. Paul teaches that the sinful heart turns away from God ‘to worship and serve created things,’ sinking into depravity (Rom 1:25–32). Here is Flescher’s problem; the natural inclination of the human heart is not towards improvement. Enslavement to sin leaves humanity incapable of independent change.<sup>47</sup> The Old Testament demonstrates this. God lays claim to his people’s hearts, urging and promising transformation by “‘circumcision’ of the heart (Deut 30:6), or replacement of “‘hearts of stone’ with ‘hearts of flesh’ (Ezek 36:26–27). In each of these passages, such transformation promises to undo the inability to obey God’s command to love him. To develop our normative conclusions, God’s transformational aim is not behaviouristic, but a development of character expressing passion for him, *shown* by obedience (Ps 40:6–8; Hosea 6:6). The paradox highlighting the weakness of moral developmentalism is that God calls his people to transformation of which they prove incapable, but which he promises to enable.

Into the New Testament, it becomes clear that Jesus is the centre of this transformational aim. As *the* hero of scripture, he is the only person in history able to meet God’s norms, and he calls those who would listen to follow. Paradoxically, however, rather than inspiring and challenging the ordinary to

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<sup>41</sup> This is Flescher’s own term.

<sup>42</sup> Flescher, *Heroes, Saints and Ordinary Morality*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Rom 6:1–23, Eph 2:1–4, and Jesus’s teaching on the human heart in Mark 7:21–23.

higher feats, here is a heroism which in the first instance resists imitation. Despite his calls to follow, despite scripture's call to imitate those who imitate him, the uniqueness of Christ's heroism must first be upheld. He alone left the glory he had with his Father, and humbled himself death on the cross (Phil 2:5–8). He alone took upon himself the just consequences of God's wrath against the failures of ordinary believers to meet their normative obligations. This is a heroism so unattainable it seems almost alien to that which we have considered thus far. There are facets of Christ's heroism into which we may not presume to step. Yet further examination with the heroic ringing in our ears discovers a reality simultaneously so familiar that all fantasies of the heroic ideal may be recognised as distorted echoes thereof. Thus, even as Christ's life and death confronts the ordinary with their inabilities and limitations, it simultaneously offers to fulfil these unattainable obligations on their behalf. Thereafter, for those taking up the offer of obligations met by faith, the cross becomes source, motivation, and empowerment for change.<sup>48</sup>

The foundation for living the heroic life, then, becomes the humble confidence of the justified, the knowledge that one's consistent failure has been absolved, and one's status set as though morally perfect.<sup>49</sup> Yet Christ calls justified believers to *follow* him. This can only be possible through Spirit-wrought transformation.<sup>50</sup>

The turn to Christ, therefore, is a renunciation of independency. Whereas the traditional hero is endowed with remarkable strength or virtue, the inability of the human heart to pursue independent transformation causes the Christian hero to despair of their strength. Thus, Christian heroism is unexpectedly transparent,<sup>51</sup> displaying the shaping, informing, and empowering heroism of Christ and opposing proud fantasies of achievement as he is manifested by the faithful so that 'it is not us but Christ in us, who secures the glory.'<sup>52</sup> In order to be truly heroic we must repent of our heroism.

Existentially understood, therefore, we have a meta-duty to moral heroism. This obligation to become like Christ in his readiness to lay himself down for others,<sup>53</sup> shapes a character ready to die to self and live for him.<sup>54</sup> This is nothing less than the call to sanctification, since believers, those 'predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ' (Rom 8:29), are now being "transformed into the same image' by the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18), bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23). God's transformational plan is to make people like Jesus by the Spirit's power.

Therefore, as the Christian enacts their meta-duty to reach beyond the call of duty, they engage in the dynamic of sanctification, God working in them even as they "work out their salvation' (Phil 2:12–13). It follows that, as each believer becomes more like Christ, the scope of particular-duty grows. The Christian bears increasing fruit. For example, a Christian growing in generosity may reach beyond duty by giving sacrificially, imitating a figure such as Barnabas in his own imitation of Christ, whether

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<sup>48</sup> 1 Peter 2:21–24 makes it abundantly clear that Christ's sacrificial death functions as *both* inimitable substitutionary death (v. 24) *and* example for believers to follow (v. 21).

<sup>49</sup> Tim Chester, *The Ordinary Hero: Living the Cross and Resurrection* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 15–46.

<sup>50</sup> Moo, "A Review of John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*," 8.

<sup>51</sup> Hook and Reno, *Heroism and the Christian Life*, 121.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>53</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 199.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

consciously or unconsciously. After some time, as their generosity increases in conformity to Christ, they may feel there is more scope to give generously, again reaching beyond duty. In this way they demonstrate morally heroic growth in generosity. Since sanctification is rightly understood as a *process*, it follows that what is morally heroic at one time for one may be ‘mere duty’ for another in whom God has formed deeper generosity. The first Christian should not be condemned by the second, nor should the second become conceited, for it is Christ in them on display. Rather, the heroism of the second can inspire the first. Similarly, in this arena the heroism of the generous widow or Barnabas *does* have moral authority, precisely because they share the ordinary tendency of the human heart to miserliness. Their generosity transparently reveals Christ’s work, inspiring imitation as they imitate him.<sup>55</sup>

Hence, the oxymoronic ‘duty to exceed duty’ of the normative perspective is explained by the meta-duty to Christlikeness in the existential. Christian heroism, founded upon and patterned after the cross, differs from traditional heroism by renouncing personal strength and relying wholly on another, scripture’s true hero. As this meta-duty to transformation is enacted, the scope of normative particular-duties expands. Growing conformity to Christ grants the transparent moral hero authority before those around them such that believers in Christ become mutually inspirational as they enact their meta-duty in the particular. A morally heroic act is, therefore, defined according to growth in an individual’s likeness and transparency to Christ. Consequently, the existential makes the heroic accessible to the ordinary, since God’s transformation project involves every Christian such that everyday decisions and actions, reflecting a growing conformity to Christ, take on this transparent heroic hue. To understand this further, we must turn to the Frame’s final lens, the situational perspective.

### *4. Situational Moral Heroism: An Heroic Duty Today*

Frame’s situational perspective focusses on life as underpinned by God’s sovereignty. Thus, the focus falls upon relationship with God, relationship with others and individual calling and make-up, including abilities, sinful tendencies and God’s work in one’s life.<sup>56</sup> Hence the situational collides with both normative, since relationship with God draws us back to norms flowing from him,<sup>57</sup> and existential, since character is *part* of a person’s situation.<sup>58</sup> A second element of the situational perspective arises from the *goal* of living which, Frame argues, should be to glorify God.<sup>59</sup> Thus the question posed of the situational is, ‘how can we change the world to bring God glory?’<sup>60</sup>

Consequently, a situational perspective on moral heroism must draw on both the normative ‘duty to exceed duty’ and existential ‘meta-duty to seek expanding particular-duty’ by asking how the heroic

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<sup>55</sup> Again, see 1 Cor 11:1. Hook and Reno comment that ‘Paul’s own specific activity in his transparency to Christ is not the content of his exhortation to imitate him. It is not important for the Corinthians to do as Paul does, in any particular sequence of action, but to be transparent to Christ as he is.’ *Heroism and the Christian life*, 126.

<sup>56</sup> See in particular Frame’s exposition of the situational perspective in chapter 15, “Our Ethical Situation,” in *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 251–70.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 239–40.

<sup>58</sup> In learning to ‘live with ourselves’ (in our situation) Frame describes the ‘collision’ of situational and existential. *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>59</sup> See chapter 17, “Our Chief End,” in *ibid.*, 298–313.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

impacts an individual in their particular situation. Furthermore, it recognises the goal of the transparent Christian moral hero as the demonstration of Christ in them to his glory. Thus, for the believer seeking to enact their meta-duty to reach beyond the call of duty in the particular, the ground-level question is, 'how can I glorify God by serving him in imitation of Jesus in the circumstances given to me?'

Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan confirms this. Were he not on the Jericho road, he would not have had the opportunity to be morally heroic. We know intuitively that Jesus is not encouraging the same *specific acts*, as though we should repeatedly travel the Jericho road watching for victims of robbers. Rather, his encouragement to 'go and do likewise' (Luke 10:37) speaks of enacting *similar* deeds with the same readiness as the Samaritan in different situations. Indeed, the force of the situational flows through the story's language. The lawyer asks, 'Who is my neighbour?'; to which Jesus replies, 'which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' (Luke 10:36). By telling the parable Jesus provides first a narrow definition of neighbour, the nearby person in need, and second the broadest possible definition, for once the *Samaritan* is understood to be neighbour by Jesus's question, the definition becomes *any* nearby person in need, even a sworn enemy. Thus the heroism encouraged by Jesus here *is* normative, following the command to neighbour love, and existential, emulating the Samaritan's readiness to obey, but it is *also* situational, looking for other situations in which such heroism may be enacted.

Viewed in such a way, therefore, moral heroism takes on myriad manifestations, dictated both by the composition of the agent's character in likeness to Christ and their unique situation as given by God. Thus in the example of Paul's moral heroism in preaching without payment although other apostles were paid, situational factors presumably played a part. It is possible that Paul's mention of his singleness compared to other married apostles provides a glimpse of this (1 Cor 9:5).<sup>61</sup> Irrespective of whether they joined Paul in this specific act, as Frame argues, other apostles 'showed their passion for Christ in other ways'<sup>62</sup> and, we might add, in other situations.

A second look at Hebrews 11 is also demonstrative. Closing the chapter, the writer depicts the variable faces of the hero. Some show victorious heroic faith as the dead are raised and battles won, others show enduring heroic faith through martyrdom and imprisonment (Heb 11:33–38). All acted differently and all faced different situations, but the situational perspective emphasises God's sovereignty over all. Then comes the exhortation to emulate in 'the race that is set before us' – that is, in our daily, situational race, struggling with sin and striving to be like Jesus (Heb 12:1–2).

This being the case, we can argue that moral heroism is found in the ordinary, daily decisions made by followers of Jesus. As the ordinary believer lives up to the normative obligation of heroic passion for Christ, they develop an existential heroic transparency, expressed so that their everyday situations can be infused by the heroic. Picking up our example once more, while morally heroic generosity may be governed existentially by the growth of a Christian's character, it is also situationally conditioned. Morally heroic generosity will look starkly different for a young single parent compared to a retired businessman.<sup>63</sup> Again, the first should not be condemned by the second, nor should the second become conceited, but each may trust their Lord's sovereignty over their situations and be inspired by the other as they glorify Christ through their imitation of his generosity. Thus, the situational perspective makes

<sup>61</sup> This is not directly confirmed by Paul in the text of verse 5, but the referent to Peter and Barnabas taking wives is surely linked to the likelihood they were more likely to require payment for the support of their families.

<sup>62</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 199.

<sup>63</sup> This is, of course, the very point Jesus made when observing the generous widow (Luke 21:1–4).

Frame's definition of moral heroism, that manifestation of passion for Jesus, vitally attainable for the ordinary believer. As one preacher put it:

The courage of faith is within reach of all. The poorest and obscurest disciple of Christ can guide his steps by the same lofty motives as the most august and honoured. However oppressed with drudgery, however circumscribed his lot, he too can face life with a divine courage and if he does so, then for him as certainly as for the most glorious, the greatest promises shall be fulfilled in God's kingdom here and hereafter.<sup>64</sup>

### 5. Conclusion: *The Hero and Me, A Fascination Fulfilled*

We began with our fascination with the heroic held in tension with perplexity at how we relate to those who seem to transcend the limits of our humanity even while remaining immanently active in the world. This fascination, born of frustration at our limitations, implies an underlying desire to overcome, a fantasy played out in playgrounds across the world as children pretend to be their favourite heroes. Thus, our captivation is often found not so much in longing *for* a hero as longing *to be* a hero, to burst the boundaries that hem us in, to reach for the extraordinary. As we draw our triperspectival examination together, we find Jesus as the shaft of light, both illuminating and splintering our dreams.

Our examination of moral heroism has drawn us towards Jesus as scripture's true hero. Thus, our perplexity is met, our fascination fulfilled, by *his* transcendence as divine Son and his incarnate immanence. He alone is the 'hero'. Yet, turning our fascination upon him sees him promising to *enable* our imitation. The evacuative nature of such imitation subverts our heroic dreams by revealing and confirming our inability to independently overcome our limitations. Jesus calls out, 'you *ought* to go the extra mile, turn the other cheek, love your enemies, for you *ought* to love me as passionately as possible.' Hence, the call to follow Christ *is* a call to respond to the normative challenge posed by the heroic. Taken up, we find ourselves following a norm we are utterly incapable of following. Far from 'ought implies can' the human plight is that ought equals *cannot*. Yet, Christ's call comes from the cross, where we find ourselves both forgiven and granted the heroic power of another. As we are drawn into *his* heroism, the obligatory heroism of the normative, enabled by the transparent heroism of the existential, becomes 'the 'ordinary' heroism of the situational. Our longing, once subverted, is fulfilled.

Consequently, scripture's heroic figures *can* be exemplars. The legitimate fears of moralising scriptural heroes are tempered by nuancing their heroism as *God's work* in them. Their heroic obedience, fuelled by a passion to know God, can and should inspire such heroism in us. There *is* a sense in which we are encouraged to 'be a Daniel'.<sup>65</sup>

The morally heroic, then, is open to all. Contrary to a culture which often hypes the life of faith into a frenzy of revolutionary extremes, Christian moral heroism, defined as the deep passion to love and be like Jesus, issues in transformed and transformative lives in small, every-day decisions.<sup>66</sup> One may imagine a missionary in extreme circumstances as living a life beyond the call of duty for the sake

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<sup>64</sup> R. H. Charles, *Courage, Truth, Purity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931), 8.

<sup>65</sup> The careful nuancing of how this should be done in practice would be worthy of further investigation, beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>66</sup> Horton (*Ordinary*) effectively grapples with this significant point, of which this study provides an iceberg-tip.

of Christ, however, the triperspectival view articulated here expands this heroic category. Hence, the heroism of such a missionary should be celebrated in view of the existential, God's sanctifying work in his life, as well as the gift of a situation that enables him to serve, even under physical danger. This does not diminish his heroism but looks more closely for *God's* glory therein. However, we may also recognise the young mother with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and an over-worked husband enacting her obligation to be like Jesus in *her* situation by laying down her life for her family, struggling through another day and teaching her children the gospel. The glory of Christ is seen as she bears morally heroic fruit. Thus, these two believers may *each* be inspired by the heroism of the other. The moral authority of apparently heroic figures takes on an inspirational quality in the mundanity of life, while the lives of countless 'ordinary' believers take on unexpected heroic significance as they follow and glorify Christ. By following Christ, transparent discipleship follows his call to moral heroism, enabled by progressive transformation to his likeness such that our fascination and desire for the heroic is fulfilled in the everyday. The believer can be 'the ordinary hero.'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Chester, *The Ordinary Hero*.

# Facts and Theories in Science and Theology: Implications for the Knowledge of Human Origins

— Lydia Jaeger —

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**Abstract:** This article examines the status of facts and theories in science and theology. The biblical worldview upholds human knowledge, while highlighting its limited, situated and personal character. Some developments in 20th century science and epistemology confirm such an understanding of knowledge. Of particular relevance here are the failure of logical empiricism and Kuhnian, Polanyian and presuppositional epistemologies. Comparing the construction of scientific and theological knowledge, this article focuses on what science and theology contribute to the study of human origins and how to harmonize specific insights gained in both fields. It explores a non-reductionist, multidimensional model of intellectual inquiry in which both science and theology can contribute to our understanding of human reality.

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There is a wide range of opinions held by Christians on the status of human knowledge. It is probably safe to consider that every epistemology there is has been adopted by at least one Christian thinker. Nevertheless, discussions about human origins cannot avoid tackling questions of the character of scientific and theological knowledge. In order to evaluate what science and theology tell us about origins, we need to have some grasp of the nature and value of their respective statements. This article does not aim to lay out a complete epistemological map, nor does it provide extensive argument for the choices made.<sup>1</sup> More modestly, it provides a sketch of what I take to be important ingredients for a Christian theory of knowledge and then formulates some insights which can guide our thinking in the field of human origins.

The conception of knowledge adopted here can be characterized as realist, situated, and personal. After explaining in the first section what is meant by this triad, the second part of the article draws out

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<sup>1</sup> I have offered a sketch of a Christian theory of knowledge in Lydia Jaeger, *What the Heavens Declare: Science in the Light of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 94–122.

four implications for scientific knowledge of human origins. When as Christians we struggle with what science reveals about human origins, we should keep in mind the following points:

1. neo-Darwinian evolution is the framework theory of contemporary biology, and thus neither proven “fact” nor “just a theory”;
2. methodological naturalism is too restrictive, as scientific methodology should follow the evidence;
3. reductionism is a favorite form of idolatry in our scientific age;
4. there are different forms of rational inquiry, each with its own method and legitimate domain.

The third section compares the elaboration of scientific and theological knowledge, paying special attention to the distinctive nature of the ultimate authoritative source of knowledge in each of these two fields (natural revelation for science, Scripture for theology). The fourth section draws out seven implications for the role of scientific knowledge in theological accounts of human origins:

1. the Enlightenment dichotomy of facts and values must be overcome, so that both science and theology have the right to teach us facts about the real world;
2. exegesis comes before science in understanding biblical texts;
3. conflict between a certain understanding of biblical texts and scientific findings provides motivation for exploring alternative textual interpretations, which have then to be assessed on purely exegetical grounds;
4. all that the Bible teaches is true; but the Bible does not teach all truth;
5. there are biblical teachings relevant to scientific questions;
6. the Bible is the unique source of authoritative teaching in theology, so that science should not control the construction of dogma;
7. natural science cannot fully comprehend human nature and specific theological insights have to be allowed for, in order to arrive at a correct understanding of human nature.

## *1. Ingredients of a Christian Epistemology*

### **1.1. Realism: Knowledge as Limited and True**

A Christian epistemology which takes its starting point from creation involves the recognition that the world was created by the *Logos* (Gen 1:3, 6, etc.; Ps 33:6; John 1:1–3),<sup>2</sup> and that humans are created in God’s image (Gen 1:26–27). Thus nature was given an objective structure, which has to be discovered and not simply constructed; and human beings are capable of gaining knowledge of the natural order, sharing some of the privileges of their Creator. The creation mandate they received includes the exploration of nature and the task of constructing a rational discourse in accordance with the structure of the created world (Gen 1:28; 2:19–20). From a biblical point of view, the scientific enterprise is not only possible and legitimate, but in some sense a duty. Thus it is not surprising that the

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<sup>2</sup> Not all theologians agree on the *Logos* as being the starting point. I provide argument in favour of this account, against Herman Dooyeweerd’s critique, in “Herman Dooyeweerd, la ‘spéculation sur le logos’ et la vérité,” in *L’amour de la sagesse: hommage à Henri Blocher*, ed. Alain Nisus (Charols: Excelsis, 2012), 299–310. Cf. also Lydia Jaeger, “Beyond Emergence: Learning from Dooyeweerdian Anthropology?” in *The Future of Creation Order*, vol. 1, *Philosophy, Sciences, Theology*, ed. Gerrit Glas, Jeroen de Ridder (New York: Springer, forthcoming).



doctrine of creation played a role in the scientific revolution in early modern times and encouraged a positive attitude towards natural science.

At the same time as creation provides a foundation for the scientific enterprise, it places restrictions on it: human knowledge is always that of *creatures*, thus limited in scope. No scientist (or philosopher, or theologian) can claim complete knowledge, which is the privilege of God alone (1 Sam 16:9; Isa 46:9–10; Heb 4:13). The limitations of human knowledge are expressed in the scriptural theme of the incomprehensibility of God's work in creation and redemption. Although humans can gain access to some true knowledge, they can never fully comprehend reality (Ps 139:6+17–18; Eccl 3:11; Isa 40:13).

Whereas the limitations of all creaturely knowledge seems at first to thwart epistemological claims, the neo-Calvinist theologian Cornelius Van Til points out that divine incomprehensibility provides the only context in which human knowledge can be recognised as both limited and true:

*If one does not make human knowledge wholly dependent upon the original self-knowledge and consequent revelation of God to man, then man will have to seek knowledge within himself as the final reference point. . . . Then he will have to hold that if he cannot attain to such an exhaustive understanding of reality, he has no true knowledge of anything at all. Either man must then know everything or he knows nothing. This is the dilemma that confronts every form of non-Christian epistemology.*<sup>3</sup>

As long as human knowledge claims to be autonomous, it cannot rest content with partial knowledge. Whatever humans know would be under constant threat from the unknown part of reality, which could be so widely irrational, as to annihilate whatever partial rational understanding humans have been able to establish. But if human knowledge is anchored in God's knowledge of reality, it is freed from the impossible strive for omniscience. Thus the humble recognition of the derivative nature of human thought liberates us from the rationalist obligation of exhaustive knowledge, which will forever remain out of our reach.

### **1.2. Presuppositionalism without Relativism: True Knowledge as Situated**

An epistemology starting from creation takes seriously the fact that knowing humans are creatures. As creatures, their knowledge is not disconnected from the context in which they live. This context is multifaceted. It has material aspects outside the individual (economic conditions and availability of techniques), corporal aspects of the individual (the shape of sense organs and brain structures processing information), and relational aspects: humans are always part of an inherited history and part of a community. All these different aspects of the context we live in have an impact on our knowledge. To echo a famous book title: there is no "view from nowhere."<sup>4</sup>

Science is no exception to the situated character of human knowledge. It also is a social activity within a historically situated community. Socio-political factors play a role in the construction of what is accepted as scientific knowledge. The scientific community has its own specific mechanisms which suppress deviant opinions, through several years of academic training of newcomers to the field and the peer-review process for scientific publications. These mechanisms are not arbitrary power structures, but essential to best practice.

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<sup>3</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), 17, italics original.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

The rigorous historical research of Thomas Kuhn, and in particular his epoch-making *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, helped to establish the awareness of the communal character of the scientific enterprise. Before Kuhn, Michael Polanyi had already stressed the foundational character of fiduciary frameworks for all knowledge, but without finding the same wide audience as Kuhn later encountered.<sup>5</sup>

Every epistemology which acknowledges the situated character of knowledge is threatened by relativism. If knowledge cannot be abstracted from its context of discovery, how can it be objectively true? The unique resources of biblical theism protect recognition of situated knowledge from relativism. First, the human knower is not the only knowing subject. The Creator also has knowledge, even complete knowledge of reality. As his perspective is all-embracing, it guarantees the complementarity of the different perspectives accessible to humans.<sup>6</sup> Second, creation by the *Logos* gives rise to an objective natural order, which is at least partially knowable to humans. Thus our human perspectives are really this: limited, but valuable *perspectives* of the one created reality, and not some worthless illusions, disconnected from reality. Without making creation foundational to his epistemology, Michael Polanyi recognised that God alone can guarantee our knowledge, once we accept its situated character: “

We undertake the task of attaining the universal in spite of our admitted infirmity, which should render the task hopeless, because we hope to be visited by powers for which we cannot account in terms of our specifiable capabilities. This hope is a clue to God.”<sup>7</sup>

### 1.3. Personal Knowledge

Inspired by the success of Newtonian physics, many thinkers since the Enlightenment have pursued the ideal of formal knowledge: all truth expressed in logical or mathematical language. Developments in formal logic at the end of the 19th century motivated the search for a purely formal language which could formulate and prove every true statement, using only empirical data in addition to logical formalism. Following Bertrand Russell’s research into the foundation of mathematics (in particular his *Principia Mathematica*, published with Alfred Whitehead between 1910 and 1913), logical empiricism (or positivism) of the Vienna circle, since the 1920s, was the strongest voice for the formal understanding of knowledge:

What unites men in language are structural formulae; in them the content of the common knowledge of men presents itself. Subjectively experienced qualities—redness, pleasure—are as such only experiences, not knowledge; physical optics admits only what is in principle understandable by a blind man too.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Kuhn acknowledged his debt towards Polanyi: Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 44.

<sup>6</sup> Divine knowledge guarantees this complementarity in principle, notwithstanding the fact that we only imperfectly implement these perspectives, so that tensions may continue to exist.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge, Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 324. Descartes, long before, held to a similar conviction: “Science is persuasion where the reason is so strong that it can never be weakened by a stronger one; which never belongs to those who do not know God” (Letter May 24, 1640), translated from the edition provided by Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, *René Descartes: Français, philosophe* (Tours: Mame, 1953), 265–66; she quotes from Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, eds., *Œuvres de Descartes* (Paris: Cerf/Vrin, 1909, 1956–1957), 3:64–65.

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Carnap, Hans Hahn, and Otto Neurath, “The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle,” (1929): sec. 2, <http://tinyurl.com/hswl8rm>.

Biblical theism cannot accept such an abstract vision of knowledge. For sure, it holds to realism: human knowledge is in contact with the created, and therefore objective, order of the world. But at the same time, the world is understood as created by a *personal* God. His image—humanity—shares in his personal character. Thus knowledge is always *personal*. The fact that it is held by persons is no accident but essential to its very nature. Thus Christians are in tune with what can be called the return of the knowing subject in the epistemology of the second half of the 20th century.

The most stunning proof of the impossibility of complete formalisation even in mathematics was provided by Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorems in 1931. The Austrian mathematician showed that in each axiomatic system (sufficiently rich in order to include arithmetic), there exists a (true) undecidable sentence. Thus the axiomatic basis is necessarily incomplete. Truth exceeds what can be formalised. In the following decades, more and more scholars reacted against the formalist ideal of logical empiricism and underlined the essential role of *persons* in the construction of knowledge. Michael Polanyi, in particular, placed his original epistemology under the title of *Personal Knowledge* (1958).<sup>9</sup> Polanyi considers that "all knowledge is either *tacit* or *rooted in tacit knowledge*. A wholly *explicit* knowledge is unthinkable."<sup>10</sup> Tacit knowledge is immediate, implicit knowledge, which is accepted without discussion and explicit proof. It is the part of knowledge, which one cannot write down on paper or enter into a computer. As tacit knowledge is involved in every act of knowledge, knowledge is always incarnated, held by rational beings, persons. It cannot be reduced to formal statements. "We can know more than we can tell"<sup>11</sup>—the *leitmotiv* of Polanyian epistemology is in harmony with biblical theism, which also stresses the personal character of ultimate reality.

## 2. Implications for Scientific Knowledge of Human Origins

Having laid out the triad—realist, situated and personal—which characterises the conception of knowledge which this article takes as best adapted to Christian theism, let us now see what this triad implies for the understanding of our origins. Without claiming comprehensibility, the article will set forth four guiding principles for learning from science and theology about human origins.

### 2.1. Neither Proven "Fact," nor "Just a Theory": Neo-Darwinian Evolution as the Framework Theory of Contemporary Biology

Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* set off a revolution itself in epistemology. Based on historical research, he offered a new conception of science. His picture of scientific progress is neither inductive and cumulative, as logical empiricism would have it, nor hypothetico-deductive, as Karl Popper argued.<sup>12</sup> Scientists do not normally try to falsify their theories, but use them as conceptual frameworks for more detailed studies. Anomalies (which always exist, as no experiment perfectly

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<sup>9</sup> For a more complete presentation, cf. Lydia Jaeger, *Einstein, Polanyi and the Laws of Nature* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2010), 1–46.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Polanyi, "The Logic of Tacit Inference," in *Knowing and Being*, ed. Marjorie Grene (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 144, italics original.

<sup>11</sup> Andy F. Sanders, *Michael Polanyi's Post-Critical Epistemology, A Reconstruction of Some Aspects of "Tacit Knowing"* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 3, based on Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Raimund Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959).

matches theoretical expectations) are suppressed, and opponents are silenced, in order to progress with “normal science.” But when anomalies multiply, the scientific enterprise enters into a crisis. There are three possible outcomes to such a crisis: either a solution is found, which explains after all the observed anomalies inside the old framework; or no solution is found, and the crisis continues; or, in the most interesting case, a new framework is creatively developed. After a while, this new framework is accepted by the entire scientific community, and becomes “normal science.”

Kuhn’s contention that the scientific community no longer lives in the same world after a scientific revolution, that the old and the new paradigms are incommensurable, provoked a heated debate. Taken at face value, it leads directly into relativism. If one wants to use Kuhn’s insights in the context of a Christian epistemology, a more modest interpretation is best. Yes, all science is dependent on presuppositions; it is done in community, where some convictions are just not open for debate. But no, this does not imply that a scientific community can choose whatever paradigm pleases them; and rational communication is possible (at least up to a certain point) between proponents of conflicting framework theories.

Such a picture of scientific practice provides some valuable insights for the origins debate. It goes beyond current caricatures: creationism and Intelligent Design as pseudo-science, or worse deception, on the one hand, and evolution as an atheist assault on religious faith and morality, on the other. But it also supplies some explanation of the high emotional stakes involved in the debate on both sides.<sup>13</sup> In particular, understanding neo-Darwinian evolution as a Kuhnian paradigm shows that is neither “just a theory,” nor is it a scientific “fact.” Whether we like it or not, neo-Darwinian evolution is the framework theory of contemporary biology. It is the paradigm within which the scientific community proceeds with its research, and science relies on routine mechanisms to exclude those who disagree.<sup>14</sup> This is nothing peculiar to biology, but happens in other scientific fields as well: no article presenting a *perpetuum mobile* will ever get the editorial attention of a physics journal. Thus it will not even get the chance of being peer-reviewed.

It also is not sufficient to point out some unexplained facts, in order to shake the confidence neo-Darwinian evolution enjoys. As-yet-unexplained anomalies are part-and-parcel of normal science. Only when anomalies multiply does scientific practice enter into a crisis. And even then, the old framework theory will not be abandoned as long as there is no new coherent research program to replace it. Most

<sup>13</sup> From personal observation: used to open non-aggressive, rational debate in theology and philosophy among proponents of conflicting views, it was quite a surprise for me to observe how difficult, or even impossible, the dialogue between those defending creationism and those defending (naturalistic or theistic) evolution can be.

<sup>14</sup> Debates about the relevance of evolutionary explanations may surface among different subcultures in the biologists’ community. A telling example is the controversy about the claim that 80% of the human genome is functional, made by scientists involved in the ENCODE project. Dan Graur et al., “On the Immortality of Television Sets: ‘Function’ in the Human Genome According to the Evolution-Free Gospel of ENCODE,” *Genome Biology and Evolution* 5 (2013): 578–90, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3622293>, criticizes ENCODE scientists for “divorcing genomic analysis from its evolutionary context,” whereas “progress in understanding the functional significance of DNA sequences can only be achieved by not ignoring evolutionary principles.” As cellular biologists, ENCODE scientists use a biochemical systems approach rather than evolutionary criteria to define functionality. Cf. the blog by Ewan Birney, the lead analysis coordinator for ENCODE, “ENCODE: My Own Thoughts,” *Ewan’s Blog: Bioinformatician at Large*, 5 September 2012, <http://genomeinformatician.blogspot.fr/2012/09/encode-my-own-thoughts.html>; also John S. Mattick and Marcel E. Dinger, “The Extent of Functionality in the Human Genome,” *The Hugo Journal* 7:2 (2013): n.p., <http://www.thehugojournal.com/content/7/1/2>. (Thanks to Zachary Ardern for informing me about this controversy and providing references.)

(opponents and proponents alike) consider that neither “creation science,” nor Intelligent Design offers such an alternative paradigm. Thus they should not be treated as rivals to established science, at least at this stage of history.

## 2.2. Methodological Naturalism as Too Restrictive: The Scientific Method Follows the Evidence

Methodological naturalism is considered by many—believers and unbelievers alike—as the norm in natural science. This consensus is more problematic than it may seem at first sight. On a foundational level, modern science is, in fact, not naturalistic: the idea of creation underlies many key presuppositions of scientific methodology, including the very existence of a stable natural order, accessible to human exploration. And close historical attention shows that there is not one scientific method which could define ideal science. Not only knowledge gained from science, but also scientific methodology should follow—and has historically followed—the evidence.

Larry Laudan’s “triadic network of justification” provides some interesting insights in how science works in the absence of an *a priori* agreed scientific methodology. In the “hierarchical model of justification,” which Laudan attributes to Karl Popper, Carl Hempel and Hans Reichenbach, three levels are distinguished: facts, methods and epistemological values. If a discordance crops up at one level, scientists, according to this model, rely on the next higher level in order to solve it. Thus, divergent views in assessing the facts can be harmonised by methodological considerations. In a similar vein, divergent opinions concerning research methods makes it necessary to appeal to general cognitive values.<sup>15</sup>

This hierarchical model certainly provides some insight into conflict solving mechanisms in science, but Laudan points out that it needs to be completed, allowing also for interaction from the inferior to the superior level or levels. Otherwise, conflicts concerning epistemological values in science would be without any solution,<sup>16</sup> whereas rational procedures exist, building on the inferior levels. For example, scientists banish “utopic values,” that is values for which “we do not have the foggiest notion how to take any actions or adopt any strategies which would be apt to bring about the realization.”<sup>17</sup> They also reject those epistemological values which are contrary to the best available scientific theories. Thus, around 1800, most scientists abandoned the empiricist insistence that theories should not include unobservable entities, as many branches had adopted theories using them. “This episode illustrates how the existence of broad agreement about which scientific theories are the best can play a crucial role in resolving differences between thinkers with respect to the goals they explicitly confess.”<sup>18</sup>

In order to account for the flexible interactions between theories, methods and values in scientific practice, it is thus necessary to abandon the hierarchical model in favour of a “triadic network of justification,” with mutual interactions between the three levels. Theories constrain methods, and methods justify theories. Methods exhibit the realizability of cognitive values, and values justify methods. And theories and values must harmonize with each other.<sup>19</sup> The direct consequence of the triadic network of justification is that there is no *a priori* fixed scientific method. That does not mean

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<sup>15</sup> Larry Laudan, *Science and Values: The Aims of Science and Their Role in Scientific Debate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 23–27.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–61.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 63, in particular illustration 2.

that “anything goes.”<sup>20</sup> Scientific practice includes feedback loops from theories to methods and goals. Thus fruitful theories confirm chosen methods, whereas sterile methods, which do not lead to greater knowledge, will be abandoned.

Recognising that the scientific method is not fixed once and for all frees us to explore possible limits to methodological naturalism. Alvin Plantinga has called Christian scholars to actively research domains where naturalistic science may not be well adapted. In his terms, Christians should join others in Duhemian science—that is, the part of science agreed on between Christians, atheists, and believers of other faiths. But they should also pursue Augustinian science, which relies more directly on Christian assumptions. In fact, Christian scientists have more options in front of them than atheists, when trying to understand human nature. In addition to naturalistic explanations, they can explore alternatives to monism about the human mind, and undirected evolution is not “the only game in town.”<sup>21</sup>

A particularly tricky topic, in regard to origins, is design. In the light of what we have seen, it will not do to exclude *a priori* any consideration about design from “science.” The decisive question is not if design is a science stopper, but if it has occurred. If design leads us beyond the field of standard natural science, then so be it. There is no reason why we should restrain ourselves to a predefined set of allowed explanations. The important question is rather whether design is a fruitful concept, if design theories enable us to make better sense of world we live in.<sup>22</sup>

Del Ratzsch has provided important epistemological work on design. While arguing for a place for design in science, he points out that the concept of design used by prominent advocates of Intelligent Design is confused. In particular, it is wrong to define, as does William Dembski design as the “set-theoretic complement of the conjunction regularity-or-chance.”<sup>23</sup> Design is not necessarily of this gap-like kind, and can be achieved by using regular and chance processes. On the contrary, design is essentially linked to the mind and is not reducible to non-rational categories. Ratzsch defines design as “an intentionally produced (or exemplified) pattern, where a pattern is an abstract structure that resonates, matches or meshes in certain ways with mind, with cognition.”<sup>24</sup> Because design is exhibited in patterns which appeal to the mind, it is possible for a rational being to recognise design, without having proven that no naturalistic scientific explanation exists.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Pace Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (New York: New Left Books, 1975).

<sup>21</sup> Alvin Plantinga, “Methodological Naturalism?,” in *Facets of Faith and Science*, vol. 1, ed. Jitse M. van der Meer (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 177–221.

<sup>22</sup> Loren Haarsma, who is no friend of ID, exhorts us “not [to] play the demarcation game,” but to evaluate design theories on their scientific, philosophical, and theological merits (“Is Intelligent Design ‘Scientific,’” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 59 [2007]: 55–62).

<sup>23</sup> William Dembski, *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 36.

<sup>24</sup> Del Ratzsch, *Science and Its Limits: The Natural Sciences in Christian Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 113.

<sup>25</sup> Del Ratzsch, *Nature, Design and Science: The Status of Design in Natural Science*, SUNY Series, Philosophy and Biology (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), *passim*.

### 2.3. Reductionism: A Favourite Form of Idolatry in Our Scientific Age

Human beings, as creatures, cannot claim to fully comprehend reality; their knowledge is limited. Thus there cannot be one all-comprehensive theory of reality. Different ways to approach reality have their own domain of application and validity. In particular, no scientific discipline can claim to provide a complete picture of what there is, nor should it be considered as the norm to which all other forms of rational inquiry should conform. There is no place for scientific (or physicalist, or biologist) imperialism in a Christian epistemology.

On the contrary, the ideal of formal knowledge leads directly to reductionism, with its effort to describe all the sciences with the model of mathematical physics:

The goal ahead is *unified science*. The endeavour is to link and harmonise the achievements of individual investigators in their various fields of science. From this . . . springs the search for a neutral system of formulae, for a symbolism freed from the slag of historical languages; and also the search for a total system of concepts. . . . In science there are no “depths”; there is surface everywhere. . . . Everything is accessible to man; and man is the measure of all things.<sup>26</sup>

But in fact, such a dream forgets what inspired modern science at its outset. Against the ambition of much of Hellenistic and medieval science to describe the *essence* of things, early modern science only tried to capture certain “affections” of objects, by adopting a specific point of view (kinematic, for example, in Galileo’s famous inclined plane experiments). A science aiming at describing the *nature* of things, is bound to seek the one, true definition:

The idea of a science, for an ancient Greek, was not only the idea of a science of *x* but the idea of the complete science of *x*. There could be only one science of a given thing: for unless it grasped the essence of the thing it was not a science of it, and one thing had only one essence. When that was discovered, all the “properties” of the thing could be deduced.<sup>27</sup>

Modern science owes its success to the rigorous application of restrictive research methodologies, appropriate to each scientific discipline. It is thus ironic that some seek to absolutise knowledge thus obtained. This is why Evandro Agazzi castigates “reductionism as the negation of the scientific spirit.”<sup>28</sup>

The more humble project of modern science is in tune with the biblical theme of the incomprehensibility of divine works (cf. section 1.1 above). Whereas it does not lead to general scepticism, it puts a hold on the strive for a “theory of everything.” Only God has exhaustive knowledge of the natural order, as he has created it. Human beings live in a world which is not of their own making, and must adopt multiple, limited viewpoints when probing reality. No human theory can exhaust the richness of creation.

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<sup>26</sup> Carnap, Hahn, and Neurath, “The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle,” sec. 2, italics original.

<sup>27</sup> Robin G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan: Or Man, Society, Civilization and Barbarism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1942), 253.

<sup>28</sup> Evandro Agazzi, “Reductionism as Negation of the Scientific Spirit,” in *The Problem of Reductionism in Science*, ed. Evandro Agazzi (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 1–29.

Why does reductionism exert such a strong pull on many philosophers and scientists? Reduction presents practical advantages: whenever we succeed in reducing one field of enquiry to another, our intellectual understanding and our technological mastery increase. But such pragmatic benefits do not justify *reductionism*, which absolutises such limited research programs and pretends to reduce all of reality to one basic level. Herman Dooyeweerd offers an explanation of reductionism as the innerworldly quest for unity, in the face of experiential multiplicity, when the unifying ground in the Creator is no longer acknowledged. Humans who have lost sight of the transcendent ground of all being, still retain nostalgia for unity. Rather than seeking it in God, they turn to visible reality and attempt to establish a unifying principle within it. But “by seeking itself and its absolute origin in one of these aspects [of experience], the thinking *I* turns to the absolutization of the relative.”<sup>29</sup> In opposition, those who find the unifying principle not in creation but in the Creator, are able to acknowledge all of reality’s multiform richness, without imposing a reductionist view on it or abandoning the hope for unified knowledge and falling prey to relativism.

Acknowledging reductionism as a form of idolatry will help to detect and resist ideological uses of scientific theories. Inside natural science, we can recognise plural methodologies, an insight we will elaborate in the next section. And beyond natural science, we constantly have to remind ourselves that science does not tell us all that there is to know about humans, an insight we will return to in the last section. In particular, we can evaluate biological findings on the grounds of their scientific merits, without adopting evolution as a worldview that claims to define humanity’s place in the world. In fact, philosophical and theological conclusions drawn from scientific theories are very often not as straightforward as many (on both sides of the debate) proclaim.

#### 2.4. An Ordered Web of Plural Sciences

As human knowledge is always partial, science can never give a complete picture of reality. This is true for science as a whole, and also for each specific discipline. Not one, but many forms of rational enquiry should be used when exploring human origins. But it is certainly not satisfactory to use different perspectives, one alongside the other, without trying to relate them. Personal knowledge provides an interesting starting point to make some progress in connecting the different perspectives.

Michael Polanyi outlined a hierarchy of knowledge which helps us to understand how different scientific practices are related: the proportion of personal implication varies in accordance with the domain of enquiry. The more the object of knowledge is itself of personal character, the more important the personal dimension of knowledge gets:

Facts about living things are more highly personal than the facts of the inanimate world. Moreover, as we ascend to higher manifestations of life, we have to exercise ever more personal faculties—involving a more far-reaching participation of the knower—in order to understand life . . . the logical gap between our comprehension and the specification of our comprehension goes on deepening as we ascend the evolutionary ladder.<sup>30</sup>

In the New Testament perspective, the natural order itself is of personal origin, as it is created by the *Logos*, the second person of the Trinity. Thus knowledge of it always has a personal dimension.

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<sup>29</sup> Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1975), 27.

<sup>30</sup> Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 347.



Nevertheless, quite in harmony with Polanyi's perspective, the degree of personal implication varies. Exploration of the material world implies less existential engagement than the understanding of those beings created in the image of the personal Creator God. Apprehension of the animal world requires an intermediate degree of personal involvement, as animals anticipate, in varying degrees, human personal capacities, without ever fully expressing them. The influence of metaphysical presuppositions and faith commitments will grow with the increase of personal implication, and become progressively more important as knowledge moves closer to the summit of existential engagement, that is knowledge of God.

The hierarchy of personal knowledge leads to an ordered web of multiple sciences, quite in opposition to scientific imperialism. In fact, we have to be very careful in the use of the word "science" itself. In its current meaning, it denotes natural science. Its singular form carries with it the pretension that there is one, and only one, science. But what is proposed here is a larger perspective, more in tune with the German *Wissenschaft*, or the medieval *scientia*. Rational inquiry is not limited to natural sciences, the humanities can also claim the honorific title of "science," without submitting to a reductionist methodology. Each human science can pursue the methodology best adopted to its research domain. In the context of Christian theism, the plurality of sciences does not lead to a fragmented vision of knowledge, as God has created a coherent world and has exhaustive knowledge of all reality. This leads to a unified, but nonreductionist epistemology: norms of rational inquiry apply everywhere, but there exist different forms of rationality.

### *3. The Construction of Scientific and Theological Knowledge Compared*

It is not appropriate here to offer a comprehensive account of how facts and theories relate in theology and how theological knowledge is achieved. But in order to assess the role scientific knowledge can play in theological constructions, it is worthwhile pondering some similarities and differences in the methods employed in both fields.

There are significant points of contact between scientific methods of inquiry and Christian theology, particularly Evangelical theology. Both recognize an ultimate source of authority: natural order explored by observation and experiment for natural science, Scripture for theology. In both fields, the construction of theories and knowledge from the ultimate source of authority is not a straightforward, inductive process. Background assumptions and communal paradigms play a vital role. In natural and human sciences as also in theology, metaphysical and faith commitments become ever more important, the closer questions get to matters of existential concern. These methodological parallels show that the common opposition between the scientific mind and faith is certainly over-simplistic.

Nevertheless, there are undeniable differences between scientific and theological practices. One decisive difference between the two inquiries can be found in the distinctive nature of its ultimate source of authority: natural revelation for science, special revelation for theology. Science is part of the cultural mandate that humanity received at creation, whereas theology is (predominantly) part of redemption history. This is not to deny the role of general revelation in theological theorizing. Different Christian theological traditions define more or less broadly the scope of natural theology; they describe in various ways the relationship between natural and revealed theology. But all agree that natural theology, only based on general revelation, does not encompass the whole field of theology. It does not even reach the most distinctive Christian features of it, for example knowledge of the incarnation and salvation by grace.

When reflecting on the distinctive nature of the ultimate sources in science and theology, several features stand out. They have important implications for the status of knowledge in both fields. First, as a result of sin, illumination by the Spirit is the prerequisite of sound theological work, whereas science only depends on common grace, which God grants to all humans because of his faithfulness to his creatures.

Second, the once-and-for-all of salvation in Christ implies the closure of the biblical canon, whereas natural revelation is on-going as it is co-extensive with (visible) reality. Thus on-going progress is to be expected in science, whereas theology has a special call to reflect and elaborate on the “faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Comprehension of this faith can deepen throughout history, but no new revelation is to be expected in theology, whereas science is constantly seeking new experimental evidence.

Third, God freely decides what he does in salvation and what he reveals of himself in Scripture, whereas humans are called to take care of and to subdue nature. Thus, the constructive contribution of the human researchers is more crucial and far reaching in science than in theology. Science also has ethical constraints on its experiments. Nevertheless, a more active, constructive part of humans is proper to its exploration, whereas in theology, observation is predominant over experimentation.

Fourth, a more far-reaching constructive implication of the researcher is also required because of the non-verbal character of natural revelation. Natural revelation is structured by the *Logos* (John 1:3; Heb 1:2–3) and thus accessible to rational discourse. Nevertheless, the path from non-verbal natural revelation to scientific theorizing is longer than the path from verbal special revelation in the Scriptures to theological dogma. The word is closer to reason than the world (although the world is not foreign to reason, having been created by the *Logos*).<sup>31</sup> Thus scientific knowledge is more provisional than theological knowledge.

#### ***4. Implications for the Role of Scientific Knowledge in Theological Accounts of Human Origins***

##### **4.1. Beyond the Fact-Value Dichotomy: The Illusion of Non-Overlapping Magisteria**

A very common conception of the relationship between science and theology considers that science leads us to a better knowledge of the workings of nature (the “how”), whereas theology is concerned with the meaning of nature and the values which should direct our action (the “why” and the “for what”). Building on the Kantian distinction between knowledge and faith, truth claims are restricted to natural science (modeled after mathematical physics), whereas values (aesthetic, teleological, religious) are not objects of knowledge, but belong in the realm of private convictions, for which it would be incongruous to ask for universal validity and public recognition. But once we recognize the personal character of all knowledge, we can no longer hold to the opposition between facts and values, inherited from the Enlightenment. Even in the hardest science, knowledge includes a personal dimension. Thus there is no strict dichotomy between science and humanities, and it would be wrong to exclude history, art, philosophy, theology, etc. from the quest for universal truth. The norm of truth finds applications

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<sup>31</sup> In personal correspondence, John Hilber pointed out a useful analogy: archaeologists examine monuments, iconography, and ancient texts. Although all three sources offer valuable and unique information about ancient times, texts provide a more direct access to history because of their verbal character.

in all regions of knowledge, even if different forms of rationality operate in each discipline. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of the “truth of the gospel,” which has to be actively preserved (Gal 2:5, 14).

Inspired by Augustine and Polanyi, the British ecumenical theologian Lesslie Newbigin has offered an epistemology which confesses the gospel as public truth in the context of Western culture shaped by the dichotomy between scientific objectivity, on one hand, and axiological as well as religious relativism, on the other. Newbigin developed his analysis of Western civilization in the context of mission. Having served in India for over thirty years, he was able to take a fresh look at Western life and thought.<sup>32</sup> He strived for a conceptual framework which would, once again, show the pertinence of the Christian message for all aspects of life. Relinquishing the Enlightenment separation between facts and values is key in achieving this goal. Taking into account the personal character of all knowledge provides the epistemological justification for this step.<sup>33</sup>

This better integrated view of knowledge shows that one common harmonization strategy between biblical and scientific data on human origins is misleading. Some authors distinguish, in the biblical creation texts, between a kernel of spiritual truths and a clothing relying on ancient science. Only the former carries any authority for us, whereas we know the latter to be factually wrong.<sup>34</sup> But limiting biblical authority to “matters of faith and life” is unsatisfactory theologically, epistemologically, and scientifically. Theologically: because the God who inspired Scripture is the Creator of all reality and thus can speak an authoritative word to all regions of knowledge.<sup>35</sup> Epistemologically: because the distinction perpetuates the Kantian dichotomy of knowledge and faith, which has been abandoned since the return of the knowing subject in recent epistemology. Scientifically: because, over the course of history, science has invaded areas which had seemed to be the preserve of religion, as for example the origin of the universe and life, or the question of whether humans have a soul. Thus there may be no territory from which science is completely and definitely excluded. Thus the idea of non-overlapping magisteria should be doubtful for theologians and scientists alike.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy is still pertinent when it declares the unrestricted authority of Scripture:

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, chs. 1, 2, 4; and Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth To Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> This strategy is favoured by Denis O. Lamoureux, who speaks of the “message-incident principle” (“No Historical Adam: Evolutionary Creation View,” in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, ed. Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013], 50).

<sup>35</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Theological Questions to Scientists,” in *Toward a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith*, ed. Ted Peters (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 16.

<sup>36</sup> The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978), Article XII, [http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI\\_1.pdf](http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf). As long as the Bible is the Word of God, all its affirmations are trustworthy. Thus it is not sufficient to exclude any “deceptive intent,” but any error *simpliciter* (*pace* Denis Lamoureux, “Beyond the Cosmic Fall and Natural Evil,” *Perspectives of Science and Christian Faith* 68 [2016]: 57n17, who only wants to exclude that God lies).

Over against a compartmental view of knowledge, we should remember that both science and theology give us access to interpreted facts. Models of human origins have to take into account data obtained from both sources. Obviously, the differing methodologies of natural science and theology are to be acknowledged. In particular, we should not expect biblical language to comply to modern standards of scientific accuracy, as divine revelation accommodates itself to the understanding of its recipients. But what Scripture has to say (or not) about human origins should not be limited by any *a priori* decision, but should emerge from paying close attention to the texts themselves.

#### 4.2. Exegesis before Science

As careful study of the biblical texts is decisive for the construction of theological accounts of human origins, it is necessary to address the question of what place the knowledge obtained in the natural sciences can legitimately occupy in biblical exegesis. Two pitfalls must be avoided. On one side, alignment with current scientific knowledge should not govern our exegetical choices, otherwise we would impose on the text knowledge that is foreign to its original context of composition and would ultimately place science above biblical authority. We would not take seriously the conviction that God revealed himself in history, to people living in a given cultural context.

On the other side, the fact that a certain interpretation is consistent with the scientific information should not incline us against it. Just because we might be tempted to look for concordist interpretations given the current climate of scientism does not mean that it is absolutely necessary to interpret the biblical text in opposition to scientific models. Rather, we should not worry too much about current knowledge (at least initially), but put ourselves in the place of the first readers and read the text with the eyes of those for whom it was originally written. This is why the choice between different interpretations of the beginning of Genesis should not be made in reference to the science of our time. It is important for the validity of the interpretation adopted that it was the natural understanding of the first readers. In this evaluation, scientific knowledge can intervene, but only to the extent that it was available to the human author and his first readers. What they believed about the world, as informed by the science of their time, is part of the background assumptions that help us understand the true meaning of the text. For example, the judge Jotham knew as well as we do that trees do not anoint kings or speak. It is legitimate to take into account this “scientific” knowledge in order to reinforce the interpretation of his story as allegorical (Judg 9:8–15).<sup>37</sup> Applied to the Genesis texts, this means that decisions on their literary genre should be taken on the basis of clues discernible by their original readers. In particular, those who prefer a literary understanding of creation stories (as I do myself) have the task of demonstrating that a careful reader at the time of writing could discern the non-literal meaning of the textual elements well before geology and biology were able to push anyone to reconsider the literal interpretation.

Responsible exegesis should strive to read the Bible texts in their original historical context if it takes seriously the incarnation of the Word in human history. But secondly, we must not avoid asking the question of the relationship to modern science; otherwise our faith would be schizophrenic. It is precisely because of the doctrine of creation that we cannot accept the separation between knowledge and faith. As we confess that God is the Creator of this world described by science, we cannot withdraw to an inner devotion and cultivate a spirituality of the heart, regardless of the best available scientific knowledge. The theologian will not avoid confronting the knowledge of the origins obtained from the

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<sup>37</sup> Henri Blocher, *Révélation des origines*, 2nd ed. (Lausanne: PBU, 1988), 20.

Bible with reconstructions of the past offered by the natural sciences today. But this comparison occurs at a later stage, after his own exegesis of the texts.

#### 4.3. Comparison with Scientific Data as External to Exegesis

If the comparison between our understanding of the biblical texts and current scientific knowledge comes after the work of exegesis, what should we do if our findings are conflicting? Is it ever legitimate to overturn our interpretation of the Bible owing to scientific considerations? The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy declares:

We . . . deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.<sup>38</sup>

This principle is sound. Otherwise we would place science above Scriptural authority and allow science to assume the role of *magisterium* deciding on the interpretation of the Bible. But the principle may be more complicated to apply in practice than it first appears, because our understanding of biblical texts is fallible. We are convinced that natural and special revelation do not contradict each other, as they have the same divine Author who is absolutely trustworthy. Therefore, scientific knowledge should be allowed to provide undermining evidence against certain conclusions drawn from our interpretation of biblical texts. Only scientific knowledge available to the human author can help us to establish the meaning of the text (as long as we reject a *sensus plenior* incomprehensible to the human author). Nevertheless, further scientific knowledge may be an extra-exegetical stimulus to reconsider the solidity of the currently accepted interpretation of the text. Scientific evidence should not control or constrain exegesis. Nevertheless, it could lead us to hold some understandings more tentatively, exploring alternative ways of interpreting the text.

There is some concern that the above considerations are a slippery slope allowing natural science to gain predominance over biblical teaching. The danger is real, and science should never be allowed to dismiss some understanding of biblical texts as impossible. It may only provide motivation for examining alternative readings of the text, where the choice between these options needs to be achieved on exegetical grounds alone. And we should also remember that not only science can undermine our confidence in some understanding of Scripture, but that central biblical teachings can also legitimately undermine our certainty that some scientific theories constitute true knowledge. What we understand about the world on biblical grounds will motivate us to re-examine scientific findings if they contradict what we have learned from special revelation. Science as well as exegesis is a fallible human undertaking.

#### 4.4. All That the Bible Teaches Is True, but the Bible Does Not Teach All Truth

The Bible is completely reliable *when* it speaks on scientific subjects: it remains to be decided when indeed it does. If evangelical interpretation cannot exclude that the Bible teaches scientific information, neither should it draw hasty scientific conclusions from Scripture. A truly respectful reading of the text will take all necessary precautions to understand its true meaning. Hence the strategic position of considerations on the proper interpretation of Genesis. The literal interpretation should not, incidentally, benefit from a favorable *a priori*: if the composition of the text suggests a non-literal genre, the literal interpretation is not more faithful than a literary interpretation, on the contrary. The decision

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<sup>38</sup> The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article XII.

for or against a literal interpretation cannot be made without patient study of each text, taken both on its own and seen in the broader context of the biblical canon.

