



themelios

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THE GOSPEL COALITION

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DESCRIPTION

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EDITORIAL

More Examples of Intolerant Tolerance

— D. A. Carson —

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

Since *The Intolerance of Tolerance* was published,¹ readers have been sending me new examples they have spotted—examples of egregious intolerance masquerading in the name of tolerance. Sometimes these examples have been accompanied with a plea to incorporate them in any revised edition that might be called for. Of course, I too have spotted a handful of examples myself. In this editorial I'd like to comment briefly on three of them, probing a little to uncover what we should learn from them. Although the book drew on examples in both Europe and America, the follow three have surfaced in the United States.

The *first* is the drama that unfolded around Chick-fil-A. By now, the bare narrative is well-known. When Dan Cathy, president of Chick-fil-A, a man known for his Christian commitments, declared that he supported traditional heterosexual marriage, he was soon attacked in the press, in blog posts, and in some talk shows as homophobic, a hate monger, and worse—despite the fact that he himself had never used the word “homosexual” and despite the fact that no one seemed able to tell of a credible instance when Chick-fil-A staff at any of their outlets had ever treated any class of customers with less than the courtesy in which the staff were trained. Protests by the LGBT crowd followed at some sites, while supporters bought countless tens of thousands of meals in a show of support. More interesting, perhaps, was the announcement by several big-city mayors, Washington D.C.'s Vincent Gray, Chicago's Rahm Emanuel, and San Francisco's Edwin Lee, that they would prevent Chick-fil-A outlets from opening in their cities since they did not want to encourage any business characterized by such intolerance. They were soon joined by the mayor of Boston and the mayor of Philadelphia. By contrast, Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York City, declared that however repellent he found Dan Cathy's views to be, government should stay clear of such pronouncements and interference with businesses that were not in any sense breaking the law.

How should we think about this little drama?

That some conservatives like Dan Cathy articulate their beliefs, while some liberals respond with their own voice, is not intrinsically problematic so far as issues of tolerance and intolerance are concerned. That the debate grabbed media attention and escalated into demonstrations against Chick-fil-A and counter movements that voiced approval for the organization by flooding the outlets with orders is part of the give-and-take of any society that cherishes free speech, no matter how much each side thinks the other is morally wrong. Somewhat troubling is the way several big-city mayors hopped

¹D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

on the band-wagon and declared that they would use their powers to keep Chick-fil-A out of their cities. By definition, that is a form of intolerance of the older kind, i.e., use of the coercive powers of the state to punish those who step outside the norms the state approves. Of course, these mayors could argue that Dan Cathy and those he influences or represents are trying to maintain or promote laws against those who practice homosexuality—for example, laws that refuse to assign the category of “marriage” to homosexual unions. In other words, conservatives no less than liberals want to use the powers of the state to exclude behavior of which they do not approve.

There is, however, one fundamental difference. By and large the conservatives defend their position and try to advance it *by arguing the merits of the case in the public arena*. It must be said that in recent years, they have not made much headway, but that is what they try to do. On the other hand, the LGBT voices barely address the merits of their case or engage the substance of their opponents’ arguments; rather, by and large they defend their position and try to advance it by dismissing their opponents as intolerant bigots, religious fanatics. That is one of the signs of the new tolerance. While the old tolerance was in some ways a parasitic virtue—that is, it depended for its life on decisions as to how much leeway might be allowed to a person who wished to advocate or take up a position outside the accepted norms and laws of a society, before state sanctions were imposed, and thus depended on the existence of a larger structure of accepted values and morals—the new tolerance is not parasitic on a larger structure. Rather, the new tolerance is itself the highest good, the ultimate virtue, trumping everything else, and therefore able to shunt to one side any serious moral discussion of important matters once the label “intolerant” has been attached to it.

The *second* example revolves around the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta. A coalition of (currently) six historically African-American seminaries from diverse denominations, ITC earned its charter in 1958. From the beginning it pursued an ecumenical focus, but in recent years it has prided itself in its gay theology, womanist theology, post-colonial theology, and liberation theology. Most of its students are African American, so a good percentage of them enter ITC with rather more conservative theology, reflecting the churches from which they spring. In 2008 ITC hired Dr Jamal-Dominique Hopkins in its New Testament department. Administrators could happily point to Dr Hopkins as the only African-American New Testament scholar with expertise in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In early 2008 he was promoted to Associate Professor. In February he invited Dr Alice Brown-Collins, director of IVCF’s Black Campus Ministries in the New England Region, to speak to some of the conservative students at ITC. After her presentation, Dr Brown-Collins gave one of the students a copy of Robert Gagnon’s book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, perhaps the best known exegetical treatment of the relevant biblical texts, a book that reaches traditional, orthodox conclusions.

The next day Dr Hopkins was closely questioned by the department chair, Rev. Margaret Aymer. Hopkins was accused of violating ITC’s code of ethics, which upholds various diversities, including sexual orientation. Three months later, he was fired. According to Hopkins, during the interval ITC persistently sought to undermine his reputation. Moreover, he discovered that the administration had commonly changed the grades he had assigned his students. Hopkins filed a complaint against ITC. At the time of this writing, no one knows how the dispute will end up.

What shall we make of this episode? From ITC’s perspective, the Center is defending tolerance, in particular the tolerance of a variety of sexual lifestyles. ITC does not seem to be aware how terribly *intolerant* it has become toward one of its employees, otherwise approved as a competent teacher and scholar, on the ground that he invited an evangelical scholar to the campus who passed out a book that

disagrees with ITC's position. The stance of Robert Gagnon is in line with the overwhelming majority of Christians in the entire history of the church, but obviously that stance is too great a threat to ITC "tolerance" to be tolerated.

My *final* example turns on regulations issued under the United States federal government's "Affordable Care Act" of 2010. The regulations in question force thousands of religious organizations to violate some of their deepest religious beliefs under penalty of ruinous fines. In particular, the government has issued an administrative mandate forcing religious organizations to provide health insurance coverage for abortifacient drugs and related education and counseling, even if those organizations, on religious grounds, hold that such drugs conflict with their religiously grounded beliefs that abortion is wrong.² Moreover, the government's mandate requires that the religious organizations facilitate government-dictated speech about such matters, speech that is incompatible with its own convictions and teachings. Equally shocking, the government is happy to issue accommodations and exemptions from the Affordable Care Act for many non-religious reasons, even to large corporations, but is unwilling to issue an accommodation in this case.

The positively dangerous element in these developments needs unpacking. How does the government think its stance can withstand a First Amendment challenge, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of religion? As far as I can see, the government believes it can win *by redefining what is included under the category of "religion."* Corporate worship may be religion, but ethical stances about abortion are not and are therefore exempt from the protection of the First Amendment. In other words, the government is making an unprecedented move to define religion more narrowly so that it can impose by the use of coercive force its own agenda, and those who refuse on grounds which in the past would certainly have been considered religious will simply have to be crushed. In historical terms, that is called intolerance.

Three separate examples, each with its peculiar lessons to teach, but each is a troubling index of the directions being taken by our culture, and the third is frankly dangerous.

² Note that some (notably Catholics) commonly hold that using any contraceptive drug is wrong, while others hold that only abortifacients are immoral. The best treatment of the topic from a theological and medical perspective is now that of Megan Best, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Ethics and the Beginning of Human Life* (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2012). This distinction is one of the reasons that the current lawsuits brought against the federal government by Wheaton College and Catholic University of America, though linked, are nevertheless distinct.

OFF THE RECORD

Sorrow at Another's Good?

— Michael J. Ovey —

Mike Ovey is Principal of Oak Hill College in London.

One of the most unnerving things you can read is John Milton's great poem *Paradise Lost*. Don't mistake me—I do not dislike the work, far from it. I love it and deeply admire it, but it is profoundly unnerving. Let me explain. It seeks to 'justify the ways of God to men,' and Milton goes on to describe the background against which the historical catastrophe of the historical Adam's fall occurs. As he does so, he describes the rebellion of Satan in heaven and starts to draw out Satan's character. And that is where things become unnerving. I am not sure if Milton has the pathology of Satan's sin correct, but as the poem develops, Milton catches an awful lot about the human heart, certainly mine and, to be honest, I think others' too.

Milton does not just attribute blame for Adam and Eve's fall to Satan. He describes Satan's motivation:

Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
The Mother of Mankind

Milton depicts Satan's pride extensively and very powerfully, but what makes his account so telling, I think, is the way he has linked Satan's pride with envy. It is envy of God's supremacy that led him to rebel in heaven in the first place. It is, further, envy he feels when he sees Adam and Eve in the uncomplicated bliss of Eden in the period of Gen 2.

Why is Milton's stress on envy so telling? After all, a very strong element of Augustinian accounts of humanity after the fall is the way that in our pride we are curved in on ourselves (humanity *incurvatus in se*). We have a love of self that is disordered so that typically we think more highly than we ought of ourselves and more disdainfully of others than we ought. Of course, there is debate about whether this depiction of pride can cover issues like low self-esteem and apathy, and I am not going to enter into that here (other than to observe that I think that self-love can be disordered in several ways, of which straightforward arrogance is one form). What interests me here is the connection between envy and pride.

Let me make some observations as we think this through. To begin with, most of us are familiar with the notion of the Ten Commandments as dividing roughly into two connected halves, the first half dealing with sins directly against God and the second half with sins against our fellows. For Luther, all of them are ways of fulfilling the great commandment to love God. It is also rightly said that all of them are ways of breaking the First Commandment.

But what about the Tenth Commandment? In some ways it doesn't fit very easily as a sin against our fellows. Sins of murder, theft, and adultery have very obvious victims in the real world. Covetousness, or

envy, does not. Yet it so easily lies behind some of the others. One envies another's wealth and steals it. One envies another's spouse and fornicates with him or her. And so on. Just as the First Commandment can lie behind the others, so to some extent can the Tenth.

Aquinas's analysis makes this even clearer. He comments that envy is a sin against other-personed love because it is sorrow at another's good for no reason other than simply that 'his good surpasses ours' (*Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.36.2). As such, it is a 'capital' sin which motivates all kinds of other sinful action (*Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.36.4). To that extent it is not difficult, although still very important, to make some obvious applications. Envy can be present for others in a home group as an attractive loving couple simply sit together on a sofa. Envy can be present as one pastor's preaching is preferred to others by the congregation. Envy can be present on a college faculty when one teacher receives recognition the others do not, just as it can be in a student body. Envy can take institutional forms, as one college knocks another or one church runs down another. It is not surprising that such settings can feature gossip, backbiting, undermining, factionalism, and social sabotage.

Yet Aquinas's comment that envy is sorrow at another's good 'in so far as his good surpasses ours' is hugely suggestive in other ways. Aquinas's point is that behind this sorrow lies a sense of self which suggests that the other should not surpass us in whatever good is in issue, be it spouse, wealth, reputation, or whatever. The lurking assumption is that one is entitled to at least as much of that particular good as the other is.

That word 'entitlement' is highly significant here. Put this way, we start to realise how profoundly important the discussion of envy is for contemporary culture. Social psychologists like Jean Twenge and Keith Campbell argue convincingly that a prominent feature of current western culture is its growing sense of individual narcissistic entitlement. And such a sense of entitlement, as Twenge in particular notes, equips one very badly to deal not only with one's own failure but also—and this is the point—with somebody else's success.

The sense of entitlement relates very closely to a particular sense of self: whatever good another has, one is entitled to it in at least the same measure. Here an attitude of disordered self-love does indeed form part of the raw material for envy. Intriguingly, though, this kind of entitlement-pride is not necessarily coupled with an overt sense of superiority. Rather this entitlement-pride can look a lot like a sort of egalitarianism, a perception that 'I'm as good as s/he is', and hence the person in question has no better title to whatever good it is than one does oneself. It is just this sense of 'I'm as good as s/he is' that C. S. Lewis satirises in his essay 'Screwtop Proposes a Toast'. Put bluntly, it is worth asking whether some forms of current egalitarianism are actually motivated by envy. Entitlement-pride, resentful egalitarianism: envy starts to have a pandemic feel as you look at our contemporary culture.

Envy along these lines is just what Milton's Satan feels. God, he feels, is no better than he is, and therefore no more entitled to the throne of heaven than he is. Satan has a feeling of 'injured merit'. And when it comes to Adam and Eve, again his envy rests on a feeling that they are no more entitled to an existence in bliss than he is: he is as good as they are. Here, though, Milton's Satan trumps Aquinas's original account of envy. For Aquinas envy is something predominantly felt between humans. What is so frightening about Milton's Satan is his envy of God.

This is why Milton's Satan is so unnerving: he seems so truly *human*. After all, consider the temptation of Gen 3. In part, Eve is prompted to distrust God with the innuendo that God envies humans for their potential to be like him. But behind this lurks the thought that Eve is also being tempted to take the fruit out of envy of God and the wish to have all the goods that God has. In modern terms she behaves

as if she feels she is entitled to be like God. The charge of God's envy of human potential looks like a piece of Nietzschean camouflage disguising the truth that in fact the real envy is what she and Adam feel towards God. This is reinforced by the parable of the tenants in the vineyard in Mark 12, where the final reason for the murder of the vineyard owner's son is the tenants' urge to inherit in his place ('Why should he get all this? We're as good as he is'): again a sorrow at another's good 'in so far as his good surpasses ours'.

Now I am used to the thought that I envy my fellow-creatures. It is unpalatable, but familiar. But my envy of my *creator* takes the insanity of disordered self-love to another level, although I reluctantly recognise it as Milton's Satan holds the mirror up to me. Here, though, following Athanasius of Alexandria, another thought strikes us, and we part company from Milton's Satan: the creator in his generosity not merely does not envy, but takes flesh precisely to redeem the envious.

The Present and Future of Biblical Theology¹

— Andreas J. Köstenberger —

Andreas Köstenberger is senior research professor of New Testament and biblical theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He also serves as the editor of the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.

In his influential address, “Discourse on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology, and the Right Determination of the Aims of Each,” Johann Philipp Gabler (1753–1826) lodged the programmatic proposal that scholars ought to distinguish between biblical and systematic theology.² In his lecture, delivered at the University of Altdorf in 1787 (the year the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia), Gabler urged his colleagues to place their theological edifice more overtly on a scriptural foundation: “There is truly a biblical theology, of historical origin, conveying what the holy writers felt about divine matters.”³ Gabler claimed that a biblical theology conceived along these lines would provide the historical and rational scientific framework enabling systematic theology to relate biblical truths to contemporary life and thought.⁴

At its core, Gabler’s distinction between biblical and systematic theology marks an important foundation stone to this day. Biblical theology is essentially a historical discipline calling for an inductive and descriptive method. We must carefully distinguish between biblical and systematic theology before we can accurately describe the theology of the biblical writers themselves. Some of us may find this to be a truism hardly worth stating. But as a survey of the last decade of biblical-theological research will show, the need to (1) ground biblical theology in careful historical work, (2) conceive of the discipline as essentially inductive and descriptive, and (3) distinguish biblical from systematic theology continues to be relevant, even urgent, if the discipline is to continue its viability.⁵

¹ This article is a revised version of plenary addresses given at the Southwest and Southeast regional meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society in Fort Worth, TX and Wake Forest, NC, both in March 2012, respectively. The address as originally given at the Southwest regional ETS meeting will be published in a future issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*.

² The Latin title was *Oratio de iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus*. For an excellent summary of Gabler’s contribution, see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, Volume One: *From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 184–87.

³ J. P. Gabler, “An Oration on the Proper Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each,” in *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future* (ed. Ben C. Ollenburger; Sources for Biblical and Theological Study; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 501. But what distinguishes Gabler’s proposal from most recent evangelical works in biblical theology is the latter’s belief in history’s unified story and the unified story of Scripture rooted in that history.

⁴ For a brief analysis of Gabler’s address and its relevance for the present discussion, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 9–10.

⁵ For a useful treatment of the history and nature of biblical theology, see Peter Balla, *Challenges to New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Justify the Enterprise* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998). More briefly, see

What follows surveys the present state of biblical theology, gauged by a selective survey of evangelical works produced during the past decade or so. Then it discusses ramifications of this survey for the future of the discipline.

1. The Present State of Biblical Theology⁶

In one of his many important contributions to the subject, D. A. Carson remarks that how one navigates the tension between Scripture's unity and its diversity is the "most pressing" issue in biblical theology.⁷ Our challenge is "Mapping Unity in Diversity."⁸ Virtually all evangelical biblical theologians start their work with the assumption of essential biblical unity. Most also realize that, within this unity, Scripture displays a certain amount of legitimate diversity.⁹ The challenge is how to come to terms with this interplay between unity and diversity. In what follows, I look at recent biblical-theological works under four rubrics: (1) classic approaches; (2) central-themes approaches; (3) single-center approaches;

Hendrikus Boers, *What Is New Testament Theology? The Rise of Criticism and the Problem of a Theology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

⁶ For our present purposes, we will focus on the most important works in whole-Bible biblical theology over the last decade. This limitation precludes works that focus on only one Testament. Noteworthy OT theologies include Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 15; Downers Grove: IVP, 2003); Eugene H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: B&H, 2006); and Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). Significant NT theologies include I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004); Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); and Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). We will likewise not consider Gentry and Wellum's recent volume, *Kingdom through Covenant*, since it focuses primarily on the biblical covenants; they propose a via media between covenant theology and dispensationalism called "progressive covenantalism." See Douglas J. Moo's review of this work at <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/09/12/kingdom-through-covenant-a-review-by-douglas-moo>. Also, owing to space constraints, I limit myself to English-language works.

⁷ D. A. Carson, "New Testament Theology," in *DLNT*, 810: "The most pressing of these [issues] is how simultaneously to expound the unity of NT theology (and of the larger canon of which it is a part) while doing justice to the manifest diversity; or, to put it the other way, how simultaneously to trace the diversity and peculiar emphases and historical developments inherent in the various NT (and biblical) books while doing justice to their unifying thrusts."

⁸ That is the subtitle of Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, eds., *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), which is the sequel to Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).

⁹ Regarding the term "legitimate diversity," see ch. 3 in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

and (4) story or metanarrative approaches.¹⁰ Each of these seeks to navigate the unity-diversity question in its own distinctive way (though there are commonalities as well).¹¹

1.1. Classic Approaches

First in our taxonomy of biblical theologies is what G. K. Beale recently called “the classic approach.”¹² This classic approach involves studying first the message and theological content of individual biblical books, followed by an attempt at synthesis tracing overarching themes across various corpora.

1.1.1. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

An example of this model is the reference work *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner.¹³ Rosner defines the task of biblical theology in the introductory article:

Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole and, to achieve this, it must work with the mutual interaction of the literary, historical, and theological dimensions

¹⁰ Cf. Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978). In his section on methodology in NT theology, Hasel lists four approaches: thematic, existentialist, historical, and salvation history. Under basic proposals toward a NT theology, he discusses NT theology (1) as a historical-theological discipline, (2) based on the NT writings, (3) presented on the basis of books and blocks of material, and (4) presented on the basis of longitudinal themes. Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), identify five types of biblical theology along a spectrum reaching from “more theological” to “more historical”: (1) Biblical Theology as Historical Description (James Barr); (2) Biblical Theology as History of Redemption (D. A. Carson); (3) Biblical Theology as Worldview-Story (N. T. Wright); (4) Biblical Theology as Canonical Approach (Brevard Childs); and (5) Biblical Theology as Theological Construction (Francis Watson).

¹¹ For a helpful assessment of the discipline almost two decades ago, see D. A. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective,” *BBR* 5 (1995): 17–41, originally an address delivered to the Institute of Biblical Research. After noting the need for definitional clarity, Carson suggested the following valid approaches to biblical theology: (1) the theology of the whole Bible, descriptively and historically considered; (2) the theology of the various biblical corpora or strata (e.g., OT and NT theologies); and (3) the theology of a particular theme across the Scriptures. He also urged the use of the following criteria for biblical theology: (1) it should read the Bible as a historically developing collection of documents; (2) it should presuppose a coherent and agreed-upon canon; and (3) it should utilize an inductive approach to the individual books and the canon as a whole, making clear connections among the various corpora, and calling all people to a knowledge of the living God (pp. 27–32).

¹² G. K. Beale, “A New Testament Biblical Theology: Interview by John Starke,” available online at http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/interview/A_New_Testament_Biblical_Theology. Actually, Beale says that a number of “classic New Testament theologies . . . conduct a consecutive theological analysis of each New Testament book within its corpus, usually in the canonical order of each corpus, and then draw up a final comparison of each of the theological emphases of each of the books. In so doing, at the end of the project sometimes a major theological thrust is attempted to be found” (e.g., Marshall’s *New Testament Theology* identifies mission as such a thrust, which Beale does not find comprehensive enough).

¹³ T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 2000).

of the various corpora, and with the interrelationships of these within the whole canon of Scripture.¹⁴

It is only in this way that we can properly account for what God has spoken to us in the Scriptures. In summary, Rosner defines biblical theology as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. More specifically, “It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible’s teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.”¹⁵ With this definition and analysis in place, the rest of the dictionary proceeds accordingly.¹⁶

1.1.2. Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*

Another edited work that contributes to the discussion of properly characterizing the discipline is *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, featuring selected addresses from the 2000 Wheaton Conference for Theology.¹⁷ In the first chapter, the editor, Scott Hafemann, discusses the issue of canonical unity and diversity. He believes that, in moving forward, scholars should focus on three central realities. First, they should look at each book of Scripture independently and take it *on its own terms* while affirming the unity of the structure of the Bible. Second, they should come to terms with the *eschatological* nature of the Bible, with the first and second coming of Christ serving as the midpoint and endpoint of redemptive history. Third, biblical theology must be *rooted in history*, lest we replace the message of Scripture with our own experience.¹⁸ These three basic affirmations serve as general principles keeping interpreters grounded as they pursue their biblical-theological work.

Later in the volume, Paul House offers a helpful perspective on the method of working toward a coherent biblical theology that does justice to the text of Scripture. He begins by affirming that canonical

¹⁴ B. S. Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 3. Thus biblical theology avoids an atemporal approach to the Bible and pays close attention to the Bible’s overarching story (see *ibid.*, 4). See also Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011).

¹⁵ Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” 10. While one notes a bifurcation of biblical theology into OT and NT theologies over the past couple centuries, it seems there is a growing trend toward the pursuit of a unified biblical theology along the lines of Rosner’s definition. For a brief survey of this phenomenon and of the history of the discipline, see Charles H. H. Scobie, “History of Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 18–20. See also Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 867–88; Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (History of Biblical Interpretation Series 2; Leiden: Deo, 2004); and H. G. Reventlow, “Theology (Biblical), History of,” in *Abingdon Bible Dictionary* (trans. Frederick H. Cryer; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:498–509.

¹⁶ Two additional introductory articles deal with the NT use of the OT and the relationship between the Testaments. Both authors stress the continuity of the Scriptures without neglecting its diversity. Craig Evans avers, “One of the most important assumptions underlying the NT’s use of the OT is that of fulfillment and continuity. . . . This means that Christian biblical theology must take fully into account the theology of the OT and never develop NT theology apart from it” (“New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 79–80). Graeme Goldsworthy concurs: “Understanding the relationship of the two Testaments involves understanding that the God who has revealed himself finally in Jesus has also revealed himself in the OT in a way that foreshadows both the structure and content of the Christian gospel” (“Relationship of Old Testament and New Testament,” 89).

¹⁷ Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).

¹⁸ Scott J. Hafemann, “Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann; Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 20–21.

biblical theology requires a unitary reading strategy of the OT and NT canon that allows the Bible to be treated as one book of Scripture. Second, this unitary reading should proceed on a book-by-book basis in order to derive the specific message from each piece of writing. Third, this analysis should lead to the identification and collection of vital central themes allowing an overarching synthesis. Fourth, there must be a commitment to intertextuality, that is, to discerning instances where later passages in Scripture refer to earlier texts. Fifth, interpreters should treat major biblical themes as they emerge from the whole of Scripture. Sixth and finally, biblical theology ought to have as its goal the presentation of the whole counsel of God in various settings.¹⁹ Thus biblical theology has the potential of encouraging believers toward understanding and applying the coherent message of Scripture to their lives and ministry.

1.1.3. Assessment

The strength of the classic approach is that it takes into consideration the contribution of each individual book in the canon of Scripture while at the same time seeking to discern major themes across the canon. Another strength of this approach is that it allows specialists in various fields to contribute. As biblical and theological studies become increasingly specialized, collaborative work is a growing necessity.

A potential weakness of the classic approach is that unless book-by-book analysis and the identification of scriptural themes are related to Scripture's larger storyline, the needed synthesis remains incomplete. While positing a single center is precarious (which I seek to demonstrate below), the scriptural metanarrative provides a promising avenue of exploring the biblical writers' message, which involves unity as well as diversity.

1.2. Central-Themes Approaches

Many have taken one important aspect of the classic approach to biblical theology, the quest for major scriptural motifs, and sought to orient the whole Bible around a few central themes that can be traced across the canon.

1.2.1. Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*

One of the most prolific, and in my judgment most successful, biblical-theological works of the past decade exhibiting a central-themes approach is Charles Scobie's massive work *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology*.²⁰ Discussing the history, definition, and task of biblical theology, Scobie believes, "If progress is to be made in the study of Biblical Theology, the question of definition is clearly crucial."²¹ Scobie sides with many others in the field in maintaining that biblical theology is "the

¹⁹ Paul R. House, "Biblical Theology and the Wholeness of Scripture: Steps toward a Program for the Future," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann; Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 271–78.

²⁰ Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

²¹ Ibid., 3. Scobie believes that necessary presuppositions for a coherent biblical theology include "belief that the Bible conveys a divine revelation, that the word of God in Scripture constitutes the norm of Christian faith and life, and that all the varied material of the OT and NT can in some way be related to the plan and purpose of the one God of the whole Bible" (p. 47).

theology contained in the Bible, the theology of the Bible itself.”²² Moreover, Scobie proposes what he calls an “intermediate biblical theology,” contending that biblical theology is a bridge discipline between the historical study of the Bible and the use of the Bible as authoritative Scripture by the church.²³ Scobie further suggests that biblical theology ought to be fundamentally concerned with the horizon of the text and as such should attempt to overview and interpret the shape and structure of the Bible as a whole. Along these lines, he writes that his own work “will seek the unity and continuity of Scripture, but without sacrificing the richness of its diversity. It will focus not on exegetical details but on the broad interrelationships between the major themes of the Bible, and above all on the interrelationship between the Testaments.”²⁴

In seeking to delineate the structure of biblical theology, Scobie cautions that scholars avoid imposing alien conceptual patterns onto Scripture and instead allow the structure of their biblical theology to arise from the biblical material itself: “The structure that is proposed here is one in which the major themes of the OT and NT are correlated with each other.” In Scobie’s approach, “Each theme is first traced through the OT. Although on the one hand the material is discussed with an eye to the way [in which] the theme is developed in the NT, on the other hand, every effort is made to listen to what the OT says on its own terms.”²⁵

Thus, Scobie believes that the procedure that seems to offer the most promise and the least risk of distorting the biblical material is identifying a limited number of major biblical themes, grouped around associated subthemes, and tracing each theme and related subtheme(s) through the OT and into the NT, following the scheme of proclamation, promise/ fulfillment, and consummation.²⁶ These themes, isolated in interaction with various centers that have been proposed through the course of the discipline, are broken up into four categories: (1) God’s order; (2) God’s servant; (3) God’s people; and (4)

²² Ibid., 5. See also the discussion of the work of Adolf Schlatter in §2.1.

²³ This *intermediate* biblical theology contrasts with what Scobie describes as (1) *integrated* biblical theology, which, prior to Gabler’s address, did not distinguish between what the Bible “meant” and what it “means,” and (2) *independent* biblical theology, which is a biblical theology dominated by historical criticism and pursued in radical independence from the church (see *ibid.*, 7–8).

²⁴ Ibid., 47. Scobie speaks specifically to the distinctiveness and relationship between the Testaments in relation to biblical theology. As for the OT canon, Scobie acknowledges the Christian stance regarding its importance: “[Christians] see in the [OT] the record of the period of preparation and promise that culminates in the Christ event. *It is that Christ event, and not the Torah, that constitutes the supreme revelation of God for Christians.* . . . Thus, whatever may be the case historically, *theologically* for Christians *it is the Christ event that closes the canon of the Old Testament*” (p. 55). Regarding the NT canon, Scobie again asserts, “BT is not concerned with the details of the complex process of the development of the canon of the NT. But it is vitally concerned with the *theology of the canon*. From a theological point of view it is clear that the all-important factor in the closing of the canon of the NT was the belief that *the Christ event constitutes the supreme, unique, and final revelation of God*” (p. 57).

²⁵ Ibid., 91–92. In this regard, Scobie anticipates the work of G. K. Beale (see §1.4.3).

²⁶ See *ibid.*, 93.

God's way.²⁷ Engaging with biblical theology in this fashion allows one to trace demonstrably important themes across the canon with a view toward analysis and synthesis.²⁸

1.2.2. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, eds., *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*

As mentioned in note 8, Scott Hafemann, subsequent to the publication of his edited work *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, partnered with Paul House to edit a sequel: *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*. This book attempts to “explore biblical themes that contribute to the wholeness of the Bible.”²⁹ In this regard, the volume moves beyond a classic approach to a central-themes model. The contributors share three convictions regarding scriptural unity. First, the Bible is a unity because it is the word of God, who is a unified and coherent being. Second, biblical theology should seek not only to unpack the content of Scripture but also to establish the conceptual unity of the Bible as a whole as it unfolds in human events. Third, doing whole-Bible theology should be a collaborative effort owing to the complexity of the discipline.³⁰ Once again, as with the works already discussed, we see specific principles guiding these authors in delineating the unity and diversity characterizing the canon.

Perhaps most pertinent to the task at hand is Roy Ciampa's essay on the history of redemption. He states that a central-themes approach to Scripture “seeks to uncover the biblical authors' own understanding of the events and their significance within the unfolding narrative context in which they are found.”³¹ Ciampa agrees with those who have argued for a creation-sin-exile-restoration motif³² and seeks to trace this pattern throughout the various corpora of Scripture. In so doing, Ciampa argues that the main structure of the biblical narrative consists essentially of two creation-sin-exile-restoration structures whereby the second of these, which is national in nature (seen in the Israel narrative), is embedded within the first, which is global (seen in the Adam-Eve narrative and its accompanying consequences). The national creation-sin-exile-restoration pattern serves as the key to the resolution of the plot conflict of the global structure, and in the interplay between these two structures, God's kingdom intervention and promises are rightly understood.³³ This essay thus contributes a useful application of biblical theology demonstrating the saving purposes of God throughout the canon.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 94–99. Scobie's chart on page 99 helpfully illustrates these major categories and how they fit into the rubric of proclamation, promise/fulfillment, and consummation.

²⁸ For an insightful summary and analysis of Scobie's work, see Karl Möller, “The Nature and Genre of Biblical Theology: Some Reflections in the Light of Charles H. H. Scobie's ‘Prolegomena to Biblical Theology,’” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig B. Bartholomew et al.; Scripture and Hermeneutics 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 41–64.

²⁹ Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, “Introduction,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 15.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 16–18.

³¹ Roy E. Ciampa, “History of Redemption,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 255.

³² For an example of a biblical theology that engages with this theme as the integrative motif for understanding the whole of Scripture, see C. Marvin Pate et al., *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004).

³³ See Ciampa, “History of Redemption,” 257.

1.2.3. Assessment

Central-themes approaches can be helpful in tracing important motifs across the canon, but the organization of these central themes still requires further synthesis, in particular in relation to Scripture's overarching storyline. Hafemann's discussion of the covenant structure or Ciampa's treatment of the creation-sin-exile-restoration theme both constitute attempts to provide such a metanarrative framework in an effort to relate these central themes to one another. The central-themes approach is a useful component of biblical theology if one recognizes the place of central themes within the framework of the macrostructure of the entire canon.

1.3. Single-Center Approaches

Over the course of the discipline, there have been scholars who have sought to identify a single center of Scripture that constitutes *the* major theme around which the entire canon revolves. In effect, therefore, the single-center approach selects one from among a number of central themes and designates it as the sole center of biblical theology. The fact that such an approach is fraught with considerable difficulty at the very outset has not kept at least one scholar in recent years from exploring the notion of a central organizing theme within the scope of biblical theology.³⁴

1.3.1. James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*

In his publication *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*,³⁵ James Hamilton, as suggested by the title of his work, endeavors to show that God's glory in salvation through judgment serves as a biblical center, that is, as a particularly prominent theme that holds the canon together. Hamilton states the purpose of his book as follows:

The purpose of this book, quixotic as it may seem, is to seek to do for biblical theology what Kevin Vanhoozer has done for hermeneutics and David Wells has done for evangelical theology. The goal is not a return to an imaginary golden age but to help people know God. The quest to know God is clarified by a diagnosis of the problem (Wells), the vindication of interpretation (Vanhoozer), and, hopefully, a clear presentation of the main point of God's revelation of himself, that is, a clear presentation of the center of biblical theology.³⁶

Hamilton contends that the saving and judging glory of God³⁷ is the center of biblical theology and as such is the primary theme uniting all of Scripture.

³⁴ See Hasel, *New Testament Theology*, 140–78. See also Carson, "NT Theology," 810: "The pursuit of the center is chimerical. NT theology is so interwoven that one can move from any one topic to any other topic. We will make better progress by pursuing clusters of broadly common themes, which may not be common to all NT books"; and Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Diversity and Unity in the New Testament," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann; Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 154: "the search for a single center of the NT should be abandoned."

³⁵ James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁷ While my focus here is the general methodology of deriving a particular theology of the Bible, it is important to understand what exactly Hamilton means by his phrase "God's glory in salvation through judgment." He asserts that God's glory refers to the weight and majestic goodness of who God is, as well as the resulting fame

Hamilton describes his methodology as follows. First, he sets out to pursue a biblical theology that highlights the central theme of God's glory in salvation through judgment by describing the literary contours of individual books in their canonical context with sensitivity to the unfolding metanarrative. Hamilton believes that this metanarrative presents a unified story with a discernible main point or center.³⁸ In defining a center in biblical theology, a crucial part of his methodology, Hamilton states, with reference to Jonathan Edwards,

If it can be shown that the Bible's description of God's ultimate end produces, informs, organizes, and is expositied by all the other themes in the Bible, and if this can be demonstrated from the Bible's own salvation-historical narrative and in its own terms, then the conclusion will follow that the ultimate end ascribed to God in the Bible is the center of biblical theology.³⁹

Thus one can identify the center of biblical theology by identifying the theme that is prevalent, even pervasive, in all parts of the Bible and that serves as its ultimate end. Hamilton claims that this theme will be the demonstrable centerpiece of the theology contained in the Bible itself.⁴⁰ Hamilton then moves into textual analysis, seeking to demonstrate the centrality of God's glory in salvation through judgment in the Torah,⁴¹ the Prophets,⁴² the Writings,⁴³ the Gospels and Acts,⁴⁴ the New Testament Letters,⁴⁵ and Revelation.⁴⁶

or renown that he gains from the revelation of himself (see *ibid.*, 56–57). Regarding the latter part of the phrase, Hamilton suggests, “salvation always comes through judgment.” Israel was saved through the judgment of Egypt; believers are saved through the judgment that falls on Jesus; and people repent of their sin as prophets and apostles vocalize the truths of God's justice: “All of this reveals God as righteous and merciful, loving and just, holy and forgiving, for his own glory, forever” (p. 58).

³⁸ Thus Hamilton's approach combines elements of the book-by-book, central themes, and metanarrative approaches discussed in this essay.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 48. Hamilton appears to be influenced in his method for finding a center by Jonathan Edwards and how he speaks of “ends” in his “The End for which God Created the World,” in John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1998), 125–251. See especially *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 48–49. Edwards also features prominently in Hamilton's preemptive defense against objections to the centrality of his posited biblical center (see 553, 561). However, Hamilton's appropriation of Edwards in defining the *overall* center of Scripture may unduly constrain his determination of the center of *individual* books of Scripture.

⁴⁰ Anticipating the objection of some scholars who believe that a center is not attainable, Hamilton responds, “In spite of the judgment of these respected scholars, it must be observed that their statements do not seem to take into account one theme that has only recently been put forward as the center of biblical theology: the glory of God. . . . Anticipating the charge that it might be too broad to be useful, I am sharpening the proposal to focus specifically on the glory of God manifested in salvation through judgment” (pp. 52–53). For a brief survey of other proposed centers in OT, NT, and biblical theology, see James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment: The Centre of Biblical Theology?” *TynBul* 57 (2006): 65–69. See also *idem*, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 52–53.

⁴¹ Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 67–137.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 139–269.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 271–353.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 355–441.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 443–559.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 541–51.

1.3.2. Assessment

While it is instructive to see how Hamilton delves into the exegetical details to substantiate his thesis, the feasibility of trying to find a single center for the entire biblical witness remains fraught with difficulty.⁴⁷ In the end, Hamilton's proposal fails to convince because it proves unduly monolithic and frequently appears to be artificially imposed onto individual writings (e.g., Esther, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Matthew, Philemon). As a result, the canon of Scripture in its entirety is unable to bear the weight of "God's glory in salvation through judgment" serving as a single center. As D. A. Carson wisely observed with regard to single-center approaches, "How shall one avoid the tendency to elevate one book or corpus of the NT and domesticate the rest, putting them on a leash held by the themes of the one, usually the book or corpus on which the biblical theologian has invested most scholarly energy?"⁴⁸

At closer scrutiny, Hamilton's center seems to work best in the prophetic literature, which is replete with oracles of salvation and judgment. The opening chapters of Genesis, on the other hand, are discussed only briefly.⁴⁹ Strikingly, God's glory *in creation* is at best subsidiary in Hamilton's center, and thus the bookends of biblical revelation do not receive the prominence they deserve. Another potential weakness of Hamilton's proposal is that he uses pivotal terms such as "glory," "judgment," or "salvation" in multiple senses and then moves back and forth between various definitions of these key terms to establish his single center.⁵⁰ "God's glory in salvation through judgment" may well be one of Scripture's central themes, perhaps even one that was underappreciated prior to Hamilton's work, but calling this theme the "single center" of Scripture overstates the case because it excludes other important themes such as God's glory in creation and new creation.⁵¹

In light of such difficulties (and more programmatic underlying concerns noted below), the concluding verdict of Gerhard Hasel's monograph *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, written decades ago, still stands:

⁴⁷ See Stephen Dempster's appreciative review of Hamilton's work: "Book Review: God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment," *9Marks Articles and Reviews*, available at <http://www.9marks.org/books/book-review-gods-glory-salvation-through-judgment>. Dempster states, "All our best efforts can be described as seeing through a glass darkly. The fact that no theological centre has been found does not mean that there is none. . . . While God and his word are inerrant, all our theology partakes of errancy. As Hamilton has come back from his quest, in stressing the glory of God in salvation through judgment he has certainly pointed us all in the right direction."

⁴⁸ Carson, "NT Theology," 810. As we see further in §1.4.3, G. K. Beale is therefore wise to eschew the notion of a single center in favor of tethering his proposal to a broader construct: the biblical storyline. This allows Beale to see a red thread running through the scriptural narrative without being equally vulnerable to the charge of being monochromatic and reductionistic. See the discussion in ch. 6 of G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011); and idem, "Interview": "I do not attempt to see a central theme in NT biblical theology." Beale continues, "On the other hand, I don't think the NT is composed of multiple themes that are merely unrelated to one another. I try to sail a middle course between these two perspectives." It should be noted, however, that few evangelicals would say that the "NT is composed of multiple themes *that are merely unrelated to one another*." For this reason, Beale's claim to steer a "middle course between these two perspectives" is a bit curious.

⁴⁹ See pp. 53, 70–74.

⁵⁰ See the seven senses in which he uses the phrase "God's glory in salvation through judgment" on pp. 58–59.

⁵¹ Cf. the similar critique by Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 12: "We do not deny that 'salvation through judgment' is *a* theme of Scripture, even a major one, but we will not defend the assertion that it is *the* theme to the neglect of other themes."

The variety of problems to which scholars have pointed in their discussions of the center of the NT, one that functions as “a canon within the canon” and serves as material principle of canon criticism, are apparently insurmountable. An approach to NT theology that seeks to be adequate to the totality of the NT cannot afford the arbitrariness, subjectivity, and reductionism inherent in the choice of a selective principle in the form of a center either from without Scripture (tradition) or from within Scripture on the basis of which value judgments are made with regard to the content of Scripture as a whole or in its parts.⁵²

1.4. Story or Metanarrative Approaches

While the single-center approach has some obvious flaws, a related centering model is the metanarrative approach to biblical theology. This approach does not identify one theme as the central idea but argues that there is an overarching metanarrative that unifies the Scriptures.

1.4.1. T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*

One fairly recent exemplar of such an approach is T. Desmond Alexander’s *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology*.⁵³ In this work, Alexander, one of the editors of the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (see §1.1.1), seeks to explore the unfolding canonical trajectory of Scripture. In so doing, Alexander grounds his attempt to describe the content of the biblical metanarrative in the conviction that the word of God is a unified story: “Produced over many centuries, the differing texts that comprise this library are amazingly diverse in terms of genre, authorship and even language. Nonetheless, they produce a remarkably unified story that addresses two of life’s most fundamental questions: (1) Why was the earth created? (2) What is the reason for human existence?”⁵⁴

Alexander’s overall method is thematic in nature as he seeks to demonstrate (similar to the central-themes approach) that several overarching motifs essentially unify and hold the Bible together. In defense of this approach, he asserts,

There is something of value in seeing the big picture, for it frequently enables us to appreciate the details more clearly. The scholarly tendency to “atomize” biblical texts is often detrimental to understanding them. By stripping passages out of their literary contexts meanings are imposed upon them that were never intended by their authors. I hope this study goes a little way to redressing this imbalance, for biblical scholarship as a whole has not articulated clearly the major themes that run throughout Scripture. Since these themes were an integral part of the thought world of the biblical authors, an appreciation of them may significantly alter our reading of individual books.⁵⁵

In a unique fashion, Alexander takes as his starting point the two final chapters of the book of Revelation, in the conviction that these chapters sustain a distinct connection with Gen 1–3 and that these two portions of Scripture frame the entire biblical narrative, providing the reader with an overarching

⁵² Hasel, *NT Theology*, 177–78.

⁵³ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

framework for what the Bible is seeking to communicate throughout.⁵⁶ In this way, the reader looks at the end of the story to make better sense of the beginning, and in so doing traces a theme from its point of departure to its fulfillment in Christ and ultimately its consummation in the New Jerusalem. Alexander recognizes that while “there are limitations to this approach, it is nevertheless one way of attempting to determine the main elements of the meta-story.”⁵⁷ Thus the study is not exhaustive but rather suggestive, seeking to outline some of the main themes running through Scripture. The contours of Alexander’s book adhere closely to the standard approach of summarizing the overarching narrative of the Bible in terms of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.⁵⁸ While Alexander does not tease out every detail of his proposal, his work serves as a helpful guide to some of the most significant themes in the Bible and the canonical weight they carry in our interpretive efforts.

1.4.2. Graeme Goldsworthy, Christ-Centered Biblical Theology

Another instance of a story or metanarrative approach is Graeme Goldsworthy’s new book *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles*.⁵⁹ Goldsworthy seeks to contribute a measure of coherence to the discipline by formulating a biblical-theological schema in accordance with the work of Donald Robinson and Gabriel Hebert.⁶⁰ He begins by pointing out some of the difficulties involved in defining the essence and nature of biblical theology.⁶¹ He defines biblical theology as “the study of how every text in the Bible relates to every other text in the Bible” and as “the study of the matrix of divine revelation in the Bible as a whole.”⁶² He further refines the definition by stating that biblical theology is the study of how every text relates to Christ and the gospel.⁶³ Goldsworthy also links his proposal with salvation history, underscoring the importance of biblical revelation and its unified progression.⁶⁴ In understanding Christ to be at the center of biblical theology, Goldsworthy seeks to show how the incarnation of Jesus is the link between the Testaments and at the center of God’s plan begun at creation and to be completed in the new creation, epitomized by God’s presence with his people.⁶⁵ In keeping with this Christ-centered understanding, Goldsworthy posits the kingdom of God, “defined simply as God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule,” as the central theme in Scripture.⁶⁶

⁵⁶ Although Alexander sees direct parallels between Gen 1–3 and Rev 20–22, he notes that one finds significant progression as well as elements of continuity and discontinuity as the canon moves toward its completion (see *ibid.*, 14).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁸ See the above discussion of Roy Ciampa’s chapter in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*.

⁵⁹ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2012).

⁶⁰ For an elaboration of Robinson’s impact on Goldsworthy, see *ibid.*, ch. 10.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶³ See *ibid.* Goldsworthy also helpfully notes that the degree to which a given scholar holds to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture will affect their approach to biblical theology.

⁶⁴ See the discussion of salvation-history approaches in Hasel, *NT Theology*, 111–32.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 56–75.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

Unlike some of the other authors we have considered, Goldsworthy does not spend much time discussing method—though he affirms that there are a number of different approaches to the task of biblical theology—but instead focuses on demonstrating what he believes is the essential structure of biblical revelation to be captured by biblical theology, properly conducted.⁶⁷ Goldsworthy urges that an exegete's presuppositions must be taken into account as he or she approaches the text.⁶⁸ With this in mind, Goldsworthy asserts, "Given our evangelical presupposition of the unity of Scripture with its central focus on Christ, we should expect that the different acceptable approaches will reflect that unity."⁶⁹ The methods for conducting this kind of biblical theology include careful thematic or word study; contextual studies of individual texts, books, or corpora; OT or NT theologies; and theologies of the whole Bible as canon.⁷⁰ All of these investigations, Goldsworthy asserts, are performed in order to edify the people of God and to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.⁷¹

1.4.3. G. K. Beale, A New Testament Biblical Theology

A final work following a story or metanarrative approach to biblical theology is G. K. Beale's recent tome *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*.⁷² Beale asserts his purpose: "My attempt in this book is not to write a NT theology, but rather a NT *biblical* theology."⁷³ Beale's distinctive approach to biblical theology is to identify the storyline that unfolds as one moves from the OT to the NT. In so doing, he engages in the exegetical analysis of key words, crucial passages, OT quotations, allusions, and prominent themes in order to elaborate on the main plotline categories. This specific approach to NT biblical theology, according to Beale, is "canonical," "organically developmental," "exegetical," and "inter-textual."⁷⁴ In this way, Beale is seeking to set his work apart as unique from the proliferation of NT theologies that have appeared in the last century.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ This may be partly because Goldsworthy has already been developing his biblical-theological approach to the text in previous works. See, e.g., Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002).

⁶⁸ See Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 217.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See *ibid.*, 217–27.

⁷¹ Ibid., 227.

⁷² Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*.

⁷³ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, 19–33, for further details on this summary. Hamilton takes issue with these items being distinctive and unique in the world of NT theology. He maintains, "It may be that Beale's book incorporates more of the things that he enumerates here than other New Testament theologies, but the difference is one of degree not kind. . . . My point is that New Testament theology is a subset of biblical theology, and adding the word biblical to the title and then laying out the ways one seeks to combine existing approaches and bring in unique emphases to contribute to the discipline does not mean that one is doing something different from what everyone else writing in the field has done. . . . So I do not want to minimize the real contribution Beale's book makes, but again, the difference between his book and other NT theologies is one of degree and emphasis not kind. Perhaps Schreiner's work is closest in terms of outlook, method, and conclusions, but Thielman's perspective is not that different, and N. T. Wright is at least moving in a similar stream." See James M. Hamilton Jr., "Appreciation, Agreement, and a Few Minor Quibbles: A Response to G. K. Beale," *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 10:1 (2011): 66–67.

⁷⁵ Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 1–25. See also *idem*, "Interview."

Rather than postulating a center, Beale seeks to identify a particular storyline arising from the Scriptures that can serve as a point of reference. His primary thesis is that in order to understand the NT in its richness, one must have a keen acquaintance with how the biblical authors viewed the end times since this topic forms an essential part of the NT story.⁷⁶ Building on this thesis, Beale delineates the specific ways in which the OT and NT articulate this kind of narrative. The OT storyline that Beale posits as the basis for the NT storyline is this:

The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant, and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, unto his glory.⁷⁷

He follows this with the storyline of the NT, showing the transformation of the OT storyline:

Jesus' life, trials, death for sinners, and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfillment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God's glory.⁷⁸

In this way, one can see in a brief description the way in which the OT is the basis *for* the NT storyline while at the same time being subject to transformation *by* the NT. By working from a reconstructed storyline of the OT and the NT, Beale sets himself apart from the classic and central-themes approaches and significantly advances the field both formally (in terms of method) and materially (in terms of content).⁷⁹

1.4.4. Assessment

In contrast to single-center approaches, Beale wisely avoids speaking of a "center" in his biblical-theological proposal, attaching significance instead to the OT storyline as modified and transformed in the NT. This is certainly creative and very likely more satisfying than a rigid application of a book-by-book approach (though care should be taken that the overall storyline does not completely crowd out more minor motifs). Beale's approach also seems preferable to a more heavy-handed procedure in which a writer posits a center that he subsequently tries to validate by tying it to the message of every individual biblical book.

Nevertheless, a couple of concerns may be noted. First, making the biblical storyline central runs the danger of marginalizing biblical material that is not central to the metanarrative of Scripture but nonetheless present in the canon. Its inductive and descriptive nature and its ability to synthesize not only major but also minor motifs is one of the greatest strengths of biblical theology. Care should be

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Beale's summary of the OT storyline bears some affinities with Hamilton's "single center."

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ For a helpful review that is both complimentary and critical, see Hamilton, "Appreciation, Agreement, and a Few Minor Quibbles," 58–70.

taken not to lose sight of minor (or not too minor) motifs simply because they do not seem to relate directly to the central storyline of Scripture.

Second, and related to the first, is a doctrinal concern. Evangelicals such as Beale believe that it is every word of Scripture that is inspired, not merely the biblical storyline.⁸⁰ If so, what in practice helps us to avoid privileging the biblical storyline (as construed by us) to the extent that less prominent portions of Scripture are unduly neglected? Here we must take care not to be similar in practice (though not in theory) to the approach of scholars such as N. T. Wright (not an inerrantist) in his work *The Last Word* or German content criticism, which has also had a notable impact on the work of some British and other evangelicals.⁸¹

2. The Future of Biblical Theology

What insights can we derive from this all-too-brief survey of recent contributions to the discipline of biblical theology? Several observations may be noted. On the whole, it is evident that the discipline has come a long way in the last decade or so. G. K. Beale's recent work, in particular, shows a level of sophistication and creativity that is impressive and bodes well for the future of biblical theology. On the shoulders of foundational efforts such as the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, the compendium *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* edited by Scott Hafemann, and programmatic studies such as T. Desmond Alexander's *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, a new generation of scholars will be able to produce biblical theologies that are theoretically responsible, methodologically nuanced, and theologically refined.

In terms of content, there seems to be an emerging consensus that stresses christological and eschatological fulfillment (whether in terms of creation-new creation, consummation, or restoration). Several of the works we surveyed contend that Christ is the center-point and pivotal figure of redemptive history. What is more, the underlying conviction in virtually all of these works is that the Bible constitutes a unity and therefore also exhibits a unified theology.

Despite these similarities, however, there are still significant differences among the biblical theologies written during the past decade. Most importantly, the question of definition of biblical theology requires urgent reassessment. Some recent works are more rigorously inductive while others proceed from a systematic or confessional framework in exploring the teachings of Scripture. Also, the specific proposals made by various scholars differ as to what the theology of the Bible actually is and how it coheres. In part, this is a matter of setting different emphases or privileging a particular overall framework, whether the glory of God, eschatology, salvation history, or some other central topic, not to mention the importance of hermeneutics.⁸²

⁸⁰ See, e.g., G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

⁸¹ N. T. Wright, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture* (San Francisco: Harper, 2005). See the discussion in Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical Fallacies Critiqued," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 273–79, and the reference to works such as I. H. Marshall, "An Evangelical Approach to 'Theological Criticism,'" in *The Best in Theology, Volume Three* (ed. J. I. Packer; Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1989), 45–60 (the article first appeared in *Themelios*). On the positive side, we should mention N. T. Wright's excellent inaugural volume in his quintology-in-progress, *Christian Origins and the Question of God, The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

⁸² On which see Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*.

2.1. The Definition of Biblical Theology

On the question of definition, Adolf Schlatter provided the following classic formulation of the nature of biblical theology over a century ago:

We turn away decisively from ourselves and our time to what was found in the men through whom the church came into being [i.e. the NT writers]. Our main interest should be the thought as it was conceived by them and the truth that was valid for them. We want to see and obtain a thorough grasp of what happened historically and existed in another time. This is the internal disposition upon which the success of the work depends, the commitment which must consistently be renewed as the work proceeds.⁸³

This kind of definition can serve as a standard by which we measure the biblical-theological work we produce in order to ensure that we are staying within the parameters of the field. Before addressing our own questions, we must first listen to the OT and NT writers and documents in order to understand the message of the Bible on its own terms, in its own language, and in its original cultural, historical, and ecclesial contexts.

Note also that Schlatter, similar to Gabler, distinguished between biblical theology and systematic theology when he urged a separation between the “historical task” of New Testament theology and the “doctrinal task” of dogmatic theology.⁸⁴ This shows that Gabler was not alone in urging this distinction but that later scholars such as Schlatter reiterated the strong need for this distinction without necessarily endorsing Gabler’s larger theological program. What this makes clear is that the distinction between biblical and systematic theology does not hinge on the specifics of Gabler’s proposal in his address as if some of its inadequacies somehow disqualify the legitimacy of the distinction between biblical and systematic theology as such.⁸⁵

2.2. The Distinction between Biblical and Systematic Theology

Another continuing need is that scholars give careful consideration to the unique characteristics of biblical theology in relation to other fields, particularly systematic theology. David Clark asserts that each particular discipline—biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and so-called practical theology—“is a microperspective that limits its view of the object of study to a particular

⁸³ Adolf Schlatter, *The History of the Christ* (trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 18. Gentry and Wellum also offer a helpful summary definition of the discipline of biblical theology: “The *hermeneutical* discipline which seeks to do justice to what Scripture claims to be and what it actually is. In terms of its claim, Scripture is nothing less than *God’s Word* written and as such, it is a unified revelation of his gracious plan of redemption. In terms of what it actually is, it is a *progressive* unfolding of God’s plan, rooted in history, and unpacked along a specific redemptive-historical plot line primarily demarcated by biblical covenants. Biblical theology as a hermeneutical discipline attempts to exegete texts in their own context and then, in light of the entire canon, to examine the unfolding nature of God’s plan and carefully think through the relationship between *before* and *after* in that plan which culminates in Christ. As such, biblical theology provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of the Bible relate to all the other texts so that they will be read correctly, according to God’s intention, which is discovered through human authors, but ultimately at the canonical level. In the end, biblical theology is the attempt to unpack ‘the whole counsel of God’ and ‘to think God’s thoughts after him,’ and it provides the basis and underpinning for all theology and doctrine” (*Kingdom through Covenant*, 15–16).

⁸⁴ Schlatter, *History of the Christ*, 18.

⁸⁵ See further the interaction with Hamilton in n. 89 below.

aspect or dimensions of the whole.”⁸⁶ In other words, there is a unity of the theological disciplines in that they all contribute to a proper understanding of the larger macroperspective of Scripture, providing unity to the individual pieces by constituting them as a “symphonic theology.”⁸⁷ While Clark’s comments are helpful, one must be careful to avoid blurring the lines between the disciplines so as to allow them to contribute to the Christian faith in their own distinctive ways.⁸⁸

Seeking to navigate the tension between an inductive and a preconceived conceptual approach, Hamilton affirms that biblical theology is inductive in nature but cannot be divorced from one’s existing theological framework:

Our biblical-theological understanding will line up—implicitly or explicitly—with our systematic conclusions. This cannot be denied, and it should be embraced, with the two disciplines of biblical and systematic theology functioning to further our understanding of God and his word. . . .

Some today are referring to biblical theology as a “bridge discipline” that connects exegesis and systematic theology, but we can also view biblical theology, systematic theology, and historical theology as equal tools, each of which can be used to sharpen our exegesis and theology.”⁸⁹

Whatever the merits of Hamilton’s proposal, however, clearly this is no longer biblical theology in the vein of Gabler’s distinction.⁹⁰ According to Hamilton, “the reality is that all these methods are used in teaching Christians, which makes them all dogmatic theology.”⁹¹ In accentuating the ecclesial thrust

⁸⁶ David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Foundations of Evangelical Theology; Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 182.

⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, 192. Cf. Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

⁸⁸ A helpful article on this topic is Trevor Hart, “Systematic—In What Sense?” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig B. Bartholomew et al.; Scripture and Hermeneutics 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 341–51.

⁸⁹ Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 46–47. Vern Sheridan Poythress makes similar sentiments: “One must get one’s framework of assumptions—one’s presuppositions—from somewhere. If one does not get them from healthy, biblically grounded systematic theology, one will most likely get them from the spirit of the age, whether that be Enlightenment rationalism or postmodern relativism or historicism” (“Kinds of Biblical Theology,” *WTJ* 70 [2008]: 134). Similarly to Hamilton and Poythress, Goldsworthy presses his readers concerning the relationship between dogmatic and biblical theology: “For a theologian to pursue a biblical theology implies some kind of already existing dogmatic framework regarding the Bible. Biblical theologians who insist that we do not need dogmatics simply have not examined their own presuppositions about the Bible. The issue is not really that of which comes first, dogmatics or biblical theology, because they are interrelated and involve the hermeneutical spiral. Because of the symbiotic relationship between them, I do not think it is possible to be competent in one without the other. A similar symbiosis exists between dogmatics and historical theology since dogmaticians cannot ignore the history of the discipline. Evangelical biblical-theological presuppositions will include some cognizance of the dogmas discussed below as the structure for progress in theologizing” (*Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 42).

⁹⁰ Note the absence of any reference to Gabler in Hamilton’s discussion of the history of the discipline (see Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 41–47).

⁹¹ Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 47. In personal conversation, Hamilton told me that the way he uses “dogmatic theology” here is not synonymous with “systematic theology.” I would like to ex-

of biblical theology, Hamilton, whether consciously or not, is picking up on an implicit distinction made by Gabler who did, in fact, seek to separate the academy from the church when urging a distinction between biblical and dogmatic theology. The fact that history matters, however, does not necessarily imply that in historical investigation the church is set aside. Rather, it is historical investigation that shows the church to be the central focus in God's redemptive plan. History is not the exclusive domain of historical research (whether historical-critical or otherwise) set off from the ecclesiastical realm, nor is the history of redemption merely textual; it is the very history in which the church has a vital, even indispensable, part.⁹²

What is more, while it is doubtless correct that interpreters approach the text of Scripture with a set of presuppositions, the goal of biblical theology, as mentioned, must continue to be accurately perceiving the convictions of the OT and NT writers. Despite the fact that the majority of scholars in both fields (biblical and systematic theology) continues to support a distinction of the respective disciplines, however, drawing such distinctions is not always hard and fast. The need remains for definitional clarity and methodological vigilance lest biblical theology becomes systematic theology in disguise, the lines between biblical and systematic theology become unduly blurred, or the disciplines illegitimately collapse into one. If biblical theology is systematic theology by another name and systematic presuppositions, consciously or not, control one's biblical-theological work to such an extent that the end product bears more the imprint of the contemporary interpreter than that of the original biblical writers, a line has been crossed.⁹³

There thus remains a need for a procedure by which interpreters move from exegeting individual texts in their original historical setting to placing the results of such exegesis into their proper canonical context before moving on to a systematization in light of contemporary concerns. Along those lines, Grant Osborne, citing R. T. France, calls for "the priority in biblical interpretation of what has come to be called 'the first horizon,' i.e., of understanding biblical language within its own context before we start exploring its relevance to our own concerns, and of keeping the essential biblical context in view as a control on the way we apply biblical language to current issues."⁹⁴ By reaffirming the distinction

press my appreciation to Jim Hamilton for his helpful clarification of his views and his interaction with an earlier critique via phone and email.

⁹² I owe this insight to Mark Catlin.

⁹³ Though seeking to carve out its own particular niche, one example of this blurring of the lines can be located in the more recent discipline known as the Theological Interpretation of Scripture. For examples of the literature in this field, see J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). One should also take note of the project known as the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, a set of commentaries written by "leading theologians" who "read and interpret Scripture creedally for the twenty-first century." For helpful assessments and critiques of the movement as a whole, see Gregg R. Allison, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction and Preliminary Evaluation," in *SBIT* 2 (2010): 28–37; Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Of Professors and Madmen: Currents in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship," 2–6, http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/pdf/professor_madman.pdf; and now D. A. Carson, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But . . .," in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives* (ed. R. Michael Allen; New York: T&T Clark, 2011)—see below.

⁹⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 521, citing R. T. France, "The Church and the Kingdom of God," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization* (ed. D. A. Carson; Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 42. Schlatter likewise argues, "Apart from the historical

between the first and second horizons of Scripture, I do not intend to issue a call for the various biblical and theological disciplines to separate even further—indeed, more dialogue needs to occur between biblical scholars and theologians.⁹⁵ Instead, my purpose is to register a plea for recognizing the place of each discipline in the overall process of interpreting and applying God's word.⁹⁶

In his recent assessment of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture, D. A. Carson, citing Graham Cole, distinguishes between four levels of biblical and theological scholarship.⁹⁷ First comes the exegesis of biblical texts in their literary and historical contexts, with proper attention being given to literary genre, attempting to discern authorial intent to the extent that this is possible. Second, the interpreter endeavors to understand the text within the entirety of biblical theology, determining what it contributes to the unfolding storyline. Third, theological structures in a given text are sought to be understood in concert with other major theological scriptural themes. Fourth, all teachings derived from the biblical writings are both subjected to and modified by the interpreter's larger hermeneutical proposal. Carson notes that traditional interpreters have operated mostly on levels 1 and 2, while many (if not most) recent practitioners of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture operate on levels 3 and 4.

I am content to let Carson appraise this latter movement. For our present purposes, it will suffice to note that the best biblical-theological work operates on all four levels (or at least the first three). On the one hand, biblical theologians must not skip levels 1 and 2 in their haste to progress to the levels 3 and 4. On the other hand, scholars should not stop at level 2 or even 3. Cole's model (as explicated by Carson) does not merely serve as a proper basis for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture; it also provides a helpful grid against which a proper definition and method of biblical theology can be assessed. There is no getting beyond Gabler's distinction, I am afraid. We must be careful to maintain the proper distinction between biblical and systematic theology.⁹⁸

task there remains, constantly and necessarily, a second one, the doctrinal task, through which we align ourselves with the teachings of the New Testament and clarify whether or not and how and why we accept those teachings into our own spiritual lives, so that they are not only truth for the New Testament community, but also for us personally. The distinction between these two activities thus turns out to be beneficial for both. Distortions in the perception of the subject also harm its appropriation, just as conversely improper procedures in the appropriation of the subject muddy its perception" (*History of the Christ*, 18).

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 24; Downers Grove: IVP, 2008).

⁹⁶ Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 66–67. Scobie helpfully comments on the needed distinction between BT and ST, along with any other ancillary discipline: "Dogmatic [or systematic] theology is the final stage in the movement from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the interpreter. Professional theologians ought to be the servants of the church, continually aiding it in its thought and reflection on how biblical norms are to be applied in the contemporary situation." Scobie also believes that the ever-increasing degree of specialization in the discipline of biblical theology is good to a degree, but if biblical theology is to serve as a legitimate bridge discipline, then more work needs to be done in opening up communication between the various theological disciplines.

⁹⁷ Carson, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But . . ."

⁹⁸ By urging a continuing distinction between biblical and systematic theology, I am in no way seeking to dispute the continuing viability of systematic theology. See on this the recent essay by R. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, "In Defense of Proof-Texting," *JETS* 54 (2011): 589–606. They analyze the work of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin and urge disciplinary symbiosis with theology and exegesis working hand in hand and side by side. However, while I understand the authors' desire to defend the legitimacy of systematic theology, I do not entirely agree with their criticism of the essay by D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 89–104.

3. Conclusion

The past decade and a half has witnessed a tremendous amount of progress in evangelical scholarship on biblical theology. Works such as G. K. Beale's *New Testament Biblical Theology* bear witness to the considerable degree of sophistication to which at least some of the evangelical practitioners of biblical theology have attained. The emergence of three new series, the New Studies in Biblical Theology (NSBT; currently 29 vols. and with more underway), the Biblical Theology of the New Testament (BTNT; 8 vols.), and the Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation series (BTCP; 40 vols.), published by InterVarsity, Zondervan, and B&H Academic, respectively, further attests to the vitality and continuing promise of the discipline.

At the same time, there remains a need for scholars to be precise in defining what they mean when they claim to engage in biblical-theological work and to carefully distinguish between biblical and systematic theology. The notion of the biblical metanarrative, in particular, holds considerable promise in anchoring the future of biblical theology. Nevertheless, it will be important not to lose sight of the contribution of individual books of the Bible and of the variety of interrelated major and minor scriptural motifs. Biblical theology should remain a discipline where we would rather leave some loose ends untied than forcing them into a straitjacket and where interpreters are willing to heed the motto attributed to Albert Einstein, one of the most famous scientists of the past century: "Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler."⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Thanks are due Jeremy Kimble for his diligent note-taking and argument-condensing assistance and Mark Catlin for his help in grouping and categorizing recent biblical-theological works. Thanks also to the students in the NT Theology seminar at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary for many stimulating discussions on the subject in general and on the biblical theologies by Hamilton and Beale in particular.

Music, Singing, and Emotions: Exploring the Connections

— Rob Smith —

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1. Introduction

Music, singing and emotions: what are the connections? The question is by no means new, but it's certainly one that has received renewed attention in recent times. Of particular interest is the power of music to foster emotional health and psychosocial well-being. For example, in his *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, Neurologist Oliver Sacks not only explores the pathologies of musical response from a clinical point of view, but also provides a deeply personal and moving account of the role that music played in lifting him out of depression after the death of his mother. Sacks writes:

For weeks I would get up, dress, drive to work, see my patients, try to present a normal appearance. But inside I was dead, as lifeless as a zombie. Then one day as I was walking down Bronx Park East, I felt a sudden lightening, a quickening of mood, a sudden whisper or intimation of life, of joy. Only then did I realize that I was hearing music, though so faintly it might have been no more than an image or memory. As I continued to walk, the music grew louder, until finally I came to its source, a radio pouring Schubert out of an open basement window. The music pierced me, releasing a cascade of images and feelings—memories of childhood, of summer holidays together and of my mother's fondness for Schubert . . . I found myself not only smiling for the first time in weeks, but laughing aloud—and alive once again.¹

The fact that music and singing have a profound ability to both impact and express human emotions will not come as a surprise to many. Common experience confirms the connection, as does the biblical witness. 'Is anyone cheerful?', writes James. 'Let him sing songs of praise' (James 5:13 ESV).

However, when one starts to probe into the precise connections between music, singing and the emotions and asks a seemingly innocent question like, How can a piece of music be both expressive of emotion and also generate emotion in human beings?, we suddenly find that we have entered a

¹O. Sacks, *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* (London: Picador, 2007), 298.

realm where a number of distinct disciplines intersect. For example, musicology, psychology, neurology, biology, anthropology, philosophy and theology all have an interest in such questions and (on their better days) provide complementary accounts and partial answers. But (on their worse days) they provide competing accounts that simply increase the level of crosstalk and confusion.

So how should we proceed in trying to understand the connections between music, singing and emotion? My approach in this essay is threefold. *Firstly*, I wish to offer some reflections on the world that God has made, drawing on some of the less controversial findings of various musicological, psychological and neurobiological studies. *Secondly*, I will offer some reflections on the word that God has spoken, exploring some of the links we find between music, singing and emotions in the Old and New Testaments. *Thirdly*, I want to offer some reflections on the history of Christian thought, drawing on the insights of a number of theologians who have wrestled with these matters—despite coming to differing conclusions.

1.1. Definitions

But before going further, I need to define how I am using the three terms ‘music’, ‘singing’ and ‘emotion’.

Music. Music can be variously defined from a range of different perspectives. For example, it can be defined *phenomenologically*; that is, in terms of it being an organised arrangement of sounds and silences. Or it can be defined *functionally*; that is, in terms of it being a communicative activity that conveys moods to the listener. Or it can be defined *culturally*; that is, by taking account of the fact that the line between what is regarded as music and what is regarded as noise changes over time and varies from culture to culture. Without disputing the value of any and all of these definitions, in this essay I am simply using it to refer to music that has no lyrical content; that is, by ‘music’ I mean ‘instrumental music’.

Singing. My definition of singing follows from this. By ‘singing’ I mean more than the activity of making musical sounds with the human voice. That is an entirely legitimate activity and a valid way of defining ‘singing’. It is not, however, how I am using the term. By singing I mean the musical communication of words that have meaning at least to the person singing them, if not to the person or persons hearing them as well. It is in that sense that I am distinguishing music from song.

Emotion. Here again there are many possible definitions (depending on whether one thinks of emotions as primarily cognitive or primarily non-cognitive or as some combination of the two).² I am using the word in a fairly unsophisticated way to cover a broad range of perceptions, expressions of feeling (like joy or grief) and the related bodily changes that normally accompany such feelings (like smiling or crying). The question I am pursuing, then, may be expressed thus: How do music and song influence and express such perceptions and reactions?

1.2. Limitations

Before we turn to the first part of our study, let me briefly mention some of things that this essay will not attempt do. *Firstly*, I will not attempt to identify (let alone discuss) the many functions of music and singing in general human experience—such as their ability to help us remember events and words—or the many purposes that music and singing serve in the gatherings of God’s people—such as their ability

² For a useful and informed discussion of the debate between cognitive and non-cognitive theories of emotion see M. Elliott, *Faithful Feelings: Emotion in the New Testament* (Leicester: IVP, 2005) pp. 18–42.

to unite people and express fellowship. *Secondly*, I will not attempt to provide a survey of everything that the Bible has to say about music and singing—as valuable as that would be.³ *Thirdly*, I will make no reference to the many different types of music and song that have arisen and been utilized in Church history, nor make any assessment of which types of music or styles of singing are best suited to Christian use.⁴

2. Soundings from the World That God Has Made

With these things understood, let us embark on an exercise in sanctified natural theology (or, more accurately, natural anthropology) to see what we can learn from the world that God has made.

2.1. Music and Emotions

How do we begin to account for the fact that music can both express and arouse emotion? Stephen Davies, a philosopher at the University of Auckland with an interest in the aesthetics of art, suggests that the connection lies in what he calls ‘Appearance emotionalism.’⁵ That is, music appears to be sad (for example) in the same way that a weeping willow looks sad. Because the tree is bent over, it appears to resemble a person who is racked with grief. Davies puts it like this: ‘The resemblance that counts most for music’s expressiveness [. . .] is between music’s temporally unfolding dynamic structure and configurations of human behaviour associated with the expression of emotion.’⁶

So, to continue the example above, music can recall an appearance of sadness by a gradual downward movement, or by utilizing underlying patterns of unresolved tension, or by employing dark timbres, or thick harmonic bass textures.⁷ Clearly, Davies is onto something here. Indeed, it is well known that minor keys and slow tempos tend to express and evoke sadness, just as major keys and fast tempos tend to express and evoke happiness. However, I have deliberately said ‘tend to’ because the ‘expressiveness’ of a piece of music is largely ‘response dependent’—that is, it is realized in the listener’s response. And not all listeners have the same response. For perceptions of similarity are not always shared. One person may see them and so be deeply moved by a piece of music, while another may miss them altogether and be quite unaffected.

Nevertheless, the fact that many listeners have a similar response to the same piece of music, suggests that there must be some objective component to its emotional expressiveness, even though the same emotions are not always subjectively experienced by all listeners in the same way. The reason for the variation is simple: not only is each listener unique, but music is never heard in a vacuum. Jeremy

³For those interested, a detailed survey can be found in D. A. Foxvog & A. D. Kilmer, ‘Music’ in G. W. Bromiley et al. (eds.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1986), pp. 436–449.

⁴To my mind, the most accessible treatment of the history of Christian music can be found in A. Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel, An Authoritative Illustrated Guide to All the Major Traditions of Music for Worship* (Oxford: Lion, 1992).

⁵S. Davies, ‘Artistic Expression and the Hard Case of Pure Music’, in M. Kieren (ed), *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 179–91.

⁶Ibid., p. 181.

⁷Ibid., p. 182.

Begbie from Duke Divinity School (who, as well as being a systematic theologian, is a trained musician with a particular interest in the interface between theology and the arts) explains why:

[M]usic is never heard on its own but as part of a perceptual complex that includes a range of non-musical phenomena: for example, the physical setting in which we hear the music, memories of people associated with it, artificial images (as in the case of film and video), words (the lyrics of a song, program notes, the title of a piece, what someone said about the piece on the radio), and so on . . . Music is perceived in a manifold environment. And this generates a fund of material for us to be emotional 'about'.⁸

But alongside these associations, there is now a growing body of literature stemming from a range of neurobiological studies showing how emotional responses to music have a direct effect on our hormone levels. For example, some music can increase levels of melatonin (which can help to induce sleep) and likewise decrease levels of cortisol (the hormone associated with stress).⁹

In addition to this, a number of neuroimaging studies have mapped the effects of music on the paralimbic regions of the brain, regions that are associated with our capacity to process and express emotion. As these regions are stimulated by music, the net effect is a highly therapeutic one for both mind and body. Dr Randall McClellan explains why:

Emotions that are not expressed when they are felt may be turned inward where they can add stress to weakened parts of the body. When the stress is prolonged our natural ability to resist disease is impaired and illness may ensue [. . .] When used regularly, music is an effective vehicle for the dissipation of normal day-to-day emotional stress. But in times of intense emotional crisis, music can focus and guide emotional release by bringing the emotion to catharsis and providing it with the means of expression.¹⁰

2.2. Singing and Emotions

So clearly there is much to be said for the healing effects of music. But what happens when we bring the human voice into the picture? How does singing both express and evoke emotion? Here again theories abound, and various insights can be gleaned from a number of disciplines.

What is incontrovertible is that voice is 'an essential aspect of human identity: of who we are, how we feel, how we communicate, and how other people experience us'.¹¹ It is also clear that the human voice has the capacity to convey emotion in a range of different ways—through changes in pitch, contour, volume, etc. It is also significant that the six primary human emotions—fear, anger, joy, sadness, surprise, and disgust—are all usually expressed vocally,¹² and are likewise differentiated by strong vocal

⁸ J. S. Begbie, 'Faithful Feelings' in J. S. Begbie & S. R. Guthrie (eds.) *Resonant Witness: Conversations between Music and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), p. 339.

⁹ L. Heslet, 'Our Musical Brain', p. 5, at <<http://www.saludart.com/sys/upload/Heslet.pdf>>, accessed 12/9/11.

¹⁰ R. McClellan, *The Healing Forces of Music: History, Theory, and Practice*. iUniverse.com, Inc, 2000, p. 146.

¹¹ G. F. Welch, 'Singing as Communication' in *Musical Communication* (eds. D. Miell, R. A. R. MacDonald & D. J. Hargreaves). Oxford: OUP, 2005, p. 245.

¹² I. Titze, *Principles of Voice Production*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1994.

acoustic variation.¹³ As Dr Graham Welch from the University of London puts it: 'Each of these basic emotions has a characteristic vocal acoustic signature and an acoustic profile that is associated with a strong characteristic emotional state.'¹⁴ In other words, even if we do not understand the words that someone is saying or singing, it is usually fairly obvious what emotion is being conveyed.

Added to all this, and this the main point that I want to highlight, is the fact that when we sing, we usually sing words with meanings, and those words not only facilitate the communication of the *cognitive content* of the song, but the singing of them helps communicate the *emotional content* of the song as well. More than that, the fact that we are singing these words (or hearing them sung) also helps us to feel an emotion appropriate to the words we are singing (or hearing).

This truth was captured beautifully and succinctly by the late Yip Harburg—the man who wrote the lyrics for all the songs in *The Wizard of Oz*, including the hauntingly evocative classic, 'Over the rainbow'. What Harburg famously said was this: 'Words make you think a thought; music makes you feel a feeling; a song makes you feel a thought.' The physiological reality behind this observation, as a number of neuroimaging studies have now shown, is that whilst the majority of sensorimotor processes for singing and speaking are the same, singing engages parts of our brain (particularly in the right hemisphere) that speaking alone does not.¹⁵ This is why singing is a unique activity not only for expressing and conveying emotion, but also for processing the emotional dimensions of cognitive thought.

It is not surprising, then, that people who have experienced great trauma can sometimes find it very difficult to sing—for singing threatens to awaken their emotional processes, which they have deliberately shut down in order to protect themselves from the full horror of what they have experienced. But it is also why singing can function as a very effective means of gently releasing suppressed emotions and of helping people to process the truth and reality behind their inner pain.

My positive point here, however, is simply that *singing* not only helps us to engage the emotional dimensions of our humanity, but that singing *truth* helps us to engage with the emotional dimensions of reality, thus helping to bridge the gap between cognitive knowledge and experiential knowledge. This is a point we will return to below.

3. Soundings from the Word That God Has Spoken

Moving now from the world that God has made (and what can be observed by various natural anthropological means), we turn to the word that God has spoken. What can we learn from God's special revelation in Scripture about the connections between music, singing and our emotions? We begin with some soundings from the Old Testament.

3.1. The Old Testament

The first thing the Old Testament reveals is a profound link between the joy that results from experiencing God's salvation and the making of music and the singing of songs. We see this first in Exodus 15 where after the LORD has rescued the people of Israel from the Egyptian army, Miriam takes

¹³ K. R. Scherer, 'Expression of Emotion in Voice and Music' in *Journal of Voice* 9:3, pp. 235–248.

¹⁴ G. F. Welch, 'Singing as Communication', p. 247.

¹⁵ E. Özdemir, A. Norton & G. Schlaug, 'Shared and Distinct Neural Correlates of Singing and Speaking' in *Neuroimage* 33 (2006), p. 633.

a tambourine in hand (v. 20) and as all the women follow her with tambourines and dancing, she sings to them saying:

Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. (Exod. 15:21, ESV)

And so the beginning of the chapter tells us that Moses and the people of Israel followed suit, singing to the Lord, saying:

1 . . . I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
2 The LORD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him. (Exod. 15:1b-2, ESV)

As John Durham points out, this celebration of 'Yahweh present *with* his people and doing *for* them as no other god anywhere and at any time *can* be present to do [. . .] is a kind of summary of the theological base of the whole Book of Exodus.'¹⁶ For that reason, 'it is more than merely a hymn of Yahweh's victory over Pharaoh and his Egyptians in the sea.'¹⁷ Indeed its primary focus is on the kind of God the LORD is, and the kind of things he does, and the kind of response that this creates. In that sense, it is paradigmatic. Not surprisingly, then, other Scriptures pick up these very same themes and forge the same connections—most notably Isaiah 12:

1 You will say in that day:
'I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.
2 'Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD God is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.'
3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
4 And you will say in that day:
'Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.
5 Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.
6 Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.' (Isa. 12:1–6, ESV)

¹⁶ J. I. Durham, *Exodus*, (WBC 3; Waco: Word, 1987), p. 210. Emphasis original.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

As Barry Webb points out in his commentary, '[t]he singing in this chapter follows in the same way that the song of Exodus 15 followed the original exodus.'¹⁸ In fact, the words in Isaiah 12:2—'God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation'—are almost an exact quotation of Exodus 15:2. And the beginning of v. 5—'Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously'—clearly echoes Exodus 15:21.

The simple message here is this: *where there is salvation there is joy and where there is joy there is singing*. They follow one another as night follows day and day follows night. For as people are taken from an experience of slavery to an experience of redemption, from an experience of God's anger to an experience of his comfort, from a place of fear to a place of trust, they have every reason to rejoice. And out of their joy they sing and make music.¹⁹

Precisely the same connections are seen in the book of Psalms. The opening verses of Psalm 98 is just one of many similar examples:

- 1 Oh sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things!
His right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.
- 2 The LORD has made known his salvation;
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.
- 3 He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.
- 4 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!
- 5 Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody!
- 6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD! (Ps. 98:1–6, ESV)

However, it is not just joy and gladness that can be expressed in music and song, but grief and anguish as well. This is seen particularly in the book of Psalms where almost half of the Psalter is made up of psalms that are laments—either in whole or in part. The value of such laments, as Walter Brueggemann points out, is that they are completely honest about the fact that 'our common experience is not one of well-being and equilibrium, but a churning disruptive experience of dislocation and relocation.'²⁰ And the relevance of these Psalms to this study is that they, like the rest of the Psalter, were all intended to be sung—either by the congregation or by the Levitical choir.²¹

¹⁸ B. G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah* (Leicester: IVP, 1996), p. 77.

¹⁹ J. A. Motyer, in his commentary on these verses, helpfully speaks of the phenomenon of song as 'an inner welling up of joy.' See J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), p. 129.

²⁰ W. Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2007), p. 7.

²¹ B. W. Anderson, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p. 32.

So, for example, Psalm 5—which begins: ‘Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry’—is addressed to the Choirmaster and contains the instruction, ‘For the flutes.’ Psalm 6—which begins: ‘O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing’—is likewise addressed to the Choirmaster with an instruction that it be played with stringed instruments. In fact, most of the better known lament psalms—like Psalm 13, Psalm 22, Psalm 42, Psalm 51, Psalm 69 and Psalm 88—are all addressed ‘to the Choirmaster.’

However, the members of the temple congregation were far from passive spectators. They were not simply sung to by the choir. As John Kleinig in his study of the place of choral music in Chronicles points out: ‘The choir addressed them directly and invited them to join in its praise (1 Chron. 16:8–13). The congregation did so by responding with certain stereotyped words and refrains (1 Chron. 16:36b). It thereby became an active partner in praise.’²²

The obvious point to be made from this is that the people of Israel were encouraged and instructed to sing not only in their times of joy, but also in their times of grief. And the importance of lament (that is, of vocalizing grief in song) is that it helps to facilitate the transition from ‘disorientation’ to ‘reorientation’ (or ‘dislocation’ to ‘relocation’), to use Brueggeman’s parallel terms. In other words, lament is productive—or, at least, it ought to be. The purpose of expressing our fears and failures, our darkness and distress, and particularly doing so in song, is to help us process our emotional pain and so bring us to a point of praise. This is clear not only from the shape of numerous individual Psalms which begin with lament and end with praise (e.g., Pss. 3–7), but from the shape of the entire Psalter—with the laments dominating the earlier books and the praises dominating more and more in the latter books, particularly in the final five Psalms (Pss. 146–150).²³

So there is much for us to learn here. Karl Kuhn focuses the chief lesson when he says: ‘As paradigms of faith and piety, the Psalms champion the affective dimension of devotion to and trust in God as elicited by the story of God’s care for Israel.’²⁴ And my point is that this ‘affective dimension’ to authentic faith is, quite intentionally and by divine design, linked to music and song.

3.2. The New Testament

When we come to the New Testament, the first thing to note is the emotional dimension of the Spirit’s fruit and the Spirit’s role, therefore, in bringing us to emotional maturity. That is, most (if not all) of the fruit of the Spirit listed by Paul in Galatians 5, whilst clearly not being exclusively emotional in nature, and profoundly practical and relational in their outworking, nonetheless have an irreducible

²² J. W. Kleinig, *The Lord’s Song: The Basis, Function, and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), p. 95.

²³ W. McConnell, ‘Worship’ in T. Longman III & P. Enns (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), p. 931. This general movement, from lament to praise, would seem to be a function of the way the Psalter has been structured to follow the historical progression of Israelite kingship, beginning with David’s experience of persecution in the time of Saul (Book I) and ending with the post-exilic hope of redeemed existence under a new Davidic king (Book V). For an insightful discussion of the purpose and shape of the Psalter, which pays particular attention to the structural significance of the kingship theme, see A. E. Hill and J. H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), pp. 346–351.

²⁴ K. A. Kuhn, *The Heart of Biblical Narrative: Rediscovering Biblical Appeal to the Emotions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), p. 9

emotional component to them.²⁵ Furthermore, learning to bear such fruit is part and parcel of the process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) or growing up into Christ (Eph. 4:15). And this clearly involves growing up emotionally as part of the package.²⁶ Jeremy Begbie puts the point well: ‘Through the Spirit, we are given the priceless opportunity of—to put it simply—growing up emotionally: having our emotions purged of sin and stretched, shaped, and reshaped.’²⁷

But does this have anything to do with music and song? Begbie certainly thinks so. In fact, he immediately follows the preceding statement with this one: ‘It is perhaps in worship and prayer, when we engage with God directly and consciously, that this will be (or ought to be) most evident.’²⁸ In a more recent essay he makes his thought even more explicit: ‘[M]usic is particularly well suited to being a vehicle of emotional renewal in worship, a potent instrument through which the Holy Spirit can begin to remake and transform us in the likeness of Christ, the one true worshipper.’²⁹

But the question for many is: Does the New Testament ever make this connection? I believe so. And the place where it does is Ephesians 5:18–21:

¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,
¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:18–21, ESV).

Now a detailed exegesis of these verses will not be attempted here. For our purposes, the key issue turns on the relationship between the command in v. 18 (‘be filled with or by the Spirit’)³⁰ and the five participles in vv. 19–21 (‘addressing,’ ‘singing,’ ‘making melody,’ ‘giving thanks’ and ‘submitting’). It is commonly argued that these five participles are best understood as ‘result participles.’³¹ That is, when a church is filled by the Spirit these will be the results. This reading is certainly possible, both grammatically and theologically, and its implication—that singing is one of key indicators of a Spirit-filled church—has considerable historical support.³²

²⁵ R. C. Roberts, *Spirituality and Human Emotions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1982, p. 12. Matthew Elliott makes this point strongly in his study of joy in the New Testament. Indeed he laments the either/or approach of those who see joy as either essentially cognitive or essentially emotional, speaking of its ‘essential cognitive emotional nature’ (M. Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*, p. 181).

²⁶ J. S. Begbie, ‘Faithful Feelings,’ p. 353.

²⁷ J. S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, p. 303.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

²⁹ J. S. Begbie, ‘Faithful Feelings,’ p. 353.

³⁰ Paul’s language suggests that the Spirit is the *instrument* of filling rather than as the *content* of the filling. For the grammatical arguments that lead to this conclusion see H. W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), p. 703; P. T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Leicester: Apollos, 1999), pp. 391–393.

³¹ See, for example, the arguments listed by O’Brien, *Ephesians*, p. 387, n. 107.

³² Grammatically, either a ‘means’ reading or a ‘result’ reading is possible. Interestingly, Daniel Wallace rejects the ‘means’ reading on theological grounds. He believes ‘it would be almost inconceivable to see this text suggesting that the way in which one is to be Spirit-filled is by a five-step, partially mechanical formula!’ (D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], p. 639). However, this is not only a caricature of the ‘means’ reading (for the participles are neither a formula nor are they mechanical) but also begs

However, I believe there is stronger case to be made for understanding the participles of vv. 19–21 as ‘means participles’; that is, Paul is here identifying the means by which he expects his readers to carry out his exhortation to be filled by the Spirit. What I am suggesting, then, is that, like the commands to ‘walk by the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:16) or to ‘let the word of Christ dwell in your richly,’ being filled by the Spirit is not a matter of ‘letting go and letting God,’ but (as v. 17 says) a matter of understanding the will of the Lord and then doing that will.³³ So Paul does not leave his readers to guess how his command is to be carried out. He spells it out in detail: we are to address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we are to sing and make melody to the Lord with our hearts,³⁴ we are to give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and we are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. These are the means (according to this passage at least) by which the Spirit fills the church with the fullness of God in Christ (Eph. 3:19, 4:13).³⁵

So to draw the obvious conclusion, singing and making music are vital means not only of addressing one another with the word of God (thereby edifying the church) and making melody to the Lord (thereby praising our Saviour), but of being filled with or by the Spirit and so growing up into Christ.³⁶ And that (as I have suggested) includes coming to emotional maturity in Christ. As Jeremy Begbie expresses it: ‘To grow up into Christ is to grow up emotionally as much as anything else, and carefully chosen music in worship may have a larger part to play than we have yet imagined.’³⁷

4. Soundings from the History of Christian Reflection

We now turn, finally, to take some quick soundings from the history of Christian reflection on these matters.

the question, Why is such a reading more inconceivable than his own suggestion that the participles provide ‘the way in which one measures his/her success in fulfilling the command of 5:18’ (p. 639)?

³³ Indeed the means reading of Ephesians 5:18–21 is strengthened by a comparison with Colossians 3:16, where singing is clearly the means by which the word of Christ richly indwells the church (see P. T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* [WBC 44; Waco: Word, 1982], p. 208. For to be indwelt by the word of Christ (both personally and corporately) is not a different experience from being ‘filled by the Spirit’; Christ’s person is not separate from his word, nor is he separate from his Spirit. Indeed it is by the Spirit that Christ himself dwells in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17). Therefore, as we sing to the word of Christ to one another, ‘with gratitude in our hearts to God,’ we are not only instructed and made wise, but we have a greater experience as a community of what it means to be filled full in Christ, in whom ‘the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily’ (Col. 2:9–10).

³⁴ As Andrew Lincoln rightly points out, the ‘heart’ refers to the believer’s ‘innermost being [. . .] where the Spirit himself resides (cf. 3:16, 17, where the Spirit in the inner person is equivalent to Christ in the heart)’ (see A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* [WBC 42; Waco: Word, 1990], p. 346).

³⁵ As Timothy Gombis puts it: ‘The church is to be the temple of God, the fullness of Christ by the Spirit by being the community that speaks God’s word to one another, sings praises to the Lord, renders thanksgiving to God for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and lives in relationships characterized by mutual submission.’ T. G. Gombis, ‘Being the Fullness of God in Christ by the Spirit: Ephesians 5:18 in its Epistolary Setting’ (*TynB* 53.2, 2002), p. 271. Emphasis original.

³⁶ See further, R. Smith, ‘Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs: What are They and Why Sing Them?’ (*CASE* 23, 2010), pp. 26–29.

³⁷ J. S. Begbie, ‘Faithful Feelings,’ p. 353.

4.1. Cautious Concern

Firstly, let me give you two examples of ‘great ones’ who have expressed a ‘cautious concern’ about the power of music and song.

Augustine. In his famous *Confessions*, Augustine is not short of things to say about music and singing—and most of it is extremely positive. Indeed he claims that when sacred words are combined with pleasant music then, ‘our souls (*animos*) are moved and are more religiously and with a warmer devotion kindled to piety than if they are not so sung.’³⁸ In other words, Augustine recognised and appreciated that when our emotions are moved by a song, the effect is not only felt in a warmer heart, but also expressed in an enhanced desire to please God. He continues:

When I remember the tears which I poured out at the time when I was first recovering my faith, and that now I am moved not by the chant but by the words being sung, when they are sung with a clear voice and entirely appropriate modulation, then again I recognize the great utility of music in worship.³⁹

At the same time Augustine was reluctant to give singing his unqualified blessing. Indeed he claimed to ‘fluctuate between the danger of pleasure and the experience of the beneficent effect’ of singing.⁴⁰ He was particularly concerned about the danger of being so carried along by the music of the song that he would become impervious to the words being sung. Here is what he says: ‘Yet when it happens to me that the music moves me more than the subject of the song, I confess myself to commit a sin deserving of punishment, and then I would prefer not to have heard the singer.’⁴¹

John Calvin. The same kind of ambivalence appears in John Calvin. On the one hand, Calvin readily acknowledged the value of singing the Psalms (and also some of the Bible’s other songs), for the reason that they ‘stimulate us to raise our hearts to God and arouse us to an ardour in invoking as well as in exalting with praises, the glory of his name.’⁴² Indeed, in his 1537 *Articles Concerning the Organisation of the Church*, he makes the singing of Psalms obligatory!⁴³ On the other hand, he too was qualified in his endorsement of singing. His reason for caution is that ‘music has a secret and incredible power to move our hearts. When evil words are accompanied by music, they penetrate more deeply and the poison enters as wine through a funnel into a vat.’⁴⁴

Admittedly, Calvin’s primary concern here is with ‘evil words’—that is, untruth—and so presumably he would not object to hearts being moved by the truth. But even when the words are good we are not out of danger. For, like Augustine, Calvin warns: ‘We should be very careful that our ears be not more

³⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, X, xxxiii. 49 (trans. Henry Chadwick; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 207.

³⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, X, xxxiii, 50, p. 208.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, X, xxxiii, 50, p. 208.

⁴¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, X, xxxiii, 50, p. 208.

⁴² J. Calvin, *Articles for the Organisation of the Church* (1537), cited in Charles Garside, Jr. ‘The Origins of Calvin’s Theology of Music: 1536–1543’ in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (69:4, 1979), p. 10.

⁴³ R. W. Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin’s First Commentaries* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 256.

⁴⁴ Cited in H. R. Van Til, *The Calvinist Concept of Culture* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1972), p. 110.

attentive to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words.’⁴⁵ For this reason, Calvin also has a concern about the intentions and purposes of both those who write songs and those who choose them, and likewise how and why they are sung. It is this concern that lies behind his comment that the singing of songs is a ‘most holy and salutary practice’ when it is done properly, but ‘such songs as have been composed only for sweetness and delight of the ear are unbecoming to the majesty of the church and cannot but displease God in the highest degree.’⁴⁶

4.2. Enthusiastic Embrace

Others, however, have been considerably more enthusiastic about the benefits of music and singing, and significantly less nervous about its dangers.

Martin Luther. Luther was a great lover of music and himself an accomplished musician. He was also greatly appreciative of music’s capacity to produce a variety of emotional dispositions. As he says:

Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. She is a mistress and governess of those human emotions [. . .] which control men or more often overwhelm them [. . .] Whether you wish to comfort the sad, to subdue frivolity, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate or to appease those full of hate [. . .] what more effective means than music could you find.⁴⁷

However, it was not music in itself that was Luther’s primary interest, but music as a vehicle for praising God and proclaiming his word. In other words, in Luther’s estimation singing is ‘word ministry’, and although not a substitute for the preached word, it is a complement to the preached word and a form of word ministry with added emotional power.

Music is a vehicle for proclaiming the Word of God [. . . T]he gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [God’s word] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words.⁴⁸

In fact, in Luther’s estimation, music was so important to life in general and to ministry in particular, that he did not believe that one should become a teacher or a preacher without some musical skill. To quote:

I always love music; who so has skill in this art, is of a good temperament, fitted for all things. We must teach music in schools; a schoolmaster ought to have skill in music, or I would not regard him. Neither should we ordain young men as preachers, unless they have been well exercised in music.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, XX, 32 (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), p. 895.

⁴⁶ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, XX, 32, p. 896.

⁴⁷ M. Luther, ‘Preface to Georg Rhau’s *Symphonoiaeiucundae*’ (1538) in J. Pelikan & H. T. Lehmann (eds.), *Luther’s Works* (55 vols.; trans. C. M. Jacobs; rev. E. W. Gritsch; Saint Louis/Philadelphia: Concordia/Fortress, 1955–86, vol. 53), p. 323.

⁴⁸ M. Luther, ‘Preface to Georg Rhau’s *Symphonoiaeiucundae*’ (1538), pp. 321, 323–324.

⁴⁹ M. Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther* (trans. and ed. William Hazlitt; London: H. G. Bohn, 1857), p. 340.

Jonathan Edwards. As is well known Edwards had a very high regard for singing, believing that, 'Tis plain from the Scripture that it is the tendency of true grace to cause persons very much to delight in such religious exercises.'⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, Edwards often preached on singing, and in a sermon on Colossians 3:16, argued that 'the ends of it are two: to excite religious and holy affection, and secondly to manifest it.'⁵¹ In his *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, Edwards expands on these points as follows:

[T]he duty of *singing* praises to God, seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No other reason can be assigned, why we should express ourselves to God in verse, rather than in prose, and do it with music, but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move our affections.⁵²

Now it must be said (and has often been pointed out) that Edwards's idea of affections should not be equated with modern concepts of emotions (particularly the non-cognitive variety). However, it is a mistake to think that Edwards's understanding of the affections excludes an emotional dimension. To the contrary, true affection, for Edwards, has a necessary emotional component. On this point Edwards is crystal clear: 'There is a distinction to be made between a mere *notional understanding*, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and the *sense of the heart*, wherein the mind don't [*sic*] only *speculate* and *behold*, but *relishes* and *feels*.'⁵³

So to return to the key point: the purpose of singing, in Edwards's estimation, is to excite and express such affections.

5. Conclusions

What conclusions should be drawn from this study? I am tempted simply to say 'those who have ears to hear, let them hear.' But I should probably say a little more about the implications of all this for personal growth and for implications for church life.

5.1. Implications for Personal Growth

On the personal front, let me say this: If music and singing are important to you (particularly singing to and of the Lord) and if you find they not only bring you joy but also great comfort, then you are not alone. In fact, you stand in a long line of saints who share the same sense of gratitude for such gifts and abilities and have experienced the same sense of release and reorientation that comes through singing the word of God. This is normal. This is healthy. This is scriptural. This is good.

⁵⁰ J. Edwards, 'A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections,' in *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. E. Hickman; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, ³1974, Vol. 1), p. 255.

⁵¹ J. Edwards, '398. Col. 3:16,' in *Sermons, Series II, 1736* in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Vol. 51* (ed. Jonathan Edwards Center; Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University) at <http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaglsby9nZXRvYmplY3QucGw/Yy40OToyNS53amVv>, accessed 12/9/11.

⁵² Edwards, 'Religious Affections,' p. 242. Emphasis original. Edwards defines 'affections' as 'the more vigorous and *sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul*' (p. 237). Emphasis original.

⁵³ Edwards, 'Religious Affections,' p. 283. Emphasis original.

Now, of course, we are not all the same. We have different bodies, different brains, different personalities and differing emotional responses to most things. What is more, we have different musical tastes. But my encouragement to one and all (but particularly to those who see themselves as ‘musically challenged’) is to make the best use you can of the gifts of music that God has either given to you, or placed around you. And, in particular, learn to use the voice that God has given you, to sing to him and of him. Luther’s encouragement on this score is worth heeding:

Music is one of the best arts; the notes give life to the text; it expels melancholy, as we see in king Saul. Kings and princes ought to maintain music, for great potentates and rulers should protect good and liberal arts and laws; though private people have desire thereunto and love it, yet their ability is not adequate. We read in the Bible, that the good and godly kings maintained and paid singers. Music is the best solace for a sad and sorrowful mind; by it the heart is refreshed and settled again in peace.⁵⁴

In short, we should recognize the good gift that God has given us to nourish our emotional health and be open to Jeremy Begbie’s thought that music and singing may need to play a larger part in your Christian growth that you have hitherto allowed or imagined. It is one of the means that God has provided and that the Holy Spirit uses to help make us people who feel and respond in ways that please him.⁵⁵

5.2. Implications for Church Life

In terms of the implications for church life, it should be clear that music and singing whilst not of the *esse* (i.e., essence or being) of the church are vital for the *beneesse* (i.e., the health or well-being) of the church. So we would be foolish to neglect them—particularly when Scripture commends them so strongly. At the same time we must also be careful to protect them—for there is always the possibility of misusing music and song. As Jeremy Begbie astutely observes: ‘If the orientation is askew, or the emotion inappropriate, then manipulation, sentimentality, and emotional self-indulgence are among the ever-present dangers.’⁵⁶

But these dangers can be avoided and, indeed, must be avoided so that as we sing the living and life-giving word of God, music and song can fulfil their divinely appointed office of reintegrating and reorienting us both personally and corporately, binding us together in prayer and praise to God and drawing us out of ourselves and toward each other in genuine love and sympathy.⁵⁷

Voltaire supposedly once made a remark along the lines that ‘if it’s too silly to be said it can always be sung’—and no doubt examples could be multiplied to illustrate the validity of this observation. But if the thrust of my argument in this essay is correct, then I think we can and must say this: if it is important

⁵⁴ M. Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, pp. 340–341.

⁵⁵ S. Guthrie, ‘Singing in the Body and in the Spirit’ (*JETS* 46/4; December 2003), p. 643.

⁵⁶ J. Begbie, ‘Faithful Feelings’, p. 353.

⁵⁷ Stephen Guthrie puts it like this: ‘Music, of course, does not remake us; the Holy Spirit does. But it seems possible that music may be one means by which the Holy Spirit makes us people who feel and respond. We are brought to our senses. We are drawn out of the darkness of self-absorption and become aware of the world around us, our place within and responsibility to it. In song we move in a dance of sympathy with the others who are singing, and by the body are drawn out of ourselves and into the Body.’ S. Guthrie, ‘Singing in the Body and in the Spirit’, p. 643.

enough to be said, then it *could* (and in the right manner, time and place *should*) also be sung. Why? Because singing helps us to process and express not only the cognitive dimensions of truth but also the emotive dimensions as well. Such are the God-ordained connections between music, singing and the emotions.

The Writing Pastor: An Essay on Spiritual Formation

— Peter R. Schemm Jr. —

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Some of the most valuable and lasting contributions made to the Christian faith have come through Christian scholarship.¹ Indeed, the church has a rich heritage of those we may refer to as writing pastors—those who have served the church through the discipline and ministry of writing. They wrote to clarify doctrine, commend the gospel to unbelievers, and deepen the hearts and minds of the faithful. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards, and Bonhoeffer are my favorite writing pastors, each for different reasons. Perhaps no one embodies the spirit of the writing pastor better than Augustine. Reflecting on the importance of writing throughout his life and ministry, Augustine writes, “I am the sort of man who writes because he has made progress, and who makes progress—by writing.”²

Trained in the disciplines of reading, writing, and contemplation, each of the pastors mentioned above, like Augustine, seem to have written in order to make progress spiritually. Writing is a form of communication and, as such, it can extend and multiply the teaching ministry of a pastor. But that is not all that writing accomplishes. I am suggesting that the great writing pastors of old realized that something more foundational and personal was at stake in their ministries. Perhaps they practiced writing as a discipline—a spiritually formative discipline, even. I think we may safely assume that they did.

None of us will likely have the influence of Augustine or Luther or Bonhoeffer. But our writing still matters. It matters because it can help us to make progress in our own hearts and minds.

So as an exercise in pastoral ministry, we will explore some benefits that come to the soul of a pastor through the discipline of writing. These apply particularly to pastors but are not limited to the vocation of pastor. Each benefit is personal and formative: (1) depth of mind, (2) clarity of thought, (3) pace of life, (4) quiet and solitude, (5) the ministry of words, and (6) a life of prayer.

¹It would be a mistake to understand the essay’s title, “The Writing Pastor,” as “The Publishing Pastor.” That is not what I intend. I am not suggesting that every pastor ought to publish journal articles and books. I am suggesting that pastors write. Writing is a spiritual discipline that holds promise for all pastors. This should not, I think, be said of publishing.

²Augustine, as cited in Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (New York: Dorset, 1986), 353.

1. Depth of Mind

In his book *The Intellectual Life*, A. G. Sertillanges, a French theologian and philosopher, presents a way to think about thinking that is profoundly sacred. Sertillanges reflects on the virtues of the life of the mind. And in doing so, he introduces us to the vocation of deep thinking. This pursuit is “a sacred call”—a lifelong vocation. He calls it the “the deepening of the mind” because it “requires penetration and continuity and methodical effort, so as to attain a fullness of development which will correspond to the call of the Spirit, and to the resources that it has pleased Him to bestow on us.”³

Pastoral ministry, rightly conceived as a Spirit-led vocation, begins with the personal development of a pastor. The Spirit’s vocational assignment for pastors includes the life of the mind. The pastor is first a Christian who is, like any other follower of Jesus Christ, committed to the deepening of the mind. This depth of mind and heart is part of what Jesus was after when he replied to the Pharisee, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment” (Matt 22:37–38; cf. Rom 12:1–2).⁴

It is also, I believe, what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he instructed Timothy, “*think over* what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Tim 2:7). Paul told Timothy to think and reflect on his teaching—but not without an important assumption: it is “the Lord [who] will give you understanding in everything.” Effective pastoral ministry requires intentionally pursuing deep thinking that totally depends on God.

That’s where writing comes in. Writing helps to deepen the mind. Pursuing a deep mind, according to Sertillanges, requires “penetration and continuity and methodical effort.” And there is no better tool for intellectual spadework than a pen or pencil or keyboard. Writing, then, is a way to dig—a way to dig deep the well of the mind. Digging a well or excavating a reservoir requires penetration and continuity and methodical effort. Writing is uniquely suited to accomplish this work. When we write, we are excavating one sentence at a time. It may not look like much at first, but after a few days of digging, we begin to notice the depth of progress.

What the church needs today is deeply spiritual leaders. And a writing pastor is most often a deeper man than he would be otherwise. So whether in notes, letters, journal entries, articles, blogs, or sermon manuscripts, a pastor can practice deepening his own mind and soul through writing. This will, in time, deepen the souls of those to whom he ministers.

2. Clarity of Thought

A second way writing contributes to the formation of a pastor’s soul is by helping him to think clearly. A friend of mine explains it this way: “Writing helps me to crystallize my thoughts. When I have a hunch about something, it then helps to work it out in writing. The process helps to clarify and refine my thinking.” That is a helpful way to put it. When we write, we give definite form to what we have been turning over in our minds, enabling us to carefully investigate our own intuitions.

³ A. G. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life*, in *The Great Tradition* (ed. Robert M. Gamble; Wilmington: ISI, 2007), 573.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2011 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Francis Bacon captured well the idea of clarity through writing in his essay *Of Studies*:

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know, that he doth not.⁵

Writing helps us to think clearly because it forces us to be precise and exact—"and writing an exact man." The discipline of writing and rewriting is an invaluable formative process. As we write, things tend to get clearer. The fog lifts, and shadowy ideas turn bright and crisp.

Pastors ought to write because clarity of mind is a spiritual matter. When we pursue clarity of mind, we are, in a sense, pursuing God himself. We are, as image bearers, seeking to return to the clear state of mind we had before the fall (Gen 1:26–27). Our uniquely reasonable capacities to represent God have been distorted, and we often do not see clearly. We see dimly.

But we may hope to recover our sight through God's own written revelation. One of the most memorable passages in the Psalter describes Scripture as what enlightens the eyes of the mind: "The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes" (Ps 19:8b NIV). Because Scripture is radiant, it enlightens and helps us to see more clearly. The Vulgate helps us here in a way that most English translations do not. The key word is *lucidum* (Lat.): "The commands of the Lord are *clear*, giving light to the eyes." One of the effects of the written Word on those who believe is that it enables us to see clearly and not shadowy. A radiant clarity comes from God through Scripture. It dispels the darkness and improves our vision to see the things of God and man.

A pastor cannot afford to be a fuzzy thinker. The discipline of writing not only makes an "exact man," but it also makes a clear man—one in whom the clarity of the Word of God itself becomes increasingly evident.

3. *Pace of Life*

A third way that writing helps us is by requiring a particular pace of life, one that most of us are in the habit of outrunning. Writing requires a rhythm of life that is remarkably different than today's Google-text-tweet-global pace. Pastors, of all people, ought to consider their pace of life.

A scene from the film *The Shawshank Redemption* comes to mind. Brooks, the older man who has served for years as the penitentiary's librarian, is finally released from prison. He reticently leaves to reenter the world outside of Shawshank. Stepping off the bus for the first time and seeing automobiles and people moving all about him, he is greatly disturbed. Things have changed. He writes to his friends still in prison, saying, "The whole world went and got itself into a big d--- hurry!" What Brooks had at Shawshank was a rhythm of life and a place in community that had come to define him so much so that he couldn't *live* without it. He couldn't bear the pace of life outside of Shawshank. This is Red's (Morgan Freeman) point as he reads the suicide note that explains why Brooks decided to take his own life.

There is a pace of life that accords with godliness and that we also cannot live without. Writing helps us to find that particular pace of life. It helps us to find the rhythm of life God intends for us.

God made us to live in a world of days, weeks, months, and seasons—his world of sunrises and sunsets, of laws and rhythms. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. speaks of the biblical idea of *wisdom* as "the

⁵<http://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-50.html> (accessed November 22, 2011).

knowledge of God's world and the knack of fitting oneself into it."⁶ One who is wise has a knack for seeing and fitting into God's design of all things. He sees the rhythms of life and learns to ride them. He sees the deep grains and textures of the world and learns to appreciate the habits of its Maker.

One way to appreciate the habits of our Maker is to cultivate habits of our own. And writing is a particularly good habit. Writing requires rhythm and order; we must abide by certain literary rules and patterns. The ordering of these rules and patterns reflects the ultimate order that exists in God himself. The Word, or Logos, of the eternal God is the one from whom all ordered communication comes. I do not think it is a stretch, then, to say that the habit of writing serves well in the formation of the soul. It is a way of finding the rhythms and patterns of God through written communication.

Writing can be so helpful in finding a suitable pace of life because it slows us down. There is something terribly inefficient about writing. We hardly ever get it right the first time. Good writing takes time, patience, and another draft. It is by nature a humbling exercise. Bestselling author Anne Lamott captures this idea well in her book *Bird by Bird*.⁷ In a chapter on "Shoddy First Drafts," Lamott suggests that most good writing begins with poor first efforts.⁸ It is not until the second or third draft that writing begins to even approach a sense of elegance. To think otherwise, says Lamott, is "the fantasy of the uninitiated."⁹

If writing is such an inefficient—and even humbling—exercise for the "uninitiated," why should we spend our time doing it? Because it slows us down. And the practice of slowing is a good practice for busy souls.

There are some things we ought not to be so efficient about. Indeed, there are some things we should be anything but efficient about. We should not seek to worship God efficiently or love our children efficiently, should we?¹⁰ If we were to speak in those terms, we would be seen by others as anything but loving—and rightly so. When we practice the habit of writing, we learn to be something other than efficient. We learn to adjust our pace. We learn patience and the value of slowing down.

4. Quiet and Solitude

A fourth benefit that writing brings to the soul relates to peace and quiet, to silence and solitude. Living in a manner that promotes a peaceful and quiet life is a mark of godliness (1 Tim 2:2). Writing well requires both quiet and solitude. For some writers this means *silence* and solitude. For others it means *quiet* and solitude. In either case, the discipline of writing brings with it the benefits that come to us through a peaceful and quiet state of mind. To borrow a metaphor from Anselm of Canterbury, writing

⁶Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 115.

⁷Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (New York: Anchor, 1995).

⁸Lamott's chapter title actually employs a word other than "shoddy," but that is close enough; you get the idea.

⁹Lamott, *Bird by Bird*, 21.

¹⁰I am following Eugene Peterson and Ken Myers here. In a chapel lecture, Myers made this insightful observation about the effects of "efficient technology" on the life of the church following Peterson's lead. In particular, he pointed out that we should not seek to worship God efficiently as do many evangelicals today. See Ken Myers, "The Counter-Cultural Imperative for Christian Disciplers" (lecture given at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, March 26, 2009).

helps us to enter “the chamber of the mind” and “shut the door” in order to seek God.¹¹ Something happens there in the chamber of the mind that rarely, if ever, happens outside of it.

David McCullough, a respected historian and author of *Truman*, *John Adams*, and *1776*, appreciates the chamber of the mind. So much does he value it that he has a separate physical place, a chamber so to speak, that he enters for the express purpose of writing. And he goes there daily. McCullough speaks of walking from his house to his backyard writing studio as his daily commute. The writing studio is away from the house intentionally so that his grandchildren do not have to worry about making noise while he writes.¹²

Choosing to be alone is not easy for many of us, including pastors. We are not used to silence and solitude. We have been trained to fill our own worlds with noise and activity. We can't seem to live without cell phones, iPads, email, and HDTV. Dennis Okholm suggests a reason for this: “Perhaps it is not just the silence itself that frightens us. Perhaps we fill our world with noise because we are really afraid to face ourselves.”¹³ I think Okholm is on to something here. Silence frightens us because we don't know who we are apart from the noise. We would much rather find our identity in the noise or hide behind the noise than allow silence to bring us face to face with God or self.

There is something incredibly restorative about entering the chamber of the mind—about getting alone to think and to write. Something that makes us better shepherds to other busy souls. To be sure, quiet and solitude are requirements for most of us simply to accomplish the task of writing. We need to be alone to focus and clear our minds in order to get something written down in paragraph form. But the point here concerns more than a cogent paragraph, more than getting something on paper. Being quiet and alone restores the soul or at least has great potential to assist in restoring the soul.

This is especially the case when the habit of writing is employed as a means to improve the most foundational of all the spiritual disciplines: Word and prayer. We now turn to these two particular disciplines in order to consider how we may practice and even enhance them through writing.

5. The Ministry of Words

In what way might the practice of writing assist pastors in their own understanding of the Scriptures and even the gospel itself? Notice that we are not asking how writing helps form an effective sermon. Surely writing a sermon manuscript can contribute to a more well-formed, clear, and substantive sermon. But that is not our subject here. Instead, we are interested in the ways in which the discipline of writing personally and privately benefits pastors. Learning the ministry of words privately will eventually find its way to bless the people of God through the public ministry of the Word.¹⁴

Ours is a ministry of words. But as pastors, our ministry of words does not begin with preaching. It begins with listening and hearing. It begins with understanding God's ministry of words to us. The Word

¹¹ See Anselm, *An Address (Proslogion)*, in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham* (ed. Eugene R. Fairweather; Library of Christian Classics; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1956), 70.

¹² Bob Hoover, “David McCullough: America's Historian, Pittsburg Son,” *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, n.p., <http://www.post-gazette.com/books/20011230mccullough1230fnp2.asp> (accessed April 14, 2009).

¹³ Dennis Okholm, *Monk Habits for Everyday People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007), 40–41.

¹⁴ Of course, pastors should also work hard to improve the effectiveness of their public ministry of the Word. This is not an “either/or” in pastoral ministry. The point here is to remain focused on what has been called the priority of the interior life.

of God is both learned and conveyed to others in human words. Peter Adam helps us with this idea in his book *Hearing God's Words*: "From beginning to end the Bible is a book about God who speaks, about people who hear and respond to God's words, and about people speaking those same words to others."¹⁵

The Word of the gospel has come near to us: "the word is near you" (Rom 10:8; cf. Deut 30:14). It has come to us in a language that we may understand. God has chosen to reveal himself through the incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ, but not only in this way. He also reveals himself through a sacred book that was written perfectly in conventional human language. This means that, as pastors, we must devote time to understanding the primary means by which God communicates to his people. We ought to be adept in our understanding of, appreciation for, and facility with words. And yet not just any words. Our competency should be in the sacred use of sacred words.

One practice for learning the ministry of words is the simple act of copying the Scriptures. It is an ancient and personal habit that pastors have employed because of its intrinsic value. It is a way of seeing, hearing, and learning God's Word. For example, Luther warns that it is not enough to recite a passage of Scripture a few times and think it now mastered: "[Y]ou should meditate, that is, not only in your heart, but also *externally*, by actually repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them."¹⁶ He then adds, "His command to *write*, preach, read, hear, sing, speak, etc., outwardly was not given in vain."¹⁷

For Luther the act of writing or copying the Scriptures, along with reading and speaking them, expresses the external Word, apart from which the Spirit does not work within us. The Spirit of God employs the external form of the Word to effect internal change. When it comes to spiritual maturity, then, Luther thinks of these habits that employ the "literal words of the book" as invaluable so much so that he cautions,

And take care that you do not grow weary or think that you have done enough when you have read, heard, and spoken them once or twice, and that you then have complete understanding. You will never be a particularly good theologian if you do that, for you will be like untimely fruit which falls to the ground before it is half ripe.¹⁸

Who among us wants to be "untimely fruit"? The way to maturity and ripeness in pastoral ministry comes through regular habits that keep the very words of Scripture in front of us. Writing and rewriting the "literal words of the book" is one such habit. It is a sacred use of words that fosters the ripening of our ministries in biblical and theological maturity.

¹⁵ Peter Adam, *Hearing God's Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 47. The book is a helpful introduction to the spiritually formative value of hearing God's word as a spiritual discipline.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (ed. Timothy F. Lull; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 66 (*italics mine*).

¹⁷ *Ibid.* (*italics mine*).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

6. A Life of Prayer

Prayer is another foundational discipline that may be enhanced through writing. So valuable is prayer that some have suggested it is the most important of all spiritual disciplines. I prefer, however, to think of Word *and* prayer together as the center or core of the devoted life (Acts 6:4). Neither discipline is more important than the other since both Word and prayer are necessarily dependent on each other. Apart from Word and prayer, none of the other spiritual disciplines make much sense.

Donald Bloesch expressed his concern about the devoted life, as practiced among Protestants, over three decades ago: “If anything characterizes modern Protestantism, it is the absence of spiritual disciplines or spiritual exercises. Yet such disciplines form the core of the life of devotion. It is not an exaggeration to state that this is the lost dimension in modern Protestantism.”¹⁹ What may pastors do to recover this lost dimension of the church’s life—to recover the core of a life of devotion?

The answer, it seems to me, begins with a faithful, private life of prayer. When our heavenly Father sees our devotion in secret, perhaps he will reward the life of the church in a more public way. Here are a few ways that the discipline of writing may help pastors in private prayer.

First, writing helps us to see more clearly what it is we ask of God. We need to see how often we come to God asking for stuff or things and even “blessings.” Written prayers are one step removed from us since they have made their way outside of us and on the page in front of us. This lends itself to more objectivity about our “needs” and “prayer requests.” Taking the time to write longhand a prayer, or copy a psalm as the expression of one’s own heart, may remind us that coming to God as suppliants is not the only way to come to God. Nor should it be the way most often taken. We may also come as grateful worshipers hoping for nothing immediate in return.

Second, writing helps us to avoid hollow and mechanical prayers. Pastors are as likely as anyone to “heap up empty phrases” and prattle on in the name of prayer (Matt 6:7). Some pastors begin their public prayers in ways that betray a shallow interior life. They pray the same hollow phrases over and over and over. Taking the time to script a prayer in writing or rehearse a prayer written by someone else helps us to fund the grammar of prayer with substance, gravity, and sobriety.²⁰

Third, writing helps us to remember in the act of prayer and meditation. Sometimes we write in order to capture an idea about God so that we may return to it at a later time. Augustine practiced writing during the act of prayer and meditation for this very reason: “[I] prevent forgetfulness from running away with my meditations by tying them down to paper.”²¹ This discipline of writing—tying meditations down to paper—was for him a way of “trusting in God’s mercy” in order to persevere “in all the truths” of which he was sure.²² Significantly, the truth on which Augustine was meditating when he penned the above words was the threefold unity of God. Through prayer and meditation Augustine ended up writing one of his most influential theological works, *The Trinity*.

¹⁹ Donald Bloesch, *The Crisis of Piety* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 63.

²⁰ Other than Scripture itself (especially Psalms), the two collections of prayers that have been most helpful to me are Arthur Bennett, ed., *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2002) and *The Book of Common Prayer*.

²¹ Augustine, *The Trinity* (trans. Edmund Hill; The Works of St. Augustine; Brooklyn: New City, 1991), 68. Thanks to Brian Daniels, my grading and research assistant, for pointing me to this insight in Augustine.

²² Ibid.

Writing in the act of prayer and meditation also helps us to remember in a different sort of way. I do not simply mean that we may look back through a journal and remember that God answered a particular prayer in a remarkable way—though that is certainly an encouragement to my soul. Rather, I mean that there is a relationship between remembering and faith, between remembrance and belief, that is formative. We see this modeled in the psalms again and again: “These things I remember, as I pour out my soul” or “Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart” (Pss 42:4; 77:6; cf. 63:6). So significant were these meditations that they were composed in writing and in song. Written composition that seeks to remember God and his faithfulness is good for the soul.

7. Conclusion: Writing Seems So Comparatively Trivial

Why should we, as busy pastors, take the time to write? Are there not more important things to do? Poverty and social injustice abound. The world is in need. And on top of that, the demands of pastoral ministry seem unending—from budgets and buildings to counseling and crisis-care to missions and church planting, not to mention weekly preparation for the ministry of the Word. How can we spare the time to write while souls are perishing? Writing seems so comparatively trivial.

C. S. Lewis helps us to answer this question with characteristic wisdom. In his address, “Learning in War-Time,” he argues that learning and scholarship are not trivial pursuits even during the intensity of war-time.²³ Human life has and always will be lived on the edge of a precipice. Lewis’s point is that there will never be a suitable moment or a perfect season for learning and reflection. We live in a broken world. “If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure, the search would never have begun.”²⁴

The same is true for us as pastors. If we postpone our search—waiting for things to settle down and life to be normal again—we will never begin. Pastoral ministry has never been normal. It never will be. It is precisely for that reason that we make the time to write anyway. We write because, for us, the search has begun. And through writing the search continues. We write because it is a formative discipline for the good of our souls.

²³ C. S. Lewis, “Learning in War-Time,” in *The Weight of Glory* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 47–63.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

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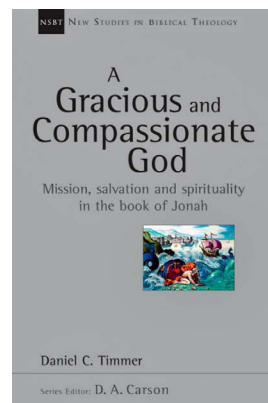
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— OLD TESTAMENT —

Daniel C. Timmer. *A Gracious and Compassionate God: Mission, Salvation, and Spirituality in the Book of Jonah*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 26. Leicester, Apollos; Downers Grove: IVP, 2011. 201 pp. \$22.00.

The book of Jonah has long fascinated interpreters for depicting a rebellious prophet, repentant Ninevites, and a surprising God, not to mention a large fish. The familiarity of this book among laypeople nonetheless stands at odds with the many questions that arise from a closer reading: What sort of faith in God did the Ninevites exercise as non-Israelites coming from a polytheistic background? What does Jonah contribute to the biblical conception of the mission of God? And how should the reader understand the book of Jonah in consonance with larger theological themes such as law and grace? Daniel Timmer, associate professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, ably discusses these questions and others in this volume. As part of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, Timmer's study aims to move from exegesis of the biblical text to theological reflection in light of the Christian canon. This movement unfolds over the seven chapters.



Chapter 1 positions the book of Jonah within the broader theological issue of Israel's mission to/ among the nations. After briefly assessing Israel's role as a priestly presence in the world, giving special attention to Exod 19:4–6 and Gen 12:1–3, Timmer defines mission in the OT as “the transmission of testimony regarding God's person and works of salvation and judgment, usually for the intended purpose of producing faith in his promises of salvation and judgment and conformity to his character and will” (p. 39). Timmer explains that this definition is broad enough to classify the prophet's activity in Nineveh as being “missionary” in nature (albeit in an ironic way), yet the primary theological contribution of the book of Jonah lies in emphasizing that mission proceeds mainly from divine rather than human initiative. This conclusion finds support in the NT's distinction between the essence of the gospel as accomplished by God and its necessary fruits on the part of the believer.