When we study the biblical texts in order to find scientific assertions, we notice that the harvest is rather meager. Biblical language lacks the precision of scientific discourse. Most times, the Bible uses a language that remains close to appearances. When, for example, the psalmist says that the sun “rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other” (Ps 19:6), he is not giving a geocentric astronomy lesson, but simply describing what he sees—what every person sees, regardless of the astronomical model to which he adheres. Do we not continue, over 400 years after Copernicus, to speak of sunrise and sunset?

The ancient Near East knew many scientific texts (on arithmetics, trigonometry, astronomy, medicine). They follow specific literary genres. It has to be said that these genres are not represented in the Bible. The Bible mentions contributions that Solomon made that may be similar to the *Listenwissenschaft* of his time (1 Kgs 5:13), but it is telling that they are not included in the sacred text. The Bible is not a science textbook.

That the Bible uses ordinary language, without seeking scientific precision, is the necessary condition for it to be understood by people of all times and cultures. On this matter, Calvin employs the bold image of the stuttering of the Spirit. Concerning the fact that the story of Genesis mentions the creation of the “two great lights,” the sun and moon (Gen 1:16), while Saturn is bigger than the moon, he wrote:

The Holy Spirit had no intention to teach astronomy. Accordingly, as Saturn though bigger than the moon is not so to the eye owing to its greater distance, the Holy Spirit would rather speak childishly [in French: “bégayer,” that is stutter] than unintelligibly to the humble and unlearned.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, one should not lament the limited scientific data that can be derived from the Bible. This is the very condition of the universality of its message. That the Bible does not speak of dinosaurs—so be it! It does not mention Eskimos either—but for a rather mysterious reason it is the absence of dinosaurs that seems to cause the problem for modern readers. More seriously: let it be remembered that Evangelicals believe all that the Bible teaches is true, but do not believe it teaches everything.

#### **4.5. The Relevance of the Bible for Scientific Knowledge**

Why is it important to maintain the biblical truth about scientific claims if we find so little in Scripture? It is first a matter of principle, as we have seen, not to separate faith and knowledge. But its importance is not limited to maintaining a principle: the Bible’s teaching is significantly relevant to science. This is particularly the case for the presuppositions of scientific practice, which often remain unconscious: to do science, we must be convinced that nature is orderly, that man can understand this order and that it is worth understanding. All these beliefs underlying science are justified by the doctrine of creation. There are even strong indications that faith in the Creator contributed to the rise of modern science during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 5:184–85, concerning Psalm 136:7.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Lydia Jaeger, *Pour une philosophie chrétienne des sciences*, 2nd ed. (Cléon d’Andran: Excelsis, 2006), ch. 3.

In addition to underpinning several fundamental beliefs of science, does the Bible also contain precise scientific information? The answer to this question will depend very largely on which interpretation we adopt of the biblical texts and the delimitation of what we consider scientific. Without developing arguments, I will only mention three scientific claims that, in my opinion, the Bible implies: the temporal beginning of the universe, the common origin of humanity, and the fact that man is more than just his body (in traditional language, he is said to have a soul).

The list of scientific teachings found in the Bible is not, *a priori*, subjects for which we consider that the Bible should provide clear guidance. But it is to be worked out by diligent reading of the Word. Thus it will depend on the interpretations we are led to adopt and in particular on the conclusions about the literary genre of the Genesis texts. Needless to say, any teaching on scientific matters in the Bible must be located in explicit statements. We should resist any temptation to uncover hidden anticipations of modern scientific knowledge in scriptural texts using allegorical exegetical methods. The historical rootedness of biblical revelation prohibits the use of a similar methodology that is popular in some strands of Quranic apologetics.

#### **4.6. *Sola Scriptura*: The Bible as the Unique Source of Authoritative Teaching**

Any effort to change, complement or abandon truths revealed in Scripture on the basis of scientific findings flies in the face of the Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura*. Once again, this does not mean that natural revelation has no role to play in theology. In fact, special revelation presupposes general revelation. Salvation history takes place in the wider framework of world history, starting at creation. The incarnation was possible in so far as humans are created in the image of God (John 10:34–36). Scriptural revelation uses human languages; the very possibility of employing human words in order to signify spiritual matters is rooted in creation.

But we should be very cautious not to allow insights gained only from the observation of nature to control our construction of theological knowledge. Christians are warranted to hold certain truths on the basis of science alone. But such knowledge should not be considered part of church dogma. Thus it does not control church discipline. Consider two examples.

First, it is science, not the Bible, that teaches us that many diseases are caused by invisible agents (e.g., bacteria and viruses). There is no problem for a Christian to accept such knowledge, as we don't believe that the Bible teaches all truth. In certain cultural settings, it may even be an important task for the Church to teach this insight and related hygienic standards, in order to improve public health. Nevertheless, such an explanation of diseases should not be considered part of the Church's confession of faith. Divergent views on the origin of disease should not exclude anybody from fellowship.

Second, most (i.e., all but a very small fraction of) research biologists consider young earth creationism to be bad science. Evangelical and non-Evangelical biologists hardly differ in their stand on this matter. But that does not imply that rejection of young earth creationism should become an integral part of the Church's teaching on natural history in general and on human origins in particular. Differing views on this matter need to be tolerated.

#### **4.7. Natural Science Cannot Fully Comprehend Human Nature**

The epistemology defended in this article leads to the recognition of plural *Wissenschaften* (see section 2.4 above). This has specific consequences for knowledge about our origins. There are facts about humans which fall outside the competence of the natural sciences, but which we learn from other

disciplines. Psychology and sociology cannot be reduced to natural science, nor can philosophy and theology be discarded as providing no independent insights about human identity. This does not mean that natural science does not give us precious information about who we are and where we come from. But we cannot expect to know everything which is worth knowing about humans from this one source.

Probably the oldest and best-known non-reductionist family of arguments concerns the nature of rational thought. It can be traced back through Descartes to Plato's *Phaedo*. The backbone of the argument is the general truth that what there is (being) cannot determine what there should be (norms). Natural science aims at describing what exists. But rational thought is a normative endeavor. Affirming that something is true (or false) thus cannot be expressed in purely scientific terms. In the 20th century, versions of this argument have been elaborated (among others) by C. S. Lewis,<sup>41</sup> Karl Popper,<sup>42</sup> Thomas Nagel,<sup>43</sup> and Alvin Plantinga.<sup>44</sup>

The normative character of rational thought is not the only threat to a reductionist understanding of mind. There are other features of thought which are problematic, such as consciousness and intentionality. Theists are not the only philosophers to point out the difficulties of the reductionist program.<sup>45</sup> And the mind is not the only aspect of humans which that defies reductionism. Relational notions—such as trust, friendship, sense of transcendence—seem in their very essence to go beyond what natural scientific method can capture. Remember that one of the hallmarks of scientific practice is the repeatability of experiments. The outcome of an experiment should not be affected by which scientist performs it. But the essence of true relationships is that it does matter to whom we are relating.

The irreducible nature of humans has direct implications for any exploration of human origins. Natural scientific studies, important and fascinating as they are, will never tell us all there is to be known. In particular, there is no straight forward way to translate important philosophical and theological concepts into natural scientific ones. This is true for two very important notions for human origins. Consider first the image of God. Genesis 1 tells us that this is the distinctive feature of humans. But how (if at all) does the image of God express itself in terms of genetics or paleontology? What criteria should we use in order to decide that a certain hominid is “in the image of God”? Is it a genetic trait? Or (more likely) the mastery of language, moral responsibility, religious consciousness? Is “being in the image of

<sup>41</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (London: Fontana, 1960), ch. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Karl R. Popper, *The Open Universe: An Argument for Indeterminism* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1982), 81–84.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), argues that rational norms and moral values are real, but cannot be explained by standard natural science.

<sup>44</sup> He first proposed his “evolutionary argument against naturalism” in 1993. The final version can be found in Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 311–50.

<sup>45</sup> In addition to Thomas Nagel, Jerry Fodor is another vocal atheist in this respect: see his “Deconstructing Dennett's Darwin,” in *In Critical Condition: Polemical Essays on Cognitive Science and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 184–85. In his *The Mind Doesn't Work That Way: The Scope and Limits of Computational Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), Fodor argues that neither the computational model nor connectionist networks provide an appropriate understanding of the mind (and the latter less than the former). Even those atheists who sternly pursue the reductionist strategy often acknowledge that they do not know how to complete it; cf. David M. Armstrong, *The Mind-Body-Problem: An Opinionated Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999), 143; cf. pp. 6, 20, 111, 140.



God” a biological or a cultural trait? Or perhaps both? Or is it neither, but a covenant relationship which God established at some point in history? It is unlikely that any scientific progress will ever allow us to answer these questions with confidence. At best, we can construct plausible models.

Similar uncertainties surround a second key concept: moral and spiritual corruption. But here an additional difficulty raises its head. Not only is it hard to know how to translate such corruption into terms amenable to scientific inquiry, but according to traditional doctrine, it is the result of a unique historical event. In that case, what kind of evidence could paleontologists hope for, in order to confirm its occurrence? It is very unlikely that any unique event leaves paleontological traces, even if it is theologically decisive. But if we have learned the anti-reductionist lesson well, we know that this does not prove that it did not happen. We only have to look for other sources of knowledge, beyond science. To use Blaise Pascal’s famous words:

Know then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, weak reason; be silent, foolish nature; learn that man infinitely transcends man, and learn from your Master your true condition, of which you are ignorant. Hear God.<sup>46</sup>

If we do not allow Scripture to contribute specific insights on the origin of human corruption, we end up with a significantly different understanding of the human condition. Take as an example Denis Lamoureux’s reformulation of Romans 12:2 and 13:14: “Let Jesus be the Lord over our evolutionary past, encouraging our pair- or group-bonding inclinations and denying our self-preserving inclinations.”<sup>47</sup> His is the picture of two sets of instincts, both naturally present in humans because of their evolutionary past, one evil and one good (parallel to Jewish, Cherokee and Buddhist considerations).<sup>48</sup> But this misses the specific light that original sin throws on human experience: all aspects of our nature are created and all are corrupted by sin. This holds for pair- or group-bonding inclinations and for self-preserving inclinations. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with aiming at self-preservation, and pair- or group-bonding inclinations provide plenty of occasions for sinful behavior. Such a view locates sin in what humans are, thus inevitably leading to deny certain aspects of human nature their legitimate due. It is difficult to see how it can avoid, in the final analysis, deriving sin from the conditions of God’s creation work—and thus from God himself, as he supremely controls these conditions by his omnipotence.<sup>49</sup>

Theologians cannot work in isolation from the best intellectual knowledge of their time. Science certainly is an important part of this. But they should not allow science to silence specific insights gained from their specific source of knowledge, that is Scripture. As Jack Collins writes:

A major goal of the Christian story is to enable those who believe it to make sense of the world. If we abandon the conventional way of telling the Christian story, with its components of a good creation marred by the Fall, redemption as God’s ongoing work to restore the creatures to their proper functioning, and the consummation in which

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<sup>46</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. T. S. Eliot (New York: Dutton, 1958), 121 (§434), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18269/18269-h/18269-h.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> Denis O. Lamoureux, “Beyond Original Sin: Is a Theological Paradigm Shift Inevitable,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 67 (2015): 45.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 43–45.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Bavinck’s critique of evolutionary reconstructions of original sin in *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 3: *Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 46–50; in particular his critique of the proposition of F. R. Tennant, *Origin and Propagation of Sin* (1901/2).

the restoration will be complete and confirmed, then we really give up all chance of understanding the world.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> C. John Collins, "Adam and Eve as Historical People, and Why It Matters," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 62 (2010): 161.

# We Who Work with Words: Towards a Theology of Writing

— Pierce Taylor Hibbs —

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**Abstract:** This article works toward a “theology of writing” in order to inform and encourage Christian writers, helping them to consider not just *what* they write but *why* they write, and *in whose image* they write. The author lays a theological foundation for language and writing in the Trinity, then applies this to human writing. The aim is to show that writing is a Trinitarian, image-bearing craft by which we mark the world with our presence.

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We have a theology for almost everything: science, language, sociology, mathematics—the list goes on.<sup>1</sup> In light of the prevalence and ease of publishing on the web, which has given many pastors and theology students a voice in the broader Christian community, it seems apropos to work out a *theology of writing* as well. We should, in other words, be conscious of what we are doing when we write and how the craft of writing fits into our biblical worldview. In this article, I hope to address these questions and suggest some of the contours of a theology of writing.

We can start by noting that the call for a theology of writing comes not simply from a lacuna.<sup>2</sup> Just because we perceive a theological gap does not mean it should be filled. We *can* have a theology of writing, just as we can have a theology of almost anything. But *must* we have one? What is it about the craft of writing that demands a theology? The answer seems to lie in a single word: faith. As Lucretia Yaghjian reminds us, writing is an act of faith: “Faith in yourself as a writer; faith in the importance of what you are writing; faith that there will be an audience for what you will write; faith that your writing

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<sup>1</sup> For clear examples by one author in the Reformed tradition, see Vern S. Poythress’s work, which often addresses a God-centered approach to various disciplines, including science, philosophy, language, sociology, and mathematics. Also see Jeremy R. Treat’s recent article, “More than a Game: A Theology of Sport,” *Them* 40 (2015): 392–403, as well as Jeff Pollard and Scott T. Brown, eds., *A Theology of the Family: Five Centuries of Biblical Wisdom for Family Life* (Wake Forest, NC: NCFIC, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Note, however, some recent work on the craft of writing within theology, in Eric D. Barreto, ed., *Writing Theologically* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015); Jonathan Roach and Grisel Dominguez, *Expressing Theology: A Guide to Writing Theology that Readers Want to Read* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015). Works such as these deal more with how we can write effectively as theologians, rather than with what our theology of writing should be.

will contribute ultimately to the flourishing of those who read it; and finally, faith in the source of your desire to write.”<sup>3</sup> What’s more, faith always rests upon a theology—a system of interdependent beliefs—whether that theology is asserted or assumed. So, we might turn the question around: if faith is integral to craft of writing, why should we *not* articulate the theology beneath it?

Now, let me be the first to say that working out a theology of writing is ambitious. I do not hope to have the definitive word on this, nor could I, in light of the tradition of Christian work that has addressed the importance of language and communication.<sup>4</sup> However, I do hope to pick up the conversation once again and get it moving in a new direction. In what follows, my aim is to offer a theological underpinning for the craft of writing and to encourage Christian writers to consider not just *what* they write but *why* they write and *in whose image* they write. To begin the conversation, we need to revisit our theological foundation for language and writing in the Trinity. Then we can properly apply this to the craft of writing, answering the question, “What is it we are doing when we write, and what, theologically, propels us to do it well?” In light of the answers to these questions, I argue that writing is a Trinitarian, image-bearing craft by which we mark the world with our presence, and this calls us to image the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with our ideas and expressions, being conscious of the effect that those expressions have upon the reader.<sup>5</sup>

### 1. A Theological Foundation for Language

Before articulating a theology of writing, we must define language, since an understanding of the latter always lies beneath the former. So, what is language? Answers to such questions always end up introducing reductionism of one sort or another, but that does not mean the question should be cast aside.<sup>6</sup> It simply means we need to realize the depth of the water we tread when we provide an answer.

<sup>3</sup> Lucretia B. Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 17. Yaghjian rightly notes that this source of our desire to write is the Holy Spirit. Philip Eubanks presents a non-Christian understanding of this desire and inspiration to write as “a feeling of being guided by an unconscious force or an inner voice for which the writer is merely a transcriber.” Philip Eubanks, *Metaphor and Writing: Figurative Thought in the Discourse of Written Communication* (New York: Cambridge, 2011), 83–84.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Paul A. Soukup, *Communication and Theology: An Introduction and Review of the Literature* (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 1983); George H. Tavard, *The Vision of the Trinity* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), 119–43; William M. Schweitzer, *God Is a Communicative Being: Divine Communicativeness and Harmony in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 14 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 11–30; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (New York: Cambridge, 1995), 75–94; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998). The final two sources in this list, in my opinion, rely too heavily on speech-act theory, which tends to oversimplify communicative behavior. See Vern S. Poythress, “Canon and Speech Act: Limitations in Speech-Act Theory, with Implications for a Putative Theory of Canonical Speech Acts,” *WTJ* 70 (2008): 337–54.

<sup>5</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 369–70.

<sup>6</sup> See Vern S. Poythress, *Philosophy, Science, and the Sovereignty of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1976), 48–49. I am not claiming to have the only answer to the question “What is language?” I am, however, suggesting that we need to account for the Trinity in our understanding of language, and that answers to this question that ignore the Trinity are missing something quite basic to communication. For a brief exposition of my own definition of language, see “Words for Communion,” *Modern Reformation* 25.4 (2016): 5–8.

It is also critical that Christians be methodologically self-conscious when answering such questions. In other words, *how* we arrive at our answer is as telling as *what* we end up concluding. In this sense, it would be a mistake to offer a hodgepodge definition of language, pasting together pieces of secular linguistic, psychological, and social theories. Such theories undoubtedly have much to offer, but their adherents are prone to begin by assuming that a definition of language must focus exclusively on humanity. This assumption gets our theology of writing off on the wrong foot by ignoring our creaturely context.<sup>7</sup> Rather than beginning with humanity, we should begin with the Creator God himself, since all coherent and effective human behavior is analogous to and rooted in that of the Trinity, in whose image we are made.<sup>8</sup> That is our starting point for everything, especially for articulating a definition of language.

### 1.1. God as a Communicative Being

To answer our question, we can first examine the Trinity as a communicative being—a being who “speaks” to himself in three persons.<sup>9</sup> By “speech” here we mean the expression of content from one person to another.<sup>10</sup>

The persons of the Godhead speak to each other in the sense that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit eternally love and glorify one another. It is in this broader sense that I consider such expressions of love and glory to be divine speech or language. The Father expresses his love toward the Son and shows him all that he does (John 5:20). The Son expresses love toward the Father and obeys his commands to perfection, just as he instructs his followers to do (John 14:15, 21, 23). And the Spirit expresses love toward the Father and the Son as well. In fact, Paul calls love itself the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23), for the Spirit loves the Father and the Son and is the bond of love between them.<sup>11</sup> As Abraham Kuyper once put it, “[T]he Love-life whereby these Three mutually love each other is the Eternal Being Himself. . . . The entire Scripture teaches that nothing is more precious and glorious than the Love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father, and of the Holy Spirit for both.”<sup>12</sup>

We see this same divine “speech” expressed with the language of glory. In John 17:5 Jesus says, “Glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” In the

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<sup>7</sup> One thinks, for example, of Noam Chomsky’s definition of language as “a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements.” Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton, 1962), 13. Note how this definition does not get at the roots of what language is for, i.e., what its broader purpose is within the nature of created reality, and how it is embedded within a complex system of other human behaviors, all of which are ultimately rooted in the coherence of the Triune God.

<sup>8</sup> On speech as an analog of divine behavior, see Hibbs, “Imaging Communion: An Argument for God’s Existence Based on Speech,” *WTJ* 77 (2015): 35–51.

<sup>9</sup> Schweitzer has helpfully reminded us that for Jonathan Edwards, God is a communicative being *ad intra* and *ad extra*, and he created reality in order to “communicate himself.” See Schweitzer, *God Is a Communicative Being*, 11–30.

<sup>10</sup> I understand here that there is a clear difference between a divine person and a human person. The latter understanding of “person” does not apply in this Trinitarian definition of language because the Godhead is not comprised of three different beings, as the human understanding of “person” would imply. God is three distinct persons but one being.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Levering, “The Holy Spirit in the Trinitarian Communion: ‘Love’ and ‘Gift’?” *IJST* 16 (2014): 126–42.

<sup>12</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henry De Vries (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1995), 542.

preceding chapter, he proclaimed that the Spirit also glorifies him (John 16:14). Yet, Jesus longs for the Father to glorify him *so that he can glorify the Father* (John 17:1). And the reason the Son is glorified is because he gives life to all men who are dead in sins and trespasses (Rom 6:11). While our life is in *Christ*, this life is none other than “the Spirit of life,” who is the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:2, 6, 9). Therefore, we can say that the Spirit shares in the glory of the Son as life-giver.

This divine, perpetual exchange of love and glory is what I call *communion behavior*, which fosters unbroken unity, and this behavior is what I have in mind when using the word “language.” What’s more, because “there is—and has been from all eternity—talk, sharing and communication in the innermost life of God,”<sup>13</sup> language is a properly Trinitarian behavior.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.2. Humans as Communicative Beings

The same definition of language can be applied analogously to us, since we are created in the image of the self-communing Trinity (Gen 1:26).<sup>15</sup> God is a communicative being in the sense that the persons of the Trinity hold eternal discourse of love and glory with one another in uninterrupted fellowship. We are communicative beings in the sense that we are endowed analogically not just with the ability to hold discourse with one another, but with the necessity that we do so in order to commune with other persons: we need to communicate in order to foster communion with each other. God’s communication, by comparison, simply *is* communion. In this context of communication and communion—the drawing together of persons—human language is an imaging, communion behavior.<sup>16</sup>

I say “behavior” because language is not merely a phonetic or graphic vehicle of thought. It forms and shapes all of our interactions, in addition to our thought. In this regard, Kenneth L. Pike still seems to have provided the most helpful definition of language, one that gives attention to its expansiveness and integration with all else that we do.<sup>17</sup> Language, according to Pike, is

<sup>13</sup> Douglas Kelly, *Systematic Theology: Grounded in Holy Scripture and Understood in Light of the Church*, vol. 1, *The God Who Is: The Holy Trinity* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2008), 487.

<sup>14</sup> George H. Tavad writes, “To say, with the Gospel of John (rendered literally): ‘In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with the God, and the God was the Logos . . .’ is to place within God the structure of communicative discourse: ‘In the beginning was Discourse, and Discourse was with God, and Discourse was divine. . . .’ In the context of the Johannine Gospel, this refers to self-communication within God. . . . There is Discourse of God to and with humankind because there is in the first place Discourse within God, Discourse from and to God. God is Speaker, and Addressee, and Discourse between them.” George H. Tavad, *The Vision of the Trinity* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), 122. See also John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), 48.

<sup>15</sup> Kallistos Ware suggests, “Without the concept of communion it is not possible to speak of the being of God: so also without the concept of communion it is not possible to speak the truth about human beings.” He also notes, rightly, that “to be human is to be dialogic.” We are not truly human in isolation from others, so it is quite fitting to refer to human language also as “communion behavior.” See Kallistos Ware, “The Holy Trinity: Paradigm of the Human Person,” in *The Trinity: East/West Dialogue*, ed. Melville Y. Stewart, trans. Eugene Grushetsky and Xenia Grushetsky, SPR 24 (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 2003), 236.

<sup>16</sup> Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Speech and the Image of God: Biblical Reflections on Language and Its Uses,” in *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine: Systematic Theology at the Westminster Seminaries*, ed. David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 183.

<sup>17</sup> For God, we might link this pervasiveness of language to divine simplicity. If speech is one of God’s essential attributes (as John Frame has argued in his *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013], 522–23), then that attribute permeates and runs in harmony with all of his other attributes, e.g.,

a phase of human activity which must not be treated in essence as structurally divorced from the structure of nonverbal human activity. The activity of man constitutes a structural whole, in such a way that it cannot be subdivided into neat “parts” or “levels” or “compartments” with language in a behavioral compartment insulated in character, content, and organization from other behavior. Verbal and nonverbal activity is a unified whole, and theory and methodology should be organized or created to treat it as such.<sup>18</sup>

Language, in other words, cannot be neatly compartmentalized within the fields of phonetics and phonemics, psycholinguistics, semantics, or even semiotics.

Pike also noted that language is a behavior rooted in a unique observer of reality, a person.<sup>19</sup> Every person then works with hierarchical structures—phonology, grammar, and reference—to express particular perspectives or emotions.<sup>20</sup> Those perspectives and emotions can then be received, analyzed, interpreted, and responded to by others, thus fostering the communion that is at the heart of language.

Pike’s understanding of language brings two things to the fore: (1) the pervasiveness of language in reality and (2) its personal and communal nature. Language always has a communal goal. By that, we mean that any use of language is ultimately the expression of one person towards another (or towards many others).<sup>21</sup> There is no such thing as a purely propositional, impersonal act of communication.

Binding together what we have seen about language from the divine and human perspectives, we can say that language is a drawing together of persons made in the image of the Trinity, as those persons express content to one another. That is the answer to our initial question, “What is language?” Language is *communion behavior* that is structured upon the Trinity’s internal and external communication and is embedded in a web of other human behaviors. What we mean by that is this: language is a behavior we undertake to commune with other persons.<sup>22</sup>

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being loving, holy, etc. Concerning God’s simplicity and the relationships of his attributes, it is helpful to remember that those attributes are “essential qualities of God, which inhere in His very Being and are co-existent with it.” Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 46.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 26.

<sup>19</sup> Note again the difference here between divine and human persons. While divine persons do have distinct perspectives as such, they nevertheless exhaustively know one another, so there is no sense in which a perspective of one of the divine persons is isolated from the other two.

<sup>20</sup> On the relation of these hierarchies to the persons of the Trinity, see Vern S. Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 267–68.

<sup>21</sup> This, again, is rooted in the Trinity, as Vanhoozer highlights. “Whatever else it is, the life of Father, Son, and Spirit involves not only generative but communicative relations. . . . The social or conversational analogy of the Trinity suggests that the three persons relate in dialogical fashion. . . . God is the Father addressing the Son, the Son responding to the Father, and the Spirit overhearing.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 246. I am by no means here advocating for social Trinitarianism. This social analogy for the Trinity must always be balanced equally with the “consciousness model,” in which the Father is divine speaker, the Son divine speech, and the Spirit divine breath. The unity and distinctions in the Godhead are equally ultimate. We must ever guard against treating the distinctions at the expense of the unity or vice versa. See Cornelius Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and God*, ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 348.

<sup>22</sup> This is not an original insight by any means. Gadamer, for one, wrote long ago that “language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth*

## 2. A Theological Foundation for Writing

So, God uses language as a communicative being. The persons of the Godhead speak to one another in a language of love and glory, but where does writing enter the scene? Is God a writer?

We might start by reminding ourselves that speech and writing are integrally related. As David Olson suggests, “Writing systems provide the concepts and categories for thinking about the structure of spoken language.”<sup>23</sup> When this truth is paired with the fact that God specifically chose to use the written word to reveal his nature and will, it is not difficult to begin speculating, with biblical awareness, in what sense God is a writer. It all comes down to how precise we wish our definition of “writing” to be.

As is always the case, our definitions either expand or restrict our understanding, sometimes in good ways, other times in bad. By “bad” I mean that a narrow understanding can blind us to something that, when seen from a different perspective, is true and worthy of our attention. If we view “writing” purely as the putting of pen to paper (or fingers to keys), then God is not a writer. But if we view writing as the practice of an author who takes up an instrument and marks the world with his presence, then God has written everything.<sup>24</sup> We know, of course, that God speaks his thought in the Son—the eternal Word of the Father (John 1:1)—and in the hearing of the Spirit, so we have an obvious connection between God’s thought, his speech, and his awareness of that speech. Yet, in creation, the Son and Spirit transcribe reality with the creative thoughts of the Father so as to manifest a physical and spiritual world that is marked with the triune author’s presence. It is this definition of writing—the practice of an author who takes up an instrument and marks the world with his presence—that I would like to adopt here, first with reference to God, and then with reference to ourselves.<sup>25</sup> But we need to consider this definition in relation to a few popular models of writing, noting why we are departing from them.

For our purposes, we can briefly look at three different models of writing, as presented by Roy Harris in his work, *Signs of Writing*.<sup>26</sup> Each model focuses on the phenomenon of signification. First, there is the *surrogational model*, in which “what a sign signifies is explained in terms of its being a surrogate or substitute for something else.” For example, the word “human” substitutes or stands in for an actual human being, its real-world referent. This model is easy enough to understand, and we might think here of Plato’s *Cratylus* and other logocentric models of signification as taking this approach to writing.<sup>27</sup> Second, there is the *structural model*, which “explains signification solely in terms of relations between signs and other signs.” Sympathizers with this model would include Saussure and Derrida,

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*and Method*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 402.

<sup>23</sup> David R. Olson, *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 68. This rightfully pushes against the longstanding assumption that writing is merely transcribed speech. Writing is more than that, though certainly not less.

<sup>24</sup> As I mention later, I believe that the instrument God uses to mark the world with his presence is his very voice. God’s speech thus becomes writing when the content of that speech is actualized in time and space, thus *marking* reality.

<sup>25</sup> I realize that this is a fairly novel approach, as far as I can tell, since the leading theories of writing focus more on signification than on a broader, theological description of what we do when we write.

<sup>26</sup> The following introduction to writing models is taken from Roy Harris, *Signs of Writing* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 50–51.

<sup>27</sup> Logocentrism, in brief, “stands for the harmonious alliance between reality, thought, and language.” Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 60. For a discussion of how logocentrism has been attacked by deconstructionism and pragmatism, “undoers” and “users,” see pages 48–85. See also Wolterstorff’s critique of Derrida



among others. It was Derrida who claimed that the meaning of written text was a matter of *différance*—signs deferring to other signs in a never-ending labyrinth of signification.<sup>28</sup> If the surrogational model is in some sense vertical, allowing us to point to realities outside and above ourselves, then the structural model is strictly horizontal, precluding the possibility that we can get outside of our language system. Meaning, for this model, comes not from reality but from the systems of signs in which we find ourselves. Third, there is the *integrational model*, which “makes no assumption that the sign has any existence outside the communication situation that gives rise to it.” This is a Wittgensteinian, contextual model, in which “the spatio-temporal continuity of the object is irrelevant to its semiological role.” In other words, textual signs signify certain things in certain contexts; beyond those contexts, there is no promise that the signification will hold.

Now, our definition of writing as *marking the world with our presence* seems quite odd in the context of these models. In fact, it may seem hopelessly vague. The truth is, however, that such a definition not only allows for the mysterious nature of communication that is rooted in the Trinity, but integrates insights from each of the above models without committing to the underlying assumptions that such models carry with them. Those assumptions are important to leave behind, since they embrace what we might call a univocal approach to reality—i.e., an approach suggesting that the world and its component parts can be mastered and controlled with scientific precision in a way that parallels God’s own abilities. But pressing each of these models a bit further reveals the mystery that is oftentimes ignored, and the fact that none of them, on its own, encapsulates the phenomenon of writing.

Take the surrogational model, for example. How do scribbles on a page come to stand for an object or idea in reality? Is it purely a matter of convention that has been built up by generations of language users, or is there more to it? Is there someone controlling the conventions and the real-world referents so as to ensure that they correspond? Christians would be quick to respond, “Yes—God is sovereign over all of reality; he controls all of signification because he controls all that is signified.” If that is true, then signification is not ultimately a matter of human convention; it is a matter of divine intention, expressed through the decisions of creatures bound in covenantal relationship to the purposeful God who spoke them into being. However, this God is incomprehensible to us, so some mystery is always present in our signification.

Or consider the structural model. Signs certainly do refer to other signs; indeed, we define words by referencing other words, using what is known to define what is new. Yet, this web of lexical-semantic relations does not place us in a labyrinth of never-ending *différance*, as Derrida claimed. The relation of signs to other signs somehow brings us deeper knowledge of the reality that those signs signify. How does this happen? Why, when someone defines a word in terms of other words, do we conclude that we have a deeper understanding of the word in question? Is it an illusion? That may be a tempting response for skeptics, but it does not hold up practically. We all make decisions and act in certain ways based on these alleged “illusions,” and when we do so, we do not find that we have been tricked—that words are *merely* signs within a system; rather, we find ourselves better equipped to interpret experiences and phenomena that were once unintelligible to us. Yet, the relations of those experiences and phenomena

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in chapter 9 of *Divine Discourse*, and Clayton Libolt, “God Speech: A Conversation with Nicholas Wolterstorff’s *Divine Discourse*,” *Crux* 43.3 (2007): 24–25.

<sup>28</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “A Lamp in the Labyrinth: The Hermeneutics of ‘Aesthetic’ Theology,” *TJ* 8 (1987): 37–39.

to one another mirror the relations of words to other words, and it is the incomprehensible Triune God that governs those phenomena, so, once again, mystery is unavoidable.

Lastly, the integrational model, which highlights the role of context in signification, can never be exhaustively or exclusively followed because contexts are not isolated from one another. The meaning of a sign in one context is not, by default, completely isolated from its meaning in other contexts. In God's redemptive plan, all contexts are semantically and purposefully related to all other contexts, and so there is some level of commonality and intelligibility between contexts.<sup>29</sup> To know this commonality and intelligibility exhaustively is something privy only to the Trinity. For creatures, knowing what a sign means within a particular context does not bleed the context of signification dry of mystery; in fact, it brings attention to the mystery that we all too often ignore. Put differently, if we were to take the integrational model to extremes, we would be like spiders standing on an intricate and extravagant web. We might focus on only a single segment of thread, but we know that this segment is interwoven with the rest of web.

What I am pressing toward here is the truth that the mystery of the Trinity as the origin for language eschews reductionistic approaches to signification, for one, but it also encourages us to see various models as perspectives, each illustrating a part of the truth. The surrogational model highlights the power of language to refer to and access reality. Just as the Son as the Word of the Father communicates the creative and salvific thought of God to us by the power of the Spirit, so, analogously, we can continue to express and promulgate the truth of the gospel with reference to our time-space environment throughout history. Our words are dependent on the Word, and this means that our thoughts and intentions can be soundly represented in language because the God who used language to create reality is upholding all things "by the word of his power" (Heb 1:3). Language is the linchpin between reality and communication. That is ultimately why signs can refer to referents in the real world.

The structural model emphasizes the role of intra-linguistic relations, but such relations in the web of words draw us closer to genuine knowledge of the world and of each other. This, again, is rooted in the Trinity. The Son is the Son *of the Father* and is filled *with the Spirit of Life*.<sup>30</sup> We understand the Son in relation to the Father and the Spirit—the Word in relation to the Speaker and the Breath that produces it. By analogy, we understand our words by our use of them *within* a linguistic system, i.e., by their relation to other words.<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, the integrational model accents the importance of context. The ultimate context for reality is, in fact, linguistic and Trinitarian. Reality was spoken into existence by the Father, in the Son, through the power of the Spirit. It is that context that provides the stability and meaning for every human

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<sup>29</sup> "A fact in this world is what it is according to the function that it has to perform in the plan of God. Every fact *is* its function, and therefore every fact contains, in conjunction with all other facts, the covenantal claims of God upon man." Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1977), 115. "All facts of nature and of history are what they are do what they do, and undergo what they undergo, in accord with the one comprehensive counsel of God." Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 127.

<sup>30</sup> For more on this, see Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Holy Trinity: In the Beginning There Was Love*, trans. Roland Clark (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012), 65; and John of Damascus, *Writings*, The Fathers of the Church 37, trans. Frederic H. Chase (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 178.

<sup>31</sup> Vern S. Poythress, "Reforming Ontology and Logic in the Light of the Trinity: An Application of Van Til's Idea of Analogy," *WTJ* 57 (1995): 190.

linguistic context in history.<sup>32</sup> So, each of the models that Harris presents gives us a part of the truth, but none is wholly sufficient in itself. It is for these reasons that I am advocating for the broader definition of writing as *marking the world with our presence*. This definition can include what we have just discussed, and it has the benefit of emphasizing the analogous behavior of the triune creator and his creatures, which we will see in the next section.

### 2.1. God as Writer

With this definition of writing in mind, we can move on to consider whether or not it applies to God himself. We tend to think of God as a speaker, and rightly so, given biblical testimony, but I see no reason why we should not also understand God as a writer in a few special ways, when we re-examine our understanding of the relationship of speech to writing. Speech is beautifully ephemeral; it enters the slipstream of air via sound waves, crests in a syllable or point of emphasis, and then crashes to completion, thinning into silence. All of this, in the moment, binds us to the presence of another. Writing, on the other hand, can appear to be less personal, for we are taken away from the face of the speaker, removed in time and space.<sup>33</sup> But is this the best way to view speech and writing—to bifurcate them as behaviors? I do not think so.

What if we consider the relationship between speech and writing to be much closer, in terms of their “marking” of reality? Speech marks time but fades just as quickly as it impresses, living on in the memory of the hearer. Writing, as symbolic speech, marks space and lives on in physicality. In this sense, when we consider what God has spoken, namely, creation and special revelation (Scripture), we can still see the effects of that speech in a symbolic form around us, i.e., in creation and in the words of Scripture. In this sense, since we are dealing not just with the temporal effects of God’s speech, but with its spatial manifestation, we can say that God has written reality.<sup>34</sup> God’s instrument for doing so is his own voice. In the communicative power of the Trinity, sound brought substance, a reality that is exhaustively revelational of God’s presence. As the psalmist wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard” (Ps 19:1–3).

As a result of this truth, we must be careful not to conclude that God *only* writes, per se, in instances such as the giving of the Ten Commandments, when he used his finger to inscribe the law on tablets of stone (Exod 31:18),<sup>35</sup> or when he wrote on the plaster wall of the king’s palace in Daniel 5. This is true in a narrow sense, but, as we noted earlier, such a view betrays a definition of writing that can restrict our understanding. With the broader definition we have adopted—writing as marking the world with

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<sup>32</sup> Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 39–41, 251–58.

<sup>33</sup> This has been noted by many authors throughout history. Gadamer, to offer an example from someone whom we’ve already referenced, suggested that “writing is self-alienation.” Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 409.

<sup>34</sup> This wording is not meant to oppose the biblically explicit teaching that God “spoke” reality into existence, which I affirm elsewhere. Here, we are merely looking at another facet of how God’s creative activity can be articulated anthropomorphically.

<sup>35</sup> See Arthur W. Hunt III, *The Vanishing Word: The Veneration of Visual Imagery in the Postmodern World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 29–52.

personal presence—we can say that all of physical reality has been written by God because it bears his presence and continues to exist for his purposes.<sup>36</sup>

Put differently, because all things are essentially linguistic products of the Trinitarian God and mark his presence in the world, there is a sense in which God has written himself in everything. In the words of Dorothy Sayers, we might say that in God’s general revelation, he has written his “autobiography,” i.e., he has clearly revealed who he is (Rom 1:19–20).<sup>37</sup> There is nothing that exists in the world that does not in some sense testify to who God is, and nothing that is not written into his personal plan for history.<sup>38</sup> Creation and history are steeped in his presence because he has written them.

God has also written redemption in his special revelation. The repetition of the Greek word γέγραπται, “it is written,” both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, lends warrant to this conclusion.<sup>39</sup> The term (along with the participial form γεγραμμένα) is often used to express that what God has declared in Scripture must be followed for the redemption of his people (Josh 1:8; 8:31; 23:6; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Chr 23:18; Ezra 3:2, 4; Ps 40:7; Matt 2:5; 4:6, 7, 10; 21:13; 26:24, 31; Mark 14:21; and others). Such a usage implies the fixity that we commonly associate with the craft of writing.<sup>40</sup> Triune writing, we noted, brands an object of reality with its author’s presence (i.e., God himself).<sup>41</sup> And that presence does not evaporate. It holds. God is always present with his words, bringing them to fulfillment.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> For example, see passages such as Psalm 96:12; 98:8; Isaiah 55:12; and Luke 19:40. Reading such passages as being “purely metaphorical” treats the text as rather shallow. We must go further and explore what such anthropomorphisms indicate. I argue here that they reflect the presence of God and, in a covenantal sense, bear witness to what he has done and is doing.

<sup>37</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker* (New York: HarperOne, 1987), 89. For more on God as autobiographer, see pages 87–92. Here we are referring to general revelation, which does not bring saving knowledge of God through a Spirit-wrought relationship with Christ. The clarity of God’s revelation in nature and in the human conscience convicts us; it does not offer us salvation. The latter is the work of God’s special revelation in Scripture.

<sup>38</sup> Oliphint reminds us that “history can be properly defined only in light of what the second person of the Trinity has condescended to do—both in creation generally and for his people more specifically.” K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practice in Defense of Our Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 64. Sayers notes that in the incarnation, God wrote himself into history as the central character. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*, 88.

<sup>39</sup> There are over 90 occurrences of this form, many of which are meant to support an authoritative statement, such as Jesus’s use of the phrase in his responses to Satan during the wilderness temptation (Matt 4:4, 6, 7, 10).

<sup>40</sup> Hunt, supported by a great number of others in the Reformed tradition, notes that “the very notion of divine revelation, the communication of truth that cannot otherwise be known, demands a method of documentation and preservation that goes beyond orality, pictorial representation, dance, or smoke signals. . . . [only writing] possesses the objectivity and permanency needed to tell the old, old story.” Hunt, *The Vanishing Word*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> This approach runs directly against Derrida’s view of writing as “dead.” For Derrida, since all written words endlessly defer to other words, they do not really signify the author’s presence. They only keep us running ever through a semantic gauntlet of *différance*. See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 65–66. Vanhoozer opposes Derrida by affirming that “the linguistic elements mediate the author’s presence to participants in the covenant of discourse—to those with the faith that seeks textual understanding” (p. 240).

<sup>42</sup> See also Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 26, where he explains how “the word of God manifests the *presence* of God.” Both Frame and Poythress are discussing God’s speech. But that speech in time has been written down in space, so the principle still applies.

Going further in the connection between speech and writing, we cannot forget that speech is still present when we read written words. We speak when we read.<sup>43</sup> Western civilization has been so long removed from its aural roots that we often forget that reading used to be a primarily external and communal event, rather than an internal and individualistic activity.<sup>44</sup> We now think of reading in the latter sense, but the former sense is what undergirds it. When we read, we speak the words in our head. Recall the famous incident in book VI of *Confessions* when Augustine walked in on St. Ambrose staring at a book in silence.<sup>45</sup> Augustine was awestruck because he was mostly familiar with reading as a verbal practice. Today we might be awestruck by the opposite.

The point is that God is present with his written words when we read them because he still speaks through them. In writing, authorial presence lives on through time and space, and that is the beauty, the gift, of the craft.

In both creation and special revelation, then, we encounter God as the writer who marks the world with his personal presence.

## 2.2. Humans as Writers

As creatures made in the image of the Trinity, we follow suite, and so we have arrived at an answer to one of the questions from the introduction: what is it that we are doing when we write? We are marking the world with our presence. We have a God-given authority and control with written language that enables us to mark the world, in a manner analogous to God's ultimate control, authority, and presence in his word, which marks the entire cosmos.<sup>46</sup> God has written all of reality, including the story of redemption. We can mark that reality with our words and take our place in that story. What accounts for the uniqueness of our "marks" is our personhood. Just as the tripersonal God marks creation with his unique presence, so we mark his creation with our individual personality.<sup>47</sup> But more needs to be said about why, exactly, we are called to do so. This will get at another question from the introduction: what, theologically, is behind the call to write?<sup>48</sup>

## 3. *Writing as a Trinitarian Craft*

Marking reality with our presence and taking our place in the story of redemption is a matter of imaging the Trinitarian God. Briefly stated, the theological impetus for writing is grounded in what John Frame calls the "linguistic model" of the Trinity, which we have already referenced. Dorothy Sayers applies this model profoundly in *The Mind of the Maker*. Her work, I believe, provides the link between what writing is (marking the world with our presence) and in whose image we write. After revisiting

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<sup>43</sup> "What the reader is seeing on this page are not real words but coded symbols whereby a properly informed human being can invoke in his or her consciousness real words, in actual or imagined sound." Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 74.

<sup>44</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 73, 115–17.

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 6.3.3.

<sup>46</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 50–65; Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 30.

<sup>47</sup> See Yaghjian, *Writing Theology Well*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Note here that "the call to write" is referring to writing more generally, not directly to God's special call that the biblical writers record his truth, as in Rev 1:11, 19. The latter is related to our call to writing, but I consider it a distinct redemptive-historical event that would require separate treatment.

the linguistic model of the Trinity with regards to writing, I will engage with Sayers to consider how, specifically, we image the Trinity when we write.

Frame's linguistic model of the Trinity is by no means exclusive to him; in fact, it has been frequently referenced throughout church history, but Frame draws particular attention to it when discussing the Trinity. Simply put, "The Father exerts his lordship through speech (Pss 29; 147:4; Isa 40:26; 43:1; 62:2; 65:15; Eph 3:14–15). The Son is the Word spoken (John 1:1; Rom 10:6–8 [cf. Deut 30:11–14]; Heb 1:1–3; 1 John 1:1–3; Rev 3:14; 19:13). The Spirit is the powerful breath that drives the word along to accomplish its purpose (Gen 1:2; Ps 33:6; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21)."<sup>49</sup> There is a divine speaker, his divine speech, and the divine breath that carries it to the audience.<sup>50</sup> Given how we have defined writing, we can also say that, by the Son and in the Power of the Spirit, the Father writes reality. The Father is writer, the Son is his medium, and the Spirit is the effect of that medium.<sup>51</sup>

We can easily see how this applies analogously to human writers: every writer produces words that affect readers; every writer uses a medium that has a particular effect on the audience. We image the Trinity in this *process*. Yet, we also image the Trinity in the written *product*. How so? Sayers answered this question by introducing the concepts of *idea*, *energy*, and *power*, which we can loosely associate with content, expression, and effect. For Sayers, each of these concepts was linked to a person of the Trinity. The Father resembles the idea, for the idea is "passionless, timeless, beholding the whole work complete at once, the end in the beginning"; the Son resembles the energy, since the energy is "begotten of that idea, working in time from the beginning to the end, with sweat and passion, being incarnate in the bonds of matter"; and the Spirit resembles the power, because the power is "the meaning of the work and its response in the lively soul." She ends by noting that "these three are one, each equally in itself the whole work, whereof none can exist without other."<sup>52</sup>

While Frame's understanding of the linguistic model of the Trinity accounts for the *process* of writing, Sayers's application of this model accounts for the *product*: what the writer produces. By examining a piece of prose, we find that every writer has envisioned an idea, attempted to craft a felicitous expression for it, and predicted the corresponding effect on the reader. In prose, this is done almost constantly—not just on the level of larger discourse, but even on the sentence level. Every clause holds an idea that is expressed uniquely by the author and has specific effects on the reader. Writers and readers are often unaware of this phenomenon, but that is merely a testament to the truth that it is deeply embedded in the craft of writing. We only notice it when something goes wrong: when the idea is unclear or false, or

<sup>49</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 66.

<sup>50</sup> See also Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 19, 21, 31–33.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Ong objects to this, and Derrida would side with him, I think, for where the linguistic model of the Trinity is seen most clearly in John's Prologue, Ong insists that it is quite fitting that God *speaks*, rather than *writes* the Son, since "the spoken word is always an event, a movement in time, completely lacking in the thing-like repose of the written or printed word." Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 74. He goes on to imply that the spoken word is active and living while the written word is dormant and dead (based on what seems to be poor exegesis of 2 Cor 3:6). But Ong seems to have forgotten that as he writes he is affirming and exemplifying the dynamicity of written words. And if 2 Corinthians 3:6 is telling us that written language is dead (or "kills"), then what are we to do with Hebrews 4:12—"For the word of God is living and active . . ."—which clearly references the *written* words of Scripture? The truth is that both spoken and written language depend on an audience for the "action," whether that audience is immediately present or two decades removed. Conscious engagement—that, at least in part, is what accounts for the "active" nature of communication, whether spoken or written.

<sup>52</sup> Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*, 37–38.

the expression is ambiguous or inappropriate, or when the effect is not what the writer intended or what the reader expected.<sup>53</sup> Each of Sayers's concepts warrants further attention.

### 3.1. Content (Idea)

All writers are interpreters of experience.<sup>54</sup> That means that whatever interpretation a writer has, be it eccentric or shared by the majority, it must be clearly identified. In other words, a writer must *have* something to say, i.e., be able to articulate his or her interpretation of a particular experience or set of experiences. This often takes the form of a thesis or main point, which “strongly influences the organization of his discourse and the kind of information that he includes.”<sup>55</sup> The thesis is like a promise to the reader, creating expectations that, when left unfulfilled, can make readers frustrated or confused. A faulty or obscure thesis is, on the writer's part, a failure to felicitously image the Father, whose unified purpose (idea) to create and subsequently redeem creation is clearly developed throughout Scripture. The purpose of creatures, what the WSC calls our “chief end,” is “to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”<sup>56</sup>

Having a unifying idea in a piece of prose, then, is not a hidebound maxim of dated English teachers; it is a timeless means of providing focus, and thus of imaging the Father, who has a singular focus in creating and redeeming the cosmos.

### 3.2. Expression (Energy)

Once that unity has been clearly established in the writer's mind, he or she truly enters the richness of language, which is ultimately rooted in the Son. “The Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the standard for the analogically related word of God to us. The word to us is the standard for the analogically related words of human beings to one another.”<sup>57</sup> Put differently, the eternal Word is the basis of God's special revelation, and God's special revelation—his speech to us—is the basis for our use of words with each other. The Word who is eternally spoken by the Father manifests the Father's thought, just as our language manifests our thought.<sup>58</sup> And just as the Father eternally chooses to speak the Word, and through him to create and uphold reality, we, analogously, choose words that should create and uphold the thoughts and sentiments we wish to convey to the reader. In our use of words and expressions, we seek to image the Son as the Word of the Father.

Yet, what does this look like practically? Every language is both broad and deep, not merely in terms of lexical choice but also in terms of literary devices, organizational patterns, tone of voice, and so on. Writers will never encounter the problem of not having an option for expression; writers always have

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<sup>53</sup> These are instances of what Sayers calls “scalene trinities.”

<sup>54</sup> Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike, *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>56</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 1.

<sup>57</sup> Vern S. Poythress, “Reforming Ontology and Logic in the Light of the Trinity: An Application of Van Til's Idea of Analogy,” *WTJ* 57 (1995): 188.

<sup>58</sup> Geerhardus Vos suggests that the Son as the Word signifies the Son's rationale “inherent in the speaker,” as being the “imprint of [the speaker's] personal existence,” and as tied to the speaker by living on in the speaker's consciousness. Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, *Theology Proper*, ed. and trans. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 57.

choices. What separates an ordinary writer from an extraordinary one—a writer who does not image the Son from a writer who does—is the ability to choose well. By “well,” I do not mean that a writer’s diction is so elevated that the reader must hold a dictionary in one hand and the author’s essay in the other. Christopher Hitchens was a very gifted writer, but his word choice too often got the better of him in this regard. For example, the point of a description is to bring to the reader’s attention certain cutting details or features of whatever or whomever is being described. Descriptions offer a clear, concrete image, in a manner ultimately analogous to the way in which the Son is offered to us as the exact imprint of the Father’s nature (Heb 1:3). But what image does the reader get from Hitchens’s description of Saul Bellow: “a somewhat rakish fellow, sharply dressed and evidently fizzing with moxie, who meets the world with a cool and level gaze that belies the slight impression of a pool shark or racetrack con artist”?<sup>59</sup> One is not quite sure which word to look up first, and putting them all together does not exactly offer a concrete portrayal of the person. The image, in other words, is still fuzzy. Sayers might classify this as a “Son-ridden” problem, a case in which the expression is embellished to the point where the content is hurt and the power of the message is lost.<sup>60</sup> In other words, the writer is not faithfully imaging the Son.

This might be one of the many reasons why people still rank George Orwell among the greatest English prose writers of all time. He knew when to dress up his prose and when to leave it casual attire, and he often left the reader with concrete imagery. Consider his description of himself among the poor and homeless of northern England during the early 1930s: “Littered on the grass, we seemed dingy, urban riff-raff. We defiled the scene, like sardine-tins and paper bags on the seashore.”<sup>61</sup> “Sardine-tins and paper bags” is concrete enough to give readers something to grasp, and we can easily understand what he is saying: the poor and homeless were seen as social trash on the landscape of the city. Such imagery evokes our sympathy as readers by giving us an image to work with, and thus effectively shaping our perspective.<sup>62</sup> Just as we see the Father through the Son, we can see Orwell’s idea through the words.

### 3.3. Effect (Power)

Orwell’s words also have an effect on us in several ways, and we may not be conscious of some of them. We can draw on language theory in order to notice and better understand these effects. Speech-act theory, for example, would draw our attention to the effect that Orwell’s description (illocution) has on us (perlocution). His comparisons between people and garbage, for instance, may evoke in the reader a sense of sympathy or injustice.<sup>63</sup>

However, if we are to truly appreciate the rich effect that Orwell’s words have on us, we must go deeper; we must pay attention to the immediate and broader context of the sentences we have quoted:

<sup>59</sup> Christopher Hitchens, *Arguably: Essays* (New York: Twelve, 2011), 62.

<sup>60</sup> Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*, 164.

<sup>61</sup> George Orwell, “The Spike,” in *George Orwell: Essays* (New York: Everyman’s Library, 2002), 8.

<sup>62</sup> Note here the close bond between expression and effect, which is rooted in the bond between the Son and the Spirit.

<sup>63</sup> I am deliberately choosing here to engage with the language theory of Kenneth Pike rather than with speech-act theory. While the latter can be helpful in bringing our attention to the perlocutions of a writer’s illocutionary acts, it does not sufficiently account for the rich context of language in terms of grammar, phonology, and reference. For an introduction to speech-act theory, see J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975). For a contemporary use of speech-act theory in a theological setting, see Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*.



“Littered on the grass, we seemed dingy, urban riff-raff. We defiled the scene, like sardine-tins and paper bags on the seashore.” These sentences can be considered a unit of language, their general purpose being to describe Orwell and his company through a comparison. Yet, like all sentences, this group of sentences is part of a larger unit of discourse—a paragraph.<sup>64</sup> Specifically, they end the first paragraph of Orwell’s essay, and that context is important in affecting us as readers. Immediately before the sentences just quoted, we read, “Overhead the chestnut branches were covered with blossom, and beyond that great woolly clouds floated almost motionless in a clear sky.” Such a contrast between descriptions! That contrast affects the way in which his final sentences in the paragraph strike us.

More broadly, we know that there are many paragraphs in this essay, and each is interconnected with the others. The effect that this unit of language has on us is connected to the effect that his other descriptions have on us. For example, in the second paragraph of the essay, he describes one of the officers as “a tartar, a tyrant, a bawling, blasphemous, uncharitable dog.” Later in the essay, he describes another character: “Old ‘Daddy,’ aged seventy-four, with his truss, and his red, watering eyes: a herring-gutted starveling, with sparse beard and sunken cheeks, looking like the corpse of Lazarus in some primitive picture.” The effect of Orwell’s description in the first paragraph is related to the effect that these other descriptions have on us. Each of them brings us closer to him, drawing us in to the sullied scene of Britain’s down-and-out crowd of the 1930s. The broader effects of each of his descriptions are related to more specific effects that are tied to each description, such as sympathy or revilement or compassion.

More narrowly, we can look at the effect that Orwell’s sentences have in terms of their grammar, phonology, and reference.<sup>65</sup> Each of these areas—or hierarchies—contributes something unique to the effect that these sentences have on us. We need not go into detail here. We can simply note an example of the phonology of his sentences, namely the rhythm and consonance he employs. We don’t often think about rhythm when we read, but the latter part of Orwell’s second sentence has a cadence to it. “Sar-dine tins and pa-per bags”: a pair of two-syllable + one-syllable word combinations. The pattern makes the prose more memorable. That is to say, the sound of the words has a mnemonic effect on us. As for consonance, note the repetition of “d” and “r” sounds in the first sentence: **L**itte**R**ed on the **g**Rass, we seemed **d**ingy, **u**Rban **R**iff-**R**aff. The repetition of consonant sounds complements the rhythm and impresses on the reader’s mind the sound patterns of English. These sound patterns affect us by highlighting the relations we can make between words not simply in light of their meaning, but in light of their sound.