Chapter 2 sketches how Timmer will explore the dynamics of conversion among the sailors and Ninevites and their subsequent understanding of the God of Israel. Working with Abra(ha)m as his main example, Timmer defines conversion in the OT as “initial faith in God's self-revelation, an abandoning of other gods and an attachment to him alone, and a genuine repentance or turning from sin” (p. 52). The activity of the Holy Spirit is notably missing from this definition, as Timmer concedes, though he suggests that subsequent NT teaching on the Spirit's work in conversion and sanctification (the latter term is usually called “spirituality” in Timmer's book) makes it conceivable that the same Spirit is at work in the lives of the narrative characters in Jonah.

Chapters 3–6 analyze the four chapters of Jonah, respectively, in light of the definitions for mission, conversion, and spirituality already offered. Though not a commentary in the traditional sense, Timmer's treatment of Jon 1–4 traces the storyline of the book and helpfully places them in the historico-cultural context of the Assyrian threat during the eighth-century B.C. Most notable here is Timmer's conclusion that the sailors (Jon 1) and the Ninevites (Jon 3) undergo some form of conversion. The sailors are more

sincere than the Ninevites in their faith, however, for the text never mentions that the Ninevites turned away from their gods (cf. Jon 1:16; Ruth 1:16; 2 Kgs 5:17) or that God actually forgave their sins.

This observation leads to a stimulating theological exploration of how God's "relenting" (Jon 3:10; cf. Jer 18:1–12) toward the Ninevites is only temporary since "Nineveh believed in God, turned *from* her sin in some degree, but did not fully turn *to* God (p. 104; cf. Nahum). But Jonah cannot foresee Nineveh's ultimate fate and therefore ventures to attack God for being "gracious and compassionate . . . slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity" (Jon 4:2). Timmer rightly notes the irony of this accusation against God since Jonah is descended from the rebellious Israelite community that survived the golden-calf incident because of precisely these divine attributes (Exod 34:6–7).

Timmer concludes by situating his findings within the larger storyline of Scripture (ch. 7). The narrative of Jonah depicts the interplay among human rebellion, divine judgment, and the offer of salvation for those who truly repent. Since Christians today experience these theological realities in a manner analogous to the Israelites of Jonah's time, Timmer ends by calling his readers to imitate Jonah's God (who extends mercy to sinners), to be conformed to Christ (who was fully committed to the Father's mission), and to walk by the Spirit (who empowers believers for this mission).

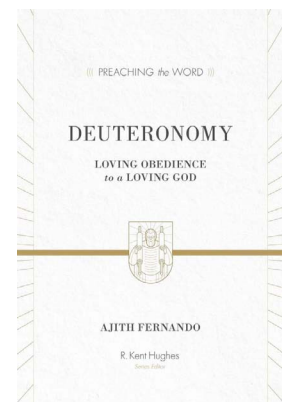
In summary, this book is highly recommended for laypeople, students, and ministers who desire to move beyond the flat reading of Jonah found in much popular-level Christian literature. Exegetes and scholars will benefit from Timmer's theological thrust in this book but will still need to consult the commentaries for more detailed interaction with the Hebrew text.

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Fernando, Ajith. *Deuteronomy: Loving Obedience to a Loving God*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 765 pp. £28.99/\$44.99.

This massive expository commentary forms part of a series written by pastors for pastors, though with an eye to others who cherish to God's word. The series is thus aimed neither for seminary students wrestling with critical questions nor for scholars. The aim is to model expository preaching with a commitment to biblical authority and a desire for readability. These points are important because any review needs to be based on what the book is and for whom it is written.

Fernando has broken down the 34 chapters of Deuteronomy into 63 different chapters in his book. Most of the chapters follow the ordering of Deuteronomy itself, although two work with topical groupings: chapter 37, "Giving to God," includes 14:22–29 and 15:19–23; chapter 49, "Rules for a Considerate Society," includes 23:15–25 and 24:19–22. Some of the chapters on the Decalogue deal with just one verse, while chapter 55 on the different blessings and curses covers the 68 verses of chapter 28. Within each chapter, there are points and sub-points, often related to particular verses within the section under discussion.



The chapters on individual verses in the Decalogue are exceptions, focusing on topics related more generally to the verses.

The author has spent thirty-five years ministering to first-generation Christians in Sri Lanka, especially among young people. Eight of those have been spent labouring on this book amid the pressures of ministry. It is no surprise, then, that the book is filled with the passion, anecdotes, and wisdom of someone deeply rooted in pastoral ministry in a challenging situation. For this reviewer this was the overriding impression of the book. It pulses with life, with enthusiasm, with a great love for the word of God, for his honour and his glory. I suspect that the massive size of the book, the product of the frequently free-ranging nature of some of expositions, is also rooted here.

There are a number of other features that this reviewer particularly appreciates. First, the author's instinct is both pastoral and biblical. On every page there pulsates a passion for God's word and for God's people, for lives of integrity and truth. Further, Fernando does not shrink from the tough questions and, in discussing some thorny questions such as the place of the law for the Christian, the ongoing significance of the Sabbath or the challenges of the commands to "devote" the Canaanites, there is a judicious approach. For example, on the ongoing significance of the law, he works with a theological and moral principlism, recognising both continuity and discontinuity.

Second, the author's integrity shines through. The ministry that Fernando has had in Sri Lanka with Youth for Christ shines through, whether dealing with the challenges of growth or the problems of disunity or the need to avoid a job with bribery as part of it. One of my particular favourites is his discussion of the Sabbath, when he observes that many in their fifties are "shadows" of what they have been, "angry, uninspiring, and unhappy" and going through the motions because of burn out (p. 192). Fernando fears it for others, but the book itself demonstrates that being "uninspiring" is not a danger for him!

Third, at many points there are perceptive insights about the text. They range at points more freely than the text itself and are often full of wisdom. The reminder in discussing Deut 7 that war is hell and that the Bible is realistic in a way that some just war discussions are not is one I found helpful.

Alongside these strengths, there are two areas that are weaker. First, at times more scholarly engagement is needed. While of course it is not a commentary written by a scholar, nor is it written for scholars, there are some characteristics of all writing that should be scholarly. For example, in discussing questions of authorship and historical reliability, there should have been more evidence of at least listening to or engaging with different points of view, both in the text and in the bibliography. In similar vein, sometimes those who have different viewpoints highlight features in the text we may miss. For example, in discussing Deut 22:19b, Fernando comments that a man who has wrongly suspected his wife of unfaithfulness may not divorce her: "Many today would react to this statement with shock and incredulity. Why should a man be forced to live until death with a woman he 'hates' (22:13)?" (p. 516). But what of the woman's view?

Second, for a series concerned to model expository preaching, there is scope for better handling of the text. There are three parts to this:

(1) The units of text for exposition should have the same boundaries as the text itself indicates. On a number of occasions, the boundaries do not match. For example, chapter 2 of the exposition works with 1:4–8, while the opening of Deuteronomy is 1:1–5. Or in Deut 4, verse 4 goes with what precedes (4:1–4), not with what follows (4:4–6a; p. 119).

(2) Sometimes the exposition of a given passage ranges somewhat wider than the point that the passage is making. For example, in expounding the inspiration that comes from past victories (1:4–5), Fernando insightfully highlights that rehearsing God’s action in history “gives us confidence and the assurance of God’s similar intervention as we face present challenges” (p. 38). However he then goes on to look at the tragedy of failing to trust. That’s a biblical point and could be made well from 1:2–3 or from the rest of ch. 1. But by airing the point here, untethered to the text, it runs the risk of inoculating hearers for when Deuteronomy does talk explicitly about it, and modelling something that allows less biblically rounded pastors to ride hobby-horses. It is not that the insights are untrue. Nor is it that they are badly made. Rather, they are not always what the passage is about. This greatly increases the length of the book, too.

(3) In places there should be greater attention to biblical theology. For example, on 1:9–12, Fernando makes analogical connections of Israel to the church and Moses to contemporary leadership, but the major salvation-historical connections are ignored. The main sub-points for 1:9–12, “Growth and Stress,” are “Stress Is Inevitable in a Growing Movement,” “We Must Talk about our Stress,” and “The People’s Problems Become the Leader’s Problems” (pp. 45–48). Some of these insights are well-made and certainly striking. But at least part of this section is highlighting the fulfilment of God’s promises made to the patriarchs (cf., e.g., Gen 26:4; Deut 1:9–11). Along with the promises of land possession in Deut 1:8, there is the clear picture that in and through Israel God’s purposes for creation are being carried forward.

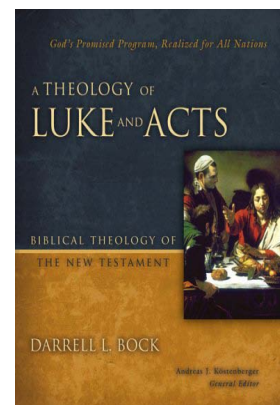
All in all, this is an engaging conversation partner for the preacher in preparation and an encouraging read for those wanting to hear God’s voice in Deuteronomy.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

Darrell L. Bock. *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God’s Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 495 pp. \$39.99.

There are different scholarly views about the way to construct a theology of Luke and Acts. Some would insist on viewing the evidence of these two volumes separately. Darrell Bock, who has written notable commentaries on both, sets out “to reconnect the volumes to each other and to tell Luke’s theological story in which one cannot see Jesus without understanding the story of the community he was responsible for launching” (p. 28). Bock argues that the key actor in Luke’s theology is God himself, whose plan Jesus came to fulfil. “The inauguration of this fulfilment came through Jesus and through the church, which consists of both Jew and Gentile. The completion of this fulfilment will come when Jesus returns (Acts 3:18–26).” Bock further observes the enablement of the Spirit as a central theme and provides an “outline of Trinitarian activity”.



Luke wrote to Theophilus to give him assurance about the things he had been taught by showing how God was at work in recent events fulfilling his promises (Luke 1:1–4). Bock asserts that two aspects of that claimed fulfillment are likely to have been troubling to Theophilus: “a dead Saviour and a persecuted community of God that included Gentiles, when Israel held the hope of the promise” (p. 29). So the resurrection-ascension of Jesus and the particular role of Paul in the outworking of God’s plan for the nations are the focus of attention in Acts.

Before he launches into a full-scale analysis of Luke’s theology, Bock provides a brief introduction to the study of Luke-Acts, examining issues such as authorship and date, provenance and genre. He devotes a whole chapter to exploring the case for the unity of Luke and Acts, which is critical to his whole approach. Then he provides an outline and narrative survey of Luke’s two volumes. Given his method in the following chapters, I am not sure that this adds much to the book.

Bock’s declared intention is “to present the theology in steps, looking at the major topics Luke treats” (p. 29). He then proposes to synthesize the results in a separate chapter, where occasionally he will stop to “take a closer look at specific verses and the exegetical issues tied to the theme at that point.” For example, the plan, activity, and character of God are surveyed in chapter 5 as these themes emerge in narrative order. Then in chapter 6 there is a synthesis of texts on the plan of God under the heading “the God of Promise, Fulfillment, and Salvation,” with the same bibliography applied to both chapters.

Taking these two chapters together, I am not sure that Bock’s approach is as integrated as he intends. Chapter 5 surveys the use of the word “God” in Luke-Acts with a brief commentary on the significance of each context for understanding God’s character and plan. Rather than being a synthesis of these findings, chapter 6 explores related issues, such as the way promise and fulfilment function in Luke-Acts or the way the theme of the kingdom of God unfolds. In my view, it would have been better to combine the material in these chapters, with the first focussing on the evidence in the Gospel and the second showing how these themes develop in Acts.

However, I certainly agree with the idea of exploring and expounding theological themes as they are progressively revealed in the narrative of Luke-Acts and only then attempting a synthesis. I am also persuaded that Bock is right to portray God and his plan of salvation as the foundational theme. Christology is next in importance, with chapter 7 devoted to a narrative exploration of “Jesus the Messiah who is Lord and Bringer of the New Era” and chapter 8 attempting “a synthesis on the person and work of Jesus” under the heading “Messiah, Servant, Prophet, Savior, Son of Man, and Lord.”

The Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is treated in a single chapter, as Bock both notices narrative sequence in references to the Spirit and attempts synthetic work. Considering the controversy over this topic, this chapter is surprisingly brief. Bock returns to his pattern of “narrative order” in chapter 10 and “synthetic analysis” in chapter 11, as he deals with the theme of salvation through Christ: how it is achieved, authenticated, propagated, and received.

In the next few chapters, Bock works in narrative order with several topics involving Israel, the Gentiles, the church, discipleship and ethics, women, the poor, and Luke’s view of the law. These findings are synthesized in chapter 19 under the heading “Ecclesiology in Luke-Acts,” where there is also a section on “the shining examples that come from that new community” since “Luke often reveals his theology through the examples of the individuals he discusses” (p. 371). But this last section is somewhat unbalanced, with only a brief reference to some key events and sayings involving these characters. Again, there is a surprisingly brief treatment of “Structure, Activity and Worship in the

Church". Bock's final chapters are titled "Eschatology, Judgment and Hope for the Future in Luke-Acts", "The Scriptures in Luke-Acts", and "Luke-Acts in the Canon".

In conclusion, I would say that Bock's method needs some refining. He attempts to cover too much ground in matters of introduction and in providing a commentary on issues that are not really central to his theological analysis. I appreciate the order in which he has examined themes but feel that there is a lack of attention to some important matters (e.g., magic and the demonic), while others are treated unevenly in his schematic approach.

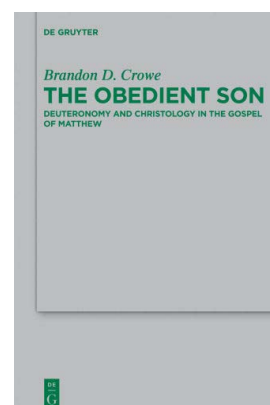
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Brandon D. Crowe. *The Obedient Son: Deuteronomy and Christology in the Gospel of Matthew*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 188. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012. x + 284 pp. £149.95/\$210.00.

In this volume, Brandon D. Crowe attempts to make sense of the connection between the theme of obedient sonship in Deuteronomy and its reuse in the book of Matthew. He asserts that "the best backdrop for understanding the obedient sonship of Jesus in Matthew is the call for Israel to be filially obedient as it is foundationally set forth in Deuteronomy" (p. 225). He does not analyze Matthew's *citations* of Deuteronomy, but uses them as a starting point to suggest that the author also utilizes Deuteronomy in a more implicit and allusive manner.

The methodological foundation for his study is Richard Hays's sevenfold methodology for "evaluating the significance of scriptural echoes:" (1) Availability, (2) Volume, (3) Recurrence, (4) Thematic Coherence, (5) Historical Plausibility, (6) History of Interpretation, and (7) Satisfaction (pp. 15–16). Moving forward, Crowe provides a broad, but helpful, survey of the possible text forms of Deuteronomy in antiquity and traces the use of Deuteronomy through large swaths of early Jewish and Christian literature (ch. 2). He continues by tracing the theme of sonship within Deuteronomy itself, arguing that sonship is closely linked to the concept of covenant because "the covenantal bond is often described in terms of a father-son relationship" (p. 92; ch. 3). For Crowe, filial love is the fullest expression of covenant obedience in Deuteronomy (p. 114). He finishes his discussion of preliminary issues by broadly sketching the dual themes of sonship and obedience in the OT, early Jewish, and early Christian literature (ch. 4).

Crowe begins the crux of the study by analyzing the use of Deuteronomy through a host of criteria. He identifies "strong and likely allusions" in Matthew beginning with 4:1–11 (p. 159). Crowe also identifies "likely allusions" in Matt 5–7. He identifies a "cluster" of possible connections to Deuteronomy (p. 166) and a number of "syntactical earmarks of having been influenced by Deuteronomy" (p. 167). Ultimately, he argues that Jesus "recapitulates" all of Israel as the obedient son and that Jesus is also portrayed a type of second Moses (pp. 170–75). Crowe finishes his study (chs. 6–7) by analyzing "significant possibilities" and "possible allusions" to Deuteronomy in Matt 1:20; 3:15–17; 12:46–50; 17:1–21; 21:28–22:14. These



connections to Deuteronomy are largely thematic or are made based on common phraseology such as “this generation” (p. 215). His concluding remarks are found in chapter 8.

Crowe’s approach to “sonship Christology” in Matthew is particularly strong in three ways. First, he rightfully recognizes that the use of Deuteronomy in Matthew extends beyond explicit citations. Allusion and thematic use of antecedent texts are hallmarks of much of Second Temple literature, and this holds true for Matthew’s use of Deuteronomy. Second, he correctly demonstrates that the author of Matthew utilizes multiple text types (Greek version[s] and proto-MT). This is not an objective of his study, and his articulation on the subject (see pp. 40–50) is not overly technical. However, it illustrates a larger trend: NT scholarship is beginning to acknowledge the demonstrable text pluriformity present in the first-century. Third, his summaries of his findings and arguments are helpful. For example, he clearly presents his summary of the ancient manuscript evidence that contain portions of or allusions to Deuteronomy (pp. 48–49).

His approach also contains a number of relative limitations. First, his study suffers from terminological ambiguity. This weakness is prevalent throughout this monograph, but especially poignant is the terminology he uses to describe the kinds of connection Matthew shares with Deuteronomy. For example, he differentiates between “explicit citation” and “implicit citation” (pp. 10–12) but refers to implicit citations as allusions throughout. Furthermore, his definition of allusion is too broad as he suggests that it refers to any passage that “draws upon language, images, themes, and/or structure from the OT” (p. 13). He then differentiates between *strong*, *likely*, and *possible allusions* (p. 158) although he does not define *possible allusion*. Also his free use of loaded terminology like “story” (p. 26), “covenantal care” (p. 162), and “eschatological sonship” (p. 170) are indicative of his larger lack of terminological precision.

Second, Crowe’s adoption of Hays’s methodology weakens his argument. Crowe is interested primarily in the thematic/theological use of Deuteronomy, but his reliance on Hays requires that he investigate textual information, historical issues, and history of interpretation (p. 28). This not to say the Hays’s methodology is imprecise in general, but its adoption here compels an unfocused approach to the main issue of the volume: Matthean Christology.

Finally, Crowe conceives first-century Judaism to be a monolithic movement. The logic he employs for applying Hays’s methodology to Matthew is that both Paul and Matthew are “clearly Jewish, in dialogue with contemporary Jewish thought, and skilled in traditional Jewish interpretation of the OT” (p. 24). This position assumes that Judaism is more unified on a number of fronts than the evidence from the period suggests and that the author of Matthew and Paul share a common background, ideology, and interpretive strategy. Crowe does succeed in demonstrating his central argument. However, his terminological imprecision and methodology detract from his central finding.

In regard to the larger field of the reuse of Scripture in the NT, Crowe’s work advances the broader discussion very little. His approach stands upon the broad shoulders of the likes of G. K. Beale, Richard Hays, and Steve Moyise. This volume’s contribution to the field is that it highlights the Deuteronomic underpinnings of the Christology of Matthew’s Gospel. Despite its limitations, this volume is a useful tool for those investigating the reuse of Deuteronomy, the use of Scripture in Matthew, or other related

pursuits. This work serves as a broad introduction to these specific fields. For those who are pursuing these avenues of investigation, I recommend this book.

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J. Scott Duvall and Verlyn D. Verbrugge, eds. *Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to Inspire and Instruct*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 160 pp. \$16.99.

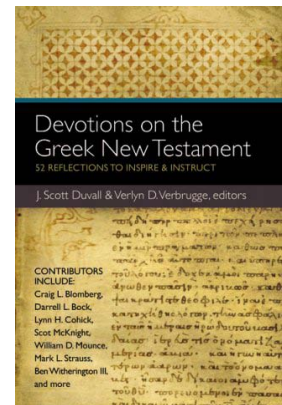
A wise man once opined that there is no end to the publishing of books. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than when one happens to peruse the devotional aisle of a local Christian bookstore. Unfortunately, most of what fills the pages of today's devotionals is nothing more than some cute, pithy little saying that has little or no connection to Scripture. This is where Zondervan's new *Devotions on the Greek New Testament* (henceforth *DGNT*) breaks the monotony of the uninspiring and breathes new life into the genre of devotional material. Now to be fair, *DGNT* is not for everyone; it will appeal only to those who have taken at least a year of Greek. But for students fresh out of first-year Greek, this will be a valuable tool in the battle to maintain an ability to read and understand Greek.

Edited by J. Scott Duvall and Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *DGNT* includes 52 devotions with samples from each of the NT books. Duvall and Verbrugge have put together a team of contributors to give devotional as well as grammatical insight into the Greek NT. The list of contributors reads like a who's who in the world of evangelical scholarship, containing both seasoned and up-and-coming scholars. Men and women like Craig Blomberg, Linda Belleville, Darrell Bock, Con Campbell, Lynn Cohick, Edward Klink, Scot McKnight, and Ben Witherington offer their expertise in the form of short, but informed grammatical, syntactical, and devotional insight into the Greek text of the NT.

The editors explain that their motivation behind *DGNT* is "to help students (and professors) keep their study of Greek a deeply *Spiritual* experience" (p. 11, emphasis original). Then the contributors begin—in canonical order—to offer their devotionals on select passages from the Greek NT. Each new devotional is clearly demarcated by a generously sized header containing the title of the devotional and the Scripture reference on which the devotional and grammatical comments are based. Next the Greek text is printed, making it helpful for those times when one may not have their Greek NT handy. This is followed by an average of one to two pages of insight on the Greek text.

Each of the contributors offers not only devotional notes but also grammatical notes that arise from the text in question. For example, in his devotional entitled "Luke 2:4–5: Mary and Joseph Travel to Bethlehem," Verlyn Verbrugge notes the importance of participles and the need to pay attention to them:

The first one is ἐμνηστευμένη translated "the one pledged to be married." This participle is preceded by the article, which makes it an attributive or adjectival participle. . . . The second participle is οὖση. . . . This participle is not joined by καί to the first one, nor does it have its own article. It is therefore an adverbial or circumstantial participle, which



denotes some adverbial idea, such as time, cause, concession, means, condition, or the like. (pp. 33–34)

Insights into the grammatical and syntactical nuance of the Greek text are invaluable to the student just getting his or her feet wet in the pool of Greek exegesis. Insight into lexicography, verbal aspect and tense, theology, and history make *DGNT* not only a useful tool for keeping up Greek, but also for keeping your mind and heart focused on the Savior.

It is hard to find fault with this incredibly invaluable resource. One could have wished that a glossary of unfamiliar words were included with the Greek text, similar to the one found in Zondervan's *A Reader's Greek New Testament*. But this is just a minor quibble that in no way takes away from the overall usefulness of this fine book.

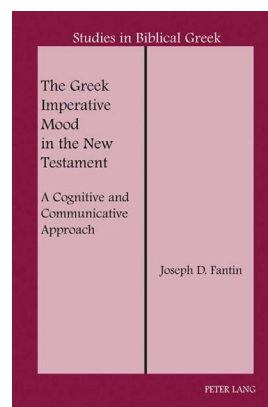
So while it may be true to say that there is no end to publishing devotionals, one can lament the lack of books being published that engage not only the sentiment of the heart but the intellect of the mind as well. With *DGNT*, Zondervan has managed to publish a book that will challenge the Greek student to think deeply about the syntax and the Savior of the Greek NT.

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Joseph D. Fantin. *The Greek Imperative Mood in the New Testament: A Cognitive and Communicative Approach*. Studies in Biblical Greek 12. New York and Berlin: Peter Lang, 2010. xvi + 406 pp. \$106.95.

The Studies in Biblical Greek series published by Peter Lang has been an invaluable resource for integrating current linguistic theories with our understanding of the Greek text of the NT. Most of the titles in this series focus on various facets of the grammar of the Greek verb system. Fantin's volume, a revision of his dissertation on the imperative mood, attempts to address the lack of attention given to imperative constructions in many contemporary Greek grammars. The goal of his study is to "discuss the possibility of identifying *the* semantic meaning of the imperative mood and will propose a theory which seems best to account for the data" (p. 65). As such, his work is a natural fit in this series.

The theoretical backbone of his work is drawn from neuro-cognitive stratificational linguistics (NCSL) as formulated in the work on Relevance Theory by Sydney Lamb (pp. 34–42) and Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (pp. 43–60). NCSL provides the linguistic underpinnings to explain why a command can be formed with either the imperative or subjunctive moods (diversification) and, at the same time, a verb in the imperative mood can be realized as a command, request, or permission (syncretization). In order to determine what the primary meaning of the imperative mood brings to a particular construction, he considers how various contextual features shape how the meaning of an imperative is understood. This goes beyond the scope of NCSL and is why Relevance Theory is employed to explore the pragmatic usages of the various imperative verbs. Fantin does not follow a strong distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning along the lines of Mari Olson (*A Semantic and Pragmatic Model of Lexical Grammatical Aspect*) or Stanley Porter (*Verbal Aspect in the Greek of*



the New Testament). Rather he prefers a more flexible conceptualization of inherent meaning (in place of semantic) and non-inherent contextual (pragmatic) meaning (p. 346).

After setting forth his goal and defining his methodology (ch. 1), Fantin surveys current studies on the imperative mood in NT studies (ch. 2). Most of these studies agree that the imperative has a fairly wide range of meaning between a command or permission (p. 76). For the past 100 years, most grammarians have focused their attention on the contribution that tense (aorist or present in particular) contributes to how we understand an imperative verb, with an aorist imperative communicating a specific or urgent command and a present tense imperative being much more general in nature. Kenneth McKay's article on the imperatival mood initiated a paradigm shift to viewing the tense of the imperative from an aspectual perspective. For example, the present tense construes a perspective on the verbal action in which we are watching the action of the verb unfold (imperfective aspect) that lends itself to commands that are universal or more general in nature (pp. 97–98). The second half of the chapter considers the contributions made by Speech-Act theory and other linguistic models. This is one section of the book that could benefit from a revision. Fantin's indifference toward Speech-Act theory is disappointing, especially if one considers the potential for integrating concepts such as the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary force of an utterance into his appropriation of Relevance Theory.

Chapters 3 and 4 are the heart of Fantin's work both in terms of space (192 of 373 pages in the main body) and caliber of work. They also represent his appropriation of Lamb's NCSL semantic analysis and Relevance Theory's contribution to pragmatic considerations, respectively. The semantic analysis in ch. 3 focuses on two primary questions: "1. What is the meaning of the imperative mood? and 2. Why did the author use the imperative in a particular instance?" (p. 121). By examining various instances in which the imperative is found in the various NT texts, he attempts to determine the range of meaning of the imperative mood (pp. 135–56). Comparing and contrasting parallel passages in the Synoptic Gospel accounts (where the same verb is used in a similar conceptual clause) allows the reader to observe the differences between, for example, Matthew's (25:21–23) use of a future verb form in contrast to Luke's (19:17–19) use of an imperative (pp. 157–93, esp. pp. 173–74). Based on his analysis, Fantin demonstrates that the imperative functions primarily as the main verb of a sentence in contrast to the subjunctive, which often occurs in a dependent construction. Its exclusive use in direct speech allows one to see that it usually conveys an emphatic and directive/volitional force.

In chapter 4, his analysis turns to consider how contextual or pragmatic elements influence how an imperative verb is understood. These contextual elements include social hierarchy, politeness, event sequencing of the verb, and who benefits from the fulfillment of the verbal action. For example, when the imperative is used by a speaker of higher social rank, the imperative usually takes on the force of a command (pp. 206–16). Of particular note in this chapter is his analysis of third-person imperatives in relationship to politeness strategies, social rank (most are employed in situations where the lower-rank individual is addressing someone of higher rank), and indirect commands to a second person (Matt 5:6: "let your light shine before men").

Fantin's overall conclusions are rather straightforward and level-headed. The imperative mood conveys a volitional/directive force, and we need to approach every instance of these verbs in the text in a multidimensional manner (pp. 309–12). The multilevel analysis that is evidenced in his consideration of the various texts is in many cases very insightful. I have had the opportunity to use examples from his text when teaching first- and second-year Greek classes to help them grasp the nuances between

the various ways a command can be constructed in Koine Greek, and also as tool to help them perceive some of the sociological elements embedded in the grammatical and lexical elements in the text.

The third and fourth chapters are excellent examples of applying linguistic theories to biblical exegesis. As such, they are a good introduction for a biblical scholars interested in learning more about linguistic approaches to the biblical texts. A particular strength of the current volume are the five appendixes that provide a clear and concise introduction and evaluation of the contribution of modern linguistic approaches, linguistic issues concerning grammatical mood, and semantic-versus-pragmatic distinctions. The final two appendixes contain tables that lists parallel passages in the Synoptic Gospels that contain imperatival constructions (e.g., where Mark may use the imperative mood and Luke the subjunctive), and a list of passages that contain the imperative, καί, and future indicative constructions.

One question I am left with is why the author chose Sydney Lamb's NCSL framework when a more extensive Cognitive Linguistic approach to linguistics is embodied in the works of Charles Fillmore, Ronald Langacker, John Taylor, Eve Sweetser, and Gilles Fauconnier, to name a few (see the *Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*). Overall, Fantin's book makes a valuable contribution to the Studies in Biblical Greek series, advances our understanding of the Koine Greek imperative mood, and can be profitably employed in various teaching contexts.

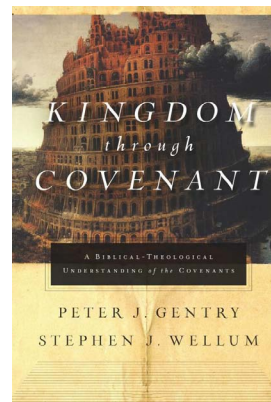
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Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum. [*Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*](#). Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 848 pp. £28.99/\$45.00.

Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum have produced a remarkable work. It is a rare book that is able to move from systematic theology to biblical theology to exegesis and then back again to theological synthesis. But *Kingdom through Covenant* accomplishes just that. That feat alone puts this volume ahead of most others.

Since neither my space allowance nor your patience allows for a thorough summary of the book, we can only highlight a few key points by way of summary. The stated goal of the authors is to demonstrate the centrality of the covenant motif in both the plot of the Bible and the structure of Christian theology (p. 21). To accomplish this goal, they begin with a prolegomena covering the current theological conversation surrounding the biblical covenants. From here, they introduce the key questions that they intend to address in the rest of the book.

The main argument of the book throughout is to present a “progressive covenantalism,” to use the term the authors coined for their system (p. 24). Gentry and Wellum also claim that this way of reading the biblical story lines results in a “*via media*” between covenant theology and dispensationalism. In short, the authors see the biblical covenants as a means of fulfilling God's saving promises as outlined in previous covenants, with the goal of finally and fully establishing God's reign over his people. Each covenant is intended to advance God's saving program, which culminates in the new covenant's



fulfillment. In other words, the kingdom is established through the progressive fulfillment of God's covenants.

While we could single out many other positive aspects of this book, perhaps the most important is how the authors describe the nature of biblical covenants. Along with many others, I have long doubted the overly clinical distinction between covenants that fall into the unconditional/royal land grant and covenants of the conditional/suzerain-vassal type. I have yet to read a better explanation of the conditional and unconditional aspects of all the biblical covenants. As the authors demonstrate with careful attention to the exegetical details of every major covenant in the OT, all of the biblical covenants are in fact conditional. Both parties must meet the terms of the covenant. However, throughout the Bible, while God faithfully meets his covenant commitments, the human parties consistently fail to meet their obligations. Therefore, Gentry and Wellum conclude, "God himself, as the covenant maker and keeper, must unilaterally act to keep his own promise *through the provision of a faithful, obedient Son*" (p. 668). The kingdom is established as God himself keeps both sides of the covenant. Because of this and other similar insights, few exegetical studies will lead you to worship as often as this book does.

When we turn to a critical evaluation of the book, I have two central questions. The first is theological and logical, and the second is exegetical and structural. It is best to begin with the theological point, for the authors have clearly indicated that this was their goal in writing the book. They have staked out their position as a middle way between covenant theology and dispensationalism. The foundation to this claim is that each of the two systems has a central tenet that is fundamentally flawed. For covenant theologians, this tenet is the genealogical principle, which requires that since children of covenant members are themselves part of the covenant, they ought to receive the covenant sign. In the OT, this sign was circumcision, and in the NT, it is baptism. This of course leads to the necessity of infant baptism. The fundamental flaw of dispensationalism that Gentry and Wellum emphasize is insisting on the literal fulfillment of the land promises to the physical descendants of Abraham. This error leads to an unbiblical view of Israel and an expectation that the promised land of Palestine will be given to the geo-political nation of Israel during the millennial kingdom.

While these two errors are very different at a superficial level, Gentry and Wellum argue that they actually share a common problem: failing to understand the nature and symbolism of typology. Covenant theologians have failed to see how circumcision is a type of Christ's work of spiritual circumcision in the new covenant. Dispensationalists have failed to see how the land promises were types of Christ as the king—not only of a small parcel of land in Palestine, but also of the whole earth.

While some will disagree with me, I happen to think their critique of dispensationalism is, on the whole, rather solid. However, while I find myself persuaded by the many of their arguments against *infant baptism*, I am not yet convinced that these constitute a complete argument against *covenant theology*. The problem seems to be that many self-professed covenant theologians are also advocates of *credo-baptism*. Whether they agree with them or not, Gentry and Wellum have not sufficiently interacted with the long history of covenant theologians in the Baptist tradition (one thinks of the 1689 London Baptist Confession, for example).

Given the long history of *credo-baptist* covenant theology, it seems that Gentry and Wellum are critiquing infant baptism more than covenant theology *per se*. While one could argue that these phenomena must go hand-in-glove, I am not convinced the authors have done this. It is therefore perhaps more accurate to say that while dispensationalism has an insufficient view of typology, *paedo-baptist* covenant theology has an under-realized view of typological fulfillment, for in the new covenant

there is no gap between the sign (baptism) and the thing signified (circumcision of the heart). That is to say, paedo-baptist covenant theology does not recognize the extent to which the new covenant is presently fulfilled. While we could certainly discuss other critiques of classical covenant theology that I happen to agree with, the authors give most attention to infant baptism. However, I am not persuaded that the mostly solid arguments against infant baptism constitute in and of themselves an argument against covenant theology.

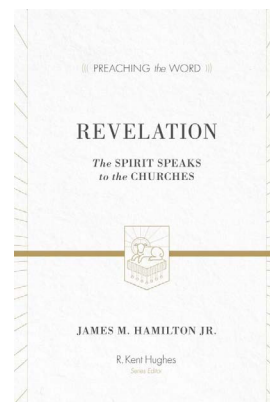
My second critique takes considerably less space to explain because the authors have given us far less material to consider. In fact, it is somewhat ironic that this review falls under the heading of “New Testament,” at least in this journal, because the most glaring omission (at least to my NT eyes) is the lack of serious and sustained interaction with the key covenant texts in the NT. While the authors do give space to the NT fulfillment of certain OT texts and themes, I was very surprised to find Eph 4:15 as the only NT passage given its own chapter in a book that aims to present a biblical-theological understanding of the covenants. While I have no complaints with their treatment of this text, closer attention to any number of NT texts likely would have served their purposes better. One thinks of Rom 11, 2 Cor 3, Gal 3, Heb 8, or even Eph 2 as better candidates for careful examination in a book on the biblical covenants. My suspicion is that such a treatment would have only strengthened the argument of this already outstanding exegetical study.

Kingdom through Covenant is an important book. Because of this, I am concerned that many believers and even some pastors will be intimidated by the lengthy word studies, frequent scholarly citations, and references to German and French literature. If any editors from Crossway happen upon this review, I would like to make a suggestion: perhaps the most effective way to get this book into the hands of pastors in a readable and accessible way would be through publishing a condensation along the lines of the summary of Thomas Schreiner’s *Magnifying God in Christ: A Summary of New Testament Theology*. We are all in the debt of Gentry and Wellum for this excellent study, and it is my hope that it is disseminated and discussed for years to come.

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James M. Hamilton Jr. *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 464 pp. \$34.99.

Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches is Hamilton’s first book-length publication since his 600-page *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). In *God’s Glory* Hamilton devoted ten pages (pp. 541–51) to an examination of the biblical theology of Revelation, focusing on Revelation’s chiastic structure (p. 544) and demonstrating how John’s consummate prophecy rearticulates biblical patterns such as the exodus, the conquest, and the return from exile (pp. 546–48). There he also anticipates this forthcoming work on Revelation (p. 542). Not surprisingly then, Hamilton’s full-length commentary on Revelation consistently highlights his understanding



of the dominant pattern in Scripture: God's glory in salvation through judgment (e.g., pp. 35, 196, 228, 389).

Appropriate to the Preaching the Word series, *Revelation* compiles sermons that Hamilton originally preached in 2005 to Baptist Church of the Redeemer in Houston and then preached again in greater detail in 2009–2010 to Kenwood Baptist Church in Louisville (p. 15). So in keeping with their original intent—Sunday sermons preached to a conservative Southern Baptist congregation—Hamilton's writing style is consistently preachy and poetic, and his theological perspective is unremittingly evangelical and conservative: he preaches the deity of Christ (pp. 15, 76, 138, 157, 354, 359), the penal substitutionary atonement (p. 36), the exclusivity of faith in Christ as opposed to inclusivism or universalism (p. 262), the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture (pp. 15, 31, 39), and the need for personal conversion (e.g., pp. 25, 26, 27, 37, 51, 59, 77, 98). But in contrast to many evangelical approaches to Revelation, Hamilton's tone is quietly sober and generally hopeful, not sensational and pessimistic. Hamilton is premillennial (pp. 368, 432), but despite his dispensational background at Dallas Theological Seminary (p. 169), his position on the rapture is *historic* premillennial (p. 116). His understanding of Revelation's imagery is usually typological rather than literal.

Each of Hamilton's 37 chapters reads like a stand-alone expository sermon: he opens with a sermon introduction followed by briefly articulating the primary human need that the passage is addressing. Then after setting the passage in the context of the book, Hamilton unpacks the main points in the exact order of the passage, interweaving practical application throughout, and finishes with a succinct summary and conclusion.

Hamilton understands the book of Revelation to have three major divisions: chapters 1–3, 4–16, and 17–22 (p. 19). He teaches that these three sections fit within an overall chiastic structure (pp. 164–66, 280). According to his view, the chiastic center of the book is the glorious announcement in 11:15 (p. 164).

Hamilton's commentary is helpful in several ways. First, his interpretive conclusions are generally convincing. His chiastic structure explains the placement of 11:15 as well as the complementary accounts of the church (Rev 2–3; 21–22), the divine throne room (Rev 4–5; 19–20) and the 144,000 (Rev 7; 14). His historic premillennial viewpoint also makes sense of the numerous, complementary, and varied references to time periods throughout the book (see his tables on pp. 369–72). Further, Hamilton's hermeneutic consistently understands the apocalyptic imagery to refer back to OT prophecy. Hence, in his view, Revelation evidences how John's mind was deeply saturated in the OT, *not* how the Beloved Disciple was grasping for familiar metaphors in an attempt to literally describe futuristic phenomena (i.e., as if the only way John could describe modern military helicopters was in terms of "huge locust with stingers").

A second strength is the exemplary quality of Hamilton's messages. This commentary is full of great sermon material. Several of Hamilton's sermon introductions and illustrations are riveting. These include George Washington's decisive clarity in dealing with a traitor (p. 93), Jim Boice's trust in God's sovereignty as he lost the battle to cancer (p. 160), James Joyce's horrifying depiction of hell (p. 279), the tragic choice of Natasha Rostov (p. 345), the protection and worth of the gold at Fort Knox (p. 391), and a warning sign at the edge of the Grand Canyon (p. 414). Every illustration throughout the commentary is thematically catalogued in a special "Index of Sermon Illustrations" (pp. 453–57). Hamilton also makes pointed, varied applications throughout his sermons. His most consistent applications include admonitions that Christians soak themselves in the Scriptures (pp. 32, 34, 39, 70, 146, 183, 190, 261, 267,

274, 320, 332, 386, 403, 407, 409, 417, 419) and that seemingly insignificant churches take heart in the great blessings that are theirs in Christ (e.g., pp. 21–23, 56, 78, 114, 131, 141, 159, 191).

Third, Hamilton's expositions include gems for meditation. Christians that read Hamilton's commentary on Revelation will find numerous paragraphs that cause them to pause, contemplate, examine themselves, pray, and worship. Believers would be wise to compile the most significant of these concepts for their own repeated, disciplined—even daily—"reality checks." In addition to its benefits for every Christian, pastors in particular will find several concepts that provide the foundation for whole sermons or whole series of sermons. Some of the little windows that invite further exploration and elaboration include how the four living creatures reflect God's glory (p. 148), the four OT allusions wrapped up in the imagery of Rev 11:4–6 (pp. 237–38), the marriage motif throughout Scripture (pp. 350–51), the connection that Hamilton draws between Rev 21 and 1 Cor 3:21–23 (pp. 387–88), the tree of life imagery throughout Scripture (p. 403), and the Bible's most fearful command (pp. 413–14).

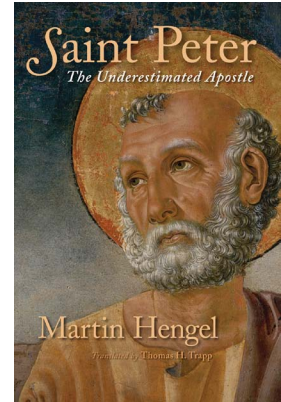
While the book overwhelmingly succeeds in its mission—to provide pastors with a compelling example of how to preach through Revelation—it nevertheless has a few weaknesses as a commentary: some frustrating typographic features, some lean explanations, and relatively limited interaction. Regarding the commentary's formatting, the book would better serve its readers if it employed footnotes rather than frustrating endnotes, if it had bolder headings, and if it included marginal verse notations for speedy reference (especially since Hamilton always follows the text in sequential order). Further, although some of Hamilton's expositions of OT allusions are glorious (e.g., Rev 1:12–16 [pp. 45–46]; 11:3–6 [pp. 237–29]; 12:1–2 [pp. 246–47]), many others provide little more than a cross-reference with a line or two of explanation (e.g., Zech 12:10 in Rev 1:7 [p. 38]; Ps 2:6–7 in Rev 2:26–27 [p. 101]; Is 22:22 in Rev 3:7 [p. 113]). Such limited explanations leave the reader unaware of the original context and of the sublime beauty of Revelation's climactic allusion. Finally, Hamilton's commentary evidences little interaction with varying interpretations and other secondary literature. Instead, he frequently provides only a brief rationale for his own interpretation, and when he does interact with other commentators, he relies almost exclusively on Bauckham, Beale, and Osborne.

However, although one might have wished that Hamilton had considered more interpretational options, his volume would then lose its preaching force. One might want Hamilton to interact with more commentaries, but then his comments might lose much of their impassioned, prophetic power. While a more technical, academic commentary on Revelation must have its place in the preacher's library, so should a sober, warm, evangelistic, direct, unencumbered commentary on Revelation. That is what Hamilton delivers. *Revelation* is profoundly inspiring and spiritually convicting from its first chapter. It is highly applicable and accessible because, rather than expending much effort in sorting through all of the interpretational options and all of the secondary literature before finally proving why he takes his position, Hamilton chooses to jump to the interpretational "bottom line" and invest most of his effort showing his hearers how the final 22 chapters of God's Word relate to them.

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Martin Hengel. *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle*. Translated by Thomas H. Trapp. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. xiv + 160 pp. \$18.00.

Martin Hengel's *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle* is the English translation of the German *Der unterschätzte Petrus. Zwei Studien* (Mohr Siebeck, 2006). As the German title suggests, the book is comprised of two studies. The first and most significant section is "Peter the Rock, Paul, and the Gospel Tradition" (pp. 1–102). Notable features of this section include the significance of Peter's identification as the "rock" in Matt 16 in relation to his central and authoritative role in the growth of the church; Peter's dominant presence in the four Gospels, with reasons that Peter is presented the way that he is; and the assertion that the dispute between Peter and Paul (recorded in Gal 2) was far deeper than many realise, lasting for many years and affecting their mission and teaching. Using textual, historical, and form-critical methods, Hengel's approach describes Peter's life and legacy not by treating the NT as historically reliable so much as by seeking to reconstruct what the "real Peter" may have looked like by looking *behind* the text. A three-page summary of this first section of the book quickly orients the reader to Hengel's overall perspective (pp. 100–102; see also Hengel's chronology of NT events and writings on pp. 135–37).



The second section of the book is "The Family of Peter and Other Apostolic Families" (pp. 103–34). It surveys the limited material available to us in biblical and extra-biblical sources, and makes some observations about the wives and families of the apostles, as well as the role of Christian women in the period spanning Jesus' ministry through to the third century A.D. As one would expect from Professor Martin Hengel (1926–2009), *Saint Peter* reflects an impressive familiarity with NT criticism and exegesis, theology, NT Apocryphal and Rabbinic studies, the apostolic fathers, as well as Greco-Roman sources.

For those who hold to the historical reliability of the NT documents, however, Hengel's heavy reliance upon the methods and assumptions of critical scholarship diminishes the value of his work. A few of comments can be made in this regard.

First, the lens of critical scholarship regularly leads Hengel to reject the historical claims of the text in order to offer less plausible alternatives supported by no extant documents. As already mentioned, a significant proportion of Hengel's work, by reading *behind* the NT, argues for a bitter, competitive, and long-lasting enmity between Peter and Paul (see esp. pp. 16–17). Hengel interprets the Gospels, the Book of Acts, 1–2 Corinthians, and parts of Philipppians and Romans in a way that supports his argument. For example, Hengel asserts,

Both apostles deeply wounded the other in the conflict at Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff.) and thus became opponents. This situation was not only still an issue in Galatians 2 but continued to have an effect in the later letters of the apostle and in his mission . . . about which Luke felt it necessary to pass over in silence because he wanted to present a harmonious picture about early Christianity. (pp. 52–53)

When arguing from Corinthians to support his case for the rivalry, Hengel daringly asserts that Paul's troublesome opponents in Corinth were "sent by the Petrine mission" (p. 92). Paul's mention of the

“super-apostles” “primarily refers to Peter, his friends in Antioch and Jerusalem, and his messengers” (p. 77). Such a radical and clearly problematic proposition requires far more defence than is given.

Second, it may have strengthened Hengel’s Petrine study if he had given more attention to the letters of 1 and 2 Peter. Although he considers them to be pseudonymous, others who deny Petrine authorship suggest a likely degree of consistency of thought between the later author (often considered to be a disciple of Peter or from a Petrine school) and the deceased apostle. As a result, the rich insights of 1 and 2 Peter into Peter’s character and theology have been overlooked and contradicted by Hengel’s propositions. One significant example, challenging Hengel’s assertion of rivalry between the apostles, is Peter’s affectionate referral to “our beloved brother Paul,” whose letters are not only to be heeded but are also, strikingly, equated with the “other Scriptures” (2 Pet 3:15–16).

Finally, *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle* presents Peter as one who was in some regards more “successful” than Paul. However, in the process of arguing his case, Hengel’s Peter and Paul consistently live below Jesus’s and their own ethical standards, displaying enduring immaturity, vengefulness, and self-interested behaviour as they vie for supremacy over each other. In my view, in order to make his case Hengel misdirects credit to Peter for what the NT reports as God’s work through Peter, such as conversions, miracles, and Spirit-inspired speeches. Similarly, regarding the privileged time Peter was given with Jesus Christ, Hengel credits Peter for it when stating, “The traditions about Jesus played a considerable role in [the church’s] mission, and Peter was in that respect superior to Paul, the more successful missionary to the Gentiles” (p. 102–3). Although Hengel uses many such arguments to assert Peter’s accomplishments and impressiveness, neither apostle comes out of it as positively as the NT’s own presentation of these humble, faithful fellow servants of their praiseworthy Lord. In the end, it could be well argued that Hengel’s portrayal of Peter underestimates him.

David K. Burge

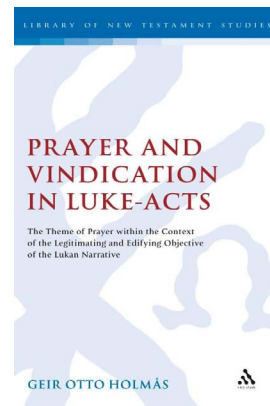
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Geir Otto Holmås. *Prayer and Vindication in Luke-Acts: The Theme of Prayer within the Context of the Legitimizing and Edifying Objective of the Lukan Narrative*. Library of New Testament Studies 433. London: T&T Clark, 2011. xvi + 300 pp. \$130.00.

A revised version of the author’s doctoral dissertation, *Prayer and Vindication in Luke-Acts* presents a sustained examination of the theme of prayer throughout Luke’s story of the life of Jesus and the birth of the church. As Holmås observes in his introductory chapter, the prominence of prayer in Luke and Acts has long been noted within Lukan scholarship. Yet prior treatments of this topic have struggled to uncover a clear and coherent conception of prayer within Lukan thought. Hence, the author seeks to move beyond this scholarly impasse by considering the theme of prayer in light of the overarching purposes of Luke’s narrative work.

Holmås’s analysis unfolds in three stages. First, part one of the book establishes a framework for the discussion by delineating the scope of the investigation and sketching the broad contours of Luke’s historiographic agenda. Drawing upon the



works of scholars such as Esler, Penner, Sterling, and Marguerat, Holmås finds two foundational concerns at work in Luke-Acts. On the one hand, as a historian, Luke offers his Christian readership an account of its origins, thereby legitimating the movement and renewing its awareness of its own identity. This legitimating project is accompanied by a second, pragmatic concern to educate the audience for faithful living in their present context. By depicting God at work in the lives of Jesus and the early leaders of the church, Luke provides examples to emulate and also demonstrates the faithfulness of God toward his people.

Having established a framework for his examination, Holmås then proceeds to consider the theme of prayer in Luke's Gospel. This second part of the book shows how the narrator's treatment of the theme of prayer is carefully crafted according to the temporal progression of Luke's Gospel. Thus, prayer features prominently in the infancy narrative, giving expression to Israel's hope for eschatological salvation. Once the public ministry of Jesus commences in Luke 3, the theme of prayer comes to center upon Jesus, as Jesus is the lone character in the body of Luke's Gospel that is actually depicted praying. Moreover, Jesus' instruction on prayer is recorded only in Luke's Gospel after his own habit of prayer has been firmly established before his disciples. In this way, Luke presents Jesus as the paradigmatic example of faithful prayer whose instruction on the matter is based upon his own pattern of prayer.

Part three extends the analysis by examining the theme of prayer in the book of Acts. Here the author underscores the devotion of the early Christian community to prayer, noting that the practice of prayer is closely connected to the growth and expansion of the community in Acts 1–12. This serves to confirm the divine favor that rests upon the movement. Likewise, in Acts 13–28, the theme of prayer helps to establish that the universalistic mission undertaken by Paul has been divinely sanctioned. Furthermore, the prayers of Paul in the latter half of Acts are depicted in such a way as to recall the pious Israelite expressions of faith at the beginning of Luke's Gospel, demonstrating the continuity between the burgeoning Christian movement and its Jewish ancestry. Finally, Holmås's work ends with a brief conclusion summarizing the author's central theses.

Among the many commendable features of this monograph, one must note Holmås's awareness of the narrative dynamics at work in Luke's presentation of the theme of prayer. By tracing instances of prayer throughout the plot of Luke and Acts, Holmås discovers a consistent pattern whereby the faithful prayers of God's people are met with a vindicating divine response. This pattern helps legitimate the Christian movement by showing its divine provenance, and the pattern also edifies Luke's audience with the assurance that their own perseverance in prayer will be vindicated by God. Hence, through his concern for the narrative development of Luke-Acts, Holmås has helpfully called attention to a feature of the theme of prayer that has previously been neglected within Lukan scholarship.

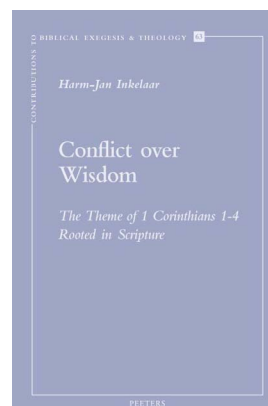
Occasionally, this true strength of Holmås's work also functions as one of its limitations. The sweeping scope of the analysis precludes a more sustained examination of individual passages. Each reference to prayer is treated in turn, and at times the reader is left with little sense of whether any particular passage is of special importance for the Lukan conception of prayer. For example, the same amount of space is devoted to Jesus's extensive instruction on prayer in Luke 18:1–8 (pp. 137–42) as the space devoted to the vague summary regarding the prayer habit of the early Jerusalem community in Acts 2:42 (pp. 174–79). Holmås wishes to avoid a reductionist approach that forces every prayer reference to conform to a single paradigm, but surely some passages are more central to the Lukan understanding of prayer than others. Some sense of proportion would lend coherence to Holmås's work by giving the reader a greater sense of what truly lies at the heart of Luke's perspective toward prayer.

Such criticisms aside, *Prayer and Vindication in Luke-Acts* might serve as a useful resource to those interested in the theme of prayer in Lukan thought. In particular, those preaching through Luke-Acts might treat this book as a reference work, consulting Holmås's commentary on specific passages and repackaging some of Holmås's narrative insights to tell the story of God's faithfulness in vindicating those first Christians who turned to him in prayer.

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Harm-Jan Inkelaar. *Conflict over Wisdom: The Theme of 1 Corinthians 1–4 Rooted in Scripture*. Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 63. Leuven: Peeters, 2011. xviii + 351 pp. £47.00.

In *Conflict over Wisdom*, Harm-Jan Inkelaar investigates the presence and function of the OT within 1 Cor 1–4. Instead of seeing Paul's argument about wisdom as unrelated to prior Scripture, the author finds Paul reasoning with the Corinthians from the OT. In doing so, Inkelaar effectively counters the notion that Paul's word of the cross is a brand new idea, unrelated to God's old ways of working. Inkelaar rightly declares that Paul is not advancing a completely different salvation-scheme from the past. To arrive at these conclusions about wisdom, Inkelaar uses a literary-historical method. Rather than examining 1 Cor 1–4 religious-historically, sociologically, or rhetorically, the author identifies specific OT texts found within 1 Cor 1–4 and then compares the context of these texts with that of Paul's writing in 1 Cor 1–4. He examines the OT within 1 Cor 1–4 intertextually. Inkelaar defines this sometimes ambiguous term as the "process that texts have absorbed parts of other texts" and "the approach that explores this phenomenon" (p. 26). He follows this approach faithfully throughout the rest of his volume, examining relevant passages related to wisdom within 1 Cor 1–4.



Inkelaar rightly highlights the unusually high concentration of words about wisdom within 1 Cor 1–4. For example, the word for wisdom, *sofia*, is present 16 times within 1 Cor 1–4. In comparison, it occurs a total of 19 times within Paul and 51 times within the rest of the NT. Other words such as *sofos* (wise), *mōria* (foolish), and *mōros* (fool) also occur in a high frequency in this section in comparison with other sections of the NT (p. 108). Attention within Corinthian scholarship has often focused on party strife, unity, and social conditions within this section. The conclusions about these concepts oftentimes influence the understanding of wisdom. But Inkelaar is correct in his approach to wisdom. He pays attention to the meaning of these words about wisdom and defines them in relationship to OT references that are explicitly or implicitly present within the text of 1 Corinthians.

He isolates thirteen OT texts that inform Paul's writing. These texts come mostly from Isaiah, but he notes that one emerges from Jeremiah, another from the Psalms, and one from Job. He investigates the broader context of each of these texts, sometimes considering ideas several chapters away from the particular text within the OT. He then brings these to bear on the interpretation of the passage within Corinthians.

His conclusions about the role of the OT are on firm footing. In agreement with F. Wilk, he sees the Scripture within 1 Cor 1–4 as forming a theological treatise to refute or correct false ideas. He also rightly shows that wisdom is a main issue within the Corinthian church. With the OT as a backdrop, Inkelaar concludes that wisdom is a large problem at Corinth. The problems are not solely religious, sociological, or political ones. The essential conflict is between the “wisdom of the world” and the “word of the cross.”

While Inkelaar has raised the importance of the problem with wisdom, it is uncertain whether he has gone too far with this conclusion. Other scholars have seen different problems at Corinth, such as division, sexual immorality, weak and strong brothers, insubordination, a misconception about eschatology, and spiritual gifts. *Conflict over Wisdom* has rightly raised the fact that wisdom is a significant problem, but it has not successfully established that the conflict with wisdom is greater than the other difficulties.

A contribution that *Conflict over Wisdom* makes is drawing attention to the influence of the breadth of the OT context on explicit and implicit references to the OT within Paul’s writing. The investigation of the presence and function of Scripture within 1 Corinthians has deserved more attention throughout the years, and this study rightly emphasizes the importance of the OT within Paul’s writing.

While Inkelaar’s study has much to commend it, he concludes that the conflict over wisdom within 1 Cor 1–4 derives from a Hellenistic Jewish misunderstanding of true wisdom. He finds the Jewish synagogue in Corinth to be highly influential and much more influential than what others believe. Because he holds this viewpoint, he thereby retreads James Davis’s approach from his book *Wisdom and Spirit*, which finds the Hellenistic Jewish tradition as the opponent. Inkelaar has not, however, established this conclusion sufficiently.

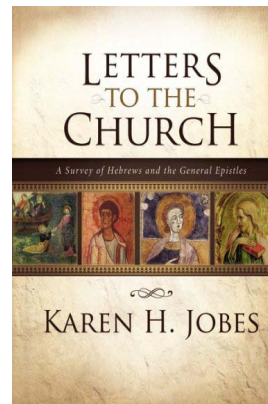
First, he has not reasoned sufficiently with other viewpoints about wisdom. Others have more convincingly declared that Greco-Roman secularism is the opponent within 1 Corinthians. This is particularly the case from the writings of Duane Litfin in *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation* and Bruce Winter in *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*; they find that the rhetorical words and practice of the sophists led to the wisdom that Paul is confronting. They draw specific attention to division, boasting, demonstration, wisdom, wealth, and power that could all be derived from Greco-Roman thought. Others like Andrew Clarke and Ben Witherington also see substantial overlaps with Greco-Roman secularism that would be manifest in the lives of those living in a Greco-Roman city. While Inkelaar acknowledges their views, he does not interact sufficiently with these other scholars within his volume. While the influence of the synagogue could be greater than considered, the more obvious opponent is Greco-Roman secular values that have infiltrated the church.

Furthermore, he has not interacted sufficiently with scholars who find that much of Hellenistic Jewish wisdom tradition agrees with the OT references that are present within 1 Cor 1–4. David Kuck, Brian Rosner, Roy Ciampa, and Drake Williams not only see the OT context but also much of early Jewish literature supporting Paul’s line of thinking within 1 Corinthians. While Inkelaar refers to these scholars at places within his work, he has not sufficiently interacted with their conclusions. *Conflict over Wisdom* will be a valuable book for those involved with Corinthian studies. It will also benefit those interested in intertextual studies.

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Karen H. Jobes. *Letters to the Church: A Survey of Hebrews and the General Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 496 pp. \$44.99.

Karen Jobes's introduction to Hebrews and the General Epistles begins with a short introduction, "How to Use This Book," with directions for both students and professors. That sort of user-friendliness marks the entire book, which she clearly wrote as a classroom tool. I mean that as a compliment, for it takes great awareness and experience to write a book of this size that is neither a commentary nor simply a recapitulation of other NT introductions. From its welcome to its concluding lexicon of all the boldface terms throughout the text and its bibliographies at the end of each chapter, this book is a lesson in pedagogy by an experienced professor.



Following a twenty-page general introduction, the book is divided into four parts: (1) four chapters on Hebrews; (2) four chapters on "Letters from Jesus' Brothers," namely, three chapters on James and one on Jude; (3) the Petrine correspondence, with a similar divide of three chapters on 1 Peter and one on 2 Peter; and (4) two chapters on the "Letters from John." These divisions alone bear witness to Professor Jobes' more conservative position, from assuming authorship by the Lord's brothers for James and Jude, to retaining the companionship of 1 and 2 Peter. These moves, however, do not mean a blind pedagogy, but with her usual care and clarity, Jobes introduces the issues and the history of scholarship on these issues. For instance, she allows regarding 2 Peter that "unless further historical evidence comes to light, it is unlikely that we will ever settle these issues with great certainty" (p. 367). Such academic humility is refreshing and forces the reader to take Jobes's work with great seriousness, for where she states a conclusion, it is on the basis of careful work.

The book is laid out well, from its wide margins useful for note-taking to its clear sectional divides and summaries. Perhaps one of the highlights of the book is the plethora of illustrations, photographs, maps, and break-out boxes with quotes, further definitions, or clarifications. Nearly every page has something of interest, whether a discussion of the Apostles' Creed, and in particular the line "he descended into hell," in the section on 1 Pet 3:18–22, to maps describing the ministry areas of Peter or John, to medieval paintings illustrating the "tree of vices" based on the seven deadly sins in a discussion on perfection and holiness in Hebrews. Likewise there are short quotes by other authors—and even pop singers—scattered throughout the margins, and breakout boxes with longer quotes, such as John Walton on what the Sabbath means for Christians today (p. 130), or showing (somewhat cheekily) how when Luther wrote on Romans, he defined "saving faith" exactly as James did (p. 221). All of these various elements serve to hold the attention of the distracted student while also revealing the breadth of Jobes's knowledge.

To take a brief look at one section, her section on James (a surprising three chapters, which warms this James scholar's heart!) divides perhaps not into the most expected categories. Reasonably the first of her three chapters asks the traditional questions of authorship, genre, themes, canonicity, and structure. She refuses, however, to allow the traditional (Pauline) questions posed James to force her hand regarding the major themes. Rightly, if unusually, her second chapter after the introductory questions examines the Christology of James, revealing James as a profoundly Christian document dependent upon the teaching of Jesus. She acknowledges that Q may have been a resource for James but refuses to assume Q-dependency, concluding, "James was expressing a form of Jesus' teaching that

predates the Gospels and was therefore preserving an important early snapshot of Jesus' teaching" (p. 192). From Christology, she moves into a chapter on the "Royal Law," under which she rightly includes her discussion of faith and works: unless one understands what James means by the "royal law of freedom," one is likely to fall into the misreading of the epistle that caught Luther. Jobes demonstrates that by reading James on its own terms, one is much less likely to misread it! This last chapter begins with extended discussions of ethics and the Greek Philosophers and of Jewish Wisdom—including a comparison chart with Proverbs, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon. She introduces the discussion of faith and works in this context, beginning with a quotation of Jas 3:13, and she ends with a warning: "James' most challenging and countercultural exhortation, then and today, is the call to repent of the false values that a love for increasing wealth and possessions instills" (p. 231).

That brief look through her work on James reveals this book to be a combination of textbook introduction and biblical theology. Regarding each major question, she provides a model for students of working through the various critical issues and then drawing a conclusion. The result of many years of teaching, this book is a valuable addition to the oft-neglected books at the back of the Bible, and I hope there are many institutions that build the space in their curriculum for the course for which this text calls.

Mariam J. Kamell

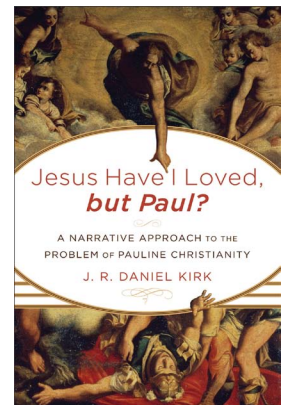
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J. R. Daniel Kirk. *Jesus Have I Loved, but Paul? A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011. 224 pp. \$21.99.

J. R. Daniel Kirk, assistant professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, thinks that too many Christians view the teaching of the Apostle Paul as he himself once did: full of rigid theological prescriptions, focused on the internal transformation of individuals at the expense of communal concerns, endorsing an authoritarian status quo at the expense of liberation. In response, Kirk invites readers to follow in his own footsteps by embracing an alternative reading of Paul. Our understanding of Paul (not Paul himself, Kirk stresses) must be "deconstructed" (p. 6). The means of this deconstruction is a narrative reading of Paul that sets his teaching within the story of Israel and maintains close contact with the teaching of Jesus.

In the first four chapters of the book, Kirk develops his approach. In a move that typifies the entire book, Kirk begins with the Gospels, which, he argues, stand in strong continuity with the story of Israel in the OT. The vision of holistic redemption that affects the entire creation in the Gospel narratives demands that evangelicals move beyond a concern with forgiveness of sins and the salvation of the individual to embrace a bigger understanding of "gospel" that includes establishing Christ's lordship over the entire earth and the redeemed community that Christ seeks to create. Read through a narrative lens, Paul's letters can be understood to fall into line closely with these Gospel-emphases.



In the next five chapters, Kirk applies this approach to four matters. Inclusion is a fundamental Pauline emphasis, one to which Paul's teaching on justification, properly interpreted, contributes significantly (note here Kirk's earlier book, *Unlocking Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008]). [Editor's note: Jason Meyer [reviewed](#) this book in *Themelios* 35.1.] The hierarchical view of gender roles often attributed to Paul can be modified and brought into line with other "liberative" texts in Paul and, importantly, with the testimony of the Gospels, when the concern to avoid undue offense in the first-century culture is factored into our interpretation. The same concern explains the apparent endorsement of social hierarchy in some Pauline texts. Fundamental to Paul's vision of redemption is a community of equals that actively pursues social justice—a vision that continues the strong emphasis on social justice in the teaching of Jesus. Finally, Kirk outlines Paul's sexual ethics from the standpoint of his narrative reading. Paul, as Jesus, is fundamentally concerned with faithfulness within marriage.

The arguments of Kirk's book will be familiar to those who have followed the writings of N. T. Wright, Scot McKnight, and John Franke (all quoted favorably). And, of course, there is much to be said for a movement that seeks to connect more effectively Paul with Jesus and both with their Jewish world. There is no doubt, also, that the problems all these scholars are trying to rectify—a preoccupation with the individual, a simplistic reading of Scripture that misses its larger themes, a focus on correct thinking to the neglect of faithful living—are genuine problems (even if not so widespread or blatant as Kirk's caricatures would suggest). Looked at in this light, Kirk's book is a useful corrective to certain unfortunate tendencies in some pockets of evangelicalism—a corrective that, by the way, is to be commended for its accessibility to a wide audience.

However, Kirk's attempt to rescue Paul from a certain imbalance creates an imbalance of its own. Arguing for a "narrative dynamic" in Paul is popular these days, and no doubt justified to the extent that a grand narrative underlies Paul's thinking about the significance of Christ. But Paul does not write narratives; he composes arguments that take up the stuff of this narrative. Kirk gives too little attention to specific statements (yes, even "propositions") in which Paul claims to provide definitive interpretation of this narrative and to specific commands and prohibitions by which Paul seeks to frame the way believers are to live out this narrative. To his credit, Kirk is well aware that his interpretive method—and especially, perhaps, the issues he chooses to emphasize—is open to the charge that he is reading certain contemporary cultural emphases into the letters of Paul (see pp. 138–39, 202). But his awareness of the problem does not mean he escapes it.

I am especially puzzled by his treatment of homosexuality at the end of the book. He accurately notes the clear condemnation of homosexuality in Paul, dismisses the claim that Jesus's silence on the issue should be determinative for us, notes that Paul is at this point running against his culture (in contrast to his apparent endorsement of patriarchy and slavery), and admits that we have no evidence of a Pauline endorsement of homosexuality. Clear enough, I would have thought. And yet Kirk then opens the door to the possibility that faithful homosexual unions may, after all, find a place within authentic Christian living. Faced with the pretty clear evidence that Kirk himself amasses, I found general and vague appeal to biblical principles to suggest that we might reconsider "the finality of the biblical depiction of heterosexual marriage as the only viable Christian option" (p. 185) to be quite unconvincing.

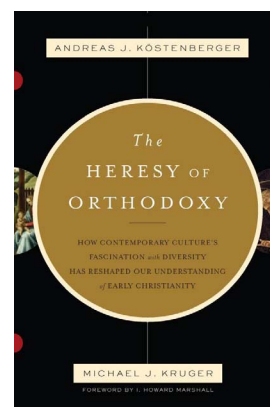
More generally, and more seriously, Kirk's approach to this issue may manifest his fundamental approach to biblical authority. Without minimizing the very real issues about our ability "objectively" to read Scripture, well known to all of us by now, I think Kirk's tendency to diminish the authoritative

voice of Scripture (p. 7)—or perhaps, in practice, the authority of particular pronouncements within Scripture—may play a role in his rather incoherent treatment of this issue.

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Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger. *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 250 pp. \$17.99.

In this book the authors attempt to respond both to Walter Bauer's 1934 book *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* and to how his ideas and approach have been picked up in the recent popular works of Bart Ehrman. The authors create a kind of synthesis in 'the Bauer-Ehrman Thesis', which is probably best understood as the view that within early Christianity 'heresy preceded orthodoxy' (so p. 25 and often). The authors take 'the Bauer-Ehrman thesis' as a challenge to the truth of orthodox Christianity and present themselves as defenders of the true orthodox faith against these (and other) challengers. The authors are very clear that they have an apologetic goal: to defend the truth claims of Christianity to the glory of God and the health of his people (see especially pp. 15–19, 233–35). This takes them into three major areas:



1. the question of the relative priority of orthodoxy and heresy within early Christianity (Part 1: The Heresy of Orthodoxy: Pluralism and the Origins of the New Testament)
2. the history of the formation of the NT canon collection (Part 2: Picking the Books: Tracing the Development of the New Testament Canon)
3. the transmission of the text of the NT (Part 3: Changing the Story: Manuscripts, Scribes, and Textual Transmission)

One of the strengths of the book is the range of issues tackled. It differs from the numerous other apologetic responses to Ehrman in its breadth (it deals with a wide range of material including both text and canon) and depth (it approaches the subject from the foundational theoretical and historical work of Walter Bauer).

It has to be admitted that some problems emerge at the outset with the title. I think the title, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, is suggesting that the orthodoxy that the authors defend would be regarded as heresy by many contemporary scholars (I may be wrong but that seems to be the point on p. 16). One might hope the title could have been helped by the subtitle, but that does not really help, since 'contemporary culture's fascination with diversity' is barely mentioned in the book (I found one paragraph on p. 39, a sentence or two on p. 154, and two paragraphs on pp. 233–34); the core of the book is about the argument and influence of an eighty-year-old book. Given the significance of the key terms, one would hope for some clear and careful definitions of 'orthodoxy' on the one hand and 'heresy' on the other. I couldn't find a definition of 'heresy'; but 'orthodoxy' is defined as 'correct teaching regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ, including the way of salvation, in contrast to teaching regarding Jesus that deviates from standard norms of Christian doctrine' (pp. 70–71). But this does not address the

fundamental question as to how or by whom ‘correct teaching’ or ‘standard norms’ may be determined. The authors pretty much assume this was all settled by the apostles in A.D. 40–50.

In the first part the authors discuss ‘The Bauer-Ehrman Thesis’ (or sometimes more simply ‘the Bauer thesis’). They argue that Bauer was wrong to think that in various places in the ancient world heretical forms of Christianity are attested earlier than orthodoxy within the extant historical evidence. They argue that in Asia Minor, Egypt, Edessa, and Rome orthodox forms of Christianity preceded heresy. They make some good points against Bauer’s thesis, even if not all of their arguments are equally convincing, since occasionally they depend on arguments from silence (as on p. 45 about the memory of Paul in Asia Minor) or presumption (as on p. 49 where they argue that since the nature of Marcionism was a corrective to existing orthodoxy ‘it may be surmised that an element of Pauline or Jewish Christianity was present in Edessa that Marcionism subsequently sought to correct’). One might have wished for some interaction with Bauer’s actual arguments (often they look at the same evidence as Bauer, but they never take the time, even once, to show that the detailed argument with which Bauer’s book abounds, is wrong); and others would be willing to concede points of detail (e.g., we know the names of Gnostic teachers active in the middle of the second century in Egypt, such as Basilides, Valentinus, and Carpocrates, a generation before any named orthodox Christian leader), but our authors seem determined not only to win the battle, but also every minor skirmish.

In the second part the authors deal with the history and also with the theology of the NT canon. This is not so much an argument against Bauer as against Bauer’s followers and the views of Ehrman in particular. It also moves decisively away from the normally constrained style of historical argumentation to attribute the recognition of canonical books directly to the operation of the Holy Spirit at work in the early church (e.g., pp. 122f., 126, 129, 136; elsewhere the authors claim to argue as ‘scholars’[p. 18] and ‘historians’[p. 229]). As a theological appreciation of the NT as a canonical collection, this section has some intrinsic and creative value; as a historical argument against the Bauer thesis, it will have less purchase, one suspects, since our authors take it that it is the anti-supernatural assumptions of the Bauer-Ehrman outlook which involves an unwarranted trust in (a-theological) assumptions (pp. 154–55; cf. p. 171 re ‘myopically focusing only on the human element’) and since the appeal to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the canon-forming activities of the early church is not attached to any historical actuality (it is invoked repeatedly, but without any specificity—it would appear to be a statement of faith rather than historical judgement).

In the third part of the book, the authors address the accusation attributed to Ehrman that the text of the NT has not been transmitted accurately (how exactly this section relates to Bauer’s work is not made clear). Our authors assert that since we have so many manuscripts it is likely that the original text is preserved somewhere among them, that most scribal changes are minor and insignificant, that among significant variations we can usually determine the original text, and that the remainder of unresolved variants are few in number and not very important. These assertions are supported by discussion of some sample passages and the occasional critique of Ehrman’s popular writing (of his scholarly writing they are surprisingly respectful and positive, pp. 221–22).

I think this book offers a useful overview of some of the issues it deals with. From my perspective it looks a bit like the authors react to an overemphasis on ‘diversity’ in some areas of contemporary scholarship, with their own overemphasis on ‘orthodoxy’. I also think there is a tendency to present complex issues in a polarized either-or type of manner and without a significant level of directly documented engagement with Bauer’s book and the relevant historical and textual details. A clearer

articulation of their theistic historiography would also have been welcome since the lack of clarity on acceptable levels of assumption and method of argument have a significant impact on the success (or otherwise) of their engagement with the achievement of Bauer: it is not only the evidence and argument appealed to by Bauer, but his general method that has proven influential.

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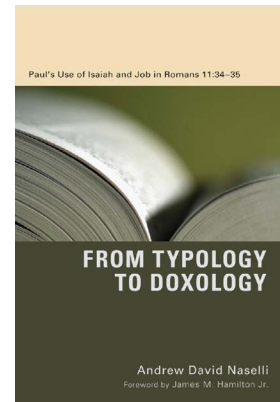
Andrew David Naselli. *From Typology to Doxology: Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012. xii + 201 pp. £16.00/\$24.00.

From Typology to Doxology: Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35 is based on Andrew Naselli's 2010 PhD dissertation written at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Naselli's particular research problem is how Paul uses Isa 40:13 and Job 41:3a (Eng. 41:11a) in Rom 11:34–35. To address this, Naselli utilizes and largely follows the six-part approach that G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson outline in the introduction of their *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007): NT context; OT context; textual issues; relevant uses of the OT passage in Jewish literature; the NT author's hermeneutical warrant for using the OT in the NT; and the NT author's theological use of the OT in the NT (pp. 2–6).

Naselli begins by examining Rom 11:34–35 in context, first with a wide-angle lens on Romans and gradually zeroing in on the passage itself. He suggests that the theme of Romans is “the gospel in its salvation-historical context for Jews and Gentiles” (p. 11). He suggests that the theme of Rom 9–11 is “the vindication of God's righteousness, faithfulness, and integrity, namely, that God has kept and will keep his covenant promises to Israel” (p. 13). He interprets 9:6b–11:32 as Paul's answer to the question in 9:6a: “has God reneged on his promises to Israel?” (p. 14). Naselli then helpfully organizes 9:6b–11:32 into four parts, each summarizing Paul's argument:

1. 9:6b–20. “God's covenantal promises to Israel do not guarantee that every ethnic Israelite will necessarily be saved” (pp. 14–15).
2. 9:30–10:21. “Israelites are accountable to God for their unbelief,” culpable for failing to “embrace God's righteousness in Christ” (pp. 16–17).
3. 11:1–10. “Even though the majority of Israelites are rejecting Christ, God's covenantal promises to Israel are still being fulfilled in some Israelites who are being saved” (p. 17).
4. 11:11–32. “Israel's fall is temporal, not final” and results in the inclusion of the Gentiles, which will result in the inclusion of Israel (p. 17).

Naselli proposes that Rom 11:33–36 contains three strophes, “each with a group of three components” (note the excellent chart on p. 29). Strophe 1 (11:33) contains three exclamations about God: his riches, wisdom, and knowledge are deep; his judgments are unsearchable; and his ways are unfathomable (pp. 29–33). Strophe 2 (11:34–35) raises three rhetorical questions and through them asserts that humans cannot understand God's ways, cannot counsel God, and cannot consider God to



be in debt to them (pp. 33–35). Strophe 3 (11:36) sets forth three prepositional phrases highlighting that God is the source, means, and goal of all things. All this resounds to the concluding doxology.

Naselli then examines Isa 40:13 and Job 41:3a in context, respectively. He interprets Isaiah as urging people to trust God as the incomparable King and Savior (pp. 42–48). Isaiah 40–66 stresses God’s comfort and restoration of his people. Chapter 40 highlights God’s incomparability to underscore his ability to restore his people (pp. 48–55). Isaiah 40:13 affirms that no one gives God advice due to his unrivaled wisdom and incomparable greatness (pp. 55–62).

Naselli interprets Job as urging people to “respond to innocent, unexplained suffering by trusting God because he is supremely wise, sovereign, just, and good” (p. 77). God’s interrogation of Job in 38:1–42:6 is instructive: “God is too small in Job’s eyes; Job is too large in his own eyes; God is not obligated to give Job anything, not even answers to his questions; and only God is all-wise” (p. 90; cf. pp. 84–87). In Job 41:2–3, God teaches Job these lessons, particularly urging Job to see his need for humility and to realize that God’s ownership of him means that God does not owe Job anything (pp. 87–90).

Naselli then addresses relevant textual issues (pp. 91–98) as well as the relevant usage of Isa 40:13 and Job 41:3a in Jewish literature (pp. 99–116). Concerning the textual issues, he concludes that the integrity of Isa 40:13, Job 41:3a, and Rom 11:34–35 is “unassailable” (p. 98). Concerning the usage in Jewish literature, Naselli concludes that the few uses of Job 41:3a are insignificant for the discussion. Two themes emerge related to the usage of Isa 40:13 in Jewish literature: “humans cannot fully understand God’s thoughts and ways” (p. 115), and “the only humans who can acquire a degree of God’s wisdom are those to whom God reveals himself” (p. 116).

Next Naselli assesses Paul’s hermeneutical warrant for using these passages in Rom 11:34–35 (pp. 117–45). Here he explains and applies Douglas Moo’s survey of types of warrant: borrowed language; alternative points of view; Jewish exegetical methods; *sensus plenior*; generic OT expression; fulfillment of a specific prediction; the larger OT context; application; canonical approach; and typology (pp. 118–28). Naselli concludes that two apply to Paul’s use of the OT in Rom 11:34–35: the larger OT contexts and typology (pp. 128–45).

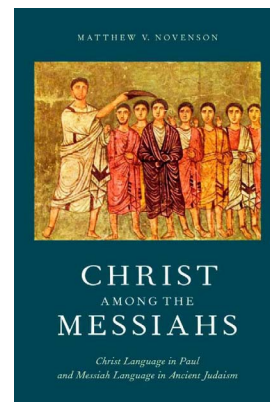
Naselli subsequently sets forth Paul’s theological use of Isa 40:13 and Job 41:3a in Rom 11:34–35. He proposes, “The three rhetorical questions in Rom. 11:34–35 communicate three of God’s characteristics that correspond inversely to his attributes in Rom. 11:33a, and they all correspond to his ways in salvation history” (p. 146). God is incomprehensible; his knowledge is deep (11:34a); God is without counselors; his wisdom is deep (11:34b); and God is without creditors; his riches are deep (11:35).

From Typology to Doxology bears the strengths of a dissertation but few of the weaknesses. It is meticulously structured, well argued, evenhanded, and heavily documented. And it is also written lucidly, generous in spirit, and even pastoral in tone, though it is often repetitious (the chapter summaries elucidate the argument but routinely quote verbatim the previous conclusions). Overall, this volume is timely and contributes to the growing literature on the use of the OT in the NT. It helpfully clarifies and applies both Beale and Carson’s method for examining the NT use of the OT, as well as Moo’s work on hermeneutical warrant. It offers an exegetically careful and theologically nuanced treatment of Rom 9–11 in general and 11:33–36 in particular. And it serves as a model for others who want to research how specific NT passages use the OT.

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Matthew V. Novenson. *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. xiii + 239 pp. \$74.00/£45.00.

One of the oddities of the past two centuries of Pauline scholarship is the standard view that despite close to 300 instances of Paul referring to Jesus as “Christ” in his epistles, Paul (supposedly) did not regard Jesus as Israel’s Messiah in any meaningful way. In almost every instance of the occurrence of *Christos* in Paul’s epistles, so the theory goes, the term has lost its conventional titular meaning and has been turned into a proper name. Novenson’s work seeks to undo this paradox by arguing that in Paul *Christos* does, indeed, mean Messiah. Rather than focus on titles/key terms or Jewish texts as parallels or background information, Novenson wants “to know what conventions existed whereby ancient Jewish authors spoke of messiahs and how Paul’s use of the word fits among these conventions” (p. 5). In other words, he is not attempting to discern what ideas or texts may have influenced Paul, but rather “what the linguistic system was in which ancient Jewish messiah texts, including Paul’s letters, made sense” (p. 9).



Chapter 1 sets forth the “state of the question” and shows how the study of Messiah-language in Paul has often been influenced by and wed to other concerns. So for F. C. Baur, Paul’s use of *Christos* cannot mean anything like Israel’s anointed Messiah given that Paul’s mission is to free Christianity from the gross particularism of Judaism. For Wilhelm Bousset and the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, it is the Hellenistic “Lord-cult” and the title “Lord” that is important for Paul, not the early Jewish confession of Jesus as Messiah that would have had no significance for Gentile churches. Nils Dahl’s essay on the matter argues by way of four philological and grammatical observations that *Christos* as Messiah may be *assumed* by Paul but is not emphasized. In the wake of the renewed interest in the Jewishness of Paul, however, there have been some recent voices hinting that the majority interpretation may not provide the best take on the Pauline evidence.

Chapter 2 argues that Paul’s messiah-language does not depend upon its conformity to a Jewish messianic ideal or to the possible psychological messianic expectation of Paul’s hearers, but rather “could be used meaningfully in antiquity because it was deployed in the context of a linguistic community whose members shared a stock of common linguistic resources” (p. 47). The Jewish Scriptures, of course, provide precisely this shared linguistic resource wherein Paul’s messiah-language can be understood. Novenson notes that messiah-texts almost invariably draw upon a small pool of biblical passages and develop them in creative ways to talk about their messiah (e.g., Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; 2 Sam 7:12–13; Isa 11:1–2). Novenson refers to the transformation of these sources as “creatively biblical linguistic acts,” of which Paul’s messiah passages have been wrongly excluded by scholarship.

Chapter 3 argues that Paul’s use of *Christos* is neither a proper name nor a title, but is rather an honorific that can be used in combination with the individual’s proper name or can stand in for the proper name. Octavian, for example, took the honorific “Augustus” after his defeat of Antony at the Battle of Actium. The Hasmonean patriarch Judah ben Mattathias took the honorific “Maccabee” in lieu of his military exploits. And the Seleucid kings are well-known for attaching honorifics to their names (e.g., “Seleucus the Victor,” “Antiochus God-Manifest”). These examples are neither titles of office nor mere names, but honorable names granted to its bearer because of military victories, accessions

to power, or some honorable deed. Thus, Paul uses *Christos* as an honorific for Jesus to identify his “inalienable uniqueness” (p. 97).

Chapter 4 sets forth the relevant Pauline *Christ*-phrases to decide whether they are relevant to the issue of messianism in Paul. He argues that Paul’s varied usage of the “Christ,” “Jesus Christ,” and “Christ Jesus” makes sense within the conventions of Greek honorifics. He responds to each of Dahl’s grammatical arguments against *Christos* meaning messiah in Paul, and he concludes that they are faulty as a means for determining, either negatively *or* positively, whether *Christos* means Messiah.

Chapter 5 is the heart of Novenson’s book, and it is here that he sets forth specific texts where “Paul does all that we normally expect any ancient Jewish or Christian text to do to count as a messiah text and that in no case does he ever disclaim the category of messiahship” (p. 138). Thus, in Gal 3:16, Paul interprets the Abrahamic promises through the promises made to David for a royal successor. In 1 Cor 15:20–28, Paul uses Davidic psalms as testimony about the Messiah. In Rom 9:4–5, Paul constructs a “messianically oriented history of Israel” that culminates in the messiah (p. 151). In Rom 15:3, 9, Paul adduces the royal Pss 69 and 18 as the spoken words of Jesus the Messiah. And in Rom 15:7–12, Novenson claims that Paul understands his mission to bring forth “the obedience of the Gentiles” as “dependent on his conviction that Jesus is the *χριστός* spoken of in the scriptural oracles” (p. 160). Novenson concludes,

[I]n these and other passages, Paul’s prose does all that we normally expect any ancient Jewish or Christian text to do to count as a messiah text. He writes at length and in detail about a character whom he designates with the Septuagintal word *χριστός*, and he clarifies what he means by this polysemous term in the customary way—by citing and alluding to certain scriptural source texts rather than others. Paul’s letters meet all of the pertinent criteria for early Jewish Messiah language. (p. 172)

I heartily concur with Novenson’s thesis that the Messiahship of Jesus is crucial for understanding Paul’s epistles and is one of the most important sources of his thinking. While others have gone before Novenson in suggesting this (one thinks of N. T. Wright, Richard Hays, and William Horbury, to name only a few), I expect his full-length study will contribute to overturning the scholarly consensus that *Christos* is an insignificant proper name in Paul’s letters and will also open avenues for further research. While I had hoped for more exegetical rigor and creativity in his final pay-off chapter, the way is prepared for further examination of Paul’s messianic discourse.

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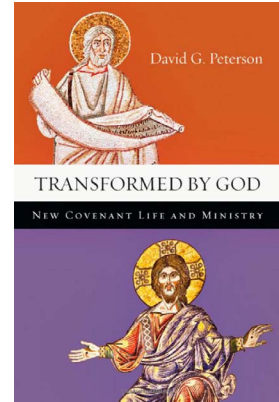
David G. Peterson. *Transformed by God: New Covenant Life and Ministry*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012. 192 pp. \$20.00.

Anyone familiar with the work of David Peterson has come to expect work of the highest caliber. His numerous books always exhibit a thorough exegesis, a careful reading of texts within the storyline of Scripture, and a practical application for the church. *Transformed by God* is no exception. The first four chapters were originally given as a series of lectures in May 2011 at the Oak Hill College Annual School of Theology in London, England. Peterson served as the Principal of Oak Hill from 1996 to 2007 before assuming his present post of senior research fellow and lecturer in New Testament at Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia. Since giving the lectures, he added two more chapters to complete the book.

As Peterson notes in the “Introduction,” the purpose of the book is to expound upon the Bible’s teaching regarding the new covenant. Peterson argues that the new covenant “is central to NT thinking about the saving work of Christ and the way it is appropriated by believers” (p. 15). It is only when we grasp the nature of the new covenant, Peterson insists, that we will understand “the differences between pre-Christ and post-Christ experiences of God” and how “the Christian dispensation is a fulfillment and perfection of the covenant first established by God with Abraham and his offspring” (p. 15), let alone comprehend the profound practical implications for Christian ministry. Such areas as evangelism, the nurture of believers, and NT teaching on perseverance, growth, and change are all grounded in new covenant realities.

Chapter 1, “The New Covenant in Jeremiah,” begins by setting the stage for the subsequent chapters. It is a model in exegesis and biblical theology. Peterson discusses Jeremiah’s new covenant prophecy (Jer 31:31–34) by placing it first within the book of Jeremiah and then in relationship to other OT prophets who also speak of and anticipate the dawning of the new covenant age (e.g., Isa 11:16–20; 42:6; 49:8; 54–55; Joel 2:28–29; Ezek 11:17–20; 36:26–28; 37). By doing so, he avoids atomistic exegesis and demonstrates that the new covenant promise includes a larger hope that includes the anticipation of a new Davidic king, a new Zion tied to a new creation, a new community comprised of Jews and Gentiles, and most significantly a new act of salvation. Peterson also contends that in the OT, when the new covenant dawns, all of the previous covenants in redemptive-history are “reaffirmed and fulfilled” (p. 39; cf. pp. 42–43). In this way, the new covenant is no mere renewal of the older covenants; it is “new” and specifically in three areas: (1) God writes the law “on their hearts” (Jer 31:33) thus fulfilling God’s promise to circumcise the heart of his people (Deut 30:6) so that they will love and obey God wholeheartedly; (2) the entire covenant community will “know the Lord” salvifically, which includes the elect from Israel and from the nations; and (3) the new covenant will be an unbreakable covenant given the definitive forgiveness of sins it achieves (Jer 31:34). “Radical forgiveness is the basis for the promised spiritual and moral transformation of the people” (p. 35).

In the remaining five chapters, Peterson develops how the new covenant promise is worked out in the NT, first in Jesus and then in its application to the church. In chapter 2, “Israel and the Nations Renewed,” he begins with Luke-Acts. Not only does Jeremiah’s prophecy provide the interpretative key to the Last Supper (Luke 22:20), but throughout Luke-Acts, the fulfillment of God’s plan of redemption for Israel and the nations is viewed in new covenant terms. Peterson nicely demonstrates how central



the new covenant is to Luke-Acts by walking through the opening chapters of Luke, which announce the coming of Christ in new covenant categories; examining Christ's ministry, which uniquely focuses on the centrality of forgiveness of sins in him; and unpacking Christ's cross, resurrection, and the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost and the incorporation of the nations into God's people. Specifically, he develops the crucial Christ-Spirit link that brings to fulfillment OT expectation. In the new covenant, the Spirit "is not simply given to equip believers for service but to make possible the sort of transformed relationship with God promised in passages such as Isaiah 32:15–17; 44:2–5; Ezekiel 11:19–20; 36:26–27" (p. 64).

In chapter 3, "The Renewal of Worship," Peterson turns to Hebrews, where Jeremiah's prophecy is more directly prominent than any other NT book. He nicely links Christ's high priestly work to the new covenant promises and how Christ's substitutionary death is what is necessary to secure the definitive forgiveness Jeremiah anticipated. At the heart of the problem with the old covenant is sin. Fundamentally, the old covenant was unable "to maintain the people in faithfulness to God and to prevent them from experiencing his wrath" (p. 82). But in Christ, sin is definitely dealt with, a new heart is now secured, and the new covenant promises now become a reality in our lives in an "already-not yet" fashion. In addition, Peterson wrestles with the warnings of Hebrews in light of the unbreakable nature of the new covenant. He concludes that genuine Christians cannot fall away, yet people "can be caught up in a group experience, without being genuinely converted. . . . Hebrews has in view those who see clearly where the truth lies, conform to it for a while, and then, for various reasons, renounce it" (p. 97). Ultimately all true believers persevere to the end. As in every chapter, Peterson concludes by drawing helpful pastoral application. In this case, he challenges Christians to maintain the balance between warning and assurance, urging us to press on in the knowledge of God and his grace with the accent on the assurance of sins forgiven in Christ.

In chapters 4–6, Peterson focuses on "New Covenant Ministry" (e.g., 2 Cor 3–4), "Hearts and Lives Transformed" (e.g., Rom 2:12–15, 25–29; 5:1–5; 6; 11:26–27; 12:1–2; Gal 4:24–28), and "The Transforming Knowledge of God" (e.g., John, 1 John 2:20). Peterson leaves no stone unturned as he sets each new covenant text within its immediate and then canonical context. He demonstrates that Jeremiah's promise occurs everywhere in the NT and is foundational to the gospel itself. Ultimately what the new covenant brings is transformation: *spiritually* (in our relation to God), *morally* (enabling a new life of obedience and service), and *physically* (allowing us to share in Christ's resurrection from death in a new creation). "What law was seeking to achieve for Israel is now accomplished for believers in Christ through the ministry of the gospel by the enabling of the Spirit," and foundational to this knowledge is "the certainty of justification by faith and of trespasses not being counted against those who believe" (p. 126). All of these realities are central to the new covenant being worked out in the church.

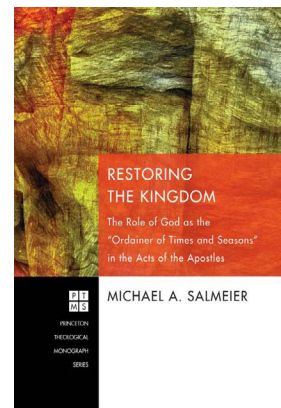
The strengths of Peterson's work are numerous: solid exegesis, biblical theology at its best, and application rooted in new covenant realities. The only weakness is I would have liked to see him apply some of his conclusions to ongoing debates within systematic theology, specifically the differences in how dispensational and covenant theology view the new covenant. Is the new covenant community the "new Israel"? If so, is there a future role for ethnic Israel? Is the new covenant community best viewed as a regenerate community or still a "mixed" entity like Israel of old? Given the tight linkage of the Spirit, forgiveness of sin/justification, and heart transformation for *all* those in the new covenant, must one not affirm that the church is a regenerate community, a people in faith union with Christ by the Spirit? If not, why not? If so, what implications does this have for ecclesiology? However, a book can only do

so much, and regardless of this weakness, I highly recommend this book to anyone who desires to think deeply about the glory of Christ and his new covenant work.

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Michael A. Salmeier. *Restoring the Kingdom: The Role of God as the “Ordainer of Times and Seasons” in the Acts of the Apostles*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 165. Eugene: Pickwick, 2011. xii + 212 pp. \$25.00.

Lamenting the scholarly neglect of the theology of the book of Acts, Michael Salmeier's *Restoring the Kingdom* seeks to trace the contours of the characterization of God in Luke's history of the early church. The work, a revised version of the author's Oxford doctoral thesis, begins by identifying ten traits that must be present for any successful analysis of the theology of Acts. These criteria provide a basis for a critique of previous works, and they help set an outline for Salmeier's own investigation. The author advocates a pragmatic reader-response approach to the theology of Acts, and thus in chapter two, Salmeier attempts to describe the basic conception of God that the implied reader is likely to have held prior to reading Acts. The author finds that the implied reader is likely to have been familiar with the Septuagint and sympathetic toward Jewish tradition. Hence, the Jewish Scriptures and the literature of early Judaism serve as the crucial “extra-texts” that inform the perspective from which the implied reader of Acts perceives the narrative.



Having summarized the vantage point of the implied reader, Salmeier then turns to an analysis of the characterization of God in Acts in the remainder of the book. *Restoring the Kingdom* blends a thematic and sequential approach to the discussion, with each new chapter of Salmeier's work tracing out the development of a different theological theme over the course of Acts. For Salmeier, the initial portrayal of God in Acts 1:1–8 is determinative for the rest of the narrative, establishing the reader's expectations for how the plot of Acts will unfold. Accordingly, on the basis of Jesus' implicitly affirmative statement regarding the restoration of the kingdom in Acts 1:6–8, the reader of Acts expects that the long-awaited restoration of the kingdom will be accomplished by God shortly within the narrative. As the story progresses, this expectation is met, as the narrator closely connects the activities of God, Jesus, and the Spirit to demonstrate the in-breaking of God's spiritual kingdom among his people. Thus, the hope for the restoration of Israel is satisfied in a surprising way. Still, Salmeier attempts to show how the narrator retains a future hope for ethnic Israel even as he describes the fulfillment of God's kingdom promises to Israel in the present life of the church. Through his examination of several different “strands” of the characterization of God, the author ultimately concludes that in Acts God is portrayed as the agent controlling the action of the narrative, ordaining the times and seasons of salvation history and restoring his kingdom through the work of his Spirit and the reign of his exalted Son upon his heavenly throne.

Restoring the Kingdom offers a number of helpful insights into the theology of Acts. The author is surely right to critique those who find divine activity in Acts only in those places that explicitly mention

God. In addition, the author successfully shows how the characterization and activity of Jesus and the Spirit are closely associated with the characterization and activity of God within the narrative. Salmeier attends closely to the scriptural resonances throughout Acts, and though some of his interpretive proposals may not be entirely compelling, the author's ambitious reading of Acts at the very least demonstrates the vast potential for meaning embedded within the text of Scripture.

Still, important aspects of Salmeier's methodology are problematic. Salmeier initially acknowledges that Luke's Gospel would have been an important "extra-text" for the implied reader of Acts (p. 12). However, in his actual sketch of the background conceptions of the implied reader in chapter two, Salmeier relies exclusively upon conceptions of God derived from the OT and the literature of early Judaism. Certainly the author's subsequent discussion of Acts incorporates evidence from Luke's Gospel in a piecemeal fashion, yet it is curious that theological conceptions derived from Luke's Gospel would not factor more prominently into Salmeier's understanding of the implied reader, given that the third Gospel is the one "extra-text" that the book of Acts unambiguously mentions as part of the background knowledge of the audience (Acts 1:1). Additionally, Salmeier leaves unaddressed the question of the implied reader's knowledge of broader Christian tradition, which one might suppose could be an important concern in light of the presumed Christian identity of Luke's readership.

Ultimately, one might even question the extent to which Salmeier's approach is actually reader-oriented, for in the final analysis very few of Salmeier's conclusions are derived from the type of considerations that have typically been the domain of reader-response approaches to the NT (e.g., the temporal arrangement of the narrative, differences in awareness between the reader and the characters of the story world). Instead, Salmeier's pragmatic reader-response approach consists primarily of a sustained engagement with the literary and religious milieu of the book of Acts. This approach differs little from conventional historical-critical exegesis, except perhaps in the author's interest in proving that the intended readership of Acts would have been aware of the subtleties in Acts that Salmeier detects.

Thus, *Restoring the Kingdom* is a mixed bag of perceptive observations encased within an overarching methodology that is flawed in multiple respects. As an alternative, one might consider Alan Thompson's recent *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus* as a more accessible and methodologically sound introduction to the theology of Acts. [Editor's note: Thomas Schreiner [reviewed](#) Thompson's book in *Themelios* 36.3.]

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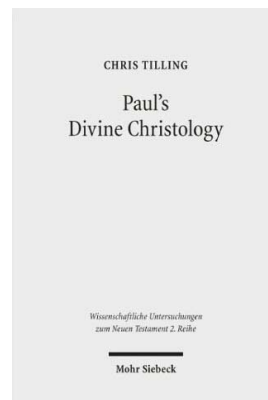
Chris Tilling. *Paul's Divine Christology*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 323. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012. xii + 322 pp. £69.00/\$137.50.

This is a lightly revised version of Tilling's PhD thesis completed under Max Turner in 2009. Tilling presents the case for viewing Paul's Christology as divine. While others have recently argued for a similar conclusion, Tilling's work represents a significant methodological step forward in securing the validity of a divine Christology for Paul.

Tilling begins by presenting a history of research, concentrating on post-1970s scholarship and the works of Fee, Hurtado, and Bauckham in particular. Tilling essentially agrees with each of these scholars in their shared conclusion regarding a divine Christology for Paul. However, he also argues that each of their proposals is methodologically limited, thus rendering their (otherwise valid) conclusions vulnerable to critique. So, Tilling argues, while Fee attempts a primarily exegetical treatment of Paul's Christology, he fails to recognize how much his approach is shaped by 'Aristotelian, and unPauline, metaphysics' (p. 5). This is particularly seen in his concentration on pre-existence as a defining christological category. Similarly, regarding Hurtado's approach (viz. considering Paul's Christology from the angle of cultic devotion), Tilling wonders to what extent Hurtado's understanding of devotion is something Paul himself would recognise (p. 5). Further, it has been claimed that devotion to Christ in Paul's letters does not actually equate to worship (e.g., Dunn, Schrage, Casey). Finally, Tilling notes the weakness in Bauckham's approach, namely, the category of divine 'identity' may not be quite as water-tight as his thesis requires (e.g., the Son of Man in the *Similitudes of Enoch*).

Tilling does not deny the legitimate aspects of the approaches of Fee, Hurtado, and Bauckham but offers what he sees as a more comprehensive and, in the end, more Pauline articulation of Paul's Christology, namely, that it be considered in terms of the *relation* between Christ and believers. Tilling suggests that the pattern of 'relation' is fundamental to Paul's theology and his epistemology. It is thus a valid lens through which to view the Pauline data. When it is examined, Tilling maintains that Paul sees the relationship between believers and the risen Lord as corresponding to the language concerning the relationship to YHWH in Second Temple Judaism.

The heart of Tilling's thesis occurs in chapters 5–8, where he examines the Pauline data in detail. He begins with an examination of 1 Cor 8–10. This chapter is a model of careful exegesis, and Tilling convincingly shows how Paul expresses his commitment to faith in the one God as opposed to idols *and* that he expresses this commitment *christologically* in terms of the relationship between believers and the risen Lord. Further, he expresses this relation in terms and categories drawn from 'the complex of themes and concepts that, in the Jewish scriptures, describe the relation between Israel and YHWH against idolatry' (p. 76). That is, for Paul the relationship between Christ and believer corresponds to the Israel-God relation in Scripture and Second Temple Judaism. Chapter 6 then surveys this relational pattern across the undisputed Pauline letters. This is the longest chapter in the book, and in it Tilling is seeking to grasp the key contours and aspects of Paul's 'Christ-relation.' Tilling convincingly shows that the relation between believer and risen Lord is portrayed with the same character (and in some places the same language) as the relationship between Israel and YHWH in the writings of Second Temple Judaism. Chapter 7 steps back to argue that the category of 'relation' is not simply authentically Pauline,



but centrally so. Chapter 8 concludes this section of the thesis by offering an extended treatment of 1 Cor 16:22.

Tilling then turns to consider how his thesis is able to withstand the critiques which have been levelled against Hurtado and Bauckham in particular. So chapter 9 examines Jewish devotion to figures other than God (e.g., praised Ancestors in Sirach 44–50, Adam in *Life of Adam and Eve*, the Son of Man in the *Similitudes of Enoch*). This devotion is often used to criticise the idea that ‘worship’ in Second Temple Judaism can be used to establish the strict transcendent uniqueness of God. Tilling shows that these texts *do* repeatedly assume a strict Jewish monotheism but that this is maintained not in terms of worship, but in terms of a broader *God-relation*. Thus, he argues, these texts essentially parallel the relation found in the Pauline letters between the believer and the risen Lord.

The book concludes with a helpful summary chapter and an appendix that suggests how the christological insights—and in particular this *relational* methodology—might have wider implications for theological discourse and the Christian life.

This is an extremely well-argued, clear and convincing thesis. It is a genuinely stimulating work and is the antithesis of the all-too-typical dense and turgid published PhD thesis. The subject matter and conclusions could hardly be more significant, and as such, I think Tilling has provided us with an extremely important work which deserves the widest possible circulation.

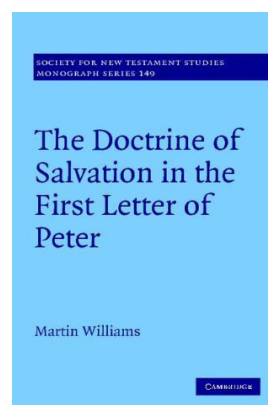
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Martin Williams. *The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 149. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 340 pp. £55.00/\$99.00.

In too many academic contexts, there is an unfortunate divide, even a great ugly ditch, between biblical studies and the discipline that might variously be termed theology, doctrinal or systematic studies. Martin Williams establishes a very helpful bridgehead from which to reconnect these two poles and re-chart their mutual and beneficial connections. A revision of Williams’ PhD thesis, albeit minus some 30,000 words, this book is also a substantive contribution to the scholarship exploring 1 Peter. On a number of fronts, therefore, it deserves commendation and wide attention.

As one hopes for in a monograph, each chapter builds well on the previous chapters. An opening chapter outlining Williams’s method leads to five exegetical chapters that examine key passages in 1 Peter for the letter’s presentation of divine election, gracious divine provision of salvation in Jesus, the application of that salvation via new birth, regeneration and calling, and the consummation of the believer’s salvation. The subsequent two chapters engage with 1 Peter’s presentation of divine election and salvation’s provision in Jesus from a systematic perspective. Readers wanting such engagement with regeneration within 1 Peter are directed to pages 425–56 of Williams’ thesis; the other sections dropped from it for publication appear to be some longer word studies. Nevertheless, frequent and cogent word studies remain and form one of the strengths of the book. I will be pointing my students to them as exemplars for their own work. I’m not



sure many students will have time to read this book in its entirety during their course, but it will reward the dedicated reader with its rich delivery of detail and big picture.

Williams describes his method as one of ‘theological-critical exegesis’. By this approach, which fits within wider recent interest in the theological interpretation of Scripture, he seeks to pursue what he judges to be the principle interest of the biblical authors—the goal of hearing God’s word and knowing him and glorifying him. Scripture is to be read canonically and in community (here, for Williams, lies the bridge between NT studies and systematic theology), but with the text and not the community as the final arbiter of interpretation. This method is outlined and defended well in Williams’s opening chapter.

The substantive chapters require careful reading. In the exegetical chapters, a repeated and clear section-by-section format (structure, context, content, summary) helps the reader, as does consistent translation into English of quotations drawn from the Greek text. The argument is syntactically adroit, but technical terms and their deliberation and payoff for the argument are clearly explained. Exegetical discussion is frequently more in-depth than that found in most critical commentaries, and it engages nimbly with Anglo-American and continental scholarship. Within the footnotes, there is an unusually rich rubbing of shoulders between critical and evangelical scholars. Leon Morris, Jim Packer, John Piper, Don Carson, and others are given their say and, hopefully, will be more widely read and considered by subsequent scholars as a result. Equally, pastor-teachers will be better schooled by this book. (I hope that the publishers make it available soon in paperback to make it more accessible to a wider audience.)

Chapters 7 and 8 apply well the exegetical findings of the earlier chapters. At a number of junctures, I wish this engagement had been reverse-engineered, that when the exegetical point was made earlier, there was some flagging up (via a footnote, perhaps) that this argument relates to a particular systematic point made later in the volume. Chapter 7’s discussion of divine election works through Barth, the Arminian-Reformed debate, Klein’s rejection of individual election to salvation, and the question of double predestination. Tying these systematic questions to 1 Peter allows a clear path through and, for the unfamiliar with the issues, these controversies are well-outlined. I wonder if those of a systematic persuasion would look for more, but clear foundations are laid for the method Williams models. He draws strong conclusions concerning the theology of 1 Peter, as he does in his eighth chapter, examining the atonement. There the standard metaphors for the atonement are discussed and judged to be evident and complementary in 1 Peter when penal substitution is recognized, forming the necessary and primary lynchpin for the letter’s atonement theology.

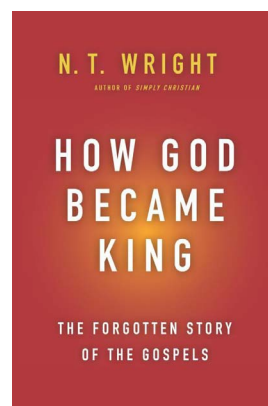
The final summative concluding pages (pp. 273–79) are vital for a book of such depth and breadth. It positions salvation as an important and rich theme in the letter, playing a vital role in its purpose. The letter’s soteriology exhibits and inhabits a salvation-historical framework and is profoundly theological in that it springs from God’s elective purposes through Christ’s atonement directed towards eschatological salvation. ‘Strangers of the Diaspora’ are invited to embody its worldview and ethic in their communal and individual lives. Williams has, in the final assessment, written—like Peter—to encourage believers of his day to consider ‘how we can communicate Peter’s message relevantly, read it meaningfully, and embody it practically in the context of our own believing communities’ (p. 279). He wonders whether 1 Peter, being theologically rich, is especially suited to his theological-critical approach, but he calls for his method to be applied to other biblical texts and genres. As such, this book provokes further studies elsewhere within the canon of scripture.

Williams has produced a volume that will figure prominently in my own teaching of 1 Peter. It will help develop syntactical sensibilities and the integration of NT and systematic studies that both the scholar and the well-trained pastor-teacher require. It is to be welcomed for its method, insights, and prospects.

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N. T. Wright. *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels*. HarperOne: San Francisco, 2012. 304 pp. \$25.99.

One of the most provocative and productive evangelical writers of our time is at it again. In this attractively written and, by all means, interesting book on the kingdom of God, Tom Wright sets forth his theological program for a popular audience. As usual for this remarkably gifted communicator, his thesis is to some extent visible in the title: the Gospels are all about how God became king over the world. This description of the message of the Gospels is entirely appropriate. Indeed, at first glance, it seems as if it offers only what Christians have long believed. But the second part of the title reveals that Wright's thesis has an edge to it. Christians and critics alike have largely and long forgotten or missed the real story of the Gospels. Wright seeks to restore us: *post tenebras lux*.



Wright goes about his task with typical clarity: (1) outlining the problem (or more properly, problems); (2) highlighting dimensions of the Gospels that he judges have been neglected; (3) presenting his interpretive program afresh; and (4) making recommendations as to how his proposal might enrich our reading of the Scriptures and the Apostles' Creed.

The problem, as it turns out, is that we have neglected the “middle” of the Gospels, the time and space between Jesus' birth and his crucifixion. We have forgotten to ask about how Jesus lived and that for which Jesus lived. As we hear already in the title of the book, Jesus's life is about God becoming king. It is not about simply “going to heaven.” Nor did Jesus come merely to give ethical instruction or to be a moral example or merely to be a perfect sacrifice (although Wright certainly affirms that Jesus was this). None of these readings or others like them are adequate. What is missing from the equation, according to Wright, is the story of Israel, specifically, the story of God's indwelling his people in such a way that through them the world is redeemed. That divine purpose, once thwarted through Israel's rebellion, has been fulfilled in Jesus, in whom God first came to his own people in order to rescue them and then to send them forth into mission to the world. Jesus's cross plays a fundamental role in this drama. On the one hand, the cross is the means by which God deals with Israel's sin and guilt. On the other hand, Israel's sin and guilt are manifest in its continuing exile, which in Jesus's day is manifest in its subjugation to Rome. In Jesus, God has established his kingdom (which, of course, is still coming) over against the kingdom of Caesar and all those in collusion with it. All of these reflections bring our reading of the creed down to earth, where God wishes to meet us. We are thereby preserved from wrongly using the creed as a means of flight into heaven.

The first thing to be said is that Wright's insistence that we read the "middle" of the Gospels together with their beginning and end is entirely appropriate. The Gospel cannot be preached rightly as a mere formula, detached from the rest of Scripture. It is relatively easy to be a sinner in the abstract, theoretical sense. It is quite another matter to be confronted with one's real sins and to hear concretely that from which and for which Christ died for us. Here it is to be underscored that there is no "freedom from" sin that is not a "freedom for" service to God. The words and deeds of Jesus bring home God's claim upon us in a way that brings the whole weight of Scripture to bear. One thinks immediately of the Sermon on the Mount in this connection, of course. Wright's call to read and hear the whole Gospel is well worth hearing.

Wright's program, however, is less persuasive, not only in its details but also in the question of its newness. Even if Wright's call to the renewal of the church is well-intentioned, it is a bit off-putting to hear that the whole of Christianity has been wrong up to this point in time. I am not persuaded. I confess that I cannot discern what is so radically new about Wright's proposal. It appears to me to be a re-cooking of C. H. Dodd's "realized eschatology" with a measure of Barth, and perhaps a dash of Ritschl. I am not here seeking to make Wright guilty by association. There are valuable insights to be gained from all three of these scholars. I am more perplexed by Wright's claim to newness, not least because of the proximity of his thought to Barth's influential conception of Christian witness.

Wright makes his case for the newness of his proposal in part from the structure and content of the ecumenical creeds, especially the Apostles' Creed. As he rightly points out, the "middle" of the Gospels, the story of Jesus's life is missing there. Yet it is not clear that this absence is as great a loss as Wright makes it out to be. His case for the deficiency of the creeds would be better if it could be shown that they were intended to supplant the reading of the Gospels as a whole, rather than to supplement them. Admittedly, the ecumenical creeds were composed in the face of specific questions of Christology and trinitarian theology. Nevertheless, they commend themselves as summaries of biblical thought that serve as guides for properly reading the middle of the Gospels as well as the rest of Scripture in the light of those questions. Undoubtedly, they can be abused. But *abusus non tollitur*. That is precisely what Wright wants to do by elaborating the Apostles' Creed in light of Jesus's, or rather Israel's, story. There is nothing wrong with the elaboration of the Apostles' Creed. But, of course, Wright was not the first to do so. I will confess that I much prefer (and commend) Luther's explanation of the Creed. But that is a question of the theological substance of the elaboration that I will touch upon in a moment.

Another hermeneutical issue that appears prominently in Wright's program of renewal is the weight given to Paul's letters in Christian doctrine and preaching in relationship to the Gospels. According to Wright, Christians tend to treat the Gospels as snacks and wait for the "red meat of Pauline theology" (p. 21). Perhaps that claim is true. If it is, it is a shame. At the same time, however, Paul's letters, and especially the main "culprits" Galatians and Romans, were written as guides for interpretation of the Jesus-tradition that was held in common in earliest Christianity, in the face of questions that were facing mid-first-century Christians. In this respect they were much like the creeds, even if they were much, much closer to the source. Obviously, the presence of Paul's letters did not prevent the writing and circulation of our four Gospels. It was not enough to have only Paul. To the extent that Christians (like Marcion) attempt to do so, Wright's complaint should be heeded. But just as Wright admits that no one comes to Scripture without a point of view (p. 109), so also no one interprets Scripture without taking their stance from a vantage point within Scripture, whether they consciously assume it or not. In this regard, the apostolic proclamation, including the letters of Paul should be recognized as providing keys

to reading the Gospels. The Emmaus road was necessary, as were its results. That means, however, that Paul's letters are to be used as keys to *reading the Gospels*, and not reading Paul into them, let alone not reading them at all.

If one does so, one comes away with a very different reading of the Gospels than what Wright offers. In the first place, it is obviously the end of the story of the Gospels that bears the greatest weight in the letters of the NT. But that is true in the Gospels themselves. We don't really find a "life of Jesus" in them, but narratives of Jesus's public ministry, that are remarkably concentrated not on the middle, but on the very end of his life. Martin Kähler's description of Mark's Gospel as a passion narrative with an extended introduction may be an overstatement, but not by much. The story that the Gospels tell is that of the mission of proclamation, healing, and exorcisms in which Jesus engaged, the opposition to him that arose as a result, and the feeble faith and failure of his disciples. None of these exclude Wright's theological program. But the distance between the Gospels and the letters is not as great as he makes it out to be. It is not at all clear to me that the Gospels don't make "atonement" their main theme (p. 7), but that is probably because I regard that theme as much broader than Wright does, as extending into the whole of Jesus's ministry. The cross is merely the culmination of his sufferings "for us." That understanding appears at various points in the Gospels (e.g., Mark 6:4; 8:34; 9:19; and, programmatically, Matt 8:17).

It is not clear to me, either, that the "backstory" of the Gospels is the story of Israel. Wright has attempted at length elsewhere to make his case on this matter. I simply do not find it plausible historically or theologically. In the first place, within the Scriptures themselves, Israel's story appears as a recapitulation of the story of Adam, retold under the condition of the primal transgression. That is arguably true of both the OT and NT. Second, it is far from clear that one can draw a straight line from the Babylonian exile to first-century subjugation to Rome. For one thing, the Jewish people had enjoyed too many victories since that time, including the restoration of sovereignty and the extension of territory for that reading to be plausible. And while we cannot pursue the details here, it hardly appears from the Gospels that most Jewish people regarded the Babylonian exile continuing in their day.

These objections deserve theological comment. If it is finally not the story of Israel but the story of Adam that is being replayed in the Gospels, nearly the whole of Wright's program must be changed. It is the appeal to Israel that facilitates Wright's political reading of Jesus's mission and allows him to frame the fundamental conflict in the world as one between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar. But what if the real enemies are sin, death, and the devil? The church is a political reality. No doubt about that. But it is much, much more. It is the appeal to the story of Israel that allows Wright to relativize the Reformers, who were dealing with sixteenth-century concerns. Is that true? We may ask that question without in any way denying the particularities of the debates of that time. We have mentioned Luther's exposition of the creed. Try reading that exposition and then that of N. T. Wright. Then decide which exposition appears more time-bound.

Two final points remain rather fuzzy in Wright's program. First, it is not clear, at least to me, precisely *how* it is that "God's one-time action in Jesus the Messiah ushered in a new world order" (p. 118). Jesus is no mere moral teacher or moral example for Wright. Very good. I would think that forgiveness makes new people. But Wright does not regard the traditional understanding of the atonement as working the forgiveness of sins to satisfy this purpose. How then does God's work in Jesus function? Again I am reminded of Dodd's "realized eschatology" that left the same lacuna. The question is pressing since Wright regards the cross as the moment of renewal for the people of God, who as a royal priesthood

“will take over the world not with the love of power but with the power of love.” It is a wonderful ideal. But Christians generally operate from a love of power, rather than from the power of love. That is the hard truth about us: we cannot remove coveting from our hearts, try as we might. For this reason, among others, I am more than happy to affirm a teaching of “two reigns” (not “two kingdoms,” which is twentieth-century nomenclature) and to embrace a proper separation of church and state.

Second, Wright leaves it quite unclear what he understands the nature of Jesus’s coming to be. Indeed, in his restatement of the confession of the creed, “he shall come again in glory, to judge the quick and the dead,” becomes “the dead summoned to face Jesus” (p. 263). Should we await Jesus’s coming? The question is not an idle one of dispensational charts. It determines the nature of our calling as Christians. The cry of the earliest church, “Maranatha!” was an appeal for the judgment of all things, including the motives of human hearts. It set a limit and framework for all Christian endeavor. The kingdom must yet come, apart from all our works. We are here to witness to the coming kingdom, a witness that is to be borne not only by our lips, but also by our lives. According to Wright, however, we are to “work for the kingdom.” Christ will have his victory through the (derivative) suffering and testimony of his people. That is how the darkest “powers” are to be overthrown (p. 208). God’s justified people are the key agents in God’s putting right the world (p. 244). Is there any limit to this task?

Mark A. Seifrid

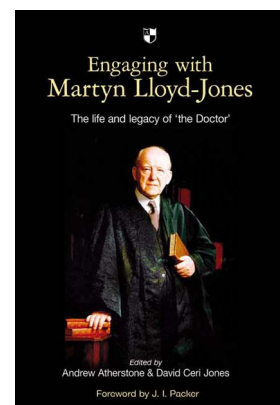
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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones, eds. *Engaging with Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Life and Legacy of ‘the Doctor.’* Leicester, UK: IVP, 2011. 352 pp. £16.99.

The appearance of this anthology assessing the significance of Martyn Lloyd-Jones (hereafter MLJ) is to be warmly welcomed, not because the outlines of the life of this venerable preacher (1899–1981) have previously gone unexplored (indeed the impressive introduction evaluates four previous attempts), but because this is the first attempt to assess the man’s career in a way properly characterized as multi-perspectival.

Eleven contributors, many of them distinguished researchers in their own right, met at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, in December 2010 to assess the career and influence of MLJ, longtime minister of Westminster Chapel, London. At the distance of thirty years from the eminent preacher’s death, there is both advantage and disadvantage in making fresh assessment. As for the former, there has been much settling of the dust of the controversies in which MLJ found himself embroiled after 1960; the passage of time can have made the needed work of reassessment only easier. But as to the latter, the passage of thirty years means that a whole fresh generation of evangelicals has reached mid-life with little or no knowledge of MLJ. This means that the contributors to the anthology have their work cut out for them in reestablishing the significance of this evangelical leader.



Among the weighty questions taken up in the 2010 conference were those of MLJ's place in the twentieth-century resurgence of Calvinism (ch. 1). D. W. Bebbington concludes that MLJ was propelled by a Reformed resurgence already underway in the 1930s. We are helped by David Ceri Jones to see that MLJ's being Welsh by birth and earlier pastoral experience, yet positioned in the heart of London from 1939 onward, cast him as something of an 'outsider' standing near the center of English Christianity (ch. 2). The skillful writing of Ian Randall (ch. 3) depicts MLJ—who had been enamored with the eighteenth-century evangelical revival—consumed with preaching and praying for national revival in the somber 1950s, a time of national retrenchment. MLJ was not the only evangelical leader sounding the trumpet this way; yet he with others did not live to see his aspirations fulfilled.

The fourth chapter, by William Kay, is particularly striking. It addresses both the question of MLJ's relations with various expressions of Pentecostalism, with which he shared a belief in a second work of grace in the believer (while disagreeing over what that work entailed), and the corollary of how the conservative Reformed constituency that had looked to MLJ for leadership fractured over their leader's ambivalence on such questions. This chapter, taken in combination with that of Bebbington (above) requires that readers reassess the conventional wisdom that MLJ was nothing if not the great Calvinist standard-bearer of his time. MLJ's affinity with Pentecostalism was, to a considerable degree, an expression of his dismay with what he took to be conservative Calvinist rigidity.

Two persons closely associated with one expression of the MLJ legacy, the London Theological Seminary (founded in 1977), explore the preacher's ideas about theological education and about twentieth-century theology in general. Though MLJ had trained and worked as a medical doctor of considerable distinction, his own ideas about theological education were highly ambivalent. Theologically self-trained, he seemed to harbor an aversion to the formal academic study of theology (at least on the university model) out of fear that the secularization underway in public universities was undermining theological education conducted in conjunction with them. He initially supported and eventually withdrew his support from the London Bible College (founded in 1946), now London School of Theology, and from 1977 threw his weight behind the new, less-pretentious school. Philip Eveson, long-time principal of London Theological Seminary, explores MLJ's sometimes-conflicted views on this subject. One finds that MLJ would have been willing to be nominated to be the principal of a Welsh theological college in 1938! Robert Strivens, current principal of London Theological Seminary, on the other hand, demonstrates MLJ's quite extensive personal reading of the works of Karl Barth. There is complexity here that resists easy categorization.

Coeditor Andrew Atherstone offers the single best account known to this reviewer of the public confrontation of 1966 involving MLJ with the equally prominent John Stott (ch. 10). The context was that of a surging ecumenical movement, with evangelical congregations and ministers within doctrinally comprehensive denominations feeling quite unprovided for as union talks proceeded apace. MLJ, having accepted the invitation of the umbrella-like Evangelical Alliance to address that current bewildering situation, took the opportunity to advocate the coming together of Britain's evangelicals who were now scattered across and within various denominations. Atherstone, while allowing that the MLJ appeal was lacking in clarity, considerably advances our understanding of this key episode by his explaining that Anglican evangelicals were seceding from their denomination in considerable numbers at this time, quite apart from the sentiments of MLJ. The intervention of John Stott, immediately on the heels of the MLJ address (an intervention for which Stott later apologized) was, on this explanation, his attempt to staunch an exodus already underway (as well as what might yet be encouraged by MLJ's exhortation).