Now, theologically, we must remember that the effects and power of Orwell’s words are grounded in the effect and power that the Spirit has in applying the work of the Word—in creation and redemption. The reality that surrounds us, written by the Word of the Father, profoundly impresses and shapes us as the Spirit works through it to reveal the omnipresence of the divine Writer. Analogously, the words and expressions a human writer crafts are empowered to reflect the writer’s presence. This empowered presence of the writer—and the power of the message itself—leads to clear and effective communication.

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<sup>64</sup> “No [linguistic] unit relevant to human beings exists without its having a relation to a system of interlocking types of context. The units exist in a vast matrix of n-dimensional intersecting relations within which the specific unit is distributed and which comprise our universe with our cognitive frames of reference.” Kenneth L. Pike, *Linguistic Concepts: An Introduction to Tagmemics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 135.

<sup>65</sup> See *Ibid.*, 69–106.

Yet, how do human writers know when this has happened? The true but painful answer is that writers only know this based on *how readers respond*. Readers are not an infallible measure of a writer's expressive abilities, but they are the most important critics a writer has.

Extraordinary writers are prophetic of reader responses.<sup>66</sup> They work ahead of the reader, gauging how a turn of phrase or idiom will sound to a reader's ear, measuring the impact of the unavoidable associations that particular words and phrases have for a particular audience.<sup>67</sup> While it is certainly true that no one knows a person's thoughts except that person's indwelling spirit (1 Cor 2:11), it is also true that writers are remarkably gifted by the Holy Spirit himself to empathize with the inner workings of the reader. In sum, writers faithfully image the Spirit when their words are empowered and effective within the hearts and minds of their readers.

What we have seen thus far is that writers mark the world with their presence by having a unifying idea (content/idea), embodying that idea felicitously (expression/energy), and doing so in a way that produces an intended effect on the reader (effect/power). This parallels the Father's unifying idea of creation and redemption (for his own glory), according to which he has written reality through his Son in the power of the Spirit.

Yet, there is still more to say. Up to this point, I have intentionally left one of the puzzle pieces out: the Trinitarian principle of *coinherence* or *perichoresis*, which underlies what we have just discussed. *Perichoresis* refers to the intimate union of the divine persons, such that "each is in each, and all are in each, and all are one."<sup>68</sup> This concept applies in a limited sense to the work of writers, as Sayers has playfully expounded.

Content, expression, and effect are bound up together, and each is equally important. We make distinctions between them, but always with a sense that they should coinhere with one another. A writer who has weighty ideas but expresses them in drab prose is not exemplifying coinherence (expression and effect are hurt in the process), and readers will suffer.<sup>69</sup> Likewise with a writer whose prose seems sharp but whose ideas are nebulous or disheveled. The content (idea), expression (energy), and effect (power) must be equally but distinctly present.<sup>70</sup> When one is lacking, the whole piece of writing suffers, resulting in a "scalene trinity."<sup>71</sup> Thus, writing is also a matter of *perichoretic* imaging. This gives credence to what we have been saying all along: the craft of writing is thoroughly Trinitarian. It is built upon and draws its effectiveness from the relationships and work of the persons in the Godhead.

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<sup>66</sup> Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*, 122.

<sup>67</sup> Here, Sayers helpfully reminds us that associations are not an evil, as if writers should purge their prose of any wording that might stir up associations in the reader's mind (that would be impossible anyway). Rather, "words and phrases become charged with Power acquired by passing through the minds of successive writers." *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* 6.10.

<sup>69</sup> This can be seen as an "image-bearing" problem. When we do not account for coinherence in the concepts we have presented, we are not really imaging the Trinity in our communicative activity. Sayers provides an insightful and humorous discussion of the Trinitarian heresies that writers can fall into. See Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*, 149–78.

<sup>70</sup> Or, as Sayers puts it in creedal language, they must be consubstantial and coequal.

<sup>71</sup> It seems that in our day, academics struggle most with the scalene trinity of being "Father-ridden," in the sense that they push ideas onto readers without giving enough thought to expression (Son) and effect (Spirit).

#### *4. Conclusion*

We set out towards a theology of writing, and I believe we have moved in that direction. We have found that writing is a thoroughly Trinitarian, image-bearing craft with divine roots and untold human potentialities. Writers are marking the world with their presence in a manner analogous to the way in which the Trinitarian God has marked the world with his presence in physical reality.

If Christian writers are imaging such a creative and powerful communicative being whenever they put pen to paper, then we must constantly remember the gravity of our calling. Writing is not the popularly assumed “vehicle for thought” that most academics consider it to be. It is much more. In writing, we mark the world that is marked by the Trinity. This in itself should draw out not merely our enthusiasm, but also our sobriety, our attentiveness, and, perhaps above all else, our sense of service. For the Father sent his Word in the Spirit not so that he might be served, but so that he might serve and offer himself as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; cf. John 13:13–17). God gave his Word for the world; the least we can do in attendant response is give our words, ourselves, to our readers by striving to faithfully image the Triune God in our prose.

# The “Same God Question”: Why Muslims are Not Moving Toward Christians

— Fred Farrokh —

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**Abstract:** Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God? This “Same God Question” has again captured the attention of the Christian public. Increasing numbers of Christians are now responding in the affirmative, especially as they seek amicable relations with Muslims. This article looks at this age-old question from the Islamic point of view, noting that Muslim scholars have not mirrored their Christian counterparts in moving toward theological reconciliation. Indeed, the foundational teachings and example of Muhammad restrict them from doing so, thus creating a dynamic of “one hand clapping” in interfaith discourse. While Muslim scholars have largely minded their Unitarian orthodoxy, Christians have been much more lax in standing for their belief in one loving God, eternally co-existent as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Encouragingly, the Triune God of the Bible is now drawing Muslims to himself in unprecedented numbers. Christians may enhance this movement by unashamedly proclaiming this unique God to Muslims.

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Christian missiologists are split over whether Christians and Muslims worship the same God. In response to the firestorm over this topic which recently engulfed Wheaton College,<sup>1</sup> 23 missiologists contributed short essays on this question. These responses were published in January 2016 by the Evangelical Missiological Society (EMS) in its *Occasional Bulletin*.<sup>2</sup> A reading of this bulletin indicates there was no consensus among the contributors regarding the basic “Same God Question”

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<sup>1</sup> The controversy at Wheaton centered on a statement made by a faculty member that Muslims and Christians indeed worship the same God. The Wheaton administration then needed to ascertain whether this statement constituted a violation of its evangelical statement of faith. For more information see Bob Smietana, “Gleanings: Wheaton College Suspends Hijab-Wearing Professor After ‘Same God’ Comment,” *Christianity Today* (December 2015), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/december/wheaton-college-hijab-professor-same-god-larycia-hawkins.html>.

<sup>2</sup> *Occasional Bulletin* Special Edition (2016), [https://www.emsweb.org/images/occasional-bulletin/special-editions/OB\\_SpecialEdition\\_2016.pdf](https://www.emsweb.org/images/occasional-bulletin/special-editions/OB_SpecialEdition_2016.pdf).

(SGQ).

This article seeks to address the SGQ in greater detail, particularly from the perspective of Muslims. The introduction to this article considers the relational issues between Christians and Muslims that have set the backdrop for the interfaith theological discourse. My thesis states that Muslim scholars are not moving toward Christian scholars regarding the SGQ; indeed, they are theologically restricted from doing so.

Two recent interfaith efforts initiated by Muslims themselves—the 2007 “A Common Word between Us and You,” and the 2016 “Marrakesh Declaration”—provide excellent data points for assessing Muslim sentiments regarding contemporary interfaith dialogue, in general, and the SGQ, in particular. These data points indicate that Muhammad’s own non-inclusive, non-tolerant view toward other religions continues to influence his followers today. However, Christian scholars seem slow to appreciate the rigidity of the theological constraints upon their Muslim counterparts. The article concludes with encouraging news that the Triune God is drawing Muslims by the Holy Spirit, in order that they might believe in the Son of God, and hence become children of a Heavenly Father they have not previously known.

### *1. Can Theological Reconciliation Foster Relational Reconciliation?*

The theological movement of Christian scholars toward the Muslim position may not be fully and consciously based on theology, but on a desire for improved relations. Due to the centuries of hostility between Christians and Muslims, many peace-loving Christians would gladly trade much for peaceful co-existence—that elusive biblical *shalom*. This desire is not wrong. Yet this desire, even if it is subconscious, cannot be realized through theological acquiescence.

Even the SGQ itself is rendered in a manner that elevates the human element of things: Do *Muslims* and *Christians* worship the same God? This only breeds more questions, some of which were addressed by missiologists in the *EMS Occasional Bulletin*. Which Muslims? Which Christians? What is meant by *worship*? The EMS query constitutes an anthropocentric version of the SGQ. It could be better rendered theologically: *Is the God presented in the Qur’an the same as the God presented in the Bible?*

In the *EMS Occasional Bulletin*, I argued that an important question underlies the SGQ, and ultimately requires a negative answer to the SGQ. This underlying question posits: “Since the Bible teaches that Jesus is God and since Islam teaches that Jesus is not God, then how is it possible that Christians and Muslims worship the same God?”<sup>3</sup>

Having given this enhanced rendering of the SGQ, this article turns to an evaluation of the SGQ from an Islamic perspective.

### *2. Evidence that Muslims are not Moving toward Christians on the SGQ*

Muslims are not moving toward Christians on the SGQ, because to do so would necessarily require them to abandon the foundational tenet of Islam—*Tawhid* (Divine Unity). Any expansion of the Islamic view of the Godhead toward biblical Trinitarianism would undercut the prophethood of Muhammad,

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<sup>3</sup> Fred Farrokh, “The Question Underlying the ‘Same God Question,’ with Missiological Implications Thereof,” *Occasional Bulletin* Special Edition (2016): 11.

and thus collapse the entire Islamic theological edifice. Muslims, realizing this reality, have refrained from theological reconciliation with Christians as it relates to the Godhead.

## 2.1. A Review of Recent Interfaith Initiatives by Muslims

The global Islamic *umma* (community) features ethnic and sectarian diversity. As a rule, Muslim religious scholars (the '*Ulama*') take theology seriously. Their ranks include many prolific writers. While a wide-ranging theological survey exceeds the scope and space allowed by this format, several recent interfaith initiatives by teams of prominent Muslim scholars provide a good basis for analysis. These include the famous "A Common Word between Us and You" initiative of 2007<sup>4</sup> and the "Marrakesh Declaration" of 2016.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.1.1. "A Common Word between Us and You"

On 13 October 2007, 138 Muslim scholars presented the document, "A Common Word" to the Christian world. The full document begins with an immediate affirmation of the non-negotiable prominence of Muhammad as the basis for belief in God:

The central creed of Islam consists of the two testimonies of faith or *Shahadahs*, which state that: *There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God.* These Two Testimonies are the *sine qua non* [indispensable characteristics] of Islam. He or she who testifies to them is a Muslim; he or she who denies them is not a Muslim.<sup>6</sup>

Though this document highlights values cherished by Muslims and Christians alike, such as love of God and love of neighbor, the Muslim scholars nevertheless fail to hold out an olive branch to their Christian counterparts regarding the SGQ. Instead, they immediately follow their initial insistence on acceptance of Muhammad with one of his *hadith* statements that Allah "has no associate,"<sup>7</sup> a clear admonition against belief in the Sonship of Christ and the Trinity. (These statements which emphasize that Allah has no partner serve a polemic purpose, and therefore do not create an environment of mutual respect. A reciprocal introduction from Christians would be to preface an inter-faith document for Muslims with multiple verses regarding "false prophets.")

The authors of "A Common Word" frame their appeal around the key Qur'anic verse, *Al 'Imran*, 3:64, from which the document gets its name:

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him; and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him).<sup>8</sup>

With the command "Come!" this verse clearly commands Christians to move away from their cherished and long-standing belief in the Trinity. The verse reiterates that Christians must ascribe no

<sup>4</sup> *A Common Word Between Us and You: 5-Year Anniversary Edition*, MABDA English Monograph Series 20 (Amman: The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2012), <http://rissc.jo/docs/20-acw/20-ACW-5.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org/marrakesh-declaration.html> (Accessed March 1, 2016.)

<sup>6</sup> *A Common Word Between Us and You*, 55.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–56, citing Sunan al-Tirmidhi, *Kitab Al-Da'awat*, Bab al-Du'a fi Yawm 'Arafah, Hadith no. 3934.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 40, 54, 69.

partners or associates to Allah. The word used in 3:64 for ascribing partners with Allah is a literal cognate of *shirk*, the unpardonable sin in Islam according to Sura 4:116. “A Common Word” finishes by again quoting Sura 3:64 and admonishing Christians not to attribute partners with Allah. The Muslim scholars conclude invitingly: “Let this common ground be the basis of all future interfaith dialogue between us.”<sup>9</sup>

Throughout “A Common Word,” the Muslim scholars quote Bible verses that they reinterpret in a Unitarian fashion. Nowhere in the document do they affirm that the Trinitarian understanding of God is acceptable. In fact, they continually use the Islamic honorific, *alaihi as-salaam* (in Arabic script) after the name of Jesus Christ, to emphasize they are referring to the Islamic Jesus, who is neither Lord, God nor Savior. “A Common Word,” therefore, serves primarily as a theological thumb in the eye to Christians.

“A Common Word” received immediate acclamation by Christian leaders, who responded with heartfelt appreciation the next month with the “Yale Response” to that document.<sup>10</sup> Readers familiar with the “Same God Question” (SGQ) will recognize Yale professor Miroslav Wolf, a leading proponent that Muslims and Christians do indeed worship the same God, as a co-author of the Yale Response.

The Yale Response was ultimately signed by over 300 hundred prominent Christian leaders, including several who contributed essays to Evangelical Missiological Society’s *Occasional Bulletin* on the SGQ. The Yale Response represents an embarrassing level of one-sided, self-abasement on the part of the Christian scholars. Their Preamble declares:

Muslims and Christians have not always shaken hands in friendship; their relations have sometimes been tense, even characterized by outright hostility. Since Jesus Christ says, “First take the log out your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye” (Matthew 7:5), we want to begin by acknowledging that in the past (e.g., in the Crusades) and in the present (e.g., in excesses of the “war on terror”) many Christians have been guilty of sinning against our Muslim neighbors. Before we “shake your hand” in responding to your letter, we ask forgiveness of the All-Merciful One and of the Muslim community around the world.<sup>11</sup>

Based on this beginning, the Christian respondents indicate they seek amicable relations between Muslims and Christians. This conciliatory statement appears to overlook the fact that the Muslim authors of “A Common Word” had just taken Christians to the theological woodshed. The Yale Response makes no insistence that Muslims tolerate or co-exist with the Christian belief in biblical theology, including the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since the Muslim scholars utilized Qur’anic material and co-opted biblical material to excoriate the biblical position, it is surprising the Christian scholars—who should know the Bible even if they may not be familiar with the Qur’an—failed to raise this objection.

Furthermore, neither “A Common Word” nor the Yale Response ever mentions the atrocities inflicted on Christians by Muslims over fourteen centuries. This reality cannot be overlooked if Christians and Muslims are indeed to proceed into an era of open and honest communication. The Barnabas Fund

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 72

<sup>10</sup> Harold Attridge, Miroslav Volf, Joseph Cumming, Emilie Towners, “A Common Word’ Christian Response,” <http://faith.yale.edu/common-word/common-word-christian-response>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

penned a much more reasonable response to “A Common Word” than the one originating from Yale and gives appropriate attention to this point.<sup>12</sup>

In summary, the Yale Response to “A Common Word” was written not in the spirit of Christian humility, but in a spirit of Islamically-ordained humiliation, known as *Dhimmitude*.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.2. “The Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Countries”

Since Muslim scholars authored the “Marrakesh Declaration” so recently, Christians have had limited time to respond to it. Therefore, this section is shorter than the previous one. Additionally, the “Marrakesh Declaration” has not offered much new, in relation to the SGQ, as compared to “A Common Word.” On one hand, the contributors to the “Marrakesh Declaration” merit praise. They obviously want to set themselves, and their religion, apart from the Salafists of ISIS who are carrying the news headlines. And they clearly have a more benevolent position toward non-Muslim minorities than would be found in the Caliphate—though the Caliphate has not set that bar too high.

Importantly, the “Marrakesh Declaration” fails to ascribe any legitimacy to the worship of the biblical Triune God. This would seem to be a minimum standard of affirmation in protecting the rights of non-Muslim minorities. Furthermore, the Declaration makes no statement asserting that Muslims and Christians worship the same God.

Instead, the “Marrakesh Declaration” celebrates the example of Muhammad and the Charter of Medina, which he implemented during his rule over that city from (AD 622–632).<sup>14</sup> Use of the Charter of Medina as a paradigm proves problematic because this covenant was between the Muslims and only those who “followed them and joined them, and laboured with them.”<sup>15</sup> The text of the Charter comes from Ibn Ishaq’s *Sirat Rasul Allah* (“The Life of the Prophet of Allah”), which is the basis for all later biographies of the prophet. Though Guillaume translates the final clause above into English as “and laboured with them,” the Arabic original is “wa jaahad ma’hum,” based on the verbal form of the noun “jihad.” W. M. Watt translates this Arabic clause “and who crusade along with them.”<sup>16</sup> The Charter of Medina, therefore, establishes the political-military-religious Islamic state, upon which the current Islamic State in Iraq and Syria bases its legitimacy. Ironically, Muslim scholars have advanced this same charter as a template for religious tolerance and co-existence.

The Charter did not ensure the rights of those who chose not to follow Muhammad and the Muslims. There were no Christians in Medina, but there were Jews. None of the three Jewish tribes in Medina chose ultimately to follow Muhammad—and thus accept Islam. Muhammad, the example for all Muslims according to Sura 33:21, banished two of the Jewish tribes, and exterminated the final one. Presently, no Jews live in Medina.

The Charter of Medina, rather, created the paradigm for the *Dhimmi* system of Sharia law, in which non-Muslim monotheists are systematically humiliated and strictly forbidden from sharing their

<sup>12</sup> Ethan Cole, “Ministry Finds Fault with Yale Christian-Muslim Declaration,” *Christian Post*, 13 August, 2008, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/33804/#JlOHbRZzV4gKWbJc.99>.

<sup>13</sup> *Dhimmitude* is the system of subservience governing Christians and Jews who live under Islamic rule.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. A. Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 231–32

<sup>16</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 94.



faith with Muslims. This system fails to provide a reliable, protective umbrella for Christians or other religious minorities. Indeed, the *Dhimmi* system oversaw the slow asphyxiation of many Christian and Jewish communities living under Islam—some of which have been extinguished.<sup>17</sup>

Despite this sobering picture, several Christians present at the Marrakesh proceedings responded with irrepressible exultation. Christian peace activists Bob Roberts and Rick Love were reported to have attended, with Roberts claiming to have been “blown away,” in a positive sense, by the Declaration.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the “Marrakesh Declaration” does nothing to move Muslim religious scholars toward their Christian counterparts on the Same God Question. Neither does it affirm the right of Christian minorities to share their faith among their Muslim neighbors. Nor does it safeguard former Muslims who have converted to Christ. Even the statements purporting to protect religious minorities from Islamic violence must be read with caution: this Declaration will not be followed by millions of Jihadists, since Sharia law does not unequivocally guarantee this protection.

In the case of both “A Common Word” and the “Marrakesh Declaration,” the Muslim scholars could not have substantively moved toward their Christian counterparts on the SGQ without being considered by other *‘ulama* as apostates—expulsed from the faith of Islam. This same threat of excommunication, *takfir*, will haunt any Muslim scholar from making substantive theological overtures toward biblical Trinitarianism. Indeed, Muhammad established the religion of Islam within these strictures. It is to that prophet, and to that establishment, that this article now turns.

## 2.2. How Muhammad Has Painted Muslim Religious Scholars into a Corner

The Qur’an gives God-fearing Christians the status of *Ahl ul-Kitab* (“People of the Book”) since they have believed in God and a bona fide prophet, Jesus. Islamic Law sets the *Ahl ul-Kitab* above the Atheists and idol-worshippers who must be killed if they resist Muslims by not submitting to Islam. This seeming conciliatory position of Islam toward Christians may engender hopes for eventual theological reconciliation. In its full context, however, this paradigm established by Muhammad should be considered as the co-opting of Jesus into the Islamic theological edifice, and an invitation to Christians to embrace Islam and become Muslims.

### 2.2.1. Muhammad and the Najrani Christians

The encounter in Medina of the Najrani Christians with Muhammad provides a clear picture of Muhammad’s interaction with, and policy toward, Christians. As Muhammad and the Muslims gained political hegemony over Arabia, various tribes came to seek terms of peace with the Prophet of Islam. The town of Najran sent a Christian delegation to seek such a peace agreement. The Najranis, who were accompanied by their bishop, spent three days in theological discourse with Muhammad in Medina. This

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<sup>17</sup> For example, see Bat Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (Cranbury, NJ: United University Presses, 1996); Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Morgan Lee, “Morocco Declaration: Muslim Nations Should Protect Christians from Persecution,” *Christianity Today*, 27 January 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/january/marrakesh-declaration-muslim-nations-christian-persecution.html>.

episode is referred to in Sura 3 (*al-Imran*). Gordon Nickel provides a thorough recap of the encounter and its treatment by Qur'anic commentators.<sup>19</sup>

The Najrani Christians offered to pledge their political allegiance to Muhammad if he would embrace their belief in the divinity of Jesus. This Sura recounts their testimony to the Annunciation (3:42–46), the Virgin Birth (3:47), Jesus's miracles (3:49, including some apocryphal miracles).

The Qur'anic narrative then markedly pivots to an antibiblical Christology in which Jesus denies his own Lordship (3:51). Jesus's disciples then shockingly declare: "We have believed in Allah and testify we are Muslims" (3:52). Sura 3:57 establishes salvation by works, and also states that "Allah does not love those who do wrong," another drastic departure from biblical theology. The Najrani episode concludes with Muhammad declaring that Jesus was no more the Son of God than was Adam, who also was created without a human father (3:59).

Because of this theological impasse, Muhammad insisted on a mutual cursing ceremony with these Najrani Christians. Though the Najranis declined to curse Muhammad, Muhammad gathered his daughter Fatima, his son-in-law Ali, and his two grandsons under his cloak, and cursed the Najranis. The incident is known in Islamic history as "The Cursing" (*al-Mubahala*) with Muhammad's indictment stated in Sura 3:61: "May God's curse be upon those who lie!" The Qur'anic narrative ends here with: "This is the true account. There is no god but Allah. . . . If they turn back, God has full knowledge of those who do mischief." (3:62–63).

For those keeping track of the verse numbers, the next verse in this passage is 3:64. This is the "common word" verse in which Christians are called to repent of associating partners with Allah (i.e., worshipping Jesus) and to return to *Tawhid*. Thus, Muhammad's single notable encounter with a Christian community ended with him cursing that community because of their biblical beliefs regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the historical context surrounding the "common word" verse summons a narrative of Christians rejected by Muhammad and the early Muslims, rather than one of inter-communal harmony and mutual respect.

### 2.2.2. *The Primacy of the Shahada Confession*

Any person who wants to become a Muslim must declare with sincere intention the *Shahada* confession: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his apostle." The Muslim authors of "A Common Word" featured the *Shahada* in their document. Inherent in *Shahada* is a denial (Arabic, *nafy*) as well as an affirmation (*ithbat*). The *nafy* denial is that "there is *no* god. . . ."

Early Muslims could have originally simplified the *Shahada* to "Allah is God . . ." or "The Supreme Being is Allah. . . ." The fact that the followers of Muhammad felt the need to include a negating statement in the *Shahada* meant they specifically wanted to exclude from their faith community those who embrace the biblical teaching of plurality in the Godhead.

### 2.2.3. *The Predicament Confronting Muslim Scholars regarding the SGQ*

The above material indicates that Muhammad saw as a central part of his mission the demolition of the biblical belief regarding the Incarnation of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Muhammad transformed Jesus into a fictional character who advances the Islamic theological narrative by announcing the coming

<sup>19</sup> Gordon Nickel, "We Will Make Peace With You': The Christians of Najran in Muqatil's Tafsir," *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 3 (2006), 171–88, <http://www.uco.es/investiga/grupos/hum380/collectanea/sites/default/files/Nickel.pdf>.

of Muhammad (61:6) and assuring all who will listen to him that he never allowed anyone to worship him (5:72; 5:116).

Muslim scholars have long since been painted into a corner by Muhammad, who created a watertight monotheistic theology with no freedom to consider plurality in the Godhead. Any deviation from absolute *Tawhid* can only trigger the echoing of Muhammad’s cursing of the Najranis through the *fatwas* (edicts) of his disciples today. Furthermore, Muslim scholars cannot directly contradict the prophet’s teaching, especially on such a foundational doctrine as the divine nature. Therefore, Muslim scholars cannot move theologically toward their Christian counterparts.

Even the moderate and conciliatory Muslim scholar Mahmoud Ayoub of Hartford Seminary resigns himself to this conclusion: “Muslims could not, in the Qur’an or later, understand or accept the idea that God could reveal himself in a human person, that is to say, Jesus Christ.”<sup>20</sup> Another Muslim scholar, Smail Baliç, states that Christians and Muslims merely share belief in a Creator God: “If theology is discourse about God, then Islam makes no assertions about Jesus Christ. Islam rules out any incursion of the human into the sphere of the divine. . . . Christians and Muslims can only agree on a belief in a God who brought forth and sustains creation.”<sup>21</sup>

Muslim scholars understand all of these things, yet their Christian counterparts seem largely unaware of the historical and theological boundaries within which scholars of Islam—regardless of sectarian affiliation—must operate. Should Muslims cross these boundaries, they become part of the growing population of ex-Muslims. Muhammad’s theological position closes the door on reconciling Islamic Unitarianism with biblical Trinitarianism. Therefore, it is no surprise that Muslims are not moving toward Christians on the SGQ.

Muslim and Christian scholar-leaders may find theological common cause on a number of issues. These could include: theism in the face of secularism, creationism/origins, as well as standing against abortion on demand. The mutually exclusive positions of the Bible and the Qur’an on the identity of Jesus Christ, however, rule out any rapprochement on the SGQ.

### *3. How the Triune God of the Bible is Drawing Muslims to Himself*

Despite their irreconcilable theological positions, Muslims and Christians have much in common. The commonality between Muslims and Christians lies in their humanity, not their theology. In other words, all people are created equal, but not all religions are created equal. Muslims, like Christians and others, are sinners whom God loves equally and unconditionally. Muslims are not worse sinners than others. Neither are they under any curse that the blood of Christ is unable to cancel. While the Qur’an states in the “common word” passage, “Allah does not love those who do wrong” (Sura 3:57), the Bible states, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8, NASB).

Tragically, Muslims are taught from birth that God is not Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet, this does not preclude the Triune God from becoming active in their lives. The God of the Bible, not the God of Islam, is even now wooing countless Muslims to himself. God’s activity is thus resulting in many of

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<sup>20</sup> Mahmoud Ayoub, *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A. Omar (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Smail Baliç, “The Image of Jesus in Contemporary Islamic Theology,” in *We Believe in One God*, ed. Abdold-javad Falaturi and AnneMarie Schimmel (New York: Seabury, 1979), 2–3.

these precious souls leaving behind Islam, the affirmation of Muhammad as a prophet, and the deity he promoted. A new generation is coming into a living relationship with the eternal Son of God. Included in this movement are even Islamic clerics who used to teach the anti-biblical polemics of Islam.

Duane Miller and Patrick Johnstone (editor of *Operation World*) recently published a country-by-country report of believers in Christ from Muslim background. They estimate there are 10.2 million of these believers.<sup>22</sup> Truly these are astounding times for the *Missio Dei*!

#### *4. Concluding Thoughts*

The current debate over the SGQ has precipitated a crisis for Christians. Muslims themselves do not seem embroiled in a parallel season of anguish and hand-wringing regarding the SGQ. Since Islam is a strictly Unitarian faith which denies both the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, any affirmative response by Evangelicals to the Same God Question can only hasten our rapid decline into a mainline manifestation of “Evangelicalism,” and the ultimate extinguishing of our missional candle.

The cost of moving away from biblical Trinitarianism is the loss of fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This loss renders Christians unable to help Muslims toward salvation in Christ, regardless of the status of inter-communal relations. Christians can encourage the ongoing process of Muslims coming to Christ by minding well the guiding light of biblical orthodoxy.

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<sup>22</sup> Patrick Johnstone and Duane A. Miller, “Believers in Christ from a Muslim Background: A Global Census,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 11, article 10 (2015): 17.

PASTORAL PENSÉES

# Seven Reasons You Should Not Indulge in Pornography

— Andrew David Naselli —

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**Abstract:** You should not indulge in pornography for at least seven reasons: (1) It will send you to hell. (2) It does not glorify God with your body. (3) It is a poisonous, fleeting pleasure. (4) It foolishly wastes your life. (5) It betrays your wife and children. (6) It ruins your mind and conscience. (7) It participates in sex slavery.

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Boys and men today regularly indulge in pornography—even guys who profess to be Christians.<sup>1</sup> By “indulging in pornography,” I mean that you sinfully allow yourself to enjoy the pleasure of printed or visual material that explicitly describes or displays sexual body parts or activity in order to stimulate erotic feelings. The most common way this is happening in our culture is by viewing sexually charged images and videos on the Internet.

My goal is to motivate you to say no to pornography by God’s grace. This article does not comprehensively address how to deal with pornography. Other resources do that well, and I recommend several of them below. My burden in this article is to *motivate* you not to indulge in pornography. I am particularly burdened to motivate people who habitually indulge in pornography and who are not killing their sin of lust. If that describes you, then this article is a way of metaphorically taking you firmly by the shoulders, looking you directly in the eyes, and soberly warning you, “Wake up! Do you realize what the consequences are for indulging in pornography?!”

You should not indulge in pornography for at least seven reasons.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article lightly revises what the author presented at a “Pure Pleasure” conference for the men of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis on April 16, 2016. Consequently, the article directly addresses men though most of it also applies to women.

<sup>2</sup> There are other reasons, but these seven reasons are some of the most compelling and motivating. Cf. Tim Chester, “Looking beyond the Frame,” in *Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn Free* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 15–35, 148–49.

## *1. Indulging in Pornography Will Send You to Hell*

In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses lust:

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. (Matt 5:27–30)<sup>3</sup>

Jesus authoritatively interprets what “You shall not commit adultery” means. It does not merely prohibit you from stealing someone else’s wife. It prohibits you from lusting. Jesus says that looking at a woman for the purpose of lusting is sin. So if you indulge in pornography, you are sinning.

Jesus then reaches a logical conclusion: Since it is sinful to look at a woman with lustful intent, *therefore*, you should tear out your eye if it causes you to sin, and you should cut off your right hand if it causes you to sin. (The “right hand” is probably “a euphemism for the male sexual organ.”<sup>4</sup>) And Jesus supports those conclusions with two parallel reasons: it is better to lose your eye or genitals than for your whole body to go to hell.

People who habitually and unrepentantly indulge in pornography will go to hell. One evidence that you have genuine faith in Jesus is that you are fighting lust. Indulging in pornography is a form of sexual immorality. And the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God. God’s wrath is against the sexually immoral:

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Eph 5:3–6)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:9–11)

“The sexually immoral” includes people who indulge in pornography. Here’s a paraphrase of 1 Cor 6:9–10: “Don’t think that you can get away with an unrepentantly sinful lifestyle. Don’t think that you can

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV.

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Matthew–Mark*, 2nd ed., Expositor’s Bible Commentary 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 185.

live that way and still be a citizen of God's kingdom. Unrepentantly sinful lifestyles do not characterize citizens of God's kingdom."

And 1 Cor 6:11 is a reminder to Christians: You are not inherently better than non-Christians. The sins that characterize non-Christians used to characterize your heart before God saved you. The sinners in 1 Cor 6:9–10 are exactly who Christians used to be—past tense. The only difference is that God intervened: he “washed” you clean from your filthy lifestyle and forgave you; he “sanctified” you as God's holy people, who are the Holy Spirit's temple (1 Cor 3:16–17); he “justified” you, legally declaring that you are righteous.

So don't think that your indulging in pornography is no big deal. Don't think you can get away with an unrepentantly sinful lifestyle. The sinful people in 1 Cor 6:9–10 represent the type of people who are not citizens of God's kingdom. If indulging in pornography characterizes your life, then you can have no assurance that you are a Christian.<sup>5</sup> Yes, Christians sin. But Christians are *repenting* sinners. So become what you are: clean, holy, righteous.

Your eternal destiny is at stake. Indulging in pornography is a treasonous sin against God. That is why Jesus pronounced, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt 5:8). If you are indulging in pornography, then you are not pure in heart. And only the pure in heart will see God. *I'm trying to scare the hell out of you*—or more precisely, to scare you out of hell. Do you believe that indulging in pornography will send you to hell?

Do whatever it takes to win the battle over lust—even if it means plucking out your eye. Of course, plucking out your eye won't solve the problem because lust is a heart-issue. There's not a one-size-fits-all strategy for fighting lust, but you need to fight the battle with multiple weapons. It may mean that you install software like Covenant Eyes on your electronic devices. It may mean that you maintain transparent accountability relationships with godly men. It may mean that you refuse to go certain places, own certain devices, watch certain movies, or view certain websites. Whatever it takes for you to win the battle over lust, it is worth it because indulging in pornography will send you to hell.<sup>6</sup>

### ***2. Indulging in Pornography Does Not Glorify God with Your Body***

Glorifying God is a way of feeling and thinking and acting that makes much of God. It shows that God is supremely great and good. It demonstrates that God is all-wise and all-satisfying. We most

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Donald S. Whitney, *How Can I Be Sure I'm a Christian? What the Bible Says about Assurance of Salvation* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1994); D. A. Carson, “Reflections on Assurance,” in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 247–76; Sam Storms, *Kept for Jesus: What the New Testament Really Teaches about Assurance of Salvation and Eternal Security* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); Wayne Grudem, “Free Grace” *Theology: 5 Ways It Diminishes the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 41–97. ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000)

<sup>6</sup> The two most helpful resources on fighting lust that I am aware of complement each other: John Piper, “Faith in Future Grace vs. Lust,” in *Future Grace* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1995), 329–38; Heath Lambert, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013). They complement each other because Piper's chapter emphasizes the powerful motivation that only the pure in heart will see God while Lambert's book presents eight grace-empowered strategies for fighting lust: sorrow, accountability, radical measures, confession, your spouse (or singleness), humility, gratitude, and a dynamic relationship with Jesus.

glorify God when he most satisfies us.<sup>7</sup> That’s what God created us for. And you glorify God with your physical body when you use it the way God intends. Indulging in pornography does not glorify God with your body:

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food—and God will destroy both one and the other.” The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. “Every sin a person commits is outside the body,” but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:12–20)<sup>8</sup>

In this passage Paul is addressing another issue in 1 Corinthians in which the Corinthians have adopted the worldly values of their pagan culture: excusing sexual immorality. It appears that men in Corinth who professed to be Christians were having sex with prostitutes, probably at the end of dinner parties.<sup>9</sup> While Paul specifically combats one type of sexual immorality in this passage (i.e., having sex with a prostitute), what he says *applies* to any kind of immoral sex—including indulging in pornography, which is a type of sexual immorality.

Verses 19–20 support v. 18c by explaining why committing immoral sex is a sin against your own body. To paraphrase vv. 19–20a, “Christian, your individual physical body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, whom God gave you. Consequently, you don’t own your body—God does because he paid for it at the cost of his Son’s death.” One of the most motivating reasons not to indulge in pornography is that “your body is a temple” (v. 19a). The temple-theme is a major theme in biblical theology.<sup>10</sup> Tracing how the

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the writings of John Piper, especially his signature book, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, 4th ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> The English translation tweaks the ESV in three ways: (1) It extends the third slogan to include the words “and God will destroy both one and the other.” (2) It deletes the word “other” in v. 18b. The ESV says, “Every *other* sin a person commits . . .” (3) It treats v. 18b as a slogan rather than Paul’s statement by adding quotation marks. For a defense, see Andrew David Naselli, “Is Every Sin Outside the Body Except Immoral Sex? Weighing Whether 1 Cor 6:18b Is Paul’s Statement or a Corinthian Slogan,” *JBL* 136 (2017): forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 86–93.

<sup>10</sup> See G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). For a more accessible version, see G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014). See also J. Daniel Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God’s Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016). Unfortunately, neither Beale nor Hays deal penetratingly with 1 Cor 6:19 in light of the temple-theme throughout the Bible; Beale gives it about a paragraph (Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 252), and Hays doesn’t even mention 1 Cor 6:19.



temple fits in the Bible's storyline richly enhances what "your body is a temple" means in v. 19a.<sup>11</sup> It is unthinkable to indulge in pornography in the Most Holy Place. But now your physical body is the Most Holy Place. So don't defile it. Keep it pure because it is sacred space.

The final line (v. 20b) concludes vv. 18c–20 as well as the whole passage: "glorify God in your body." So here's one way to summarize Paul's main argument in vv. 12–20 in one sentence: *Glorify God with your body by not committing sexual immorality.* When you indulge in pornography, you sin against God himself because God owns your body. Indulging in pornography does not glorify God with your body.

### *3. Indulging in Pornography Is a Poisonous, Fleeting Pleasure*

Moses chose not "to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." That means sin can be pleasurable—at least for a time. But that pleasure is fleeting:

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. (Heb 11:24–26)

Indulging in pornography is immediately pleasurable, but that pleasure is fleeting. It leaves you feeling empty, unsatisfied, yearning for more.

Could God say the same thing about you regarding pornography?

By faith *you* refused to indulge in pornography because you chose to enjoy God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of pornography. You did that because you considered enjoying God as greater than any pleasure that pornography could offer because you were looking to the reward.

Indulging in pornography is like eating a sugar-coated poison pill. Why would you try to satisfy your physical hunger with sugar-coated poison pills when you could feast on excellent food? And why would you try to satisfy your desire to be happy with the sugar-coated poison pill of pornography when you enjoy God himself? Indulging in pornography is always foolish; it is never wise (cf. Prov 6:32: "He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself").<sup>12</sup> Indulging in pornography may satisfy your sinful urges short-term, but it will never make you happy long-term. It steals your joy.

So don't desire pornography; desire God. The pleasures of pornography are poisonous and fleeting; the pleasures of God are eternally and infinitely satisfying. "The way to fight lust is to feed faith with the precious and magnificent promise that the pure in heart will see, face to face, the all-satisfying God of glory."<sup>13</sup> "People are starving for the grandeur of God. And the vast majority do not know it."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See ch. 9 in Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> See Randy Alcorn, *The Purity Principle* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Piper, "Faith in Future Grace vs. Lust," 338.

<sup>14</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 147.

One way to fuel your desire to know and worship God is by reading or listening to John Piper’s sermon “Sex and the Supremacy of Christ.”<sup>15</sup> Piper concludes,

*Knowing the supremacy of Christ enlarges the soul so that sex and its little thrills become as small as they really are. Little souls make little lusts have great power. The soul, as it were, expands to encompass the magnitude of its treasure. The human soul was made to see and savor the supremacy of Christ. Nothing else is big enough to enlarge the soul as God intended and make little lusts lose their power. . . .*

My conviction is that one of the main reasons the world and the church are awash in lust and pornography . . . is that our lives are intellectually and emotionally disconnected from the infinite, soul-staggering grandeur for which we were made. Inside and outside the church Western culture is drowning in a sea of triviality, pettiness, banality, and silliness. Television is trivial. Radio is trivial. Conversation is trivial. Education is trivial. Christian books are trivial. Worship styles are trivial. It is inevitable that the human heart, which was made to be staggered with the supremacy of Christ, but instead is drowning in a sea of banal entertainment, will reach for the best natural buzz that life can give: sex.

Therefore, the deepest cure to our pitiful addictions is not any mental strategies—though I believe in them and have my own (called ANTHEM). The deepest cure is to be intellectually and emotionally staggered by the infinite, everlasting, unchanging supremacy of Christ in all things.<sup>16</sup>

#### *4. Indulging in Pornography Foolishly Wastes Your Life*

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:15–17). A drop of water seems infinitesimal compared to the Pacific Ocean. So does your short life on this earth compared to life after death. Right now there are so many people to love and serve, so much to learn, so much to do. But instead of swimming in the ocean of the Bible and strategically investing time and money to spread the gospel in your community and around the world, you may be foolishly wasting

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<sup>15</sup> John Piper, “Sex and the Supremacy of Christ,” in *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 25–46. That is the published form of a two-part sermon series from the Desiring God 2004 National Conference: <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/sex-and-the-supremacy-of-christ-part-1> and <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/sex-and-the-supremacy-of-christ-part-2>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 43–44. Cf. what Piper preached at the 2012 Passion Conference in Atlanta: “Little hearts, little souls give little lust big power. Big hearts give little lust little power because they look little. When you see the magnitude of your treasure, your soul swells to get around it and you mark pornography as a powerless thrill. That’s the way it works. You don’t . . . just fight with saying, ‘Say no, say no, say no.’ That doesn’t work. You got to see. Your heart has to get bigger and bigger and bigger so that this little temptation looks like the stupid suicidal insane little monster it is” (John Piper, “Seeing and Savoring the Supremacy of Jesus Christ Above All Things,” *Desiring God*, January 1, 2012, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/seeing-and-savoring-the-supremacy-of-jesus-christ-above-all-things>).

your life by indulging in pornography.<sup>17</sup> When you indulge in pornography, you waste your time and energy and sometimes money. Instead of powerfully serving God with every ounce of your being, you waste your God-given life (see 2 Tim 2:20–22). You cripple the church you are a part of because instead of serving others inside and outside your church, you are like Achan, deceitfully loving your sin instead of forsaking it. Instead of freely serving God as a slave of righteousness, you live like you are enslaved to the sin of pornography (cf. Rom 6). When you indulge in pornography, you act like what the book of Proverbs calls a fool. “Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom” (Ps 90:12).

### ***5. Indulging in Pornography Betrays Your Wife and Children***

This reason applies to you if you are married or ever will be married.

When I married my wife, Jenni, I made a covenant with her. This is what I promised her: “I, Andy, will cleave to you, Jenni, as my wife according to God’s design for marriage. I will love you and lead you as Christ does the church. Until death parts us, I promise you my loving loyalty.” I included that term “loving loyalty” with the Hebrew word *hesed* in mind. That word occurs in the OT 248 times, and it refers to *loving loyalty* or *loyal love* based on a committed relationship that results in kind deeds. When it refers to marriage, that loving loyalty is a *covenant* loyalty. I would rather die than be unfaithful to my wife.<sup>18</sup>

If you indulge in pornography, then you are not loving your wife. You are breaking your promise to be lovingly loyal to her. You are betraying her. You are committing adultery against her. And you are making her compete with the database of racy images you have lusted after. Indulging in pornography can ruin your marriage.

And indulging in pornography will harm not only your marriage but your children. You will lose your moral authority with your family. Your children will suffer. And if it leads to divorce, then your children will suffer even more. (I know this firsthand; my parents separated when I was four and divorced when I was five.)

### ***6. Indulging in Pornography Ruins Your Mind and Conscience***

I’ll unpack this reason in four steps:

1. *Indulging in pornography ruins how you think about sex.* Sex is a gift from God that is exclusively for one man and one woman who have covenanted together in marriage. Sex in marriage is beautiful. Sex is God’s idea, and we should praise him for it. Pornography corrupts and perverts sex. If you indulge in pornography, you will think about sex perversely. If you are married and indulge in pornography, then you will delight in sex with your wife less and less.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. John Piper, *Don’t Waste Your Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 107: “I do not know how many times I have sung the words, ‘O let me never, never / Outlive my love for Thee,’ but I mean them. I would rather die than end up unfaithful to my wife; I would rather die than deny by a profligate life what I have taught in my books; I would rather die than deny or disown the gospel. God knows there are many things in my past of which I am deeply ashamed; I would not want such shame to multiply and bring dishonor to Christ in years to come. There are worse things than dying.”

2. *Indulging in pornography ruins how you think about women.* Women are humans whom God created in his image, and they beautifully display God's glory. If you lust after the bodies of women, then you will think about women as sex objects to satisfy your sinful lusts rather than as fellow image-bearers.

3. *Indulging in pornography ruins how you think.* It destructively rewires your brain.<sup>19</sup> It ruins how you think and thus warps your affections.

4. *Consequently, indulging in pornography ruins your conscience.* Your conscience is your consciousness of what you believe is "right" and "wrong."<sup>20</sup> When you indulge in pornography, you desensitize your conscience because you suppress and silence your conscience and rationalize away your sin. Eventually, you can damage your conscience so badly that it doesn't condemn you when you sin. You may, for example, need to calibrate your conscience about viewing sexually charged nudity in videos.<sup>21</sup>

As a Christian, you must *renew* your mind with Scripture, but indulging in pornography *ruins* your mind and conscience.

## 7. *Indulging in Pornography Participates in Sex Slavery*<sup>22</sup>

When you indulge in pornography, you feed the system. And the system harms women. One way pornography harms women is that it ruins how women think about themselves. Many women are insecure about their body image and even hate their bodies and have eating disorders and are depressed because they can't compete with the impossible standards of pornography.

But pornography harms women even more significantly: *When you indulge in pornography, you participate in sex slavery.* Pornography is to sex slavery what gasoline is to the engines of motor vehicles. Gas fuels engines. Pornography fuels sex slavery.

### 7.1. What Is Sex Slavery?

A sex slave is a person who is the property of another person, and that owner forces the slave to obey them by performing sex acts, usually for money. Sex slavery is sex trafficking, which includes acquiring, transporting, and exploiting sex slaves.

Most prostituted women are sex slaves. Often a pimp physically and psychologically abuses prostituted women to coerce them to continue committing commercial sex acts. Sometimes people abduct children and adolescent women and force them into prostitution. Most women who enter prostitution have already been sexually abused. Prostituted women are often girls or adolescent women who are insecure and become emotionally traumatized and view themselves as worthless.

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<sup>19</sup> See William M. Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009

<sup>20</sup> See Andrew David Naselli and J. D. Crowley, *Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 70–71.

<sup>22</sup> This section condenses Andrew David Naselli, "When You Indulge in Pornography, You Participate in Sex Slavery," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 20:2 (2015): 23–29 (used with permission).

## 7.2. How Does Pornography Fuel Sex Slavery?

Pornography fuels the demand for prostitution and thus for sex slavery. I haven't heard anyone argue this more clearly and compellingly than David Platt does in chapter 5 of his book *Counter Culture*.<sup>23</sup> Platt tells the story of a nine-year-old girl in northern Nepal named Maliha. A charming slave trader deceived Maliha's poverty-stricken single mother when he promised to help provide for their family by helping Maliha get a well-paying job in the city at the bottom of the Himalayan mountains. He promised to send the money she earned back to the mother and to bring Maliha back to visit her family at least once each year. The mother eventually but reluctantly agreed, but the man did not keep his word. Maliha's new job was to sit outside a restaurant in the city, where customers would violate this beautiful girl. Sometimes twenty customers a day would rape Maliha.

Platt next tells a story of a sixteen-year-old girl named Hannah. She lived in Birmingham, Alabama. Her boyfriend started treating her like a queen and convinced her to flee with him to Los Angeles so that she could be a model. Then he pressured her to pose nude for photo shoots. Then he pressured her to have sex with truckers. Her boyfriend became her pimp.

Platt then shows how pornography connects to sex trafficking:

Research continually demonstrates a clear link between sex trafficking and the production of pornography. Federal legislation has acknowledged this, participants in the production of pornography have confirmed this, and while exact figures are hard to pin down, one anti-trafficking center reports that at least a third of victims trafficked for sex are used in the production of pornography. Another study on the relationship between prostitution, pornography, and trafficking found that one half of nearly nine hundred prostitutes in nine different countries reported pornography being made of them while in prostitution. When we hear such research, we mustn't miss the connection. Men and women who indulge in pornography are creating the demand for more prostitutes, and in turn they are fueling the sex-trafficking industry.

Yet the cycle is even more vicious than that. For the more people watch pornography, the more they desire sexual fulfillment through prostitution. Such desire drives men (and women) to engage in physical prostitution or even virtual prostitution as "every home computer [becomes] a potential red light district." Pornography thus feeds prostitution, again increasing the demand for sex trafficking.

Do we realize what we're doing? Every time a man or woman views pornography online, we are contributing to a cycle of sex slavery from the privacy of our own computers. . . .

No matter how many red Xs we write on our hands to end slavery, as long as these same hands are clicking on pornographic websites and scrolling through sexual pictures and videos, we are frauds to the core.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> David Platt, "A War on Women: The Gospel and Sex Slavery," in *Counter Culture: A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture in a World of Poverty, Same-Sex Marriage, Racism, Sex Slavery, Immigration, Persecution, Abortion, Orphans, and Pornography* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 105–27, 255–57.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 120–22.

A journal that Johns Hopkins University produces also makes this connection. It “argues that there are a number of links between pornography and sex trafficking and that curbing pornography can reduce sex trafficking.”<sup>25</sup>

The growing evidence is horrific. More and more women who escape the bondage of sex slavery are testifying that pornography fuels sex slavery. Such women are often forced to pose nude for photographs and to endure sex acts for films, all while pretending to enjoy it. Not only are many of the women in pornographic pictures and films themselves sex slaves, but pimps regularly use pornography to instruct children and young women how to perform for customers.

You can’t indulge in pornography without being part of that culture, without fueling prostitution and sex slavery. Pornography is part of the law of supply and demand for prostitution and sex slavery. It fuels the demand for sex slavery.

Plant this deeply and firmly in your conscience: *Since pornography fuels sex slavery, indulging in pornography to any degree is participating in sex slavery.* This is the case even if the person you lustfully look at is profiting financially from that pornography. The point is that any and all pornography is part of the worldwide system that fuels prostitution and thus fuels sex slavery.

### 7.3. How Should Men Feel about Pornography?

What does it mean to be a man? It’s hard to improve how John Piper defines mature masculinity: “At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships.”<sup>26</sup> Real men *protect* women. A man honors a woman when he protects her. “Women and children are put into the lifeboats first, not because the men are necessarily better swimmers, but because of a deep sense of honorable fitness. It belongs to masculinity to accept danger to protect women. . . . A mature man senses instinctively that as a man he is called to take the lead in guarding the woman he is with.”<sup>27</sup>

It is unconscionable for a man to harm a woman or child. And looking at pornography belongs in that same category because pornography harms women. Think about pornography from the vantage point of manhood.

Can you hear that story about the nine-year-old Maliha and not feel both pity for Maliha and righteous anger towards those who oppress her? There are millions of stories that are variations on Maliha’s life as a sex slave. When you hear how adults are enslaving girls and young women and raping them, does that not make you feel sick to your stomach? Do you not feel outraged against people who victimize children and young women? *That is exactly how you should feel about pornography.* Pornography should be as vomit-inducing to you as an evil man raping a nine-year-old girl. Pornography should be as revolting and disgusting to you as a group of evil men gang-raping a helpless woman. “If

<sup>25</sup> Robert W. Peters, Laura J. Lederer, and Shane Kelly, “The Slave and the Porn Star: Sexual Trafficking and Pornography,” *The Protection Project Journal of Human Rights and Civil Society* 5 (2012): 1.

<sup>26</sup> John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined according to the Bible,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 36.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 43–44.

you saw a woman being gang raped in a back alley, would you stop and masturbate?”<sup>28</sup> That’s essentially what you are doing when you indulge in pornography.

When you indulge in pornography, you participate in sex slavery. The pornography industry abuses women and children by fueling prostitution and sex slavery. Honorable men *protect* women and children. Honorable men don’t *abuse* women and children.

### ***8. Conclusion***

So those are seven reasons you should not indulge in pornography:

1. It will send you to hell.
2. It does not glorify God with your body.
3. It is a poisonous, fleeting pleasure.
4. It foolishly wastes your life.
5. It betrays your wife and children.
6. It ruins your mind and conscience.
7. It participates in sex slavery.

*Father, thank you that your grace trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions such as indulging in pornography. Thank you that your grace enables us to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age as we wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from sins like pornography and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. We need your grace. Please give us grace not to indulge in pornography but instead to find our satisfaction in you. Amen.*

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<sup>28</sup> Toby J. Sumpter, “The Porn War,” *Having Two Legs*, April 30, 2013, <http://www.tobyjsumpter.com/the-porn-war/>.

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## — OLD TESTAMENT —

Craig G. Bartholomew. *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. 623 pp. £34.72/\$44.99.

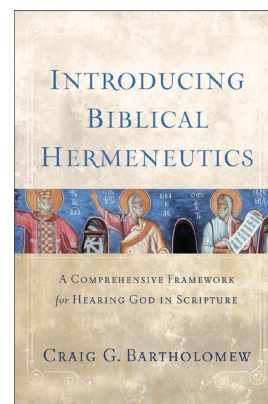
The present work by Craig Bartholomew is a substantial and solid book on biblical hermeneutics. It is not always easy reading, and the title ‘*Introducing . . .*’ could mislead some prospective readers. Many students might find the book heavy going and rather abstract in many places. This is not intended as a criticism, but to make clear the nature of the book as an intermediate textbook rather than a primer.

A major theme of this book is the integration of faith with hermeneutics, that is, the need to read Scripture ‘listening’ to God speak. This is indeed a healthy and much-needed emphasis in an academic environment which is frequently sceptical. Bartholomew engages these sceptical voices as he seeks to encourage believing students not to lose touch with God’s voice in the course of studying Scripture.

The first two chapters set the scene for this emphasis. In his opening chapter, Bartholomew sets out eight statements about Trinitarian hermeneutics (pp. 8–15). These points are neither argued nor debated, but lay out his integrative agenda. Most notably, a Trinitarian hermeneutic will regard the Bible as authoritative, as a whole as Scripture, and as ecclesially focused. The goal of such a hermeneutic is obedient attention that takes God’s address seriously. The second chapter focuses on listening and includes an encouragement to practise a *lectio divina* method of approaching Scripture, a method mentioned occasionally later in the book (e.g., ch. 14). While Bartholomew repeatedly urges ‘careful attentiveness’ to Scripture (p. 20), it might have been helpful to develop this more practically. How does one carefully attend to Scripture?

The second section of the book expounds an emphasis that readers of Bartholomew will be well familiar with, namely, biblical theology. His presentation of the coherence and essential unity of the whole Bible is important for highlighting the primacy of narrative and its role in the quest for the Bible’s big picture. I find an awareness of these matters lacking both in modern scholarship, as Bartholomew argues, but also in the church in general, not least in Asia where I teach. So in this section Bartholomew reminds us that Scripture has one ultimate and united voice, namely, God’s, and that Jesus is the key to Scripture. While these foundational points are contested in academia, Bartholomew does not so much defend them as present them as fundamental.

Part three of the book provides a history of biblical interpretation. Unlike standard surveys of the discipline, Bartholomew states that his aim is to ‘indicate major contours in the reception of the Bible as Scripture so as to equip contemporary interpreters to orientate themselves amid current trends’ (p. 120). That is as good as any summary of the book’s overarching purpose to guard readers against liberal and unbelieving trends in biblical scholarship. A key point for Bartholomew, which is raised in this section and developed later (esp. ch. 13), is the importance of philosophical awareness for good biblical interpretation. In underscoring this need, Bartholomew is attempting to direct readers to foundational matters of worldview that influence approaches to and interpretation of Scripture. He shows, for example, the role that philosophy played in W. de Wette’s liberal approach to Scripture (p. 215) and



bemoans the fact that so many interpreters leave their philosophy hidden (pp. 216, 223; see also p. 235 on Barth's caution about philosophy).

Part four addresses biblical interpretation and, in successive chapters, philosophy, history, literature, theology, as well as including a chapter on Scripture and the university. All of these chapters build upon issues raised in the section on history of interpretation, and indeed trace that history in more specific detail. Again Bartholomew highlights the importance of philosophy in approaching Scripture, along with an introduction to the philosophy of language. Various issues relating to history and narrative are also developed, with appropriate warnings against the historical-critical method whose presuppositions are often irreconcilable with traditional belief (pp. 352–53). It is in the chapter addressing history that Bartholomew rehearses his 'drama of Scripture' approach to the Bible found in his earlier works (with Michael Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014]).

Finally, section five of the book draws practical applications under the heading, 'The Goal of Biblical Interpretation.' One chapter is devoted in this regard to the book of Hebrews; here Bartholomew's plea for a 'faith-full interpretation' summarises the heart of his book—the need for believing and obedient listening to the text of Scripture. The final chapter, unexpected perhaps in a book on biblical interpretation but very timely indeed, is devoted to preaching. Some of the themes in Bartholomew's outstanding little book on preaching (*Excellent Preaching: Proclaiming the Gospel in Its Context and Ours* [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016]) are also echoed here. As one who spends most of my time training preachers, this chapter is worth reading above all. Our world needs the reminders of this chapter about the primacy of preaching for the church, and it is in preaching that the keys of biblical interpretation are most needed and applied.

As I said at the outset, this is not a simple book. The text is 545 pages with almost fifty pages of bibliography. Bartholomew is both extremely widely read and, as has been the case since his doctoral work on Ecclesiastes, somewhat of a polymath with interests in philosophy, literary theory, Bible, and ministry. This book draws all of that, and more, together in a book well worth reading, though perhaps a bit too theoretical for most undergraduate students. In the course of reading, I kept wanting some worked-out examples to show the application of the theory and to illustrate the differences between what Bartholomew advocates and what he is arguing against. Towards this end, my desire was in part answered with some extended examples from Luke, Genesis 1–2, and a whole chapter on Hebrews. While there is nothing too original in those examples and more are needed, they do concretise the theory in helpful ways.

Finally, the key message of this book is abundantly welcome. More than ever, we need to correct the academic trends away from obedient listening to the text of Scripture. Bartholomew has done much in redressing this need.

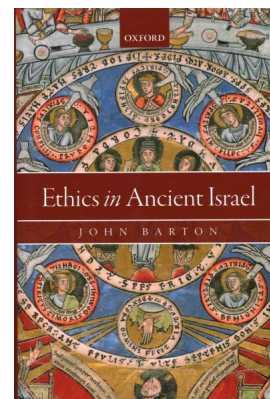
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Yangon, Myanmar

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John Barton. *Ethics in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. viii + 316 pp. £30.00/\$50.00.

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In this monograph, John Barton undertakes a study of ethical thought in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, supplementing with the Apocrypha, Dead Seas Scrolls, and various other texts. “Ethics” here is not to be equated with “practical morality,” the moral code of a given society, but rather “*reflection on morality from a philosophical perspective,*” that is, moral philosophy (p. 1, emphasis added). While all societies have the former, not necessarily so the latter. At its broadest, Barton’s argument is that ancient Israelites did indeed engage in ethical thought akin to Western moral philosophy (i.e., that of the Greeks), and that such ethical thought was more varied and sophisticated than modern scholars have tended to allow. His approach is meant to be descriptive and theoretical, “a contribution to the history of ideas” with stated indifference to contemporary ethical application or apology (p. 5, n. 14). Moreover, Barton endeavors to show that, although aspects of Israelite ethical obligation certainly flow from obedience to the divine command, there are also elements of what he calls “natural law” and “virtue ethics,” among other influences.



After a chapter discussing his ancient primary sources, to which I will return, Barton addresses in each subsequent chapter the issues raised by themes both from moral philosophy and OT studies. To paraphrase, chapter topics include moral agency, popular morality, the moral order, obedience to God, virtue and moral formation, sin and forgiveness, consequences, ethical digests, and finally, the moral character of God. Considering the vast scope of literature on ethics in the OT, Barton’s nuanced discussion of an astonishing array of issues subsumed within these chapter topics defies concise summary. At times one even senses Barton struggling to get to his own contribution to a given issue after a dense but necessary section laying out the current state of the question.

Several main conclusions emerge from this book. Barton is concerned to demonstrate that Israel’s ethical thinking was motivated by more factors than mere obedience to the deity. In addition to the “divine command” ethic, he finds that Israelite ethical thought also contains appeal to human reason by means of motive clauses (p. 12). This feature is common in biblical narrative and the Prophets, which often imply moral responsibility for all humankind, not only Israel (e.g., Mic 6:8). In conversation with Klaus Koch and others, Barton finds that there is also a moral order in the world that brings about “automatic” retribution not immediately wrought by God (p. 85), an ethical mechanism particularly prominent in the OT wisdom literature (e.g., Prov 26:27). In addition, Israelites could generalize ethical obligation in lists and summaries, says Barton, as in the Decalogue and certain psalms. Good and bad actions in such texts are framed in “meta-ethical” terms like “sin,” “evil,” or “righteousness” (e.g., Ps 15; Amos 5:14–15).

Aspects of this book will certainly prove useful to research students and scholars. To be sure, John Barton is a world-class scholar whose work has been both widely published and read, and rightly so. His mastery of the relevant primary literature in this volume is remarkable, and in his own discussion Barton deftly weaves together point and counterpoint with a host of secondary sources as well, sometimes at considerable length (e.g., pp. 194–206). As the book proceeds, at times it feels closer to a survey of Old Testament ethics in recent scholarship, and in this respect will prove to be a valuable introduction to this field.

However, as Barton has very little to say to evangelical scholars (much less laypeople), this book may prove largely unhelpful for the readership of *Themelios*. To begin with, Barton states plainly that he treats the OT strictly as ancient historical evidence, in no sense holy or authoritative (pp. vii, 4). Furthermore, Barton's notion of the "traditional" approach to a given issue in Old Testament study typically derives from mid-19th century German critical scholarship (e.g., pp. 148–49, 191). Owing to this approach, Barton raises topics so far afield from those germane to anyone who holds that the Bible is God's Word (in any sense, not just evangelical) that many of his questions will prove irrelevant or outlandish. For example, Barton asks rhetorically, "What did the ancient Israelites mean by 'sin'?" He then continues, "If I can convince readers that it is *reasonable to pose* questions of this kind . . . I shall be satisfied" (p. 13, emphasis added). As much as Barton is to be commended for addressing such issues in the secular academy, evangelicals and others who adhere to the enduring authority of the OT will have little need of such convincing.

To return to the issue of Barton's ancient primary sources, particularly the canonical Old Testament, debate over the purported author(s), dating, provenance, or motivation for any given book (or section) has only grown more disarrayed and contested among scholars. For instance, no longer is Deuteronomy necessarily considered to be older than the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua–Kings), parts of which, along with Ecclesiastes, are now thought to originate as late as the Hellenistic period, as in Thomas L. Thompson's work (pp. 8–9). This of course entails a complete reversal of Julius Wellhausen's source-critical theory in that covenant theology is now viewed as later than law, although the Deuteronomist(s) purportedly strove to present the case otherwise. In the end, critical scholarship is in such confusion over the development of the OT that Barton is unable to posit any kind of timeline for the various strands of ethical thought that he discerns (see pp. 7–9).

At present, scholarly opinion is so divided over what the OT is, who wrote it, and why, that it has become increasingly difficult for scholars to make any meaningful claims about it. For example, in discussing the notion of the image of God, which Barton regards as unique to the late Priestly (P) source, he writes the following:

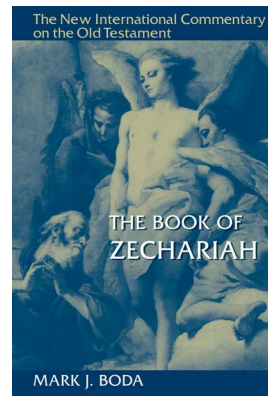
How many people in Israel ever knew of P's teaching about the image is unfortunately unknowable, but *perhaps* we can say that *a number* of texts *suggest* that *some at least* of what it *encapsulated* was believed by others at *various* times. (p. 67, emphasis added)

The sheer degree of qualification in this statement is remarkable and demonstrates the lengths to which OT scholars must now go to be considered reasonable in the broader academy. Nevertheless, Barton strives under such conditions to present a rigorous argument for the Hebrew Bible to find its rightful place among legitimate sources for moral philosophy. For that he is to be commended.

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Mark J. Boda. *The Book of Zechariah*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. xxiii + 911 pp. £38.99/\$58.00.

Mark J. Boda is professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. He is a graduate of Westminster Seminary and the University of Cambridge, and the author of many books and over seventy articles, many of which deal with Zechariah, the Book of the Twelve, or the post-exilic period. In fact, he is an acknowledged expert in the field of Zechariah studies and has already authored the NIV Application Commentary volume, *Haggai, Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). Whereas that commentary is intended for a broader, non-technical audience and focuses on contemporary application, this one contains very little application and will be most appreciated by readers with some knowledge of Hebrew. The 44-page introduction (plus seven pages of bibliography) in the present commentary might seem slight considering the volume's 911 pages, but each of the four divisions of the book (1:1–6; 1:7–6:15; 7:1–8:23; 9:1–14:21), as well as the smaller sections of the commentary (e.g., 1:8–17; 2:1–5, 6–13; 3:1–10; 14:1–21), begin with their own introductions. So introductory issues are adequately and expertly handled.



Boda argues that the book was composed over an eighty-year period, between 520 and 440 BC. The messages of the prophet Zechariah are especially dominant in chapters 1–8, but superscriptions indicate the involvement of someone else in the book. The next sections, chapters 9–11 and 12–14, “may have different points and sources of origination” and were edited separately, but “they have been drawn together into a unified literary collection” (p. 23). Although Boda acknowledges clear differences of style between chapters 1–8 and 9–14, he is convinced that “Zechariah 1–14 should be treated as a single book” (p. 28). He also sees “those responsible for the book of Zechariah were also responsible for drawing Haggai and Malachi into the Haggai–Malachi corpus and placing it within the Book of the Twelve” (p. 31). He dates chapters 1–8 in the early Persian period, chapters 9–10 about 515–510 BC, much of chapter 11 after 510 BC, and much of chapters 12–14 during Nehemiah’s governorship in the latter fifth century BC (likewise the final form of chs. 9–11; pp. 521, 529). The final form of the book addresses those living in Yehud in the mid- to late-fifth century. It calls for repentance and stresses the need for faithful leadership.

The commentary is divided into numerous small sections, some of which begin with an introduction to its context, structure, composition, and significance (see the sample list above). The size of sections varies from a paragraph to only a verse or two. A translation is then offered with careful and helpful translation notes. Virtually every grammatical, textual, and lexical detail is carefully analyzed in the light of the latest scholarship. On grammatical issues, he makes abundant use of modern grammars as well as his own examination of usage. The usage of every word and phrase is carefully studied, as when he argues that לַיְלָה with the article in 1:8 is wrongly rendered “at night” or “in/during the night” in most translations; instead, it means “this past night” as in 1 Samuel 15:16. In addition, much attention is given throughout to Zechariah’s use of other Old Testament passages. No one working in Zechariah can afford to neglect this invaluable resource.

Nevertheless, someone looking for a whole-canon perspective on Zechariah must look elsewhere. This may be observed in Boda’s discussion of the identity of צַמָּח in 3:8 and 6:12, which he translates



as “Sprout.” He argues that the translation “branch” is “inappropriate and an imposition of the royal expectation of Isaiah 11:1 (where  $\text{רֹאשׁ} \text{נֶזֶר}$  appears)” (p. 250). On an intertextual note, he correctly notes that Isaiah 3:16–4:6 is in the background of Zechariah 3, and that  $\text{נֶזֶר}$  in Isaiah 4:2 refers not to a future king but to the future re-sprouting of Israel; he also acknowledges that Zechariah is reading the Isaiah passage in light of Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15, where “Sprout refers to a future righteous descendant of David who will reign over Israel.” After making these intertextual observations, however, Boda denies that Zechariah’s “Sprout” is messianic (p. 254) and asserts that he is instead a “human being” (pp. 254, 399). Furthermore, despite the connection between the Sprout and the engraved stone to the removal of guilt “in a single day” (Zech 3:9), he holds that “one should not presuppose that this phrase signals a shift to a far-off future age” (p. 262). In addition, his comments on 6:12–13 identify the “Sprout” with Zerubbabel, and “[t]he fact that Zerubbabel never reigned as an independent king does not disqualify him as a candidate for Sprout” (p. 408). Nor does Zerubbabel’s initial presence in Judah disqualify him, because “it is not inconceivable that, at some point, Zerubbabel returned to Mesopotamia” (p. 409).

Boda likewise identifies the righteous and humble king of 9:9–10 as Zerubbabel. In his view, “It is thus likely that 9:9–10 joins Hag 2:20–23 in creating high expectations for Zerubbabel’s rule. As will be seen in 11:4–16, these high expectations will soon be dashed, due to the fragility of human participants” (p. 565; cf. pp. 678, 738). Similarly, no connection to a future Messiah is seen in 11:13 (“thirty pieces of silver”), in 12:10 (“they will look at me whom they have pierced”), nor in 13:7 (“strike the shepherd, and let the sheep be scattered”). The latter passage “possibly signals the end of the Davidic line . . . [which] may explain why Zechariah 14 makes no reference [to it]” (p. 738).

In his NIVAC commentary, Boda acknowledges that the New Testament writers found the Messiah in the book of Zechariah. But this commentary might lead one to assume they were mistaken. For even as the volume includes a 90-page Scripture index, references to NT passages are confined to a bit more than a third of a page. This stands in stark contrast to the last sentence of the Introduction: “Yahweh’s commitment to renewal . . . is only possible, as we discover in the New Testament, through the sacrifice of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit” (p. 44). Due to their differences of emphasis, Boda’s NIVAC commentary on Zechariah will be better for those who seek a Christian reading of Zechariah, while this NICOT commentary will be more suitable for exegetes of the Hebrew text.

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Bo H. Lim and Daniel Castelo. *Hosea*. Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. xii + 260 pp. £16.99/\$25.00.

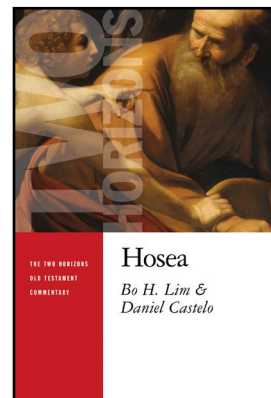
In this engaging commentary on Hosea, Bo Lim and Daniel Castelo, professors at Seattle Pacific University and Seminary (the former of Old Testament and the latter of dogmatic and constructive theology), work in tandem to ascertain the meaning of this prophetic book for modern readers. Each writes an introductory chapter on theological interpretation, followed by Lim's exposition of the text and three excurses by Castelo.

In his opening chapter on theological interpretation, Castelo is careful to distinguish their approach from "determinate" approaches that can tie a text too closely to its original context (p. 5). To read the Bible as Scripture, he argues, is to appreciate the interpreter's "underdetermined" interactions with texts that can highlight appropriately their personal and theological commitments within the life of the community that is the church (p. 10). These engagements are more than a retrieval of a settled meaning; they involve reflection on the Word to hear the voice of the Triune God with, and for, the people of God. The challenge, which will be repeated throughout the commentary, is to think through carefully as Christians *how* this ancient book can function authoritatively today as Scripture. This endeavor is not limited to any one exegetical approach; instead, it is grounded in a certain set of faith commitments and practices.

For his part, Lim concentrates his discussion of theological reading on the significance of Hosea's location within the Book of the Twelve. This prophetic text acts as the theological introduction to that section of the canon, specifically with its key motifs of returning to Yahweh and the land, the marriage between God and his people, issues related to theodicy, and the wisdom questions with which the book closes. As Christian Scripture, Lim believes, the message of Hosea points ultimately to Jesus, the church, and the new creation.

Lim provides a chapter of analysis for each of the ten sections into which Hosea has been divided. The solid exegetical discussions demonstrate that Lim is conversant with the pertinent scholarly research, and he displays literary-theological sensitivity by pointing out textual features and the many intertextual connections within Hosea and beyond. These qualities are evident from the beginning. In the first two chapters of the commentary, which cover 1:1–2:1 (MT 1:1–2:3) and 2:2–23 (MT 2:4–25), he expands on the hermeneutical implications of the fact that Hosea opens the Twelve (and more specifically the quartet of Hosea–Amos–Micah–Zephaniah). He also explores the relationship of chapters 1–3 to the possible narrative of the prophet's marriage, looks at the household metaphor in the ancient world as well as within a covenant framework, and examines rhetoric that has spawned feminist ideological critique. Lim's discussions are well informed and fair, even though, as in the case of any commentary, there will be disagreement on certain interpretive decisions.

The first of Castelo's three reflections appears after the commentary section on Hosea 3. He probes extensively the complex issues related to difficult speech about Yahweh in Hosea, while advocating a "hermeneutic of continuity" (pp. 99–100) in which the covenant God of the Old Testament is the Christian God. The second reflection follows the section on chapter 11 and responds to a "hermeneutic of suspicion" which doubts strongly that Hosea's marriage metaphor is viable in the modern world. What is truer to the text as Scripture, Castelo claims, is a "hermeneutic of trust" (pp. 228–29) that



contrasts the realities of ancient marriages (from which arise the meaning and power of that metaphor) with how that institution is construed today. His appropriation of Emotionally Focused Couple Theory to analyze Yahweh's emotions is a worthy contribution to the ongoing debate about the impassioned—and controversial—language of Hosea.

In the third excursus, the last chapter of this commentary, Castelo wisely places his discussion of the critique that Hosea is misogynistic, a “text of terror” (an allusion to the title of Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, OBT 13 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984]), within the broader setting of reading the Bible as Scripture. He criticizes both traditional and feminist approaches for misunderstanding the nature of texts and for not properly performing their interpretive tasks as virtuous, community-oriented readers. These three excurses are thoughtful and thorough. Some might find them to be a challenging read, but the payoff is well worth the effort.

There is much to applaud in this commentary, but I do have two observations. To begin with, although both commentators begin by claiming their ethnic and cultural heritages (Lim as a Korean-American, Castelo as a Mexican-American), there is nothing in this work that reflects what those backgrounds might contribute to the interpretation and embodiment of this prophetic text. In addition, there is no mention of minority voices that might enrich this study. For example, from a Latino/a perspective, scholars such as Justo González and Fernando Segovia have wrestled with how to read Scripture as Hispanics (e.g., Justo González, *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1996]; Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000]), and Loida Martell-Otero has written on the task of doing situated theology (e.g., Loida Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado Pérez, and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, *Latina Evangélicas: A Theological Survey from the Margins* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013]).

Second, some might find the stated theological stance a bit uncomfortable. As an Old Testament scholar, I am hesitant to read too much Christian theology back into a prophetic book. While I agree that the God of the Old Testament is the Christian God, how can one allow Hosea to proclaim its own message without asserting the need to establish connections to Jesus Christ and the Trinity? The theological coherence (and moral authority, I might add) of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture involves more (though not less) than reading it as an anticipation of redemptive history. Hosea is both significant on its own terms as well as a crucial witness to Jesus Christ. That being said, most of the commentary is not overtly theological, even as the two introductions raise the expectation of more extensive theological reflection. Indeed, many pages are dedicated to processing how Hosea is to be taken as Scripture, but this reviewer would have liked to have seen more of what that conviction might produce, particularly in the exegetical chapters.

This is a worthy addition to the Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary series. I recommend it highly.

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Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner. *The Book of Psalms*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. xxii + 1051 pp. £46.99/\$60.00.

At over a thousand pages, this work is possibly the most detailed, balanced, and up-to-date commentary on the Psalms. The NICOT series in which it is found is broadly evangelical and targeted at a wide range of readers such as scholars, pastors and priests. The user-friendliness of this commentary is evident through its use of traditional versification from English Bibles, gender-inclusive language, and transliterated Hebrew.

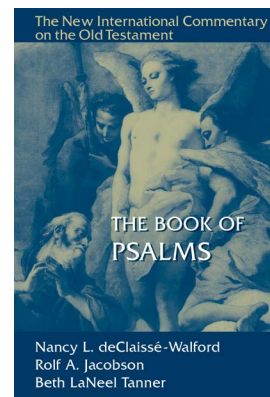
The Introduction is comprehensive and well written. Two particular features highlight the authors' method. First, they maintain a form-critical approach, not as a way to uncover the settings behind the text, but to consider the textual forms themselves as important for interpretation (pp. 16–19, 79). Second, they adopt a canonical approach to the Psalms which views the five-book structure of the Psalms as an expression of the canonical story of Israel. Book I begins with the story of David's reign before moving to Solomon's in Book II. Book III depicts the fall of Israel (and Judah) through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Book IV is a reflection of Israel's struggles during the Babylonian exile, while Book V celebrates the return and establishment of the people of God (p. 29). The shape of the five-book structure provides a rationale for "existence and a new statement of national identity" (p. 39).

The commentary on the 150 psalms is divided relatively equally among the three authors. Jacobson comments on the majority of psalms in Book I, and several psalms in Book IV. The entirety of Book III and the majority of the psalms in Books II and IV are handled by Tanner. deClaissé-Walford undertakes the rest. I find Tanner's discussions of textual issues to be detailed and robust, while deClaissé-Walford covers more ground on historical issues. Jacobson is more sensitive to poetic elements in the text, and his theological reflections are often penetrating and punctuated by sharing his own experiences. As far as format, the commentary on each psalm falls into four parts. The first is a prefatory discussion on genre, setting, superscription, and the psalm's structural divisions. This is followed by the translation and the commentary on the text. A brief theological reflection concludes the study of each psalm.

Two strengths of the commentary deserve mention. First, *the authors demonstrate sensitivity to rhetorical/poetic devices, wordplays, and key themes*. The authors have retained difficult or redundant readings and preserved emphatic Hebrew syntax. For instance, the translation of Ps 31:22[MT 23]a (וַאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי בְּחַפְזִי) "In my alarm, I, I said") leaves the pleonastic first-person pronoun intact, thereby capturing the personal thrust of the Hebrew text. Similarly, the authors have illustrated how a poetic "centering device" serves to emphasize the key theme of YHWH's kingship in Ps 67 (p. 539).

Second, *the commentary includes extensive Psalms texts from Qumran for text-critical analysis*. Taking advantage of the publication of *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (e.g., vol. XVI) at the turn of the millennium, the authors—especially Tanner—have enriched their text-critical discussions by consulting manuscripts of the psalms from Qumran. This is a feature lacking in Psalms commentaries written before the 1990s, and will be helpful to those interested in text-critical work on the Psalter.

Nonetheless, several weaknesses detract from the strengths of the commentary. First, *several methodological propositions featured prominently in the Introduction did not come to fruition in the*



*commentary.* deClaisse-Walford's canonical approach and her overarching historical proposal for the five Books remain disappointingly impressionistic. Each psalm is generally treated in isolation from its neighbors. Her canonical proposal requires the Psalter, and Book V especially, to be seen as a *historical* search for the identity of postexilic Israel. Consequently, the Psalter's messianic and eschatological perspectives are downplayed (note especially Ps 110; p. 838). It is also unclear how the "evocative language" of Hebrew poetry, as highlighted by Jacobson (p. 42), makes a difference in the actual interpretation of the Psalms. This "evocative" concept is not clearly detailed beyond the Introduction.

Second, *defining text divisions beyond the level of the verse is problematic.* The authors have used the terms "stanza," "section," or "part" to specify higher-order groupings of the text beyond the verse. However, a "stanza" can range from a single verse to seven or more. A "section" or "part," for divisions beyond the stanza, can be similarly arbitrary (pp. 372, 385, 447). These higher-order divisions are generally based on *thematic* considerations, though at times they are based on formal poetic elements in the text. It is also unclear how these terms relate to poetic divisions such as the "strophe" or "canto" used by other scholars (e.g., Pieter van der Lugt).

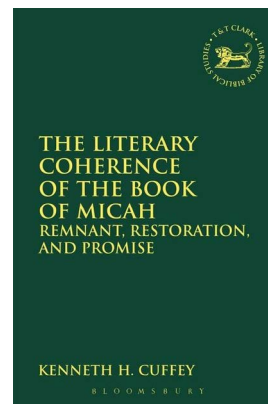
Third, *the commentary evidences the kind of inconsistency that arises from multiple authorship.* For instance, different figures for the word count of מִזְמוֹרֹת in the Psalms are cited by different authors (pp. 319, 405). Strategically prominent expressions are also translated differently, such as הוֹדוּ ("testify" vs. "give thanks" in Pss 106:1; 107:1; pp. 792, 814) and אֲשֻׁרִי ("happy" vs. "content" in Pss 1:1; 119:1; pp. 59, 872).

In comparison to the other single-volume Psalms commentaries published in 2014 (Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic]; Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr., *Psalms*, NCBC [New York: Cambridge University Press]), this NICOT commentary on the Psalms has achieved more in terms of textual criticism, translation and methodological balance. The balance can also be credited to the synergy among the strengths of the individual authors. Specialists, students, and pastors alike will find this commentary invaluable in their study of the Psalms.

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Kenneth H. Cuffey. *The Literary Coherence of the Book of Micah: Remnant, Restoration, and Promise*. The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 611. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. xx + 379 pp. £76.00/\$120.00.

This volume represents the culmination of a project that began with the author's doctoral dissertation, completed under Herbert Huffmon at Drew University in 1987. Its focus on literary coherence (defined briefly as "the connectedness of the text"; p. 6) takes up the challenge to render intelligible the structure and message of the book of Micah, and the study's length and detail testify to the rigor with which Cuffey has put himself to this task. The work is set in the context of the waning (but hardly ended) influence of historical-critical methodologies that distinguished between "genuine material from the eighth-century BCE prophet Micah" (thought to be limited to Micah 1–3; p. 7) and later "traditions and redaction" that eventually completed the book's literary development (p. 2).



In the 19th century, a perceived lack of coherence led interpreters like Julius Wellhausen to affirm that Micah 7:7–20 was an exilic addition that is "something wholly different" than what precedes it (p. 8, citing Wellhausen). A similar orientation continued in many studies of Micah in the early 20th century, although others found the book coherent (regardless of whether or not some or all of it could be confidently attributed to Micah). These two rather incompatible trends circumscribe Micah scholarship to the present, with ideological critiques joining historical and redactional arguments against the book's fundamental unity, while literary approaches and arguments related to the formation of the Book of the Twelve or of the canon as a whole have been added to those in favor of Micah's coherence. In these respects, trends in Micah studies serve as a mirror of OT scholarship as a whole.

Recognizing the variety of proposals for the book's literary coherence, the first three chapters define this crucial concept in the context of recent and current discussion, providing readers with "indicators that allow modern readers of an ancient text to find and test for coherence" (p. 4). After chapter 2 surveys studies focused on Micah's coherence, Cuffey concludes that "the definition of coherence has been too restricted" in focusing on a single aspect like structure or concepts (p. 71). This leads him in chapter 3 to reconsider the concept of coherence itself, where he adopts a broad definition drawn from communication models but suited to the varied corpus of ancient Israelite literature: "the connectedness of a work" (p. 78). The author sees this connectedness as existing in three interrelated dimensions: (1) *textual*, in that a work exhibits internal coherence in areas such as linkage, structure, perspective, theme; (2) *historical*, in answering the question of what stage of its development the text became coherent; and (3) *perceptual*, in focusing attention on the reader's prior knowledge and expectations. In addition to exhibiting these dimensions, coherence also "occurs on different levels" (e.g., sentence, paragraph, sections) and is a "relative," not a binary, matter (pp. 112–20).

The detailed nature of the book's central section is difficult to summarize in the limited space of a review. In chapter 4, Cuffey analyzes the various arguments scholars have advanced in favor of Micah's coherence. His analysis is careful and thorough, and sprinkled with important observations such as the irrelevance of the book's historical development for the question of the coherence of the book's final form. For by spreading bits of the book over various periods, historical explanations inevitably account for each part on its own, but never in coherent relation to the whole (p. 147). In this vein, Cuffey's fifth

chapter aims to consider all three dimensions of coherence simultaneously (pp. 211–12), something he finds lacking in earlier studies. This he does by examining the following theme: “although God’s people may face punishment for their sins, God is committed to forgiveness and restoration” (p. 213). This theme is highlighted by the placement of four passages focused on the remnant (2:12–13; 4:1–8; 5:6–8 [ET 7–9]; 7:18–20). The content of each of these passages corresponds to “the problems raised in the preceding sections of doom” (p. 214). Cuffey’s discussion is accompanied by a number of helpful figures (the volume includes thirty in all) and is extensively footnoted. His presentation of the book’s message is appropriately theocentric, focusing on the God who regathers, rules, leads, and forgives his people.

In chapter 6 Cuffey evaluates his proposal for Micah’s coherence on the basis of the indicators of coherence developed in the first part of the study, addressing anticipated objections along the way. His characteristic restraint and nuance are evident in the following excerpt: “It is possible that [the pericopes in Micah 1–5] may have once concerned situations that were not connected with each other. The issue, however, is whether or not the final form of Micah speaks as a whole. This has indeed happened. . . . Further, I am arguing that chs. 1–5, though all related to a central theme . . . treat different aspects of that theme” (p. 261). His final conclusion is simple yet noteworthy in the contested field of Micah scholarship: “The book of Micah is coherent” (p. 313).

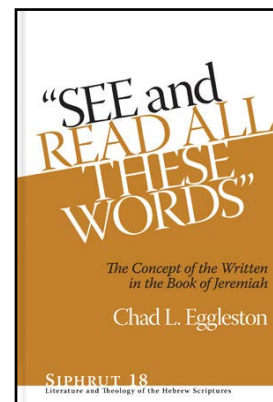
A final chapter proposes further steps and trajectories for research based on the study’s conclusions. While Cuffey sometimes seems to imply that the book of Micah reached its present form through a process of literary development that began with Micah in the eighth century BCE but continued for several centuries (p. 314), his most developed reconstruction of the book’s growth is explicitly open to both single-author and multiple-author approaches (pp. 322–27). Further, while most attempts to attribute a book’s various sections and redactions to different historical settings depend on those sections’ literary or theological incoherence with respect to one another, Cuffey argues convincingly that the book in its final form is fundamentally coherent. His reticence against adopting a complex and exclusive chronology for the book’s development is reinforced by the difficulty of assigning dates to this or that part of Micah, as well as by his observation that the prophet himself lived through “three juxtaposed contrasts” that provided plausible life settings for his various oracles: (1) between the people at large and a faithful remnant; (2) before and after Micah’s prophecy drove Hezekiah to repentance (cf. Jer 26:18–19); and (3) before and after Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah in 701 BCE (pp. 329, 336).

Writing for a scholarly audience, Cuffey does not develop an explicit theological basis for the coherence he finds in Micah, nor does he unpack the various implications of his arguments and conclusion. These omissions may reflect nothing more than the limits of Cuffey’s project, or perhaps his awareness of the epistemological limits with which the guild typically considers questions of method. Whatever the case, his work provides solid literary and theoretical corroboration for an approach in which the biblical text is taken as a coherent (albeit complex) whole unless proven otherwise on its own terms. This volume will enrich future studies of Micah and of biblical prophetic literature, and gives further proof of the methodological legitimacy and primacy of an approach that “begins with the text in its final form and tries to [explain] what the text means, as it now is” (p. 2). In doing so it will almost certainly accelerate the discipline’s move away from historical-critical approaches and toward literary and ultimately canonical ones.

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Chad L. Eggleston. *“See and Read All These Words”: The Concept of the Written in the Book of Jeremiah*. Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 18. Winona Lake, IN.: Eisenbrauns, 2016. xiv + 194 pp. \$44.50.

At what stage did Israel begin to write down its traditions? When did ancient texts such as Jeremiah begin to be treated as Scripture? Many scholars consider scribal activity to be a late development which turned old, oral, prophetic traditions into ideological texts that served the ruling élite. In this monograph, Chad Eggleston makes a convincing case that the book of Jeremiah was produced from the start with an explicit awareness of its authoritative status as the words of God, and that the textual dimension was always integrated with the oral. The present review draws out points of respectful disagreement, but only in the interests of engaging a sound thesis. (It should be mentioned at the start that this is a Duke University PhD dissertation from 2009—a detail not mentioned in the book itself, so most of the relevant research published since 2010 is passed over, including work by Mark Brummitt, Yvonne Sherwood, David Carr, John Hill, Else Holt, Mark Leuchter, Christopher Rollston, Ehud Ben Zvi, and others.)



Eggleston argues his case in four main chapters. He begins with a helpful survey and analysis of four conceptualizations of scribal activity: (1) that it blunts memory and ossifies religion (e.g., Julius Wellhausen); (2) that it enables critical thought and transforms culture (e.g., William Schniedewind); (3) that it records speech to be spoken again in the future (e.g., Hermann Gunkel), a re-performance for which the text may act as an inexact *aide-mémoire* (e.g., Susan Niditch); and (4) that it creates a source of new and contradictory meanings decided by the reader (e.g., Robert Carroll). Eggleston’s view is closest to the third of these models, because it recognizes that the oral and the written always coexisted in ancient Israel, though he criticises Niditch for maintaining that Israel transitioned from an early oral phase to a later literate phase (pp. 40–41). In this section, the one point that failed to convince was the claim, on the basis of Jeremiah 8:8’s polemic against lying scribes, that tradents in the first half of Jeremiah were wary of the written word, by contrast with its acceptance in the second half. The evidential basis for such an assertion is simply too thin.

In his second chapter Eggleston analyses references to scribes and writing in the narrative (Jer 8:8; 36; 43:1–7; 45), against the background of scribal culture in ancient Israel. His aim is to demonstrate a tight ‘chain of transmission’ from Yahweh to Jeremiah to the scribes. Eggleston’s major contribution here lies in the way he pushes from the scribes in the narrative to the scribes behind the narrative, which will become a key element in his conclusions about the theological nature of the early Hebrew Bible, a theo-logic that ‘explicitly disallows innovation and extemporaneity in the reading of the prophetic word’ (p. 171). One cannot help but feel, however, that Eggleston has been led by his interest in writing to misconstrue the nature of the links in this chain.

For Eggleston, ‘every link in the chain of transmission (YHWH, prophet, and of course, scribe) is imagined as a potential writer’ (p. 53). He weaves hints and scraps of text into a tapestry depicting both Jeremiah (29:1; 30:2; 32:10; 51:60) and Yahweh (31:33) as writers, thus legitimising the book of Jeremiah as divine writing. But while Eggleston is right about the existence of such a chain of transmission, he is likely wrong to see it as a written chain. The focus of Jeremiah is overwhelmingly on the spoken word, with written texts the means by which words may be spoken in the future. In Jeremiah 36:4–6, for



example, the word Yahweh spoke to Jeremiah is in turn spoken (that is, dictated) to Baruch, who writes it down so that the word of Yahweh may be spoken in Jeremiah's absence. Jeremiah 36:10–11 may thus be translated, 'Baruch read by means of the scroll the words of Jeremiah . . . [and Micaiah] heard all the words of Yahweh coming from the scroll' (see my discussion in *A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah*, NSBT 29 [Leicester: Apollos, 2012], 239). It is the identity of the spoken words that secures the chain of transmission, not the identity of one written word with another. This being said, the fact remains that the book of Jeremiah is a scribalisation of prophecy, and Eggleston's larger argument is not to be dismissed.

Eggleston moves on to consider scrolls in his third chapter. Here he examines the book's self-references ('this book', 'these words') as key elements of a narrative of textualisation, by which he argues that the book's scribal traditions authorise not just the words behind the text but the text itself (p. 124). Given that the term 'words' has a textual meaning (pp. 112–13), the fact that the editors of the final version of the book structured it around two references to 'the words of Jeremiah' (1:1; 51:64) deserves more attention; this device would seem to construe all the intervening text as a scroll.

In his fourth chapter Eggleston makes a case for working from the text's 'constructed audience' to find its receiving audience. His search begins by charting the wide variety of Zedekiah's reactions in Jeremiah 37–39 (pp. 128–32), which eventually points him to the existence of a similarly varied audience in front of the text (p. 148). He also takes the temple location of Jeremiah's preaching as an indication of an audience at worship. His conclusion—that the book's audience were hearers of an inscribed word (p. 166)—is sound, but not one that requires this audience to be designed as a portrait of later generations. For example, the probability that later audiences gathered in the temple where they heard scribes reading prophetic texts may be argued historically, but the location of Jeremiah's preaching does not seem to me to be grounds for this conclusion. After all, Jeremiah's hearers were hardly model worshippers!

Even so, none of these criticisms invalidate Eggleston's point that the book reflects upon its own nature as Scripture, and upon its hearers as those directly addressed by the words of God. The main strength of his argument is its dislodging of the wedge between speech and writing. The result is a due caution about our ability to separate out writing from speech, in view of 'just how difficult it is to distinguish between original oral proclamations and scribal productions shaped to be perceived as oral in nature' (p. 170). At the same time, Eggleston's work promotes confidence both in the fidelity of oral performances, and in the antiquity of enscripturated words.

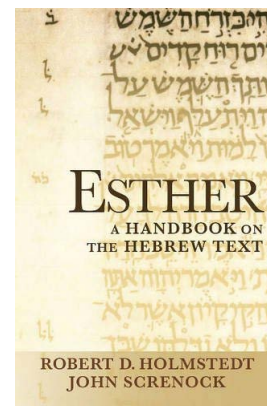
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Robert D. Holmstedt and John Screnock. *Esther: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*. Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015. 303 pp. \$39.95.

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As indicated by the subtitle, this book focuses on the Hebrew text of Esther. Although the authors refer to the volume as a ‘commentary’, it is not a commentary in the traditional sense. For example, there is minimal discussion of intertextual and literary aspects as well as interaction with other interpretations; instead, it focuses on features of the Hebrew text. According to the back cover of the book, the target audience of this book is Hebrew language students. And from the Baylor University Press website, the volumes in this series are intended as ‘prequels to commentary proper’ (<http://www.baylorpress.com/en/Series/5/Baylor%20Handbook%20on%20the%20Hebrew%20Bible>). The present book is thus aimed at intermediate Hebrew students and those seeking to understand the Hebrew text. In terms of its structure, the book contains an introduction followed by analysis of the text in four parts, then three appendices (Numeral Syntax in Esther, Bergey’s Features for Diachronic Analysis, Glossary of Linguistic Issues), a bibliography, and an index of linguistic topics that are discussed in the book.



The introduction outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the book. The authors also present their understanding of linguistic theory (e.g., syntactic components, syntactic roles, valency), verbal semantics, word order, subordinate clauses, and numeral syntax. Since the authors depart somewhat from traditional terminology and theory for Hebrew grammar, this section is required reading if one is to understand the rest of the book. For instance, *binyanim* is used throughout instead of ‘stems’; a subject-verb (S-V) word order is presented as basic, with the commonly found verb-subject (V-S) order a result of contextual ‘triggers’; verbal ‘valency’ is used, a term that describes ‘the number of arguments the verb requires in order to be semantically “complete”’ (p. 4). The authors then present a detailed defence of the traditional understanding of diachrony in biblical Hebrew, and argue in detail that Esther is a specimen of late biblical Hebrew (16 pages, half the length of the introduction).

The authors analyse the book of Esther in four parts: 1) Esther Becomes Queen of Persia (1:1–2:23); 2) Haman and Mordecai in Conflict (3:1–7:10); 3) The Jews and the Peoples in Conflict (8:1–9:32); and 4) Epilogue (10:1–3). Excluding the short treatment of Esther 10:1–3, each part is divided further into episodes, with ten episodes in total which correlate roughly to the narrative scenes of the book. Each episode is then divided into sections of 2–17 verses which include a translation and verse-by-verse analysis of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax.

There are many strengths of this volume for different groups of people. (1) For students with at least intermediate Hebrew proficiency who are studying Esther, this book would be an immense aid. The comments on Hebrew morphology, syntax, and grammar in traditional commentaries tend to be ad hoc, rather than comprehensive as in this volume. (2) For Hebrew language teachers, this volume is a good supplement for a class on the Hebrew text of Esther. I’ve previously used the Ruth volume in the same series for an intermediate Hebrew class on the text of Ruth, and we referred to it intermittently, especially to confirm our hunches and to corroborate our observations. My students did not always find the explanations in the Ruth volume convincing, although it did raise significant issues and generate productive discussions. I anticipate that this volume would be equally stimulating in this way. (3) For those in the preparation stages of writing a commentary on Esther, the detailed analysis of the Hebrew

would be most helpful. Many factors are involved in exegeting a passage, of course, but this volume provides a firm foundation from which to start.

As for any book, a reviewer can find areas of concern or offer constructive criticism. First, for readers of this volume who have not encountered the terminology and theory for the Hebrew language used in this book (as detailed in the first half of the Introduction), my concern is that some might find learning it too difficult and thus give up before reaching the analysis of the text of Esther. Although I learned Hebrew using a textbook with a different approach, I think the effort needed to learn Holmstedt and Screnock's method (as detailed in John A. Cook and Robert D. Holmstedt, *Beginning Biblical Hebrew: A Grammar and Illustrated Reader* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013]; not listed in the bibliography, although mentioned in the text of the present book) is worthwhile. This approach gives alternative explanations for certain phenomena in the Hebrew text of Esther, such as how the syntax and grammar of the book work.

Second, more explanation for contested phrases would be appreciated. Let me provide two examples. (1) Apart from being described as an 'adjunct to the verb', there is no further discussion of the meaning of מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר (‘from another place’; Es 4:14; p. 156). This important but cryptic Hebrew phrase needs commentary from the standpoints of grammar and syntax. (2) The authors explain their translation of the phrase וְכִּי אֲשָׁר אֲבַדְתִּי אֲבַדְתִּי (‘however I perish, I perish’; Es 4:16), on the basis that אֲשָׁר is a ‘manner-free choice relative’ (p. 158). The reader is then referred to the comments on 5:3, which refers to a forthcoming work by Holmstedt. Given that their translation of the phrase differs from most others, a more detailed defence of their translation is required.

Third, the second half of the introduction has a mildly polemical tone, but the opponents of the authors' views on Hebrew diachrony are not stated. For those who want to hear the other side of the debate, mention of the interlocutors would be welcome.

Fourth, for a revised edition or future volumes, a list of abbreviations for the scholarly works cited would be useful (e.g., BDB, HALOT, DCH, JM, WO, GKC, CAD). The abbreviations are given after the relevant entries in the bibliography, but a list at the beginning of the book would provide them in an accessible form for non-scholars.

In short, Holmstedt and Screnock have produced a volume worth having for intermediate and advanced Hebrew language students, along with translators and scholars. This is not only so for those already familiar with the different terminology and approach to Hebrew grammar employed in this book, but also for those who are willing to learn it.

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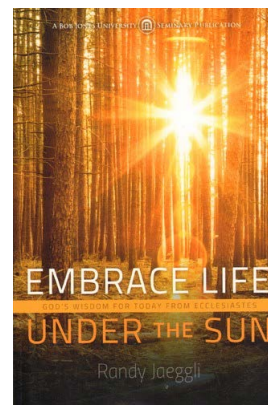
Randy Jaeggli. *Embrace Life Under the Sun: God's Wisdom for Today from Ecclesiastes*. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2015. 247 pp. \$19.00.

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Philip G. Ryken. *Why Everything Matters: The Gospel in Ecclesiastes*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015. 141 pp. £8.99/\$14.99.

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Randy Jaeggli, a professor of Old Testament studies at Bob Jones University, states that the book of Ecclesiastes presents “a divine philosophy for living in a fallen world” (p. 22). He arranges his work in six chapters, beginning the first with the contention that Qoheleth’s dissuasive words, “Of making many books there is no end” (Eccl 12:12), are not intended to discourage another book on Ecclesiastes. So he forges ahead with the goal of providing readers with “pure joy as the message of Ecclesiastes becomes dear to each believer’s heart” (p. 2). While we can appreciate his self-confidence, it would be peculiar if no one else had remedied the supposed paucity of books that instruct believers on how to “annunciate a biblical, coherent philosophy for how to live in a world that sin has so severely marred” (p. 23).



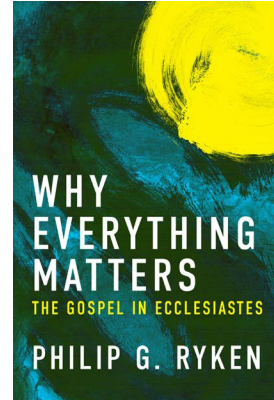
To accomplish that, in chapter 1 Jaeggli conducts his readers through a rather extended journey of the merits and demerits of Solomonic authorship, insisting that “it is crucial for correct interpretation of the book to identify Solomon as the author” (p. 2). His readers, of course, will need to decide for themselves if those who hold to non-Solomonic authorship (e.g., Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]; and Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999]) end up interpreting Ecclesiastes as possessing less power and persuasion, thus justifying his claim.

In chapter 2 Jaeggli introduces the attractive idea that Ecclesiastes is connected directly with God’s creation of humanity and his subsequent fall, citing Ecclesiastes 7:29. To support his thesis, he mentions two terms shared by this verse and Gen 2:18: the adverb “alone” (לְבַד) and the verb “to make” (עָשָׂה). While two common terms may be sufficient to establish similarities between two texts, interpreters must be careful not to take the comparison beyond similarity if such is not justified. This rule of intertextuality then brings into doubt the specificity of his conclusion: “This tie-in to the creation account sets up a comparison of two things that are not right. Just as it was not good for Adam to be alone, so it is lamentable that man has spoiled his originally upright condition that existed in the Garden of Eden before the Fall” (p. 31, emphasis added). But this does not seem to be the result of the comparison. While both occurrences of the verb “to make” relate to the creation of humanity (Eccl 7:29 to “mankind” generally; Gen 2:18 to the creation of “woman”), Qoheleth applies the term “alone” to his search (“Alone—note this!—I have found that . . .”), whereas Genesis applies it to the man’s unmatched condition in the world of living creatures that have mates (“It is not good for man to be alone”).

Underlying the entire book of Ecclesiastes, Jaeggli asserts, is Solomon’s teaching about who God is: “The only logical place to start in our exploration of the divinely revealed philosophy for living in a fallen world is Solomon’s teaching about who God is” (p. 25). This being the bedrock of the study, the upper strata therefore become: 1) God created mankind; 2) God has the right to control what he created; 3) God does not have to tell us what he is doing; 4) God judges all people; and 5) God deserves reverence.

The remaining chapters of the book are subthemes of the main theme of who God is. They proceed as follows: “Vanity Is the State of Life in a Fallen World” (ch. 3); “Enjoying Life Is a Gift from God in a Fallen World” (ch. 4); “The Fear of the Lord Is Essential to Life in a Fallen World” (ch. 5); and “Even Wisdom Has Limits in a Fallen World” (ch. 6). Using the Hebrew text of Ecclesiastes, Jaeggli describes these themes from various angles, giving many hypothetical and personal stories along the way. His anecdotes in particular are warm and invite the reader into his own mental and personal world (some readers, however, may find his images from deer hunting offensive, e.g., p. 83).

Around the same time Jaeggli’s work was published in 2015, another study on Ecclesiastes appeared from Philip G. Ryken, president of Wheaton College and former senior pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Like Jaeggli, Ryken has provided a study of Ecclesiastes for preachers and Sunday School teachers that is arranged in ten chapters of comparable length, packaging each chapter under a virtual hashtag that hints at the thrust of the chapter. Also like Jaeggli’s book, the author discusses Ecclesiastes by theme rather than text, although Ryken is less inclined to discuss textual matters than is Jaeggli. Ryken’s familiarity with contemporary language and cultural literature, however, helps readers feel they are connected with Qoheleth in a way that makes his words relevant, if not contemporary. Both books, quite appropriately, engage Ecclesiastes as a theological book with advice for living, especially since both are written for the church rather than college and seminary classrooms. Yet, at the same time, it is evident that both authors have some familiarity with critical issues surrounding the book, such as authorship and theological inconsistencies, even though they might not prefer the latter term. While Ryken is inclined toward Solomonic authorship, he does not, unlike Jaeggli, make it an essential tenet for interpreting the book properly. In fact, at times he drops a hint that the writer may not be Solomon (e.g., pp. 46, 130).



In Chapter 1 Ryken asks the question, “Why Bother?” and deals with the merits and demerits of studying Ecclesiastes. He then concludes that the message of the book is apocopated—it lacks the final word: “Almost every verse in Ecclesiastes shows us how much we need a Savior to make all things new” (p. 15). Another of Ryken’s angles on the book is that the author of Ecclesiastes asks the right questions, like that of 3:21, “Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward?” And he sometimes supplies the right answer in the book itself, like 12:7, “The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” But most often the ultimate answer is found only in Jesus Christ and his resurrection and promise of eternal life (p. 83).

In their emphasis on Christ as the theological endpoint of Ecclesiastes, the two books under review are in agreement. On the one hand, I certainly agree with this perspective, since Christians believe that Jesus Christ is God’s ultimate revelation of truth. However, a methodological word of caution is in order, since this viewpoint can sometimes hinder interpreters from giving due diligence to the message of an OT book itself when it seems so divergent from the NT. For example, some translations and commentators view Ecclesiastes 7:16–17 as commending a life that does not over-engage in righteousness. In fact, both of these writers seem to look for a more moderate way to understand this passage: Ryken interprets it as “self-righteousness” (pp. 108–10, following Norman Whybray) and Jaeggli as a manipulative righteousness to get some advantage from God (pp. 131–34).

Yet, even though the wider biblical perspective would lead us to believe that one should not be overly righteous, we ought to allow Qoheleth the latitude of taking the position that a moderate faith is

preferable, particularly in light of his unorthodox leanings from time to time. This sort of moderation is precisely the way we need to interpret Job's outlandish statements in the dialogues with his friends. While a moderate religious position may not have been Qoheleth's final counsel to those struggling with life's "vanities," it certainly was a position he entertained at some point before he came to the ultimate conclusion that we should "fear God and keep his commandments" (12:13). Again, our model is Job's experience, with his final conclusions in 40:3–5 and 42:2–6.

Both of these studies will lead the preacher and teacher through the major themes of Ecclesiastes, even though these themes are framed differently by these two commentators. In fact, it would be stimulating for the enterprising preacher and teacher to use these two works in tandem and allow them to feed into each other.

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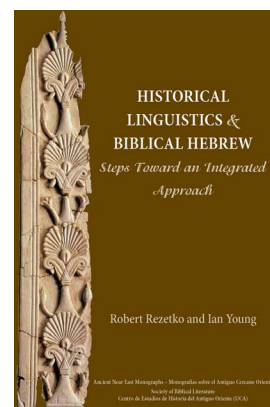
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Robert Rezetko and Ian Young. *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps Toward an Integrated Approach*. Ancient Near Eastern Monographs 9. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. xx + 699 pp. £57.50/\$89.95.

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Rezetko and Young are hardworking and prodigious scholars who previously collaborated on a number of historical Hebrew language projects, notably their 2008 volume (with Martin Ehrensverd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts: An Introduction to Approaches and Problems* [London: Equinox]). In that volume, they argued that the two styles of biblical Hebrew usually referred to as Early Biblical Hebrew (EBH) and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) are misleading, as is also the case with similar categorizations such as SBH (Standard Biblical Hebrew). They concluded that these supposedly datable styles of Hebrew were not chronologically separate stages at all, but rather co-existing styles of the language employed by biblical authors as well as scribes throughout the entire biblical period. EBH should thus be understood to denote a kind of inclination toward conservatism in linguistic choices, favoring a relatively small core of traditional literary forms which were used throughout the biblical period, not merely in early times (e.g., during the Israelite monarchy). By contrast, so-called LBH represents a more flexible style in which biblical-era authors and scribes felt free to adopt a greater variety of linguistic forms throughout Israel's history and not merely the exilic or post-exilic period. Masoretic Hebrew, the kind we read in virtually all the usual Hebrew Bibles, is the final result of a process of later editing that applied elements of either EBH or LBH style—or both—in various ways to given portions of the OT. The authors therefore held that EBH and LBH characteristics cannot be used to date biblical texts.

These conclusions in their first volume left not a few scholars (e.g., Ronald Hendel, Jan Joosten) wondering if Young and Rezetko had figured out anything useful about the history of biblical Hebrew, because their conclusions were essentially negative. That is, Young and Rezetko opined that the usual methods and assumptions related to dating OT Hebrew texts would not produce correct results because of the nature of the mixing and combining of styles throughout the OT. It was this pessimism about the usual methods for dating Hebrew that led Young and Rezetko to search elsewhere for a new, more scientific methodological paradigm. That need provided a springboard for the book here reviewed,



whose relatively neutral title, *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, hardly connotes the degree to which they have embarked on a very different direction for addressing the problems of dating biblical Hebrew.

In the main, the authors do six things in this book:

1. They accept relatively recent, variation-based studies of the history of selected English, French, and Spanish texts as valid, and seek to apply the same sort of approach to biblical texts.
2. They argue against traditional textual criticism on the grounds that text critics are wrongly wedded to the idea that the Masoretic Text represents only a modest deviation from the original text of the various OT books. The authors instead contend that the medieval MT manuscripts are almost certainly vastly different from the originals.
3. They introduce and argue for the validity and usefulness of two techniques for approaching the diachronic history of biblical Hebrew. The first of these is “cross-textual variable analysis,” which, in their words, “compares different language versions of the same writing” (p. 7). The idea is to take, say, a book of the Bible and find all the variations (language differences of virtually any sort, from slight differences in morphology to small differences in wording, to major differences in the wording or style) in all the extant manuscripts and editions of that book to determine the history of its linguistic development over time.
4. They introduce and argue for the validity and usefulness of a second technique called “variationist analysis” for approaching the diachrony of biblical Hebrew. This is different from cross-textual variable analysis, but closely related. Its objective is “to describe and explain patterns of variation in language as they relate to times and places and individuals and groups” (p. 212). Of necessity it is a “hybrid discipline, which in a chronological framework is connected to historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, variationist sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, historical sociolinguistics, and quantitative methods” (p. 212).
5. They offer a variety of listings, tabulations, calculations, charts, and detailed examples of the initial results that their methods produce when applied to sample OT Hebrew texts.
6. They offer suggestions for further research along the same lines, including the need for more digital databases of the variants found within the OT. These databases would make the sort of research they describe in the book more comprehensive and productive.

This is a book neither for generalists, nor for beginning or intermediate Hebrew students. It might work, however, as part of the reading for an advanced Hebrew language seminar or the like. The book is essentially a technical, fairly complex, 699-page progress report of research. The authors are trying to put diachronic Hebrew linguistics on a careful scientific footing, which is a worthy enterprise. But as all of us in biblical studies know all too well, there have been and continue to be a great many ideas about what constitute “scientific” biblical studies. No matter how objective and ideologically neutral such approaches may claim to be, they are always based on a range of assumptions and biases that can pile up in such a way as to challenge anyone’s findings.