Of similar sterling quality is the eleventh chapter, provided by Puritan scholar John Coffey, regarding MLJ's love of church history and especially Puritan history. This is not the esoteric inquiry one might imagine. MLJ was, after all, as responsible as any evangelical in the period since 1950 for the marshaling of the opinions of the sixteenth-century Reformers and the Puritans of the subsequent century on contemporary theological and ecclesiastical questions. Coffey's concern is to observe that MLJ's use of history was not characterized by any particular rigor. While MLJ left evidence of having digested some twentieth-century analyses of his favorite epochs of church history, the overwhelming impression gained is that MLJ's appeals to history were too harnessed to his polemical concerns. Coffey also observes that the Puritan publishing program, so energetically advanced by the Banner of Truth (of which MLJ was a principal backer) was, in effect, a program that put into circulation the "canon" of Puritans favored by MLJ.

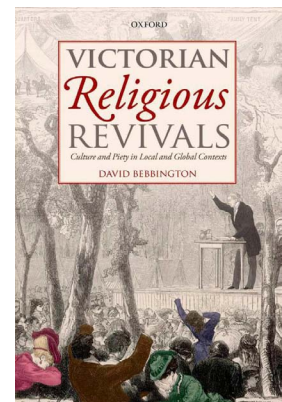
Taken all in all, this excellent volume is a demonstration of how much the study of church history gains when it is "re-complexified." Virtually every contributor to the anthology communicates deep respect for the memory and leadership of MLJ and shows that such reverence is compatible with serious efforts to untangle and reinterpret the contested legacy of a great Christian leader. If there is a caveat to be raised, it would simply be that the volume devotes no segment to exploring the legacy of MLJ *outside* the UK. When one considers that MLJ discovered the writings of B. B. Warfield in Toronto, was first observed by the man he would succeed in London (G. Campbell Morgan) while preaching in Philadelphia, came to the attention of post-war evangelicals outside the UK by a preaching series at Wheaton, delivered his lectures on homiletics (later published as *Preaching and Preachers*) in Philadelphia, and whose ministry was emulated by the erection of "Westminster Chapels" in cities all over North America, we can acknowledge that the influence of this Christian leader was far wider even than this excellent volume suggests.

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David Bebbington. *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Contexts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. xii + 307 pp. \$110.00.

With a handful of noteworthy exceptions, historians of revival have avoided local micro-history, focusing more upon leading figures and larger movements. The assumption is that you can make extrapolations about local revivals based upon the general tendencies of more regional (or even national) awakenings. In *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Contexts*, David Bebbington turns this received approach on its head. The result is a groundbreaking work of scholarship that will likely exert considerable influence on the field.

Bebbington is one of the most respected scholars of modern religious history and has been at the forefront of renewed scholarly interest in global evangelicalism. This is not his first foray into the world of religious revivals. Over the past two decades, Bebbington has written numerous journal articles and book chapters on the



topic. Revival has also been a major factor in his more general studies of modern English evangelicalism and Victorian evangelicalism, respectively. His years of research have culminated in the present volume.

Victorian Religious Revivals could be divided into two unofficial sections. In his first two chapters, Bebbington describes several historical patterns of revival, contributes an extensive historiographical study of revival history, and advances his own paradigm for interpreting local revivals. Eighteenth-century revival patterns reflected denominational tendencies among Congregationalists (and Baptists), Presbyterians, and Methodists before giving way to a more synthetic approach in the next century and eventually modern mass revivalism from the 1870s onward. As a general rule, awakenings gradually evolved from semi-spontaneous (though not always unexpected) phenomena to planned events led by a class of professional revivalists.

Bebbington's historiographical chapter extensively summarizes how scholars have interpreted revivals, endearing the author to a generation of graduate students. According to Bebbington, "providentialist" historians, many of whom are clergy rather than professional scholars, focus on how they believe God worked during a given revival, often avoiding nuanced discussions of historical contextualization. Earlier academic historians went in a very different direction, offering psychological analyses of revival participants, suggesting that revivals arise from social factors such as frontier expansion and economic uncertainties, and arguing that revivals are a form of social control. Recent historians have given greater attention to intellectual history, local religious practices, the presentation of revival movements to the wider world, and the international links between revival movements. Bebbington proposes that the intersection of culture and piety, local context and lived religion, offers a fruitful way forward for historians.

The book's second unofficial section, comprised of eight chapters, applies Bebbington's "culture and piety" paradigm to seven local revivals and summarizes the conclusions. Each of the local revivals took place in the English-speaking world between 1840 and 1880. None of them occurred in an urban setting. (Because of the influence of the so-called Businessman's Revival of 1857–1858, most historians of this era focus upon citywide revivals.) Three revivals were in North America, three occurred in Britain, and one took place in Australia. None of the revivals was connected to a larger regional movement, and few of them have been examined in previous scholarly studies. In each case, Bebbington not only focused upon the events of the revivals themselves, but also discussed geography, social context, theological undercurrents, polemical considerations, and attempts to reign in or capitalize on the revival.

In the closing chapter, Bebbington moves from the particular to the general, offering some summary observations about revival in the Victorian Era based upon his case studies. Each revival occurred in a community where a single occupation dominated the local economy, though there was no corollary between relative prosperity and spiritual awakening. In several communities, dangerous occupations (e.g., mining and fishing) produced a regular fear of death among the locals. Most of the revivals were colored by the theology and emphases of a particular denomination and in many cases new ideas were introduced, debated, and eventually embraced due to the revival. Many of the awakenings occurred among people with a growing commitment to evangelical activism, especially foreign missions or temperance advocacy. None of the revivals were preplanned events, but few of them were wholly spontaneous; in almost every case, the community had experienced an earlier revival or recent smaller and/or shorter movements of spiritual vitality. Laypeople, including women, played a role in advancing most of the revivals, and some of them were multiethnic in nature. The one universal factor in each local

revival was expectant prayer on the part of the participants for spiritual awakening in their church(es) and community.

Bebbington's emphasis on localism as interpreted through the lens of culture and piety is a welcome contribution to revival studies. He avoids the types of overgeneralizations that plague the literature as well as extremes such as the borderline ahistorical interpretations of many providentialists and the uncharitable psychological or merely social interpretations of many academic historians. Simply put, Bebbington takes matters such as beliefs, doctrine, personal testimony, and devotional practices seriously, but without divorcing them from their historical context or detaching them from non-religious social phenomena. This type of balance is sorely needed among historians of religion in general, not just evangelical revival.

Some historians will likely criticize this book because the emphasis on local revivals means that any conclusions drawn by Bebbington, insightful though they may be, do not necessarily hold true of other local revivals beyond his case studies. The very nature of local history is that it explodes simplistic interpretations—even those made when several local revivals are compared. It may well be that some non-urban Victorian revivals were even less spontaneous or were more interdenominational or involved less prayer for revival. But this is not so much a weakness of the book, which by its very nature is a limited study, as it is an invitation for others to apply Bebbington's methodology to other local contexts and other historical eras. Hopefully, a generation of historians will take up this challenge.

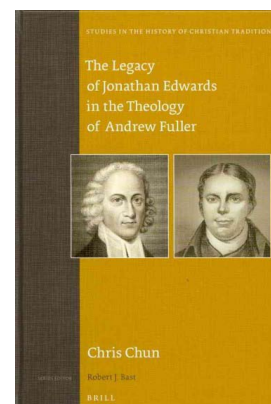
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Chris Chun. *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller*. Studies in the History of Christian Traditions. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012. xx + 242 pp. \$144.00.

Over the past two generations, an ever-multiplying number of scholars have written hundreds of essays, dissertations, and monographs devoted to the life and legacy of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). The crowning achievement of this Edwards Renaissance is the critical edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, published in twenty-six volumes by Yale University Press. These volumes, plus an additional forty-six electronic volumes, are available online through the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale.

A smaller, yet related movement has thrived in the last three decades among scholars interested in Andrew Fuller (1754–1815). Fuller was the most influential English Baptist pastor-theologian during the final years of the “long” eighteenth century (ca. 1688–1815). New scholarly studies of Fuller are constantly being published. The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary sponsors an annual conference, publishes a scholarly journal (*The Andrew Fuller Review*), and has generated several forthcoming collections of essays under contract with various publishers. Much like Edwards, a sixteen-volume critical edition of *The Works of Andrew Fuller* is currently in preparation to be published by Walter de Gruyter, under the general editorship of Michael Haykin.



Scholars have long argued that the key theological influence upon Fuller was Edwards. The latter's works were read widely in England during the eighteenth century. Fuller frequently cited Edwards in his own writings, corresponded regularly with the New Divinity theologians who further developed Edwards's thought, and never hesitated to admit his indebtedness to the New England divine. Yet while scholars have universally acknowledged the Edwardsian flavor of Fuller's theology and ministry, until now no one has done the hard work of demonstrating the extent of Fuller's literary dependence upon Edwards. This is why Chris Chun's *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* is such a signal contribution to the literature.

Chun, who teaches church history at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, has published scholarship on both Edwards and Fuller. *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* revises his doctoral dissertation at the University of St. Andrews. In the volume, Chun demonstrates exactly how Fuller engaged Edwards. After a brief historiographical introduction, Chun divides his study into seven meaty chapters that address various theological topics wherein Fuller drew upon Edwards.

Chapters one and two focus upon the best-known intersection between Edwards and Fuller: the nature of free will. Chun summarizes Edwards's views in *Freedom of the Will* and then demonstrates how Fuller appropriated Edwards's thought in his own polemic against High Calvinism. While this is to some degree well-worn ground by scholars, Chun is the first to demonstrate in meticulous detail which passages from Edwards most influenced Fuller. Through Fuller's *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, Edwards's distinction between moral and natural ability became commonplace among English Calvinistic Baptists.

Chapters three, four, and five examine Fuller's use of Edwards's eschatology and his emphasis on the affections. Fuller embraced the optimistic postmillennialism of Edwards, which again, has been widely acknowledged by scholars. But Chun demonstrates that Fuller was so influenced by Edwards that he even adopted an idiosyncratic interpretation of the slaying of the witnesses in Rev 11 that was rejected by other postmillennialists of the era. In terms of religious affections, Fuller embraced Edwards's views and put them to use in his own polemic against Sandemanianism. The Sandemanians argued that intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel is the essence of saving faith. Like Edwards, Fuller argued that biblical faith is a repenting faith that results in a life of redirected affections toward God.

Chapters six and seven turn their attention to the most controversial elements of Fuller's theology: his understanding of the atonement and justification. Chun agrees with scholars who emphasize greater continuity than discontinuity between Edwards's understanding of the atonement and the moral government view of the New Divinity theologians. Though Fuller embraced governmental language and was accused of being an advocate of New Divinity, he was actually much closer to Edwards, who had also allowed for a governmental aspect within a primarily penal substitutionary paradigm. Chun also makes the case that Fuller's views of the extent of the atonement are in continuity with those of Edwards. Both men combined a universal sufficiency with a particular efficacy, the limitation being in God's covenantal design rather than in the nature of propitiation itself. In this construal of the atonement, both theologians were closer to the Synod of Dordt than Reformed Orthodox thinkers like William Perkins and Theodore Beza.

In terms of justification, Fuller embraced Edwards's view that justification and imputation were forensic, but representative rather than actual. Christ did not literally become a sinner, and we do not literally become righteous. Rather, God punishes Christ as though he were a sinner and relates to believers as though they were righteous. The language is metaphorical, and for both men, the central

soteriological motif is union with Christ. Edwards has been criticized by some later Reformed thinkers for downplaying forensic justification. Not surprisingly, Fuller engaged in an extended controversy with his contemporary Abraham Booth over that very issue. Yet again, Fuller was thoroughly Edwardsian in his views.

It is often the case in historical theology that scholars sense facts and trends that everyone assumes but nobody has thoroughly demonstrated. This is most certainly the case with Jonathan Edwards's influence upon Andrew Fuller. Chris Chun has done scholars a tremendous service by demonstrating exactly how Fuller appropriated Edwards into his own thought and used him as a theological resource in the debates of his own generation. In Edwards, Fuller found an ally in arguing for the type of evangelical Calvinism that gave rise to the modern missions movement in the English-speaking world. *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* is historical theology at its finest. It will undoubtedly become one of the key scholarly monographs in the ongoing renaissance of Fuller Studies.

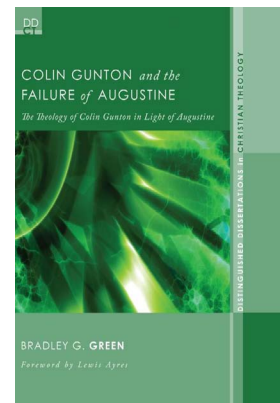
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Bradley Green. *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: The Theology of Colin Gunton in Light of Augustine*. Cambridge, UK: James Clark, 2012. 226 pp. £19.50/\$30.33.

Bradley Green's *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine* is a sound contribution both to contemporary theology and Augustinian studies. Originally his doctoral dissertation, the book examines the thought of respected British theologian Colin Gunton, well known for his criticism of St. Augustine, defending Augustine and constructively critiquing Gunton. Many have questioned Gunton's reading of Augustine in recent years, and in this work Green stands with Augustine while extending a hand to Gunton, urging him to reconsider Augustine and find in him not a foe but a friend.

According to Green, "The purpose of this monograph is to offer an analysis of key components of Gunton's thought in light of the Trinitarian theology of Augustine as seen in his *De Trinitate*. To that end, the monograph seeks to come to grips with the Trinitarian theology of Augustine, and to ask if Gunton's largely negative assessment of Augustine can stand up to scrutiny" (p. 8).

Chapter one introduces Gunton's view that key problems in contemporary Western thought are largely Augustinian problems. Gunton argues that Augustine simply lacked the "conceptual equipment" to avoid such heresies as Arianism and modalism, and therefore the Western tradition has struggled with such heresies" (p. 3). Gunton has two major criticisms: (1) Augustine attempted to fuse neoplatonic and Christian categories, resulting in a dualism between the material and ideal; (2) Augustine "squandered the Cappadocian ontology," which emphasized the community of the Trinity (p. 4). The repercussions seen today according to Gunton are too much emphasis on "oneness" over and against "threeness" in Trinitarian theology, failure to incorporate the communion of the Trinity into ecclesiology, an overemphasis of "One" culturally that led to Modernity, and radical oneness politically that has often



associated Christians with repression (p. 5). Following this introduction to Gunton, Green outlines the major contours of how Augustine's teaching on the Trinity has been received from Anselm to Zizoulas.

Chapter two explains Gunton's doctrines of creation and redemption. Gunton's strong doctrine of creation leads him to deeply criticize Augustine on this point. Gunton argues that Augustine's neoplatonist baggage and overemphasis on "One" leads to severing creation from redemption.

Chapter three considers being and ontology in Gunton. Gunton argues for recovering a Cappadocian ontology that teaches that "*relationality*, or *communion* constitutes 'being,' and supposedly this is an achievement ignored or not understood by Augustine" (p. 69). Gunton argues that Martyr, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Basil, and the Cappadocians developed a truly Christian ontology that was squandered by both Origen and Augustine. The Cappadocians understood the Trinity not as "relations" but as "concrete particulars in relation to one another, '*and being in relation constitutes what it actually means to be a person*'" (p. 75). This, in Gunton's view, is a fresh way of seeing God in communion that is not "hostage to Greek metaphysics." Gunton contends that the Cappadocian understanding of God also provides us with a better, indeed more Trinitarian, way of viewing reality.

Chapters four and five respond to Gunton's criticisms by allowing Augustine to speak for himself, primarily from *De Trinitate*. Concerning creation and redemption, Green explains Augustine's notion of *creation ex nihilo* as a fully Trinitarian act that strongly responds to the problem of evil. Concerning dualism, Green affirms dualism in Augustine but qualifies it as a "limited dualism" where both matter and spirit are good, though the latter is superior. Nevertheless, physical creation plays a crucial role in man's coming to know God, not least seen in the incarnation of Christ. Green writes, "The only way to the vision of God is through a bloody, human body" (p. 132). Thus, though there may still exist too much dualism for Gunton's taste, it is inaccurate to say that the relationship between creation and redemption has been severed.

Further, concerning being and ontology, Green argues that one must remember the *goal* of *De Trinitate*—to see God face to face. Green notes that if Augustine stopped with the goal of the mind being to remember, understand, and love itself, Gunton's critiques would be more persuasive. But "*in Augustine's thought man is most fully human when he is actively focused outward on God. . . . To truly image God in the fullest sense man must be focused in a loving relationship on another—God*" (p. 200).

Chapters six and seven summarize Green's critiques of Gunton and conclude the work. Green clearly defends Augustine beckoning Gunton to join forces, but the purpose of his book is not to defeat Gunton's work altogether. Rather, Green seeks to ask critical questions of how Gunton understands and represents Augustine.

The strengths of the work are the sound summary of Gunton's thought in chapters one and two and the robust defense of Augustine in chapters six and seven. At times, however, especially concerning creation, one wonders if Green is slightly overemphasizing Augustine's creation friendliness. Also while Green does draw on more than *De Trinitate*, further consideration of the development of Augustine's doctrines of creation and ontology from his early to mature thought could have enriched the study.

Nonetheless, Green's work is laudable as he holds Gunton's feet to the fire regarding his reading of Augustine, and he skillfully unshackles Augustine from Gunton's grip while attempting to forge a friendship between them. Green's book beckons for further research, especially concerning how Augustine speaks today. Green concludes, "If Christian theology is to speak today with a meaningful

message, it will be because it has spent time with figures like Augustine, and has learned from the experience” (p. 206).

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Polly Ha. *English Presbyterianism, 1590–1640*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011. xiv + 300 pp. \$65.00.

Received tradition since Patrick Collinson’s seminal 1967 work *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* holds that in the 1590s the Elizabethan Presbyterian movement was driven underground by state persecution, and to all intents and purposes, destroyed. Polly Ha’s groundbreaking research, based on her excellent 2006 Cambridge University PhD thesis, shows that far from reappearing only in the 1640s during the Civil War, Presbyterianism never really went away, and the discovery of Walter Travers’s encrypted papers (at one point in French using Greek letters!) at Trinity College, Dublin sheds vital new light on the movement during nearly half a century of alleged silence. New manuscript sources show a demonstrable continuity between the Elizabethan Presbyterians and their seventeenth-century successors. The book is helpfully divided into three parts, beginning with the wider theological-political context, then the emergence of a distinctive Presbyterian process, and finally analysing the example of the English Reformed churches in the Netherlands.

Part One, ‘English Presbyterianism and the Church of England,’ admirably sets out the background of the early Presbyterians and their influential contribution to later ecclesiology, especially their sustained assault on episcopacy, which Hooker memorably defended. Travers and his colleagues needed to both uphold royal supremacy and deny any sense of separatism or sedition—the frequent charge of ‘popularity’ was a serious one to the Early Modern mind. Presbyterians were very keen to separate civil and ecclesiastical authority, but understood that minister and magistrate had to work closely together. The rule of one bishop was deeply mistrusted, and ‘the discipline,’ a system of courts and synods, was devised to ensure doctrinal orthodoxy and correct behaviour.

It is too general to see a ‘Puritan versus conformist’ dichotomy in the period. Within nonconformity, even at an early period, there were various competing voices. Ha very helpfully traces out the implications of competing Presbyterian and Congregationalist ideologies. Puritanism was a nuanced and pluriform movement with fertile tensions and renegotiations constantly present. Although scholars such as Nicholas Tyacke want to emphasise a so-called ‘Calvinist Consensus’ in the period ca. 1570–1620, it would be misleading to gloss over the divisions within the Puritan movement. This was not just an English controversy, as different congregations and ministers took their radical positions overseas, influencing other Christian groupings. Throughout this book English Puritanism is rightly rehabilitated as part of a much wider international Calvinism.

Part Two, ‘The Evolution of English Ecclesiology,’ shows how intra-Puritan debates sought to find a godly and biblical ecclesiology that eschewed both clerical hierarchy and separatism. Presbyterians



such as Travers were deeply suspicious of congregational experiments, such as those of Henry Jacob and pioneers in New England. Ha's unearthing of previously unknown sources reveal the depth and passion of the debate between Puritans over ecclesiology. Presbyterians showed an impressive flexibility of approach in their arguments against Congregationalists and bishops, constantly marshalling biblical exegesis and church tradition.

Ha very helpfully places Travers in a wider context of church history and shows how Patristic study, and in particular the role of councils and synods, helped mould a distinctively Presbyterian process, a shared commitment which sought resolution through conflict with disparate groups. Presbyterianism is thus seen as more of a process, a theological and ecclesial method, than a movement for ecclesiastical or moral reform. The collective weighing up of evidence and establishment of a hierarchy of authorities helped to tackle heresy and the example of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 provided a powerful antecedent of this principle. Although thoroughly Reformed adherents of the principle of *sola scriptura*, the Presbyterians greatly valued antiquity and a more rounded and mature picture of Puritanism gradually emerges. Ha thus helps to explode the caricature of a self-serving, introspective, overly individualistic Calvinism.

In Part Three, 'From Theory to Practice', the Presbyterian commitment to a universal visible church is reflected in a complex range of international networks, including kinship, clerical fraternities and commercial enterprise. Presbyterians fostered links with Members of Parliament, livery companies, merchants, and especially lawyers, who challenged episcopal corruptions in the English Church. Popular antagonism against ecclesiastical courts and anti-clericalism were harnessed by Presbyterians, but later protests would compare a zealous eldership with the worst excesses of the bishops.

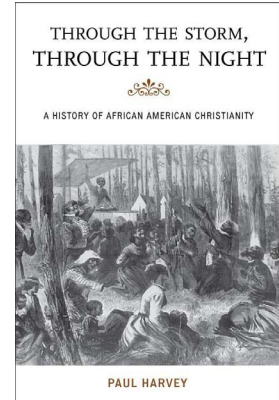
The system of elders and the consistory played a major role in Presbyterian thinking and the imperative of Matt 18:17, 'tell it to the church', was thus put into operation in a culture where reputation was crucially important and public confession a serious deterrent. Ha's case study is the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam and how a surprisingly diverse range of people were involved in radical experiments in Reformed ecclesiology. Previous studies have focused on the clergy and the 'middling sort', but Ha's research concludes that the laity, including women and lower socio-economic groups, were actively involved in disciplinary structures and the decision-making process.

As befits a work based on a Cambridge doctorate, this volume is replete with sixty-seven pages of endnotes, twenty-one pages of bibliography, and a useful eleven-page general index. It therefore represents an immensely wide-ranging and informative study for the reader and researcher in Elizabethan and Early Stuart theology and politics. Ha's scholarly detective work is a splendid exercise in historical theology, factoring Presbyterianism back into Early Modern English political and religious life. Figures such as Travers were catalysts for powerful intellectual currents, which challenged the established institutions which many Christians took for granted. At times both deeply radical and conservative, the Presbyterians challenged their opponents to defend and articulate their ideas (Richard Hooker would do so in his seminal *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*). Ha skillfully shows how these controversies and articulations would profoundly influence the future trajectories of religious thinking in both the Old and New World.

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Paul Harvey. *Through the Storm, through the Night: A History of African American Christianity*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2011. x + 232 pp. \$35.00.

Following his key publications on African-American religious culture in the South, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs historian Paul Harvey has written a general history of African-American Christianity spanning from the African past to the rise of megachurches in contemporary times. According to Harvey in the introduction, this volume is “a short, lively, introductory narrative of African American Christianity” (p. 3) also meant for students and scholars to explore more certain areas of African-American Christianity. Harvey frames this book within three paradoxical themes: (1) Christianization has fostered an African-American culture and served as an agent of African-American survival (p. 6); (2) the internal divisions among African Americans has resulted in the church’s inability to be a united voice for all African Americans; and (3) African-American conservatism in theology has produced progressive social movements (p. 7). Throughout the narrative, Harvey weaves these themes, albeit unevenly, to tell a gripping and informative story of African-American Christianity.



Following the tradition of classic works like Albert Raboteau’s *Slave Religion* (1979) and Mechal Sobel’s *Trabelin’ On* (1979), Harvey begins this history on the African continent at the time of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. To understand what developed into African-American Christianity, there must be discussion of the general religious culture of West and West Central Africans. What is of particular interest in this section of the book is that Harvey highlights that there were Christians and Muslims who were part of the nearly twelve million African slave captives who survived the Middle Passage and landed in the locales of the New World. Drawing from recent scholarship on the Slave Trade and the development of New World African-American cultures, Harvey notes that some slave owners preferred to purchase slaves from specific regions in Africa; therefore, African slaves from a certain area would arrive in the same region in North America. For example, Virginia slave owners preferred African captives from the Bight of Biafra and Benin. The importance of this phenomenon to Harvey’s discussion at this point in the text is to assert that there was clear retention of features of African religious cultures that would be incorporated into Christian teaching and culture.

Throughout the rest of the book, Harvey offers some nuanced insights. For example, in discussing African-American Christianity during the early twentieth century, Harvey notes that the Great Migration had a significant role in redefining the African-American Church. The advent of Holiness/Pentecostal churches looms large in this discussion as challenging established Baptist and Methodist churches as well as being the incubator of the new gospel sound by giving artists like Thomas Dorsey a place to hone that new style. According to Harvey, African-American migration also gave rise to movements like those of Father Divine and the All-Nations Pentecostal Church that spoke to the realities of African-American life in large urban contexts such as New York City and Chicago.

Even without a plethora of nuance, Harvey continually offers support for the three paradoxes that frame the entire story; but the support is more heavily weighed in favor of African-American Christianity as a tool of African-American freedom. He offers examples from Richard Allen and the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816 to the Christian-inspired civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In reading this narrative within Harvey’s framework, there can be no separation

between African-American Christianity's historical emphasis on freedom and the persistence of white American supremacy. Harvey pinpoints this in terms of white Christian support of the slave system and Jim Crow segregation in the South. One particular theme is clear from this work: the development of African-American Christianity occurred amidst slavery; and in slavery's aftermath a still potent white power structure pervaded and defined American society.

One weakness of the book is the lack of attention Harvey gives to the third paradox: the general theological conservatism of African-American Christianity helping to promote liberal or progressive social and political movements. Harvey assumes conservatism in most cases, but there is a need for him to define this for his readers because this is an important aspect of this particular history. For example, in writing about King's Christian framework, Harvey retells a story about King having a type of crisis-moment in which he acknowledged that he had to have a personal relationship with God because he had basically been a cultural Christian (pp. 111–12). This example fails to dig further into King's theological influences, which were firmly liberal Christian.

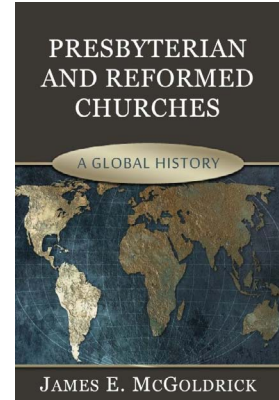
The major strength of this narrative is how Harvey is able to blend intriguing stories of the development of African-American Christianity in a neat volume. He offers us the historic contributions of women as both preachers in the person of the African Methodist Jarena Lee, abolitionists such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman all in the nineteenth century to the proponent of early twentieth-century racial uplift and progressivism, the Baptist Nannie Helen Burroughs. Regarding cultural expressions, Harvey highlights African-American Christianity's contributions to American music in the forms of spirituals, gospel music, and the freedom songs of the civil rights era. He also finds space to acquaint his readers with the more recent trend of African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants and how they are changing African-American Christianity into a phenomenon more complex.

For a volume of this length, Harvey has given students, scholars, and all interested a fine introduction to the richness, dynamism, and vibrancy of a major aspect of African-American life and culture. For scholars and interested students who desire more from this short work, Harvey includes a nice section of primary sources and a fine bibliographic essay. Though Harvey asserts that the "black church" is a "figment of academic imagination" (p. 8), he realizes that the African-American church is alive and well as illustrated in the Barack Obama-Jeremiah Wright controversy in 2008. Their dialogue also indicates that Christianity for African-Americans fails to be a singular voice for all.

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James E. McGoldrick. *Presbyterian and Reformed Churches: A Global History*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012. ix + 566 pp. \$40.00.

James E. McGoldrick, professor of church history at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary has revised and updated R. C. Reed's early twentieth-century *History of the Presbyterian Churches of the World* with the aid of an unpublished manuscript by the twentieth-century Presbyterian minister Thomas Hugh Spence Jr. The result is *Presbyterian and Reformed Churches: A Global History*. Its thirty-four chapters move from the biblical origin of Presbyterianism and its disappearance in the fourth century to its recovery in the Reformation and propagation across the globe since. The introduction, development, and fate of Presbyterianism in particular and Reformed theology in general is recounted in various nation-states or regions from Europe to North America and then subsequently in Central America, the Caribbean Basin, South America, Africa, Asia, and Lesser Pacific Islands. Each chapter concludes with a bibliography for further study. A short conclusion followed by an extensive index finishes the work.



The early chapters treating Europe cover ecclesiastical and theological territory familiar to most who have studied the topics. By organizing the material regionally and nationalistically, details regarding particular events and people are highlighted that are perhaps often overlooked in broad survey works. The ground to cover is geographically, ecclesiastically, and theologically vast, so generality still marks the work. In the treatments of each European nation, the story is generally told from the early years of the Reformation to the present day. Ireland is the one exception, with the story beginning with St. Patrick in the fifth century.

Nearly half the book recounts developments in America. The chapters devoted to the American story of Presbyterianism and Reformed theology, however, are interrupted by a twenty-four page overview of matters in the British Empire from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. While the book consistently employs chapter titles that elucidate the subject within geographical boundaries, this is altered a bit in the chapters addressing the story in America. Though chapter twelve is titled "The Southern Presbyterian Church," it is apparent that this is not simply or perhaps even primarily, about the Presbyterian Church in the American South, as much as it is the story of an American southern Presbyterianism. The final fifty-eight pages of the American story conclude with a focus on twentieth-century battles between "modernists," who advocated Protestant liberalism, and the "fundamentalists" or "conservatives," who opposed the modernists' critical interpretation of Christianity. The theistic evolution of B. B. Warfield along with the work of W. G. T. Shedd attempted to "employ the sciences in support of Christianity" in order to make "its claims more credible" (p. 301).

Chapter seventeen, "Scholarship in Defense of the Faith," follows the overview regarding the fundamentalist-modernist controversy addressed in chapter sixteen. It highlights various individuals in both Europe and America who played key theological roles in that controversy. The "Challenge of Neo-orthodoxy" in its reaction to Protestant Liberalism is explained through vignettes on Albert Schweitzer, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Rudolf Bultmann. The story of the "Defenders of the Reformed Faith" employs the same method of vignettes and covers Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, Geerhardus Vos, Louis Berkhof, Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Cark, John Murray, Ned Stonehouse, E. J. Young, Francis Schaeffer, and Carl McIntire. Chapter eighteen is devoted to the "Formation of the

Presbyterian Church in America,” that is, the specific denomination by that name. Here we find sketches on various leaders in the PCA that include various seminary professors, pastors, and public servants, the latter of whom include former Vice President Dan Quayle, former surgeon general C. Everett Koop, Senators Jim DeMint and James Talent, as well as judges Kenneth Ryskamp, William Barker, and Kenneth Bell. The “increasing secularism of American culture” and “some recent doctrinal novelties” that were “beyond the scope” of the book’s study are challenges facing the PCA (p. 347). The chapters on America conclude with an overview of some of the smaller Presbyterian and Reformed denominations.

The latter chapters cover geographical territory and nation-states with which many of us are personally unfamiliar and that are often neglected in our general survey works. In large part they help underscore the missionary impulse within the Presbyterian and Reformed heritage and the overall trajectory of its geographical growth.

The book contains much valuable information and reads quite easily. As a general survey work, it is beneficial for the beginning student in learning the roots of Protestantism in general and Presbyterianism and the Reformed heritage specifically. Even for the veteran, it is a good review, and the latter chapters will likely prove helpful for veteran and novice alike. The bibliographies ending each chapter are helpful guides for further study. Those with a particular focus and interest in missions, especially, although not limited to the Presbyterian and Reformed heritage, should find it of some help.

As a composite work with three authors the book is difficult to assess, though its idiosyncrasies are apparent and perhaps could have used further editing. The structure of the subject matter according to nation-states and regions of the world contributes to redundancy, especially in the chapters on Europe. Scholars trained in the historical craft will likely be sensitive to the general lack of a clear coherent narrative. As a survey, the shaping of Presbyterian and Reformed thought and practice over the centuries is addressed, but not at a substantive level, though sympathies for a theological, if not political “conservatism” are sometimes quite apparent. The particular expertise of historians will probably alert them to various inaccuracies. This reviewer noted the repetition of the canard that Warfield was a theistic evolutionist whose apologetic is summarized as trying to “employ the sciences in support of Christianity” (p. 301). One wonders why space was available for sketches on some individuals, especially conservative political figures, and none for addressing the “New Perspective on Paul” and its rather substantial age and influence on theological unrest in Presbyterian and Reformed churches and seminaries.

These weaknesses notwithstanding, *Presbyterian and Reformed Churches: A Global History* can still and should be used for benefit.

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Michael J. Svigel. *Retro-Christianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 279 pp. \$17.99.

Today there is a readership for literature written by former evangelicals in the “going home to Rome” genre. Whether by Tom Howard (once of Gordon College) or Scott Hahn (once of the PCUSA), such literature functions as an apologetic to convince others to tarry no longer in the threadbare project known as evangelicalism and to embrace instead the “historic church.” A variant of this literature can be called “going home to Antioch.” Writers such as Peter Gilquist, Charles Bell, and Frankie Schaeffer identify the Eastern church as the “historic” communion waiting to embrace malnourished evangelicals.

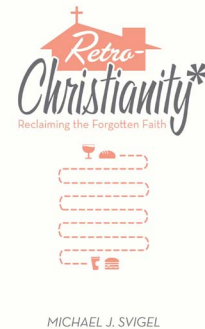
By contrast, Michael Svigel’s *Retro-Christianity* joins a growing body of literature by conservative evangelicals that aims to inform and enrich the evangelical Christianity of today by “drawing down” the legacy of early Christianity. Just in the past five years, there have appeared volumes such as Bryan Litfin’s *Getting to Know the Church Fathers* (Brazos, 2007) and Michael Haykin’s *Rediscovering the Church Fathers* (Crossway, 2011). But even to allude to these volumes is to raise the question of why, following Litfin and Haykin, Svigel has also plowed this furrow.

The answer to this question is twofold. First, Svigel writes with his own particular strand of evangelicalism in mind (independent or “Free Church” evangelicalism). Second, he believes that this strand of evangelicalism is in real danger of disintegrating because it has cut itself off in a myriad of ways from the stream of historic Christianity. Svigel, a Dallas Seminary professor, is an Early Church specialist and is affiliated with an independent Bible Church congregation. He believes that he observes disease spreading in this movement in the form of eccentric ideas and practices taking hold in settings where Bible, theology, and worship are understood in ways disconnected from the larger storyline of Christian history.

Svigel provides several examples of this “drift.” Some are veritably obsessed with secondary eschatological questions across the twentieth century. Some tend to neglect the two ordinances Jesus gave to his church. Svigel describes a pastor who would not administer the Lord’s Supper in his congregation in light of his belief that each meal of the day provided an opportunity to “remember Jesus.” He describes numerous churches in which Christian baptism is left quite optional. Rather than allow their pastors to exercise direction and authority, some congregations treat their pastors as “employees” with the real direction of the congregation being vested in board chairmen.

In Svigel’s judgment, this drift, this eccentric tendency in modern “independent” evangelicalism, can best be remedied by strong doses of teaching from the church’s earliest centuries—especially the immediate post-apostolic late first and early second century. To his very great credit, Svigel not only believes that this “transfusion” of vision and principles from early Christianity to today *must* be carried out; he also believes that it can come only after patient advocacy. He deserves to be affirmed in this.

This reviewer empathizes with Svigel. Having been raised in this stream of evangelicalism, he remembers clearly how, under the general pursuit of “New Testament Christianity,” there was often displayed the eccentricity and angularity against which Svigel warns. And yet there are reasons for hesitation here.



For one, the Svigle volume does not clearly enough distinguish between post-1900 “independent” American evangelicalism (whose excesses he laments) and the wider Protestant evangelical movement. Of evangelicalism “per se,” he indicates that it is “in bad shape and likely to get worse” (p. 23). Now it may indeed be the problem of the first stream that it is badly out of touch with the historic Christian tradition, mediated across the centuries and in consequence in real danger of eccentricity. But this is not the problem (at least to the same degree) of evangelical Protestantism in the major post-Reformation traditions. Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, and Lutherans have had transmitted to them some of the practices and the patterns of early Christianity mediated by their own traditions. The aberrations which Svigle laments are not necessarily the aberrations of older evangelical Protestant groups. So perhaps Svigle has wielded too wide a paintbrush.

Second, if it is indeed the case that historic understandings of the place of creeds, of the ordinances Jesus left to his church, and of the ministry he established live on in the post-Reformation Protestant churches, then it is apparent that correctives to the eccentric ways of independent evangelicalism are a lot nearer to hand than the early Patristic age. They may be within walking distance of the independent evangelical congregations for which Svigle is concerned. So why would not the cure for the eccentricities of independent Christianity begin with greater cross-pollination with longer-established evangelical Protestantism? If there are lessons to be learned from the Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians—well then, on with it!

Third, Svigle’s appeal to the Patristic age (and more particularly the late first and second century, his area of expertise) as the necessary cure is itself open to counter-argument. If independent Christianity has too easily supposed that it can maintain NT Christianity with only the NT Scriptures to guide it, how is this equation fundamentally changed by the mere addition of the *Didache*, the *Epistles of Ignatius* and *Clement*, and the *Apologies* of Justin? Is this not just a recipe for “Book of Acts Christianity 2.0”? Is not what is being proposed just another attempt at Restorationism? One might infer just that from the fact that Svigle regularly prefers the earliest possible dates for these writings, bringing some of them (notably the *Didache*) into the lifetimes of the apostles. If such documents are contemporary with the apostles, do they not serve as windows into the practices of the apostles? Svigle believes this. Ah, but then there is the uncomfortable fact, acknowledged by Svigle, that these early post-apostolic writings contain some elements that we find hard to square with the sayings of the apostles. An example of this is the over-association, in the apostolic fathers, of water baptism and salvation/regeneration (pp. 237–38).

Svigle deserves our thanks for sounding a caution against the dangers, potential and real, of the independent evangelical Christianity in America that sits too lightly to the biblical interpretation, creeds, and practices of historical Christianity. When one considers that independent Christianity is not only an American, but a proliferating global phenomenon, Svigle’s needed cautions are of much wider application than at first appears. The question remains, however, whether the best remedy for this problem is leaping over the many Christian centuries (with scant attention to the Reformation-era re-appropriation of the ideals of early Christianity) and making fresh appropriation of post-Apostolic Christianity. The question of how biblical and Christian teaching have been substantively mediated to us across twenty centuries is the proverbial elephant in the room; it will not go away unrecognized.

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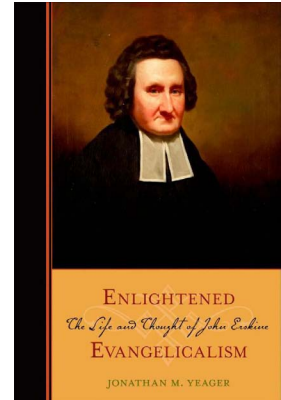
Jonathan M. Yeager. *Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xxii + 336 pp. \$74.00.

The name John Erskine (1721–1803) may not be familiar to the modern Christian world, but to his friends and colleagues he was the leading Calvinist clergyman of the Church of Scotland during much of the eighteenth-century. Despite his family's desire for him to follow his father's path in law and manage the eventual inheritance of a large estate in Carnock and Torryburn, he began his career as a preacher in the town of Kirkintilloch (1744–1753). As the leader of the Popular party, he opposed patronage in favor of a popular vote for ministers and would later serve at Edinburgh's New Greyfriars (1758–1767) and Old Greyfriars (1767–1803).

Though Erskine did not possess the oratory skills of Whitefield, his sermons were heard by no less than David Hume and aimed for perspicuity without compromising the gospel message. He incorporated Stoicism into his preaching, but differed from Moderates by redefining Stoicism "entirely on the orthodoxy of Reformed theology and grounded it on a penal substitutionary view of the atonement, while at the same time exhorting the activism of mission work to save souls" (p. 62). His writings reflected a deep commitment to Reformed, evangelical orthodoxy, yet a desire for intellectual sophistication and creativity. One would think that as a Scottish Enlightened minister Erskine would utilize Thomas Reid's Common Sense Realism, but it was the contrary Lockean empiricism that he gravitated toward. Yeager writes, "As a Calvinist, an evangelical, and an empiricist, Erskine was teaching that all three belief systems complemented each other" (p. 90).

Perhaps Erskine's greatest contribution was his involvement with the international book trade and the dissemination of works and ideas. Thoroughly devoted to the importance of books, having close to 4,000 volumes by the time of his death, Erskine committed himself to the distribution and publication of theological works. While he served on the boards of several missionary societies, his primary focus was on the written component of missions and church life. Erskine's goal in publishing was to "produce moderately priced religious literature that would be widely available for the general public" (p. 175). Often forgoing more expensive publishers, Erskine favored publishers that printed on more affordable paper, with less of a profit margin, and more open to orthodox works. He often used his leverage to get religious books that were out of print or would be otherwise overlooked to get published. Rather than concentrating on his own theological treatises, "he remained content as a man behind the scenes, promoting the abilities and writings of others" (p. 204).

Illustrating Erskine's vision, Yeager unpacks the impact he had on the young colleges of America. Erskine generously donated works to Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, and Dickson College, and his collaboration with Princeton earned him an honorary doctorate from the institution. His involvement with America also extended to figures such as Jonathan Edwards and Joseph Bellamy. Despite never meeting, Erskine and Edwards formed a friendship through letters. They shared their thoughts on theology, church, and even personal matters; during a tumultuous period of Edwards's ministry, Erskine secured a possible pastorate for Edwards in Scotland. Each of Erskine's letters was usually accompanied by several volumes, which at the time of Edwards's death comprised a third of his library. Erskine sent works that he thought would help Edwards, books that Edwards specifically asked for, and heterodox volumes that Erskine hoped would merit a written criticism from Edwards. After Edwards's death,



Erskine became the “chief progenitor of Edwards’ ideas” and was entrusted with the publication of much of Edwards’s posthumous works (p. 150).

Writing under David Bebbington for his doctoral dissertation, Yeager continues Bebbington’s thoughts on the continuity between Scottish evangelicalism in the mid-eighteenth century and the surrounding Age of Enlightenment. However, Yeager may be seen as extending beyond what Bebbington has proposed in *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989). Yeager’s own understanding of Christianity and the Enlightenment is a hybrid of the positions of Jonathan Israel and David Sorkin, with influences from James Bradley and Dale Van Kley. Despite rejecting Peter Gay’s argument that the Enlightenment was a single unified secular movement, Yeager does not want to abandon the term Enlightenment but rather to speak to the complexity of what the Enlightenment actually entailed. In keeping with Bradley and Van Kley, Yeager contends that the radical Enlightenment did not come to prominence until the French Revolution (1789–1799). Prior to this time a Christian could find himself partaking in the critical thinking of the eighteenth-century. Yeager promotes Sorkin’s “spectrum” theory of three rival moderate strands of the Enlightenment and juxtaposes it with Israel’s understanding of the Moderate Enlightenment. He contends that a modern understanding of the Enlightenment leads to the inclusion of figures such as John Erskine as contributing members to the Age of Reason.

Enlightened Evangelicalism is a wonderful addition to other works that have skirted around the present subject matter but have never addressed Erskine in a suitable manner. Yeager’s work goes beyond Richard Sher’s *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (1985) by addressing the evangelical involvement with the Enlightenment. The work accompanies books that attempt similar thinking but with other Christian figures such as Henry Rack’s *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1989) and Josh Moody’s *Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment* (2005).

While being the definitive work on Erskine, Yeager’s book is much more than a standard biography. Yeager taps into the study of the book trade and its impact on theological and ecclesiastical issues during the eighteenth century. The study also adds light to the Transatlantic Awakening and the rise of evangelicalism. Especially profitable is Yeager’s discussion of eighteenth-century evangelicalism and the Enlightenment. Although he may fail to convince Sorkin and particularly Israel that Erskine was an active member of the Enlightenment, by showing how Erskine utilized Enlightenment thinking Yeager does complicate the issue of the Enlightenment. More importantly, Yeager illustrates a successful example of Christian participation with critical thinking and creatively incorporating new methodologies into orthodox theology. Erskine’s ministry is a testament to Christian humility based on countless hours of encouragement through letters, generous financial support through books, and the dissemination of Christian ideas through the promotion and criticism of other authors. Through clear prose and strong research, Yeager brings to light Erskine’s thankless endeavors during the early stages of evangelicalism.

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— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

Christopher Asprey. *Eschatological Presence in Karl Barth's Göttingen Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. xi + 266 pp. £61.00/\$99.00.

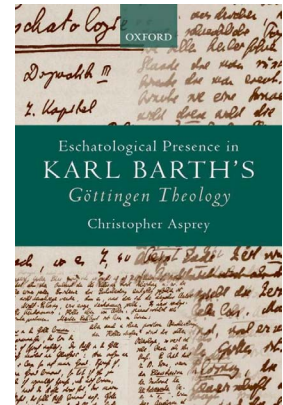
Eschatological Presence in Karl Barth's Göttingen Theology offers a fascinating and nuanced reading of Barth's lectures produced in the course of his first academic appointment at the University of Göttingen (1921–1925). This was a massively important time for Barth, as he wrote the first and only dogmatics cycle he ever completed, lectured on theologians like Calvin and Schleiermacher, and wrote exegetical treatments (e.g., 1 Cor 15) that were massively important to his theological program.

Asprey's book depicts Barth's theology in the Göttingen period from the perspective of his eschatology, arguing that, as an inheritance from his studies with Wilhelm Herrmann, Barth's early theology understands the relationship between God and humankind as normed by the eschatological event of revelation. God freely and graciously encounters the creature, truly making his presence known within the world of creaturely existence and directing the creature to its proper end and goal. As such, this is an *eschatological* event in the sense that its occurrence is radically contingent and depends entirely upon conditions that exist outside the realm of creaturely existence in the gracious will of God.

By critically examining Barth's commentaries on Ephesians and 1 Corinthians, Asprey begins his study by illustrating how Barth understands the nature of Christian existence in comparison to Bultmann (ch. 1). For Barth, the resurrection serves as the ground of Christian existence and ethics only in virtue of its historical particularity. To render Christ's resurrection, like Bultmann does, as a horizon of possibility that God gives to each new moment reduces the historical particularity of Christ, and to that extent it threatens the creature-Creator distinction that is essential to the gracious character of revelation. And yet, along with Bultmann, Barth thinks of the event of revelation as radically contingent and non-assimilable, and therefore he construes Christian identity as what is given in the event of revelation.

This radical contingency is intended to offer a serious challenge to natural human subjectivity, and this has significant consequences for how religion is conceived. This can be illustrated, as Asprey shows, in the roles Barth assigns to preaching and dogmatics (chs. 2–3). For Barth, the event of revelation communicates a *novum*, something genuinely *new*, which is given by God and which "makes a disruptive arrival" into the present with the purpose of reorienting and redirecting the creature into a new form of existence (p. 93). Preachers and theologians are tasked with doing what they cannot do of themselves: speak the Word of God. And so while they may consent to this end, they can never guarantee it or prepare for it; the Word of God remains radically free.

Chapter four discusses Barth's lecture cycles on Calvin, Schleiermacher, and the theology of the Reformed Confessions. Asprey shows that Barth treats the sixteenth-century eucharistic debates within the frame of the doctrine of *revelation* because the basic contents of these debates (divine immanence and transcendence understood in terms of Christology) are the very themes that Barth regards as basic to the question of the nature of religious subjectivity in the event of revelation. In light of Barth's expressed interest in protecting the creature-Creator distinction, it is not surprising that as a way of



explaining this he gravitates to Calvin's Christology, which focuses on the bodily ascension of Christ and the Spirit's mediation of participation in Christ. This enables Barth to protect the event of revelation as a differentiated participation rather than an undifferentiated identity with Christ.

This Christology enables Barth to continue to emphasize the contingent nature of revelation as well as the ontology of the church as what is constituted "from above." And yet, as Asprey argues in chapter five, Barth's interest in Christology as a way of grounding his eschatological moral ontology leads him to stress the *moral* significance of the resurrection and lordship of Christ to the exclusion of the nature of its objective existence. Because Barth worries about how a doctrine of the resurrection might be used to control God, and reify his grace, he renders an attenuated account of the objectivity of the resurrection that results in a Christian ethics that lacks sufficient teleology. Asprey thinks it may finally be this reductionistic doctrine of the resurrection and royal office of Christ that yields the problematic upon which Barth's theology in this period is based: the problem of religious subjectivity.

Chapter six seeks to show how a shortened account of the resurrection and lordship of Christ unduly stresses Barth's pneumatology, which Asprey finds increasingly difficult to distinguish from creaturely subjectivity. The radical contingency of revelation forces him to choose between the prospect of a human subject that is always slipping just out of reach, or of delivering God over into the hands of sinners, to be controlled by them. Barth recognizes that, at some point, the "movement of grace" must be overcome by a "state of grace." As Asprey notes, Barth might have found the stability he sought in a fuller account of the resurrected humanity and heavenly session of Christ as the basis of his theological anthropology—something Barth would go on to do much more considerably in his CD IV.2. Instead Barth seeks to ground it in the event of baptism, which, grounded in Christ's command, proclaims the identity of the creature but does not deposit it with him, as such. Rather, as an event of the Christian's past, it can proclaim only that identity that must continually come into existence in the act of revelation, though in God's grace it truly does proclaim it.

Asprey's argument is relatively simple: Barth's theology in the Göttingen period is oriented around the eschatological encounter between God and humankind, but this preoccupation with the subversive *form* of God's grace—the eschatological encounter—tends to relativize it from the objective content of God's grace, consequently subverting all knowledge of grace. This is the best kind of research. It concerns itself with a discrete body of literature; it proceeds by a close reading of those texts; its writing is clear; and its judgments are sensible. And while it will likely be of interest only to Barth specialists, those who make use of it are certain to be helped by it.

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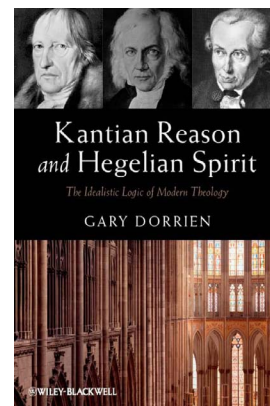
Gary Dorrien. *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. x + 605 pp. £95.00/\$174.95.

In early college days (1970s) I stumbled on a little book by Colin Brown called *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*. For the first time I began to see Western thought as a coherent whole and how the Christian faith related to the wider intellectual world. Gary Dorrien's *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit* is a much longer and more technical book. But for those with the background and stamina to stay with it, it has similar potential for bringing clarity and comprehensiveness to one's understanding of (some modern forms of) Christian theology in modern times in the West.

There is a significant difference between Brown's book and Dorrien's. While the former took historic confessional Christianity as its lodestar for narrating the history of thought, Dorrien is an apologist for the "modern theology" of his book's subtitle. Brown helped situate historic Christianity vis-à-vis non-Christian thought currents; Dorrien argues that the Enlightenment rendered historic Christianity passé. It was and remains superseded by a religion (the liberal idealist tradition) for which not the God of Scripture but certain key philosophical thinkers are the supreme authority. Hence reference to Kant and Hegel in the title, with Schelling and Schleiermacher also looming large, for "modern theology operates in the shadow of" these four thinkers (p. 567). Dozens of other major figures factor in as well, as a quick survey of the book's ten chapters shows.

Chapter 1 (pp. 1–22) is relatively short and sets the stage: "Introduction: Kantian Concepts, Liberal Theology, and Post-Kantian Idealism." It shows that Kant's idealist philosophy and reactions to it are the foundation of mainline Western Protestantism. Dorrien calls this "modern theology," as if everybody affirms it, but he makes it clear that he is not talking about historic Catholic belief (p. 3), and he glosses "modern theology" with "what came to be called 'liberal' theology in Germany and 'modernist' theology in Great Britain" (p. 1). To explain further: until the eighteenth century, Christian theology reflected biblical and ecclesial authority. There had to be affirmation of "specific points of doctrine if one was to claim the Christian name" (p. 2). (Actually, this is still the case in most forms of Christianity around the world, but Dorrien writes as if doctrinal definition is a thing of the past because for him "modern theology," which affects to reject such definition, reigns supreme above all other forms and expressions.) The historic conception of the Christian faith was swept away by "the later Enlightenment [i.e., after Hume], biblical criticism, the liberalizing of German universities, Kant, an upsurge of Romantic and Absolute idealism, and Schleiermacher's determination to liberalize Christian theology within the context of the Christian church and tradition" (p. 3). Chapter 1, then, lays the groundwork for Dorrien to tell the story of how every serious construal of modern theology "from Schleiermacher to Hegel, to Kierkegaard and David Friedrich Strauss, to Ritschland Troeltsch, to Rashdall and Temple, to Tillich and Barth got its bearings by figuring its relationship to Kantian and post-Kantian ideas" (p. 11).

Chapter 2 ("Subjectivity in Question: Immanuel Kant, Johann G. Fichte, and Critical Idealism," pp. 23–83) is largely an exposition of Kant's views as they unfolded over the decades and then began to be developed by others. The chapter concludes dramatically with a hint at how Schleiermacher received Kant but took his thought in a different direction at a key point (p. 74).



Chapter 3 (“Making Sense of Religion: Friedrich Schleiermacher, John Locke, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Liberal Theology,” pp. 84–158) tells the story of the outworking of Kant’s idealism in Schleiermacher and Coleridge, who “had the Schleiermacher role in British theology” (p. 84). John Locke comes into the picture as the dominant British thinker whose legacy Coleridge had to confront and overcome. Not to be missed in this chapter is, for example, the catalog of criticisms of Schleiermacher by his contemporaries (p. 103). Nevertheless, Dorrien is in Schleiermacher’s corner, deftly exonerates him, and in the end credits him with sounding “the keynotes of the first full-orbed liberal theology, which surpassed in influence all the liberal theologies that followed it, and which eventually was recognized as the quintessential liberal theology, long after Schleiermacher was gone” (p. 105). Coleridge proved to be “the Luther of Broad Church Anglicanism” (p. 145), which is to say, the conduit through which liberalism began its rise to dominance on the late Victorian British scene.

Chapter 4 (“Dialectics of Spirit: F. W. J. Schelling, G. W. F. Hegel, and Absolute Idealism,” pp. 159–242) is the longest of the book. Dorrien calls Hegel “the greatest philosopher of the modern experience” (p. 159), stresses the religious cast of his thought, and shows how Hegel was received (or not) or adapted by Schleiermacher and Schelling. Hegel offered “a panentheistic conception of the divine as the unification of nature and freedom, finite and infinite, and universal and particular” (p. 160). Dorrien avers that Hegel is at the root of almost all the great more recent philosophies (he mentions those of Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Bradley, Troeltsch, Bergson, Whitehead, Heidegger, Sartre, Derrida, and Žižek) and schools (he mentions existentialism, psychoanalysis, absolute idealism, historicism, phenomenology, process, structuralism, and deconstructionism) of generations since his time. This chapter is key to explaining why Hegel belongs next to Kant in the book’s title from Dorrien’s point of view.

Chapter 5 (“Hegelian Spirit in Question: David Friedrich Strauss, Søren Kierkegaard, and Mediating Theology,” pp. 243–314) plots out ripples and reactions brought forth in response to Hegel. Strauss gets credit for paving the way for “theologies that let go of philosophy in the name of sacred history” (p. 260)—that is, theologies that speak of redemptive story without the rational justification that a philosophical system might provide. Kierkegaard in his anti-Hegelianism pays tribute to the advance and influence of outlooks Hegel set in motion. This chapter epitomizes a device Dorrien uses frequently to sustain his thesis: if a thinker (like Strauss) appropriates Hegel (or anyone else Dorrien affirms), then that is evidence for the authority of Hegel’s ideas. If a thinker reacts against Hegel (cf. Kierkegaard), that is still evidence for Hegel’s authority since he won out in the places Dorrien thinks ultimately matter, bolstered by the added status of having outdone the reactive thinker. I have never heard reference to “heads-I-win, tails-you-lose-historiography,” but the term could be out there. Otherwise, perhaps there is room for creation of the rubric.

In chapter 6 (“Neo-Kantian Historicism: Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf von Harnack, Wilhelm Hermann, Ernst Troeltsch, and the Ritschlian School,” pp. 315–77), Dorrien shows that “Ritschlian theology was as idealistic as the Mediating and Hegelian traditions that it spurned” (p. 316; there’s that device again: both Hegel and his detractors contribute to the legacy of his idealism). Since the main players in this chapter exerted great influence on twentieth-century German theological and biblical studies, this is one of the most important chapters for those engaged in those fields today. Ritschl rises to importance in eventually acrimonious debate with his father-in-law, F. C. Baur; Ritschlian liberalism becomes normative mainline Protestant thought in Germany and among many intellectuals in North America; and Troeltsch turns out to be the most important figure in the making of modern theology after Kant, Hegel, and Schleiermacher (p. 366).

Chapter 7 (“Idealistic Ordering: Lux Mundi, Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, Hastings Rashdall, Alfred E. Garvie, Alfred North Whitehead, William Temple, and British Idealism,” pp. 378–453) recounts some of the means by which idealist and liberal impulses from Germany made their way into Britain. The section “Liberal Evangelicalism: Alfred E. Garvey” (pp. 408–415) may be of special interest to *Themelios* readers; the whole chapter helps explain the many shifts from the confessional world of Westcott-Hort-Lightfoot to the post-World War II British scene where British doctrinal convictions had given way to the same impulses Dorrien documents in nineteenth-century Germany.

Chapter 8 (“The Barthian Revolt: Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and the Legacy of Liberal Theology,” pp. 454–529) describes “the major event of twentieth-century theology,” which was the “postwar explosion” (meaning after World War I) of “the Barthian overthrow of the liberal establishment” (p. 454). Yet Tillich’s theology turned out to be liberal, as was the theology of the “neo-orthodox” Rudolf Bultmann, and Barth himself by reacting so much to liberalism while being steeped in it educationally and professionally essentially replicated a truncated form of it. Yes, he was a revelational positivist (pp. 514), abhorrent to the liberal outlook. But as Dorrien shows in the next chapter, Barth “worked out a dialectical approach . . . that gave the upper hand to realism,” and “his dialecticism and open-ended pluralism played out in ways that prefigured postmodern criticism and fluidity” (p. 562). In many ways this chapter shows the liberal Dorrien saying, “Bye-bye, Barth!” (see also pp. 562–67) because he accepts little of what Barth in his reaction to liberalism sought to advance. But Dorrien also alleges close ties between Barth and idealists like Hegel, Hermann, and Kant (see, e.g., p. 499). In other words, where Barth affirms what Dorrien does, he was on the right track, even if only because he unwittingly implicated himself in idealism. Where he doesn’t, he erred.

The irony of this anti-liberal-yet-still-idealist Barth is expanded to give the theme to the entire final chapter, “Idealistic Ironies: From Kant to Hegel to Tillich and Barth” (pp. 530–73). In a way this summarizes the book. But it also extends and seeks to clinch its key assertions. It is a rich and complex denouement of all that precedes. In a meandering and often oblique way, Dorrien commends the liberal legacy he has described in its current forms “where everything is relative because everything is related” (p. 567; does relationship necessitate relativity?). Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher remain the fathers of the “modern theology” that operates in their shadows.

This book is important because of its sweep and depth. Dorrien is a skilled storyteller with a nose for decisive detail. His accounts of most thinkers are rich in biographical features. It can be hard to remember or distinguish between the ideas of so many people holding such closely related ideas. But Dorrien’s presentations of Kant, or John Locke, or Ritschl, in their respective upbringings and personality quirks and struggles, leave lasting impressions. For intellectual history in this general area, it is one of the more readable and memorable books I can recall.

The book could be improved editorially by more careful attention to German orthography. I found numerous typos without looking for them. And not just in German: on p. 483 we read that Barth called for theology based on “the World of God alone.” Surely that should be “Word.” I also wished for more careful or complete indexing. Too many names from works mentioned in endnotes do not appear in the index. Adolf Schlatter appears in the text (p. 455) but is not indexed. J. C. K. von Hofmann appears in the index, but the wrong page is given (should be p. 108; Hofmann’s positive role in promoting Schleiermacher may be questioned). We can access Charlotte von Kirschbaum in the index if we look for her under “Von” (Adolf von Harnack, however, is found under “Harnack”). But if we are looking

for Susanne Selinger's important work on von Kirschbaum and Barth, we will have to pick through the endnotes (see p. 522n100), for "Selinger" is absent from the index.

The book concludes speaking of irony but also embodies one: Dorrien's story substantially omits mention of the other simultaneous "story" that has unfolded alongside the one he tells. This alternate story is at least two-fold.

First, if the Enlightenment was as Dorrien affirms a revolution against historic Christian faith, there has also been a robust counter-revolution all along. In general Dorrien has little to say about this, affirming its existence only in the merest passing (e.g., when he speaks of the confessional convictions of the fathers of Ritschl [p. 316] or Harnack [p. 322] or Barth [pp. 454–455]). But Dorrien is writing history from the point of view of the victors (liberals, in his telling) at its best. And they still hold key aces in Western domains, so his narrative will resonate in influential quarters. Yet socially the mainline constituency has fallen from ca. 25% of the US population around 1950 to ca. 12% today. Numbers in pretty much all Western mainline denominations have been falling for decades. Today European liberal Protestantism in the "modern theology" mode Dorrien promotes is a feeble facsimile of its former self. Dorrien writes as if mainline theology were uniform, sacrosanct in its hegemony, and floating above social and ecclesial vicissitudes in enduring importance. Hardly. In Germany, in Britain, in North America—there have been many capable persons, significant institutions, and influential movements responding to the Enlightenment challenge by proposing alternative syntheses, whether doctrinal or intellectual or some combination of both. None is allowed telling voice against Dorrien's triumphant "modern theology." That is fair enough; it is his book. But readers should be aware of the larger story they are not being told, which may turn out to be at least as significant for world history, the church, and Christian thought more broadly conceived as the narrow one Dorrien skillfully narrates. For in the same "modern" timeframe as liberal idealism, there have been other significant conceptualizations, articulations, and applications of Christian theology in academic, ecclesial, and missiological domains. They were evidently critical of or non-compliant toward Enlightenment dicta in ways Dorrien does not approve and so does not give much credence to. Yet in terms of the calendar, for what that is worth, they were and are "modern" too.

Second, internationally the church has exploded in numbers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America during much of the latter period Dorrien describes. Again, his book is silent on this. He could answer that the book is about "the idealistic logic of modern theology," not the exponential growth of "new faces" in Christianity as a result of "believing the Bible in the global South" (see Phillip Jenkins's 2006 book containing those words in its title). Still, what Dorrien treats as self-justifying, inexorable, and hegemonic could as readily be described as arbitrary, fortuitous, and at the current time fragmenting. The irony here is that his story upholds a view of God and the Bible that was post-Christian, indeed anti-Christian, from the start by historic standards. Dorrien's aim, in part, is to show how right that movement has been, and how wrong Barth (and those favoring him today?) was in thinking he could out-innovate the great prophets and apostles of the Enlightenment, their disciples, and the neo-churches they remade in their image and have dominated for generations. Meanwhile, another much larger church has arisen, charismatic or evangelical or both in character, Bible-centered in outlook, largely uninterested in and indeed skeptical of the god-of-some-German-philosophers during the era Dorrien describes.

Perhaps we might indulge here in a little postmodern playfulness. If we think of major Christian groupings worldwide today in Mount Carmel terms (see 1 Kgs 18), where some (or at least one) were prophets of Yahweh and many were not, one wonders who Kant and Hegel (Dorrien's greatest prophets)

might correspond to. In Dorrien's telling, they led the way into "modern theology" and have truth, such as it is after modernism and under current postmodernisms, on their side. So the "modern theology" salvation-historical heritage (with many gaps) follows this sequence: Elijah-John the Baptist-Jesus . . . [major modulation for Enlightenment] ... Kant and Hegel *et al.* The prophets of Baal, for "modern theology," would be (the anti-liberal) Barth and his followers. Entirely off the grid it seems would be the world-wide charismatic and evangelical movements that have been sweeping across continents for decades.

An alternative assessment is one sketched most succinctly, perhaps, by Machen in *Christianity and Liberalism*. Or one might think of Kant scholar Heinz Cassirer's take on Kant in *Grace and Law: St. Paul, Kant, and the Hebrew Prophets*. When Kant and Hegel and others consciously turned aside from classic Christian conceptions and doctrines as they felt constrained to do, they were not filling old forms with better ones but with alien ones. Naturally they were necessary ones in retrospect from the standpoint of reigning academic philosophies. But one can reasonably assert, from a Christian viewpoint, that Christ and Scripture as historically known and confessed furnish the norm for Christian faith-thought-life, not philosophers who have declared independence from the faith's foundational assertions to start with. Salvation history going back to Elijah does not find its fulfillment in Kant and Hegel.

Dorrien's book—which I cannot avoid calling brilliant—will hold the same enduring place in giving an historical justification for his "modern theology" that Barth's *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* holds in setting the table for Barth's dogmatics. Time will tell whether the future belongs to Dorrien's theology, Barth's (in historical or repristinated form), or some other. Also decisive may be whether a paperback edition appears, making this pricey volume more affordable for a wider range of readers.

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Terry Eagleton. *On Evil*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. 159 pp. £10.99/\$16.00.

Reflecting on the horrific events of September 11, 2001, Harvard President Larry Summers, only in the saddle for a few weeks, delivered a message in the memorial service the afternoon of the tragedy. He declared that unlike a tornado or earthquake, the events of "9/11" were acts of malignant agency that rightly called forth outrage against the perpetrators. He added that we needed to be intolerant of intolerance and that the best remedy would be to prevail by simply carrying on the university's everyday work. He was quite taken aback when he discovered that some of his Harvard constituents found his call to outrage against the perpetrators of 9/11 out of place and that his claim to "prevail" was imperialistic. For them the causes were to be sought in America's misguided foreign policy, the oppression of Muslims, and the like.

Terry Eagleton's book *On Evil* sets out to find sentiments such as Larry Summers' entirely justified. Against the fashionable trend to deny the validity of such categories as good and evil, Eagleton mounts a considerable case for their appropriateness. Yet he does so by refusing to simply label something good or



evil in order to have done with it. The effect of that is to shut off debate about social causes, upbringing, psychological conditions, etc. Yet he puts a special twist onto the word evil, one that we may want to question. The reader may be caught off guard by his approach. Evil is banal, nihilistic, meaningless, lacking in being. Thus, Shakespeare's three witches are truly evil, lacking in substance. Hitler is truly evil, inhuman. The Holocaust was an *actegratuit*, a spree of cruelty. Whereas, he argues, Mao and Stalin were ideologues, who carefully planned their rampages. While inexcusable, they were not strictly evildoers. Rather, they were wicked. It is not certain that Eagleton gets away with this distinction entirely. Did not Hitler make plans? Were not Mao and Stalin lusting for power? Let's follow his argument, though.

In many ways this book is stark, appropriately so. The title itself is uncomplicated, in your face, which is how we often meet evil. He opens by recounting the horrible story of two ten-year-old boys in England who tortured and then killed a toddler for no apparent reason. The policeman on the case reported that as soon as he looked at one of the perpetrators he just knew he was *evil*. Eagleton suggests that this policeman gives evil a bad name! He proceeds to explain that however convenient it might be simply to call a person, be it a child, evil, it rather excuses the deed. Similarly, to diagnose terrorists as evil psychotics gets them off the hook of their real responsibility. Calling terrorism evil is lazy. Wicked, no doubt, but there are in existence (or in literature) very few really evil beings.

If you have come to expect profound, witty, culturally informed, iconoclastic writing from Terry Eagleton, you will not be disappointed by *On Evil*. Neither a theodicy nor a systematic account of philosophical and theological explanations for the daunting problem of evil, its origins, its nature, its solution, nevertheless Eagleton's volume serves a useful purpose. What is it? The answer may sound rather modest, but it is not. The answer is to defend the concept of free will. He does this by supporting the rationality, though not the commendability, of evil deeds. While fully admitting the various influences (parental, cultural, religious, etc.) on every one of us, he does not thereby excuse our heinous actions. On the surface, Eagleton appears to reserve the term evil only for the rarest of cases. But deeper down, that is because he is so anxious not to excuse wicked acts and persons. Indeed, evil is meaningless, rather than transgressive. And as such it is relatively rare. Still, there is plenty of wickedness out there, and it is not altogether unrelated to evil.

The book has three sections of uneven length. The first examines the problem of evil through the lens of literature. One might recall, Eagleton is sometimes considered one of the greatest literary critics of our times. Many students survived university literature courses thanks to his *Literary Theory* (1983), one of the clearest accounts of the various schools of literary criticism ever written. Here he takes us through various novels where good and evil are articulated through the main characters. He discusses the dark novels of William Golding, *Pincher Martin* and *Free Fall*, where it is tempting to describe the protagonists as purely evil because of circumstance or psychology. Instead, they are described as stuck on themselves and incapable of love. These are qualities that are chosen, or learned, rather than simply predetermined. This is confirmed by a host of other stories he parades before us. Eagleton is fully aware that we come into the world with all kinds of influences and circumstances that incline us to evil. But, he argues, if we didn't, then how could it be called evil? Eagleton argues that the possibility of destructiveness is there in us because we are truly free.

The second major section of his book is titled "Obscene Enjoyment," and it begins with the canon of Shakespeare, on which Eagleton is a considerable expert. He takes us from Shakespeare to Thomas Mann and de Laclos, and then to the Nazis. He argues that evil is based upon power and that such power loathes weakness. Valmont, in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, seduces his women out of spite rather

than lust. His victims lack being or significance. The Nazis loathed the Jews because they are flawed, scheming, deficient in being. Evil in one sense has no reason for it. We are reminded of the guard at Auschwitz who was asked by one of the inmates why a particularly unjust measure was enacted, and who simply answered, "Here at Auschwitz, there is no *why*." If there is a purpose to evil, it is to hasten the process of destruction that leads to death. Other than that, it is purposeless. Eagleton points out that true evil has no romance to it. In postmodern times we are told that transgression is fun. But since there is no authority against which to transgress, there is no real evil, only the nasty and the gross: vampires, demonic children, corpses, and the like. The truly demonic, as Kierkegaard and Hannah Arendt point out, is boring, banal.

The final chapter hastily goes through untenable answers to the problem of evil. Titled "Job's Comforters," Eagleton rehearses the standard theodicies and dismantles each of them. Moral improvement (the "cold shower" view)? How is the Holocaust remotely useful? Looking at the big picture? Well, most of us live where the smaller bad things contribute to the big picture without any credible link to the good. Evil as mystery? Perhaps, but of what use is such a view to those who are really suffering? Evil as freedom gone wrong? But why were we given the capacity for evil in the first place? What kind of God would perpetrate such a thing? Theodicy, he affirms, is not only a failed enterprise but a very bad idea in the first place.

The great strength of this book is that it puts to rest the liberal idea that we are basically good, moving forward to a better place, only stymied by a few obstacles, or evildoers, along the way. Evil is real. It's not an alien force, making us do what we ordinarily would not. By the end we are made painfully aware that there is not only evil out there but in here. The book is strangely close to parts of traditional theology, while yet never stating that directly. The shadow of Thomas Aquinas hovers, especially when at times Eagleton describes evil as non-being. In the Bible, evil is all too real, yet it is irrational in one sense. There is no good reason for it. Eagleton does not accept a historical fall of a first couple, yet he fully agrees with the doctrine of original sin as he understands it: sin is pervasive and universal. And he asks many of the right questions. Insightfully, he states that the issue for believers is not how a good and powerful God could have allowed sin, but why he would make creatures in the first place who would endure such suffering and misery.

The singular weakness of the book is that it offers no hope. Perhaps Eagleton's strategy, a bit like the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible, is to drive the reader to look elsewhere (upwards?) by confronting him with the bleakness of life under the sun. But could we not have at least a small ray of sun in the midst of his unrelenting analysis of evil? Sure, an honest, if brutal, diagnosis, contains more hope than a romantic cover-up. Still, it is surprising that the author who has given us very bright pages on *Reason, Faith and Revolution* (2010), and insightful, if defective descriptions of *Jesus Christ: The Gospels* (with Giles Fraser, 2007), ends with the stark sentence, "The result of defining terrorism as evil is to exacerbate the problem; and to make the problem worse is to be complicit, however unwittingly, in the very barbarism you condemn." The book is even, most cynically, dedicated to Henry Kissinger! Is he evil, or merely wicked, we may wonder?

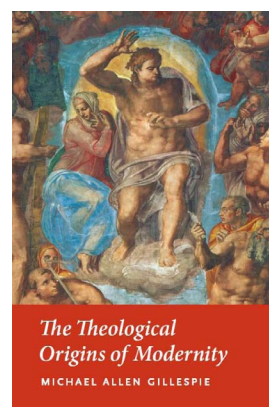
The gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that in one sense evil is a mystery. It does not remove the mystery of evil, but begins by pointing the finger at human beings, who are evil (and wicked—same thing). And then, with great caution and reverence, the Bible lets us think that if God truly is God, then there must be an explanation for the phenomenon of evil. That we do not have access to that answer is a challenge. But that there is someone who does should bring enormous relief, if not clarity. Finally, though, the real

comfort is not that we can know what was in God's mind, but that from eternity he purposed to provide an extraordinary answer. By himself suffering and dying, "becoming sin for us," he provides real hope. If Professor Eagleton ever knew that, he seems to have deliberately left it aside for the moment.

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Michael Allen Gillespie. *The Theological Origins of Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. 386 pp. £14.50/\$22.50.

Here is intellectual history at its best. When I first opened it, I thought to myself, ho-hum, one more book on modernity. A book this one is often compared with is Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, which, if more nuanced and perhaps on more solid diagnostic ground, I found to ramble through so many eras and trends without the cohesion that could have made it much more persuasive. Gillespie's volume is lengthy, but riveting all the way through. He has a way of placing you, the reader, right in the crucial meeting, or beside the important author. For example, we wander all over the world with Petrarch and thus realize why he contributed so much to modern individualism. We are right there in Luther's thunderstorm and thus have a sense of his terror of God. We are present at the execution of Louis XVI by guillotine and experience the transgression of regicide.



Gillespie is deeply acquainted with the primary sources, the difficult debates, the philosophical and theological issues that have shaped the modern world. But what makes this book important is its central thesis, repeated throughout, and supported by each episode he describes. Modernity is an attempt to deal with the late Medieval world, where nominalism has overcome realism. The scholastics of the High Middle Ages were realists, believing in the real existence of universals. To call a chair a chair is possible because chairness has been fixed in heaven. Nominalism, on the other hand, states that we cannot be sure that particulars on earth truly connect with heavenly ones. So we need to find ways to do that. In the fourteenth century a vision of God as powerful and wrathful began to replace a vision of God as love. Ever since we have been struggling to find a way. Plausibility for the new quest was enabled because of the Black death, the discovery of gunpowder, economic upheavals, the failure of the Crusades, and the like.

Gillespie uses the term "theological" not in some providentialist sense, but to mean that modernity is the product of theological, really philosophical issues. At the center are the great debates among thinkers about whether humanity will have the freedom to pursue its liberal calling or whether the darker forces of nihilism will prevail. Over against the standard historiography that says modernity was born out of trends that move from God to secularization, Gillespie contends that secularization is simply a mask covering up deeper theological concerns that just won't go away. Throughout the book he looks for opposites, a sort of dialectic, out of which modernity emerges. Put differently, he argues that modern history is a series of encounters between those who defend humanity and those who cannot.

He has a brilliant chapter on Petrarch, whom he believes is the central figure in the renaissance, despite his neglect by historians. Through the poet-philosopher Western man was able to move away from the Greek worldview, where he is tied in to political, cosmological, and theological forces, to the emerging individualism he did so much to promote. Petrarch made the conscience, not the Bible, the best judge of virtue. This he proves by extensive explorations of texts such as the *Song Book, My Solitary Life, and My Secret*.

In two separate but related chapters, Gillespie compares and contrasts humanism, centering on Erasmus, to the reformation, centering on Luther. While never quite calling Luther a nominalist, it is clear that access to God was no longer possible through the standard Medieval practices of the sacraments, prayers, and so on. Luther's great crisis for knowing God led him to stress the role of faith, rather than reason. Instead, for Erasmus piety and learning, albeit in a more humanist way than in the Middle Ages, are more central. Gillespie employs something of the same tactic comparing Descartes to Hobbes. Descartes explores all of the layers of rationality and skepticism, to emerge with a rock of indubitability, and thus the possibility of science. His God will give us access through our reason. Hobbes's God is more remote, less scrutable. His is a "fearful wisdom." Finally, Gillespie tackles the Enlightenment and discovers there the same kinds of opposition. Following Immanuel Kant he finds a "contradiction" in the Enlightenment, between the powers of reason and its limits. And what looks at first like a rationalist rejection of religion is only a truly religious faith in reason, one that, as Nietzsche demonstrated, is idolatry. The hope in progress is dashed then and now by the catastrophes of the French Revolution, the two World Wars, and the woes of globalization. Yet we can still hope for the emergence of a more positive answer to the great dilemma.

Toward the beginning of the book, the author sets before us two images. The first, the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, gives us hope that the best in humanity will indeed triumph. The second, the blowing up of the Twin Towers, puts all of that into question. The purpose of the book is not to predict which of the two forces will prevail, but to raise the questions and thus give us more of a grip on modernity.

My own evaluation of *The Theological Origins of Modernity* is rather mixed. Gillespie is a masterful historian. In the best tradition of the history of ideas, a discipline sadly maligned by the more trendy culture studies, he takes us right to the texts and the persons so that we feel we know what was said and done, all of it without forgetting his larger narrative. Modernity was not born of random events, but of ideas, driven, why not, by "theological" convictions? Having said that, I found some of the oppositions he describes too rigid. The case for a drift from realism to nominalism is itself somewhat tenuous. Speaking as a theologian, I don't think he quite gets the distinction right. He wants to call Thomas Aquinas a realist, which he was not exactly. Associating Luther with nominalism may seem plausible at first, but Luther not only knew God but described his nature and his will from the Bible in very particular ways. William of Ockham may have been a nominalist, but surely not Luther. The Calvinist branch of the reformation is only very briefly mentioned, though it is arguably far more influential in the genealogy of modernity than the Lutheran. And both Luther and Calvin are lumped together as believing that nothing we do on earth affects our chances for salvation, something only divine election can decide. Here Gillespie shows himself surprisingly unaware of the very texts in the reformers that would have shown him the contrary. For them the sovereignty of God is not an alternative to human responsibility and the cultivation of virtue, though it is a necessary precondition. Gillespie describes God as a power, but not much a grace-giver. Grace, as theologians know, or should know, does not violate "second causes."

While the book is long enough, it really concentrates on the struggles in the late Middle Ages and its aftermath, skipping very fast over the more recent centuries. As a result little or nothing is said about one of the most remarkable trends within modernity, the growth of the church outside of Europe. Nothing is said about the counterpart to the Enlightenment which are the awakenings and revivals, which spawned the great missionary movements of the nineteenth century, and the establishment of truly national and independent churches in the global south. The trouble is that those cannot be explained by the attempt to fill the gap of nominalism, at least without quite a stretch. A small portion interacts with Islam and rightly tells us we would understand it better if we understood ourselves better. But as to the possibility that Islam itself is connected to modernity, there is nothing.

Am I contradicting myself since I called the book intellectual history at its best? No, because this is a very good read and full of insights into some of the most significant voices that have shaped the modern world. And the idea of rival worldviews between optimists and pessimists has a ring of truth about it. It's just that the categories of realism and nominalism don't quite work as a master narrative.

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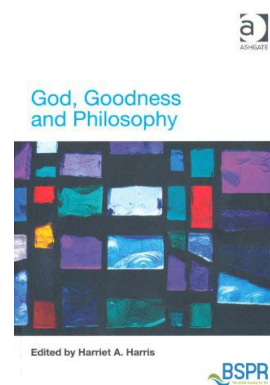
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Harriet A. Harris, ed. *God, Goodness, and Philosophy*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2011. xviii + 257. £19.99/\$39.95.

The British Society for the Philosophy of Religion was founded in 1993/1934 and has held a biennial conference since 1995. Each conference focuses on a particular theme, and in 2009 the theme was God and Morality. This volume promises to be the first in a series of volumes gathering together some of the papers presented at each BSPR conference. The papers collected here cover five broad issues. (1) Practicing philosophy of religion: what is the use of philosophy of religion? (2) The Euthyphro dilemma. (3) Evolution and the grounds of morality. (4) Evil and the goodness of God. (5) God and moral responsibility. What follows highlights some of the essays that seem noteworthy.

Jaco Gericke's "Beyond Divine Command Theory: Moral Realism in the Hebrew Bible" challenges contemporary divine command theory (DCT). It is often assumed that DCT is taught in the Hebrew Bible, but Gericke argues that this simply is not the case. Instead, the Hebrew Bible often talks of God as if he were under some external standard of morality. The Hebrew Bible does not seem to equate God with goodness as is the case with DCT. The arguments in this paper should be considered by those who are currently working on DCT and Christian theology since Gericke shows a deep understanding of biblical studies and philosophy of religion. It would also be interesting to see if the NT fits better with DCT than the Hebrew Bible.

The doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS) is a controversial doctrine these days. Its proponents often say that DDS can help us solve the Euthyphro Dilemma by way of developing a robust version of DCT. However, contemporary thinkers like Alvin Plantinga have offered arguments that DDS is incoherent. Anders Kraal seeks to defend the coherence of DDS in "Does Divine Simplicity Solve the Euthyphro Dilemma?" Plantinga's argument, in brief, is as follows. On DDS all of God's properties are identical



to each other, so there is only one property. This property is identical to God, so God is a property. A property is not a person (nor three persons) and cannot cause things to exist. So DDS is incompatible with any Christian doctrine of God. Kraal points out that Plantinga's argument uses first-order logic. If the argument cannot be stated in first-order logic, the argument fails to refute DDS. Kraal argues that Plantinga's objection cannot be stated in first-order logic. This is because first-order logic does not allow us to predicate things of an object without introducing complexity into the object. As such, the argument fails. What Kraal does not seem to notice here is that this is a hollow victory for DDS. Plantinga's objection fails because DDS cannot be stated in first-order logic. Elsewhere Kraal attempts to develop possible systems of logic that can handle DDS, but concludes that the prospects for developing such a system do not look good (Kraal, "Logic and Divine Simplicity," *Philosophy Compass* 6 [2011]). The inability of DDS to be stated logically is a reason for thinking that DDS is false. Something that cannot be stated logically cannot help us solve the Euthyphro dilemma, nor anything for that matter.

Robin Attfield's "Evolution and Agapeistic Ethics" argues that contemporary evolutionary accounts of altruism fail. Some evolutionary accounts fail because they preclude altruistic behavior from the start. We cannot presume altruistic behavior to be impossible because we know from experience that it does in fact occur. Other accounts fail because they rely on meme theory that treats genes and memes as wholly deterministic. This removes all rational agency, and only rational agents can engage in science. So we must reject meme theory in order to do science. However, our genes do have a causal role to play in our lives, but they are not determinants. Our "genes may incline without necessitating" our behavior (p. 128). Attfield then goes on to suggest some ways one might go about developing a proper evolutionary account of altruistic behavior.

Nicholas Wolterstorff's "What Makes Generosity Sometimes Unjust?" starts with two parables from the Gospels that seem to conflict with some of our moral intuitions about justice. The first parable is the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) and the other is the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt 20). The parable of the Vineyard involves a vineyard owner hiring people to work the land. Some agreed to work the land early on in the day, while others began to work with only an hour left in the day. Yet, the owner gives all of the laborers the same pay. Naturally, the workers who have been there all day complain, but the owner contends that his actions are just. Jesus also seems to affirm that the owner's acts are just. What are we to make of this? What does this teach us about God and morality? Wolterstorff offers a fascinating analysis of this issue that looks at the true nature of justice, generosity, and mercy. He also offers a critique of other accounts. An unfortunate number of theologians and biblical commentators hold that God's generosity does in fact violate justice, but God transcends justice so this is somehow not a problem. Wolterstorff disagrees. "[P]ace Nygren and Brunner, God's generosity does not transcend justice by violating justice; it transcends justice by doing what justice requires and more. We are to do likewise." (191)

Ioanna-Maria Patsalidou's "God's Love and the Problem of Hell" argues against Eleonore Stump's doctrine of hell. In Stump's hell, it is a good thing for God to preserve the damned. Whatever exists, or has being, is good. It is better to have being than not to have being. Through a series of free immoral actions, the damned have acquired a second nature that is not suited for heaven. God can be good to the damned by preserving them in being, and allowing them to act out the second nature that they have freely acquired. Yet God does not allow evil to continue. Here is one of the problems that Patsalidou brings up. It seems that God cannot preserve the damned and allow them to continue to act out their second nature without allowing further evil to occur. Say that one of the damned has developed a

wrathful nature. If the damned has no object of wrath, how can she continue to act out her nature? It would seem that God is not being fully good toward her in the way Stump's hell demands. If the damned does have an object of wrath (i.e., another person), it would seem that she is continuing to perpetrate evil acts. How could it be the case, then, that God is not allowing evil to continue? Patsalidou's argument is more nuanced than I can do justice here, and it deserves attention from those who are currently working on the doctrine of hell.

All in all, this volume offers us some interesting papers that are of value to those working on the relationship between God and morality. It also allows us to see that Britain's got talent in the realm of philosophy of religion.

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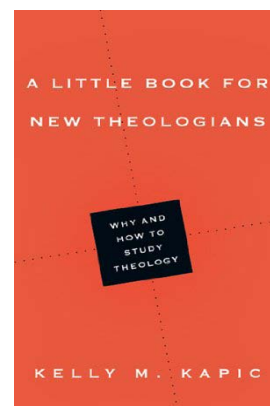
Kelly M. Kapic. *A Little Book for New Theologians: Why and How to Study Theology*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012. 121 pp. £4.99/\$8.00.

The burden of this book is the author's concern that anyone embarking on theological study should have a solid devotional life and spiritual maturity that will make such study both profitable to him and useful for the life of the church. Too often young theologians get caught up in debates that have little to do with the Christian life. They may go off into an academic world of their own, leaving others with the impression that theology is of little importance in the real world. Sometimes they lose the faith they had to begin with because they have not maintained the right balance between knowing what other people have said about God and knowing him personally.

To confront these dangers head on, Dr Kapic tells his readers what theology is all about—it is the study of God with the intention that we should know him better and enjoy him more. We are pilgrims on a journey into deeper understanding and have to prepare ourselves spiritually for the task that lies before us. Dr Kapic begins by setting out the theme of the book, which is that life and theology are inseparable. Our rational faculties must be used to deepen our faith, not to overturn it by clever arguments that get us nowhere in the end. Prayer and humility in approaching the subject are in many ways even more important than technical competence in the discipline itself.

Furthermore, we have to realise that we are part of a tradition that stretches back to the NT and beyond. If what we say does not fit in with that tradition, it is probably wrong, and we must be on our guard against the urge to pursue novelty for its own sake. Finally, a good theologian must have a deep knowledge and love of Scripture, which is the means God uses to speak to his people. If we are not hearing his voice in the text, then all our study of it is a waste of time.

Dr Kapic is not saying anything new, as he himself insists. He constantly draws on the great saints and theologians of the past in order to illustrate and support the points he is making. What he is doing is bringing that ancient message to a new generation, which needs to hear it afresh. Occasionally, we must admit that he demands more from his readers than they will be able to provide. For example, he makes



a distinction between ‘archetypal’ and ‘ectypal’ theology, which is certain to baffle not only beginners but almost anyone who is not well-read in seventeenth-century Reformed dogmatics. Here and there he needs to come down a notch or two in order to connect with where the general public is at, but that does not detract from the overall usefulness of the book. New theologians can learn a lot from it, and if it challenges them in some places, then so much the better.

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John Lennox. *Seven Days That Divide the World: The Beginning according to Genesis and Science*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 192 pp. £10.99/\$16.99.

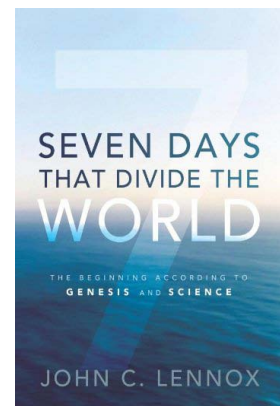
There is a volatile debate concerning science and Christianity most of which centers on the first chapter of Genesis. Even Christians have wrestled with proper interpretation of the creation account for centuries. Does a six-day creation account match what we know about the age of the universe? Can a Christian who believes in an old universe be true to what the Scripture says? What does the creation story tell humanity about God and nature? John Lennox has written *Seven Days That Divide the World* to answer these questions and more.

John Lennox is a Christian mathematician and philosopher. He begins his book affirming the truth that God is the author of both Scripture and nature. In the introduction, Lennox says, “We think that, since God is the author both of his Word the Bible and of the universe, there must ultimately be harmony between correct interpretation of the biblical data and correct interpretation of the scientific data.” He fully affirms the inerrancy and ability of the Bible to inform humanity about nature. He understands there seems to be a troubled relationship between science and interpreting the Bible. Lennox believes that the two are equal in truth-value because God has authored both and that each are meant to illuminate, not dominate, the other.

Lennox lays out three basic models of interpreting the creation story. The first is a so called “young-earth creationist” account that reads Gen 1 as seven (24-hour) days. This model tends to point to a young earth that may only be ten thousand years old. However, Lennox mentions that 24-hour days in Gen 1 could still be congruent with an old universe. He mentions the possibility that long periods of time could have transpired between the days of creation yielding an old earth.

The second model is known as the day-age view. It interprets the Hebrew word for day based on other passages in the Bible that describe a day as an age or long period of time. In this view, the creation story lasts quite a long time and is in harmony with scientific evidence of an old universe.

Lennox’s third category is known as the framework view. This view is the most discussed and is obviously closest to Lennox’s own view. It explains the days in creation in a logical order rather than a chronological one. In this view, the days are not necessarily 24-hour periods but are logical categories. Lennox asks the reader to consider metaphorically how a builder and a surgeon would explain the construction of a hospital. The builder would most likely explain the construction in a chronological fashion beginning with the foundation, then a floor-by-floor description. A surgeon might explain the



building categorically by first referencing a third floor surgical ward, then second floor children's ward, then basement parking garages.

Lennox provides ample support for this framework view with some exegetical evidence. He does not pretend to be a Hebrew scholar and cites plenty of other scholars. The basic clues indicate that the Bible uses different articles to describe the days giving special distinction to days six and seven. The first three "days" of creation sum up the universality of creation, which includes light and darkness, water and air, land and vegetation. The last three sum up the particulars—sun and moon, fish and birds, and animals and humanity. This logical explanation helps explain why the earth would have light even though the sun is not introduced until day four.

The crux of this book is the last chapter, entitled "The Message of Genesis 1." Lennox rightly explains how the creation story exalts God as the supreme being over all and that humanity has a special place among creation. His resting on the seventh day is also important; it is not to show that God was tired, but that his creating was over and complete. Lennox notes this completeness as a polemic against evolution. He states that God's infinite Sabbath does not allow for the guided evolution that some theistic evolutionists posit. Lennox also includes humanity's unique creation, specifically that there were no suitable animals to tend the ground. Genesis 1:27 is the axiomatic verse for the distinction between humanity and animals.

Lennox does not pretend that his book is the answer to all the riddles of the creation account. Additionally, this book is not limited to the creation account. He notes with some frequency that his text is a mere introduction to some of the issues in Genesis, but that it can serve both Christians and skeptics. His scholarship is both thoughtful and respectful of other interpretations of Genesis. Lennox wrote this to demonstrate how Christianity and science are both expressions of truth and how the book of Genesis is integral to human existence. He succeeds on both accounts. Lennox is humble enough to admit his own inadequacies in Hebrew translation and faithfully gives credit to multiple sources that have contributed to his views. He also highlights the overarching narrative of the Bible that God is a redeemer who has provided the necessary and sufficient means for reconciling humanity to himself through Christ.

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Paul T. Nimmo. *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of His Ethical Vision*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007. 214 pp. £22.99/\$39.95.

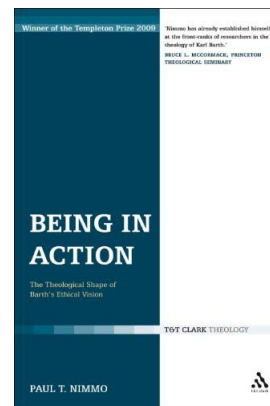
The recent resurgence of interest in Barth studies has furnished us with several publications examining the theological dimensions of Barth's ethics. It is no exaggeration to say that this topic has long been regarded one of the most problematic and difficult dimensions of Barth's thought, and it is typically fixed within the cross hairs of his most vigorous critics. Several of the major motifs of Barth's theological program cause him to give a unique account of human moral action. Most notably among those motifs is Barth's "actualism."

In the history of Barth studies, "actualism" has been a term most typically used to designate Barth's theology as one that is oriented toward an event of revelation in which God encounters man. For Barth, revelation is an irreducibly *personal* affair and therefore cannot be contained or enclosed within creation but must always take place in a continually new event in which humanity is graciously encountered by the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ. By describing the relation between God and humankind in terms of an *event*, Barth's theology tends to focus its attention on the active relations between God and humankind.

This gives Barth's ethics a very distinct contour. In any particular circumstance, human moral action is normed by the event of God's revelation in the form of a divine *command*, which summons humankind to obedience. Barth thinks the idea that human action is normed by universal principles extracted from Scripture by some method of exegesis must entail a reduction of the particularity of God's command in the circumstance in which it is given. Furthermore, Barth thinks it would finally prove to be ineffectual, as sinners would certainly manipulate it to serve their own ends. In the end, the faithful obedience of the Christian depends less on the skillful application of universal principles than on the guidance of the Spirit in each new moment.

While this "actualism" enables Barth to give an unusually powerful account of how ethics is driven by God's freedom and grace, it has often been criticized for containing an unnecessary phobia about creaturely media that diminishes or even completely eclipses human action. In *Being in Action*, Paul Nimmo contends that these criticisms fail to grasp the full scope of Barth's actualism. Far from being merely a formal feature of Barth's theology of revelation that orients all knowledge of God, Barth's actualism is, in reality, a theological *ontology*—a way of describing the nature of divine and creaturely being—which forms "the context of all ethical action and of the human person" (p. 2). If the event of revelation in Jesus Christ does not merely orient or direct the Christian but in fact makes a determination about her context and ontology, then Barth's command ethic can be seen as not an occlusion of her created nature, but her correspondence to it.

The goal of *Being in Action* is to trace the significance of an actualistic ontology in relation to the noetic, ontological, and teleological dimensions of Barth's ethics in an attempt to show its "structural significance" for his thought. Nimmo devotes relatively little space to discussing what actualistic ontology *is*, or the nature of Barth's understanding of and dissatisfaction with substance metaphysics. For the most part he takes these points as given in the work of Bruce McCormack. Consequently, he reads Barth's actualism as a properly theological alternative to the ontology of substance, which Nimmo thinks tends to deal with the human agent as self-contained and abstract—a historically remote entity



(p. 10). By contrast, an actualistic ontology prioritizes history, not merely as a sign that refers to God as its principle, but as what is truly constitutive of God (pp. 10–11). The putative benefits of such an ontology are its generally non-speculative character and its responsiveness to the particulars of the drama of redemption, particularly the incarnation and atonement.

Nimmo's reading of the material generally succeeds in demonstrating the structural importance of actualism for Barth's ethics, making him more resilient against the charges of his critics. The primary benefit of this course of interpretation appears to be that it maximizes Barth's atonement theology from the outset, ensuring that there can be no fundamental disparity between the work of Christ and the ethical agent. This enables Nimmo to render a richly textured, non-competitive reading of the divine-human relation in both providence and union with Christ.

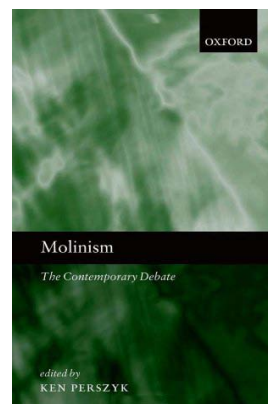
But this move also tends to further relativize Barth's doctrine of creation to his Christology, which in a sense renders Barth's notion of the ethical agent even more illusory. This can become problematic in those passages where Barth appears to speak of moral action as an enactment of or a defection from one's created nature. This is why Nimmo expresses surprise at Biggar's suggestion that Barth's ethic might include a non-formal version of natural law (p. 52) or why he finds trouble with the suggestion that Barth prioritizes union with Christ over ethical correspondence (p. 179)—because, for Nimmo, the order and ontology of nature is primarily a function of Christology rather than creation.

This notwithstanding, *Being in Action* is an important book in the ongoing discussion concerning Barth's ontology and a very helpful treatment of Barth's ethical theology. Nimmo shows a tremendous grasp of the secondary literature and is able to convey a sense of the dimensions, not only of Barth's thought, but also of his interpreters. For the Barth specialist, the bibliography and footnotes will prove invaluable, but Nimmo's balanced exposition, his attentiveness to the proportion of Barth's overall thought, and his careful interaction with the secondary literature make this book of considerable use to an audience that is interested in theological ethics or soteriology more generally.

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Ken Perszyk, ed. *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. vii + 320 pp. £40.00/\$65.00.

The popularity of ideas, as that of other things, ebbs and flows. This is true even in philosophy, where the intention is for reason to prevail. In philosophy there is intense clarification of concepts and their implications, and deployment of arguments in which these concepts figure. Arguments may be proved to be invalid, or to be based on ideas that are dubious because confused. When I was younger, Logical Positivism and its effects prevailed. It has the characteristic thesis that unless a proposition could be verified or falsified (or is in principle verifiable and falsifiable) by sense experience, it was cognitively (i.e., literally) meaningless. It was counter-argued that by that standard many scientific claims are unverifiable or unfalsifiable, and that scientific laws appear to be verifiable or falsifiable in principle. Many other propositions were unfalsifiable yet



meaningful. Why then not theological propositions? For a while the arguments go to and fro, some being convinced that logical positivism is indefensible, others that it is defensible, and many in between. And then what usually happens is that a tiredness settles over the academic community as the arguments are rehearsed and revisited and as little new light emerges. People look for other things to argue about. The wheel turns.

In the 1970's Alvin Plantinga defended and developed the free will defense against the charge that it is inconsistent to suppose that there is evil in a universe created by an all-good, all-powerful God. Plantinga's adherence to a libertarian account of human freedom is crucial to this argument. It is fair to say that he elaborated this argument with a sophistication that is without parallel in the modern literature. In what may be called the second phase of this work, he employed the newly developed semantics of modal logic to argue that God can know the counterfactuals of freedom, propositions such as 'If A were placed in circumstances C, he would freely choose to X rather than Y'. He knows what would happen in the future since he knows what A would freely do if placed in circumstances C. God can then 'weakly actualise' C in some circumstances which best suit his purposes knowing that, say, in those circumstances A will choose X. (For details, see Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, pp. 49–50.)

Little did Plantinga know (until it was pointed out to him by the likes of Anthony Kenny and Bob Adams) that he had thereby reinvented the Molinist doctrine of middle knowledge: that besides God's natural knowledge and his free knowledge, he possesses middle knowledge, knowledge of the counterfactuals of human freedom. By actualizing a possible world in which this state of affairs is true, God can ensure that creaturely freedom is preserved as well as his immaculate knowledge of the future free actions of his creatures. Bingo!

Plantinga's proposal precipitated an avalanche of discussion on Molinism. Parts of Molina's *Concordia* were translated into English for the first time, and several philosophical theologians became avowed Molinists, applying the insights not only to the problem of evil, but to the incarnation, providence, prayer, heaven and hell, perseverance in grace, and so on. The main practitioners here are Tom Flint (*Divine Providence* and innumerable articles) and Bill Craig (*The Only Wise God* and equally innumerable articles—and other books). The likes of Flint and Craig were challenged, among others, by William Hasker, for how God might know the future free actions of his creatures and how they be brought about is beside the point, he being an Open Theist. Some of the articles by these and others have been collected in *Middle Knowledge: Theory and Applications* (ed. William Hasker, David Basinger, and Eef Dekker; Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2000).

Now here is another collection, welcome of course, but several features about it suggest that, after a surge of interest, the Molinist tide is ebbing. No one now gets excited over the 'grounding objection' to Molinism, the objection that God cannot have knowledge of future free actions unless he has evidence, and what could that evidence be, given libertarian freedom? A number of contributions review and summarise the course of arguments in 'Molinist studies' without offering any new arguments, while others go to topics at the margin, such as theodicy (and hard determinism). This also suggests that the tide of interest and philosophical argument and counter-argument is retreating and that Molinism will drop in the league table of interest to be replaced by the next issue to attract interest.

In his helpful introduction to this new collection, Ken Perszyk not only provides interesting historical background; he restates the distinction between the theory of middle knowledge, its perspicuous statement, and the discussion of resources that may be called upon to overcoming objections to its deployment, on the one hand, and also its application to grace, predestination and free will, and other

theological areas. The question ‘Can it fly?’ raises one set of questions. If so, ‘Where can it fly to?’ raises another, though it would be misleading to suppose that those who are interested in this second question wait patiently until the first question is settled, if it can be settled to general satisfaction. And this is fair enough because the second question can in any case be raised hypothetically: if Molinism were to be theoretically satisfactory, where could it be deployed?

Among the chief theoretical questions are questions about the counterfactuals of freedom, whether there can be any that are true, and our old friend the ‘grounding objection.’ This is featured here in two summary discussions, Hasker, ‘The (Non)-Existence of Molinist Counterfactuals,’ and Tom Flint in ‘Whence and Whither the Molinist Debate: A Reply to Hasker,’ and the latest rounds of the debate. A second kind of theoretical objection, that is concerned with bringing about counterfactuals of freedom, making them true by what we do, is also discussed. This features Hasker again, and Flint and Trenton Merricks. And there is discussion about whether there can be true counterfactuals of freedom prior to God’s decree of them. Objections along this line go back to J. L. Mackie. The remaining papers are by Dean Zimmerman and Merricks, Edwin Mares and Ken Perszyk, Edward Wierenga, William Lane Craig and Greg Restall. Those by Derk Pereboom, Hugh McCann, and perhaps John Fischer on determinism and providence, the free will defense, and on what Molinism does and does not imply stand apart from the main lines of argument. Some of the papers are quite technical, because a further reason for discussing Molinism is a philosophical interest in conditionals and modality. All these discussions have this in common: an overriding concern to safeguard human libertarian freedom. This needs to be borne in mind when we read, for example, that middle knowledge provides ‘the reconciliation of divine sovereignty and human freedom’ (William Lane Craig, p. 210), for Craig means divine sovereignty in the Arminian sense.

As regards so-called ‘applied’ Molinism, the satisfactoriness of these discussions depends in part on what one regards as a satisfactory Christian doctrine. But Molinism cannot be allowed to determine the contours of a Christian doctrine or how it is to be formulated.

Harking back to the objection to there being true counterfactuals of freedom prior to God’s decreeing of them, this is one of the few places at which contemporary discussion of Molinism connects with the original Reformed objections to Middle Knowledge. Theologians such as William Twisse and Samuel Rutherford were not so much interested in whether Molinism was internally satisfactory as in cutting it off at the root because they could not conceive of any counterfactuals of creaturely freedom being true that were not first decreed by God, and true because of this, and so part of his free knowledge. So they argued *ad hominem* against Molinism by denying the very idea of middle knowledge. Their answer to the current ‘grounding’ objection would be that what grounds the truth is not evidence that exists apart from the decree of God, but that decree. So the idea of middle knowledge, some category between the natural and free knowledge of God, is inadmissible. How could it be known to God that in circumstances C, A will freely do P other than by being unconditionally decreed by him, and so being an aspect of the divine free knowledge? If God cannot know this, it cannot be true. (Do I hear you say that there is some equivocation in these debates in the use of ‘knowledge’ in phrases such as ‘middle knowledge’ and ‘God’s free knowledge’? Indeed there may be, but the fact goes largely unnoticed.)

This is why those philosophers with Calvinistic convictions do not figure very prominently in current debates about Molinism, which is (as a rule) defended by those who wish to retain a traditional understanding of the scope of divine omniscience, and covers future libertarian actions, and is attacked by those who uphold libertarianism and who let go of the traditional view of omniscience. So viewed

theologically, it is a debate within the libertarian guild, discussed without any reference to the necessity and scope of the divine decrees, and it excludes such as Hugh McCann, who upholds absolute divine sovereignty *and* libertarian free will. To admit a Calvinist to the party would be a conversation-stopper or at least a conversation-changer, in which the Calvinist would do his best to show how unfair it is to characterize his position as theological fatalism and human beings as puppets or machines run along fatalistic lines. (The ‘fates’ are in fact the purposes of God our creator who has given us life and who governs what he has created towards specific ends in accordance with his good and wise purposes.) He may in turn attempt to change the conversation by name-calling, perhaps by calling the God of Molinism the ‘Demiurge’ (p. 11n22) and Open theist theologians as ‘Socinians’. But nothing is to be gained by name-calling.

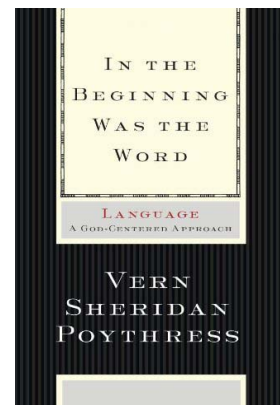
For the Reformed who debated Molinism in the seventeenth century, God’s knowledge of what takes place in his creation, whatever else it is, is knowledge of what he will decree. So the idea that there are states of affairs, including the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, which are distinct from the divine mind and which are made true or false only by acts of creaturely freedom which God abets by supporting and enabling but which he does not foreknow, is quite unacceptable. Theologians such as Bruch Ware, who finds a place for ‘Reformed Molinism’ (*God’s Greater Glory*, pp. 110–12), are an odd and an inexplicable exception.

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Vern Sheridan Poythress. *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009. 415 pp. £16.99/\$25.00.

Vern Poythress, professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary, writes a book on language using the Bible as his “foundational resource” with the aim of “helping people increase their appreciation for language” (p. 9). The book is divided into five parts. Part 1 details a theology of human language that is rooted in divine sovereignty and reflects the Trinity. With a brief introduction to language, Part 2 is mainly a historical-redemptive account of human history with short reflections on language at the end of each chapter. The focus of Part 3 is discourse, with chapters on speaking and writing, verbal and biblical interpretation, and genre. Part 4 begins with an overview of storytelling and then highlights both the Story and stories of Jesus and redemption. Part 5 studies sentences, meaning, and systems of language, and Part 6 is made up of two concise chapters on truth and language. A robust section of informative indices follows, and the book ends with a reflection on special cases of human speech.

The chapters that make up Parts 1 and 2 are mainly a theological exposition of God’s sovereignty in and over human language and history. Using a framework based on John Frame’s triad of lordship (authority, control, presence), Poythress applies a corresponding triad to the three aspects of God’s speaking: meaning, control, and presence. For Poythress, the sovereignty of God in language is



meticulous; God determines and controls the meaning of each word in human speech and language. Though human beings as image bearers do play an ectypal role in the use of language, it is the triune God who creates words and specifies their meanings and even spellings (p. 51). The meanings of words come from the omniscient mind of God that knows the world as it is. On the basis of several passages that affirm the omnipotence and omnipresent activity of God in the world, Poythress explains, for example, that “God controls and specifies the meaning of ‘go’ in English” (p. 38). How a statement like this can be declared as true by analogy with scriptural revelation is not explored, but attention is given to God’s control of words and grammar throughout their historical development, as well as to the God-ordained rules that govern language over time. These rules reflect the character of God and are therefore omnipresent (they apply anywhere a particular language is spoken), eternal and immutable (both ascribed to the rules, but not the living language). These “actual rules” are not to be equated with the language rules we know as “[w]e cannot say that the human formulations of the rules completely capture the actual rules” (p. 64n1).

Poythress’ starting point for language and its ontological basis in the triune God must be applauded, as well as chapters such as “World History” (ch. 13), where some of his concepts of language are skillfully interwoven with the Trinity, Christology, and redemptive history. One has difficulty, however, reconciling his view of language—with its corresponding forms and “actual rules”—with how humans experience and use language. He tries to illustrate, for example, the study of the “actual rules” of human language with a parallel to scientific law: “Scientists in studying scientific law are actually looking into the word of God that governs the world. A similar situation holds when linguists study rules about language” (p. 66). Yet this comparison between scientific law and the rules of language seems unwarranted. Scientific laws derived by scientists are attempts to describe how things really are in the world, not some transcendent form of this planet. That, however, is not what Poythress is actually suggesting in this first part of the book. His actual rules of language are not descriptive of what is observed in the world, but rather prescriptive. Despite an appendix that relates the shortcomings of Platonism due to the prioritization of universals before particulars (viewed as unhelpful for a Trinitarian framework), the discussions of language in Part 1 sound, to this reader, reminiscent of a platonic system in which words and rules are described as archetypal forms in the transcendental realm of a divided line.

Poythress does not exclude human participation from his views (he distinguishes the primary causation of God from the secondary causation that humans play), but his proposal would benefit from a more robust description of human creativity, participation, and responsibility in human language via the *imago Dei*. The limited role humans are given in his account leaves unsatisfactory answers to questions regarding the meticulous sovereignty of God in language and its relation to the effects of the fall and the problem of evil. Deception, for example, is described as “involv[ing] language or *something analogically akin* to language” (p. 109, emphasis added) such that questions regarding what kinds of forms or “actual rules” exist for utterances that are “half-truths” or lies are left unanswered.

Moreover, in a well-intentioned attempt to delimit true meaning and what counts as “real” or “actual” to what exists in the heavenly realm of God’s goodness and truth, Poythress introduces a dualism that potentially problematizes his view of Christology and atonement (he affirms a penal substitutionary view, p. 117): “spiritual death is actually more significant than physical, bodily death. . . . [It] is the real death, the death most to be dreaded. . . . In comparison with it, bodily death is only a pinprick, an emblem, a shadow of the real thing to come” (pp. 112–13). This dualism raises questions regarding the necessity of the incarnation and the reality of Christ’s physical death and resurrection.

One must appreciate Poythress' expressed endeavor towards a non-reductionistic approach to the study of language and the extensive appendices that discuss philosophy of language and linguistics. The main argument in the book, however, does not seriously consider the work of other linguists (with the exception of Kenneth Pike) or theories of language due to a belief that they are inherently incompatible with a view of God's existence or ongoing work in the world (p. 38). As a result, the argument potentially misses out on helpful concepts and leaves little room to engage with contemporary understandings of language. These and matters of conceptual clarity throughout lessen the force of the proposal. "Language" itself, for example, is never defined, and meaning, although introduced in chapter 3, is not adequately discussed and defined until chapter 33. A weakness in the persuasiveness of the argumentation is the sole use of the English language to make assertions about the "actual rules" of language in general. One can find exceptions to these rules when applying them to other spoken languages, and variations in dialects and vernaculars are not considered.

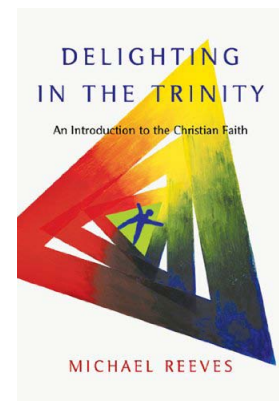
Despite these shortcomings, Poythress should be commended for his trinitarian approach to language and for the many insights he makes regarding language and communication. He achieves his goal of helping the reader gain an appreciation of language via the use of Scripture. Although this book is not sufficiently detailed or technical to serve as the main textbook for a course on linguistics, it could serve as helpful supplementary material. And anyone wishing to think more deeply about language within a trinitarian framework would benefit from it. Whether or not one agrees with Poythress' assumptions on language or its meta-philosophical underpinnings, one can appreciate many of his theological insights concerning the God-given gift of language and communication and the important role that these play in our lives.

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Michael Reeves. *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove: IVP; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012. 130 pp. £9.99/\$15.00. [The UK title is *The Good God: Enjoying Father, Son, and Spirit*.]

Have you ever been mystified by the Trinity? If so, then this book is for you. It is written in a popular style, quite free of theological jargon, and aims to tell us in a simple and straightforward way why the doctrine of the Trinity is central to our faith. You cannot understand the Bible or grow in the Christian life without coming to know the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit personally. That means meeting each of them together since they are never apart from each other, and it also means seeing how they relate to each other inside the mysterious oneness of God.

Dr Reeves starts with the assertion that God is love and that the Trinity is the supreme manifestation of that. From there he goes on to explain that the creation of the world was an expression of God's love but that human beings chose to reject it and turned in on themselves. That cut them off from God and led to the drama that we know as the Christian faith. To explain that, Dr Reeves opens up to us the mystery of salvation, telling



us how the Father sent his Son to suffer and die for us so that we might be able to return to fellowship with him. From there he goes on to talk about the life in the Spirit that Christians are called to enjoy as children of the Father and adopted brothers and sisters of the Son.

Along the way, Dr Reeves introduces his readers to some leading theologians of the past, explaining who they were and what contribution they made to our understanding. He does not run away from the hard bits, like the so-called ‘damnatory clauses’ in the Athanasian Creed, which state that those who do not believe in the Trinity will perish everlastingly. Rather than dismiss this as outdated prejudice, Dr Reeves shows us why the Creed is right. Belief in the Trinity is essential, and understanding God’s self-revelation correctly is proof that we have indeed met him and known him as our Saviour and Lord.

It is obviously impossible to do full justice to such a mighty theme in a few short pages, but Dr Reeves is not trying to do that. His book is an introduction that aims to set us on the right track, and here he succeeds admirably. If there is a weakness in his presentation, it is that he puts so much emphasis on the ‘sunny side up’ dimension of our relationship with God that the more sombre aspects, like sin and suffering, tend to get passed over. For example, although Dr Reeves occasionally quotes from the book of Job, he does not enter into Job’s experience of God, which for many Christians is more real than the ‘happy ever after’ approach that he seems to prefer. There is a balance that needs to be struck here of course—Christians are not meant to be miserable! But the joy of the Lord is often found in and through suffering, and more could have been said about that.

This book is an ideal introduction for young people, for those who want to know more about God but who cannot grasp academic theology, and for pastors who are looking for ways to communicate the faith to non-specialists. Its basic approach is sound, and it will refresh the souls of all who read it. Could we ask for more?

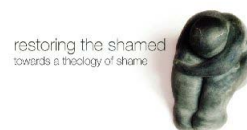
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Robin Stockitt. *Restoring the Shamed: Towards a Theology of Shame*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012. 182 pp. £13.50/\$21.00.

This book by Robin Stockitt, an Anglican minister in Freiburg Germany, is the product of sustained theological reflection on the issue of “shame” in the context of the author’s pastoral ministry. Stockitt’s purpose is to “build a bridge across the chasm” between our current experience and the Gospel and, in doing so, to articulate a theology that fits in with and responds to everyday experience, not one that is grounded in abstract philosophy (p. 7).

The book is divided in two sections. The first section seeks to define shame in theological terms. Stockitt presents shame as something that holds us back from relationship with the Other through a feeling of inadequacy. His definition of the Other follows that of Paul Ricoeur, where the Other is defined in three forms. The first of these is the Other as ourselves, particularly our bodies. The second one is the Other who is the same as us, yet different. This is Stockitt’s human Other. The third one is the “Wholly Other”, that is, the Other who is completely different from us, identified by Stockitt



robin stockitt

as God. What follows in chapters 3–7 is a theological analysis of how shame affects our relationships with each of these Others. Stockitt identifies the impact of shame on the self in society and on our relationship with God. He notes that shame makes us withdraw from both the human and divine Other and then examines how shame affects the self and our views of our selves. We are presented with a rich understanding of shame that prevents a true and meaningful relationship with God and society.

In section two Stockitt seeks to show how Christ's life and death solves this human problem. Guilt in the light of sin, as the primary human predicament, is replaced with shame. We are told that wrath, justice, and punishment are aimed at those who exclude and abuse the shamed and that these are attributes of God's love and concern for the shamed, rather than expressions of his intolerance of sin. In doing this, Stockitt seems to shift the human problem from sinful guilt before God to the human problem of shame. He then rejects a substitutionary reading of the work of Christ on the grounds that it is incompatible with God's grace and his love, which Stockitt claims is his "essential being", with love pitted against the need to punish sin. Stockitt presents his alternative view, claiming that the work of Christ sought to transform positions of shame into positions of honour, empowering and honouring those who were shamed. Throughout his ministry, Christ put himself in a position of shame, of which the cross was the ultimate expression. He suffered the greatest possible shame, being excluded by both humanity and God. Stockitt calls for us to look on the face of God in Christ. On the cross we see the One who was shamed, while in the resurrection we see the One who brings honour. Stockitt writes, "The resurrected Christ, upon whom we are invited to gaze, offers us the prospect of our shame being removed and in its place the gift of honor and glory is bestowed" (p. 151). In closing, Stockitt offers pastoral resources for dealing with shame.

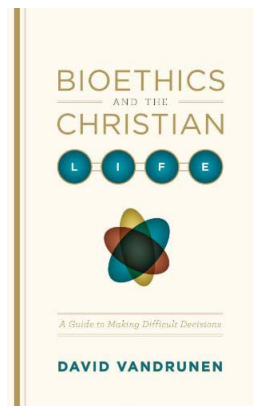
Restoring the Shamed is born out of a concern for practical pastoral issues and offers a cruciform theology that deals with shame, thus filling an important place in pastoral and atonement theology. Its greatest strength is, perhaps, the pastoral resources offered at the end of the book. Its major problem is not what it affirms, but rather what it denies, most notably substitutionary atonement, on the grounds that God could not be conflicted within himself with love, on the one hand, and the need to punish sin, on the other (p. 106). Stockitt does contend that God will punish those who refuse to embrace the excluded (p. 96), which suggests that he does have a category of divine punishment in his theology. But this creates a problem, as we read that Christ's shameful death was both for the shamed and the "instigators of shame" (p. 140). Christ's death, which is an expression of his love, is aimed at both those whom Christ seeks to affirm and at those who should be punished. It appears, therefore, that Stockitt presents a concept of love and punishment that he rejects in substitutionary atonement.

Stockitt's work is to be commended for presenting a pastoral approach to a systematic theology of shame that adds a pastoral dimension to the mosaic of sin that is destroyed by Christ on the Cross. However, the theology of shame in *Restoring the Shamed* cannot and should not replace or eclipse an objective view of the atonement that deals with sin and our guilt before God.

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David VanDrunen. *Bioethics and the Christian Life: A Guide to Making Difficult Decisions*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009. 247 pp. £13.99/\$19.99.

After years of observing the attempt to do bioethics from a neutral and generic philosophical perspective, many thinkers are coming more and more to the conclusion that the best approach to addressing issues in bioethics is one that arises from a specific theological tradition. For a conservative Reformed approach to bioethics, one could hardly do better than to consult David VanDrunen, the Robert B. Strimple Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics at Westminster Seminary, California. VanDrunen tackles issues at the beginning and at the end of life, but only after laying a careful theological foundation that considers divine sovereignty, human nature and the image of God in humans, soul and body, sin, and suffering, along with the Christian virtues.



Of particular interest to this reviewer is his taxonomy of possible approaches to bioethics available to the Christian. VanDrunen identifies five possible ways to relate Christian and secular bioethics in one's methodology ("secular" here means not *godless* bioethics, but simply bioethics as done in the broader community):

(1) *Secular Bioethics Only* is seen in Tom Beauchamp and James Childress' common morality approach that is called "principilism," as well as Robert Veatch's appeal to a broad social covenant.

(2) *Christian Bioethics Only*, as advocated by such thinkers as John Frame and Marsha Fowler, appeals solely to theological premises and guidelines found in Scripture.

(3) *Secular and Christian Bioethics Identical* is promoted by many Roman Catholic ethicists such as Richard McCormick, Lisa Sowle Cahill, James Walter, and Thomas Shannon, who generally believe that the Catholic tradition illumines, clarifies, and reinforces moral truths that are known even apart from faith.

(4) *Secular and Christian Bioethics Radically Different* is championed by H. Tristram Engelhardt, who rejects secular ethics as lacking useful content while he champions the Eastern Orthodox tradition as a rich way to understand human beings in their bioethical situations.

(5) *Secular Bioethics and Christian Bioethics Distinct but Legitimate* sees Christian ethics as distinctive and rich, but also views secular ethics as "genuine and meaningful" (p. 28). He sees this approach in both Roman Catholic and Protestant thinkers, including Edmund Pellegrino and David Thoma, particularly their works on virtues in medicine linked to the "internal morality of medicine" (p. 28), which is amplified and expanded by theological considerations. Among evangelical Protestants in this camp he lists John Jefferson Davis, Scott Rae, and Paul Cox, who encourage Christians to engage the public debate with arguments from general revelation to attempt to persuade nonbelievers, while holding that Christian revelation provides distinctive shape to Christian thinking. Joel Shuman and Brian Volck also belong in this category with their belief that modern medicine is among the powers ordained by God, yet is prone to abuse. VanDrunen as well advocates this fifth position.

VanDrunen's approach throughout is consistently practical, pastorally sensitive, and theologically grounded. His treatment of infertility and assisted reproduction is a fine example. He recognizes the puzzling moral predicaments infertile Christian couples face and offers a theological perspective on marriage, intimacy, and reproduction before suggesting that there is a distinctly Christian way to deal with the pain of infertility. He recommends the virtue of *contentment*, which must be sought before any

medical remedies are pursued, with the church all the while bearing up the suffering couple. *Courage* and *Christian stewardship* are also called for. He believes that solutions that do not involve a third party (donor or surrogate) are morally superior, and he disputes the Roman Catholic claim that all reproduction must result from a conjugal act. He finds artificial insemination by the husband morally licit and believes that despite all the moral difficulties with IVF it could be permissible, but only when the couple is committed to bringing into the world each embryo implanted.