Permit me an illustrative anecdote. When I was an undergraduate at Harvard in the early 1960s, the discipline known as *symbolic logic* was hot stuff. It was “the future” for philosophy, many claimed, because it would enable rigorous, “scientific” rules for human language and reasoning. In symbolic

logic, both language and logic were reduced to strict formulas and semi-mathematical descriptions, with the expectation that the way people reasoned could be corrected and advanced by measurable, testable, mathematically checkable language analysis. Eager to be on the cutting edge, I took a course on symbolic logic from W. V. Quine, a guru of the method in those days. Unfortunately, students found out by the end of the course that we really couldn't think any more clearly or reason any more persuasively than when the course began. Today, symbolic logic is no longer held out to be a guarantor of clear thinking. I could have predicted that in 1963, but nobody would have listened then.

Similarly, I'm not entirely optimistic that Rezetko and Young will end up being persuasive. There are several reasons for this doubt. First, their methods treat the Bible as a strictly human book like any other. Its contents are assumed to have evolved over multiple and complex stages of composition, redaction, and re-redaction, both major and minor, until they reached the stage called the Masoretic Text as exemplified in the Leningrad Codex—the basis for all modern editions of the Hebrew Bible. To cite an example of their skepticism, the authors argue that “neither the Masoretic Text nor any other biblical text is likely to preserve the authentic details of the language of any biblical author” (p. 406). That's a pretty radical conclusion, as much pre-suppositional as it is empirical.

Second, they assume that the process of linguistic change within biblical books was so constant and substantial over the centuries that anyone who claims that ancient compilers and scribes preserved biblical texts well enough to keep them essentially the same over generations and centuries is naïve. Yet, the electronic-penetration reading of the Ein-Gedi Leviticus Synagogue scroll, just announced in September 2016, is relevant here. No less a text specialist than Emanuel Tov notes that the wording of that scroll, dated to the third century AD or earlier, is “100 percent identical” to the medieval MT version. That's proof of nearly a millennium of accurate copying, recopying, and lack of change, whether purposeful or accidental. As Tov goes on to note, “This is quite amazing for us. In 2,000 years, this text has not changed” (as cited in Daniel Estrin, “Scanning software deciphers ancient biblical scroll,” *AP News Report*, 21 September 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/60785bb2031a478cb71ce9278782c320/scanning-software-deciphers-ancient-biblical-scroll>). Rezetko and Young take the opposite approach that precise transmission of biblical texts over such a long time didn't occur before the invention of the printing press. In fact, it did.

Third, they place great faith in the analogy between the history of transmission of certain English, French, and Spanish texts and the methods used to analyze them, and the history of the transmission of the Hebrew Bible and the methods that should be used to analyze its texts. They assume that biblical authors, compilers and scribes were just as willing to reword, reshape, rephrase, and modernize texts to suit themselves and their contemporaries, and just as unconcerned to preserve the original wordings, as were the tradents of other types of literature, including relatively modern European literature. Additionally, they hold that “the surviving texts of the Hebrew Bible do not provide evidence even for the original shape of the biblical compositions, and much less for the linguistic features used by any original authors” (p. 407). Rezetko and Young hope that they have offered up good evidence, though initial and partial, for such conclusions.

My own sense is that, in spite of many interesting and potentially useful statistics of diverse types of variations in the Hebrew Bible, it is more likely that the authors may have too often allowed their presuppositions to lead them to their conclusions, albeit in a very complicated, not easily noticeable



way. The majority view of how biblical Hebrew came to be remains for the time being, despite this latest challenge by Rezetko and Young.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

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Donald L. Berry. *Glory in Romans and the Unified Purpose of God in Redemptive History*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016. xi + 232 pp. £21.00/\$29.00.

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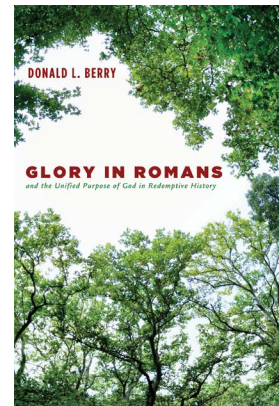
Donald Berry correctly highlights the significance of *Glory in Romans and the Unified Purpose of God in Redemptive History* when he states, “This study marks the most thorough exegetical treatment of Paul’s use of the δόξα word group in Romans to date” (p. 195). I can vouch for his claim. In my own research, I’ve discovered a severe dearth of resources with the depth found in Berry’s recent book. One of his major objectives is to show the purpose and prominence of this motif within Paul’s letter. As he notes, “Of the ninety-six occurrences of δόξα in Pauline writings, twenty-two are found in Romans” (p. 4).

According to his thesis, glory in Romans refers to the eschatological life of believers, which will finally be revealed at the resurrection. Ultimately, glorification is the manifestation of the nature and character of the invisible God whose image we are made to reflect.

Rather than give equal attention to each section of Paul’s letter, Berry’s study carefully examines specific passages that explicitly speak of glory [δόξα]. Aside from the introduction and conclusion, three chapters look at Romans 1–4, two chapters consider Romans 5:1–8:16, two more explore Romans 8:17–30 before concluding with individual chapters that survey Romans 9–11 and Romans 12–16. He also includes two appendices. The first briefly reviews the relationship between glory and the image of God in the OT. The second revisits the discussion about whether God’s glory is his ultimate purpose and humanity’s ultimate end.

Berry’s exposition of the glory-motif in Romans draws from the stories of Adam and Israel. In fact, he argues, “For Paul, eschatological glory is the realization of God’s purposes for Adam and for Israel to see and to show forth the glory of God” (p. 5). According to Berry’s reading of Romans 1, Paul’s use of glory throughout Romans is primarily rooted in OT themes like image of God and sonship. Multiple times, Berry nearly equates humanity’s glory with image of God language (pp. 27, 83, 141, 148, 206–9).

When interpreting Romans 8, Berry pays significant attention to “functional glory” whereby humanity reigns by representing God in the world through bearing the ethical likeness of Christ. While sharing in Christ’s glory entails resurrection and adoption, it also includes inward transformation. Practically, this means “the Spirit, through the very sufferings that believers face, produces in them the perseverance and tested character that are the precursors to final, eschatological glory” (pp. 122–23).



Berry communicates his findings with a balance and clarity that make his book accessible to a wide range of readers. As a revised dissertation, *Glory in Romans and the Unified Purpose of God in Redemptive History* demonstrates exegetical rigor yet with surprising brevity (less than 200 pages). He anticipates potential objections, such as whether there is a conflict between God's glory and human glorification. He answers, "This is because his glory is responsible for their glory. His death and resurrection have made possible their glorification. And the glory that is displayed in the saints is a reflection of his own glory. It is theirs derivatively, it is his by nature" (151).

What might readers find concerning or unconvincing about Berry's book? He seems overly dependent on a handful of commentators, especially Schreiner, Moo, and Piper. One wonders what would emerge through increased interaction with other scholars and themes within Romans and Pauline theology. Due to his methodology (pp. 7–10), the book says nothing about the meaning and function of δόξα within the historical and social context of Romans. Because Berry's study narrowly focuses on Paul's δόξα usage, he also does not explore closely related concepts like honor and shame, which appear throughout the letter. Perhaps this explains why he translates κατασχύνω inconsistently as "be put to shame" (pp. 77–78) and then "disappointed" (p. 156).

The book should spur further research that considers questions left unanswered in this book. For instance, it seems that more needs to be said about the role of glory-related themes in Romans 12–16, which Berry only briefly touches on. Also, Berry's focus on Adam limits how much he connects glory with Israel in Romans. Therefore, he does not delve deeply into the OT background of Paul's quotations in Romans 9–11, although those OT texts are rich in glory language.

Berry's excellent work is constructive. He does not spend much time critiquing others' views. His tone is generous and measured. Like every book, *Glory in Romans and the Unified Purpose of God in Redemptive History* has natural limitations. Nevertheless, Berry has gone further than others into a much neglected topic. For interpreters of Romans and anyone who wants to better understand Paul's view of glory, Berry's book is important reading.

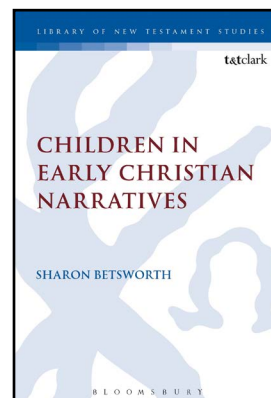
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Sharon Betsworth. *Children in Early Christian Narratives*. Library of New Testament Studies 521. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. x + 214 pp. £28.99/\$39.95.

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Jesus loves the little children. *Sic et non*. Yes, Jesus does, indeed, love "all the children of the world" as the familiar children's song goes, however, "there is so much more to the story than that," according to Sharon Betsworth (p. 187). Betsworth's latest work, *Children in Early Christian Narratives*, issues a clarion call for adults to re-read the gospel narratives and to reconsider the often minor, sentimental roles children have been ascribed in Christian scholarship. In this work, Betsworth (Associate Professor of Religion at Oklahoma City University) argues that the "children's presence informs each gospel's understanding of



Jesus and his identity and message” (p. 1). In this sense, the canonical gospels reverse the impression that children were unimportant in society and in literature (p. 6).

Betsworth’s monograph consists of nine chapters, a ten-page bibliography, and an index of biblical and extra-biblical references. Chapter 1 serves as Betsworth’s introduction, in which she sets forth the subjects of her socio-literary analyses (the canonical gospels as well as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* [IGT] and the *Protoevangelium of James* [POJ]) as well as her method of “Childist Interpretation” (pp. 2–4). *In nuce*, “Childist Interpretation” focuses on the role of children and youth in texts, and sees them not as passive bystanders or victims, but as important characters within the narrative (p. 4). Chapter 2 lays the foundation for the remainder of her book in a masterful survey of children’s roles in their ancient Mediterranean context. Betsworth argues that archaeological evidence dispels the notion that “children were considered of no value in the Roman world” (p. 37). Chapter 3 is Betsworth’s longest chapter and builds upon her previous volume, *The Reign of God Is Such as These: A Socio-Literary Analysis of Daughters in the Gospel of Mark*, LNTS 422 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010). Chapter 4 investigates the Matthean theme of Jesus as child, which guides Betsworth’s reading of Matthew. For Betsworth, “the question is whether the disciples will be able to follow Jesus in this way, because for the disciples to become like children is ultimately to become like Jesus” (p. 97). Chapter 5 focuses on Luke, which contains the most material on children of any of the canonical gospels (p. 99). Unfortunately, Betsworth bifurcates Luke-Acts in this discussion, and argues that Luke portrays Jesus as an “only child” (pp. 120–23). Betsworth surveys John’s portrait of Jesus as *Logos* and life in chapter 6, with chapters 7–8 covering the IGT and POJ respectively. Chapter 9 concludes that, literarily, children are equal vis-à-vis with other biblical characters, and since Scripture depicts God as a child, this should also inform one’s theology (pp. 186–87).

There is much to commend in Betsworth’s work: her writing is well-researched and lucid; chapter 2 is excellent and serves as a beneficial and accessible prolegomenon to the discussion; Betsworth argues her thesis well and convincingly; and Betsworth’s critique of the context from which the “kingdom of God” nomenclature emerges (seventeenth-century England) is interesting and keenly insightful. Betsworth argues that this phrase is better understood as “empire/reign of God” to contrast the notion of the Roman empire rather than the anachronistic conception of “kingdom” (p. 41).

However, Betsworth’s work is not without faults. First, Betsworth claims in chapter 4: “By calling the child the ‘Son of God,’ Luke is not indicating divine paternity, but rather affirming ‘God’s self-evident, indelible commitment and engagement in this human life from before its beginning’” (p. 104). This seems to elevate Jesus’s humanity above his deity. Second, Betsworth seems to overstate Luke’s portrait of Jesus as “only child” (p. 121). Betsworth is correct that Luke’s Gospel never mentions the siblings of Jesus by name. In Acts, however, the consensus holds that James, the biological sibling of Jesus, is explicitly referenced thrice (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18–20) in contexts within which terms are used that imply a familial relationship to the other Christians (ἀδελφοῖς/ἀδελφοί/ἀδελφές). Unless Luke is not the author of Acts, Luke does not *discount* the role of Jesus’s biological siblings in his narrative. Contra Betsworth, Luke actually *highlights* James’s role in Jesus’s “redefined” family as an important leader within the nascent Christian movement. Moreover, Luke never uses the term μονογενής to describe Jesus as he does in the three pericopes on healing children (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38). Third, Betsworth seems to present the IGT as a “Christian narrative” on par with the canonical gospels (p. 153). The IGT presents a heretical portrait of Christ—the cornerstone of Christianity—and orthodox Christians (e.g., Irenaeus) apparently condemned it, as Betsworth concedes (p. 147). The paucity of extant manuscript

evidence and lack of uniformity within the IGT texts, themselves, contradict Beckworth's estimation of the IGT as a "Christian" narrative.

In conclusion, Betsworth makes an important contribution to scholarly discussions on the literary roles children play across the gospel narratives, and helps give her readers a more fully-orbed perspective on the issues involved. Regarding biblical studies, Betsworth paves the way for further exploration of the remaining corpora within the Old and New Testaments (p. 4). While Betsworth's more controversial claims should give careful scholars some pause, this work deserves a hearing from anyone wanting to better understand the important (yet oft-neglected) roles children play throughout the gospel narratives.

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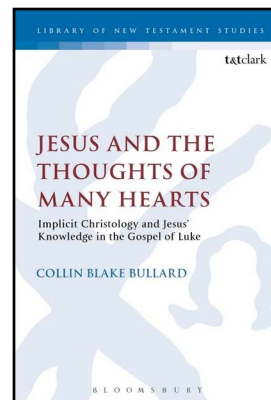
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Collin Blake Bullard. *Jesus and the Thoughts of Many Hearts: Implicit Christology and Jesus' Knowledge in the Gospel of Luke*. Library of New Testament Studies 530. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. xviii + 214 pp. £28.99/\$39.00.

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The extent of Jesus's knowledge seems paradoxical in the canonical gospels. On the one hand, Jesus's knowledge appears to be limited (Mark 13:32; Luke 2:52). On the other hand, Jesus displays supernatural omniscience evinced in his prophetic pronouncements as well as Jesus's knowledge of the inner thoughts of certain characters (Luke 4:24; 5:22, 6:8; *et passim*). This paradox is the subject of Collin Blake Bullard's monograph, *Jesus and the Thoughts of Many Hearts: Implicit Christology and Jesus' Knowledge in the Gospel of Luke*. Bullard (Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodville, TX) argues in this work (a revision of his doctoral thesis at Cambridge under the supervision of Simon Gathercole) that "Luke understood Jesus' knowledge to be a divine ability which he possessed by virtue of his identity as Lord" (p. 26). The bedrock of Bullard's project is Simeon's oracle in Luke 2:34–35, which Bullard sees as a hermeneutical lens through which Luke frames the earthly ministry of Jesus via *inclusio* with Luke 24:7 (pp. 7–8, 157). Bullard's volume makes an important contribution to scholarship because "the Christological questions relating to Jesus' knowledge of thoughts have not been sufficiently considered in combination with ancient parallels and in light of the Lukan narrative" (p. 9). Bullard seeks to fill this lacuna. Rather than seeing Luke's portrayal of Jesus's divine knowledge as the result of extra-biblical parallels—thus, eschewing the seeming parallelomania prevalent in Lukan studies (e.g., the investigations of Luke 16:19–31 by Hugo Gressmann, Richard Bauckham, and Ronald Hock)—Bullard sees Luke's portrayal of Jesus as commensurate with the portrayal of YHWH's knowledge in the LXX (especially, Ps 93 [94]) (pp. 62–64, 168–69, 175).

Bullard's narrative- and redaction-critical study consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, and useful indices for biblical/extra-biblical references and authors. In his introduction, Bullard identifies the motif of Jesus's knowledge of thoughts in seven pericopes (four that are explicit: Luke 5:17–26; 6:6–11; 9:46–48; 11:14–32; and three that are implicit: 7:36–50; 11:37–54; 24:36–43). He investigates each of these pericopes via a four-fold rubric: (1) the presentation of Jesus's knowledge; (2) Lukan redaction; (3) resonance with Simeon's oracle; and (4) implicit Christology, noting



“the points at which the text encourages a link between Jesus’ knowledge and Jesus’ identity” (pp. 3, 82). Bullard concludes his introduction with a review of literature, and highlights the “gap in scholarship” surrounding the motif of Jesus’s “knowledge of thoughts” (p. 9). In chapter 1, Bullard surveys the Greco-Roman and Jewish sources and argues that “expressions of divine knowledge in the OT and STJ [Second Temple Judaism] provide . . . the closest literary parallels to Jesus’ knowledge of thoughts in Luke” (p. 63). Chapter 2 explores the framework provided by Simeon’s oracle in Luke 2:34–35, and chapter 3 comprises nearly half the book (ninety-three pages) in Bullard’s narrative-critical study of the seven pericopes above. For Bullard, Jesus’s knowledge is not incidental to his identity as Jesus uncovers the depths of the human heart (p. 184).

Bullard’s work displays numerous strengths. He argues his thesis well, and disproves many a priori assumptions within the religionsgeschichtliche Schule and the subsequent work of Rudolf Bultmann regarding Luke’s “Hellenistic touch” of Jesus as a “divine man” (pp. 22, 29–34), as well as Luke’s supposed “primitive/low” Christology (p. 182). It is mostly well-written (only a few typographical errors were noted [e.g., pp. 113, 153, 172]). Further, this work reflects Bullard’s pastoral heart—thus, bridging the gap between the academy and the Church.

However, as good as Bullard’s work is, a few quibbles remain. First, Bullard fails to adequately address the tension(s) arising from passages that present the apparent limitations of Jesus’s knowledge. Neither Mark 13:32 nor Luke 2:52 (both of which are *loci classici* in the discussion) is referenced in Bullard’s work, and this is perhaps a blind spot in Bullard’s argument (pp. 198–99). Second, the section on Luke 11:37–54 is perhaps the weakest link in Bullard’s *catena* as Bullard seems to have overstated his case. Luke 11:37–54 does not fit Bullard’s schema: “a verb of knowing followed by a direct object meaning ‘thoughts’” (p. 7). Moreover, the other “implicit” passages in Bullard’s study (Luke 7:36–50; 24:36–43) more readily display Jesus’s knowledge of interior thoughts/monologues than does 11:37–54. Contra Bullard, Jesus could have been responding to a visible look of “surprise” on the Pharisee’s face in 11:38, rather than knowing his inner thoughts/heart. Third, the flow of Bullard’s monograph is interrupted at times, especially in the inclusion of “other relevant passages” in chapter 3 (pp. 139–53). This section appears disjointed and misplaced, and perhaps should have been moved to an appendix or a separate chapter.

In conclusion, Bullard’s meticulous monograph paves the way forward for investigations studying Jesus’s knowledge and interior monologues in the remaining canonical gospels (see, e.g., Michal Dinkler’s recent article, “‘The Thoughts of Many Hearts Shall Be Revealed’: Listening in on Lukan Interior Monologues,” *JBL* 133 [2015]: 373–99). While a few flaws were noted above, this work is overall an excellent study that demonstrates the literary artistry of Luke and the intertextual resonances that reverberate throughout the Third Gospel.

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Brendan Byrne. *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*. Rev. ed. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015. viii + 232 pp. £19.04/\$24.95.

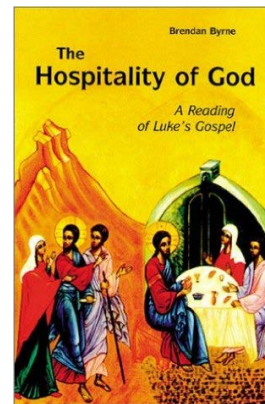
Birthered out of a “series of workshops on Luke’s Gospel,” *The Hospitality of God* takes its readers on a literary odyssey through the work of the third Evangelist, whom Dante famously described as *scriba mansuetudinus Christi*: the “narrator of the winning gentleness of Christ” (p. 1). In this monograph, Brendan Byrne (Professor of New Testament at the Jesuit Theological College in Melbourne, Australia) adopts a literary rather than historical approach to Luke—think Luke Timothy Johnson or Robert Tannehill—and inductively argues his thesis that those who hospitably receive Jesus as guest will be drawn into “a much wider sphere of hospitality: the hospitality of God” (pp. 5, 8).

While there has been a pervasive trend in Lukan scholarship recently in studying the theme of “hospitality,” Byrne’s volume (revised from the original 2000 edition) makes a unique contribution as it traces this theme through the entirety of Luke, rather than merely focusing on a handful of key texts. This is because, for Byrne, “Luke sees the whole life and ministry of Jesus as a *visitation* on God’s part to Israel and the world” (p. 8, emphasis original). Moreover, Byrne’s literary study uncovers a triangular pattern of relationships within numerous Lukan pericopes in which three groups of characters—namely Jesus, the “marginalized” persons in need of salvation, and those murmuring against Jesus/them—are presented by Luke, “by way of contrast,” to show the diversity of human response to Jesus as “guest” (pp. 9–10). Byrne suggests that this triadic arrangement of characters implicitly posits in the mind of Luke’s hearers/readers the questions of “Who is showing hospitality to Jesus?” and “Who is in most need of conversion—the marginalized or the murmurers?” (p. 9).

Structurally, Byrne sees Luke-Acts as a singular drama/story spanning three stages: 1) the era of promises (i.e., the prophecies contained within the Scriptures of the Old Testament with the transition of the infancy narrative and preaching of John the Baptist in Luke 1:1–3:20); 2) the “day” of Jesus (Luke 3:21–24:53 with the transition of Pentecost in Acts 1:1–26); and 3) the “day” of the Church (Acts 2:1–28:31, which concludes at the time of judgment [pp. 11–14]). Byrne’s work consists of a brief, seven-page introduction, a newly-added section discussing the features of Luke’s Gospel, a literary analysis tracing the theme of hospitality throughout Luke’s twenty-four chapters, and lastly, a concluding synthesis of twenty-one “quasi-theses” derived from Byrne’s literary analysis of Luke’s text (pp. 213–15). Bibliography, Scripture, modern author, and subject indices are included as well.

Byrne helpfully posits some of his *a priori* assumptions regarding Luke’s Gospel in his introduction. Byrne takes Luke in its final, canonical form, sees the author as a “third-generation Christian” writing sometime after the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman armies in the year 70,” presupposes the literary unity of Luke-Acts, and follows the “majority” of scholars that espouse the “Two-Source” theory of the Synoptic Gospels with Luke’s unique “insertions” (e.g., Luke 9:51–18:14) stemming from his so-called “Sayings Source that scholars reconstruct and call ‘Q’” (pp. 4–5, 106).

Numerous strengths mark Byrne’s work. It is easily accessible (both in content and price) and includes helpful graphics that adroitly illustrate key concepts. Further, Byrne’s “Features of Luke’s Gospel” chapter should prove beneficial as it succinctly summarizes key concepts and theological motifs within Luke. This section alone is worth the price of this book.



Despite Byrne's contributions, there is room for improvement. First, despite being (mostly) well-written, Byrne's work features transliterations of Greek words (e.g., σπλαγχνίζομαι) that deviate from the SBL standards (pp. 82, 114, 118, 145). While his choice to transliterate is understandable given his target audience of pastors, students, and laity, Byrne should have ensured that the transliteration standards were consistently met. Byrne also repeats himself with a redundant discussion of the exegetical pitfalls of the moniker "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25–37), which should have been omitted in the proofreading/editing process (pp. 113, 115). Second, Byrne exhibits too much dependence on only a handful of sources (especially in his reliance on Fitzmyer). This is elucidated when perusing the paucity of references within Byrne's two-and-a-half-page bibliography. Third, Byrne seems to *a priori* reject much of the historical value of Luke-Acts, and this skepticism colors his exegesis (pp. 24, 60–70, 94, 136–37, 212). Furthermore, Byrne seems to caricature those who read various Lukan texts literally (e.g., Luke 21:27) by labeling them pejoratively as "fundamentalists" (p. 180). This is unfortunate, and does not seem very *hospitable* in a book written on the subject of *hospitality*. If Byrne intended his book to be read only by those swimming within his own theological/hermeneutical stream, he should have stated this in his introduction.

In sum, Byrne's *The Hospitality of God* is not perfect. However, busy pastors and students alike should appreciate this volume as a useful and accessible resource that quickly summarizes key concepts in preaching/teaching through Luke's Gospel. Those looking for a more traditional, historical-critical commentary will be left wanting, but those wanting to quickly grasp a holistic picture of Luke's literary structure and artistry will not be disappointed.

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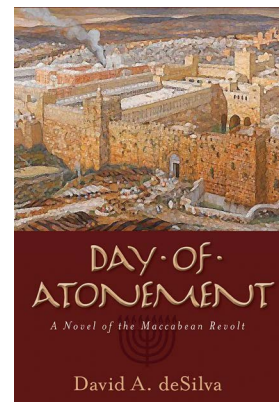
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David A. deSilva. *Day of Atonement. A Novel of the Maccabean Revolt*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015. 320 pp. £9.99/\$15.99.

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Very few biblical scholars are also writers of interesting and engaging fiction. But David deSilva is one of them. His *Day of Atonement* is a novel set in the turbulent years leading up to the Maccabean revolt. A culture war is being waged in Jerusalem and Judea in the second century BCE. The progressives view the adoption of Greek culture as essential to the continuing relevance of Judaism in a rapidly changing world. The traditionalists see Hellenization as nothing short of heresy—the paganization of their ancestral religion and the desecration of Yahweh's holy city and temple.

Jason, an ardent Hellenist and brother of Honiah the high priest, maneuvers politically to have himself appointed as high priest in Honiah's place by the Syrian king Antiochus IV. Jason's goal is to make Jerusalem a place where everyone feels welcome and where Greek culture can thrive alongside Judaism. Only then will Jerusalem become a great city among the other great cities of the world. Jason courts the favor of Antiochus, building a Greek gymnasium and encouraging the tolerance of private pagan shrines. While respecting the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple, he faces stiff opposition from conservatives, who view any pagan idols in Jerusalem as an abomination.



When Jason's reforms move too slowly for some, Antiochus is persuaded by powerful forces in Jerusalem to replace him with Menelaus, who takes even more radical measures to Hellenize the nation. Menelaus eventually commits the "abomination of desolation," erecting pagan shrines in the temple and offering unclean animals on the altar. Since in his view Judaism now means backwardness, intolerance and insurrection, he moves to outlaw Jewish practices like circumcision, Torah study and Sabbath observance. These last events spark a guerrilla war, launched by the zealous priest Mattathias and his sons. The novel ends in the early days of the Maccabean revolt.

Many of the characters in the novel are known from history: Honiah, Jason, Menelaus, Mattathias and his sons, etc. Others are fictional. The story especially focuses on the family of Zerah, a metal worker who has died five years earlier, leaving a widow, Miryam, and three sons, Binyamin, Meir and Ari. Their household becomes a microcosm for what is happening in Judaism: Binyamin pursues the life of a rabbi, while his brother Meir (renamed Hilaron) becomes enamored with Hellenism, joining the gymnasium, marrying a Syrian girl, and finding a patron in a leading Hellenistic Jew. Ari, the youngest, eventually joins the revolutionaries.

David deSilva is well known for his expertise in Second Temple Judaism and the book does an excellent job of establishing the *Zeitgeist* of second century BCE Jerusalem, both culturally and historically. Through the voices and actions of the various characters, we see and understand the powerful attraction of Hellenism for many as well as the repulsion and anger it provoked among pious Jews. We find ourselves sympathizing with Zerah's second son Meir (Hilaron), who sees better relationships with his Greek patrons as a means of getting ahead and getting along. Why not appropriate the best from the Greeks while staying faithful to our ancient heritage? When he rescues a Syrian girl from prostitution and then marries her, the common narrative theme of "love conquers all" seems appropriate and fitting. At the same time, we feel the outrage and zeal of Mattathias, Ari and others as their countrymen forsake faith in the one true Creator God to follow worthless idols of wood and stone.

Antiochus IV "Epiphanes" is portrayed not quite as the maniacal madman ("Epimanes") and cruel tyrant we sometimes assume, but (probably more accurately) as a pragmatic ruler set on expanding his empire and obsessed with the defeat and subjugation of his constant nemesis—the Ptolemies of Egypt. In his eyes, the loyalty and support of his Judean subjects is essential to these grand designs. Menelaus's failure to bring his unruly people into line is a constant irritant for Antiochus.

There are also some interesting innovations and surprises in the book. DeSilva handles the challenging question of the prophecies of Daniel related to the Maccabean revolt in a fascinating way, as a divine vision of God's coming deliverance given to a priest and desert prophet named Zedekiah.

I won't spoil the ending by giving anything else away. Let me just say that a famous scene from 4 Maccabees comes to life in a remarkable way.

This volume is not just a good read. It is also an excellent teaching tool. Students will learn the religious, social and cultural background of the New Testament period without realizing they are in class! The book would be an ideal supplemental text for courses in New Testament survey, history, and background as well as those more specifically focused on Second Temple Judaism.

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Richard B. Hays. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco, TX: Baylor, 2016. xix + 504 pp. £38.66/\$49.95.

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It has been almost three decades since the publication of Richard Hays's landmark work, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. Those hoping for a follow-up volume devoted to the gospels were heartened by the release of *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014). That much shorter work was the first fruits and foretaste of the greater harvest that *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* represents; much material in the latter will be familiar to those who have read the former.

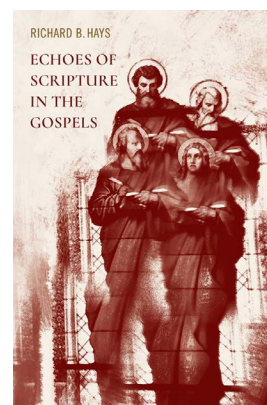
*Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, its completion hastened by Hays's cancer diagnosis, revisits the concept of 'echo' explored in his earlier work. Echo or metalepsis differs from quotation or explicit allusion: the echo evokes the wider context of the text to which it alludes, beyond that which is directly cited. It establishes an intertextual correspondence between two or more texts, allowing illuminating arcs of hermeneutical electricity to travel across the intervening spaces.

The book contains four larger chapters, one devoted to each of the gospels, with a shorter concluding chapter summing up the broader argument and identifying some principles to guide us as readers of Scripture. Each of the four major chapters is subdivided into five sections. The first is a brief synopsis of the evangelist's mode of interpreting Israel's Scripture; the last summarizes the findings of the chapter. The main body of each chapter is devoted to the remaining three sections, which treat the way an evangelist 'invokes/evokes' Scripture to narrate or re-narrate the story of Israel, the identity of Jesus, and the church's role in the world. So structured, the book is able to showcase both the distinctiveness and the 'polyphonic' unity of the evangelists' fourfold witness.

Hays's exegesis is frequently scintillating, not least in its vindication of the evangelists' citations of the Scriptures against those who accuse them of haphazard, opportunistic, or careless misappropriation. Rather than treating the Old Testament as a grab bag of predictive prooftexts, Hays demonstrates that the skilful interweaving of citations and allusions in a text like Mark 1:1–3 establishes a scriptural matrix within which the mystery of the Messiah will be disclosed to those who have the ears to hear. Matthew's more overt citations, which are also often subtly blended quotations, accomplish something similar, illuminating the deep correspondences between Christ and his precursors and the manner in which 'he gathers into himself the significations imbedded in their stories' (189).

In contrast to figural readings that focus narrowly on a one-to-one relation between types and antitypes, for Hays significations and motifs routinely overlap, recur, and coalesce in a more musical fashion. The literary artistry of Luke, for instance, manifests a world that is richly redolent with scriptural memory, reverberating with its expectant whispers. Each fleeting appearance of a variation upon a given scriptural theme affords the attentive hearer an enlightening foil against which to understand the evangelist's story of God's salvation in Jesus. John presents a more transfigural reading of Scripture, summoning his readers 'to recognize the way in which Israel's Scripture has always been mysteriously suffused with the presence of Jesus' (289).

Although it is surrounded by much more material in this volume, at the heart of its account—as was the case in *Reading Backwards*—is a masterful demonstration of the close connection between a robust Christology and the figural reading of the Scriptures. As we attend more closely to the evangelists' use



of Scripture, Hays demonstrates that the divine Christologies of the Synoptics in particular assume a far more pronounced form.

This will be a valuable reference volume for any student of the gospels, even though it is far from comprehensive and also suffers somewhat from its lack of a topical index. Many readers may have hoped for more extensive discussion of various topics (in my case the parables) but it would be unfair to fault Hays for such omissions, considering the vast scope of the potential subject matter. There were a few curious apparent oversights, such as the absence of any discussion of 2 Chronicles 36:23 in the otherwise superb treatment of the Matthean Great Commission.

The close attention that Hays gives to the textual mediation of the figural relations between events or persons is a particular strength of his treatment. It does, however, occasionally leave him vulnerable to an overemphasis upon the pole of the evangelists' narrative genius at the expense of the power of the agency and witness of the Scripture itself—not least in what Richard Davidson has termed the *devoir-être* force of scriptural prefigurations—and that of the divine providential orchestration of history.

For Hays, the evangelists' readings of Scripture are not hermeneutical keys to their respective gospels alone, but invitations to us to read in similar manners. Recognition of the presence of an echo requires alert and attentive readers with a 'complex poetic sensibility' and extensive familiarity with the evangelists' 'encyclopedia of production'. High demands made upon reader-competence are a prominent dimension of Hays's account of scriptural interpretation. Unfortunately, although his practice may be exemplary, he suffers from a relative theoretical inattention to methodology and failure adequately to define scriptural competence, the practices that shape it and the principles that guide it.

Such reservations are overshadowed by my immense appreciation for this exhilarating work. This is a book abounding in rewarding exegesis, and is doubtless one that I will revisit many times in the future.

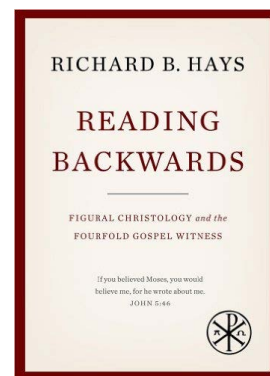
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Richard B. Hays. *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014. xxii + 155 pp. £16.99/\$29.95.

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Richard Hays has been a major contributor in recent decades to the important topic of the use of the Old Testament by the New Testament writers. He has influenced many others (including this reviewer) to write articles, monographs, and dissertations on "Echoes of Scripture" in various New Testament books. In the preface—which is important to read—Hays describes the origin, purpose, and approach of this book, which began life as a series of lectures. Hays explains that this book may be thought of as an *arrabon*, a "down payment," toward a book that he has been writing for some time that he, "half-jesting," calls *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (subsequently published under that title by Baylor University Press in June 2016). It is important to know that the latter book, much larger in size, is the basis for the smaller book being reviewed, not vice-versa as one might expect. Readers unfamiliar with Hays's previous, widely-influential book, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, might not see the connection. In these essays, Hays seeks to "distill a



few narrowly focused insights about the fourfold witness of the gospels to the divine identity of Jesus, viewed in light of their intertextual engagement with Israel's Scripture" (p. ix).

The opening chapter of this book introduces Hays's model of "figural reading." Hays offers examples of how the Old Testament teaches us to read the New Testament, and how the New Testament teaches us to read the Old Testament. Hays states that, "The Gospels teach us to read the OT for *figuration*" (p. 15, emphasis original). He contends that "the Gospel writers summon us to a conversion of the imagination," and that "we will learn to read Scripture rightly only if our minds and imaginations are opened by seeing the scriptural text . . . through the Evangelists' eyes" (p. 4). In saying this, Hays is directly challenging a historical-critical reading of the canonical gospels and the Scriptures of Israel. Figuration is not the same as prediction. Recognizing figuration is always retrospective. It is evident from this first chapter that Hays wants late modern people in the church to have their eyes opened, like those on the road to Emmaus, to understand Israel's story through the lens of Jesus's story.

Chapters two through five treat Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John respectively, in the order of composition accepted by most New Testament scholars. Regarding Mark's Gospel, Hays states that Mark uses Scripture generally in an "indirect and allusive" way and that, while Mark's story is intelligible without recognizing the Scriptures "woven" into the fabric of Mark's gospel, and that "[m]any of the key images in this mysterious narrative are drawn from Israel's Scriptures" (p. 17). While Hays characterizes Mark's use of Scripture as "allusive," he does not mean ignore explicit quotations. Through scriptural allusions, readers of Mark's Gospel are led to see Jesus as the embodiment of Israel's God. Hays repeatedly asserts the mysterious character of Mark's narrative. This mystery, akin to Mark's account of the meaning of parables in Mark 4, involves elements of Israel's story. Mark does not state Jesus's identity propositionally, but by interweaving Israel's story to show that Jesus both embodies the God of Israel and the Crucified One. If we would read Scripture through Mark's eyes, we must do the same, superimposing the story of Jesus on top of the story of Israel. Alas, Hays does not tell us precisely how to do this, but he has offered examples in the chapter on Mark of how Mark does this.

In chapter 3, "Torah Transfigured: Reading Scripture with Matthew," Hays asserts that Matthew, unlike Mark, "presses narrative claims about Jesus" and links them to Scripture (p. 36). Hays believes, quite rightly, that the New Testament authors do not pull scriptural texts out of context. Rather, they expect their implied readers to understand the Old Testament intertext in light of its original context. Hays therefore argues that when Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1, "Matthew's use of the quotation actually depends upon the reader's recognition of its original sense" (p. 41), which speaks of God's love for Israel, his son, as seen in the Exodus from Egypt.

Chapter 4 describes the way that Luke, no less than Mark or Mathew, uses scriptural intertexts to present the divine identity of Jesus, but more subtly and "insistently portrays Jesus as the embodied Presence of Israel's Lord and God" (p. 58). This conclusion differs sharply from that of many modern scholars. Luke primarily uses scriptural allusions and echoes to show through "*implicit correspondences*" (p. 58; emphasis original) a pattern of promise-fulfillment.

While John's Gospel does have explicit quotations of the Old Testament, there are far fewer than in the other gospels; according to Hays, John evokes Scripture more through imagery than through literary echoes. In *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Hays roundly rejects "midrash" as a useful description of how Paul interprets Scripture, as it really tells us nothing about what is actually happening. So it seems quite odd that Hays describes the "midrashic" use of Proverbs 8 in John's prologue. Hays's criticism of midrash as an interpretive method in Paul is important because a) that is not what Jewish

midrash looks like; and b) as Hays notes, saying that Paul used a specific scriptural text midrashically is not enlightening regarding Paul's hermeneutics. In the same way, John's prologue is not like a Jewish midrashic text. So Hays would do well to pick a different term, perhaps "model" or "inspiration." While Matthew takes a dialectic approach to connecting Scripture to the story he is telling, John "presents both the scriptural text and the word of Jesus as enigmas that become comprehensible only retrospectively, only after the resurrection" (p. 85).

This retrospective element is a core part of all that Hays says about the ways the Evangelists used the Scriptures of Israel. For no one would have read the texts the gospels cite, allude to, or echo as pointers to the promised Davidic Messiah, let alone as pointing to a future person who would embody Israel's God. It is only when looking through the hermeneutical lens of Jesus's words, life, death, burial, and resurrection that one can see what the gospel writers saw. At the start of the book, Hays refers to Martin Luther's description of Christ in the Old Testament as being like Christ wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. As such the Old Testament both reveals and conceals aspects of Jesus. However, Hays does not go looking for ways that the Evangelists found some random text that contains perhaps the right words and explain it as a prophecy about Jesus directly. Even allowing for a Christocentric reading of Scripture, as the early Church Fathers practiced, the Evangelists did not read or understand Scripture as containing a large quantity of prophecies that Jesus directly fulfilled.

The sixth chapter sums up what Hays has presented in the previous five chapters. The Old Testament teaches us to read the gospels and the gospels teach us how to read the Old Testament by practicing the use of the hermeneutical key, "figural reading." Figural reading is the "discernment of unexpected patterns of correspondences between earlier and later events or persons within a continuous temporal stream" (p. 93). The intertextual elements in both can point to the other. However, these correspondences can only be seen retrospectively. As can be seen from Hays's book, he does not mean typology. These correspondences can only be seen in the light of Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection. Only in light of Jesus's story is it appropriate and "illuminating to *read backwards*" seeking in the Old Testament "unexpected *foreshadowing* of the later story" (p. 94, emphasis original). Hays explicitly rejects seeking to find in the Old Testament predictions of events in Jesus's life as a "hermeneutical blunder" (p. 94). The previous chapters show how each Evangelist did his figural reading.

From this point of departure, Hays suggests some answers to questions about how the Evangelists compare or diverge in their figural readings of Scripture. He invites listeners into a conversation about matters of "urgent interest for all who are concerned about the integrity and the future of Christian biblical interpretation" (p. 95). Readers of this journal would want to know if the Evangelists offer one way to do this figural reading or multiple ways that might be in tension and what can we do with their approach. Hays says that each gospel writer takes a distinctive approach to the intertextual task. While Mark's Gospel has great evocative power in his distinctive approach, it is so "subtle" and indirect (p. 97) that it may cause some readers to miss what he is doing. Matthew takes an opposite tack, providing "great clarity about how to approach the reading of Scripture" and clearly shows continuity between Israel's story and Jesus story. However, according to Hays, "Matthew's strongly assertive christological position can sometimes bleed over into a harsh polemical stance" (p. 98). Moreover, it is "not always clear that [Matthew] has reflected systematically or coherently" on his use of biblical motifs in his effort to show that they have all found fulfillment in the person of Jesus. Hays asks how Matthew could place the various identities of Jesus side by side in his narrative, e.g., new Moses and embodiment of Israel's God. Moreover, Matthew's "fondness for overt confessional statement stands in some tension with

Mark's reverent reticence" (p. 98). Two questions may be asked here. First, why is Mark the measure of what ought to be done? Second, even if Hays is correct about Matthew not being as systematic as Hays would be, should Christian biblical interpreters stand in judgment over what a gospel writer has done?

Hays sees significant strengths in Luke's hermeneutical strategy. Luke boldly narrates continuity in Israel's story past, present, and future. Luke also shows how the mission to the Gentiles is part of God's longstanding plan for Israel to be the light to the nations. On the other hand, there is the misguided view of many German critics that Luke's narrative shows "excessive confidence in the continuity of *Heilsgeschichte*" (p. 100). Hays mentions this to warn readers against falling into this trap. For this reason, Mark is needed alongside Luke in the canon to serve as a "counterweight to any possible triumphalism" (p. 100). Yet, what if Luke, as generally supposed, used Mark's Gospel and chose to distinguish his approach from Mark's?

John's reading of Scripture is "profoundly *poetic*," and John is "completely straightforward about setting forth his program of retrospective figural reading." Instead of weaknesses, Hays sees "personal *dangers* for his reading strategy of the OT" (p. 101, emphasis original). John's hermeneutic is presented in a polemical manner against other interpretive strategies. However, is that not true of all four gospels? Are they not all saying, "Don't read Scripture that way because it is invalid. Read Scripture this way"? It is difficult to see how a hermeneutic that is reflected in the narrative polemically is a weakness or danger. It is useful to observe the polemical aspect but this is an observation. In general authors in the first century A.D. were far more ready to be polemical and castigate their opponents for wrong interpretations of the Scriptures of Israel (following in the steps of the prophets such as Ezekiel or Hosea who have much harsher things to say about Israel and Judah). So this criticism perhaps should only be an observation.

Terminology is important and those unfamiliar with Hays's language of "echo" will need to consult his earlier work on that subject in Paul. Having some background in New Testament studies would also be helpful, though not essential, to benefit from this book. Given what Hays says in this book and elsewhere about figural reading of Israel's Scriptures, he could have helped his readers by attending more closely to the Greek words he translates as "fulfill/fulfilled," in order to show in what sense this is meant. Clearly, in cases like Hosea 11:1, Matthew cannot mean that Jesus fulfilled a predictive prophetic oracle that was for the future—a common issue assumption when scholars talk about prophetic "fulfillment" in the New Testament. These things aside, this is an excellent book for helping people get into the topic of the NT's use of the OT, and putting forth a positive hermeneutical contribution to the ongoing discussion and debate. Hays makes the important point repeatedly that the writers are looking for their audiences to hear the allusions, echoes, and quotations, and consider how the original contexts, in contrast to those scholars who simply claim the gospel writers are proof-texting out of context. The latter is surely an inadequate reading of the biblical text. This book is highly recommended for all readers of *Themelios*, as an entrée to Hays's fuller treatment in *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*.

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Michael J. Kok. *The Gospel on the Margins: The Reception of Mark in the Second Century*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015. 240 pp. £37.44/\$49.00.

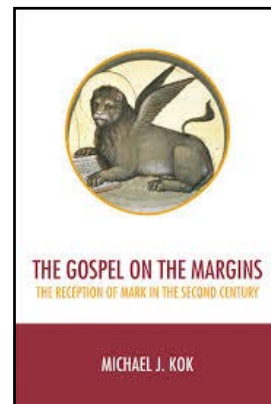
In *The Gospel on the Margins*, Michael J. Kok probes the question of why the Gospel of Mark would receive the lacklustre reception that it did in the second century and yet still survive to hold a place in the New Testament canon. Stating that “solely the authority of Peter’s name, once attached to Mark, rescued it from oblivion” (p. 12), Kok spends the bulk of the book exploring two possibilities: firstly, whether “the tradition is correct that Mark is a storehouse of Petrine reminiscences” (p. 12; chapters 1–3); and secondly, whether Willi Braun’s theory is correct that “the patristic authorities credited the text to Peter as the symbolic figurehead of their communities” (p. 13; chapters 4–6).

Chapters one to three are devoted to subjecting “the patristic association of the evangelist with Peter to historical-critical scrutiny” (p. 14). In Chapters 1 and 2, Kok assesses the forms of biblical criticism that led to a decline in the consensus that Mark was connected with Peter, and the arguments of those representing a “re-emergence of the patristic tradition” (p. 57). He is sympathetic to some of the conclusions of form-, redaction-, narrative- and historical-critical scholars, but he does acknowledge that their arguments are not water-tight (p. 56). He is more certain in his rebuttal of the arguments for a Petrine connection, asserting the anonymity of the Evangelist and thus the unlikelihood of direct Petrine or Pauline influence (pp. 105–6). While Kok claims to “have tried to fairly evaluate the arguments” (p. 104), he is occasionally too ready to reject the conservative arguments without convincingly presenting his alternative, such as in his response to Hengel’s argument regarding titles (pp. 66–68).

Chapter 3 is devoted to examining patristic and New Testament references to the individual “Mark” in order to “pinpoint when he became linked with Peter and identified as the author of a Gospel” (p. 107). His examination of the patristic evidence establishes that it is solely traced through Papias (p. 160), which raises doubts about the tradition’s veracity.

Kok’s exploration of the New Testament data focuses on the authorship and date of the biblical texts. He argues for late dates for the texts that explicitly link Mark with Peter: 1 Peter (late 1st c. CE) and Acts (c. 110 CE). While he does not explicitly admit it, Kok’s thesis stands or falls on this late dating; distancing these texts from living apostles and eyewitnesses conveniently marginalizes the biblical testimony to the connection of Mark and Peter. Kok’s argumentation is not sufficiently robust to convincingly close the case on this point.

Kok himself acknowledges the thrust of chapter 4 to be an argument from silence that needs further justification (p. 184). Avoiding the “orthodoxy-heresy binary,” he prefers a differentiation between “centrist” and “radical” groups within a diverse second century Christian milieu (p. 166). He then cites reception history, and reader-response theories specifically, to assert that these groups claimed apostolic authority for their positions by “setting themselves up as guardians of apostolic tradition (teaching), apostolic succession (office), and apostolic writings (authoritative scriptures)” (p. 170). This, along with a more detailed examination of patristic attitudes towards Mark in Chapter 5, continues to build the theory that Mark could be used to bolster a community’s ideological goals, even if they did not necessarily appreciate its literary value (p. 173, 177, 185).



In his final chapter, Kok turns to assess patristic references to the Gospel of Mark and scribal revisions within the text itself in order to establish its use in the second century context (p. 229). He identifies second century concerns with Mark as its low Christology (p. 237) and its openness to esotericism in light of the secret knowledge given to the disciples (p. 238). He finds that Papias acknowledges interplay between apostolic and heretical teaching but does not reveal any use of Mark by his theological opponents (p. 242). Irenaeus identifies its use by groups arguing adoptionist Christologies (pp. 243–47). Kok finds that mirror readings of Clement’s use of the rich man pericope (Mark 10:17–31) suggest that Clement used it to counter strict ascetic teachings and low Christologies (pp. 249–50). A brief appendix discussing *The Letter to Theodore*, a text attributed to Clement, is also presented as supporting evidence. Scribal amendments to Mark by other evangelists and scribes are shown to reflect similar concerns.

Kok concludes in favour of his thesis that the gospel was associated with Peter to legitimate the text for use by centrist Christian communities and “snatch it out of the hands” of their opponents. He views this as a “liberating thing for the gospel” as it allows a fresh take on the gospel and the evangelist, appreciating it for its own voice (p. 268). The gospel’s presence in the canon “ensured that its countercultural proclamation of the ‘good news of Jesus Christ’ may speak in our world today” (p. 269).

*The Gospel on the Margins* offers an interesting explanation of Mark’s place in the canon despite its lukewarm reception in the second century. Kok’s discussion of the patristic context is informative, and his portrayal of the adoption of texts by Christian factions for ideological purposes is intriguing. While his argumentation does not consistently prove convincing, his thesis raises a pertinent question for the contemporary church: Do we allow scripture to authoritatively speak into our beliefs, practices and emphases, or do we simply adopt it to the extent that it supports our pre-conceived opinions?

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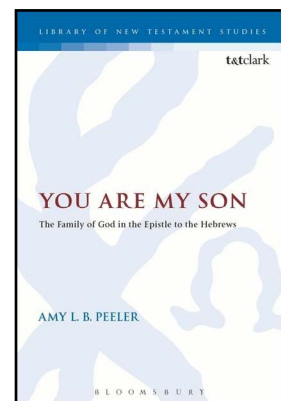
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Amy L. B. Peeler. *You Are My Son: The Family of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Library of New Testament Studies 486. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014. xiv + 225 pp. £19.99/ \$122.

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The basic thesis of Peeler’s book is that *familial* language, particularly the language of God as “Father” and Jesus as “Son” and the audience as “siblings,” is fundamental to Hebrews’ presentation of its main characters. She writes, “God’s paternal relationship with Jesus his Son shapes the theology and Christology of the letter, and, in so doing, constructs the identity of the audience, legitimizes their present experience, and supports them in their endurance” (p. 8).

Chapter one, dealing with Hebrews 1, argues that the author’s presentation of Jesus as “Son” and God as “Father” governs their actions throughout the book. This implies, for example, that *personal* sonship is implied throughout the exordium (Heb 1:1–4) and the catena (Heb 1:5–14); this goes against those who emphasize the author’s use of impersonal “wisdom” themes in Hebrews 1 over and against personal pre-existence of the Son. Peeler does not deny the presence of wisdom Christology here but argues that wisdom (and Davidic) themes are brought “into the framework of a familial relationship” (p. 61). Peeler also argues that the *fatherhood* of God is basic to Hebrews 1 (pp. 13,



59–61); this implies, moreover, that God is a relational God and will remain such throughout the letter (p. 62).

Peeler argues in chapter two that Hebrews 2 continues to emphasize God-as-father-and-Jesus-as-Son by “tracing the path Jesus took on the way to his exalted position” (p. 65). This chapter makes at least three important observations: (1) God is the kind of Father who uses humbling to exalt (pp. 76, 103); (2) similarly, in the family of God it is suffering that renders one fit for an inheritance (p. 79); (3) the audience is first identified as a *family*—the children of God and the siblings of Jesus—that is being led into its inheritance (pp. 66, 81, 84–94).

Chapter three deals with the relationship between Jesus as *Son* and Jesus as *Priest*—indisputably the two main Christological themes in Hebrews. While some have argued that the two are in tension with one another, Peeler argues as follows:

1. Jesus had to be a “son of man” (i.e., a human being) in order to be a priest (p. 108);
2. Jesus had to be a “son of God” to be a *Melchizedekian* priest (p. 137);
3. the suffering he endured in order to attain his filial inheritance and the work he accomplished in order to become a high priest forever are one and the same (pp. 124–28, 138–39);
4. Psalm 110 brings the two together—in Psalm 110:1 he is appointed “son,” and in Psalm 110:4 he is appointed “priest” (pp. 116, 118–20);
5. the two positions have in common not only a divine appointment but a guaranteed permanence (pp. 128–32);
6. finally, it is by his high priestly offering and intercession that Jesus makes it possible for his siblings to come into *their* inheritance: “When Jesus takes his place as God’s heir through the offering of his body, he makes his siblings’ status as God’s heirs a reality” (p. 136).

Chapter four examines the audience’s participation in the path already taken by Jesus, their older brother and high priest, in Hebrews 12–13. God is particularly portrayed as a Father who exhorts his children to faithfulness (pp. 144–63) and as a Father who “leads” his children (pp. 174–75). It should come as no surprise, given the preceding discussions of Jesus’s suffering on the way to his inheritance and exaltation, that his siblings’ path should move in similar directions: if they are God’s children, they will be prepared for their inheritance by discipline (Heb 12:4–13).

In her conclusion, Peeler highlights a couple of unique contributions offered by her study. First, while the sonship of Jesus has always garnered significant attention, this book engages the fatherhood of God in new ways. Second, she argues that a *familial* framework, rather than the honor-shame framework suggested by notable Hebrews scholar David deSilva, best guides one’s overall reading of Hebrews. Third, this familial framework provides a new way to understand the connection between the Son’s perfection through suffering and the sons’ (and daughters’) perfection through suffering.

Peeler has certainly demonstrated the importance of familial themes in Hebrews, though I wonder if she has overstated her case at a couple of points. First, one wonders how God as Father and Jesus as Son relate to portions of Hebrews *not* emphasized in the book (esp. Heb 3:7–4:13, 11:1–40)—if indeed such familial themes truly govern the whole epistle. Second, Peeler on occasion states emphatically that God does something *as Father*, but it is unclear why this is important (e.g., pp. 127, 173). Third, she occasionally seeks allusions to familial themes in texts leave one wishing for further substantiation (e.g., her claim that the πάντες in Heb 8:11 “invokes the inheritance of Jesus by which he brings all



things . . . under his domain” [p. 144]). In the end, though, these are minor quibbles about a fine piece of scholarship that makes a solid contribution to scholarship on Hebrews.

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C. Kavin Rowe, *One True Life: The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. Xii + 330 pp. £25.00/\$40.00.

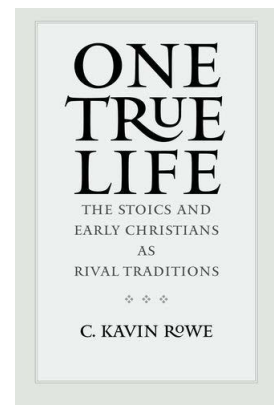
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*One True Life* is one of the most well-written, thought-provoking, and challenging books on early Christianity and its philosophical milieu published in recent years. Kavin Rowe, Professor of New Testament at Duke University Divinity School, is well known for his two previous monographs, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke*, BZNTW 139 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006) and *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). In *One True Life*, Rowe argues the simple yet controversial thesis that ancient Christianity and Roman Stoicism are “rival traditions of life” (p. 6).

Parts I and II offer close readings of three Stoics (Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius) and three Christian writers (Paul, Luke, Justin Martyr) with a chapter devoted to each. These six authors are fitting representatives of the two traditions, and Rowe effectively and creatively blends quotation of the primary sources with his own “textually elaborate dialogical reflections” (p. 8). Rowe’s chapter-length treatments of major authors from the first and second centuries represent a major advance over previous comparative studies, such as Troels Engberg-Pedersen’s influential book *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), which remarkably includes only three passing references to Seneca’s writings and one each to Epictetus and Marcus.

Chapter 1 focuses on five key emphases in Seneca’s *Moral Epistles*: death, Fortuna, God and Nature, the passions, and philosophy. For Seneca, philosophy is “a redemptive mode of being . . . the wise way of life that enables us to die daily, to build and fortify the inward fortress against Fortuna, to become aligned with God and Nature, and to control the passions” (p. 42). Chapter two considers the influential philosophy of the slave Epictetus, preserved by his student Arrian. Rowe lingers on “five animating themes” in the *Discourses* and *Manual*: God, right judgments, philosophy, the human being, and society (p. 44). Seneca and Epictetus agree that philosophy is crucial to a wise, happy life, though the latter emphasizes trust in God and celebrates his good gifts more than the former (p. 64). Chapter three considers Marcus’s writings on death, God and Nature, human beings and right judgments, philosophy, and society. According to Rowe, “Marcus is not so much an innovator as he is a disciple” (p. 68), and like Seneca and Epictetus, the Stoic emperor presents philosophy as therapy for humanity’s woes and as a way of life, not simply a set of ideas.

Chapter four considers the themes of God, Jesus Christ, humanity’s creation and sin, humanity’s death and resurrection, and faith and community in Paul’s seven undisputed letters. Rowe writes, “Through his readings of Scripture, Paul aims to form the church that God is creating” (p. 105). Chapter five considers Luke’s contribution to the story of Israel, Jesus, God, human beings, and church and



society. “For Luke,” Rowe explains, “Christian community is the necessary consequence of the total event that was Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection” (p. 134). Chapter six discusses Justin’s treatment of God, Jesus Christ, philosophy, the human being, politics and death, and Judaism in his extant works. For Justin, Jesus the incarnate Logos is *the* true philosophy and illustrates that “Christianity is truer even than death” (p. 171).

Following his inductive, dialogical treatment of the six Stoic and Christian authors, Rowe opens Part III by posing an important methodological question: “how should we read them in relation to one another?” (p. 175). In chapter seven, Rowe follows Alasdair MacIntyre in summarizing modern approaches to scholarly inquiry under three headings: encyclopedia, genealogy, and tradition. Encyclopedists are committed to the notions of “a single, unitary rationality,” “a unified world,” and “progress” (pp. 176–77), while genealogical inquiry fundamentally opposes each of these basic commitments. Rowe follows MacIntyre in commending a third way, “a tradition of inquiry,” which is “a morally grained, historically situated rationality, a way of asking and answering questions that is inescapably tied to the inculcation of habits in the life of the knower and to the community that originates and stewards the craft of inquiry through time” (p. 184). According to Rowe, ancient Christianity and Stoicism were *traditions* in this sense; however, modern scholars (such as Abraham Malherbe and Engberg-Pedersen) commonly compare the New Testament and ancient philosophy with encyclopedic aims and assumptions.

In chapters eight and nine, Rowe argues that we must study Christianity and Stoicism as “traditions in juxtaposition.” He synthesizes the major themes treated inductively in Parts I and II and stresses that while Stoics and Christians may use similar words (e.g., “God”), when understood within the grammars of each tradition these terms simply do not mean the same thing and cannot be translated. “The Christians and the Stoics are not, in the profoundest and most difficult philosophical sense, saying the same thing. They face each other with different and competing stories about all that is. . . . They are, permanently and irreducibly, traditions in conflict” (p. 235). Rowe asserts that Stoicism’s greatest lacuna is the absence of a comprehensive account of humanity’s “Fall,” while Christian discourse does not fully account for what Seneca calls “Fortuna” (p. 255). He concludes that Stoicism and Christianity are “claims to the truth of life, and knowing the things they teach requires a life that is true” (p. 257).

Rowe’s mature study raises significant questions that scholars will likely wrestle with for years to come. One may quibble with points of interpretation or emphasis here and there, but the overall thesis holds. *One True Life* is engagingly written, masterfully argued, and in the end convincing in its call for reframing the comparative task in New Testament studies. It is also beautifully published in hardback for an affordable price by Yale University Press. I warmly recommend this volume to scholars and theological students and plan to return to it for years to come.

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Francis Watson, *The Fourfold Gospel: A Theological Reading of the New Testament Portraits of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. viii + 207 pp. £19.29/\$24.99.

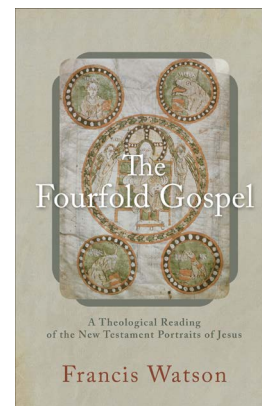
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In this short volume Francis Watson explores the nature and significance of the fourfold gospel. This is not a survey of the gospels. It is instead an exploration of the church's choice to value and preserve these four and the role they played in the early centuries of the church.

In his introduction ("Prolegomena: The Making of the Fourfold Gospel") Watson raises key questions related to the fourfold gospel witness. What is a gospel? Who wrote the gospels? How many gospels are there? These seemingly simple questions have complex answers. The term "gospel," for example, was originally applied to the *message* of salvation rather than the books themselves. So are there four gospels or one gospel (= message)? And why only four? Many other books were called "gospels" in the early church (*Gospel of Peter*, *Gospel of Thomas*, etc.). Why were these four selected above the others? Further, since Matthew incorporates most of Mark into his gospel, did he intend to supplement or to replace Mark? Watson suggests the latter. He writes, "Do we have here two gospels, or two editions of a single gospel? Does Luke then add a third edition?" (p. 6). Watson concludes that there was nothing inevitable about the four-gospel collection. Mark could have fallen into disuse. Luke could have superseded Matthew. John might have been rejected because of its differences. Yet the fourfold gospel prevailed. This was not, in Watson's words, "because some bishop or council imposed it on an unwilling or unthinking majority but because of countless small-scale decisions about which texts were to be copied and used and which were to be passed over" (p. 17).

After the prolegomena, the book is divided into two parts. Part one, "Perspectives" (chs. 1–4) discusses each of the four Gospels. Chapter 1 ("The First Gospel: Jesus the Jew") examines Matthew, which was the most prominent gospel in the early church and appears first in most ancient lists. Watson summarizes this gospel's theme through the lens of its opening genealogy, which emphasizes both Jesus's Jewish background and the new thing that God is doing through the virgin birth. In chapter 2 on Mark ("The Second Gospel: Preparing the Way") Watson again focuses on one key passage to illustrate the gospel's central theme: the appearance of John the Baptist, who will "prepare the way for the Lord." The "way" of the Lord is the journey that begins with John's baptism of Jesus—symbolizing Jesus's identification with humanity—and ends with the cross, his ransom for many. In chapter 3 on Luke ("The Third Gospel: Magnificat"), Watson compares Luke's own narrative approach with that of his later interpreters, Marcian, Justin Martyr, Tatian and Irenaeus. He then seeks to show how Luke takes four Matthean themes (genealogy, annunciation, epiphany, baptism) and develops them in his own way. (Watson here assumes the Farrer hypothesis, which claims Luke used Mark and Matthew [not Q] as his sources.) Chapter 4 on John ("The Fourth Gospel: Seeing God") emphasizes the differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics. Like the living creature of Ezekiel and Revelation it is often identified with, John's Gospel soars like an eagle.

Part two, "Convergences" (chs. 5–8), begins by discussing how all four distinct gospels converge in the passion narratives. After an introductory chapter (5: "Four Gospels, One Book"), he compares the four gospels in the triumphal entry and Gethsemane (ch. 6, "The City and the Garden"), and in the death, burial and resurrection (ch. 7, "Christus Victor"). The last chapter (ch. 8, "The Truth of the Gospel")



begins with a discussion of the first century BC Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus and his philosophical defense of materialism. Watson then provides four case studies from church history in response: Justin Martyr's rejection of Platonism in favor of Christian community, Origen's *Against Celsus*, Martin Luther's identification of the four gospels as both "gift" (John) and "example" (the Synoptics), and the Barmen Declaration's 1934 statement against the influence of Nazi ideology on the German church.

The book's greatest strengths and most original contribution are its many insights related to how the church has viewed and utilized the gospels throughout history. Fascinating tidbits from church history permeate Watson's volume, providing information that will be new not only to lay readers but even to many gospel specialists. To take just one of many examples, in chapter 5 Watson discusses the illuminated pages for Luke's Gospel found in the sixth century manuscript, "St. Augustine Gospels." These pages, which depict scenes unique to Luke's Gospel, give lie to the popular notion that the church of the first millennium had little interest in narrative theology. These illuminated pages, in turn, are drawn from the Eusebian canons, a complex and sophisticated system developed by Eusebius of Caesarea that identified the relationships between gospel parallels. These canons, which had a profound impact on gospel manuscripts and commentary for many centuries, guide Watson's discussion throughout his final chapters (5–8).

In terms of weaknesses, the reader will not find here a survey or even a summary overview of the gospels. The chapters on the four gospels (chs. 1–4) are quite disappointing in this regard, leaving unmentioned and unexamined even some of the most basic gospel themes and motifs. In Watson's defense, it soon becomes clear to the reader that book was not intended to provide this kind of systematic theological analysis. But with its subtitle, "A theological reading of the New Testament portraits of Jesus," one would expect significantly more narrative theology than is provided here.

Despite this shortcoming, the book makes a significant and original contribution to gospel studies. Watson's mastery of early church perspectives on the gospels makes for an innovative and interesting read throughout.

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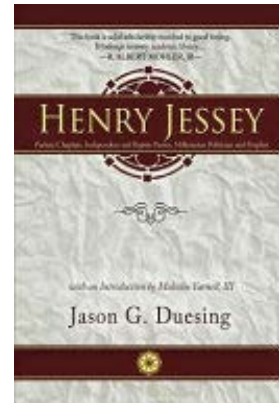
— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

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Jason G. Duesing. *Henry Jessey: Puritan Chaplain, Independent and Baptist Pastor, Millenarian Politician and Prophet*. Mountain Home, AR: Borderstone, 2016. 426 pp. \$19.99.

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Sorting out Particular Baptist origins has been compared to “trying to untangle a snarled fishing line in the dark” (Wm. Loyd Allen, “Baptist Baptism and the Turn toward Believer’s Baptism by Immersion: 1642,” in *Turning Points in Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth*, ed. Michael E. Williams Sr. and Walter B. Shurden [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008], 37). Jason G. Duesing, however, has shone a bright spotlight upon this notoriously confusing subject with a study of early Baptist leader, Henry Jessey (1601–1663). Although Duesing’s comprehensive study of Jessey’s life does much more than this, the careful untangling of the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the Particular Baptist community may well be its most lasting contribution to the growing body of scholarship focused on dissenting life in early Modern Britain. Thus, the publication of this work is a welcome addition to Baptist studies.



This project began as the author’s PhD dissertation and was lightly revised for publication. As such, the work follows a fairly straightforward structure. Duesing uses the first chapter to introduce Jessey and his significance as one of the first three pastors of the “Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey” or JLJ church. This church has been called the “mother church” of the Particular Baptist movement, with as many as four of the original seven such churches in London having direct ties to this church. During the late 1630s and early 1640s, several congregations broke away from this church and eventually adopted believer’s baptism. Duesing not only explores Jessey’s importance but also provides a thorough review of the literature published over the last 350 years that directly references Jessey. At the end of the chapter, the question of whether one can classify Jessey as a Baptist is introduced. This question is discussed more fully in chapter four.

The second chapter is a virtual encyclopedia of the key people, events, and published works that would have impacted Jessey’s life. No discernable narrative ties together the disparate selections in this chapter, but the goal is obviously to position Jessey as a man who was shaped by his historical context. To this end, the chapter is useful as a topical reference to key individuals, events, and publications referenced elsewhere in the book.

The subtitle of the work provides a preview of the structure of Chapters three to five. Chapter three explores the period of Jessey’s life from his birth in 1601 until 1637. This period is summarized in the title as Jessey as a “Puritan Chaplain.” Of course, the chapter begins by introducing Jessey’s family background, early life, and conversion. His education at Cambridge University established him as a Puritan seeking reform in the Church of England. Jessey’s first foray into the ministry was as a family chaplain in which he instructed the children of wealthy, landowners according to Puritan orthodoxy. By the end of this period, Jessey had become connected with a separatist congregational church—the church of which he would soon become the third pastor.

The years 1637–1650 were formative in Jessey’s move toward his Baptist convictions. In the fourth chapter, Duesing explores this important period in precise detail and with pristine clarity. After

succeeding Henry Jacob and John Lathrop as the third pastor of what would become a virtual factory for Particular Baptist congregations. When Jessey came as pastor, the church was already actively embroiled in conversations about the nature of a gospel church and whether the baptism of the Church of England was valid. The question revolved around whether the Anglican Church's communion could be regarded as true churches. If not, their baptism was invalid. Some within the JLJ church came to believe their baptism in the national church was invalid. These separated further by forming a separate congregation with a new baptism, although not at this time embracing believer's baptism. Others became convinced, not only of the invalidity of the Church of England's baptism, but also that believer's baptism was commanded, although not at this time embracing immersion as the only proper mode. Still, others would become convinced that only the immersion of believers in a properly ordered gospel church was valid. These believers formed the first Particular Baptist churches in the early 1640s. Jessey's own experience followed this trajectory. He had first been a Puritan seeking reform within the Church of England, and then later became a separatist pastor. Eventually, through the conversations with those within and outside his own church, Jessey would become personally convinced of believer's baptism by immersion. Unlike most others who embraced this viewpoint, however, Jessey did not believe that this belief should cause a separation between those who were sprinkled as infants and those immersed as believers. The JLJ church, therefore, became a mixed-congregation with members of both persuasions who were in full fellowship and communion with one another. This naturally resulted in the congregation practicing a mixed-communion at the Lord's Table. This would be a minority view among the Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century, but Jessey and John Bunyan were among the notable exceptions to the typical restricted communion of their Baptist contemporaries.

The fifth and final chapter explores Jessey as a "Millenarian Political and Prophet" and covers the years 1650 to the end of his life in 1663. This period was characterized by Jessey's involvement in the tumultuous political life of England during the interregnum and restoration of the monarchy. Jessey's writings from this period are characterized by optimism for the conversion of Jews, including open advocacy for their welfare and settlement in England. Duesing also demonstrates that Jessey held to a form of pre-millennialism, although Duesing is careful to note the difficulty of applying such labels anachronistically.

Duesing's study of Jessey fills a significant lacuna in early Baptist studies. This is the most comprehensive study of a figure whose life in many ways epitomized the journey of many in the period from Puritan to Separatist to Baptist. Duesing is masterful in his careful handling of the intricacies of the first congregations to embrace the immersion of believers. The relevant primary and secondary literature is surveyed and evaluated in such a way that readers are allowed to reach their own conclusion based on the evidence, even though the author is not afraid to suggest the most likely scenarios. Duesing's handling of the difficult question of English Particular Baptist origins is the greatest strength of this work and is an important contribution to seventeenth-century English Baptist studies. One criticism of the book, however, might be the absence of a narrative structure to the first and second chapters, especially the second. While both chapters are important for setting the historical context and significance of Jessey, they probably make the work less accessible to the average reader. Nevertheless, this book is recommended to scholars and interested students of Baptist thought and seventeenth-century England who desire a straightforward presentation of the primary source materials by a trustworthy guide. Most readers will likely benefit by skipping chapter two and using it as a reference guide during the reading of

chapters three to five. Those who take the time to read this book will be rewarded with a rich study of an important, though little-known, early Puritan/Separatist/Baptist.

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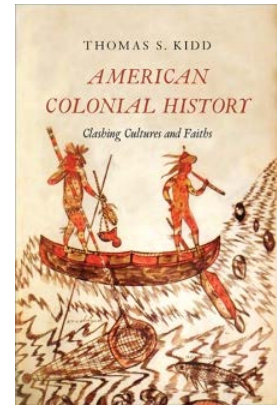
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Thomas S. Kidd. *American Colonial History: Clashing Cultures and Faiths*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. 329 pp. £12.99/\$20.00.

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Thomas Kidd, Distinguished Professor of History at Baylor University, lives up to his title with this excellent overview of Colonial America. The book will serve well as a textbook for university classes. It gives just what is needed to start and sustain many interesting discussions.

There used to be a consensus among historians about how to teach Colonial America. It was agreed that two religious groups should be discussed, Puritans and Quakers, in order to set up the core story about three sections, South, Middle, and North, uniting politically in a secular enlightenment and revolution. To set up the Civil War and modern discussion regarding civil rights, there was the story of how slavery arose in Virginia, due mainly to a dysfunctional economy. Additionally, there was a parallel side-story: religious in-fighting in a “Great Awakening” accidentally set up the American Revolution’s democratic feistiness, and a revivalist, George Whitefield, who accidentally set up the American Revolution’s unity. There were also two men of pure genius: Ben Franklin, who represented America’s urban scientific future, and Jonathan Edwards, who represented the possibility of self-taught philosophic sophistication on an American frontier. This framework usefully promoted America’s purpose in the world: the promotion of secularized liberty and civil rights.



In 1974 this self-congratulatory framework for general education in Colonial American history was popularly restructured for college classes with the publication of Gary B. Nash’s textbook, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall). Nash’s new framework made the Puritans look terrible, the Quakers acceptable, and both the enlightenment and revolution, hypocritical. The great benefit of this book was that it forced many WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant) college students in America to look at history in a way that made them uncomfortable. Nash’s book is now in its seventh edition.

*American Colonial History* is a preferable textbook option because it is not based on tweaking the old model; rather it is geographically balanced and raises religion to its appropriate place at the center of the many varied stories of cultural encounters, emphasizing the “clash of cultures and faiths.” Overall Kidd’s textbook, much like Nash’s, is unsettling. Kidd wants the standard college student in America to see Colonial American history through widely diverse ethnic, religious, and regional lenses.

Kidd is an avowed evangelical Baptist, and this brings good edginess to the book. He is an expert on, and appreciator of, religious people “clashing.” This is no insider history tracing the roots of consensus values. The outsider quality of the book hits quick: paragraph one of the Introduction is about Cahokia on the Mississippi River. Paragraph one of chapter one is about Buttermilk Creek in Texas. The book

offers sweeping coverage of American colonial history: it starts in Mexico, swishes through the Great Lakes, and eventually swipes down the East Coast, Caribbean, and then back west. Puritan Boston is not emphasized. The first paragraph of the chapter devoted to African slavery is about the Dutch in Manhattan. Kidd is at his best in his chapter on the Glorious Revolution because he emphasizes the anti-Catholicism at its core. He does not get sidetracked in the ideological origins of what later would be revolutionary political arguments. He sticks to his theme, and shows well, especially in Maryland, that anti-Catholicism was front and center in people's minds during the colonial period.

Kidd is especially good with quotations and short stories about people. This is not really a book about cultures and faiths. He is not interested in analyzing differences between the Huron and Iroquois or the Jesuits and Franciscans. He is interested in people interacting with people. Everybody is religious, and Kidd helps to show the religious notions behind their actions. There is a matter-of-factness to his writing. He dismisses historians who have given "a disproportionate share of attention to chattel slavery" (p. 167). Slavery in North America was much bigger than the story of slave codes. He tells a story of people distinguishing "negros" from "Christians" in Barbados, and how an Anglican missionary in South Carolina "pioneered a system of severe punishments against slaves" (p. 164). Religion is much bigger than doctrinal differences. He quotes a poem written by the British in the Seven Years War: "The time will come when both Pope and Friar/Shall both be roasted on the fire" (p. 281).

Kidd offers a geographically balanced, religiously well-founded, history of Colonial America. At the very end of *American Colonial History* on p. 297, Kidd offers a short and powerful justification for the book's form and content:

The civic mandate of knowing the "basics" of American history would put Jefferson and the delegates of Philadelphia front and center, and the mandate is not wrong. But we must be mindful that there is more to the early American experience than the coming of independence. Colonial American history forms a dizzying kaleidoscope of cultures, faiths, and tragic clashes of incompatible powers. The struggle to balance the aspects of history that made us different, and those facets that made us Americans, is perhaps the greatest challenge facing historians today.

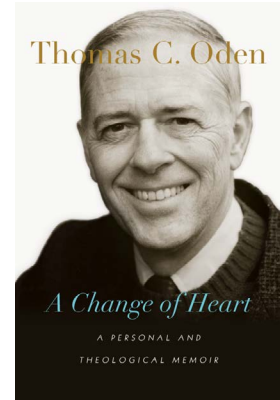
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Thomas C. Oden. *A Change of Heart: A Personal and Theological Memoir*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. 384 pp. £27.99/\$40.00.

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If you've lived long enough, you'll begin to realize with increasing clarity that there are definitive, providential turning points throughout the course of your life. Thomas Oden's memoir, *A Change of Heart*, is a sustained reflection on the eight decades of his life and how God's providence has guided him, in both his intellectual maturation and his spiritual transformation. Both of these movements are intertwined throughout, although the structure of the book places most of the emphasis on intellectual change in Part I, and thereafter focuses on spiritual transformation and vocation in Parts II and III. One might say, then, that Oden's intellectual change of heart is intertwined with and provides a catalyst for his spiritual and vocational change of heart. I do not wish here to take away from the affective way in which Oden tells his own narrative by repeating it in such bland terms as a book review; rather, I will focus on the details that highlight these transformations.



Regarding Oden's intellectual movement, he describes growing up in the 1930s and 1940s in rural Oklahoma, reared as a United Methodist, but then encountering the revolutionary, counter-cultural, and Social Gospel movements of the fifties and sixties, first at the University of Oklahoma and then at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology. Oden became enamored with Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, and this led him to seek out existential intersections between psychology and Christian theology. He found a natural teacher in this regard in Rudolf Bultmann's works, which he studied under the tutelage of H. Richard Niebuhr at Yale University. It was at Yale, though, and in his subsequent junior faculty period at Phillips Theological Seminary (his first teaching post), that his previously liberal views on not only politics but also religion (Oden confesses at one point to taking a Bultmannian view of the incarnation and resurrection during this period) began to be challenged.

Through a series of encounters with everyone from the Niebuhr brothers, Barth, Bultmann, Pannenberg, to Robert Naylor (then president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), as well as through coming to an understanding of the deleterious effects of Marxism, Oden saw his liberal perspective on politics and ethics begin to crumble. The façade crumbled completely at a World Council of Churches meeting in 1966. Oden had previously been heavily involved in many of the radical left's movements, and shared their attempt to produce ecumenicity via those counter-cultural protests. During a march at the Geneva Conference, and after hearing speeches calling for utopias moderated by liberation movements while ignoring "totalitarian collectivist regimes" (p. 113), the scales fell off and Oden saw the fruitlessness of what he'd worked for up to that point.

It was at this time that Drew University called Oden as a tenured professor, a post he held for thirty-three years. Upon arriving, he became fast friends with Will Herberg, a Jewish scholar thirty years his senior. At a fateful lunch soon after Oden came to Drew, Herberg forcefully challenged Oden to give up being novel, namely through trying to wed modernity's politics and psychology with liberalized Christianity, and instead to work on understanding and appreciating his own robust, vast, Christian tradition. Oden at this point set out on a quest that would take up the remainder of his life, "to inquire deeply into the greatest minds of the earliest Christian tradition" (p. 137). Upon reading Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem, Chrysostom, and the like, he began to understand

and confess the rationality and historicity of the Christian faith. And as the Holy Spirit used these early Christian writers to revive Oden's faith, he in turn wanted to help others see the beauty of early Christian interpretation and theology. That has been, for the most part, the remainder of his life's work. Oden describes this turn thusly: "My life story has had two phases: going away from home as far as I could go, not knowing what I might find in an odyssey of preparation, and then at last inhabiting anew my own original home of classic Christian wisdom" (p. 140).

The remainder of the book (over half) is the story of Oden's ministry and work that is most likely more familiar to many readers here. Oden became increasingly involved in ecumenical movements centered on doctrinal orthodoxy, liturgical practice, and shared tradition. He visited the Vatican, worked with Timothy George and John Richard Neuhaus, and befriended Cardinal Ratzinger (who later became Pope Benedict XVI). Both his return to the earliest sources of the Christian tradition and his ecumenical work with Rome prompted what is perhaps his most well known accomplishment, not only among evangelicals but among Christians worldwide: serving as the general editor of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* series. Oden tells the long but encouraging tale of how this series came about, and reflects on its continuing impact today. He ends the book by reflecting on his increasing awareness of global Christianity, and particularly its manifestations in Africa, in the chapter entitled, "The 2000s," and by detailing his spiritual practices, including practicing the Anglican Daily Office and "Hours" tradition, in "The 2010s." This is particularly moving given how it has sustained him through his wife's death and now is preparing him for his own.

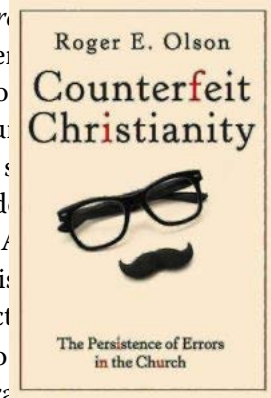
*A Change of Heart* is an incredibly encouraging book, one that encourages not only in the sense of demonstrating God's providential care—which it certainly does!—but also in the sense of encouragement as exhortation. Oden, whether through explicit narrator asides or, more often, through simply telling his story, continually exhorts readers to challenge modernity's (and now postmodernity's) prevailing assumptions through a return to the biblical texts and their earliest interpreters. In doing so, they will find not something novel and fleeting, but something grounded and rooted in the grace and guidance of God. It is precisely this confrontation, this turning point, which changed Oden's life. And as Christians, we all have these turning points, these changes of hearts. As Oden says, "For confessing Christians it is a familiar story of a life unexpectedly turned around by an outpouring of grace" (p. 140).

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Roger E. Olson. *Counterfeit Christianity: The Persistence of Errors in the Church*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2015. 176 pp. £12.99/\$19.99.

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Roger Olson's latest volume, *Counterfeit Christianity: The Persistence of Errors in the Church*, is intended to introduce non-theologically educated laypeople to the world of ancient and medieval Christianity. Furthermore, besides this more descriptive aim, in each chapter, the book also contains what Olson calls "antidotes" against modern heresy and to either prevent or thwart the resurgence of such thought. Olson has not tried to write an academic study; hence, the volume is not to be read or evaluated as such. Writing a more popular work like this always—and understandably—leads the writer to simplify and systematize quite intricate theological discussions. As a result, if this is not problematic, one could ask the question of whether Olson has done this well. Do these simplifications have served to misrepresent or unhelpfully lump together distinct heresies? Olson's work includes ten chapters, a conclusion, and endnotes. The first two chapters provide a framework for the latter eight. Chapter one deals with both the nature and characteristics of heresy, as well as those proposing it, and chapter two addresses the development and boundaries of orthodoxy. Olson argues that "heresy" can either be "ecumenical" or "denominational." In other words, some heresy divorces from the ecumenical Christian tradition, as defined by the first ecumenical councils (pp. 28–32) whilst other streams of thought might be considered "heresy," not based on the fact that they move away from the ecumenical tradition, but because such ideas stand in opposition to theology held by a certain denomination. Chapters 3–7 deal with ecumenical heresies and their modern presence and chapters 8–10 discuss "denominational heresy." Understandably, in the last three chapters of the book Olson's own personal theology and his denominational affiliation shine through quite clearly.



Chapter three, entitled "The Mother of All Heresy: Gnosticism," deals with one of the heresies most famous in the earliest years of Christian history. Olson briefly touches on keystone Gnostic thought and Irenaeus's rebutting response. According to Olson, Gnosticism was dealt with in the second and third centuries, but throughout Christian history its legacy can be seen in the Cathars of the high Middle Ages, Rosicrucianism, and Theosophical streams of thought. Chapters four and five deal respectively with the heresies revolving around divine revelation (Montanism and Marcionism) and the divinity of the Son (Adoptionism, Arianism, and Nestorianism). In chapter 4 Olson shows how these streams of thought (Marcionism and Montanism) further enabled orthodox reflection upon both the New Testament canon and the relation between Scripture and extra-biblical revelation. The fifth chapter discusses heresies regarding Christ: Adoptionism, Arianism, and Nestorianism. Olson shows how these streams of thought relate, and why the divinity of Jesus was defended with such fervor.

Chapter six touches on heretical conceptions of the Trinity: Subordinationism, Modalism, and Tritheism. Olson wants the reader to distinguish between the "Trinity" per se and the Doctrine of the Trinity. The first of these is mysterious and cannot be fully grasped, the second, however, can be wrongly portrayed and is a human description of how the Trinity "works." Olson primarily describes what the boundaries should be in one's Trinitarian reflections. Sadly, there is not a lot of positive reflection on the doctrine. The last chapter dealing with the ecumenical heresies touches on Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism.

The final chapters address what Olson classifies as denominational heresies. Chapter eight is provokingly called "Making God a Monster: Divine Determinism." In this chapter, Olson hopes to convince the reader that the views regarding God's sovereignty and predestination proposed by

Augustine, Wycliffe, Calvin, Zwingli *et al.* are internally inconsistent since they necessarily result in a system in which God is responsible for evil. The last sections of the book deal with Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and the “Gospel” of Health and Wealth. In them, Olson quite convincingly shows how one should not think of these streams of thought as orthodox or even Christian.

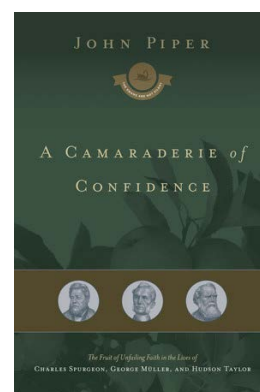
I can appreciate Olson’s project: trying to make the lessons from the past accessible to the modern church and pointing out where the influence of old heretical thought can be seen in today’s church. In trying to make this awareness available to the church today, however, Olson has unfortunately made some odd decisions that misrepresent some of the thinkers, or are unhelpful for understanding the historical context of these ancient discussions. Let me briefly focus on one chapter in the ecumenical heresy section and one in the denominational heresy section to illustrate this shortcoming. Although Nestorius did sometimes speak of two *prosopa* and other times of one *prosopon*, he did not himself argue that Christ was two persons, like Olson contends (pp. 79–80). It is also doubtful and needs much more explanation whether Nestorius doubted the divinity of Jesus (Nestorius fully agreed with the anti-Arian confessions of the fourth century). Finally, the eighth chapter of the book makes very big claims about the relationship between Augustine, Calvin, and Zwingli and their thought on God’s predestination. Olson jumps very quickly—without presenting enough evidence—to the conclusion that their views are contradictory to the confession that God does not cause evil. Such thorough critiques—even in a non-academic work—are in need of much more grounding and explanation.

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John Piper. *A Camaraderie of Confidence: The Fruit of Unfailing Faith in the Lives of Charles Spurgeon, George Müller, and Hudson Taylor*. The Swans Are Not Silent 7. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. 116 pp. £8.99/\$19.99.

*A Camaraderie of Confidence* is John Piper’s seventh book in The Swans Are Not Silent series of biographical vignettes. This entry focuses on three well-known evangelical leaders from the Victorian Era: Charles Spurgeon, the famous Prince of Preachers; George Müller, the man of prayer and faith who cared for thousands of orphans in Bristol, England; and Hudson Taylor, a pioneer missionary to the interior of China and the founder of the China Inland Mission. What many readers may not know is that Spurgeon, Müller, and Taylor were contemporaries who knew, admired, and encouraged one another.

In his Introduction, Piper draws out the interesting connections between the three men and sketches the historical context in which they lived and worked. As heirs of the evangelical awakenings, they were gospel men with hearts for the poor and the lost. As practical men with a zeal for a working faith, they were “modern mavericks,” willing “to adjust inherited ways and traditions to put personal biblical convictions to practical use” (p. 22). In a great summary statement, Piper says, “Their activism and individualism and pragmatism and resistance to elite privilege and identification with the common man (none of them had a theological degree) made them men of their age. Nevertheless, they were radically different from the unbelieving masses of their day” (p. 30).



The subtitle of the book discloses its unifying theme: “The Fruit of Unfailing Faith in the Lives of Charles Spurgeon, George Müller, and Hudson Taylor.” Faith in God’s sovereign goodness and his faithfulness to the promises of Scripture was a thread woven through their shared stories. This theme is most prominent in the book’s Introduction, Conclusion, and chapter on Müller. The chapters on Spurgeon and Taylor, however, follow a slightly different orbit, each with their own distinct center of gravity.

The subtitle to Spurgeon’s chapter is “Preaching through Adversity” (p. 33); this chapter is easily the longest in the book. Piper describes seven features of Spurgeon’s preaching ministry, including his suffering, which is divided into another five subheadings. This leads straight to the crucial question on which the chapter hinges: “how did he persevere and preach through this adversity?” (p. 48). Piper answers with six “strategies of grace” (p. 49) that supported and sustained Spurgeon’s perseverance through the pressures, criticisms, and physical afflictions that marked his life and ministry. Among these strategies were Spurgeon’s practices of prayer and meditation and his deep confidence in the sovereignty of God.

The second chapter takes up George Müller and his “Strategy for Showing God— Simple Faith, Sacred Scripture, Satisfaction in God” (p. 63). After briefly recounting the details of his life, Piper devotes several pages to Müller’s distinction between the gift of faith and the grace of faith (pp. 69–72). Müller insisted that he did not have the spiritual *gift* of faith (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:9), but rather that he had built his life and ministry by exercising the *grace* of faith that should characterize all believers. This, in Piper’s view, is the key to understanding Müller’s life. The chapter also explores Müller’s Calvinistic theology and his devotional use of Scripture.

The chapter on Taylor is focused on his experience of union with Christ and devotes considerable space to his affiliation with the higher life teaching of the Keswick convention. While Piper is critical of the Keswick Movement and even contends that “its views of sanctification . . . in the worst exponents, are seriously flawed,” he also concludes “that Taylor was *not* one of those worst exponents, and that he was protected from Keswick’s worst flaws by his allegiance to the Bible, his experience of lifelong suffering and sorrow, and his belief in the sovereignty of God” (p. 85). The book’s Conclusion highlights the “uniting thread in the interwoven lives” of Spurgeon, Müller, and Taylor, namely, “their great confidence that God could and would fulfill all his promises to care for each of his children” (p. 105).

I will offer two moderate criticisms of *A Camaraderie of Confidence*. First (and this criticism applies not only this book, but to the *Swans* series as a whole), while Piper’s treatment of these men is inspiring, one is left feeling that Spurgeon, Müller, and Taylor were larger than life. Missing from these chapters is the kind of critical engagement with the subject’s less admirable traits that one hopes for in a longer, more critical biography. While readers will walk away admiring Spurgeon and company’s faith in the face of suffering, they will know little of their faults, failures, weaknesses, and sins. One must recognize, of course, the limitations of this series and this particular kind of biography. These are really biographical sketches aimed for the edification of readers (these chapters originated as sermonic biographical lectures to pastors, delivered in a conference setting). And while they fulfill that aim admirably, an element of hagiography remains nonetheless. The second criticism concerns Piper’s treatment of the relationships between Spurgeon, Müller, and Taylor—the “camaraderie” of these three men. While readers can be grateful that Piper pointed out these connections, I wonder if more could have been said about these partnerships and the importance of such collaboration in ministry today.

There are also several strengths to this book. First, Piper succeeds in condensing the most crucial details of these three lives into accessible, interesting chapters. Second, he draws specific attention to the work God accomplished through each man, as well as the unique trials they each suffered in their particular contexts. Finally, Piper not only highlights their unflinching faith in God, but he also explores the theological and practical dimensions of their faith, with special emphasis on their trust in God's sovereignty and their personal practices of prayerful communion with God through meditation on Scripture.

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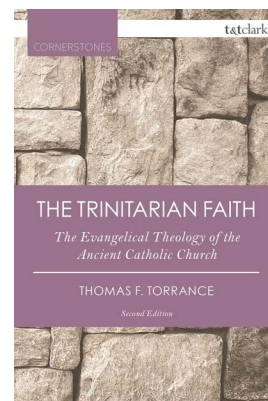
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Thomas F. Torrance. *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Christian Church*. 2nd Ed. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016. 384 pp. £21.99/\$29.95.

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T&T Clark has recently published a second edition of Thomas F. Torrance's *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* as part of their Cornerstones Series, which aims to republish major works in the fields of biblical studies and theology. Originally released in 1991, Torrance's extended analysis on the Trinitarian basis of the Nicene Creed is deserving of its inclusion in this series for its sustained impact in Trinitarian discourse. Torrance's book gives an interpretation of the background, context, and contents of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Each chapter moves through one phrase of the creed, and gives Torrance the opportunity to analyze the debates and issues surrounding the linguistic choices that the patristic fathers made in formulating the creed. While Torrance is mainly content in this work to examine patristic debates behind the creedal formulation, it has much to add to current discussion on the Trinity, such as the ongoing debate in certain evangelical circles over the question of the eternal subordination of the Son.

Myk Habets introduces the second edition of the book with a new critical essay that is worth reading for anyone interested in the current landscape of Trinitarian theology. He evaluates the book's contents as well as its place and impact on the field of Trinitarian thought. The book itself is composed of eight chapters that move through each phrase of the creed. The first chapter gives some background information on the creed, the controversies surrounding its formulation, and the mindset of the patristic authors who sought to give boundary markers for orthodoxy. In the second chapter, Torrance analyzes the patristic church's understanding of the Father through the self-revelation of the Son. Torrance then gives implications of this knowledge in the third chapter, where the internal Father/Son relation is given ontological priority over the external Creator/creation relation. The fourth and fifth chapters focus on Christ as the Son of God, first in his relation to the Father and second in his relation to creation. The sixth chapter examines the Holy Spirit in his relation to Father and Son as well as to creation, arguing that what the Holy Spirit is toward creation he is inherently within the Trinity. The seventh chapter presents the doctrine of the church as an extension of the doctrine of the Trinity, with the Church as the body of Christ grounded in the Son's relation to the Father but not equal to it. The final chapter



once again looks at the Trinity through the lens of several Patristic fathers, such as Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Epiphanius.

Throughout the book there are three principles that are important for Torrance in understanding the formulation of the creed. The first is “*lex orandi—lex credendi*,” theology built on doxology, originating with Origen and guiding the evangelical faith of the patristic fathers in their twin-pursuit of theological knowledge and devotional piety. Torrance describes the patristic church fathers as evangelical precisely because of this pursuit, along with their goal of making God known to the wider world. The second principle stems from Athanasius’s famous quote, “It would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father, than to name God from his works alone and call him Unoriginate” (p. 49). Torrance continually draws on the embedded principle from this quote—that God is known through the Son—for methodological reasons, showing how it grounds knowledge in the objective reality of God and also how it opens up possibilities for knowledge in the self-revelation of God in Christ. The third principle is the conceptual power of the creedal term *homoousion*. In the introduction, Habets emphasizes that this term provides the functional structure of the entire book (p. xii). Torrance continually refers back to it to explain each phrase of the creed, particularly related to the divine nature of each member of the Trinity.

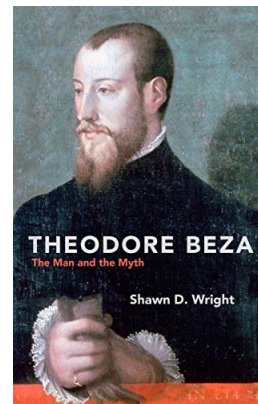
As the book’s subtitle illustrates, Torrance believes that acknowledging the evangelical faith of the patristic fathers is crucial for understanding their theologies and the creed’s formulation. For this reason, Torrance’s book has much to commend it to current evangelicals also. Throughout the book, Torrance demonstrates the primacy of Scripture in patristic thought related to the creed. As Habets notes in the introduction, Torrance is also keenly aware of the patristic emphasis on witness in the life of the early church (p. xii). Expressing a position that relates to the modern debate concerning the eternal subordination of the Son, Torrance argues that Basil’s elevation of the Father as sole principle of the Trinity was a significant weakness compared to the Athanasian axiom that, apart from his fatherhood, whatever we say of the Father we can say of the Son and Spirit. Part of his reasoning is that the elevation of the Father as sole principle introduces the possibility of degrees of honor, unequal degrees of deity, and disunity within the Trinity. At the time of original publication, this line of thought separated Torrance from other Trinitarian theologians such as John Zizioulas and Colin Gunton, who advocated a Basilian understanding of the persons of the Trinity. Today, this same argument can inform evangelical theologians on the potential problems in advocating the eternal subordination of the Son for anthropological reasons.

Still, there are also certain historical difficulties for the reader to wade through. As Habets notes, Torrance has been accused in this work by David Ford and others of flattening out historical complexities and making Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, and other patristic figures to sound very similar to the “scientific theology” that Torrance himself advocates (p. xiv). However, when read as a constructive engagement with Trinitarian doctrine rather than simply as a historical treatment of the patristic writers, Torrance’s work can be viewed as a case study in how to build a scripturally grounded and historically attested doctrine of the Trinity. For this reason, as well as its continued usefulness in Trinitarian discourse, Torrance’s book is well worth obtaining in this new (more affordable) edition.

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Shawn D. Wright. *Theodore Beza: The Man and the Myth*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015. 256 pp. £8.99/\$14.99.

French Reformation scholar Brian Armstrong once averred that Theodore Beza's unique theological method was "invariably based upon an Aristotelian philosophical commitment and so relates to medieval scholasticism" (*Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism in Seventeenth-Century France* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969]). Such remains the modern legacy of John Calvin's heir in Geneva: a cold, distant scholar who forsook the pure biblicism of his teacher for a systematized theology made in his own scholastic image. This negative evaluation of Beza provides the *raison d'être* for Shawn Wright's latest book *Theodore Beza: The Man and the Myth*. As the subtitle suggests and Tom Nettles observes, this work wipes away the "historiographical garbage" in order to present a more accurate portrait of the man who inherited the task of uniting the Reformed churches in Europe and leading the Academy in Geneva after Calvin's death. Wright, Associate Professor of Church History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, seeks to "introduce you to the real Beza." (p. 10)



Among the litany of books on Beza, including Wright's *Our Sovereign Refuge: The Pastoral Theology of Theodore Beza* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), this latest work offers a most genuine contribution in its ability to countervail the many modern misconceptions surrounding "the Calvinist." The author accomplishes this primarily in four ways: (1) demonstrating the continuity and discontinuity between Beza and Calvin, (2) advocating the "Muller thesis" against the likes of R. T. Kendall and others, (3) contesting the negative connotation of the word "scholastic," and (4) presenting Beza as a man who was "first and foremost a Christian and a pastor" (pp. 74, 43, 45, 203). For Calvin and Beza, the gospel was central to everything. As a result, both men shared a heavy burden for their French homeland. Wright begins the book with an incisive look into Beza's historical context in order to give the reader a sense of Beza's humanity and the trials that shaped his writing and teaching. According to Wright, "Unlike Calvin, Beza lived to see the intense heat of persecution decimate the French Protestants, and, in many ways, he served as their counselor during this difficult time" (p. 31). From the aftermath of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre to the Colloquy of Montbeliard, Beza proved himself to be more than a theologian; he was a statesman and an ambassador for the Reformed faith. *Theodore Beza: The Man and the Myth* is a robust depiction of Beza in all of these roles.

Wright's most impressive erudition, however, is found in his ability to correct the mischaracterizations of Beza with a wide array of primary sources. Chapters 4–8, for example, are each centered on a particular "work of Theodore Beza that explains an important facet of his thinking" (p. 11). Wright's Beza is not a rigid, philosophical thinker so much as a theologian with a "pastoral vision" who interpreted the vicissitudes of this life against the backdrop of a cosmic battle for souls waged between God and Satan. Therefore, Beza's doctrine of predestination becomes the ground for his doctrines of assurance and perseverance. Hence, the believer can earnestly seek after a sovereign God and can find confidence in the Christian life. Beza's practical doctrine of divine providence is perhaps no more on display than in *A Learned Treatise of the Plague* (1579). In this work, Beza biblically answered some of life's most difficult questions regarding death (p. 168). In a particularly insightful chapter, Wright utilizes Beza's discussion of secondary causes in order to demonstrate that his seemingly Aristotelian theology was imbued with a pastoral bent.



In response to Roger Olson, who accused Beza of founding supralapsarian Calvinism, Wright scrupulously dissects Beza's *Tabula Praedestinationis* and his doctrine of double predestination. The author insists that Beza "is not asserting a sort of robot theology." (p. 114). Instead, the "asymmetry" to his famous chart of salvation, along with his oft-neglected doctrinal discussion that accompanies it, clearly indicates that sinners are punished in eternal hell due to their own culpability and sin. As Wright correctly shows, Beza was not the first to formulate the doctrine of double predestination, nor did he confuse the two concepts of reprobation and condemnation. God's wrath for the reprobate is pure justice; his saving of the elect is pure grace. As Wright exhorts, "The asymmetry that Beza draws is essential for us to repeat." (p. 140)

Wright's treatment of Beza is a welcomed, didactic biography for the Reformed community. As the first student of Calvin, the "real Beza" is able to teach us about the "real Calvin" and his legacy in ways that no other historical figure can. Despite its hagiographic quality, *Theodore Beza: The Man and the Myth* is an enjoyable book that forces its readers to reexamine scholastic theology through a more pastoral lens. This is an excellent resource for the Reformed theologian, both for its historical description and its pastoral prescription.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

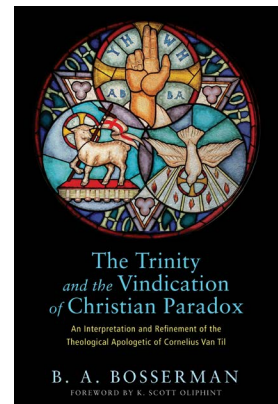
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B. A. Bosserman. *The Trinity and the Vindication of Christian Paradox: An Interpretation and Refinement of the Theological Apologetic of Cornelius Van Til*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014. xxiv + 267 pp. £20.50/\$35.00.

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The work of Cornelius Van Til is an enigma. Many are sympathetic to Van Til's claim that the theological revolution of the Protestant Reformation should entail a parallel revolution in apologetics. Yet turning to Van Til's writings, one is quickly bogged down in opaque expositions and obtuse analogies with very few examples of what a *reformed* argument for God actually looks like. Bosserman seeks to remedy the situation in two ways. First, he provides a cogent and relatively accessible analysis of Van Til's trinitarian system of thought. Second, Bosserman extends the work of Van Til by advancing an argument for the necessary existence of the Triune God of the gospel.

Bosserman begins by offering a useful overview of the theology of "Old Princeton" and "Old Amsterdam" and the philosophy of the "Absolute Idealists" (beginning with Hegel and culminating in the works of F. H. Bradley, Bernard Bosanquet, and John McTaggart), all of which influenced Van Til. This section is particularly dense but valuable for its pithy accounts of various philosophers (especially Aquinas, Reid, Kant, and Hegel) and their influence on subsequent trends in theology. The close reading and synthesis of British Idealist philosophy, whose terminology is often used by Van Til but has since fallen into obscurity, helps in understanding Van Til.



With this frame of reference, Bosserman turns to an exposition of Van Til's "trinitarian system." He begins with Van Til's transcendental argument *from* and *for* the Trinity: all predication, even denials of the Trinity, presupposes an absolute and personal harmony of unity and diversity which is *only* found in the Triune God. Bosserman proceeds to demonstrate how trinitarian doctrine shapes Van Til's theory of knowledge and logic. Van Til's theory of knowledge is predicated on an analogy between different types of minds—between the Triune Creator on the one hand and creatures on the other—ensuring that finite human knowledge can be reliable. Next Bosserman organizes Van Til's suggestions into a coherent, if brief, Christian theory of logic. This logic, following the British Idealists, makes "implication" central, rather than induction or deduction: a concrete portrait of reality, intertwining revelation of God, humanity, and nature, is challenged by various experiences, including further investigation of Scripture, leading to the development of a more comprehensive vision of reality. Bosserman concludes his exposition by showing how Van Til developed various loci of theology as *implications* of the doctrine of the Trinity. What emerges from Bosserman's careful analysis is a portrait of Van Til as a precursor to the recent renewal of trinitarian theology.

Based on this exposition, Bosserman raises two criticisms. First, although Van Til argued for God's oneness and *many*-ness, the *tri*-personality of God appears to be an inessential attribute. On the contrary, Bosserman argues, "we should . . . seek a deeper understanding of how (1) tri-personality is indispensable to the unity of God; and (2) the created system of reality reflects its Creator" (p. 158). Second, it is unclear how Van Til can simultaneously make paradoxical doctrines central to his system while criticizing non-Christian thought as intrinsically self-contradictory. What is needed to make Van Til's argument coherent is a way of distinguishing the apparent contradictions of paradoxes from true contradictions.

In response, Bosserman moves beyond Van Til, proposing arguments for the necessary *tri*-unity of God along with various other paradoxical Christian doctrines. In brief, Bosserman maintains that although a paradox looks like a contradiction, the poles of a paradox actually imply each other as well as illuminate the larger system of thought in which they are situated, while the poles of a true contradiction negate each other and lead to abstractions. Bosserman's statement of the Christian system proceeds by implication, taking "a basic portrait of reality, which is discernible . . . throughout the biblical story, as a major premise" to which is added various minor premises, derived from further "revealed information," in "a way that it both receives illumination from the major premise and challenges its completeness." Though these premises initially appear to be in contradiction, once "discovered, it becomes evident that neither premise could have ever been true apart from the qualification of the other" and thus form an authentic paradox (p. 173). Following this approach, Bosserman's analysis proceeds from theology proper to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, sin, and salvation.

Bosserman's argument for the necessity of the Trinity, perhaps the most important effort of the book, is a suitable example of the analyses offered in this final section. Bosserman proposes as his major premise "covenantal personalism," the pervasive biblical teaching that there is "a single personal God . . . [who] is the context/atmosphere within Whom all other things live and move and have their being" (p. 175). All alternatives to covenantal personalism ultimately lead to self-defeating abstraction. Yet this major premise must be challenged by the "distinctively New Covenant revelation that God is in fact three persons" (p. 176). So far this is standard fare. Bosserman, however, advances the argument with the insight that "the uni-personality and tri-personality of the Godhead necessitate one another, and are equally indispensable to that covenantal personalist worldview to which they belong" (p. 177). All

alternatives ultimately presuppose an impersonal context within which God relates to creation and/or other gods. A triune God alone can be both personal and absolute (that is, free from any larger, abstract context). Any two members of the Trinity are related to each other only within the personal context of the remaining member: “the Son and Spirit are related to one another within the personal context of God the Father . . . [and] each person in himself *is* identical with his activity of relating the other two—the Father *is* that self in whom the Son and the Spirit relate” and so forth (p. 178).

Bosserman continues, challenging the resulting synthesis, “Trinitarian covenantalism,” with further minor premises, such as the apparently contradictory equality and ordered economy amongst the persons of the Trinity and the apparent contradiction between divine simplicity and the multiplicity of divine attributes. Further theological paradoxes addressed include divine immutability and creation from nothing, human knowledge as objective and analogical, the emergence of sin in a good world, and the dual natures of Christ. Admittedly, a weakness of the book is the brevity with which various doctrines are discussed in this final section. This should, however, be excused: Bosserman must demonstrate the utility of his Christian logic and definition of paradox through application to a variety of doctrines and, at any rate, the arguments offered are suggestive and exciting, leaving the reader hungry for more.

Make no mistake: this is a difficult book. Bosserman’s subject matter is demanding and his prose is difficult. I hope, however, that this does not deter the wide readership that this work deserves. In our increasingly post-Christian society, Bosserman’s competence in philosophy and willingness to argue rigorously for the truth of the Christian system can provide both a model and a guide for theological students and pastors alike.

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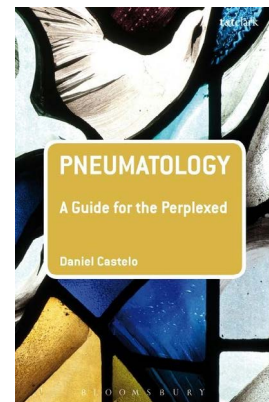
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Daniel Castelo. *Pneumatology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. xiv + 144 pp. £20.00/\$27.95.

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Over the last few decades, reflection on the third person of the Trinity has been a major topic within and across theological disciplines. A guide is thus needed. That is what Daniel Castelo aims to provide in this short book. What sort of guide? As Castelo acknowledges, one may not find in this book “an exhaustive reference work” (p. xi). Instead, it is “a collection of ‘working papers’ (especially in its latter chapters) that offers a glimpse into the field with the aim of clarifying some of the most pressing concerns associated with it” (p. xii). This book is an aid to “perplexed” readers that offers, at least, a route to explore a few areas within a large field of pneumatology.

Due to the breadth and depth of pneumatology, Castelo devotes seven condensed chapters to reflecting on some of the key issues. The first three chapters deal with some lingering fundamental issues. Chapter one brings forth a set of challenges and expectations within pneumatology. Castelo offers a keen perspective on how Christology is privileged over pneumatology, which in turn creates a serious challenge to Spirit-talk. Moreover, the inadequacy and ambiguity of terms employed within the domain of Spirit-talk, the difficulty in translation, the



relationality and the transpersonal nature of the Spirit have implications for major challenges within the field of pneumatology. Chapter two presents the shape of Spirit-talk in terms of diverse biblical tags, patterns, and themes. Rather than a threat to truth and meaning, this diversity is actually a gift to the church. Providing a brief survey of biblical materials along the lines of Spirit-talk, Castelo argues that consistency and coherence are not to be identified with uniformity and homogeneity. In chapter three, Castelo surveys the earliest construals of pneumatology through the eyes of major figures such as Irenaeus, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Augustine amid the Trinitarian controversies.

The remaining four chapters reflect specifically Castelo's focus on making a case for the vitality and necessity of Spirit-discourse in Christian life. The Spirit works in every aspect of life, such that the deep relationship between pneumatological framings and worldview thinking cannot be ignored without doing injustice to the reality of the permeating work of the Spirit. Chapter four discusses an oft underestimated-yet-crucial topic in pneumatology, that is, the relationship between the Spirit and cosmology. Castelo points out that although most Christians have a working consensus regarding the role of the Spirit in creation, they acknowledge little to no active role for the Spirit in their cosmology. A pneumatological cosmology is thus greatly needed. However, it is puzzling that Castelo leaves untreated significant contributions to the topic by non-Pentecostals such as John Calvin, John Owen, and Jürgen Moltmann. Against the contemporary tendency to limit the role of the Spirit within the bounds of doctrinal categories such as "inspiration" and "illumination," chapter five elaborates the topic of mediation, in which the Spirit is discussed as being at work in the life of the Christian community through a variety of means—especially Scripture—for the church's ongoing healing and sanctification. The work of the Spirit in and through Scripture (and other means) is more organic than merely inherent in the process of its writing. Holy Scripture is a pneumatological phenomenon. The Spirit works ceaselessly for the sanctification of Christian life. Chapter six takes on the different views of Spirit-baptism, comparing in particular "sacramental," "evangelical," and "Pentecostal" views. In this chapter Castelo offers a helpful and wise proposal for how to deal with recalcitrant approaches to theological conundrums, that is, to acknowledge differences in the alternatives and to prioritize a larger theological framework rather than a reductive attempt to defend one over the others or to resolve the irreconcilable differences. In the case of Spirit-baptism, he suggests that theologians from diverse traditions may find a constructive consensus by reframing the discussions within the overarching goal of sanctification, that is the maturation and transformation of Christians (2 Cor 3:17–18). Discussions related to the Christian life, Castelo points out, "can be reframed so that growing vitality and an abiding desire for God can be prioritized in such discussions" (p. 116). This sets the stage nicely for the last chapter in which he discusses discernment of pneumatological activity. Here Castelo deals with the following questions: *Where is the Spirit at work? What is the Spirit's work? What is the Spirit ultimately trying to do?* He shows that finding answers to these questions is enormously complex. The tensions exist between the vast work of the Spirit and the human culture-ridden ability to discern it. Discernment ought not to depend on human freedom (Chung) nor formulas (Wesleyan Quadrilateral), but on the Spirit himself. To discern the Spirit "one needs capacitation by the Spirit" (p. 130); one also needs to be an "epiclectic" self, that is, "a Spirit-dependent and Spirit-enabled" self, an actively engaging member of a Christian worshipping community (p. 132).