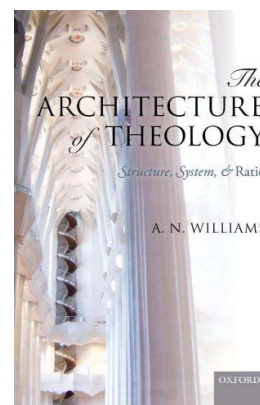
This book will repay close study by any Christian looking for solid biblical guidance in bioethics, either as a medical professional or as a patient.

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A. N. Williams. *The Architecture of Theology: Structure, System, and Ratio*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xi + 239 pp. £60.00/\$110.00.

Systematic theology presumes the inherent *systematicity* of doctrine, but rarely does it attend to the nature and reality of this interconnection. In this volume, Williams focuses her attention on the epistemological questions inherent in any discussion of theology. To do so, she starts with a qualification about the systematic nature of systematic theology, distinguishing systematic theological works (e.g., Francis Turretin's three-volume elenctic theology, Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, etc.), and the systematic nature of all doctrine. The latter is the focus of this book. In other words, rather than focusing on theological systems as whole units, Williams attends to *how* doctrines function systematically. Within any discussion of doctrine, there is an implicit or explicit notion of interconnection with related doctrinal decisions. Williams attempts to exposit the nature of this interconnection, focusing both on abstract epistemological discussion as well as concrete examples within the history of theology.

To advance her analysis, Williams starts with a broad overview of contemporary discussions of epistemology among analytic philosophers. Her focus is on the structure of knowledge and justification and models of truth. After outlining the key players and positions in the debates, she turns her attention to the nature of systems. Building upon this development, Williams looks at warrants and norms, providing more detailed discussion (though still brief) of the four key warrants in the Christian tradition: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. This analysis moves into questions concerning weight of warrants, authority, and language. It is at this point in the volume where Williams's breadth comes to bear in her analysis. Up to this point, the book has the feel of a thought experiment—a thinking-out-loud about various issues often ignored in theology. Now Williams' understanding of theology comes to light through a broad overview of the tradition. She starts with a brief conclusion from her previous exposition: "Theology . . . can be described as discourse which proceeds deductively and inferentially, moving between propositions, some of which have a privileged status within the system" (p. 128). From here she suggests that theology is a discourse of mimesis. Theology, therefore, "can be viewed as discourse that attempts to embody in itself what it attests of its subjects" (p. 131). To illustrate this mimesis in



Christian theology, Williams gives brief overviews of: Gregory Nazianzen, Pseudo-Dionysius, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Newman, Kierkegaard, Niebuhr, Tillich, and Boff. Unveiling a deep connection within all these diverse thinkers, Williams concludes, “Theology is a re-presentation of humanity’s own (though imperfect) mimesis of the divine, which in turn fosters the knowledge and adoration that make possible a yet nearer mimesis” (p. 185).

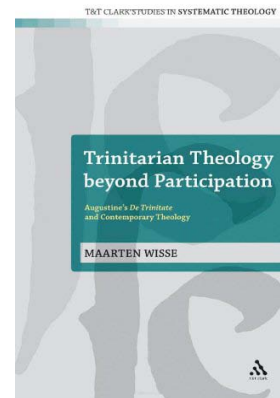
Addressing the systematic nature of theology and mimesis leads naturally to a discussion of beauty. These issues raise questions of order and harmony, and therefore push theology into the realm of aesthetics. Again, showing her desire to speak across the Christian tradition, Williams moves rapidly through the thought of Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas, to Calvin and Edwards, resting on Edwards, before moving on to von Balthasar and Patrick Sherry. This development, with the previous, concludes in a chapter titled “Theology and Transfiguration” where Williams ruminates on the nature and task of theology. The systematic nature of theology is always matched with a contemplative posture. In her words, theology is also necessarily “contemplative, inasmuch as it draws its writers and readers more deeply into the divine reality which the discourse, for all its frailty, mirrors” (p. 227). Theology is intimately connected to prayer and worship, and as the tradition shows, always was. This raises important vocational questions for the theologian, questions not addressed by Williams but hinted at throughout the book.

Of the many parties who would be interested in Williams’ work, I think that those interested in the new “Analytical Theology” would find this volume interesting. The first half of the book is done with reference to analytic theology with particular focus on epistemology. Addressing these epistemological questions is unusual enough for a theologian, and doing so with reference to the analytic tradition is virtually unheard of. In this sense, this is an important volume for bridging the gap between analytic philosophers and theologians (even if they prove to disagree with her conclusions). In terms of readability, Williams could have pushed a lot of extraneous material to footnotes. At times throughout the volume she raises an issue without addressing it, and doing so muddies the analysis. It would have been more helpful for the flow of the book if she would have expanded her footnotes with these issues rather than having them in the text. Overall, the argument of this book is, at times, very subtle and implicit, with her development taking the form of a mosaic. This could be, in light of her point, very purposeful, but it proves difficult at points. In general, the volume impressively displays depth and is an important discussion of issues often assumed and neglected in Christian theology. While it may raise more questions than it answers, it is clear that Williams is less concerned with that reality than with reorienting the theological discussion around the proper call of the theologian to relate deeply with God. For this point alone the book is well worth the read.

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Maarten Wisse, *Trinitarian Theology beyond Participation: Augustine's De Trinitate and Contemporary Theology*. T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 11. London: T&T Clark, 2011. xiv + 329 pp. £65.00/\$120.00.

It is almost a truism now that the twentieth century witnessed the “return” of Trinitarian theology, beginning with Barth and continued by those who work in his shadow. This renaissance is so thoroughgoing that the doctrine of the Trinity is commonly understood as *the* determining factor of systematic theology, affecting everything from theologies of religions to relational anthropologies construed as mirror structures of the Trinity. Yet Maarten Wisse joins a growing chorus suggesting something has gone wrong and proposes that the only way forward is to properly find our way backward. His concern is not only to present an attentive, fresh exposition of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, but also to offer a sophisticated critique of modern Trinitarian theology, which he argues is overly indebted to an ontology of participation. Those on trial include Pannenberg, Radical Orthodoxy, the current Pope, and even Barth, who seems to lurk underneath the surface at every turn.



Wisse raises the alarm against all forms of theology that functionally make God determined by history. Augustine’s critique of Plotinus in *De Trinitate*’s opening paragraphs becomes a window through which Wisse evaluates theologies indebted to Hegel and panentheistic metaphysics. Here Wisse critiques a “negative theology” that starts with an invisible, transcendent “Absolute” that makes itself visible through a mediating structure that in turn resolves in a third moment of self-consciousness. Wisse contends that under such a construction, the second moment of self-realization/visibility ends up determining the first supposedly unknowable and transcendent moment of negativity. This path to historicizing God via a participatory metaphysics is seen as nothing more than a form of projection that compromises rather than protects God’s transcendence. Thus begins Wisse’s dense and bracing attempt to read along with and beyond Augustine, with a keen eye on modern theology.

Before it was commonplace, Augustine distinguished between the economic and immanent Trinity, which enabled a “dysfunctionalization” of the doctrine. This is radically opposed to modern relational and Hegelian models of the Trinity, which map the Trinity onto a foreign metaphysical structure such that the doctrine is reduced to little more than an ontological or descriptive framework. Augustine heads off such functionalization because he maintains the Trinity is radically other and thus “irrational,” problematizing all speech about the divine essence. The irrationality of the Trinity precludes theology’s ability to overcome mystery without rendering the entire theological enterprise hopeless. The immanent Trinity is fittingly “irrational” and not comprehended by the economy, much less determined by it.

The irrationality and otherness of God’s immanent life is carried over into Augustine’s Christology. Here Wisse primarily combats the notion that the incarnation is a manifestation of the participatory nature of reality or the God-world relationship. Such a view misses the soteriological and moral import of Christology by focusing too much on ontology. Instead the incarnation is an entirely contingent event, not definitive of God’s life, and thus historically particular and unique. Christ’s human life and death on the cross reveal God’s eternal character as love, compatible with justice and mercy all at once. Revelation thus occurs in God’s contingent acts in history, not as superfluous manifestations of the way things are by nature.

The last half of the book seamlessly ties together anthropology, epistemology, and soteriology within the context of a doctrine of creation that posits a total difference between God and the world. Augustine's "fundamental Trinitarian anthropology" in books 8–10 is based on the *absence* of any resemblance between humans and the Trinity. The relationships to oneself, others, and God—hence the "Trinitarian" aspect—are unique, thus retaining their integrity. This is contrasted with relational anthropologies that identify the Trinitarian structure of human being with our relations to other creatures, which in effect render the relationship to God immanent and common. Our primary relationship to God determines our secondary relationships to others and self, thus rendering the relationship between oneself and others non-competitive. Prioritizing the relationship to God leads to a theological epistemology that emphasizes the moral over the noetic because knowledge is dependent on the will's orientation towards God. Augustine thus locates the basis of our knowledge of God in the will, whereas participationist epistemologies find this basis inherent in objects given creation's participation in God. On this account, goodness is prioritized over truth and beauty, none of which are identical, though they are mutually interdependent. This raises interesting questions for old debates about intellectualism and voluntarism, Scripture and tradition, and soteriology.

A further question is whether our access to God is completely lost or whether we still have sufficient access to God by nature. Augustine avoids both of these extremes in his anthropology, retaining an original state of perfection and a severe injury of that state through sin. For Augustine, salvation is thus a restoration to a properly human state, rather than something beyond it. This leads to a critique of participationist-oriented accounts of deification. These soteriologies consist of a transformation of one's ontology or a mere noetic recognition of one's participation in God by nature, either denigrating human integrity or relativizing the significance of Christ. Since for Augustine only the pure in heart see God, the believer undergoes a transformation of character through growth in Christ. Hand in hand with this anthropology and soteriology comes the brief suggestion that theologies admitting of a historical fall make sin a contingent, rather than necessary, feature of human nature and afford the theologian more options for a balanced anthropology and soteriology.

It is impossible to summarize the complexities and riches of a book with this scope in the space of a small review. Wisse's argument is important not only for his reading of Augustine but because he offers an antidote to participationist/sacramental ontologies while also illuminating the issues at stake. For example, Wisse explicitly welcomes the disenchantment of the world to a degree and in effect argues that access to a great change of heart rather than a great chain of being is a better measure against the continuing exploitation of the natural world. This note is especially welcome since an uncomfortable amount of literature labeled "ecotheology" leans in a panentheistic or process direction. Indeed, identifying the world more closely with God will no more protect the world than identifying with our flesh prevented us from crucifying Christ. Augustine's wisdom to us today would be that unless we love justice more than power, which requires a reorientation of our love, our ecological crisis will continue.

Inevitably with a work such as this, the details will be disputed. One reservation is with Wisse's concluding thoughts about the inconvertibility of the transcendentals and the prioritization of goodness over truth, which might be disproportionate to Augustine's own emphasis on the interdependence of the two with beauty (pp. 313–14). Christianity's persuasive potential lies in word *and* deed together, rather than one over the other. Further, Wisse's interpretation of Augustine critiques swathes of secondary literature and his arguments against targets like Benedict XVI and Pannenberg are so devastating that one wonders if the defendant has been given due process. Then again, perhaps their appropriation of the

Western metaphysical tradition Wisse critiques makes them guilty as charged. Regardless, the sum and substance of Wisse's theological argument against participatory metaphysics is forcefully articulated and deserves a careful hearing of its own—especially among evangelicals looking to weave a sacramental tapestry or advocate an incarnational humanism.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

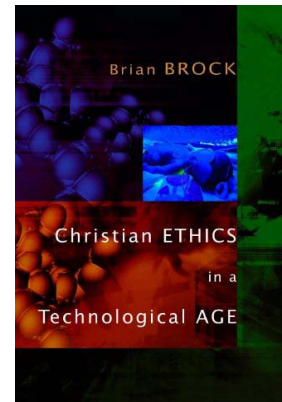
Brian Brock. *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 424 pp. \$35.00.

In recent years, an increasing number of authors have written popular-level books on technology that address basic moral issues. But substantive works that consider “technology” itself—not just the devices in our pockets or the cell towers and electrical lines that connect and enliven them, but technology as the underpinning of our entire modern way of life and thinking about the world—are much more rare. Rarer still are works with the kind of deep, integrated thinking and theologically driven answers that Brian Brock offers in *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age*.

The book, which is adapted from Brock's doctoral thesis at St. John's College, is divided into two major parts. Part 1 traces the thinking of Martin Heidegger along with two of his interpreters, George Grant and Michel Foucault, as they make the case that “technology is not the things we make but the way we live” (p. 32). None of these philosophers would have claimed the mantle of “Christian,” but Brock demonstrates that each offers keen insight into how the technological ideal has infiltrated and dominated the way in which humanity conceives of itself, going back to Newtonian science.

Brock's central claim is that we have unwittingly come to see every aspect of our lives—from food to families to sex to employment—in technological terms. Even more importantly, this technological way of being in the world is often in conflict with the biblical vision of humanity. He traces many of the problematic pathways uncovered by Heidegger, Grant, and Foucault by highlighting the dehumanizing effect of technological thinking. For example, Foucault's concept of “problematization” attempts to show how many modern “thought forms and practices make aspects of life appear as problems” (p. 105) that must be solved with tools and methods. This leads us to conceive of ourselves as technological beings whose highest ideal is efficiency. Brock uses each man's thought well, but he also occasionally pushes back. He critiques, for example, Foucault's views as “overdetermined by his Enlightenment dialogue partners” (p. 130) and criticizes Heidegger for being an “earth-centered relativist” (p. 61). Brock closes the first half of the book with a case study on in vitro fertilization, carefully observing how we make ethical choices with technology and through technology.

In the second half of the book, Brock takes up the more difficult task of offering an alternative pattern of life that “allows us to relate to creation as creatures and not aspiring gods” (p. 26). He draws



on the ideas of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Augustine, Bernd Wannenwetsch, Karl Barth, Wendell Berry, and others. Following Bonhoeffer, Brock argues that Christian ethics cannot begin merely with a set of principles, but with “hearing and responding to God” (p. 171) and that our ethic must “take the form of a resolve to pursue a specific action in specific circumstances” (p. 177). Brock does not construct a set of boundaries so we can ask, “How far is too far?” Instead, he wants our ethic to be centered upon a thoroughly christological account of life in the present.

He begins by arguing from Augustine’s *The City of God* and from Barth that the importance of technology is less about the specific tools we make and use and more about the expression of our desires represented by such usages. This includes the desire to secure salvation apart from God. In subsequent chapters, Brock addresses patterns of life such as Sabbath, community, worship, work, and gifts contrasting their portrait in the Scriptures with technological assumptions about their meaning and value. Toward the end of the book, he offers some examples of how to think Christianly about modern technology, such as breeding poultry for disease resistance. Brock also returns to the case study of in vitro fertilization, showing how the theological orientation he offers changes the questions we might ask.

Brock’s work is so massive in scope—both in the thinkers he covers (from Augustine to Barth) and the subjects he addresses (from spirituality to politics)—that, if there is a criticism to be offered, it might be that it is challenging to come away with concrete actions or methods for approaching future technological questions.

But perhaps this is simply because, under the influence of the technological ideal, I tend to view books as tools that offer answers, solutions, and tools for a life of questions, problems, and needs. If Brock is right, what I need is not more technique, but a more thoroughly christological eyepiece through which to question our technological world. Indeed Brock succeeds not only in arguing for the need of such a reorientation, but in showing what such an orientation looks like in a technological age.

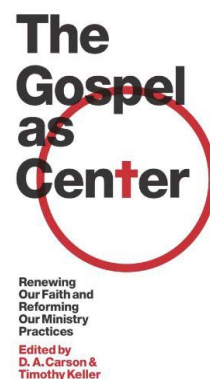
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D. A. Carson and Timothy Keller, eds. *The Gospel As Center: Renewing Our Faith and Reforming Our Ministry Practices*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 320 pp. \$21.99.

This book can be well-understood as a kind of book-length elaboration of the Foundation Documents of *The Gospel Coalition* (TGC). Nearly all of its contributors are TGC Council members, and the chapters each have their origin as individual booklets, written to comment upon TGC’s Confessional Statement and Vision for Ministry (p. 9). Moreover, from the book’s subtitle, back cover, and front flap, it is already apparent that the purpose of the book is one with the purpose of TGC: re-centering evangelical theology and ministry practices on the gospel. Thus, in addition to serving as a valuable resource for gospel-centered ministry, *The Gospel as Center* also provides a sort of “insider’s perspective” on TGC—a sneak peek into the inner thinking of this increasingly influential Scripture-based reform movement.



The book's 14 chapters vary significantly in length, quality, assumed audience, and relation to the Foundation Documents. Some, such as Sandy Willson's "Christ's Redemption," simply exegete a portion of TGC statement of faith; others, such as Mike Bullmore's "The Gospel and Scripture: How to Read the Bible" cover a topic in the statement of faith but make no explicit mention of the statement itself; still others, such as Richard D. Phillips's "Can We Know the Truth?," have no clear relation to the statement of faith, but seem to comment more upon TGC's theological vision for ministry. Among the most helpful essays is Sam Storms' "The Restoration of All Things," which anchors future eschatology in the broader context of past redemptive history (drawing especially from N. T. Wright and George Eldon Ladd) and analyzes such topics as the intermediate state, the nature of the resurrection body, and recent trends in the doctrine of hell. Storms's treatment of Isa 65:17–25 (pp. 268–69) is especially illuminating. Readers will also benefit greatly from Philip Graham Ryken's defense of a classic Reformed view of justification, especially his treatment of imputation (pp. 161–63) and his analysis of Paul vs. James on the role of works in relation to faith (p. 167). Two other chapters that particularly stand out are D. A. Carson and Tim Keller's opening chapter for its cultural sensitivity and missional insight and Bryan Chapell's exposition of the gospel (ch. 7) for its devotional richness.

In general, the book follows TGC's posture of seeking a wise balance between primary, secondary, and tertiary issues. Discerning readers will note that the authors affirm with the Foundation Documents issues such as complementarianism (Davis, pp. 66, 72), divine election (Smith, p. 93), divine sovereignty over evil (Andrews, p. 80), a propitiating model of atonement (Smith, p. 109), imputation (Ryken, p. 143), and exclusivism over inclusivism (DeYoung, p. 182). The authors leave open, as the Foundation Documents do, issues such as millennial views (Storms, pp. 268ff.), cessationism (DeYoung, pp. 185–86), and the paedobaptism/credobaptism debate (Anyabwile and Duncan, pp. 237–41). Issues of ecclesiology are also left relatively open; in fact, one wishes for more discussion of such matters as church membership and church discipline in Tim Savage's otherwise helpful chapter on the church.

A possible breach in the book's openness on tertiary issues, however, arises in Andrew Davis's chapter on creation: he prefers to interpret the days of Gen 1 as 24-hour periods (p. 63), and he reads the entire week chronologically (pp. 62–66). Evangelical readers who hold to a framework interpretation will likely wonder why their view is precluded from his summary of viable options; perhaps he intended to refer to this view as the "literary week view," but erroneously suggested that the days in this view are 24-hour periods of time (cf. pp. 59ff.)? More scientifically inclined readers may also wonder how his apparent view that scientific advance should not alter our interpretation of Scripture relates to the rise of helio-centrism (p. 60).

But the book's generally impressive balance of structure amid openness in non-essentials brings up a larger point concerning TGC identity within evangelicalism. Even as TGC's openness on tertiary issues opens doors for cooperation across denominational lines, its closedness on many secondary issues increasingly distinguishes it from the doctrinal indifferentism and minimalism of much of broader evangelicalism. TGC's ability to effectively influence broader evangelicalism may depend on its ability to demonstrate how secondary issues often *relate* to the gospel, sometimes as an expression of it (as with, e.g., a complementarian view of gender), sometimes as a protection around it (as with, e.g., a high view of biblical authority), sometimes as one building block within it (as with, e.g., the doctrine of imputation or divine election), and still other times in perhaps less discernible ways. (It is significant, for example, that [Scot McKnight's criticism](#) of Chapell's chapter as too narrowly "soterian" touches on the nature of the gospel itself—not on secondary issues.) As TGC continues to seek to refocus evangelicalism on "the

gospel as center,” it may paradoxically find an increasing need to defend its stance on issues around the periphery and their *relation* to the center.

The same issue arises with TGC’s relationship with other segments of the gospel-centered movement. For example, most younger, Reformed evangelicals would agree in principle with Carson and Keller’s cultural posture of seeking the middle ground between accommodation and disengagement (pp. 13–17), but in practice significantly divergent leanings exist within this camp. One wonders, to give one specific example, if [Together for the Gospel](#) would list “doing justice and mercy” as one of five characteristics of gospel-centered ministry, as stated in TGC’s theological vision for ministry (p. 285). Once again, issues in outer parts of the circle (so to speak) bring about different understandings of what it *means* to “hold the center.” *The Gospel as Center* thus exhibits the extent to which TGC, as it continues to wrestle with the healthy tension of finding the right balance of closedness and openness, may find an increasing need to define itself more clearly not only in relation to broader evangelicalism, but also to other wings of the Reformed resurgence.

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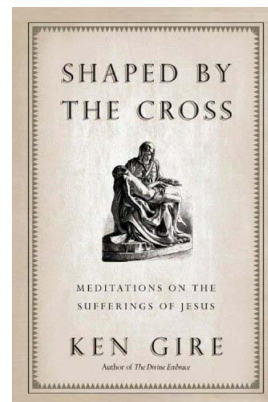
Ken Gire. [Shaped by the Cross: Meditations on the Sufferings of Jesus](#). Downers Grove: IVP, 2011. 119 pp. \$15.00.

The stated goal of this book is “to demonstrate how God uses the circumstances of our lives, however confusing, to conform us to the image of his Son” (pp. 13–14). To achieve this, the author focuses on the sculpture by Michelangelo (1475–1564) entitled *Pietà*. Carved from marble in less than two years’ time by the sculptor in his early twenties, the *Pietà* depicts a supine and lifeless Jesus being held in his mother Mary’s arms. Each chapter of the book opens with a photograph of the *Pietà* from a different angle. The author associates a theme with the photo, and this theme is explored in the chapter.

The first chapter, “The Mystery of the *Pietà*,” discusses how the sculpture came into existence. Gire assigns revelational and miraculous properties to it, to the extent that can be true of a work of art. When you touch the *Pietà*, “you feel as if you have touched the very heart of God” (p. 26). At the end of the chapter, as in every chapter, the author offers a prayer. Then there is a page of study questions, “For Reflection or Conversation.” This makes the book suitable for small group or personal use.

Chapter two, “The Image of God,” treats man’s majesty in creation but destitution in the fall. Genesis 3:15 and Isa 52:13–53:12 are at the heart of discussion. Gire reflects on both the wonder and the horror that “he who stooped to shoulder the sorrows of humanity would himself become a man of sorrows, rejected by man and forsaken by God” (p. 37). We see, though, not only what it cost Christ to become like us, but also “what it will cost us to become like him” (p. 37).

Chapter three, “The Image of Christ,” ventures more deeply what it means for his followers to become like Christ. “Just as the essence of sculpture is the loss of the stone,” in that excess is chipped away to leave the image the artist seeks to create, so “the essence of being conformed to the image of



Christ is the loss of the self” (p. 45). Sometimes it seems like God is wielding “the tools of a torturer” (p. 47) as he shapes his people.

Chapter four takes up “The Wounds of Christ.” The author draws on a madman’s attempt to hammer the *Pietà* to pieces in 1972, on various Bible passages, and on the martyrdom of Western missionaries in the Boxer Rebellion to note that “our suffering, regardless of whose hands have inflicted it, is the raw material from which God wants to make something” (p. 66). Gire notes that God “permits *our* hands to prevent *his* hands from transforming our suffering into a blessing and filling it with meaning” (p. 66). An apt quote from Helmut Thielicke (pp. 65–66) identifies the blind spot American life seems to generate when it comes to the redemptive potential of our afflictions.

In chapter five, “The Mother of Christ,” Mary’s loss of her son is Gire’s focus. “The more people we love, the more we will suffer” (pp. 76–77), because those people will endure loss from which we cannot protect them. Moreover, “the deeper our love, the deeper our suffering” (p. 77). God did not spare Mary, and he will not spare us, unique miseries in the course of bringing about his saving intentions, in the world and in our lives.

The focus in chapter six is “The Body of Christ.” Michelangelo’s depiction of Jesus suggests how we should live. Jesus in the *Pietà* is “the image of someone dying to the self and all its hyphenates: self-interest, self-reliance, self-indulgence, self-protection, self-preservation, self-promotion” (p. 85). In the end, Jesus “showed us how he loved us on the cross. That is what we are to remember. And that is how we are to live” (p. 94). One wonders about the view of the atonement implied here and the potential for concluding that self-abnegation earns redemption.

The final chapter, “The Miracle of the Resurrection,” details the handling of Jesus’ body after his death, then quotes John 20 and Acts 2 virtually in their entirety. Gire uses the image of Aslan making statues come to life, freeing them from the White Witch’s curse, to point to how we experience renewal in this life: “we experience smaller resurrections in the here and now” (p. 111). Gire could have gone farther when he states, “One day our bodies will be renewed. Today it is our spirits” (p. 111): Paul suggests that the Spirit is already giving resurrection life to our mortal bodies (Rom 8:11). But of course Gire is correct that we await something even greater.

An epilogue notes that Michelangelo began 44 sculptures. He finished just 14 of them. Not all the works of the master saw completion. Gire applies this with the help of C. S. Lewis’s observation that “there are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, ‘Okay, go ahead and have it your way’” (p. 116). Gire reminds the reader that the joy in the age to come will more than compensate pain and loss in the present order of things (pp. 118–19).

This is an elegantly written book. It reflects research into Michelangelo’s history and art history’s regard for him and for the *Pietà*. Gire draws effectively on Scripture, various authors, current events, and his own life to make his case. As meditations on the cross go, this one has theological depth. I wondered if a moral influence view of the atonement was unhelpfully dominant. And sometimes the imagery moved from vivid to saccharine (e.g., p. 111). I’m not sure that “image” can do as much to redeem as some passages in the book claim (e.g., pp. 91–92). Possible theological soft spots should probably be chalked up to artistic license and genre. On the other hand, meditation on the meaning of Christ’s death needs to be informed by the very best in theological reasoning, deployed with scrupulous

consistency. Still, this book can be commended as a creative and largely successful foray into one of the greatest divine mysteries in its implications for us all.

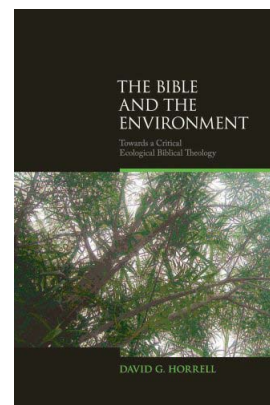
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David G. Horrell. *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*. London: Equinox, 2010. 161 pp. \$29.95.

David Horrell is professor of New Testament at the University of Exeter. He has done research on various NT texts, including the Corinthian letters and 1 Peter. He is currently the director of a project on the uses of the Bible in environmental ethics, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK. This volume and several others were published in 2010 based on the collaborative work under this project.

Horrell's development of an ecological hermeneutic comes in three parts. The first part consists of two chapters and is primarily descriptive of ways that contemporary Christians read the Bible when discussing the environment. In the first chapter, Horrell details some of the backstory of the present environment milieu: he discusses Lynn White's famous essay and Joseph Sittler's address to the World Council of Churches; then he discusses the present ecological problem of climate change and its symptoms. Horrell states his intention to argue "that what we need is not merely a careful reading of biblical texts, but to articulate and develop an ecological hermeneutic, that is, a newly reorientated way of reading the Bible that is demanded by our current context and the issues that face us" (p. 9). Chapter two outlines three approaches to hermeneutics that reappear at various places throughout the text. First is the *recovery* approach, which attempts to reconcile an authoritative Bible with an interest in ecology. Second is a form of *resistance* that resists any biblical text that appears to run counter to ecological principles. Third, and also called *resistance*, is the view that resists any idea that appears contrary to a preferred reading of Scripture.

The second part of Horrell's trek toward an ecological biblical theology examines a series of biblical texts that environmentalists commonly cite. Chapter three discusses Gen 1–2 and three different perspectives on it. Chapter four moves on to the narrative account of the fall of man and the great flood. Beginning in chapter five, Horrell deals with larger sections of Scripture and ceases to discuss different hermeneutical methods. It discusses several poetic texts, such as Ps 104 and Job 38. Chapter six considers how the Gospels deal with Jesus and ecology. Horrell's main point seems to be that Jesus is not as environmentally friendly as some have suggested. The Pauline texts that are often discussed when debating the biblical perspective on environment (especially Rom 8 and Col 1) are the topic of chapter seven. Chapters eight and nine both deal with eschatology: chapter eight focuses on the future visions of eschatology, and chapter nine centers on the biblical texts that deal with catastrophic end-times occurrences. Horrell's main point through the center section of this book is apparently that there are currently diverse interpretations of all of these texts that scholars in various parts of Christendom accept.



The motivation behind this becomes clearer in the third part of *The Bible and the Environment*. This final part of the book includes Horrell's attempt to create a positive ecological hermeneutic. The tenth chapter provides the main material for Horrell's proposed hermeneutic: "the Bible . . . is ambivalent and ambiguous in terms of its ecological perspective" (p. 117). He clarifies, "a response to our ecological crisis cannot be derived just from reading the Bible carefully and attentively" (p. 119). Horrell provides a suggested alternative to careful exegesis, namely, "interaction between the reader's contemporary context and the ancient text, so the changing contexts and demands bring new perspectives and doctrines to light" (p. 124). This interaction should rest on three pillars: historical study and informed exegesis, theological tradition, and contemporary science (pp. 125–26). Only by coming to conclusions in light of those three pillars can one hope to arrive at a valid perspective on Scripture. The final chapter of the volume lists six theological principles that should be considered when reading all of Scripture: the goodness of creation, humanity as part of the community of creation, interconnectedness in failure and flourishing, God's covenant with all of creation, creation's summons to praise God, and liberation for all things.

The Bible and the Environment has at least three significant strengths and also three weaknesses. The first strength is that Horrell touches on all of the major biblical texts commonly discussed with regard to the environment. It is true that he does this rather incompletely and with a strong bias toward revisionist readings of the text. The reader can, however, get a general feel for scholarship on all of the major ecological texts by reading this book. A second strength is that Horrell clearly states his position early in the discussion. Some scholars, when dealing with Scripture and the environment, tend to disguise their agendas and leave it to the reader to read between the lines. Horrell boldly states right in the first chapter that he wants to change the way Scripture is read. A third strength of this book is that it has both a Scripture index and an index of authors and subjects. This makes it a very useful tool for research and reference.

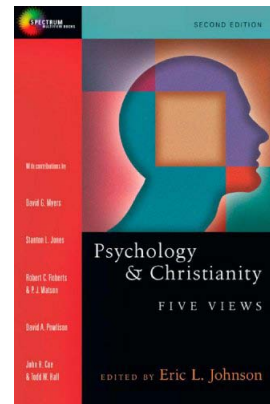
The first weakness of this book is that it rather unfairly dismisses any argument that holds to canonical integrity and authentic biblical authority. Horrell's ecological hermeneutic requires that the reader accept his premise that all of the various interpretations of each text are equally valid. If one rejects this central plank, then Horrell's argument does not stand. Yet Horrell does little to support the central plank of his platform. A second weakness is the failure to address current scientific data from non-theological sources. Other than the IPCC report on climate change from 2007, the remainder of Horrell's sources illustrating the ecological crisis come from theologians who were writing around a decade ago. The third significant weakness of this volume is that Horrell creates a set of categories for hermeneutical approaches (chs. 3–4) and then subsequently abandons them. This leaves the reader to try to determine what categories Horrell is discussing in the remaining chapters and if he is even dealing with all the categories anymore.

The Bible and the Environment is a useful volume for discovering the hermeneutical approach on which much of the Christian environmental movement is based. Horrell's categories for describing hermeneutical approaches are rough, but a good start. This book also provides a good bibliography of the revisionist perspective on the environment for those interested in further study. For these reasons, this book would make a useful addition to an interested scholar's library.

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Eric L. Johnson, ed. *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 320 pp. \$22.00.

Over a decade ago InterVarsity Press published an edited volume entitled *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views* (2000). This volume contained chapters from notable Christian scholars David G. Myers, Stanton L. Jones, David A. Powlison, and Robert C. Roberts. The book presented four models of the relationship between Christianity and the discipline of psychology that included *levels of explanation* (Myers), *integration* (Jones), *biblical counseling* (Powlison), and *Christian psychology* (Roberts). This book came at a time when Christians were striving to determine how to establish a clearer picture of human nature. It addressed the concerns that many had about psychology being antithetical to Christianity, and it provided intellectually sound arguments for a variety of positions. The *Four Views* text also contained responses between the authors that highlighted points of agreement as well as disagreement among the models.



In *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*, editor Eric L. Johnson (who coedited the *Four Views* text with Stanton Jones) is back to revisit the historical context and expand the dialogue that has been developing with respect to the interface (if any) between the discipline of psychology and the Christian faith. In addition to the four original models, a fifth view has been added in this updated volume. All of the original authors from the first edition have returned to reframe and revise their models (with P. J. Watson added as a coauthor of the chapter on Christian psychology alongside Roberts). The fifth model is presented by John Coe and Todd Hall and frames the interaction as a *transformational* view. As in the original text, each chapter is followed by short responses from the other essayists.

The chapters are well-written and present their models clearly. In Myers' *levels of explanation*, psychology is addressing questions of human nature from an entirely different framework and perspective. It represents a layer of explanation that is (simply put) different than a theological layer. It is asking similar questions, but is similar to Stephen J. Gould's Non-Overlapping Magisteria model. Psychology and Christianity may share similar ideals and goals, but they are better understood as coming from different magisteria (domains of authority). In Jones' *integration* view, psychology and Christianity are woven together and should not be isolated from one another. Heavily influenced by Abraham Kuyper's Reformed theology, the relationship between psychology and Christianity is less of a dialogue (levels of explanation) and more of a fusion of epistemological approaches, each bringing a unique voice to a scholarly duet. In Roberts and Watson's Christian psychology, Christian faith is utilized as a starting point to develop psychological theory—that is, psychology done by Christians has a distinctively Christian nature to it. In Coe and Hall's transformational view, psychology is a process of investigation that is both descriptive and prescriptive, but is for the purpose of changing people into something different and looks to soul care as a primary point of praxis. The biblical counseling model of Powlison is focused primarily on the manner in which biblical principles can be involved in the care of individuals in a therapeutic/counseling setting and focuses on the place of Scripture and theology within this context.

Each of the chapters is crisp and straightforward in style. I found that in each essay I was extraordinarily sympathetic to the author's perspective. The responses that follow each chapter helpfully highlight

some of the points made, but occasionally seem to be either too broad or dithering about minutia. As a general rule, the authors are straightforward and to the point about strengths (and occasionally weaknesses) of their own models and include many helpful examples or personal stories to highlight the strengths, but with humility. The text focuses on psychology as a social science and emphasizes the culture's preoccupation with psychology as a therapeutic enterprise. Psychology is an incredibly broad discipline, and the text could easily include another chapter that is more in line with the contemporary trend of psychology becoming more of a natural science. There is an anthropocentrism about the text, with minimal time and space given to the non-human/comparative aspects of the discipline. This will upset few readers; but it is important to remember that psychology has a rather large comparative presence, and the absence of this that might put off those looking for a broader tent for psychologists focused solely on the human condition.

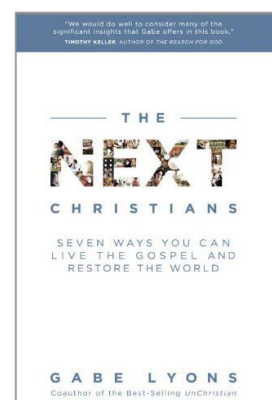
Johnson bookends the text with introductory and closing chapters: he begins by reviewing the history of the dialogue within the Christian community about psychology, and he ends by admonishing readers to remain focused on scholarly dialogue and the big picture. The attention to humility informed by various perspectives and the scholarly posture of irenic discourse is on target and fits perfectly with the text. In my opinion, the manner in which the chapters are presented and the responses of the coauthors provide an incredibly helpful tool for those looking for a text that feels like an academic conference. Johnson's editing, the authors' familiarity with one another, and the high level of scholarship avoid the sometimes uneven and choppy nature of an edited volume. This book is recommended for upper-division undergraduate or foundational-level graduate courses in psychology. While the size and scope limit the degree of depth that each of the models is able to plumb, it serves its intended role as a thoughtful presentation of each of the models. No doubt, readers will find themselves drifting towards one of the models presented, and their preference will be due to their affinity for the model rather than the rhetorical quality of the prose.

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Gabe Lyons. *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2010. xii + 249 pp. £9.99/\$14.99.

What accounts for the negative perception that non-Christians generally seem to have about Christianity in America? According to Gabe Lyons, one problem is the failure of the Christian community to recognize and adapt to the characteristics of a post-Christian American culture (pp. 4, 21–27). He suggests that this failure to recalibrate has left the church without traction in modern America and has made her an object of disdain in eyes of the broader culture. Nevertheless, Lyons remains hopeful that a rising movement of Christians whom he calls *Restorers* provides a remedial example as they recapture the full gospel and navigate the opportunities afforded by our changing social terrain.

The book is divided into three sections, the first of which (chs. 1–4) measures the current relationship between Christianity and contemporary American



culture. Chapters one and two observe that the church no longer occupies a central role in Western culture. Lyons notes three unprecedented cultural characteristics that have shifted Christian values to the social periphery in recent years: we now live in a pluralistic, postmodern, and post-Christian society (pp. 21–27). Despite resistance by Christians who have attempted to preserve America as “a sacred Christian nation,” the change is irreversible (pp. 26–27). The church lost the culture war, though Lyons believes this may be “the stirrings of something beautiful” (p. 28).

In the third chapter, Lyons describes three broad approaches to Christian cultural involvement. The first is the antagonistic approach of the *Separatist Christians*, who are admittedly spiritually devoted (p. 38), but generally “unconcerned about the social consequences of their tactics” (p. 37). Lyons roots this mentality in Fundamentalism, stating that its true objective was “combating a secular America” (p. 39). The *Cultural Christians* make up the second category, and are recognized by their active involvement in the community, “but offer little in the way of distinction” from the culture (p. 43). The chapter closes by introducing the *Restorers*, a third, emerging generation of believers who approach culture with a mission to tell the world about Jesus *and* “to infuse the world with beauty, grace, justice, and love” (p. 47).

Chapter four argues for the need to amend our popular and truncated understanding of the gospel, which “reduces the power of God’s redeeming work on the cross to just a proverbial ticket to a good afterlife” (p. 51). In particular, the “next Christians” (i.e., *Restorers*) have regained an appreciation for the roles that creation and restoration play in the gospel story (pp. 50–51). Personal redemption is not the final goal, but rather “the beginning of our participation in God’s work of restoration in our lives and in the world” (p. 53). The *Restorers* believe they play a role in the restoration chapter of God’s gospel story as those “called to partner in a restorative work so that the torch of hope is carried until Christ returns” (p. 55). In the meantime, the next Christians work to “give the world a glimpse of what the world looked like before sin entered the picture” (p. 59).

Part two provides seven chapters of everyday portraits that illustrate distinguishing characteristics of the next Christians. Lyons recounts numerous stories of Christians engaged in a wide spread of cultural activities, ranging from a makeshift home rehab center (pp. 71–73) to male fashion models building homes in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina (p. 120). Among other things, he illustrates that *Restorers* tend to be creative social contributors (pp. 91–108), view their employment in terms of “calling” (pp. 109–26), and place a high value on community (pp. 147–63). Here we see the *Restorer* in action, “partnering with God to breathe justice and mercy and peace and compassion and generosity into the world” (p. 59).

The third part of the book echoes the conviction that Christians must recover the full gospel, a message that calls for Christians “to partner with [Jesus] to renew and restore the creation to its fullest potential” (p. 208). Once this priority is in place, Christians will realize that they must disperse throughout society and “take seriously their call to proclaim and embody the gospel in everything they do, everywhere they go” (p. 214).

The Next Christians helpfully explains the cultural shifts that have led to the depreciation of Judeo-Christian values in the American public square. The book persuasively explains how Christians have mishandled the shift by attempting to preserve America’s so-called “sacred” status, which has not only led to the ill-repute of the Christian community, but to countless numbers of Christians who have a largely antagonistic posture toward society. Lyons’s call for and multiple examples of engaged, compassionate, and community-minded Christians is an inspiring alternative and should provoke the pursuit of salty,

God-glorifying lifestyles “in every channel of culture and every sphere of social interaction” (p. 67). Should faithful believers strategically scatter in this way, perhaps it would help reverse an unfortunate stigma incurred by Christians in America.

These helpful correctives are nevertheless tinged by Lyons’s presumption that a Christian’s cultural activity is unquestionably regarded as partnership with God in his restoration of the cosmos (a major premise of his paradigm). The notion is stated but undefended and results in numerous overstatements that indicate that Christians are virtually ushering in the new earth through civic involvement. For Lyons, “restoration living can flood and transform our entire cosmos” as *Restorers* “partner” with God to “restore every corner of the earth” (p. 65). The suggestion that God calls Christians to “redeem” the world (p. 192) not only embellishes the nature of a Christian’s social activity, but grinds against Scripture’s clear teaching that the earth remains in *unredeemed* bondage until the bodily resurrection (Rom 8:21).

A related and more fundamental concern is Lyons’s misguided attempts to stimulate “restoration” activity with a defective understanding of the gospel. Though he is perhaps correct to suggest that a full rendering of the gospel-story should include Christ’s eventual “restoration of all things” (p. 50), he nevertheless mistakenly argues that the gospel also proclaims that *we Christians* are God’s means of this restoration: “The good news for humankind is that we are . . . purposed to partner with [Jesus] to renew and restore the creation to its fullest potential” (p. 208). Though this news will undoubtedly motivate “bored Christians” with “jobs they can get excited about” (p. 60), it apparently does so by loading Christian obedience into the gospel message itself. Rather than rousing love for our neighbors by announcing the redemptive and restorative accomplishments of Christ alone, we are provoked into action by a gospel that tells us that *we* are responsible to perform God’s act of restoration in partnership with him.

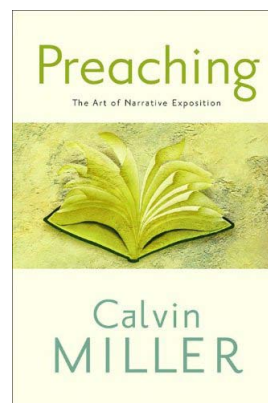
In *The Next Christians*, the good news of the dawning of God’s cosmic restoration is too quickly identified with Christian civic influence, as though the two are coterminous. Certainly both are biblical, and perhaps they are in some sense related. Christ has inaugurated the new creation (e.g., 2 Cor 5:17), and Christians should labor for the good of society (e.g., Titus 3:1–2). But far more care must be taken to define what elements of the new creation are already breaking in and to what extent, if any, civic engagement counts as such.

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Calvin Miller. *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. 285 pp. \$18.99.

Preaching is the most difficult thing anyone can do. What makes it so challenging is the call on the preacher to understand two unfathomable objects—the mind of God as it is revealed in the riches of Scripture and the minds of the audience as they are shaped by the complexities of our postmodern world. The sermon seeks to unite these two poles, bringing the purposes of God to bear on the audience.

Not surprisingly, classical books on preaching tend to focus on the first pole: how to comprehend the wonders of a very great God, how to distill the profundities of biblical texts into preaching ideas, and how to expound those ideas faithfully. What is often overlooked is the audience—its outlook, its needs, its aptitude. Veteran pastor and seminary professor Calvin Miller seeks to redress the imbalance in *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition*.



Miller sets for himself a radical agenda: to persuade preachers to give as much consideration to the audience as they do to the biblical text and theology. Without sensitivity to the feelings and moods and struggles and pains of the hearers, argues Miller, no communication will take place; the message will fall on uncomprehending ears, and the preacher's biblical insights will avail nothing.

Part of knowing the congregation requires appreciating how contemporary people process information. It's a process that has undergone seismic revision in recent years. In the postmodern West, we are less and less people of ears, deriving our outlook from words, either written or spoken, and increasingly people of eyes, taking our bearings from all sorts of visual stimuli. According to Miller, preachers have been slow to adjust to this massive shift.

Happily, Miller spends little time criticizing modern preaching and instead offers an abundance of wise counsel and helpful solutions. Over and over, he commends the power of story to drive home transcendent truths. Our preaching should be saturated by the creative use of narratives, illustrations, images, and anecdotes. It was symptomatic of the preaching of Jesus, and it should be of ours as well. Whenever Hawaiians gather, they (to use their own words) “talk story.” So should the preacher on Sunday morning, when standing in front of the people: he should “talk story.” It's especially stories that postmodern ears remember, and hence that most fruitfully punch home the truths of Scripture and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For Miller, preachers are artists, practitioners of a superlative craft. Every sermon is an artistic creation, a retelling of the biblical text in the form of a story, seeking to connect with people on a relational level, not just intellectual. This takes prayerful creativity, Spirit-inspired insight, and hard work. The introductions and conclusions of sermons should be given highest priority in preparation, written out in full (as well as, if possible, the middle part of the sermon) and yet never read, but delivered from an outline, freely spoken, with an earnest passion to resonate with the hearts of congregation. Eye-contact should be made with individuals in the pews; pacing back and forth should be limited, and so should jokes. The aim is to help people to live within the biblical text. “Great preaching is making the audience feel the Scripture” (p. 220). References to the preacher's own pilgrimage can help to make the story accessible. So can the use of the literary classics, as well as saving the best insights and illustrations to the last. Like every good story, the sermon should build to a crescendo—including, above all, the

grand finale of strong and sound application to every heart (and such application should be fermenting in the preacher's mind from the earliest stages of sermon preparation).

At the end of the day, Calvin Miller, a life-time advocate of the glories of gospel-preaching, successfully accomplishes his purpose. He pays careful attention to two horizons, both a lofty message and a potentially fickle audience, knowing both so well that the latter will, with help from the Holy Spirit, truly hear and assimilate the former. Thus the author who can say "all preaching is doctrine" (p. 49) and laments that in postmodern preaching "transcendent themes have been replaced by 'how-to[s]'" (p. 183) is the same author who pleads with us to acknowledge that "stories are the stuff of persuasion far more than propositions" (p. 134) and that "relational preaching is everything" (p. 71).

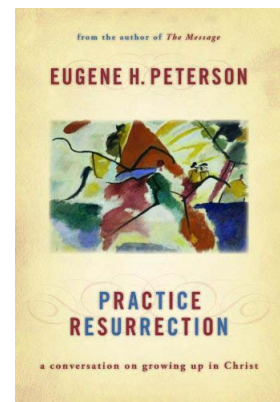
As a preacher who longs—with Miller—to proclaim the immensely rich and exceedingly glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, I was blessed by the challenge of this book to pay more attention to the second pole: to know my audience well enough to be able to expound the gospel compellingly, interestingly, passionately, and creatively to their hearts.

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Eugene Peterson. *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. xii + 290 pp. \$24.00.

In this fifth and final installment of his "Conversations" series on spiritual theology, Eugene Peterson tells us directly that we need to grow up. He argues that while evangelism remains critical, the American church must treat growth and maturity, what he calls "practicing resurrection," with equal urgency. Much of the church "runs on the euphoria and adrenaline of new birth—getting people into the church, into the kingdom, into causes, into crusades, into programs," but, Peterson laments, "I don't find pastors and professors, for the most part, very interested in matters of formation in holiness. They have higher profile things to tend to" (p. 5). With the American church as his conversation partner, Peterson offers a fatherly rebuke of its adolescence and a better way forward.

The book is laid out somewhat like a commentary, with chapter divisions according to pericope that walk the reader through the book of Ephesians. Yet it is different from a commentary. It is Peterson doing what he does best, providing ruminations on texts of Scripture intertwined with story, metaphor, and spiritual direction, only this time through one specific book of the Bible. At times this can give the book a disjointed feel. If it is not really a commentary and not really a topical book, then what is it exactly? Because of this, the exegetical judgments can sometimes feel rushed and left in need of more support. Still, it is hard to read anything Peterson writes without deriving benefit. Not unlike C. S. Lewis, Peterson has the unique ability to transcend simple categories. He is not easily skimmed or read simply to distill the main points and move on. With Peterson, the journey *is* the point. And this book is no different. At times it meanders, but at the same time, it is filled with many gems for those willing to take the scenic route.



Peterson is at his most prophetic when critiquing the “Americanization” of the church: “America in the twenty-first century does not offer propitious conditions for growing up. Maturity is not the hallmark of our culture” (p. 179). We are more like “children, tossed to and fro by the waves” (Eph 4:14) than mature Christ-followers. This is one of Peterson’s most important contributions in all his writing: not to unfairly malign American strengths, but to point out blind spots. A large one of these is the “Americanization of congregation,” which he defines as the turning of “each congregation into a market for religious consumers, an ecclesiastical business run along the lines of advertising techniques and organizational flow charts, and then energized by impressive motivational rhetoric” (pp. 23–24). No church is immune from the temptation to this kind of approach, simply because it surrounds us in culture, and, frankly, it often “works.” But the reality is that this kind of success is not necessarily the same as genuine growth. In fact, it is often growth-stunting, despite appearances to the contrary, because it tends toward a perpetual adolescent obsession with numbers and trends.

No doubt Peterson’s words will be a breath of fresh air to many and a thorn in the side to others. Not everyone will love what he says or the positions it takes. Such is the nature of those who offer prophetic rebuke. But the reality is that we need people like Peterson to shine the light in the darkness, to awaken us when we have dozed at the wheel. For decades, Peterson has lamented the consumerization of the church, as well as the idea of church as what *we* do, rather than what God says and does. This is particularly important in Ephesians, where church is not a goal or project, but rather simply *is*, because God says it is, and because he is the one doing the heavy lifting. Peterson reminds believers of the priority of grace, even as they seek to live in obedience: “Christian maturity is not a matter of doing more for God; it is God doing more in and through us” (pp. 222–23).

This leads to another important thread that runs through the book: a high regard for the ordinary. Again grating against American sentiment, Peterson argues that maturity happens only within the real, often harsh, conditions of life. To be sure, there are moments of great glory. But too often these are overemphasized, and the patient work of God in the present, the broken, the ordinary, and the mess of real life is underestimated and ignored. “The way to maturity is through the commonplace” (p. 182). Further, while the church is proficient in kerygmatic and didactic language (preaching and teaching), it is far less competent with “paracletic” language, the “language of relationship and intimacy” (p. 175). This is the language of community, where believers bear with each other in love and peace. This language cannot be cultivated if we depersonalize or compete with one another, but only as we embrace patience and love within the everyday conditions of life lived together in Christ.

Thus, *Practice Resurrection* has plenty of depths to be mined for pastor and layperson alike, even if it is not Peterson’s best overall work. Within its pages there is much that is well worth reading and digesting. It would be ideal for someone studying Ephesians who wants to balance out more technical commentaries, or anyone who wants to immerse themselves in a unique but grounded perspective on the church’s maturation in Christ that will both bless and challenge.

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David Platt. *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2011. 165 pp.\$14.99.

David Platt, pastor of the Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, is one of the brightest lights in Christian circles and the author of the best-selling *Radical* (Multnomah, 2010). *Radical Together*, published a year later, zeroes in on the need for gospel-driven sacrifice in the life of the gathered church.

Platt unfolds his prophetic call to the church in six short, readable, biblically based chapters. Chapter 1, “Tyranny of the Good,” explores how buildings and programs can get in the way of meaningful ministry. Chapter 2, “The Gospel Misunderstood,” refigures evangelical motivation for activism and mission. “The gospel,” says Platt, “is the key to—and the only sustainable motivation for—sacrificial living” (p. 36). Chapter 3, “God Is Saying Something,” grounds such sacrificial ministry in the Word of God. The Word, in Platt’s mind, is his methodology (pp. 53–54). In Chapter 4, “The Genius of Wrong,” Platt seeks to enfranchise every member for meaningful ministry. “[T]he ministry of making disciples was not intended for professionals alone,” Platt argues, but “was intended for the whole people of God” (p. 68).

The book turns into a flame in Chapter 5, “Our Unmistakable Task”: Platt urges his fellow believers to pursue the Great Commission with abandon. He closes the book by reminding the reader in chapter 6 that we are serving “The God Who Exalts God,” and thus our ultimate catalyst is the glory of our Lord, not a pragmatic result or numerical statistic.

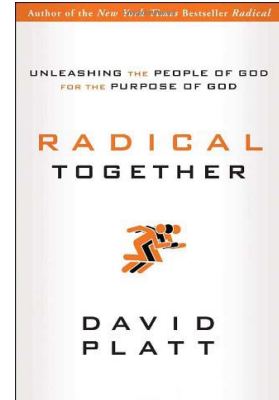
Radical Together has many strong points. I will focus on just two, both of which are foundational.

First, Platt wisely grounds human action in the sovereignty of God. There has been a great deal of discussion in certain circles over whether certain strands of theology kill missions. Is embracing God’s comprehensive sovereignty like a nail gun to the head when it comes to evangelism and discipleship? Not if *Radical Together* has anything to say about it. As the Bible does (see Job 38–41, for starters, or Isa 40–48), Platt exalts a massive, awesome, authoritative, majestic God in his book. But he doesn’t end there. He knows that God is great and also *good* and so desires to extend his goodness to sinners. Platt therefore calls for holistic personal commitment to the Great Commission (see ch. 5).

Theology does not kill mission for Platt. Theology drives mission, just as it did for John Calvin (who sent out church planters to Brazil and all across France), George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards (who himself served as a missionary for several years!), David Brainerd, William Carey, Luther Rice, Adoniram Judson, Lottie Moon, C. H. Spurgeon, Amy Carmichael, and too many other figures to count.

A second strength is the focus on a church’s use of its money and resources in fulfilling the Great Commission. Platt seeks to rouse sleeping churches in *Radical Together*. He wants churches to “drastically change our spending to better align with the will and ways of God” (p. 16). This means, in his view, being willing to downsize buildings, cut programs, and generally sacrifice in any necessary area in order to funnel more money and energy to the global (and local) spread of the gospel. Ironically, though created for the good of the broader world, the church can easily become a world unto itself. In doing so, it loses the world—no longer weeping over it and striving to reach it.

Our churches need to realize that we exist for the glory of God shed abroad through evangelism and discipleship. That’s it. Consequently, our prayer meetings, Bible studies, Sunday Schools, associational meetings, weekly gatherings and calendar of activity should be centered on this end. We should be



deeply doxological Christians, powered and infused by passion for God, who then express our love for the crucified Christ by promoting the Word of Christ. Platt gets this. I hope that we will too.

In these ways and more, Platt's book is rich and wise. Yet while there is much to receive and appreciate in *Radical Together*, I do want to tackle briefly one matter that could be problematic: What level of radical is radical enough? The strength of "radical" faith is that it is world-denying. It reminds us that our churches are fundamentally bands of "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth, gatherings of citizens of a greater kingdom (1 Pet 2:11). Our purpose in life, as mentioned above, is to give glory to God with every atom of our being. This will naturally mean that we individually and corporately renounce comfort, wealth, and material things as ultimate pursuits. It will also surely entail that we give not merely the minimum to financially support the local and global promotion of the gospel, but that we give sacrificially.

But it is possible to be so zealous for this ultimate end of our lives that we debase the good things God has given us. Platt grounds his call in God's sovereignty and kindness, but there are a few places in which he comes close to endorsing asceticism and faulting the church for the world's problems, thereby making it possible to ground our motivation for radical living in false guilt. For example:

As I write this, more than five hundred million people in the world are starving to death. They lack food, water, and basic medical care. Children are dying of diseases like diarrhea; many who live will suffer lifelong brain damage from early protein deficiency. Others will be sold into forced labor or trafficked for sexual exploitation. Nearly one hundred fifty million children are orphans. Yet judging by what we hang on to in our churches, convenient programs and nice parking lots are still more important than such children and their families. (p. 15)

Platt moderates his tone in places, referencing programs and material things that "were good things" in themselves (p. 22). But I am concerned that Platt places the world's problems at the church's feet. This is at best an incomplete conclusion.

Don't misunderstand. There are major steps that many of our congregations and denominations could take to be more missional, more gospel-driven. I am all for those steps. But our theology of hope and our doctrine of evangelism must take into account human depravity. We cannot singlehandedly overturn the curse. We can do great good for God in the world, and it is entirely right to try. But we cannot end disease. We cannot stop global poverty. We cannot end sexual abuse. As individuals and churches, we can and *must* address these and other effects of the curse. But fighting sin is like playing a cosmic whack-a-mole. You strike at one form of evil, and another pops up. Until Christ returns as rightful heir of this world, this awful pattern will persist.

It is not wrong, furthermore, for churches to have "nice parking lots." It's not necessary, of course. But it is not wrong for us to have a building in which to worship God any more than it was wrong for the Israelites to have a temple in which to do so (see 1 Kgs 6–8, for starters). It is not wrong for Christians to build houses and buy cars and have investment portfolios any more than it was wrong for Job to be fabulously wealthy. In the same vein it is not wrong for churches to have vans and air-conditioned rooms and savings accounts. Such things do not *necessarily* subvert the work of the gospel.

Furthermore, global evangelism is not our only duty as Christians. There is a sizeable place in our individual and corporate lives for steadiness, normalcy, and the "ordinary means of grace." Much of life and ministry is not sensational.

I don't think that Platt would disagree with this. But church leaders should not necessarily feel guilty if we are not able despite our best efforts to visibly see sudden transformation happen as Platt has. Some pastors will want to implement many of his good ideas, but will have to patiently teach their congregations over time on matters of sovereignty and action. It could be a mistake for a young pastor, for example, to read *Radical Together* and its moving story of Great Commission effectiveness and then throw down a gauntlet of reform overnight.

A crucial passage in this larger conversation, it seems to me, is in 1 Tim 6, which my sharp-eyed wife kindly pointed out to me.

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (1 Tim 6:17–19 ESV)

It is remarkable what Paul says and does not say here. He does not condemn the rich. He does not castigate them for their wealth. Instead, he does two things. He charges them firstly to remember the ultimate end of life, God and his glorification. Secondly, he calls them to be positively sacrificial in the way they live, to be “rich in good works,” which would surely, we can estimate, involve a good deal of generous financial support of gospel work.

So Paul does *not*, in this passage, malign wealth, possessions, or even what you might call a “nice lifestyle.” We are tempted to look down upon such things, but it seems fairly clear to me that the biblical authors did not do so. In fact, as Richard Bauckham has shown in his book *Gospel Women*, wealthy women connected to the imperial court and possessing mind-bending wealth provided major funding to the apostles. It is not always right, then, for the wealthy (and, globally speaking, relatively wealthy folks like the American middle-class) to sell their homes and cars, or for churches to sell their buildings and end sports leagues. It might be. We want to feel that tension, in accord with Prov 30:8 (“give me neither poverty nor riches”).

But tension does not a rule make. It leaves us to trust God and to search our hearts, to pray as individuals and corporate bodies of the living Christ to the Father and ask him for guidance in these areas. Our exact course of life is not spelled out. The Spirit *must* graciously guide us and our churches. What does this mean practically? Some of us must renounce every last dime and go to the mission field. Some of us must down-size as Platt and Brook Hills did (see pp. 15–20). Some of us should be investment-bankers and CEOs and entrepreneurs and make loads of money and give sacrificially (though not necessarily to the extent of asceticism). Some of us should be solidly middle-class and give whatever we can. All of our churches should be supporting Christians in these and many other situations. Whatever practical steps we take, our collective heartbeat should mirror 1 Tim 6.

In conclusion, *Radical Together* is a helpful and prophetic work. It is filled with good theology, good exposition of Scripture, moving and even funny stories, and a biblical call to action. Its one flaw is that it treats a complex matter rather narrowly. This should not stop churches from reading and being challenged by the book, however, and I hope that many will do just that.

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Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer. *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010. x + 243 pp. \$22.99.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a surge in the numerical growth of American evangelicals. Numerical growth can be one indicator of a biblically healthy congregation, but it need not be. What, then, are the marks and traits of a thriving church? This is the question that two Southern Baptists, Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer, have set out to answer in this book.

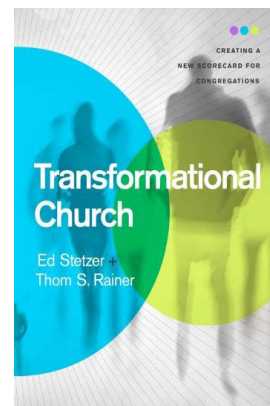
The authors begin with a sobering assessment of the contemporary evangelical church. Too often, they argue, churches rely upon an inadequate “scorecard” of “the three Bs: bodies, budget, and buildings” (p. 26) in order to gauge their success as a church. Dependence upon these metrics prompts evangelical churches to become self-complacent, to lose sight of their biblical mission, and to stand helpless before the decline that many of them are experiencing (p. 8).

In response to this state of affairs, Stetzer and Rainer undertook an extensive, cross-denominational survey of seven thousand North American churches. In light of the survey’s findings, they identified what they have called “transformational churches” (TCs). To be a TC, a church “must have grown at least 10 percent in worship attendance” in a five-year window and have “a minimum worship attendance of fifty” at the end of that window (p. 28). TCs, furthermore, must “have people in small community,” whether a “small group, Sunday School class, or similar group” (p. 28). Most importantly for the authors, TCs are churches committed to “principles that transform people to look like Christ, congregations to act like the body of Christ, and communities to reflect the kingdom of God” (p. 33). In this book, Stetzer and Rainer hope not only to describe the defining features of TCs, but also to assist congregations in becoming TCs (p. 42).