Castelo's book is not only a guide but also an insightful proposal for how to deal with the work of the Spirit honestly and openly, in a nonreductive and constructive way, and with proper appreciation for existing traditions. But this book is not a beginner-level introduction to pneumatology; general

readers with minimal theological background will find it hard going as they read this book. Those with the necessary background will certainly find this book compelling and stimulating.

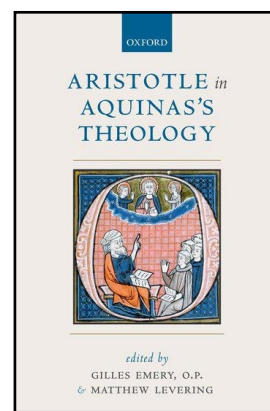
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Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, eds. *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 261 pp. £65.00/\$110.00.

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The influence of Aristotle on Aquinas's philosophy has been the subject of many studies, but this is not true regarding the same influence on Aquinas's theology. This collection of essays aims to provide an introduction to such a study. The book meets this aim successfully through ten essays, which are arranged reflecting the order of the *Summa Theologiae*—starting with God and the created order, and finishing with the sacraments. With three exceptions, most authors of the volume primarily work in theology or religious studies; the primary interest is theological, and Aristotle only serves as a point of comparison. Their underlying conviction is that “Aquinas is, first and foremost, a theologian” (p. vi), and that we can understand some important claims of his theology by looking at one of its main sources.



The first essay, “Central Aristotelian Themes in Aquinas's Trinitarian Theology” by Gilles Emery, shows that Aristotle's influence on Aquinas's trinitology is widespread: Aquinas borrows from Aristotle certain structural elements (such as the Holy Spirit's proceeding from the Son, divine persons as relations, etc.), as well as some central concepts (such as nature, individual, principle, etc.), and some logical tools that enable him to clarify his Trinitarian language. Overall, this essay is a very clearly written case study of how Aquinas turns to some Aristotelian concepts when elaborating on specifically Christian doctrines.

The second essay, “Aristotelianism and Angelology according to Aquinas” by Serge-Thomas Bonino, shows that Aquinas inherits certain key elements from Aristotle that give a framework for his treatment of angels. For instance, Bonino considers Thomas's position that angels are purely immaterial and his (later condemned) view that each angel must be its own distinct species.

The third essay, “Aquinas and Aristotelian Hylomorphism” by Raymond Hain, bears a slightly misleading title. Instead of examining Aristotelian hylomorphism in Aquinas in general, it focuses on two questions: the unity of soul and body, and the status of the intellectual soul especially after death. Hain concludes that although Aristotle's hylomorphism provided a useful framework for tackling these issues, Aquinas remained rather unclear especially regarding the second one (giving rise to many contemporary debates on the status of the disembodied soul).

The fourth essay, “Aristotle and the Mosaic Law” by Matthew Levering, argues that Aristotle enables Aquinas to fully appreciate the law of Israel *as a law*, in the context of Israel. Levering shows Aristotle's influence in three central places: in Aquinas's discussion of the precepts of the just social order and of interior dispositions, in the discussion of whether the laws of the Decalogue are well expressed, and in

some particular problems (such as why can there be no exceptions to the Mosaic law, or why all but two precepts are negative ones).

The fifth essay, “Aristotle’s Philosophy in Aquinas’s Theology of Grace” by Simon Francis Gaine, demonstrates that topics that would have been foreign to Aristotle himself can still manifest a remarkable Aristotelian influence in Aquinas. Aquinas relies heavily on Aristotle’s account of nature in his discussion of why grace is needed, and on other Aristotelian themes in his characterization of grace as a habit, and in his description of the instrumental causality of the sacraments.

The sixth essay, “Aristotle and Aquinas’s Theology of Charity in the *Summa Theologiae*” by Guy Mansini, shows that Aristotle’s understanding of friendship provides a useful model for Aquinas in developing his account of charity—Aristotelian friendship strictly but analogically—and we cannot understand it without considering Aristotle’s account in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The seventh essay, “Aristotelian Doctrines in Aquinas’s Treatment of Justice” by Christopher A. Franks, provides a thorough discussion of Aquinas’s account of justice and its Aristotelian counterpart. Franks’s assumption is that “the Christian narrative context is important for understanding Aquinas on justice exactly because he is so Aristotelian” (p. 141), and overall, this is a detailed introductory presentation of Aquinas’s theory even though avoiding such topics as the theory of just war or just government.

The eighth essay, “Contemplation and Action in Aristotle and Aquinas” by Mary Catherine Sommers, shows how Aquinas adopted and at the same time changed Aristotle’s view of the contemplative life. Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that the contemplative life, *simpliciter*, is better than the active life. Unlike Aristotle’s, however, the Christian context presents a special problem for Aquinas’s position: If the contemplative life is better than the active life, then how is it that Christ, whose life was in every respect an exemplary life, chose an active life? The overall solution seems to be that while Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that the contemplative life is the best life, he also thinks that perfect contemplation can only be achieved by the blessed, *in patria*.

The ninth essay, “Aristotle in Aquinas’s Christology” by Corey L. Barnes, provides both an interesting case study in Aquinas’s theological use of Aristotle, and an examination of some more general principles that are present in Aquinas’s other—philosophical as well as theological—considerations. Barnes shows four issues where Aristotle informs Aquinas’s Christology: fittingness arguments, the principle that “actions pertain to suppositis” (p. 188), the notion of instrumentality, and Christ’s resurrection as a cause of the general resurrection.

The final, tenth essay, “Aristotle in Aquinas’s Sacramental Theology” by John P. Yocum, shows some key aspects in Aquinas’s theology of sacraments that either explicitly or implicitly rely on Aristotle’s conceptual framework: Aquinas’s view that sacraments are complex signs, treating sacraments as sensible signs, and Aquinas’s treatment of sacramental causality. Yocum’s paper is a helpful case study, even though it does not discuss some specific problems arising from combining Aristotle’s metaphysics with especially the sacrament of the Eucharist, and its treatment of sacramental causality is rather brief.

All in all, the present volume is a useful introduction to Aristotle’s influence on Aquinas’s theology. It is selective, not comprehensive, and does not treat certain topics such as, Aquinas’s discussion of the divine attributes, creation, divine providence, other theological virtues, sin and punishment, prayer, and eschatology. Additionally, the essays concentrate on Aquinas’s views as expressed in the *Summa theologiae* and occasionally in the relevant Aristotle commentaries and do not consider the *Sentences*

commentary or the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Nevertheless, the material presented here is already much more than sufficient for an introductory volume.

The organization of the whole book as well as of most of the individual essays is exceptionally clear. The volume is well edited and includes a helpful index of terms. Readers would benefit from more tables like the one on p. 57 that lists parallel references between Aquinas's *Summa* and Aristotle's writings on major topics.

The volume, despite being an introduction, assumes a readership with some previous knowledge of Aristotle and Aquinas. It will be especially welcome by Aquinas scholars in both philosophy and theology, and can provide a good starting point for some further, more specific studies on this rather general subject.

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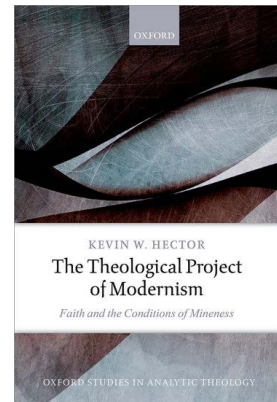
Kevin W. Hector. *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness*. Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 271 pp. £65.00/\$110.00.

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To many potential readers another book on a number of emblematic modern theologians might not seem like a very good idea. After all, are we not beyond modernity in more than just one way? Singularly, modernity's presumed "view from nowhere" can no longer be credibly entertained, especially since it is presumably in fact a mask of its white-, male-, and Euro-centrism.

Hector aims to demonstrate the ongoing fruitfulness of the modern theological project, not least in its adaptability to more contemporary concerns with context and perspective. He suggests a way of reading modern theology that locates one of its main interests to be the problem of "mineness." "Modern theology," Hector writes, "can be understood (among other things) as a series of arguments about what it would mean for one's life to be self-expressive, and what role faith can play in making this possible" (p. 3). Standing in the way of achieving "mineness" are life's inevitable oppositions. The modern theologians Hector discusses (Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Ritschl, Troeltsch, and Tillich) provide explicit accounts of dealing with such oppositions. They "were deeply concerned with just the sort of issues" we are sensitive to today, "including especially the role theology might play in enabling persons to face death, tragedy, guilt, and injustice" (p. 264).

The book is largely successful in its aim of demonstrating the viability of such a reading of modern theology, even if it picks up just one of the threads that makes "modern theology" modern. One particularly helpful feature of the book, related to its presence in a series on Analytic Theology is the clarity of argumentation. The author explains in just what way this is an exercise in analytic theology: "I have tried throughout to explain key concepts by relating them to well-understood examples and other concepts, to make the steps of my argument explicit (usually by putting them in the form of conditionals), to anticipate and respond to objections to which my claims are liable, and, in short, to submit my claims to the sort of discipline practices among analytic philosophers" (p. ix). In my judgment, he admirably succeeds in this. Some readers may be happy to find that the author does not utilize symbolic notations.



Nonetheless, he is judicious in clarifying the thought of the various writers, but also translating it into more familiar concepts.

So what does the modern theological project look like from the vantage point of its concern with mineness? To start with, God is understood as resolving life's oppositions, by taking them into union with Godself. On the horizon of faith, these oppositions are no longer experienced as ultimate. In faith we gain a new stance in relation to adversity, whether natural, social, or personal. Faith is precisely a way of responding to such circumstances. It is not defined by making abstraction of its relation to the self and its circumstances. "Patience and forgiveness are thus the form that faith takes in relation to circumstances, and which enables one to remain self-united in the face of these" (p. 257).

Against the objections of Freud, faith need not be reduced to wishful thinking; neither does faith necessarily stifle action. Hector helpfully shows that treating the oppositions as ultimate is even more likely to lead to denial and thus inaction. More interestingly, faith does not lead to passivity because faith is "necessarily expressed in certain kinds of action—or, more precisely, to have faith is to act in certain ways in response to certain circumstances, such that faith, so understood, is decidedly anti-quietistic" (p. 261).

Two observations need to be made at this point. First, Hector provides something like a dispositional account of faith. Faith is not simply an inward (or, indeed, a subjective) state. Rather, faith is a "stance" (p. 23) that is learned in the midst of dealing with life, but also as one learns from Jesus from within the community of his followers (there is an extremely nuanced account of social-epistemology here that deserves attention). Here the discussion of Schleiermacher is particularly illuminating, with Hector defending him against the customary charges of subjectivism.

Secondly, faith is not simply self-denial. In faith one's humanity and individuality are not obscured, but precisely affirmed. The theological grounding for this is the divine act of union with humanity. Christ's humanity is preserved and not superseded; similarly, our humanity is also affirmed. To encounter God is to find ourselves. This is clearly not exclusively a modern theme, but the theologians under discussion certainly highlight the self-involving nature of this faith: "one's relationship to God is simultaneously a self-relationship" (p. 26). Hector clarifies and defends their position against facile accusations of subjectivism and idolatry (esp. pp. 122–25). Nonetheless, the integration of the oppositions must itself be "mine," or "self-expressive."

This raises an interesting difficulty in relation to the problem of normativity. Hector argues that each person's response in faith to these oppositions, as self-expressive, opens up new expressive possibilities for others. In other words, since faith is a disposition that is learned in community, I learn a range of adequate responses from other "recognized" Christ followers and their own responses. In turn, as I become a recognized Christ follower, I add my own expressive range of responses to the responses of the community. Thus, the very meaning of faith changes with each new recognized follower of Jesus. One may wonder, then, what constraints are available to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate expressions of the faith? To put it differently, on what basis does one recognize other disciples?

The traditional Evangelical response to this question has been to appeal to the normativity of Scripture. Hector does not engage with this particular approach here, although he does deal with it more extensively in his *Theology Without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). No clear revisions appear to have been made to the earlier project here. We may thus assume something like the following. The appeal for non-contextual criteria is a foundationalist pipe-dream. The only adequate way of entertaining any discussion of



normativity is in more holistic terms. Here, authentic expressions of the faith are just recognized as such by people who simply know what it means to “go on” (to put it like Wittgenstein, one of the inspirations behind much of Hector’s thinking). Hector calls this the “spirit of recognition.” As one who has much sympathy for (much of) the post-foundationalist project, I nonetheless find it increasingly difficult to reconcile (in our situation of grave moral disagreement) my recognition of other Christ followers with my moral assessment of their positions, or even life-choices. In other words, I find it increasingly difficult to simply “trust” that our communal “spirit of recognition” is always attuned to the Spirit who alone “searches hearts” (Rom 8:27). I am not suggesting that my negative assessment of other people’s claim to authentically express faith in Christ is infallible. Rather, this is an observation about our increasing difficulty to agree on whether this or that action, or belief, or lifestyle is indeed to be recognized as expanding the range of what Christianity means.

If I may be allowed a comment about the usefulness of this book as a modern theology textbook, the following should be noted. Hector does not contrast modern theology with pre-modern theology. That angle might have made epistemological issues, including the issue of normativity, Scripture, and history more central. The discussions of the six modern theologians are very clear, persuasive and often illuminating. Whilst the theology of the six modern authors is not systematically presented, Hector gives an excellent sense of the evolution of their thought, whereby other central features of their *oeuvre* are often brought to bear on the issue of mineness.

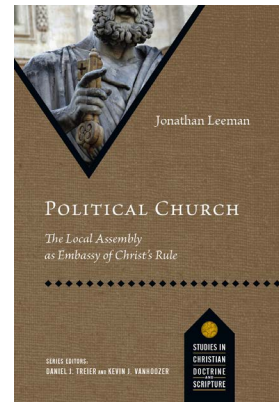
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Jonathan Leeman. *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ’s Rule*. Studies in Scripture and Doctrine. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. 448 pp. £24.99/\$40.00.

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At the writing of this review, the USA is currently in between the summer nominating conventions of its two main political parties. Many Christians, including some well-known evangelical personalities, have been weighing in on the relationship between faith and politics for many months. Some of these voices are more thoughtful than others, of course, and no doubt such prognostications will continue long past the election this fall. Considering this cultural context, Jonathan Leeman’s new book *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ’s Rule* is a particularly timely contribution to IVP Academic’s new series, Studies in Doctrine and Scripture. Leeman, editorial director of 9 Marks Ministries and an elder at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, offers a sophisticated contribution to evangelical ecclesiology and political theology that hopefully will influence how the faith and politics discussion takes shape in the coming years.



Leeman states his two goals in his preface. First, he wants to “replace the map of politics and religion that many Christians have been using since the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century with a more biblical one.” Second, he aims to “explain where the local church fits onto this redrawn map as a political institution or embassy of Christ’s rule” (p. 13). Rather than relying on political theory to shape how believers construe the relationship between church and state, Leeman calls for a more

robustly theological approach to this issue. For Leeman, the local church is an inherently political assembly. “Indeed, the church is a kind of embassy, only it represents a kingdom of even greater political consequence to the nations and their governors. And this embassy represents a kingdom not from across geographic space but from across eschatological time” (p. 22).

Leeman makes his case over the course of six sometimes-lengthy chapters. He rejects modern liberalism’s understanding of politics, especially insofar as many political theorists argue for religious liberty as a natural right grounded in freedom of conscience and/or advocate a divide between the public secular sphere and the internal, more personal sacred realm. He opts instead for a more theological understanding of religious freedom that rejects religious neutrality on the grounds that all of life is inherently religious. Leeman also enters into scholarly debates about the nature of institutions and advocates what might be characterized as a theocentric institutional interpretation of the church as a political body endowed with dominical authority over its constituent members. Though a Baptist theologian, Leeman’s reframing of religious liberty is a departure from dominant Baptist views. However, his rejection of modernity—which seems correct to this reviewer—should lead to a necessarily less philosophical and more explicitly theological conception of religious liberty, even among traditions, like Baptists, that have leaned heavily (at least in America) on Enlightenment accounts of conscience and neutrality as allies in articulating religious liberty and church-state separation.

Leeman leans heavily upon biblical theology to argue for the kingship of Christ over all creation, the place of the fall and redemption in reasserting Christ’s political rule over his church, and the dynamics of church membership. He draws upon Oliver O’Donovan’s political theology (which Leeman summarizes as a “two ages” approach [p. 274]) and Gordon McConville’s work on Old Testament political theology, while critiquing Kuyperianism as too ambiguous in how it relates institutional thinking to ecclesiology and two kingdom theology for being too quick to separate the sacred and secular realms in a way Scripture does not. (The latter in this way is often a religious ally of secular modernity.) He leans heavily upon a covenantal understanding of the biblical narrative, a Reformational affirmation of justification by faith alone, and a Free Church (or baptistic) understanding of local church ecclesiology. The end result is a constructive reframing of well-worn Protestant and evangelical concepts such as kingdom, covenant, and church.

Readers familiar with Leeman’s other scholarly and popular writings on church membership, discipline, and polity will recognize many familiar themes in the latter chapters, and especially chapter six, which at almost 100 pages could have been published as a separate monograph with only minimal editing. Like earlier Protestants, but unlike most contemporary evangelicals, Leeman suggests the local church is the primary arena of God’s present rule and an eschatological microcosm of his universal rule. Politically speaking, the keys to Christ’s kingdom have been entrusted to the church and are exercised through the will of the members, under the leadership of its officers, in submission to Christ’s ultimate will as revealed in Scripture. In this way, the local church is the embassy of Christ’s rule, recognizing citizens of Christ’s kingdom, exercising oversight over their citizenship, and pronouncing judgments that will be fully realized at the final consummation of the kingdom at the end of the age.

There is much more that could be said about *Political Church*; it is a work deserving of a review essay rather than a short review of this kind. Various readers will doubtless push back on some of Leeman’s interpretations. His anti-modern stance (and its ramifications for religious liberty discussions) will trouble some evangelicals and especially some of his fellow Baptists. Those who embrace other ecclesial traditions will rebuff his congregationalist polity. Dispensationalists will reject his covenantal

reading of biblical theology outright while covenant theologians will criticize his resonance (at least at certain points) with a “progressive covenantal” view. Leeman’s reliance on institutional theory will certainly challenge those who downplay polity and wider debates about faith and order. However, even for those who disagree with Leeman on certain particulars will hopefully find much to appreciate. Baptists and other Free Church evangelicals should welcome an ecclesiological work that is constructive and grounded in biblical theology rather than primarily apologetic and reliant on isolated proof-texts. Leeman likely did not set out to make a contribution to debates about Baptist theological identity, but he has most certainly done so.

Regardless of one’s level of agreement with Leeman’s various arguments, most will agree he has provided a helpful starting place for some needed scholarly discussions about topics such as the royal priesthood, religious liberty, the relationship between the church and its surrounding culture(s), ecclesial authority, and evangelical political engagement. *Political Church* is a signal contribution that should provide grist for the scholarly mills of evangelicals and others interested in ecclesiology, political theology, and related topics. Highly recommended.

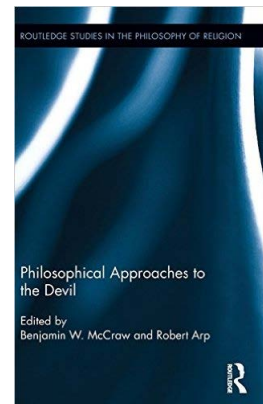
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Benjamin W. McCraw and Robert Arp, eds. *Philosophical Approaches to the Devil*. Routledge Studies in the Philosophy of Religion. New York: Routledge, 2016. 211 pp. £90.00/\$145.00.

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Routledge is one of the top academic philosophy publishers around today and their Routledge Studies in the Philosophy of Religion series has published excellent work by some of the best scholars in philosophy of religion today, including J. P. Moreland and William Hasker. Their most recent book in this series, *Philosophical Approaches to the Devil*, is a unique and interesting addition. Editors Benjamin W. McCraw and Robert Arp claim in their introduction that though there have been many volumes devoted to historical, cultural, and theological treatments of the Devil, this edited collection of newly written papers “engage[s] specially in philosophical argument, debate, and dialogue involving conceptions of the Devil and related ideas” (p. 10). Thus, they take this book as filling “an important intellectual gap, giving the Devil his philosophical due, so to speak” (p. 11).



I think this book can be more specifically described as a *very* broad array of philosophical essays that deal either directly, or sometimes much more tangentially, with the concept of the Devil. McCraw and Arp divide this collection of papers into four main sections. The first section looks at differing conceptions of the Devil. The second section deals with medieval and modern perspectives on the Devil. The third and fourth sections deal with epistemological issues and social or moral issues concerning the Devil.

I don’t think this is the sort of book most of us would pick up. But I think reading books we wouldn’t normally investigate can sometimes get us to think differently and more profitably about a subject than we had ever thought of before. In this vein, I think the *Philosophical Approaches to the Devil* is worth

one's time. In what follows, I will highlight a few of the essays to give a flavor of the helpful philosophical discussion within.

In the first section of the book Siobhan Lyons's cultural and literary essay on the Devil was very enlightening. Starting with Milton and going through various Romantic thinkers up to Nietzsche, Lyons traces out how the concept of the Devil transformed from being thought of primarily as a villain to being thought of as a misunderstood and tragic hero. This is very illuminating given the rise in popularity of tragic heroes and anti-heroes within literature and pop culture today. I think Lyons helpfully shows how this conception of the Devil has been very socially influential.

In the second section of the book the most outstanding essay came from notable Anselm scholar Katherin A. Rogers in her "The Devil and St. Anselm." This all too short essay covers Anselm's famous work on the Devil and makes the case that it is really more "a case study on the mechanics of free will, rather than a discussion of Satanic goings on" (p. 71). She offers careful exegesis and insightful analysis that indeed has implications for issues including freedom, temptation, and moral responsibility. Another interesting historical essay in this section is David Reiter's essay on Jonathan Edwards's understanding of hell. Reiter makes the case that Edwards understood God's punishment of the damned as being mainly rooted, not in a principle of retribution, but in a principle of teleology. Reiter argues that Edwards understood a principle of retribution to be subsumed under this broader teleological rationale for hell.

The third section of this collection contains Paul McNamara's "A Theist's Nightmare," written as something of a Socratic dialogue. His main character (called Bob) retells a nightmare to a counselor (called Doc) where Bob is presented with a lecture that offers a panoply of arguments for the existence of "the supreme evil being"—which incidentally is almost exactly analogous to his philosophy professor's arguments for the existence of God. Bob is concerned that this supreme evil being must indeed exist. Fortunately for old Bob, Doc points out that though the two lectures are mirror images of each other, the conclusions can't both be true, namely that God exists *and* the supreme evil being exists. Thus, "If the reasoning is parallel in both cases, and the conclusions are incompatible, then the reasoning itself has gotta be flawed" (p. 131). This gives Bob great comfort as evidence that the supreme evil being does not exist. Note that Bob is seemingly comforted despite the fact that the philosophical arguments for the existence of God are also disposed of as well! This is an interesting argument but one wonders what McNamara would say to a parallel argument from evil—i.e., an argument from good where a supreme evil being probably doesn't exist because of the existence of good in the world. Would he accept that this shows that the usual argument from evil against the existence of God is also equally flawed?

In the last section of this book, T. Ryan Byerly has an interesting essay examining the immorality of Satan's temptations of Eve and Jesus. I'm not sure what I think of Byerly's conclusions, but he convinced me that we philosophers and theologians probably have not thought sufficiently about the nature of temptation. Again, this is what makes a book like this so valuable: introducing us to thinking in new beneficial ways about already familiar concepts.

As with most edited volumes, the essays within *Philosophical Approaches to the Devil* are of lesser and greater quality. The only essay that I found of very poor quality was the very last one by editor Robert Arp. His paper attempted to argue against the existence, not only of the Devil, but also of God. Fine and well. But it seemed to me that Arp's essay was more of a rant than providing much in the way of substantive argumentation. Rather than a reflection of Arp's abilities, we have here a classic case in which an editor would have been wiser not to include his own work in a volume he is editing.

A collection of philosophical essays on the Devil is probably not the sort of reading most of us would jump into. But I greatly appreciate a well-written book that pushes me to see anew a seemingly already familiar subject. I believe *Philosophical Approaches to the Devil* rightly highlights our need to mine old subjects, including the Devil, in new ways.

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John Piper. *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. 304 pp. £9.99/\$24.99.

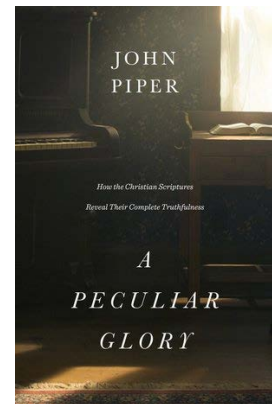
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John Piper, a well-known Baptist pastor, teacher, and writer from Minneapolis, has penned an original and edifying book. Piper's trademark concern for God's glory, inspired by Jonathan Edwards' paradigmatic "A Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World," is here applied to the fundamental-yet-contested issue of the truthfulness of the Christian Scriptures. The thesis of the book can be summarized as follows: "The glory of God is the ground of faith. It is a solid ground. It is objective, outside ourselves. It is the ground of faith in Christ and in the Christian Scriptures. Faith is not a heroic step through the door of the unknown; it is a humble, happy sight of God's self-authenticating glory" (p. 11, see also pp. 15, 18).

Piper depicts Scripture as a window through which one experiences God's glory. He seeks to open the eyes of the reader to the many ways in which this is true objectively and experienced personally, producing a warranted, solid and full faith/confidence in the heart of the believer. This leads him to explore the role of human rational abilities in this process and their instrumentality in the Spirit's sovereign work of illumination, viz. as the means through which the elect perceive God's glory. Though historical inquiry has a place and a use in his view, it is insufficient by itself for the job required. Rather, "at the end of all human means, the simplest preliterate person and the most educated scholar come to a saving knowledge of the truth of Scripture in the same way: by a sight of its glory" (p. 15).

Piper's argument expands on the Reformational doctrine of the self-attesting or self-authenticating nature of Scripture. The book does not intend to offer an academic or theoretical discussion of the philosophical, historical, theological and apologetical debates related to the truthfulness of Scripture. Yet, the author's thorough acquaintance with and understanding of the relevant issues undergird and frame the entire edifice. His position is neither naïve nor fideistic, but on the contrary theologically and epistemologically sophisticated and informed. Piper's method is a self-conscious outworking of his life-long reflection on the subject. Due to his particular interest, the book focuses less on arguing for the "that" of the self-authentication of Scripture than on the "what" and "how."

Parts 1–3 of the book are "preliminary" in nature, while parts 4–5 deal with "the heart of the matter." Hence, after a short general introduction Piper tells the story of his own experience of God's authenticating glory in the Scriptures, which culminated in the composition of the relevant section of the Bethlehem Baptist Church Elder Affirmation of Faith (which, on this issue, echoes the Westminster



Confession of Faith). These are expounded in the early chapters of the book. Thus the next three chapters define “what” it is exactly that we call Scripture: which books compose the OT, the NT, and whether we possess the very words (and message) of the original authors. Piper then investigates what the Scriptures claim for themselves, focusing on the OT’s own claims, Jesus’s evaluation of the OT, and the Jesus-derived nature of the authority of the apostles.

Moving beyond these foundational considerations, Piper tackles the central question of his book: How does one know that the Scriptures are true? He notes that we do not do so merely on the basis of Scripture’s claims about itself, but as we espy the bigger tapestry of divine glory to which they contribute. It is this glory alone that is intrinsically self-authenticating (pp. 89–90). Here the argument returns to Jonathan Edwards’s point that the answer to the question cannot be limited to a few highly educated scholars but must be equally applicable to all believers. Chapter 9 is where Piper describes what it is like to see the glory of God, building on Edwards and parsing 2 Corinthians 4:4–6. In this reader’s opinion, it is the highlight of the book. He follows with a discussion of Pascal’s Wager in which he argues that biblical faith is no leap in the dark. This part concludes with Calvin’s doctrine of the internal testimony of the Spirit, God’s solution to man’s natural (because fallen) inability to accept/recognize the truth and glory of God revealed in either nature or Scripture.

Piper finishes the book with a discussion of the different ways in which Scripture is confirmed by the peculiar glory of God. First, he argues that this glory constitutes the “entire scope” of world and Word. Then, he shows how the person and work of Christ determine its unique character. Further, God’s glory shines through the pages of Scripture in its testimony to the fulfillment of prophecy and to the miracles of Jesus. Finally, it is made visible to all by the character and life of the communities created and transformed by the Word. Piper concludes this last part with a chapter detailing various roles that human agency and historical reasoning play in the preservation, transmission and reception of the Scriptures (touching on Romans 10), thus being also means through which God confirms the truthfulness of Scripture with his own glory.

Piper’s book is a knowledgeable and accessible development of the historic Reformational understanding of the issue. It is pastoral and edifying. Unlike many treatments, *A Peculiar Glory* does not shirk the issues raised by textual criticism but tackles them head-on, for which it must be commended. Moreover, it provides a unique and soul-building exposition of the inner workings of the attestation of Scripture by God’s glory shining through its pages. It is not an academic apologetic for the inerrancy of Scripture, but a valuable complement to its traditional defense. The doctrine is given flesh and bones, so to speak, by being investigated in a personal and experiential way, thus reinforcing the Christian’s confidence in the Word of God.

One question was vexing throughout my reading, however: Who, exactly, is Piper’s intended audience? Christian apologists? Concerned or doubting believers (as appears from pp. 79–80)? So-called “seekers”? Curious unbelievers (mentioned on p. 282)? Combative skeptics? A combination thereof? I was not able to ascertain the answer to the question, making an evaluation of the book difficult.

I have one more—rather minor—criticism: a few references are insufficiently precise in my opinion. Hence, no specific edition of Pascal’s *Pensées* is indicated (pp. 168–69), though various arrangements exist and the referencing system is not universal. Similarly, the original source of a long citation from Calvin (p. 183) is not identified, but only the anthology in which it can be found is indicated.

All in all, Piper has made a valuable contribution to the church’s toolbox. There is no doubt that *A Peculiar Glory* will encourage many Christians. Strict evidentialists will be frustrated with the book.

Presuppositionalists should enjoy it, however. It seems to me that its most profitable apologetic use is in combination with a more traditional defense of the truthfulness of Scripture, i.e., of the historic Protestant doctrine of the principal necessity of the doctrine of Scripture's self-attesting nature.

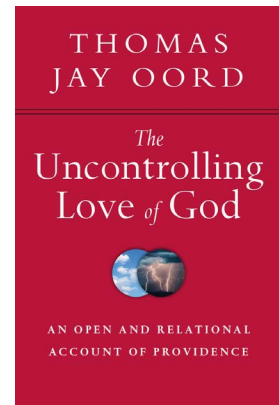
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Thomas Jay Oord. *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 228 pp. £16.98/\$22.00.

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Thomas Jay Oord offers an original account of providence in the tradition of the open view of God, but going beyond it in significant ways. The account is set out to provide an answer to the problem of evil. Over and over again, Oord returns to the existence of genuine evil in the world, which forces on us a renewed understanding of God's power and love. The book presents real life tragedies, which serve as test cases for different accounts of providence throughout the book (ch. 1). Chapters 2 and 3 provide useful definitions and clarifications of concepts such as randomness, laws of nature, agency, free will. In chapter 4, Oord provides an interesting classification of the major accounts of providence, before focusing in chapter 5 on open theism, which he calls "the open and relational alternative." Chapter 6 presents and critiques one major account in this tradition: John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007). Chapter 7 is the heart of the book, explaining Oord's own understanding of God's relation to the world. Chapter 8 then applies his account to the question of miracles.



The book is extremely well-structured and readable. From the outset, the reader understands the author's project and easily follows the exposition as it unfolds. A figure on p. 83 is helpful in showing how the major accounts of providence differ. The particular features of Oord's own account are clearly explained. Throughout the book, Oord's pastoral concern for people suffering from evil is obvious.

The very readable character of the book comes with a number of unjustified claims. Here I shall point out just two of them. First, Oord conflates different levels or forms of chance. Calvin is quoted as rejecting chance. Oord provides a quote from the *Institutes* in which Calvin opposes *fortuna*, that is metaphysical chance, events without any divine control and causation (pp. 30–31). But Oord does not point out that Calvin allows for "scientific" chance, that is fortuitous events as far as any inner-worldly explanation is concerned (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, rev. ed. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008], 1.16.9):

As the order, method, end, and necessity of events, are, for the most part, hidden in the counsel of God, though it is certain that they are produced by the will of God, they have the appearance of being fortuitous, such being the form under which they present themselves to us, whether considered in their own nature, or estimated according to our knowledge and judgment.

The indeterminism of contemporary scientific theories does not contradict this view of chance. Nor does Oord distinguish between epistemological and ontological randomness. He considers coin flips to be determined neither by “God above or the atoms below” (p. 33). For the first part of this statement, science has nothing to say about this (whereas Oord seems to think otherwise, p. 41). For the second part, the laws of classical physics are sufficient to describe coin flips, thus these are deterministic happenings. We can still use them in games of chance, because the outcome is outside of our control.

Second, Oord is not a very reliable guide when it comes to the history of Christological thought. Commenting on the Chalcedonian Declaration of Faith, he writes that “theologians thereafter pondered which divine attributes Jesus retained in human life” (p. 154), as if this was a common quest among theologians after Chalcedon. In fact, we have to wait for the 19th century and *kenosis* Christology, in order to see the question raised. Instead, historic Christianity stayed with the Declaration which had stated: “the difference of the natures being in no way removed because of the union, but rather the properties of each nature being preserved.”

But let us turn to the core of Oord’s book—his original account of providence. Here’s the summary he provides:

Because of love, God necessarily provides freedom/agency to creatures, and God works by empowering and inspiring creation toward well-being. God also necessarily upholds the regularities of the universe because those regularities derive from God’s eternal nature of love (p. 94).

He describes this model as “essential kenosis.” It “considers the self-giving, others-empowering love of God revealed in Jesus Christ to be logically primary in God’s eternal essence” (p. 160). How does Oord arrive at this understanding?

Not surprisingly, Philippians 2:4–13 is invoked as support for this model of divine providence. Oord is aware that there are differing understandings of the passage and that it speaks about the Incarnation and not God’s essence. But these scruples are brushed aside, as “all Scripture requires interpretation” (p. 154). Preference is given to readings which have arisen “in recent decades” and which emphasize what Jesus’s *kenosis* reveals about God’s nature (p. 155). Such an understanding flows from the “a priori truth . . . that love . . . does not control.” “Love by definition is noncoercive,” therefore “God *cannot* control others entirely” (p. 181). And it receives confirmation *a posteriori* by what we observe in the world: God’s love must be of this uncontrolling kind, otherwise we would not observe so much genuine evil (pp. 183–85).

Oord’s methodology deserves attention. His starting-point is not what Scripture explicitly teaches about God’s nature, his love and power, and his dealings with the world. He even recognizes that some biblical passages “seem” to favor a more robust view of divine sovereignty. He vaguely points to a “better interpretation of most biblical passages and the overall drift of Scripture” (p. 85), without providing any clue for how this better interpretation can be reconciled with the significant number of biblical texts that stress God’s control and sovereign action in history. Instead, Oord draws conclusions from central events in salvation history, in particular Jesus’s life, death and resurrection, while barely interacting with the interpretations Scripture itself offers of these events. He approvingly quotes John Sanders that “Jesus’s life, death and resurrection reveal that ‘God is not the all-determining power responsible for sending everything, including suffering, on us’” (p. 136). Not much is offered in terms of an argument on how Jesus’s life, death and resurrection reveal such a thing. And what should we make of Jesus’s teaching about God’s sovereignty (Matt 10:29)? What about his prayer at Gethsemane, understanding the cross



as the cup of God's wrath (Matt 26:39)? What about Peter's contention that Jesus was nailed to the cross "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23)?

Scripture does not occupy center stage for Oord when it comes to knowing who God is. It is merely one source among others: "We can know something about God because of the revelation we find in Scripture, the natural world, tradition, reason, the arts, sciences and our personal experiences" (p. 82). The reader is thus not surprised that the problem of evil provides a significant argument in favor of Oord's view of God's nature: traditional accounts of his power and sovereignty can't be true because they don't explain why genuine evil happens in the world.

Let no one underestimate the revolutionary character of Oord's proposal. His is not a cautious, half-hearted revision of traditional accounts of God's nature and action in the world. Not only is the future open, so that God does not know future contingents, as other advocates of the open view consider (p. 175). In opposition to other open theists, God's self-giving, others-empowering love is not a voluntary self-restriction, but *part of God's nature*. Otherwise, God would still be responsible for evil, as it would result from his free decision to restrict himself (p. 140–144, 164). The consequences are far-reaching. Not only does the act of creation become necessary, but specific aspects of our world are required by God's nature: "freedom, agency, self-organization and lawlike regularities" (p. 169). God does not have the power to prevent evil from occurring, as he is uncontrolling love. In particular, God cannot directly act in the physical world, for example by blocking "a bullet before it projects from a rifle," because God has no body (p. 178; no argument is provided as to why bodily action would be the only causal process available).

Oord wants to allow for miracles. Given God's uncontrolling character, they only "occur when creatures . . . cooperate with God's initiating and empowering love" (p. 200). But what does it mean to claim that "organs and cells of our bodies can resist God's offer of new forms of life that involve healing" (p. 213)? And is such a view faithful to the biblical authors' own understanding of miracles? They regularly stress the manifestation of God's mighty power in these acts, quite to the exclusion of creaturely cooperation, too corrupted by evil to assist God (Isa 63:5; John 11:39–44; Rom 4:17–19).

Does Oord's account solve the problem of evil? At first sight yes, but at a very high price. Evil becomes metaphysically unavoidable. This is a tragic view of reality. And can we really consider that Oord's God is exclusively good (as Oord maintains)? Evil essentially flows from his nature. For example, he necessarily upholds lawlike regularities including chance and "gives . . . self-organization to the . . . organs of our bodies," from which illnesses, such as birth defects and cancer follow (pp. 172, 174). He may not be "culpable for the evil that less-complex entities cause" (p. 172); but traditional theology has always considered that goodness does not only pertain to God's voluntary acts, but characterizes his very nature and all that flows from it (Jas 1:17).

On closer inspection, I am not even sure that Oord succeeds in solving the problem of evil. He is right to consider that we experience genuine evil in this world (p. 185). But does his model provide any grounds for being scandalized by evil? After all, if genuine evil is necessarily part of reality, a direct consequence of God's nature, why call evil *evil*?

If you want a readable presentation of models of providence in the vicinity of open theism, Oord's book is a good place to start. It will make you think about such crucial issues as God's nature, his relation to the world, and how to explain (and not to explain) evil in the world. But beware, in this book you will not encounter the Lord answering out of the whirlwind. For all those interested in the problem of evil

on existential and pastoral grounds (as is the case for Oord), may they remember that it was only this God who brought comfort to Job's heart and finally relieved him of his suffering.

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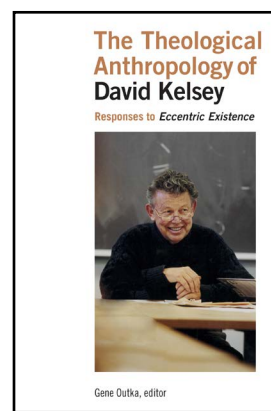
Gene Outka, ed. *The Theological Anthropology of David Kelsey: Responses to Eccentric Existence*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. 179 pp. £16.99/\$25.00.

The title of this volume accurately conveys its purpose and scope. In 2009, Westminster John Knox Press released a massive two-volume work by David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*. Kelsey, now retired, was a long-time professor at the Yale Divinity School. His book was many years in the making and has garnered a great deal of interest in the world of academic theology. The present volume, consisting of eight essays interacting with *Eccentric Existence* specifically and Kelsey's theological work generally, is further evidence of that interest.

John Thiel opens the book with an essay on Kelsey's methodological choices in writing *Eccentric Existence*. Key in this regard, according to Thiel, is the way Kelsey structures his book around the idea that God relates to what is not God in three interrelated but distinct ways, "to create us, to draw us to eschatological consummation, and, when we have alienated ourselves from God, to reconcile us" (p. 3). Thiel points out that this threefold relation corresponds to the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Hence, Kelsey works out his theological anthropology in light of this distinctively Christian idea, and he makes God rather than human beings the center of his work. Nearly every other contributor to this volume also reflects on this basic approach of Kelsey.

The next essay, by Charles Wood, reflects on a number of features of *Eccentric Existence* and closes by posing three questions (which are really friendly challenges) to Kelsey. One of the features of *Eccentric Existence* he discusses is its extensive attention to the Old Testament wisdom literature. Kelsey turns to the wisdom literature because, he believes, it is the one place in Scripture that considers God's relating to people as their creator in a way independent from considering how God brings them to eschatological consummation or reconciles them. I mention this because Kelsey's attention to the wisdom literature is another theme that many of the other contributors also discuss.

The next essay, by David Ford, focuses upon Kelsey's use of Scripture. Among the issues he raises, Ford mentions three books of Scripture (John, Isaiah, Song of Songs) to which Kelsey does not give much consideration and suggests how they might contribute to his analysis. Then Cyril O'Regan, a Roman Catholic, attempts to begin a dialogue between *Eccentric Existence* and Roman Catholic theology. He gives particular attention to Karl Rahner, with whom Kelsey interacts, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, with whom he does not. The following two essays focus on particular theological doctrines. Amy Plantinga Pauw seeks to extend Kelsey's interest in the wisdom literature into ecclesiology, suggesting how a robust conception of wisdom ought to shape our understanding of the church. Joy Ann McDougall then turns to the doctrine of sin and considers how Kelsey develops his conception of sin in light of the three



interrelated but distinct ways in which God relates to human beings. She presents Kelsey as upholding all of the key features of the traditional doctrine of original sin, except that he rejects the idea of an historical, primeval fall from an originally sinless state.

The volume concludes with essays on two issues tangentially related to *Eccentric Existence* but important to Kelsey and the so-called Yale School, of which he is a prominent representative. First, Barbara Wheeler and Edwin van Driel reflect on how Kelsey's anthropology might stimulate professors of theology to rethink the nature and purpose of theological education. This piece considers some of Kelsey's earlier scholarship on the nature of theology and theological training. Finally, Shannon Craigo-Snell closes the volume by locating *Eccentric Existence* within the Yale School, which emphasizes the importance of *narrative*. She compares this emphasis on narrative with more recent scholarship that highlights the related theme of *performance*, and concludes that *Eccentric Existence* is open to important performance-related themes but has difficulty accounting for others.

Reviewing a collection of essays by different authors always presents the challenge of trying to evaluate the collection as a whole as well as the many parts that are inevitably of different quality and conviction. For the most part, I will focus my remarks on matters pertaining to the former.

First, it is worth mentioning for readers of *Themelios* that this volume, like *Eccentric Existence*, is written at a fairly high level of theological sophistication. Readers without a good theological education will likely find it very challenging. On a related note, I observe that this book is primarily designed for those who have read and pondered their way through *Eccentric Existence* itself. The book could have limited value for those who wish to gain some knowledge about Kelsey's project but have not and do not want to invest the time to read his rich but slow-moving tome of more than a thousand pages. Nevertheless, those who have already immersed themselves in Kelsey's theological world will reap the greatest reward from this book.

The origins and purpose of the volume is worth noting in a little more detail. In a brief preface, the editor relates how the project began as a *Festschrift* in honor of Kelsey's work generally, and that Kelsey himself chose the contributors from a group of colleagues and former students with whom he had collaborated. But in the course of events the project turned into a book focused upon *Eccentric Existence*, thereby becoming not exactly a *Festschrift* but more like a "celebratory volume" (pp. vii–viii). I point this out because it explains certain features of the volume—features that somewhat detract from its quality, in my judgment. For one thing, the essays are highly laudatory of Kelsey's work. Insofar as the book aims to be a "celebratory volume," that seems perfectly appropriate, although some of the comments are more than a little excessive. (*Eccentric Existence* is impressive indeed, but, for example, is it really "impossible to do justice to such a capacious book and quite so masterly a theological performance" [p. 88]?) Of more importance is the fact that, while many essays raise questions offering at least implicit challenge to this or that aspect of Kelsey's work, none of them propose fundamental challenges to the method or substance of the book and often they do not even pursue their questions very far. Thus, the book satisfies its stated purpose of being celebratory, but I believe it would be a more interesting work and more profitable for the larger theological community if its contributors were drawn from a wider circle or at least if they offered more sustained critical engagement with *Eccentric Existence*. Readers who are looking for such critical engagement may find most interest in the essays by Ford (because he asks a number of very good questions of Kelsey) and O'Regan (because he puts Kelsey in extended dialogue with Rahner, one of the most important Roman Catholic theologians of recent memory).

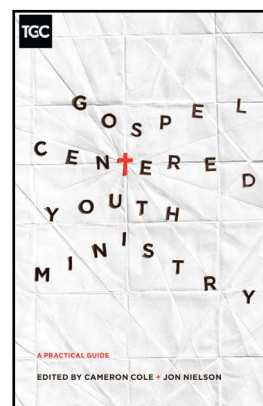
One of the interesting features of the book to me is the fact that many contributors comment on the Reformed character of *Eccentric Existence*. I reviewed *Eccentric Existence* shortly after its publication (*Them* 35.3 [2010]: 523–25), and there I claimed that, for better or worse, it lacked dependence upon or commitment to a particular theological tradition. The contributors to the present volume obviously feel differently. One of them even calls *Eccentric Existence* “unequivocally a confessional text” which “takes its place in the great tradition of Reformed theology” (p. 65). These contributors have a point. From the perspective of mainstream academic theology, in which the Reformed tradition of recent centuries is understood to flow through the likes of Schleiermacher and Barth, Kelsey’s work does seem to belong to the Reformed tradition in several respects. Yet as a Presbyterian who identifies with an older, confessional Reformed Christianity, I would still defend my claim that *Eccentric Existence* is much more eclectic than confessional or Reformed. A few examples briefly illustrate. MacDougall says that Kelsey upholds all of the standard features of the traditional idea of original sin except the notion of an historical fall, but she ends up making him sound rather Pelagian—although she does not use this term but ascribes to Kelsey “a social theory of the inheritance of sin” (p. 113). Also Pauw, addressing herself to Kelsey as a “fellow Presbyterian” (p. 91) and seeking to extend his focus on wisdom to ecclesiology, has sharply critical things to say about several confessionally Reformed theologians and several historic Reformed convictions as she develops a defense of universal salvation. One contributor, the Roman Catholic Thiel, does see (and like) in Kelsey a “Franciscan style of Christology” but wonder whether it is “faithful to the classical Reformation heritage captured in the great Lutheran and Reformed confessions” (pp. 14–15). But on the whole I believe the contributors exaggerate the purported Reformed character of *Eccentric Existence*.

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## — ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Cameron Cole, and Jon Nielson, eds. *Gospel Centered Youth Ministry: A Practical Guide*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. 214 pp. £13.73/\$17.99

Recently, there has been a proliferation of books, blogs, and conferences striving to be “gospel-centered.” This trend seems to be a response to a hodgepodge of secondary things becoming the primary identity, focus, and passion of many American evangelical churches. The center had become fuzzy. Probably no area of ministry needs to regain this clarity more than youth ministry. Several well-intentioned youth ministries focus on entertainment and morality. Pizza parties and promise rings are at the center. Statistics show that this has not been successful. A large percentage of church-raised youth are leaving home with a minimal understanding of Christianity and an even smaller desire to continue to be a part of it. While not guaranteeing numerical success, *Gospel Centered Youth Ministry* asserts that making the gospel central will fight against this trend.



Cameron Cole, one of the editors, is the chairman of *Rooted Ministry*, a network of online resources and a yearly conference seeking to “transform student ministry by fostering grace-driven and cross-centered leaders through rich theological and contextual engagement” ([www.rootedministry.com](http://www.rootedministry.com)). Many of the authors in this work are a part of that same network. The result is a helpful summary and application of the ministry’s core values. However, this does not mean that the perspectives are narrow. The contributors’ voices represent a diverse assortment of reformed evangelicalism. They have dwelt in settings that range from high church to non-denominational.

Within this diversity, all contributors share two core convictions. First, youth ministry ought to focus on “lasting redemption” (p. 25). Youth ministry does not exist to entertain or protect youth for just a season of life. Instead, the goal is for students to have a “passion for God’s redemption in Christ to continue for the rest of their lives” (p. 25). This first conviction leads to the second; that the gospel is “the change agent” that brings about lasting redemption. “God can accomplish the purpose of ministry to youth (*lasting change*) through the gospel as they believe in Jesus and follow him forever” (p. 31). These convictions shape every chapter and give focus to each topic addressed.

The chapters are organized into three sections, with each section intentionally building upon the previous. Part one lays down the “Foundations for a Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry.” Upon that, part two sets forth “Practical Applications for A Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry.” Finally, part three explores “The Fruit of a Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry.” The logical flow between these sections is one of the book’s biggest strengths. Throughout the fourteen chapters, many of the traditional loci of youth ministry are addressed: teaching (ch. 3), small groups (ch. 8), parent relationships (ch. 6), leadership training (ch. 9), worship music (ch. 10), retreats (ch. 11), and mission trips (ch. 14). Although the scope is broad, the three-part structure allows each chapter to fit comfortably alongside the others. The result is a neatly constructed mosaic assembled according to the pattern of the gospel.

The chapters all follow a similar outline. First they show the biblical and theological foundation for the subject. After making the connections between the gospel and their chapter’s focus clear, it moves to more practical considerations. This efficiently packaged combination of theological and practical insights is an extremely valuable feature of the book. Finally, after the theological and practical discussions, each chapter finishes with recommendations for further reading on their topic.

The power of these theologically grounded insights is best illustrated in chapter 6 (“Building a Foundation with the Parents”). It is telling that this chapter is placed within the first section and considered one of the foundations for a gospel-centered youth ministry. Mike McGarry, the chapter’s author, argues that “we must embrace a vision whereby the church and parents coevangelize and codisciple their teenagers” (p. 91). The family emphasis in passages such as Deuteronomy 6 is presented as evidence that a youth leader is not the one primarily responsible for discipling children inside the church (p. 92). Instead, youth ministry focuses on equipping parents as well as discipling students “rather than simply being focused on the youth alone” (p. 95). The chapter is persuasive, but it obviously breaks the mold of most youth ministries. Thankfully we are given plenty of practical advice and encouragement for the long process of building this bridge.

Those strengths far outweigh the weaknesses, but some issues are still worth mentioning. In the introduction, Cole asserts that youth ministry is “a relatively young field” and that it just “concluded its first generation near the turn of the twenty-first century” (p. 17). It is conventionally agreed that youth ministry as we know emerged in the 1940s and 50s, around the same time as the modern teenager. Thus,

it seems odd to claim that the first generation ended around the year 2000. This claim is never explained or defended.

Continuing along historical lines, it is unfortunate that none of the authors directly ask how youth have been raised and nurtured in the church through past generations. While the authors are right to focus on the battle to keep the gospel at the center of youth ministry, they never turn to church's historical resources to see how our predecessors in the faith have fought this fight. Something as prominent in the church's history as catechesis never gets a mention. Even the book recommendations at the end of each chapter display a recency bias. Only three of the almost fifty books that are recommended were printed before 1990. In light of the discouraging statistics suggesting modern youth ministry's inability to form life-long Christians, one might expect a stronger turn to the past for resources. While not dealing directly with "youth ministry" per se, works such as *The Reformed Pastor*, by Richard Baxter, *Thoughts for Young Men*, by J. C. Ryle, or catechisms from various streams of Protestantism all touch on topics such as pastoral ministry, expository preaching, evangelism, and discipleship.

One other potential problem with this volume is presented by the wide array of topics covered. This breadth might be daunting for some under-resourced youth leaders. The average American church has a modest budget and 150–200 attendees. In order to be gospel-centered, does each youth ministry need to go on an annual mission trips, staff multiple small groups, plan a winter retreat, and maintain a worship band?

These qualms do not devalue this book. It is thorough while keeping the most important aspects clear. Cole and Nielson have assembled a resource which is obviously useful for every youth leader. One would do well to read it through once and then revisit each topic in the appropriate season. Furthermore, any pastor who feels a responsibility to train their youth minister for faithful ministry should pay attention to this book. *Gospel Centered Youth Ministry* succeeds in articulating a gospel grounding for everything that happens in youth ministry. Yet it is also jam packed with the sort of solid practical advice and guidance most youth leaders are hungering for.

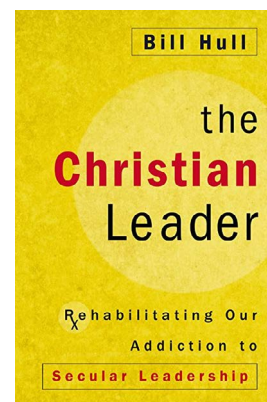
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Bill Hull. *The Christian Leader: Rehabilitating our Addiction to Secular Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 199 pp. £10.99/\$16.99.

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While there is an abundance of books and resources on the topic of Christian leadership, it does not appear that these resources are making a substantial difference in the church since "the American church is not producing mature leaders and followers of Christ who are vibrant, mature, and engaged with their neighbors and communities" (p. 33). In the mind of Bill Hull, a writer and speaker who has spent much of his career focused on discipleship, this failure is due to these resources teaching a kind of leadership that does not reflect the form of leadership that Jesus taught, modeled, and calls Christians leaders to embody.



In this book, *The Christian Leader*, Hull seeks to paint a different picture of leadership than that offered in other resources by drawing attention to Jesus as the ultimate leader, one who might not fit the standard vision of a leader found in the world but is “our leader and our model for any leading that is to be done in his name” (p. 17). Hull calls “for the deconstruction of the irrelevancy of Christ as leader” (p. 19), comparing this deconstruction process to going into rehab for an addiction, as we must be emptied of our view of what a leader looks like (and addiction to this idea) and see Christ as teaching and showing us what a true leader is like. This vision of leadership, according to Hull, is not just for pastors but for all Christians who have people who listen to them and follow them (p. 17).

The first chapter focuses on having a new perspective on Jesus by highlighting Jesus’s uniqueness and also his place as a leader who exhibited a different style, calling for leaders to adopt his practices. The book then proceeds to explore this form of leadership by looking at Jesus, Hull’s own story, and the examples of many leaders of different eras in the eight chapters that explore where to find happiness (ch. 2), how to define success (ch. 3), how to view the world (ch. 4), what humility means and looks like (ch. 5), how to serve others and have a different purpose (ch. 6), how to lead in hard times (ch. 7), what the reward is for leaders (ch. 8), and how one must continually develop as a leader (ch. 9). Themes that repeatedly emerge in these chapters include serving others rather than using others, having a goal of helping others progress towards Christ rather than one of finding success or accolades in the secular or Christian world, viewing the ordinary and mundane as important, and being patient and following God’s timing rather than trying to push one’s own agenda forward in his or her own timing.

At first, I was a bit concerned about Hull’s approach and focus on Jesus as an *example* of leadership. While Christ is certainly an effective leader, I am not sure if his methodology is designed to be replicated in all leaders in light of his unique calling and unique position as the Messiah and Son of God; his ministry is not necessarily a manual on Christian leadership but the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan. However, Hull goes beyond presenting Jesus as an example, explaining how his person and lordship should have profound effects in the lives of his followers. Hull’s call is actually for leaders to lead like Jesus in that they lead from who they are rather than what they do or can do (see p. 18); therefore, Christian leadership flows out of finding our identity in Christ. The foreword by Robby Gallaty picks up on this important emphasis as well, noting that Hull “doesn’t just explain how *to act like Christ*,” but also “explores *how to be in Christ*” (p. 11).

In light of the great number of books on leadership, it is good to know what makes this book different and justifies its publication and reading. While each chapter (except for chapter 1) features a quote and a passage from Philippians 2, this book does not engage in a systematic study of that passage, nor is biblical exposition its major emphasis. Historical examples of leaders are always interesting, though the introduction led this reviewer to believe that there would be a special focus on Winston Churchill and Josephus when these figures do not seem to play a more prominent role in the book than others (it is unclear why these figures are named in the introduction rather than Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson, Dwight Eisenhower, Harry Truman, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the latter of whom appears to be mentioned more than Churchill, likely due to Hull’s work on “The Bonhoeffer Project”). What stands out in this book is the openness with which Hull writes and shares about ways he has tried to live as a Christian leader, including the ways that he has failed in past situations. For example, Hull shares how he did what many pastors do in terms of climbing the “church ladder” of going to bigger churches when one gets “bored” pastoring his present church (p. 165). He also notes how he left a church before accomplishing what he thinks God’s mission was for him there because it was riddled with problems

and he was not fully committed to the “ways of Jesus” (pp. 85–86). At another spot, Hull acknowledges his struggle to let crowds define him in his discussion of humility (p. 111). Overall, Hull’s transparency and self-reflection throughout is refreshing and illuminating, and it presents an invitation to the reader for reflect on his or her own leadership and shortcomings.

This book seems targeted towards Christian leaders who have spent time looking at secular books on leadership and need a corrective, or who have a temperament similar to that of Hull and need to learn from someone else’s struggles and realizations. I am not sure if this book would make a short list of the best books on Christian leadership, but if I knew of a leader or an emerging leader who seems drawn towards the vision of leadership that Hull seeks to counter, I would readily give them a copy of the book or invite them to read through it with me. There is value in this work and readers will benefit from it, but its message does not seem groundbreaking, as numerous other writers have sought to differentiate true Christian leadership from the forms and models of leadership espoused in our world.

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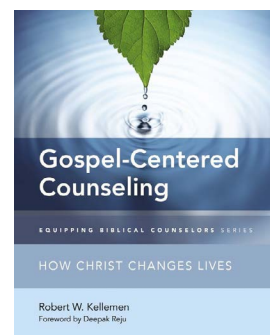
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Robert W. Kellemen. *Gospel-Centered Counseling: How Christ Changes Lives*. Equipping Biblical Counselors. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 312 pp. £7.99/\$16.99.

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Let me state up front that I write as a self-confessed Christian psychologist who happily works in a biblical counseling department at a seminary, and I count Robert Kellemen a friend. Many readers will know that he has written a number of counseling books over the years and is a major leader in biblical counseling, having become the first director of the Biblical Counseling Coalition in 2010 (a position he has since resigned), so any book by him is important. This particular one is a major reformulation of his earlier book entitled “Soul Physician,” but it is so vastly re-written that it warrants a different title and feels like a different book. I might mention that his writing style is pedagogically creative, intended to engage the reader and communicate memorably through the use of catchy phrases, acronyms, alliteration, and figures of speech. Some will find this manner helpful, while others might be put off.

The overall structure of the book is similar to a standard evangelical systematic theology (with a few exceptions in the order), except that it is extremely practical, written to promote counseling practice based on such theology. As one might expect, the first chapter is about the role of the Bible in counseling, but Kellemen highlights its “gospel narrative” as the revealed context for making sense of human life and its restoration in Christ. The next chapter, more controversially, assesses the value of other sources of knowledge for biblical counseling (more on that below). The next two chapters are about God—on the Trinity and his character—followed by a chapter on spiritual warfare, which might seem out of place, but underscores the ultimate battle we find ourselves in and serves as preparation for the rest of the book, which unpacks the gospel narrative. That leads to discussions of the created nature of humanity (two chapters), human fallenness (three chapters: two on sin and one on suffering), and the redemption of Christ (two chapters on redemptive change, organized around “new nurture” and “new nature”). Kellemen adds a chapter on the role of the church in soul healing and another on our future





eternal destiny. Perhaps surprisingly, the book concludes with a couple of chapters that revisit and expand considerably on the multifaceted nature of progressive sanctification.

A book entitled “Gospel-Centered Counseling” wants to make clear that the gospel, and not the fall, is paramount in the biblical counseling project, and this theme is sounded on every page. But it has many other strengths as well: its thorough reliance on Scripture; the attention given to the quality of the counseling relationship; the case examples, sensitively written, used to show how practice flows from theology; the rich and complex model of human nature that highlights created features of humanity not usually so emphasized in biblical counseling literature, e.g., personality, the emotions, the imagination, the value of self-awareness, embodiment, social embeddedness, and empathy. While personal sin is treated with utmost seriousness, he sees it as only half of what biblical counseling needs to address, the other half being suffering (p. 170). The bulk of the book, however, is focused on the amazing resources believers have in Christ for the healing and strengthening of their souls.

Many years ago David Powlison explained to me that there are two kinds of biblical counseling; I labeled them “traditional” and “progressive” in *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007). With its emphasis more on creation and especially redemption, than on sin, this book exemplifies the “progressive” side of the spectrum.

There are only two interrelated areas where I had questions: the role of science and relations with other Christians. Basing his overall approach to psychology on Paul’s admonition in Colossians not to be taken captive to “hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human traditions and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (2:8), Kellemen rightly discourages the “blending” of a biblical worldview with a secular worldview (p. 37), and rejects the latter’s “prescriptive therapy” (p. 47), which is fundamentally religious, since it promotes human-centered soul healing apart from Christ. As a result, he says, we should avoid “spoiling the Egyptians”—i.e., borrowing therapeutic wisdom from them—but should instead “impact the Babylonians,” like the prophet Daniel did. “Paul warns us against integrating secular counseling with biblical counseling soul care” (p. 47).

He then offers an important, but subtle qualification by distinguishing the “prescriptive therapy” of secularists from their “descriptive research” (p. 47), which we should “embrace”: “science, research, and medicine . . . disciplines that examine God’s creation in obedience to the Creation mandate” (p. 48). He extols studies of the “mind/body connection” and even argues that psychotropic medications can be used legitimately by Christians, being a matter of Christian liberty, though he cautions against their abuse.

Some will say it is contradictory to embrace “descriptive research” but decry “integration” and “spoiling the Egyptians,” but I see this as an attempt to strike a careful, biblically-based balance regarding some very complex issues, for which I am grateful. But as I said, I do have some questions. If it is permissible to utilize descriptive research, why is so little cited in the book? Perhaps the answer is self-evident, since it is a book of counseling theology, and not on some aspect of human nature, like human development. But one might expect that such openness to descriptive research would lead to greater utilization of it, so long as it is clearly subordinated to Scripture. Furthermore, are there no areas of even prescriptive therapy that might be helpful for Christians, so long as it is interpreted Christianly, for example, therapy with developmentally-delayed children or those with an autism spectrum disorder?

Second, and more important, what does this position imply about our “integrationist” brothers and sisters, many of whom work in public mental health? Is their “integration” okay, so long as they stick to descriptive research, rather than prescriptive therapy? With Kellemen, I have reservations about

the term “integration,” because what goes by that label today often does not involve much integration of relevant biblical and theological knowledge. I prefer the term “translation,” and its more radical connotations (see *Foundations for Soul Care*, ch. 7.). But if *something* akin to integration is okay, then maybe we can help those who use the term improve upon they claim to do. It was Augustine, after all, that early church champion of redemptive grace, who coined the phrase “spoiling the Egyptians” in his magisterial *City of God*. We desperately need to discuss such issues as a Christian counseling community, and biblical counseling has much to contribute to that conversation. But I suspect little progress will be made so long as those who are the most biblical and theological sharply distinguish themselves from those who “integrate,” and rarely cite them in their works. Is there nothing of benefit, at least descriptively, produced by other Christians in the counseling field? Are there unstated rules of “secondary separation” going on here that forbid citing those “outside the camp?” But if we wish to influence our brothers and sisters in Christ, we have to treat them as friends, and engage in mutual dialogue, listening and learning from them, as well as sharing, even if we disagree on exactly how much we can learn from secularists. Moreover, they just might have something valuable to contribute to our understanding of counseling, God’s creation, and of God’s broader purposes in the world, related to the Creation mandate.

So I pray that the biblical counseling movement continues to grow: in understanding how the Bible should ground Christian counseling; in gospel-centeredness; in a robust and complex doctrine of the Creation Mandate that enables believers to wisely and carefully embrace all the scientific truth given by God to his image-bearers; in a genuinely dialogical stance with Christians who are less biblical, but who have other strengths to share, so that the Christian counseling community as a whole can impact the church--and Babylon—with the kind of sound doctrine and wisdom and grace we find in this book.

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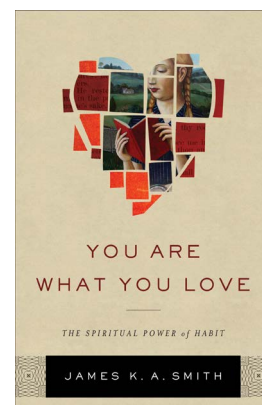
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James K. A. Smith. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016. xii + 210 pp. £15.09/\$19.99.

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James K. A. Smith has given substantial consideration to the complicated relationship among beliefs, desires, actions, and practices. His newest book, *You Are What You Love*, outlines his scholarly work in the field with a practical bent for Christian homes, churches, and vocations.

Smith believes that much of contemporary Christianity has followed Enlightenment thinking by giving human cognition undue pride of place in the role of personhood. This overly cognitive view of human identity tends to view human emotions and behavior merely as the mechanical result of human thought—more or less, with apologies to Descartes, “I think, therefore I behave.” Smith’s scholarship has pointed out that this view does not account for the shaping effects of practices, and over time he has assembled an unlikely alliance of neuroscience, monasticism, and contemporary phenomenological philosophers to argue that actions, particularly repeated actions, influence upon human cognition and understanding.



Smith's interest appears to be much more than scholarly, however, and he brings to *You Are What You Love* an apparent conviction of how deeply entrenched is an overly-intellectualized anthropology within the modern perspective and the contemporary church. Bridging his findings between the scholarly and the pastoral, the book cautions and instructs that the practices of corporate worship are deeply *formative*. Smith argues that liturgical actions carry weight even when the mind does not "understand" the meaning behind them. He sees a virtue in "going through the motions" which, while less than ideal, can lead to a sort of implanting of gospel principles and a resultant shaping of a person's outlook: "Christian worship doesn't just teach us how to think; it teaches us how to love, and it does so by inviting us into the biblical story and implanting that story in our bones" (p. 85).

Smith's project is very appealing, not least for local worship leaders who, unaware of the deeply formative effect of their services over the years, are placing the ark of God's presence on the oxcart of popular song form. The contemporary evangelical church is emerging from a liturgical slumber. Local church practitioners have a new recognition of their responsibilities for the worship of their congregation, as well as the risk of abdicating those responsibilities to an often well-intentioned, but commercialized industry.

Today's worship leaders desire to be taken seriously as thinkers and pastors. Many recognize some incongruity between the soteriological doctrines of grace they have embraced and the dominant worship paradigms they practice. That is, evangelical worship leaders feel the dissimilarity between their Calvinist bookshelves and the tendencies toward a Charles Finney revivalism in their liturgical patterns. *You Are What You Love* offers a robustly reformed call for worship leaders to embrace their essential role in the disciple-making commission of the church.

In my review I was pleased to note the extent to which this book celebrates the *locality* of the local church. Many paradigms of contemporary worship have been derived from parachurch ministries: Christian conferences, radio stations, worship "concerts," and worship recordings. These are edifying in their own way. However, the ongoing worship gathering of the local church has goals and responsibilities (and privileges!), if only by virtue of their regularity—but more than that, by virtue of the role of corporate worship in the life of a believer—that such paradigms do not have the power to approach. Smith places appropriate emphasis in these matters.

That noted, *You Are What You Love* is more than lessons for worship leaders. Smith's book provides rewarding and challenging insights to those who want their Christianity to inform and reform not only their worship services, but also their homes, their youth groups, and their vocations. It is written for those who seek this reward not as a matter of assent, but as a matter of application.

Given the ambitious scope and claims of Smith's scholarship, it is not surprising that his work both provides answers and raises questions. Some have sought to criticize Smith by pointing out the dangers of viewing the relationship between practices, cognition, and affection as a one-way street. However, to hold Smith as arguing that practices affect only cognition, and not *vice versa*, is an unfair reading; indeed, he has vigorously defended against that accusation ("We Need More Than Liturgy: Agreed," *Fors Clavigera*, 22 August, 2014, <http://forsclavigera.blogspot.com/2014/08/we-need-more-than-liturgy-agreed.html>).

A more valid line of inquiry arises in that Smith sees his project as growing out of Aristotelian views of virtue formation, this in keeping with medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas and the contemporary moral philosopher Alistair MacIntyre. For all its pedigree and contemporary advocacy, however, Aristotelian virtue formation has not been received uncritically. Smith's own writing has trained his

readers to be suspicious of this very question: Is habit formation a morally neutral machine that can be appropriated by Christian discipleship? If Aristotle's project of virtue formation-through-habit itself is to be a secular liturgy, then incorporating Christian liturgical practice into Aristotle's paradigm could simply exchange one liturgy for another, with Euthyphrian implications. The long history of Christian thought rightfully imposes a certain amount of suspicion for fitting the gospel of God into other paradigms.

An illustrative concern from Aristotle: the crowning virtue of the *Nichomachean Ethics* is "magnanimity" (1124A.2). According to Aristotle, the magnanimous person is self-sufficient (1125A.12) and maintains superiority over others by giving more than they receive (see 1124B.12). By Aristotle's account, a "great-souled" person "thinks himself worthy of great things and is really worthy of them" (1123B.3) thus avoiding the erroneous extremes of vanity and false modesty and finding the virtuous middle path. The Christian tradition affirms Aristotle's hunch by confessing God's self-sufficiency (divine aseity). God's eternality and sheer originality means he must always give more than he receives. Likewise, Christian worshipers affirm God's worthy nature and his delight in that nature. But if this is a crown of virtue, Christians believe that only a sovereign God is fit for such a crown.

The building of New Jerusalem on the foundations of Athens always has its difficulties: some of Evangelicalism's historical suspicion of habituation and virtue formation finds its root not in the autonomy of enlightenment anthropology but in the potential that habituation of virtue formation would emphasize efforts rather than the gospel of grace. An Aristotelian view of virtue formation that is to pass biblical muster must account for the idea that only God passes the *Nichomachean Ethics* test of a self-sufficient and magnanimous person, as well as the divine initiative needed to find a virtuous middle path.

This is not a critique of Smith's paradigm or his execution, but a recognition that any new emphasis on human activity invites further exploration of the implications. What are the distinctions between, say, the human activities which drive a virtue seeker toward magnanimity and the activities that lead a disciple toward Christ-likeness? And is there correlation between denominations who prize historical liturgy and Christian maturity? Anecdotally the evidence is not strong, and the point bears ongoing exploration.

These points notwithstanding, Smith's book is recommended reading for Christian leaders of all sorts, and essential reading for worship service planners. Evangelical worship leaders owe Smith a tremendous amount of gratitude. He is philosophically aware and theologically articulate. The bookshelves in this field have not often enough benefited from someone of his wide learning and love for the local church. This book and the resulting conversation it will generate will benefit Christ's church for a long time to come.

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Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock. *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015. 176 pp. £6.99/\$9.99.

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In a climate of debate and confusion about gender, Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock offer a case for “complementarity, the way in which men and women find happiness in owning their God-given identity and filling their God-given roles” (p. 122) and show that complementarianism is a doctrine to be savored.

After laying out the recent emphasis on the fluidity of gender in contemporary culture, the authors organize their project into six main chapters. In chapter one, they sketch out the major themes of their project, which finds its basis in Genesis 1:26–27. All human persons are made in God’s image, and “an essential part of being an image-bearer is maleness and femaleness” (p. 22). From this vantage, they move to discussing how the differences between the genders are necessary for fulfilling the dominion mandate given to the first couple. It is only after the sin of Genesis 3 that dissolution between the genders begins to unfold as a consequence of the curses on sin, which are “a curse upon existing complementarian roles” (p. 39).

In chapter two, the authors discuss the tendency, since Adam, that men have to abdicate their responsibility to be leaders. This loss of identity leads women to act in traditionally masculine ways. In response, they elucidate “The Corinthian Challenge” from 1 Corinthians 16:13–14, organizing the rest of the chapter into a reflection on the five imperatives given there. Men must be watchful over sin and personal purity: “Biblical manhood means leadership and leadership means watchful protection and provision for women” (p. 54). Men must stand firm in the faith: “A biblical man spends time with God and he is a biblical man to the extent that he does this” (p. 57). Men must act like men and be strong: they should take action, responsibility and instruction well. Men act in love: “God wants men who are authoritative, but not authoritarian” (p. 62).

In chapter three, womanhood is summarized under three headings: role, attitude, and response. In the first section, the authors note that Eve was made to be Adam’s helper. They contrast this view with a secular culture that teaches that a good life equals a successful career. Because most women will marry, they should focus on the nurturing of their children, look to their husbands as leaders, and help them as they lead. “As a woman obeys God’s pattern, she will feel freer and more feminine” (p. 76). In the second section, they argue that a woman should cultivate an attitude of reverence and respect in her speech, dress, and conduct. In the third section, they outline the thrust of the chapter: “the purpose of submission is rooted in the sovereignty of God in salvation” (pp. 86–87).

In chapters four and five, the authors unpack how their reflections on biblical manhood and womanhood relate to Christian living in practice and proclamation. Because marriage is an image of the relation between Christ and his church, the design of marriage is that wives would submit to their husbands and that husbands would cherish and protect their wives. “In a marriage, headship and submission look like love and respect” (p. 103). Likewise, within the church, God has designed the roles of leadership as male roles. In embracing these differences, biblical men and women present the most compelling counter-cultural argument to the sexual revolution. In chapter 5, they discuss transgender identity and homosexuality. Transgender ideology and homosexuality, they explain, represent a subversion of God’s design for family and sexuality. To respond to these ideologies, we need to speak



truthfully about sin, guide sinners to Christ, and develop a broader sexual ethic that includes teaching on biblical manhood and womanhood.

In the final chapter, the authors argue that complementarity is not a “take it or leave it” doctrine for seven reasons: it shows the purpose of humanity, helps explain sinful instincts, provides a script for living, tells us what is vital in marriage, drives us to invest in the church, explains sex better than secularism, and helps us appreciate singleness.

This book has many strengths. It provides a survey of significant biblical passages that defend the main contours of complementarianism and strongly locates gender distinction within the context of God’s design for humanity. It invites its readers to delight in a doctrine that is often thought of as restrictive (especially for women). Above all, the authors’ encouragement to men and women to pursue Christ is vivid through prose that can often only be described as breathless.

I hesitate to criticize a text that has been so well-endorsed, but I have two reservations. One is the way that intra-Trinitarian relations are used as a model for gender relations, especially because some of the Trinitarian discussions are troubling (e.g., when the reader discovers of God that “[a]t the height of His creative work, on the sixth day, He became a Father” [p. 26]). One could remove all such arguments, and the book would in no way suffer for it.

The second reservation regards the discussions of biblical womanhood. The authors have little to say about women who work, single women or otherwise. “Care and discernment are needed here,” they note (p. 77). However, beyond mentioning some jobs that they believe women probably should not do (e.g., drill sergeant or men’s soccer referee), no guidance is forthcoming. Saying that a woman should lead “in a feminine way (like Deborah in Judges 4)” is insufficient (p. 78). What does that mean? The reader is looking to the authors of this text to explain biblically what this “feminine way” of leading is or how a single working mother can appropriate the design described in this book. They fail in this task.

This book does not advance new arguments beyond the texts mentioned in the footnotes. As a complementarian, I would have appreciated the book more if it had broken new ground. Its unique contribution is in its call to delight in, rather than dread, an important biblical doctrine.

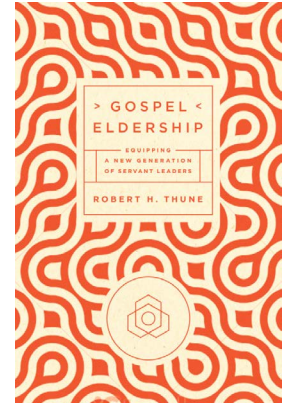
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Robert Thune. *Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders*. Greensboro: New Growth, 2016. 144 pp. £10.55/\$14.99.

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A friend is a senior executive in financial management, a tenured seminary professor, or a governor for a local public school; he's also been a Christian for many years. Presumably he is half way to joining the elder board.

Or is he? What does it mean to be an elder? What does it mean to serve as an elder? This recent manual by experienced pastor Bob Thune from Coram Deo Church in Omaha, NE sets to answer just those questions. He contends, "Eldership is the highest office of servant leadership in the church" (p. 124), and so sets out to provide a biblical informed, theologically grounded, spiritually enriching, and practically applied workbook to help equip current elders, would-be elders, and other interested Christians thinking through this crucial calling.



Thune's starting point is that elders are to be pastors (citing the equivalence of the terms *elder*, *pastor* and *bishop* in Acts 20:17–18, 28 and 1 Pet 5:1–2); they are to be pace-setters (disciples who make disciple-makers; cf. 2 Tim 2:2); and they are to be male (Thune is unapologetically though generously complementarian). But his real interest in *Gospel Eldership* is to drill into his readers that "elders must be men who are *grounded and rooted in the gospel*. That is the crucial gap in many churches today, and that is the weakness that this book is designed to address" (p. 4, emphasis original). For while "many resources on church leadership seem consumed with church management, church structures, and church governance—as though the most important thing elders do is hold meetings and vote. Almost nothing has been written about the quality of spiritual life an elder must have *as an elder*" (p. 5, emphasis original).

*Gospel Eldership* is divided into two sections. Part one (chapters one to four) addresses what elders are. Part two (chapters five to ten) considers what elders do. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions (ideal for group interaction), and a practical exercise (for personal reflection and prayer).

Chapter one (Servant Leadership) asks whether "we look to the bookstore, the boardroom, or the blogosphere to learn about leadership? Mentors who have succeeded in the business world or led large ministries?" Rather, we should to look Jesus, the "most brilliant leadership expert ever. He knows more than the most successful CEO, the sharpest leadership consultant, the most compelling movement leader" (pp. 8–9). Unpacking Mark 10:35–45, potential elders need to be attuned to the cycle of leadership: aspiration → failure → grace → empowerment → aspiration, and so on (p. 13).

In chapter two, "A Biblical Approach to Leadership," Thune compares various popular though flawed models of eldership (the "Anointed Leader" model, the "Ecclesiastical hierarchy" model, the "CEO/board" model) with the "Biblical" model: "the church is to be led by a plurality of called, qualified men known as elders" (p. 21).

Chapters three and four cover Thune's three priorities of gospel elders: character, competence, and compatibility, which he maps onto John Frame's triperspectivalism—the normative perspective (character), the situational perspective (competence) and the existential perspective (compatibility). Thune works through the well-known biblical qualification passages from 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, providing probing insights to assess oneself: "Don't look at how you act on your best day. Rather, consider what you're like under pressure: an exhausting day at work, an emotionally draining ministry

situation, a fight with your spouse. And expect your church leaders to evaluate *that* you, not the ‘better version of yourself’ that you sometimes put forward” (p. 36).

In Part two, Thune delineates the responsibilities of eldership, using as his template Alexander Strauch’s taxonomy of feeding God’s flock (chapter five), leading God’s flock (chapter six), protecting God’s flock (chapter seven), caring for God’s flock (chapter eight), but also including functioning missionally (chapter nine). “Elders must be men of the Word. They must love, treasure, memorize and meditate on the Scriptures” (p. 60). Thune contends this must not just be for public ministry, but in private too, for “leaders who are lazy or lacking in their own spiritual disciplines will usually create churches that are long on style and short on substance—where methodology and pragmatism trump theology and formation. And such churches, despite the external appearance of success, usually produce spiritually malnourished people” (p. 62). Like King David in Psalm 78:72, they are to shepherd with integrity of heart, and with skillful hands (p. 69).

Thune’s closing chapter covers the temptations of leadership, exploring five subtle but sinister seductions of entitlement, comfort, pleasure, greed and affirmation.

It’s hard to be critical of *Gospel Eldership* as it is by and large an excellent book. I wasn’t, however, totally convinced of Thune’s counsels to “listen to the Holy Spirit in prayer” (p. 38) as part of an elder’s spiritual formation, nor was I of his application of John 16:13, which he takes as Jesus’s promise to all Christians (“the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth”) rather than primarily to the first apostles. Furthermore, in the chapter on caring for God’s flock I was left asking, Which sheep are the elders responsible for? The occasional attender? The committed church member? The non-Christian friend who comes once but never again? I would have liked at least an interaction with the concept of church membership, which for many provides a significant marker in identifying which sheep are the church elder’s first priority. In that regard, Thune’s book would helpfully be read alongside the recent work by Jeramie Rinne (*Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

These are minor quibbles however, for overall *Gospel Eldership* is a very good resource. It is sound, biblical, applied and honest about the challenges of serving as an elder. The discussion questions and exercises for personal reflection make this an extremely usual manual for spiritual formation, which I hope will be used by many. Perhaps most formative of all is that each chapter exudes grace: rather than making the reader feel overwhelmed with the unbearable weight of eldership, Thune repeatedly and liberally applies the gospel to the various idolatries associated with Christian leadership.

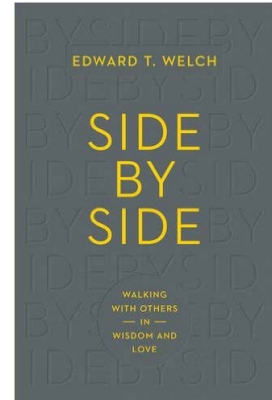
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Edward T. Welch. *Side by Side: Walking with Others in Wisdom and Love*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. 163 pp. £9.99/\$14.99.

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True mastery of any subject is reflected in one's ability to take complex matters and make them simple. Acknowledging personal weakness and seeking help is no simple matter. Nor is it simple to step into the darkness of another person's sin. These are extremely challenging and complex issues of the soul that are often reserved for vocational ministers or licensed therapists. In *Side by Side*, Edward Welch draws upon thirty-five years of counseling experience to translate the complex and intimidating language of soul-care into an understandable dialectic between the needy and the needed. He asserts, "God has determined that run-of-the-mill people do most of his work—not professionals, not experts" (p. 70). His primary thesis is that "those who help best are the ones who both need help and give help" (p. 11).



*Side by Side* is divided into two parts that reflect Welch's thesis: "The first part guides you in sharing your burdens; the second part guides you in bearing the burdens of others" (p. 11).

Part one opens with language that is intentionally provocative: "Your neediness qualifies you to help others" (p. 17). This is disorienting for those who implicitly believe the strong and credentialed are uniquely qualified to walk side by side with the weak and broken. Welch dismantles this false assumption throughout the book by drawing attention to the physical, relational, vocational and spiritual neediness that is inherent to all human beings. His desire is to help the church "acknowledge some specifics of the fragility and uncertainty of our lives and the difficult circumstances we face and then to speak about them to God" (p. 21). Welch's goal for mutual confession in the pews is lofty because "we have our own views of strength, honor and what is most becoming, and pleas for help are not on that list" (p. 60).

In part two of this work, Welch argues that all people are needed as much as they are needy. Chapters seven through seventeen function as a primer for basic caregiving within the body of Christ: "This is the way the church moves forward—through mutual love and care" (p. 65). Welch works diligently to disarm the fears associated with helping others, while keeping the reader honest: "Make no mistake: to move toward others is hard" (p. 74). This difficult move is mitigated by Welch's consistent return to biblical truth and practical wisdom: "We are simply interested in knowing another person, which is a basic feature of everyday love" (p. 79). Love is the foundation upon which Welch builds his framework for entering into the brokenness of other needy individuals: "God has determined that help takes place in the context of love and respect" (p. 87). One common temptation in loving needy people is focusing exclusively on their weaknesses. Welch cautions against this and reminds the church that, as a general rule, we will not be able to have growing relationships in which we help other people unless we see the good in them, and they know we see good in them.

One obstacle that readers may face in *Side by Side* is Welch's use of the word "needy." The word comes loaded with cultural presuppositions (inside and outside of the church) that trend more towards a particular sin pattern as opposed to the general need for redemption that is common to all humanity. The difficulty with this word diminishes as the reader progresses through part one and gives Welch an opportunity to develop his thesis. Other readers may desire more nuance in Welch's argument that "Your neediness qualifies you to help others" (p. 17). For example, some pastors will argue that the degree of neediness they see in some of their members disqualifies those individuals from helping others. While it

may serve Welch to add this qualification to his argument, he is certainly aware that some people enter into temporary seasons that preclude their ability to help others.

*Side by Side* is simple, but in no way simplistic. Operating behind the scenes of this work is a sophisticated anthropology (pp. 23–31), a robust theology, and a biblical ecclesiology. The style of writing reflects a scholar whose greatest concern is the equipping of the saints and the implementation of his thesis into the fabric of everyday life through the hearts of ordinary people. This book is tailored to the small group, Sunday school class, or church planting team looking to create a culture of mutual care among its fellowship. Each chapter concludes with a few discussion questions that set up naturally for group reflection. The most commendable achievement in this work is its practicality. Not only does Welch teach the church what to say, he teaches the church what never to say (pp. 104–7). His writing is experientially seasoned by decades of personally walking with others in wisdom and love. *Side by Side* is a wonderful tool by which the body of Christ may protect herself against unbiblical hierarchies and correct the unhealthy practice of limiting soul-care to the few paid professionals.

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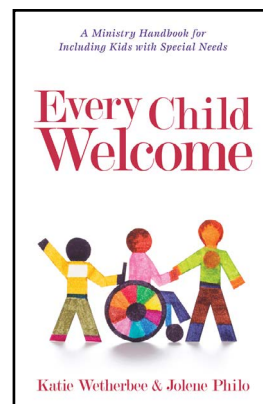
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Katie Wetherbee and Jolene Philo. *Every Child Welcome: A Ministry Handbook for Including Kids with Special Needs*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015. 176 pp. £11.55/\$14.99.

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Katie Wetherbee and Jolene Philo, both former public school teachers, arrange a banquet of strategies on integrating kids with special needs into children's ministries (p. 10). The book opens detailing each author's parenting story of their own child with disabilities. The goal of the book is to encourage quality teaching about Jesus by equipping ministry volunteers in a variety of circumstances (pp. 10–11). Each chapter serves this goal by recommending a menu of strategies for ministry volunteers as they teach children with disabilities.

Chapter 1 aims to create a welcoming atmosphere with strategies like detailed schedules and clear communication with parents. Chapter 2 is about making good first impressions to eradicate the fears of children by techniques such as check-in stations and visual schedules. Chapter 3 seeks to help introduce kids to new environments and concepts as they prepare for learning. Chapter 4 takes up the task of promoting a positive classroom climate through ideas such as peer training, formulating classroom rules, and predictable routines. Chapter 5, the heart of the book, provides a variety of ways to prepare and serve biblical truths to kids through various reading strategies, encouraging responsiveness, and helpful teaching methods. Chapter 6 gives tools to enhance learning truths of the Bible such as creating social stories, visual timers, and fidget toys. Chapters 7 and 8 offers ideas for special holidays and how to help a child with special needs serve the church. Chapter 9 details navigating transitions and how to reassure kids who have a difficult experience. Finally, chapter 10 introduces ideas for teaching children who cannot attend children's ministry. The book closes with a resource list and several appendices.



This book has several notable strengths. First, the repeated goal to provide rhythms and strategies for all children to grow in a knowledge and enjoyment of God (p. 12). Authors encourage those ministering to children with special needs to know each child well in order to best support and engage that child with biblical truth. For instance, “Your goal when sharing biblical truths with children is not to force-feed them. Your goal is to present truth in ways that make it understandable and accessible to them” (p. 78). This is a refreshing and biblical aim permeating the entire book. Second, there are a host of ideas and resources this book offers. Wetherbee and Philo are proven educators of children with disabilities, and their expertise and experience is evident. They do the church a great service by borrowing effective educational practices and passing them along to enhance learning within children’s ministries. They unmistakably reach their goal of resourcing ministry workers with these valuable insights as they relate them to a remarkable number of disabilities.

While the strengths outweigh the weaknesses, a couple of changes could more fully accomplish the authors’ objective. While many readers will benefit from this book, one can quickly get overwhelmed by the sheer amount of strategies and lack of big picture ideas. Although the authors write in an engaging dinner party format with meal courses corresponding to general topics, the reader is unable to quickly find a specific disability or answers to a specific challenge one might be facing. Either an index listing disabilities and their corresponding strategy or an alternate more organized format would help. As a result, the book feels a bit overwhelming as each individual chapter includes anywhere from two to sixteen different strategies. Because the authors do not present overarching principles all these helpful resources begin to blur together.

Additionally, the book would serve readers better if the authors reflected more fully on the theological truths that undergird their proposed strategies. Wetherbee and Philo cite Matthew 19:14 (“Let the little children come to me”) as their foundation for writing. While their belief that no child regardless of ability should be restricted from hearing the gospel is correct, this text seems to be a stretch in supporting that claim and offering foundational support for ministry to children with disabilities. This is because children were brought to Jesus to receive a blessing from him (Matt 19:13; cf. Gen 48:14) and also because children in this passage were serving as a metaphor for entering the kingdom (cf. Matt 18:2–4). Yet, this book is not without right theological understanding, though it is implicit. For example, the authors correctly claim that God uniquely created each child. However, when the theological basis for inclusion is only slightly hinted at, the “why” question still looms. Furthermore, the authors also make several vague theological statements such as how to understand children with disabilities serving within the church. In chapter 8 they appear to conflate natural gifts with spiritual gifts intended to build up the body of Christ by implying that children serving the church are identical with covenant members within the church. To encourage service while addressing how to correctly view that service would have helped in rightly motivating volunteers to implement many of these beneficial strategies. Within the field of disability studies while the practical “how to” continues to be published and prove helpful, but the theological undergirding of such practices needs further development. The theological in turn will aid the practical.

Overall, this is a well-written and very helpful resource for the church. *Every Child Welcome* fills a gap regarding how to minister well to children with disabilities within the church. While Wetherbee and Philo write mainly to ministry volunteers, this book will most likely be effective for ministry leaders who oversee and organize programming. I was grateful to personally glean from the authors’ educational expertise in order to implement ideas for my own son with complex medical and cognitive disabilities.

I recommend this book to all who are seeking to include children with disabilities into their ministries and create an environment in which all children can flourish as they learn to treasure Christ.

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

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William A. Dyrness. *Insider Jesus: Theological Reflections on New Christian Movements*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. 165 pp. £15.72/\$20.00.

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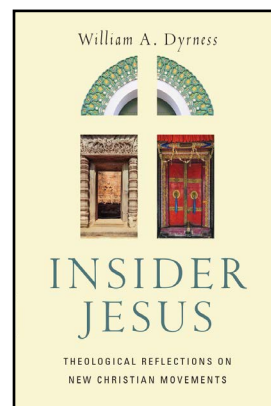
What might God be doing and intending in this new global religious world? This is the question William Dyrness asks in *Insider Jesus*. The specific focus of his inquiry is what has been commonly referred to as “insider movements,” or “movements to obedient faith in Christ that remain integrated with or inside their natural community” (p. 1).

Dyrness aims not to describe or evaluate these movements but to provide a theological perspective for thinking about them. While he notes the soteriological implications and questions these movements raise, Dyrness believes more fundamental issues are at stake. Beneath the soteriological concerns are “conflicting cultural codes and multiple conceptions of religion” (p. 2). This, says Dyrness, is where the conversation should begin.

The major claim of *Insider Jesus* is that varied contexts and religious diversity provide “hermeneutical spaces where new understandings of the gospel can emerge” (p. 3). Previous efforts in contextualization were helpful, but Dyrness suggests this approach needs fresh examination, one that exhibits a new appreciation for and appropriation of differences that result from interreligious encounters.

Dyrness attempts to argue this claim in six chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the development of contextualization, especially since the 1960s, and the problems it addresses. Particularly problematic, says Dyrness, is the Reformation’s emphasis on the cognitive aspect of religion (belief in truth) which “encouraged a particular intellectual imperialism that was inclined to pay little attention to indigenous wisdom” (p. 9). This imperialism negatively affected later evangelical efforts in contextualization. The second chapter offers a theological perspective on culture in light of God’s purposes for creation and the re-creative work of Christ. While he notes the effects of sin, Dyrness argues for a rather positive view of cultures and God’s work in them. This means we can use cultures as “the starting point and framework for any expression of the gospel” (p. 39).

The third chapter discusses religion directly, specifically various biblical attitudes towards religion. Here Dyrness argues that the Old Testament attitude toward religion was ambivalent and emphasizes that God’s dealings with Israel and His work through Christ make up the center of the story but do not define the periphery; that is to say, God very well may be working outside of this central story. In discussing the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, Dyrness begins to explain what he means by “hermeneutical



spaces,” which he defines as an encounter between culturally and religiously different people in which both must work out the meaning of God’s new work in Christ.

Chapter four includes a number of case studies. These range from pre-colonial Latin America to Hindu and Buddhist areas of Asia, to the Muslim Magindanon people of the southern Philippines. Dyrness sees these movements as modern hermeneutical spaces where new followers of Jesus must work out the implications of the gospel in their original setting. In chapter five Dyrness argues for a reconceptualization of mission in light of this idea of hermeneutical spaces. Essentially, this new understanding of mission will leave room for new forms of faith to be explored.

In the final chapter Dyrness commends an approach like that of Gamaliel (Acts 5) which is careful to honor the ways the Spirit may be at work. Here he points to the idea of “dual belonging” that is emerging from those within these movements (p. 139). He also notes four common elements from case studies that he believes contribute to emergent forms of church among these movements and demonstrate that the Spirit is at work in them.

Until relatively recently, the public discussion about Insider Movements consisted largely of short articles. Many of these dealt with biblical and theological issues in a rather cursory manner. *Insider Jesus* is a significant contribution that helpfully draws attention to some of these more fundamental issues and attempts to treat them more substantively. This alone makes the book worth reading.

*Insider Jesus* is also helpful at a number of specific points. First, Dyrness’s summary of the history of contextualization, particularly his comments on the Western concept of religion, helps readers understand some of the significant differences and challenges Western missionaries face in other contexts. Second, the case studies in chapter four give insight into some of the major issues these movements face, particularly the issue of identity and how to think about one’s previous religious and cultural heritage. Third, *Insider Jesus* provides an example of a more comprehensive framework one might employ to conclude that the Insider paradigm is biblically faithful and viable (assuming one agrees that the various pillars and posts of the framework are sound).

Nevertheless, I am unpersuaded by a number of the key arguments Dyrness employs. First, while *Insider Jesus* is generally more substantive than many previously published articles, the discussion of key passages is too thin and the conclusions unconvincing. Acts 15 has long played a key role in the Insider discussion; it plays an equally significant role here. Dyrness dismisses Timothy Tennent’s claim that the four stipulations of the Jerusalem Council were intended to separate Gentiles from their former religious identities. In support, Dyrness simply asserts that any first-century person would have found this impossible to do (p. 61). I have argued at length elsewhere that there are good exegetical reasons for the four prohibitions of Acts 15. I suggest their intent was to instruct Gentile believers to avoid idolatrous practices associated with pagan religions (see Doug Coleman, *A Theological Analysis of the Insider Movement Paradigm from Four Perspectives: Theology of Religions, Revelation, Soteriology, and Ecclesiology*, EMS Dissertation Series [Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2011], 135–39). Dyrness’s reading and application of Melchizedek and Paul’s speech in Acts 17 are similarly unconvincing (see Coleman, *Theological Analysis*, 39–41, 54–65).

Second, at various points Dyrness draws conclusions that seem not to follow from their premises. For example, he claims that religious traditions reflect a response to God, or the gods, or powers that humans encounter. He then draws the conclusion that “they must be in some way capable of being included in God’s project of renewing and restoring the earth” (p. 39). However, this simply is a non-sequitur. Similarly, Dyrness points to what he considers to be the work of the Spirit in Insider

movements and implies, therefore, that God approves of someone remaining connected to a previous religious community, even participating in Hindu temple rituals or mosque prayers with the majority community. This, too, does not follow. While the line between religion and culture can at times be very difficult, if not impossible, to discern, I have argued that 1 Corinthians 8–10 suggests believers must at times make these distinctions in regard to specific practices (see Doug Coleman, “The Idol’s Temple and the Insider Movement Paradigm: An Examination of 1 Corinthians 8–10,” *Global Missiology* 3.12 [2015], <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/1783/3960>).

A number of other points of disagreement could be noted, but space does not permit further discussion here. Nevertheless, in spite of these substantial disagreements, *Insider Jesus* reflects the kind of conversation that should be held on a topic as significant as Insider movements.

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Jayson Georges. *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures*. Timē Press, 2016. 80 pp. £5.73/\$8.99.

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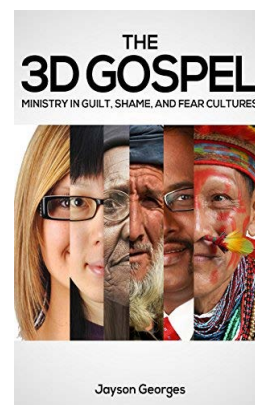
Jayson Georges, author of *The 3D Gospel*, is a missiologist who has also served as a missionary in Central Asia, working in development, discipleship, and church planting. During that time, he became more attuned to the issues of shame and fear and developed a greater desire for the honor of God. Out of that new awareness, Georges pursued this dimension of culture and theology in new ways. He has developed TheCultureTest.com, an online test that allows one to identify personal or more broad cultural orientation toward guilt, shame, and fear. He also blogs at HonorShame.com, which he founded in 2013. This blog, Honorshame.com,

offers practical tools and training for Christians ministering in honor-shame contexts. Though honor-shame is the primary OS for 80% of the world, they remain significant blind spots in Western culture, theology, and missiology. HonorShame.com develops and advocates a biblical missiology for honor-shame cultures, so that all peoples will sing, “My salvation and honor depend on God” (Ps 62:7).

*The 3D Gospel* is George’s attempt to make this learning accessible to a broader audience.

A programmatic statement for the entire book comes from the concluding section. Georges argues that sin

distorts the human family by causing guilt, shame, and fear. Consequently, the cultures of the world chase after innocence, honor, and power apart from God. But the God of the Bible desires to bless all peoples with the fullness of salvation in Christ. The calling of the Church is to meaningfully introduce the nations to the God who addresses our deepest cultural and spiritual longings. (p. 73)



Most readers would likely agree in theory with such a statement. But, as Georges contends, a large number of contemporary Christians do not embrace the fullness of salvation that makes room the areas of shame-honor and fear-power. More than simply a casual oversight, such constitutes “a one-dimensional gospel” that

threatens the veracity and integrity of the Bible. We misread Scripture and construct a sub-biblical view of God. If God does not save us from shame and fear (not just theoretically, but practically), then we severely minimize his glory as God. A 3D gospel allows us to more fully worship our holy, glorious, and sovereign God. (p. 74)

Relying upon a typology of varying cultural reaction to infractions, Georges extrapolates three broad cultural types: guilt-, shame-, and fear-cultures. Guilt-cultures correlate with western individualistic cultures, shame-cultures with non-western collectivist cultures, and fear-cultures with animistic-cultures. Georges is quick to note that no culture partakes exclusively in one type and that these types are very broad heuristics. Yet, as Georges contends, all societies will likely tilt toward one particular type, thus warranting the designation.

Chapter Three, using this tripartite framework of guilt-shame-fear, elaborates on the story of salvation viewed through each of these cultural lenses. This brief but very helpful chapter provides nuanced descriptions about how the gospel story can be heard with strong resonances for guilt-innocence, shame-honor, and fear-power. Georges fills his discussion with key scriptural texts that connect to each particular dimension. This chapter contains a brief survey of three major theories of atonement (ransom, satisfaction, and penal substitution). Each theory speaks powerfully and particularly to guilt, shame, or fear as each image speaks to different human needs.

Georges ends the book with a chapter on contextualized forms of witness. Christian communication must address each culture type in distinctive fashion. As he unpacks the 3D gospel, he leads readers through a helpful discussion of truth-, power-, and community-encounters. He notes specific biblical imagery, metaphors, and a contextualized “plan of salvation” to match each cultural framework. There are also brief yet helpful discussion questions at the end of the book. These can be used profitably for further reflection or group discussions.

Georges writes as an informed practitioner. He adeptly summarizes very broad cultural and theological issues in a clear, practical form. I would raise a few minor issues. First, Georges paints with very broad cultural strokes, which he admits are oversimplifications. Second, though not intended for experts, several foundational claims would benefit from more scholarly grounding, such as George’s claim that the primary creative force for these cultural differences is socio-economic (p. 27) and the division of culture into three broad types (p. 10). Since it is more introductory and practical in purpose, these issues perhaps are more a function of the book’s brevity and function than real oversights.

Though missiological in focus, this book would be beneficial for any who wish to understand better the gospel in all its fullness. This book would be an excellent resource for all who work to frame the Christian message in any culture. It could function in introductory courses on missions or courses that deal specifically with the gospel. Also, since the book is relatively short and written at a popular level, it

is ideal for church classes or discussions about missions and culture. In short, *The 3D Gospel* is a perfect introduction into the critical issues of honor-shame, innocence-guilt, and power-fear.

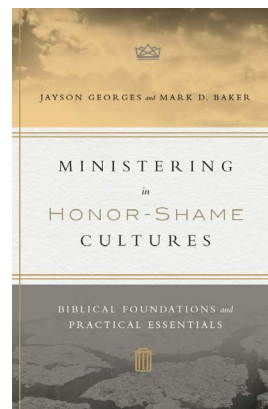
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Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker. *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials*. Downers Grove, IL; IVP Academic, 2016. 295 pp. £18.49/\$24.00.

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A surge of books and articles have appeared in recent years concerning honor and shame. Some are technical, others simply give broad overviews. All the while, readers ask, “How should honor-shame shape our ministry?” Well, I bring good news. Jayson Georges and Mark Baker have written the book so many people have been looking for. In *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, they serve a wide range of readers by explaining the meaning and relevance of honor-shame across diverse cultures. Not only are their insights both personal and practical, they also demonstrate a biblical and theologically sound approach to the topic.



*Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* has three main parts: cultural anthropology, biblical theology, and practical ministry. The last section makes up about half of the book. The opening three chapters provide an excellent introduction to the subject of honor-shame. They show how honor-shame is a human dynamic, not merely an Eastern phenomenon. The discussion draws widely from history, anthropology, personal experience and current events.

Georges and Baker rightly distinguish shame and guilt *yet without* forging a false dichotomy between the two concepts. They acknowledge the importance of both ideas. Using multiple illustrations, readers see why honor and shame are important considerations for making moral decision. Each has “objective *and* subjective dimensions” (p. 69). Furthermore, whereas shame concerns identity (“who I am”), guilt involves a person’s actions (“what I do”).

In Part Two, the authors’ study of the Bible both corroborates and develops the prior discussion. Readers will be glad to see Georges and Baker’s opening affirmation, “Ultimately the story of the Bible is about God’s honor and God’s face, not just ours” (p. 67). Accordingly, while sin can be understood in terms of guilt, many texts show that “shame is a theological problem, not just a psychological abnormality” since “we bear shame in the eyes of people *and* God” (p. 69). Four points summarize the relationship between sin and shame: (1) sin dishonors God, (2) sin makes us objectively shameful before God, (3) sin leaves us feeling ashamed, and (4) shame induces sin (p. 73). In short, “sin is an illegitimate claim to honor that dishonors God and shames ourselves” (p. 110).

Naturally, other doctrines, such as salvation, are understood via an honor-shame perspective. They suggest that “removing shame requires more than forgiveness. . . . So overcoming shame needs a sort of remaking or transformation of the self” (p. 38). They also overview a shame-to-honor motif, which “structures the worldview narrative of Israel as a nation [and] continues into the New Testament” (p. 82). Readers will see numerous biblical passages that demonstrate what becomes of those who do not



humble themselves before God. Borrowing a line from C. S. Lewis, the book says all will see the Father “either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised” (p. 88).

Chapter 5 specifically focuses on Christ, our “hope of glory.” The authors give extensive attention to Jesus’s ministry without minimizing his death and resurrection. Christ subverts the social standards of the world, whatever its cultural manifestations. Furthermore, “Honor, wisdom and power are all redefined at the cross. The false honor systems [perspectives that do not reflect God’s view of honor and shame], including requiring revenge, that killed Jesus were exposed and triumphed over” (p. 113). Likewise, “The resurrection opens a new path to glory for the human family” (p. 113).

Georges and Baker helpfully avoid the “either-or” trap that sometimes plagues books that offer fresh perspectives on well-discussed matters. For example, they utilize a “both-and” approach when talking about justification, not content to restrict justification to *either* a sociological *or* soteriological category. They state, “Justification is not simply being declared not guilty, but God’s declaration that we belong within his community” (p. 112).

Part Three discusses a number of practical issues yet without succumbing to pragmatism. It focuses on spirituality, relationships, evangelism, conversion, ethics, and community. Space doesn’t allow for an overview of each chapter. It suffices to say that many examples and stories within this final section not only clarify the meaning of honor-shame, they also demonstrate how honor-shame can shape the church’s ministry.

Despite the exceptional insights contained throughout the book, some readers will no doubt have objections. As with any work, people will disagree with particular interpretations or nuances given to this or that verse. Others will want more from the book. However, no one will complain for a lack of substance. Rather, I suspect readers will desire to learn more about the subject. Georges and Baker did not intend to write an exhaustive treatment of honor-shame and ministry. One should not criticize *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* for what it does not attempt to do. Thankfully, they anticipate questions people might have. Therefore, they provide three appendices that equip readers to reflect further on biblical passages and resources related to honor and shame.

I heartily commend *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* because it truly advances the conversation about honor and shame in ways that are practical and accessible for everyone in the church. This is not merely a book for missionaries but also for theologians, pastors and lay Christians. After all, the authors show that honor and shame transcend particular cultures; fundamentally, they are *biblical* issues.

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Werner Mischke. *The Global Gospel-Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World*. Scottsdale, AZ: Mission ONE, 2015. 325 pp. \$24.99/£11.50.

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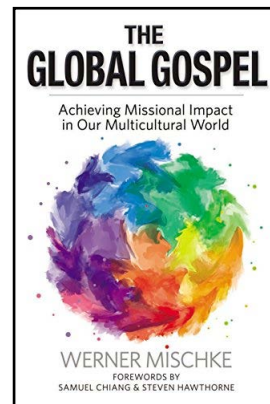
Most people assume the gospel. That is, we receive the good news through a cultural framework that makes sense to us and which we generally adapt and become comfortable. In *The Global Gospel*, Werner Mischke wants to shake up Western gospel assumptions. He does this by asking a basic question: “What does honor and shame have to do with the gospel?” If Mischke is correct, the answer is “everything.”

Mischke begins his work with a personal story, one likely recognizable to many in the Western world. A deeply embedded shameful experience sets in motion a life lived with deep feelings of inadequacy and enduring shame due to being different. Starting from this place, he notes that, despite his deeply Christian upbringing, much was said about how the gospel deals with our sin and guilt but next to nothing about what Jesus means for our sin and shame. What do we make of this lack? To find answers, Mischke mines biblical texts and contemporary missiological discussions.

The book divides into four sections, with significant appendices at the back. In Section 1, Mischke addresses the rapid globalization of our world and the incredible multicultural complexities this brings to most countries, including the United States. The recent increase in cultural diversity raises important questions about how our own version of the gospel, framed as it has been for several centuries in Western cultural terms, may fail to address important features of these culturally diverse populations now living on our doorsteps. In this section, Mischke draws the reader’s attention to how the Bible “is not your book.” That is, Scripture comes to most of us from a very foreign cultural frame of reference. Many of these cultural differences, however, get lost on Western Christians, who have developed a cultural “blind spot,” particularly in the area of honor and shame. To some degree, this is to be expected, Mischke asserts, since finite human understanding never fully exhausts an infinite God.

In Section 2, Mischke draws on recent biblical and missiological scholarship that makes use of social scientific tools and perspectives. In it, he provides a helpful summary of important cultural nuances of honor and shame in the Bible. Such includes insightful discussions about how honor and shame relate to ideas of limited good, the concept of face, body language, patronage, name/kinred/blood, and purity. Mischke helpfully discusses different sources of honor. He ends with a powerful section on honor status reversal occupies a major place in God’s story (i.e., from honor→shame and shame→honor). Mischke uses the Pauline paradigm of Jesus’s honor→shame→honor from Philippians 2:5–11. He notes how variations of this story fill the pages of the Bible. He ends the section reminding readers that this is in fact the paradigm for all believers, namely, God in Christ reverses the human status of shame into an enduring honor status.

In my opinion, Section 3 is Mischke’s single greatest contribution in *The Global Gospel*. He asserts that it is possible to frame the good news of God in Jesus as a fulfillment of humanity’s longing for honor and desire to escape shame. This is a significant corrective to the Western framework assumed by many contemporary Christians (both Western and non-Western). Ultimately, Mischke attempts to contextualize the gospel (a long-standing missiological project!) using honor and shame. This, as Mischke makes clear, is not simply an issue for cultures “out there,” i.e., non-Western cultures. Honor



and shame are issues that operate powerfully in all cultures. Thus, though focused specifically on our “multicultural world,” this re-contextualization is beneficial for all cultures.

One particular strength of the book is Mischke’s frequent examples, which relate his key points to biblical characters or events and to contemporary believers. Though scholarly, *The Global Gospel* concretizes major points, making scholarly concepts accessible to any reader. Another outstanding feature of the book is the large number of charts and illustrations. Throughout the entire work, Mischke creates visuals that illustrate and drive home his points. In particular, Appendix 2 is especially helpful. It describes varying levels of honor and shame awareness. Mischke uses this chart multiple times in the book as a concrete typological tool to measure the honor-shame awareness of an individual or community. Though not absolute or mathematically precise, it represents the single best attempt I know to frame honor-shame awareness in a concrete fashion.

Mischke’s *The Global Gospel* is informed and poignant. Throughout this delightful volume, Mischke’s writing is clear and arguments forceful. I have only one small critique. The book needs greater engagement with theological voices alongside his well-researched section on biblical materials. Despite this minor shortcoming, *The Global Gospel* should be required reading for all who serve in non-Western cultures. It will also profit those who desire to rethink the gospel’s reception in Western culture. This book will surely prove to be a foundational text against which subsequent books on honor, shame, and the gospel will all be judged.

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