So what is the “scorecard” of a TC? The authors describe what they call a “transformational loop” consisting of seven elements in three categories—Discern (Missionary Mentality); Embrace (Vibrant Leadership; Relational Intentionality; Prayerful Dependence); and Engage (Worship; Community; Mission). The authors insist that these elements are a loop and not a causal chain. Churches may “begin anywhere in the Loop” (p. 38). TCs will furthermore find that these elements “converge” in their life as a congregation—they are “distinct” but not “independent from one another” (p. 41).

The bulk of the book devotes separate treatments to the seven elements of the transformational loop. A “missionary mentality” seeks to live out the church’s mission in the community in which the church finds itself. “Vibrant leadership” entails building a team of collaborative and mutually accountable leaders who are uniformly committed to the church’s mission. “Relationally intentional” leaders and congregations commit to embracing different and difficult people by means of one-on-one relationships. “Prayerfully dependent” churches embrace Jesus’ prayer priorities and therefore share such prayer practices as “praying for members by name” and “engag[ing] their communities through prayer.”

TCs are committed to reverent, God-centered “worship.” TCs, while sensitive to the context and community within which they serve, nevertheless refuse to let personal taste and preference dictate worship styles and priorities. TCs are committed to “community”; that is, to groups or fellowships within the congregation that promote growth in the knowledge of Scripture, personal transformation,



and service to the broader church and community. Finally, TCs are committed to “mission”; that is, they “show Jesus through word and action” (p. 199). These congregations self-consciously equip and prepare members to form relationships with unbelievers and to share the gospel with them.

One positive dimension of *Transformational Church* is its advocacy of a high view of the church. For Stetzer and Rainer, Christian growth, Christian worship, and Christian witness are personal but not individualistic. They necessarily take place within the context of the body of Christ. The authors, furthermore, understand the church to occupy center stage in what they term “God’s mission” (p. 226–28).

At points in the book, however, important concepts could benefit from further clarity. The authors’ discussion of “mission” serves as an example. The authors are concerned to define the church’s mission in terms of “telling good news” rather than simply “being good news” (p. 67), and to center the church’s mission in “global evangelization” rather than “societal transformation” (p. 65). Even so, Stetzer and Rainer will elsewhere speak of the church both “deliver[ing] justice” and “deliver[ing] the gospel” (p. 68; cf. p. 69). Left unclear to the reader is precisely how the authors understand social betterment to comprise part of the church’s mission, and whether or how the church could commit herself to the project of “social justice” without compromising her calling to proclaim the gospel message.

In all, the authors have done well in calling the church to align her priorities and endeavors with the Scripture’s teaching. Whatever differences readers may have with aspects of the book’s argument, *Transformational Church* can be a valuable starting point for conversations that evangelical congregations ought to be undertaking. Those that do, with this book’s assistance and by God’s blessing, will come away with a clearer sense of what it is that God has called them to be and to do.

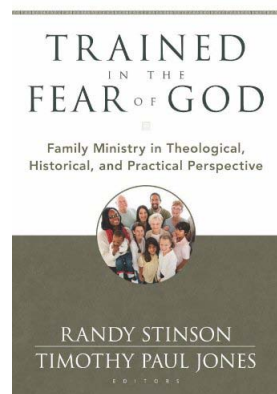
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Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, eds. *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011. 290 pp. \$26.99.

Nothing is more important for Christian parents than the spiritual well-being of our children. When they thrive, we rejoice; when they don’t, we weep. And nothing is more spiritually potent in the lives of our children than churches and parents intentionally working in tandem to mature these young saints.

The question becomes, then: What might that partnership between the local congregation and parents look like? Answering that question in today’s world, however, is no easy matter. Practices and perspectives have changed over time and vary from congregation to congregation. *Trained in the Fear of God* speaks into the confusing array of possible answers, charting a way forward by looking backward at our history and also at God’s Word.

Let me begin by summarizing the book. Simply stated, the editors advocate “family ministry,” which they define as “the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives” (p. 15). Their particular version of



family ministry—the “family *equipping*” model—differs from the “family *integrated*” model in that the family equipping model may retain age-organized classes and events (youth group, children’s church, Sunday school), unlike the family integrated model. On the other hand, the family equipping model differs from the “family *based*” model, even though both rely on age-organized classes, in that “every practice at every level of ministry [in the family equipping model] is reworked to champion the place of parents as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives” (p. 27).

Trained in the Fear of God is divided into three sections. The first section provides biblical foundations for family ministry and addresses three theological topics: the Trinity, gender, and homosexuality. The second section works its way through Christian history beginning with late ancient church practice and concluding with postmodern church practice. The final section explores practical topics (such as the pastor’s home, a gospel-centered household, and missional families) useful for transitioning churches to the family equipping model of family ministry.

As for the book’s strengths, there is much to commend. One is its emphasis on the role of parents in training our young people to walk with God. No one is more influential “in children’s spiritual, social, and behavioral development” than parents (p. 17). That should be obvious to us—the Bible teaches it, common sense confirms it, and research further supports it. But we Christian parents often fall short, sometimes unwittingly, of our God-given responsibility in this area. This is in part because of what the authors refer to as a “deferral culture” (p. 153). With the rise of the “efficiency movement” in the early twentieth century, emphasis was placed on specialization, the creation of experts who were considered better equipped to handle certain responsibilities (p. 153). That has led at times to an over-confidence in the trained staff of the church such that parents defer responsibilities to the children’s minister or youth minister, responsibilities that are primarily the parents’ and only secondarily the church’s.

Here the book is most helpful. It is convincing in its call to parents to take up the mantle of the spiritual training of their children and practical in urging the church to equip parents to do so. Trained ministers do have expertise. That doesn’t make them better able to parent our children, however—rather, it makes them better able to assist parents in that role.

A second strength is the book’s rich historical perspective. The discussion of family discipleship through the centuries is invaluable, especially chapter 9 (“Family Discipleship in Modern and Postmodern Contexts”). Programmatic, age-segregated children’s and youth ministry “is church as the twenty-first century knows it, as the twentieth century refined it, and as the nineteenth century created it” (p. 144). That does not mean we necessarily jettison current practices. But to think critically about the partnership between the local congregation and parents, we must understand the context that colors our thinking. Otherwise, we unthinkingly embrace unbiblical practices that may unintentionally undermine the role of parents.

A third strength is the book’s emphasis on the practice of being missional. Books on family ministry are not always robustly missional; *Trained in the Fear of God* is unashamedly so: “In God’s design, Christian households and churches are not shelters *from* the [cosmic] conflict; they are gospel-empowered training bases *for* the conflict” (p. 14). In truth, they are shelters too, but the important emphasis on mission is clear. And the examples given in chapter 16—“Building and Equipping Missional Families”—are plentiful. This section would be enhanced by examples in which children need to be missional in their parents’ absence (scouts, dance, sporting events, school, etc.). But overall the focus is encouragingly on the biblical task “to expand the borders of the realm wherein the Lord was present, known, served, and worshipped” (pp. 33–34).

As for weaknesses, one in particular is worth raising: a lack of clarity. Although, by design, *Trained in the Fear of God* “includes no chapters that relate specifically to age-organized programs in the church” (p. 9), it should have. Or at least it should have provided some examples. Without such examples, it is nearly impossible to understand how the local congregation partners with parents in a church with age-organized programs (which are most of our churches). And for that reason, it is nearly impossible to distinguish between the family-based model and the family-equipping model advocated here. Specifics are provided in *The Family Ministry Guide*, also by Timothy Paul Jones. But the lack of those specifics here diminishes the value of this book.

It also gives a false impression. The overwhelming emphasis on the parents—“It doesn’t take a village; it takes a father” (p. 37), and “every effort of the church should be to *equip* the parents” (p. 159)—might lead to the conclusion that the church has little role in the lives of our children apart from equipping the parents to minister to them. Our emphasis becomes our theology, and the emphasis here often sounds more like the family-integrated model than the family-equipping model. That of course is not the intent of the editors.

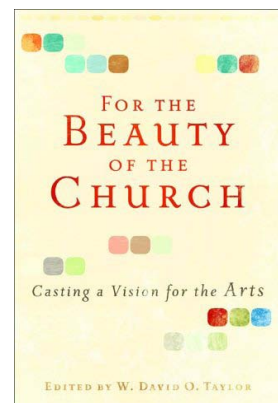
The primary value, then, of *Trained in the Fear of God* is in the theoretical foundation that it provides, a foundation that needs to be supplemented by books like [*Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples*](#) and [*Perspectives on Family Ministry: Three Views*](#). And yet, it is helpful in itself—it continues a much-needed conversation about the partnership of the local congregation and parents, giving historical perspective to that conversation; it reminds parents that they are the primary disciple-makers of their children; and it charges the church to come alongside the parents and assist in that endeavor. All good things!

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W. David O. Taylor, ed. [*For the Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts*](#). Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. 208 pp. \$15.99.

With *For the Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts*, editor and contributor W. David O. Taylor has brought together a number of leading voices in the discussion on the interplay between the church and the arts. This book is the fruit of a 2008 conference where artists, pastors, and theologians gathered together to consider the church’s relationship to the arts. As such, this volume captures something of the energy that is to be found running through this exciting, important conversation. And in the same way, it puts on display the tensions, difficulties, and remaining questions that result from the dialogue.

In total, eight contributors offer their thoughts on the church’s need to develop and live out a robust theology of the arts or, in some cases, the artists’ need to root themselves deeply in an ecclesial community. Together, the relatively diverse group of thinkers discusses topics ranging from theological foundations to practical dos and don’ts, from arts patronage to arts-pastoring. This broad scope of subject matter makes it a



helpful, perspective-enlarging read for those who find themselves working in pulpits, art studios, and all the places in between.

The stated goal of the collection is “to inspire the church, in its life and mission, with an expansive vision for the arts” and to redress the deficiency of “a comprehensive, systematic, integrating, and grounding vision.” Taylor and the other contributors, mostly of the evangelical Protestant variety, all sense within that tradition the lack of a theology that demonstrates “how art and the church could hold together” (p. 21). The book’s readers, it would seem, will be those who are looking for resources to fill this void. Therefore, the question is whether or not the writers can articulate the kind of sweeping vision at which they (and we) are hoping to arrive.

Following Taylor’s introduction, the book begins with a compelling contribution from Andy Crouch: “The Gospel: How Is Art a Gift, a Calling, and an Obedience?” While he does not spend much time talking about the gospel itself, which some readers will find disconcerting, he does draw out some interesting implications of the gospel for our understanding of art. Crouch argues that “art” is another way of talking about “those aspects of culture that cannot be reduced to utility” (p. 36). In other words, art is the stuff of life that cannot be defined in terms of its “usefulness.” Similarly “useless” in light of God’s grace to us in the gospel are our works, prayer, and worship: “What if we no longer have to offer a sacrifice that might waft up into [God’s] nostrils—what if he himself has taken the initiative, become the sacrifice, torn the temple veil? What is left but gloriously unuseful prayer and praise” (p. 39). Note that he is not stripping these things of their value, or calling them unimportant: he is attempting to free worship, prayer, and ultimately the Christian life from the bonds of utility and production. If it is true that Christians are defined primarily not by what they do but by what has been done for them, then we will be a people characterized by a comfortability with the unuseful, including the arts.

Chapter two finds John D. Witvliet offering a helpful meditation on how the arts might fit into and serve the corporate worship of the church. Readers will certainly have differences of opinion with Witvliet on the specifics, but the implicit distinction he works with between the corporate worship of the church and other potentially church-sanctioned venues is very important. The waters of the church-arts debate are often muddled when artists and pastors clash over what is to be “allowed” in the corporate worship of the church. A distinction between the institutional and organic church (like the one made by Abraham Kuyper, articulated clearly by Tim Keller in *Generous Justice*) can help to create spaces wherein the church can support a variety of arts without necessarily introducing them into Sunday worship. For example, a church can be very excited about displaying the work of a painter at a “Night of the Arts,” or on the walls of their facility, without introducing the act of painting into the corporate worship service.

Lauren Winner and Eugene Peterson both take a more narrational approach to some aspect of the arts. In her characteristic style, Winner leads the reader through the thought process (and actual process) behind spending a significant amount of money on a piece of artwork. The questions she asks (and is asked) open up a new way for individual Christians to think about supporting the arts. Peterson’s chapter on “How Artists Shape Pastoral Identity” skillfully weaves together personal and biblical narrative to make the case that “pastors need artists” (p. 97) in order to keep them from calloused overfamiliarity with the riches of God’s glory in salvation.

The next three chapters focus on artists in particular, asking questions like, What is an artist? How do you pastor an artist? What does healthy (or unhealthy) art in the church look like? Pastors will find Joshua Banner’s chapter on “Nurturing Artists in the Local Church” to be extremely practical and

applicable. His approach includes sage advice on cultivating and critiquing artists. For instance, pastors can help artists to see that glorifying God is not something that happens only when a work of art is finally presented, but that he is also glorified “in the gracious and patient way we engage in the process of artmaking” (p. 141).

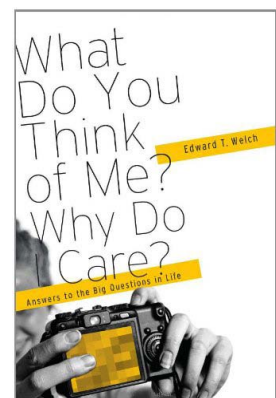
The always thought-provoking Jeremy Begbie closes the body of the book with a chapter on a vision for the future relationship between the church and the arts. He suggests that we must not develop our vision primarily by projecting from our present into the future, but that we must seek to project from God’s promised future into our present. He makes the argument from Rev 21–22. This is similar to the distinction that can be made between a naïve, future-oriented, imaginative extrapolation and real biblical hope, which Peter describes as a living hope, an inheritance already made available in Christ. Only when our art aims at and is shaped by that future will the seemingly dissonant melodies of art and church meet in harmony.

Numerous critiques could be leveled, but only one bears mentioning here. There is no question that *For the Beauty of the Church* is a significant contribution to the ongoing discussion on the church and the arts. It is easily recommended to those who are a part of this conversation, as well as to those who would rather not be a part of the conversation. However, I would argue that it does not meet its goal of presenting the kind of grounding, expansive, systematic vision for which it reaches, and this is largely because it lacks an explicit center. In short, though the book begins with a chapter on “The Gospel,” throughout, and even in the first chapter, the gospel is largely assumed. The challenge for Taylor and others who continue to work on similar projects in the future will be to take the fruit of these labors and show how the church’s relationship to the arts is explicitly shaped by the gospel, the person and work of Christ, and a thick understanding of what God is doing in redemptive-history. Of course, this assumes that the dialogue must continue, which further necessitates an eagerness among pastors to help artists make meaningful connections between their art and the rhythms of redemption. To the extent that this book holds out this tension and demands a developing discourse, it is to be heartily recommended.

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Edward T. Welch. *What Do You Think of Me? Why Do I Care? Answers to the Big Questions in Life*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2011. 149 pp. \$12.99.

Ed Welch brings to a topic and a particular age-group the Biblical Counseling methodology for which he is known. Following the counseling model of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF), Welch, a counselor and faculty member there, goes after the idol of the approval of man in order to expose the heart-struggle of inflating the fear of man and undervaluing the fear of God in the life of a Christian. This interactive book focuses on persons ages 15–25 and is more narrative than didactic in style. Rather than focusing on simply changing thought or behavior, Welch tackles this issue by focusing on the heart.



The first few chapters discuss the problem of overvaluing the need of human approval and how it is an epidemic across the lifespan. Next he discusses how this issue relates to the heart of a person by exposing that fear of man is an issue of misplaced worship. He then structures the remainder of the book upon three questions: “Who Is God?”, “Who Am I?”, and “Who Are They?” This structure allows Welch to apply a biblical understanding of the character and nature of God, a biblical anthropology, and an understanding of who other people are to the issue.

Even though the book has a particular audience in mind, it would be beneficial for anyone wanting to fight against the fear of man. Some primary uses for the book would be counselors wanting an assignment for young adult counselees, student and family ministers wanting a resource for those they are seeking to shepherd, and even parents wanting their teenagers to work through a biblically based resource on the topic. The book lends itself to individual use given its conversational style, but could also be used in small-group formats.

This work brings the approach of Biblical Counseling to a younger population. However, even though this resource does fit within the CCEF Biblical Counseling paradigm, it would not likely be the first book to recommend to someone seeking to understand the biblical counseling model in general. Welch gives good examples in each section, but as the target audience ranges from age 15 to 25, some examples may be less received by one particular subset over another given the diversity of development between those ages. Nevertheless, any reader could glean something from each section.

Welch uses the overarching biblical narrative to discuss the three questions upon which he structures the book. This provides for a big-picture understanding of the topic against the backdrop of Scripture. In his chapter entitled “God Is Holy,” he might have added a small description of God’s being separate from sin, though the lack of this inclusion does not make the chapter ineffective. In fact the imagery he later uses is helpful when he discusses walking through life “with your shoes off” (p. 99), borrowing from the story of Moses and the burning bush.

Welch’s book is a useful, wise, and Bible-rich resource for believers, counselors, pastors, and parents alike. It is bathed in the gospel of grace and its heart-transforming message. Welch continues to strengthen the counseling and ministry world with his writing, and this one is worth having on the shelf.

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Fred G. Zaspel. *Warfield on the Christian Life: Living in Light of the Gospel*. Theologians on the Christian Life. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 236 pp. \$17.99.

This volume is another excellent contribution from Fred Zaspel on B. B. Warfield, and it also serves as the inaugural volume in Crossway's new series, Theologians on the Christian Life, edited by Stephen Nichols and Justin Taylor. The next volume scheduled for release is *Francis Schaeffer on the Christian Life* (February 2013). (In the interest of full disclosure, I'm under contract to write the volume on John Newton, which was not the case when I agreed to write this review.) I am drawn to this new series because it promises to help a broad cross-section of Christian leaders and Christian lay-readers get introduced to a number of the more intimidating and significant theologians in church history. B. B. Warfield is an excellent starting point.

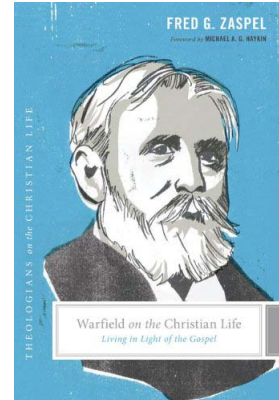
Warfield was a voluminous writer, and harnessing all of his works is not an easy task. Fred Zaspel is clearly up to the challenge. His skill in bringing Warfield's writings together is especially well-reflected in the sections of the book where he writes micro-synthesis paragraphs—that is, paragraphs that draw from many different sources and synthesize a particular theme with great brevity (see p. 67). Zaspel digests themes particularly well, and he uses just enough direct quotes from Warfield to give the reader Warfield's flavor. The balance between direct quote and summary digest is very good.

This book is about sanctification, and one of the particular strengths of this volume—indeed one of the strengths of Warfield himself—is the dual emphasis on both the doctrines of the gospel (the work of Christ) and of the Savior (the person of Christ) in sanctification.

First, Warfield understood that the Christian life cannot be lived successfully without doctrine. In Zaspel's words, doctrine is "the stuff of the Christian life" (p. 39). "The entirety of the Christian life and experience is our response to revealed truth" (p. 38). And much of this book lays out foundational "stuff" for that pursuit (inerrancy of Scripture, deity of Christ, reconciliation, regeneration, conversion, justification, etc.). Indeed, some readers may grow a little anxious that a full-fledged theology of sanctification is postponed until page 99.

Second, and perhaps easier to neglect, the Christian life requires that we focus on the person of Christ. Warfield has left us with brilliant studies of the maturity of Christ on earth and of his emotional life. Zaspel writes, "Warfield's heart beat hot for Christ" (p. 33). Throughout the book, both of these strands of Christ's work and person run concurrently. In this way, the Christian life is both driven by doctrine and focused on Christ. We cannot take our eyes off either. They are inseparable. Zaspel closes the book with perhaps the best summary of this when he writes, "Warfield's point in all this is not to articulate certain points of doctrine, but by this to encourage us, his readers, to live in light of the glory that awaits us. Our life here is lived in Christ, for Christ, by Christ, and in view of Christ and the glory that shall be ours when we are with him" (p. 225). The Christian life must be lived with a constant eye on the person of the Savior. Perhaps the best chapter in the book—chapter 12, "Looking to Jesus: Our Model and Forerunner" (pp. 143–61)—is an especially beautiful "adoring gaze" at the Savior's person and glory.

I can find little disagreement with what Zaspel writes in this book. He is clear and concise in his points, and his words are sharp. He understands Warfield very well. And I could write many paragraphs



on the strengths of this book. If I have a point of criticism it is in what Zaspel leaves *unsaid*—and given the nature of this project I know a lot of what Warfield wrote about sanctification must, by necessity, be left unsaid. Still, at a few places I think Warfield’s further contributions to the topic of sanctification could have been helpful, and particularly in two areas.

First is over the nature of our struggle against sin. As Warfield well understood, God is utterly *for us* and entirely *against our sin* at the same time. Sanctification is nothing less than being enlisted into God’s army to fight God’s war against our indwelling sin. Here’s how Warfield says it:

The Christian life on earth is a conflict with [indwelling] sin. And therein is the dreadfulness of our situation on earth displayed. But we are not left to fight the battle alone. The Christian life is a conflict of God—not of us—with sin. And therein is the joy and glory of our situation on earth manifested. As sinners we are in terrible plight. As the servants of God, fighting His battle, we are in glorious case. (*Faith and Life* [London, 1916], 202)

I find this point to be encouraging, affirming of my position in Christ, stimulating of my meditation about God, and motivating in my struggle against sin. Warfield’s point about the God-for-us-ness of the Christian struggle against sin is critical. In our personal sanctification, we are taken up into a common cause; with God, we battle against the sin we find yet in us. I did not see that Zaspel makes this point in the book.

Second, this book offers readers who are experiencing suffering and trials little more than a call for patient endurance (pp. 70–71, 220). Trials are good for the Christian; therefore they are to be endured in the moment, and we are to endure them by looking to the Savior. These are all true and helpful points Zaspel makes. But Warfield offers us more than endurance; he encourages us to give thanks *for the trial* and to give thanks *in the trial*. This is what Warfield calls “the marvel of the Christian life”:

Here is the marvel of the Christian life. Not patience in afflictions merely, but thankfulness for them, says Adolph Monod, is our duty, nay, our privilege. Exult in joy over them, cries Paul; rejoice in them because we recognize in them but the “growing-pains” by which we are attaining “unto a full-grown man—unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of man in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but dealing truly in love, may grow up *in all things* into Him which is the Head, even Christ.” (*The Power of God Unto Salvation* [Philadelphia, 1903], 88–89)

Trials in the Christian life bring eternal benefit and value, and so we can thank God for the trials even as we experience them. That certainly is a marvel of the Christian life and worthy of such strong language by Warfield. Again, I think this is a point that can press the doctrine of God’s sovereign goodness into the Christian life.

On either of these last two points, one could say I’m being nit-picky to suggest that Zaspel should have included these additional details. Perhaps. I choose these examples because Warfield himself chose to frame the points with strong language. Nevertheless, it is very clear that Zaspel knows Warfield well. (That the word *joy* appears over 70 times in this book illustrates the point well enough!) In the end, I highly commend this book, with the encouragement that once you finish it, you move to Zaspel’s other outstanding work, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

After you have read both of these excellent introductions to Warfield, you are ready to go one step further: to pick up and read Warfield himself and make a lifetime of further discoveries.

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— MISSION AND CULTURE —

Leroy Barber. *Everyday Missions: How Ordinary People Can Change the World*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012. 156 pp. \$15.00.

Youth in our age are at great risk of living listless and wandering lives. Today's norm seems to be either a future of living with their parents for years after they could be pursuing a healthy independency or else adrift in a job market that does not seem to offer the fulfillment they desire even if it does provide the finances. Today's youth need a vision of using their life for more.

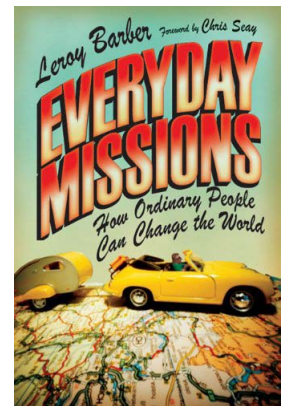
In *Everyday Missions*, Leroy Barber sets out to provide just that.

Barber shares many inspiring stories. For example, Juan and Marcheeta in Argentina used their home as a community center in an impoverished neighborhood (pp. 25–28); Tom and Mary voluntarily served for a year in an inner city context (pp. 37–39); Rob helped his employees find significance in their janitorial workplace (pp. 78–80); and Clay lived a homeless life for a weekend (pp. 100–102). And Barber weaves his own engaging story throughout. These lives devoted to serving others are encouraging and uplifting. They frame a dynamic picture of the type of person that today's youth could aspire to be—a type of humble and loving person actively working for the good of those around them. Indeed, much of *Everyday Missions* points to the kind of “ordinary radicals” Shane Claiborne called for in his well-known and similar 2006 publication, *The Irresistible Revolution*. Adding to helpful personal anecdotes, Barber also presents his vision through the lens of biblical characters like Moses, David, and Esther.

Distilling the story-telling into the thesis, Barber claims that today's youth have “a desperation to be involved in something that connects us to God” (p. 12) and the reason for that desperation is that without God we are ordinary and lack significance, which can lead to breakdown (p. 34). So to avoid breakdown we are encouraged to experience God because, “We inhale God, and we exhale significance” (p. 13). Experiencing God happens when we do something: “This is the call—the moment when you realize God has chosen you for some work” (p. 47).

Essentially, in statement and in story, *Everyday Missions* champions the solution for the mundane life as finding personal significance by connecting with God through engaging in a variety of activities that are abnormal to twenty-first-century suburban Westerners.

Certainly this is a noble call, and one that is written in way that will be palatable to many young people—perhaps particularly useful for new believers or seekers who could be more attracted to the mission of Christianity as an entry point to discipleship rather than a salvation experience.



And yet on that point we need to linger. Shouldn't we consider it to be something other than distinctly *Christian* mission if proclaiming charity fails to emphasize Jesus Christ? Should Christians really invite someone to participate in good works and point to those actions as the provider of our lifelong desire for significance? Do we risk a hamstrung disciple if we advocate only to the implications of the gospel without emphasizing its core components?

The lives Barber shared about reminded me of a good friend I work with. Helping with our organization to deliver tutoring to slum children, Adiyat (not his real name) is a favorite volunteer among the staff and kids. His devotion exhibits a testimony of bucking the culture of discrimination that keeps many of his peers from serving the "least of these" among them. This kind of work is a good example of what *Everyday Missions* envisions as normative for Christian witness.

However, my friend Adiyat is a Sikh, a follower of the Ten Gurus (teachers). For a Sikh, the ultimate aim is to discipline one's thoughts and actions so that lust, anger, greed, materialism, and ego are dispelled and the soul is united with the One Immortal Being.

My fear is that, were Adiyat to read *Everyday Missions*, he would find much that confirmed the worthiness of his daily life and little that entered his worldview and pointed him towards the Savior.

The pursuits Barber points to as affording an extraordinary life are drawn exclusively from the realm of social justice, such as working for racial reconciliation (ch. 8) or volunteering for secular organizations like Teach For America and Americorps—both of these organizations unfortunately described as those which in themselves inspire "young people by pointing them to the extraordinary purposes God has for them" (p. 18). Throughout the book the place of the local church in the world is also somewhat diminished (ignored?), and the Great Commission of Matt 28 goes unmentioned. Much more room is given to introducing a quote from Wikipedia (p. 83) than to explaining the gospel that both saves from sin and calls believers to journey together on mission.

Since JFK formed the Peace Corps in 1961 (and surely long before that) investment by youth in the social issues of our time has been a matter of public discussion. Our youth need to know what is it that is so unique about *Christian* missions. What sets a Christian aid worker apart from a Sikh aid worker? Does Christian mission involve only social action, or does it also contain a message or truth to be proclaimed? Unfortunately, these questions and others remain unanswered in *Everyday Missions*.

The limited scope of Barber's presentation of mission practice and absent articulation of gospel-motivations leave me concerned the book could aid and abet a view of Christian missions that makes social justice an end in itself.

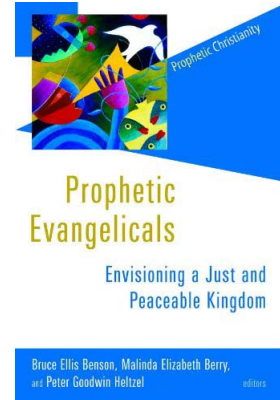
We need resources that will call the Adiyats to become the Pauls, not books that will make him feel comfortable doing what he is doing without Christ. We need resources that call youth to Christian mission that embraces full participation in the apostolic ambition for the nations to worship and serve Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We need resources that show that this work is accomplished through self-denying workers who labor not for their own significance, but for the joy set before them in eternity.

By themselves, ordinary people can't change the world, but if they are changed by the grace found in Jesus, they can participate in spreading the kingdom of the God whose everyday mission is making all things new.

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South Asia

Bruce Ellis Benson, Malinda Elizabeth Berry, and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds. *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. vi + 219 pp. £23.00/\$35.00.

In this inaugural volume of the Prophetic Christianity series, diverse voices from across the theological spectrum present a vision for taking the gospel of Jesus Christ seriously. For that is what professing evangelicals are, or at least who they claim to be: people fully committed to the gospel. Tragically, however, evangelicals have at times reduced the gospel to individual salvation, corrupted the gospel through alliance with political agendas, and contradicted the gospel through practices and lifestyles of colonialism, racism, and consumerism. Others have understood and demonstrated a full-orbed gospel, the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and the King of the universe who forgives sins, inaugurates a peaceful kingdom, and makes all things new by his Spirit. While the claim to the term “evangelical” is held by a number of individuals, and is even viewed as unhelpful by some, the contributors to this volume claim the title *Prophetic Evangelicals* because of their commitment to a gospel that challenges the powers of this world, bringing the healing, freedom and reconciliation of *shalom* and empowering the people of God to live for justice. Some readers still may question, however, whether every contribution in this volume can be properly designated as “evangelical.” Would it have been better for the editors to drop the evangelical label and simply give this book the title *Prophetic Christians* to match the series title? We will return to this question after offering a summary of how the book portrays prophetic evangelicals (PE).



In the first three chapters, the editors provide an introduction to PE and their commitment to a “just and peaceable kingdom.” They identify several roots and catalysts for PE including the new evangelicalism of the 1950s and its break from fundamentalism, the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and key coalitions and documents of the 1970s fusing personal and social transformation, including the Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern (1973) and the Lausanne Covenant (1974). Key figures for the new generation of PE include Ron Sider, John Perkins, Jim Wallis, Karl Barth, and John Howard Yoder, but if PE claimed a patron saint, it would be Martin Luther King Jr. Each contributor to this volume begins their thematic essay with a personal reflection on their experience within evangelicalism. Many admit to being burned by an evangelicalism where faith was either privatized or politicized. As a result, some identify as “recovering” evangelicals, having tried the full gamut of evangelical-liberal options and found the entire spectrum wanting. What unites these essays, therefore, is a desire to articulate a more world-encompassing, boundary-shattering, justice-pursuing expression of evangelical faith and practice. Rather than summarizing each contribution individually, it may be more beneficial to delineate four key characteristics of PE emphasized throughout the book, drawing on examples from individual essays along the way.

First, *PE embrace a missional/liberationist logic*. The argument is that if Jesus came to proclaim and demonstrate liberty for the oppressed (Luke 4), then followers of Jesus have the same mission. To participate in this mission means to fight against injustice and fight for liberation of the oppressed. PE argue that since God is on the side of the “least,” the church of God should be a people who “embody an ethic of radical neighbor love with particular focus on the least of these” (p. 48). As such, PE understand mission to include the *proclamation* of the gospel and the *demonstration* of the gospel through lifestyles of liberation. Whether in the area of racial reconciliation (John Franke), military torture (David Gushee),

or the Native American struggle (Raymond Aldred), these authors believe the gospel *must* lead to embodying its radical implications for freedom, justice, and reconciliation in every area of life.

Second, *PE pursue communal/collaborative practice*. Individuals are called to participate in God's liberating mission, but they do so as members of God's people. As Craig Boesel observes in his essay on News, the individualism rampant in some evangelical circles blinds people to the liberationist logic of the gospel (p. 100). If the gospel is merely about eternal life for saved individuals, then the economic, social, and political implications of the gospel are eclipsed. PE are also critical of the perspective popularized by Stanley Hauerwas that the church exists just to be the church, a unique community within secular culture (p. 26). While affirming the church's uniqueness, PE are adamant that the church is unique for the sake of its mission to the world. The collaborative practices of the church do not merely maintain faithful presence in the world: they serve the common good and contribute to the triumph of *shalom* over broken chaos.

Third, *PE share a shalom vision*. In his compelling essay on Shalom, David Gushee explains that *shalom* is the Hebrew word for peace as the opposite of violence and war, but it means much more. Shalom is everything God intended for his good creation: the triumph of life, the rebuilding of inclusive community, abundance instead of scarcity, healing of brokenness, holistic delight, and joyful celebration (pp. 66-71). As Cherith Fee Nordling emphasizes, the resurrection of Jesus' humanity makes shalom possible, as he sends his Spirit to empower the church to embody the new creation (pp. 180-81). The vision and hope of complete shalom—which Telford Work maintains is a trinitarian vision (p. 200)—drives the church's mission and communal practice. Shalom is the “just and peaceable kingdom” in which the church is invited to improvise.

Fourth, *PE employ an improvisational method*. If redemption is a drama, then Jesus performs the lead role in the drama and the church is invited to participate by improvising on the pattern of his masterful improvisation (p. 35). This metaphor has several benefits. It connects our contemporary situation with the entire biblical drama, showing how our scene fits with the others. As such, it reminds us that Jesus has performed the most important role, and we are primarily improvising *witnesses* to his performance, as Christian Winn rightly emphasizes (pp. 91-95). In addition, improvisation highlights the various forms of kingdom mission in different cultures. Improvising a just and peaceable kingdom is an intercultural enterprise, and there is no script (pp. 42-43). That does not mean that PE eschew all principles and standards, but that these principles and standards become more colorful in the process of collaboratively improvising the struggle for justice in particular contexts. Does that imply, as Helene Slessarev-Jamir suggests in her essay on Justice, that the Virgin of Guadalupe can rightly bring healing and comfort to Mexican immigrants (p. 85)? This is one example of where a contribution stretches the character of what may be deemed “evangelical” to a breaking point. Having spent a year living and working in Mexico, the sad fact is that the Virgin of Guadalupe does not merely bring comfort to the downtrodden; she is actually adored and worshipped. Insofar as being evangelical means that one's trust for salvation and worship is directed to Christ alone, then surely this suggestion is no evangelical one.

This leads to the most prominent concern with the book, namely, that some particular perspectives represented in the book, like the one just mentioned, cannot be deemed evangelical in either a historical or a theological sense. Therefore, as suggested already, it may have been better for the editors to use the title *Prophetic Christians*, leaving the evangelical association alone. Nevertheless, this volume contains a number of brilliant essays through which evangelicals should be both challenged and enriched, inasmuch as they contain biblical and timely insights. This is the case especially with those

essays that demonstrate how to bring together and simultaneously emphasize theological orthodoxy and social engagement, personal reconciliation and cosmic renewal, the life to come and life in the present, individual piety and communal practice. One of the most enriching elements of these chapters is their ability to mix personal stories with scholarly reflection, and refusing to be captured by false dichotomies. Overall, the book also gives readers a necessary sense of urgency: if the gospel of Jesus is true, then we have much to celebrate and much to do. Having received our roles in the kingdom drama, it's time to improvise for justice with Spirit-empowered creativity.

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John Corrie and Cathy Ross, eds. *Mission in Context: Explorations Inspired by J. Andrew Kirk*. Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. xxii + 252 pp. £50.00/\$99.95.

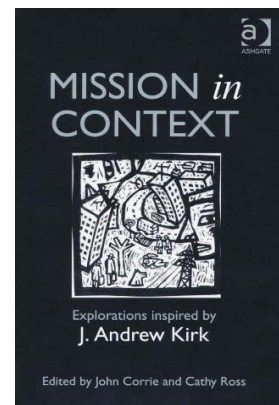
Assembled by John Corrie of Trinity College Bristol and Cathy Ross of Ripon College Cuddesdon, this volume is a *Festschrift* celebrating the teaching and writing ministry of one of the second half of the twentieth-century's leading missiologists, J. Andrew Kirk.

With a foreword by Christopher J. H. Wright, who acknowledged Kirk's influence for what later flowered into his book *The Mission of God* (p. xvi), this collected volume hosts essay contributions from leading missiologists around the world who in one way or another found themselves inspired by Kirk, mostly through personal interaction, but also perhaps most notably for his best known work, *What Is Mission? Some Theological Explorations* (1999), or its sequel, *Mission Under Scrutiny: Confronting Contemporary Challenges* (2006).

While bringing together the "who's who" in contemporary missiology, this compilation volume is beautifully laid out in four parts addressing these broad subjects: (1) biographically, Kirk's life and work; (2) the question of the nature of mission; (3) truth and pluralism; and (4) issues related to the contemporary state of mission, education, and religion.

The first part of the book begins with Cathy Ross's survey of Kirk's work (ch. 1). This gives way to a very personal chronological presentation of Kirk's early life, academic studies, missionary service in Argentina and Latin America, along with his work back in the UK (London and Birmingham) and around the world. This presentation in chapter 2 is provided by Daniel Kirk, Andrew's eldest son, himself a missionary in Viña del Mar, Chile. In chapter 3, J. Samuel Escobar concludes the book's first section with retrospective reflections on Kirk's contribution to the Latin American scene during a time of significant tension and turmoil for Latin America, working as an evangelical and with the Latin American Theological Fraternity (founded by Escobar, Rene Padilla, and Kirk) when Liberation Theology had become the most significant theological movement in Latin America.

Part Two hosts essays (chs. 4–7) from Padilla, Corrie, Peter Penner, and Hwa Yung, each of which in various ways address hermeneutical issues related to evangelical approaches to Scripture and the contextualization of the gospel.



Part Three then contains essays focused on perspectival truth-bearing in a postmodern situation (Parush Parushev, ch. 8) and the nature of Christian truth-claims in a pluralistic world (Vinoth Ramachandra, ch. 11). It also includes an essay working through challenges amidst the present European intercultural and inter-religious dialogue culture (Darrell Jackson, ch. 10) and an encouraging essay by Andrew Walls on the nature of worldviews and the opportunity for theological reflection to shape various Christian worldviews that have often remained underdeveloped theologically (ch. 11).

Part Four begins with Wilbert Shenk's interesting account of a working project funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts in the 1990s that Kirk was part of. This project flowed out of the British Gospel and Our Culture Programme and aimed to develop "A Missiology of Western Culture." It met with significant interest and spawned other networks while it produced quite uneven research from its different subsets. While producing a series of short books published by Trinity Press International, what Shenk calls a "pioneering effort" and remaining model in the field is the volume edited by Kirk and Kevin Vanhoozer, *To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge* (Orbis, 1999).

The late David Kettle offers an essay on the nature of freedom and significance of tacit faith commitment, pairing Andrew's work with Lesslie Newbigin's as over against the secular liberal claim to neutrality (ch. 13). In chapter 14, Alan Kreider draws from patristic sources after Constantine—from Basil of Caesarea and Ambrose of Milan, each writing for the upper classes—in order to chart how each reflected on the acts of war and violence in a society. As Kreider reads it, these missionary works had long-lasting consequences in the West, something Andrew Kirk was quick to note.

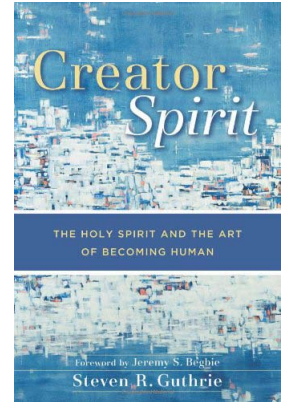
In chapter 16, Pete Kuzmic correlates some of Kirk's work with contemporary concerns in Eastern Europe after Communism. And in chapter 17, Allan Anderson reflects on features inherent to Pentecostal theology and their relevance for contemporary mission.

This volume is a very welcome contribution to a number of discussions related to somewhat recent missionary theology and the various developments therein. The contributors have been significant voices, along with Kirk, in important conversations surrounding the church's mission in the world today. And there is no surprise about the subject matter that each author writes on, each working in his or her area of expertise, and offering very little by way of constructive academic, missional engagement. A much more constructive and explorative approach to the contemporary state of mission theology could probably be better found in the book flowing from the 2011 Wheaton College Theology conference, edited by Jeffrey P. Greenman and Gene L. Green, *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective: Exploring the Contextual Nature of Theology and Mission* (IVP, 2012). This more constructive volume contains a couple essays by some of the same contributors to this *Festschrift*. And yet the present volume is a fantastic collection assembling all these leading missiologists together to honor Andrew. Of particular interest to the field of missiology will be how Kirk is closely tied to each of the topics presented in the seventeen chapters. However, many who would enjoy this book at present simply will not be able to afford it at its current price-listing. Meanwhile, surely all theological libraries (in the West, at least) keeping up with work on late twentieth-century evangelical mission theology should possess this volume until it is more readily available as an affordable paperback edition, making it more easily accessible for others thinking through Andrew Kirk's legacy to contemporary missiology.

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Stephen R. Guthrie. *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011. 222 pp. £14.99/\$25.00.

In this work Guthrie explores the interface between art, beauty, and spirit or what Jeremy S. Begbie in the foreword rightly calls ‘foggy territory’. More specifically, he treats the relation between the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) and aesthetics. In other words, as the author correctly points out, his work is not a general systematic theology of the Holy Spirit. You will not find out from this work whether *filioque* is to be embraced or rejected for example (p. xviii). His aim is to provide a conversation facilitator for both theological students and arts students to enable an intelligent, Christian conversation concerning theological anthropology, pneumatology, and aesthetics, done within a biblically informed eschatological frame of reference. His thesis is that the Holy Spirit makes us truly human (‘the humanizing Spirit’) and that being truly human involves the arts. In the introduction Guthrie sets out his project in a programmatic way:



In creation, the Spirit is the breath of God that animates the dust of the ground and creates a living human being. Similarly, in the coming of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is *the incarnating Spirit*. It is by the Spirit that the eternal Word of God becomes truly and fully human. The Spirit likewise rests upon and empowers the humanity of Jesus, and so we call him the Christ, the Messiah—that is, the one anointed with the Spirit. Finally, in the work of redemption and consummation, the Holy Spirit is *the re-humanizing Spirit*. The Spirit is poured out on God’s people, so that by the Spirit they may become truly and fully human, recreated in the Image of the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. (p. xvi, emphasis in original)

As I read this I was reminded of Irenaeus’s words: ‘The glory of God is humanity fully alive’ (*Against Heresies* 4.34.5–7). To give just a few examples from the work itself, the arts that Guthrie treats cover classical music (e.g., Beethoven), jazz (e.g., Coltrane), rock (e.g., Van Halen), literature (e.g., Rilke), and the visual arts (e.g., Francis Bacon). He draws on philosophers past and present (e.g., Aristotle and Wolterstorff) and theologians past and present (e.g., Athanasius especially, Calvin and von Balthasar). Regarding Calvin, the work would have benefitted with some engagement with Calvin’s provocative statement in the *Institutes* that argues that to despise the arts, sciences, and crafts of humanity is to dishonor the Holy Spirit (see II:II:14–18). The book consists of a total of twelve chapters arranged in three parts. After the introduction, Guthrie explores ‘The Making of the Human’ in Part 1, ‘The Spirit’s Making and Ours’ in Part 2, and in Part 3, ‘A World Remade.’ Finally there is an epilogue: ‘The Museum of Spirituality.’

Guthrie carries out his project with great deftness, erudition, depth of scholarly engagement, biblical and theological insight, and respect for Scripture. With regard to Scripture, when he develops ‘A Christian Theological Framework for Artistic Inspiration,’ he develops his vision through a reading of Ps 104 (pp. 141–45). Pleasingly, Scripture references abound throughout this book. On the matter of biblical and theological insights, I found his treatment of the Ephesian text, ‘Be filled with the Spirit,’ to be helpfully refreshing (pp. 78–82). He is aware of the debate as to whether the participles of Eph 5:18–21 are participles of result or participles of means. Significantly, this text—one long sentence in Greek—includes a reference to ‘songs, hymns and spiritual songs.’ On either view of the participle question, as

Guthrie points out, there is a strong connection between the filling of the Spirit and the singing of the community: ‘When the church sings together, it announces the new community the Spirit has created in Christ.’ The gathering then ‘would have heard a single melody arising from the mouths of men and women, Jews and Greeks, slave and free. If the church is the new humanity, then here is its voice.’ Thanks to Guthrie I have a renewed appreciation of the congregational singing and its importance.

Another example of Guthrie’s keen biblical and theological insight is found in his examination of the nature of discernment. He argues, ‘The work of God’s Spirit is to restore sight: to allow human beings to see truly, no longer blinded by ideology and priestcraft’ (p. 153). He sees a parallel between the artist’s ability to see truly and Christian discernment. He offers a kind of virtue epistemology. To quote P. T. Forsyth, ‘the truth we see depends upon the man [or woman] we are.’ Note it is not that truth depends upon us but what truth we are able to see does. Guthrie contends, ‘We come to know the Spirit’s leading by immersing ourselves in his narrative, becoming familiar with his way and words among his people’ (p. 167). Discernment reframes stories so that their true nature can be seen. He uses Nathan’s parabolic reframing of the story of David’s adultery to make his point: ‘Nathan offers David “a reseeing” of his situation’ (p. 171). Guthrie maintains that Jesus does the same with the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–37 (p. 172). Guthrie then seeks to show how three artists exhibit ‘seeing truly’. One is a dancer (Patricia Cross), one a cabinet maker and woodworker (Chris Barber), and finally a photographer (Sarah Bennett). Very stimulating! Even so, the criteriology that Guthrie offers would be even stronger if his notion of discernment had some interaction with the classic Pauline text on discernment of 1 Thess 5:19–21 in which the notion of testing, the Holy Spirit, good and evil are brought into meaningful nexus.

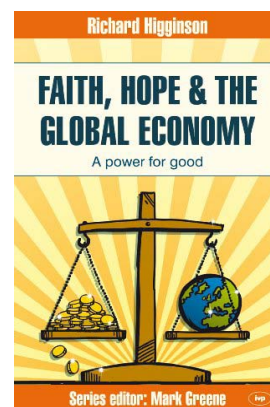
All in all, a fine book on a difficult subject!

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Richard Higginson. *Faith, Hope and the Global Economy: A Power for Good*. Nottingham, UK: IVP, 2012. 253 pp. £9.99.

After the declining winter of secularism, Richard Higginson, director of the Faith in Business project at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, provides an invigorating reminder of the potential of faith, hope, and love as avenues of healing and inspiration to a hurting (and often hurtful) economy. Properly applied to business, Christianity ‘stimulates enterprise, reduces poverty, promotes integrity, encourages sustainability and fosters discipleship’ (p. 13).

Undergirded by the “inaugurated eschatology” of Jürgen Moltmann, the book interweaves a Protestant work ethic with present-day implications of the ultimate Christian hope. Contrary to the one-sided claims of the so-called prosperity gospel and of some anti-capitalist theologies, and in opposition to the Western secular-sacred divide—all of which leave Christians ill-equipped for God-honoring lives of discipleship from Monday to Saturday—Higginson is convinced that entrepreneurship and work are actually God-imaging attributes to be gladly pursued. By honoring its



Sabbatical provisos, the economic story of the Bible provides a paradigm of what good work could look like and accomplish.

The book is built on the conviction that in being people of integrity, vision, passion, decisiveness, and with a willingness to take risks, human beings emulate God's character. In this way, as long as it is matched by orienting business enterprises towards the social incorporation of the neediest and towards the responsible stewardship of creation, faith can be (and has been) a power for good. Hence Higginson reminds readers that the Christian life is not about operating under the 'conventional business wisdom' but about planting seeds of 'active compassion' (pp. 224–25).

This conviction is developed through the book's core chapters, which echo what the author sees as an ongoing seven-act drama implicit in the whole narrative of Scripture.

The opening act, which Higginson calls 'Launched in hope,' sets the stage for what is to follow, developing a theological framework for work and rest as essential components of the human vocation. By exercising creativity and hope, humans are called to mirror God's own entrepreneurial heart and subdue and steward the earth in his service. And yet things ran riot, as Act II records. Because of human arrogance and collaboration with evil, work has often been distorted to become a force of frustration, alienation, regimentation, and exploitation.

Starting in Gen 12 and moving through the rest of the canon, this contrasts with Acts III through VII, which vividly present several out-workings of God's alternative economics—those entrusted to his people (Israel), and later exemplified in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and consequently exemplified in the 2,000-year ministry of the church. With the eye of a nuanced critic, by dwelling on biblical, historical, and contemporary examples around issues like usury, debt and equity, bribery and corruption, self-sacrifice and executive pay, and the socio-economic incorporation of the marginalized, Higginson presents numerous interesting and inspiring glimpses of the life of shalom that God has intended for creation: prostituted women find hope through social enterprises; bankers are restored from their greed and hence from public disdain; monks devise waterwheels; fair trade improves the conditions of the global South; worker cooperatives are set up as alternatives to impersonal corporate gigantism; microcredit enables those without a chance in the traditional banking industry; corporate managers give up large salaries in favor of more just schemes of profit distribution; and more.

The author ends by assuring that 'all things' done in an obedient discipleship marked by faith, hope, and love will endure into God's ultimate future. Christians are to be encouraged: their work is not in vain. It is, instead, a living sign of the kingdom-coming.

In our cynical age weary of criticism, Higginson offers a constructive critique of a fallen global economy, yet hardly by direct confrontation. Instead, he presents a lucid blend of biblical insights and inspiring examples from the Christian church that serve to illuminate ways forward. So if it is hope, and not doom, which mobilizes people, then this book delivers far more than a single volume can contain. Not only does it avoid both the pessimism and the arrogant triumphalism that marks much of contemporary Christianity, but it wisely and courageously speaks into the core of much of what it means to be human: work itself.

Beyond the need for rephrasing the language of 'developed/ing countries' into that of 'high/low-income countries' and of 'natural resource' into that of 'gift,' one is left with a sense of wanting more in regards to sustainability. Although the author does address the need for resting and for taking satisfaction and pleasure in our labor, the book seems to be built on the assumption that sustainability is a matter of improving production, instead of addressing *consumption*. And to an extent, it is. But there

is hardly any mention of the role of enterprises in advocating for a ‘pull-demand,’ or for encouraging a grateful delight and a sense of ‘enough-ness’ among their customers. In *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*, William Cavanaugh has pointed out that the current problem is not so much our *attachment* to material things, but our *detachment*: the restless discarding of goods and services that stems out of our deep-rooted dissatisfaction. Hence not only does poverty need to be alleviated (as Higginson well-suggests), but the discontent that leads to overconsumption needs attention as well. A word on marketing from a Christian perspective would have been most welcomed.

Considering such caveats, however, the book should be of great value for all who desire integrated lives of discipleship in the workplace. In the eyes of the global consumerism ideology, which has shown signs of being perishing, many of Higginson’s challenges will strike the reader as absurd—as mere ‘foolishness.’ But for people with ears to hear and eyes to see, the summons of this book is nothing but an invitation for workers and entrepreneurs to rely on the very power of God—the only foundation for those who are being saved.

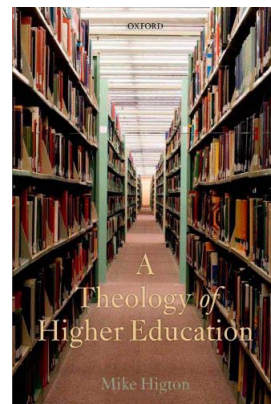
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Mike Higton. *A Theology of Higher Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 284 pp. £75.00/\$150.00.

Christianity and universities have existed in tension. From Tertullian’s, “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?” to Luther’s observation that universities are “the bilge water pool of all heresies, errors, and idolatries,” the history of higher education is often the story of this acrimonious relationship. In *A Theology of Higher Education*, Mike Higton invites a conversation regarding three important questions. First, as a Christian theologian, what is good about universities? Second, what can those who share similar theological commitments do to help universities achieve their noble ends? Finally, what oneness, if any, exists in the universities to a theological voice? The author makes three assumptions: higher education is training in intellectual virtue; there is an inherent sociality in university education; and higher education exists for a common public good (p. 1). Higton states that his focus is *secular* universities—not the creation of alternative Christian universities.

Higton is the Academic Director of the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme and Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter. Higton has previously addressed issues of theology and higher education: *Vulnerable Learning: Towards a Theology of Higher Education* (Cambridge: Grove, 2006); “Can the University and Church Save Each Other,” *Crosscurrents* 55 (2005): 172–183; and “The Research Assessment Exercise as Sin” *Critical Quarterly* 44:4 (2002): 40–45. Higton’s expertise focuses on the work of Hans Frei.

Avoiding the temptation to romanticize a previous golden age of Christian higher education, Higton offers a thoughtful dialogue for readers in a conversational style—at times, humorously prompting them



(including prospective reviewers, p. 191). Following introductory comments, *A Theology of Higher Education* is organized into two distinct parts. Part I develops and nuances the intellectual contributions of three historic European universities: Paris, Berlin, and Oxford. The section concludes with an exploration of selected contemporary theologians who contribute a voice to the intended conversation. The first part is a reflection of what others claim about the university. In Part II, the author shifts to a personal tone and reflects assertions from his own ecclesiastical tradition and university experience.

Part I begins by exploring the development of rational inquiry at Paris as a spiritual devotion. Higton skillfully recounts rationality as something not foreign to Christian thought, but rather birthed in it. His discussion of the three universities is lavishly noted and well-presented. This reviewer found his account of Paris, Berlin, and Oxford to be the highlight of this work, and the supplemental information in his footnotes well worth the read. For the uninitiated, his notes represent the best of the literature and are certainly worth exploring. The University of Berlin, of course, becomes the second landmark in the historical development of higher education. Higton explains the rise of the research university model through German concepts of *Bildung* (self-cultivation) and *Wissenschaft* (rigorous scholarly knowledge). Interestingly to this reviewer, Higton does not discuss *Weltanschauung* (worldview), which would be important for providing conceptual frameworks that inform and explain disciplines. It is at this level that university dialogue occurs as explanations compete for explanatory power. He later tips his hand when he states, “I am not sure I can describe university life in terms of a clash of world views, mostly because I am not convinced that people have world views” (p. 244). Also, discussion of the contribution of the German *Kritik* (critical assessment/method) would have been helpful given its importance to modern university thought.

He concludes his historical treatment with an excellent discussion of the impact of John Henry Newman’s thought (*The Idea of a University*) on Oxford and Dublin. Articulating a unified view of knowledge, Newman’s ideas mitigate against the fragmentary effects of *Wissenschaft*. To readers in the United States, awareness of Berlin and Oxford is critical to understanding the development of American higher education through both the research and liberal arts traditions.

Part I concludes by presenting the contributions of Christian thinkers both inside the secular university and those from outside in distinctively Christian institutions, thus framing Part II of the book with the primary voices that have already engaged the conversation. Most appreciated were the reflections of those who are working for meaningful dialogue within secular structures.

In Part II, Higton offers a model entitled, “An Anglican Theology of Learning.” Readers will be quick to note the recognizable shift to the usage of “I” in this section as Higton’s tone changes from a descriptive voice in Part I to a dialogue attempting to more directly engage his reader. He then explores four aspects of the university by which theologians might fittingly enter into prospective dialogue—Virtuous, Sociable, Good, and Negotiable—concepts that transcend the sacred-secular debate. This second half of the work is largely personal, well-noted, and at times, intensely humorous. This reviewer could not agree more when he notes, “decent coffee is an epistemological issue” (p. 188n36).

The author’s treatment reflects the situation in the UK (e.g., an Anglican theological perspective, ch. 5) and discussion of the Research Excellence Framework (pp. 212–14). American readers will need to translate British realities to the American experience. The second half of the work might provide a context for professors and administrators wishing to engage the questions raised. For example, discussion of apprenticeship is critical when mass education is pushed for financial efficiencies. If the university is sociable, what place is there for distance learning when professors and students are isolated

to their technology? What place is there for academic civility in a culture of declining civil? Is the goal of academic dialogue consensual agreement or non-consensual reciprocity?

This excellent work is unfortunately hampered by the high sticker price that will discourage some in its prospective audience. For a transatlantic perspective, those who appreciate Higton's work might also consider the collaborative and more US-focused study by Jon H. Roberts and James Turner: *The Sacred and the Secular University* (Princeton, 2000).

A Theology of Higher Education is an important contribution in the conversation of the place and relevance of a Christian voice to the university.

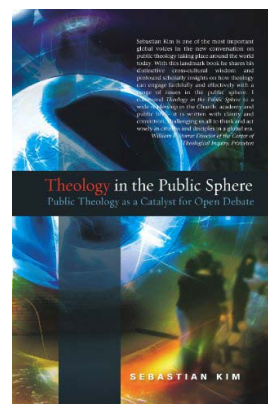
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Sebastian Kim. *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate*. London: SCM, 2011. xi + 260 pp. £40.00/\$64.00.

Written in easily accessible language, Kim's work is about the contours of doing theology in the public sphere in a plural, multicultural, multireligious, and even globalised world. In face of this contemporary reality, the tools of doing theology are humbleness, generosity and dialogue. As a distinct orientation within the wider enterprise of theology, responsible public theology takes to its core the notion of dialogue or conversation. According to Kim's analysis, dialogue/conversation is the only viable option for theology in the public square. He supports this position by exploring certain narratives of public engagement of various theologies from Britain and from the rest of the world.

The meaning and function of public theology is by no means an unequivocally agreed matter. For some, it is an undogmatic engagement with the issues society faces. For others, it amounts to an ecclesial critique of the social, political, economic, moral, etc. dimensions of life. Still others advocate for a total collapse of the artificial chasm between the sacred and the profane, the religious and the secular, the public and the private, the church and the wider society. Kim advocates a dialogical or conversational paradigm in public theology. In Kim's own words, 'Public theology is Christians engaging in dialogue with those outside church circles on various issues of common interest' (p. 3). He identifies conversation to be the key word and a key concept for public theology that underlines its praxis-oriented methodology. Academically, a legitimate question arises about the disciplinary identity and locus of public theology. What makes public theology distinguishable from political and/or liberation theologies?

While acknowledging the context-specific emphases of political and liberation theologies, Kim underscores the methodological distinctiveness of public theology from these two types of theology. He identifies four distinguishing marks of public theology: (1) it attempts to create common ground for conversation on issues in the public sphere; (2) its guiding mechanism is searching for the public meaning of theology and for a theology of public life; (3) it posits itself as a reforming theology instead of a revolutionary one; and (4) major issues in public theology include not only inequality but also the



increased privatisation of religion that resulted in the dominance of the state, the market and the media in the public sphere. These marks amount to taking theology as 'a public activity' (p. 15)

Importantly, Kim takes the Bible seriously as a 'public book'. This is not meant to imply that the Bible addresses all issues in the public sphere. Instead, public theology draws authority and inspiration from the Bible, which has the power to speak to people of different faiths in different social contexts. Ultimately, Kim objects to any idea that the Bible is hermeneutically the exclusive possession of the *ecclesia*. However, how the Bible is read by peoples of different faiths remains unanswered. Yet Kim attempts to show the hermeneutical openness of the Bible in changing contexts by taking the examples of liberation (Latin America), feminist (Africa/Asia), inter-textual (India/S. J. Samartha), and inculturation (Africa). The hermeneutical focus of public theology reminds and challenges its interlocutors to constantly discover, reinterpret, and appropriate the meaning of texts in the plurality of contexts.

The remainder of the book is committed to elucidating how public theology as a practical discipline can be done by taking wide-ranging examples from diverse methodological and concrete contexts. This includes ecocentric theology in which public theology's significance is underlined in its social, creative, and holistic dimensions; how the church is perceived as a public body in the quest for just and authentic community in India; how the church contributed to perceptions of justice and struggles against injustices; exploration into how the churches in Latin America decisively voice against economic injustices; and how public theology can play a role in peace-making by taking the example of the diverse response of the western churches to the Iraq War. The successes and failures of the church in these contexts are indicative, Kim argues, that 'any public theology has to be constantly revised and shaped by new ideas and new situations otherwise it will cease to be an authentic public theology' (p. 170).

Kim's focus on the global significance of public theology does not deter him from looking into his own backyard. His emphasis on the hermeneutical significance of public theology draws him to address such realities as the religio-cultural pluralistic and multicultural society. To this end, he takes the controversial cases of Rowan Williams's lecture on Sharia Law, the Danish cartoon controversy, and the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill in UK. What is of significance in these controversies is the place of secularism and religious life. Kim views that the crux of these controversies is secularism's desire for hegemony to the extent of disrespecting and being intolerant of worldviews other than its own. His point is that churches have the capacity to contribute to common humanity more than secularism would seem to allow. It is within this mutually inclusive and dialogical/conversational dynamic that such notions as freedom of expression, justice, and human rights can be ensured.

The problem, if any, with the study is that although Kim has done a brilliant and penetrating study of the engagement of the church in the public sphere with matters of common interest while allowing the church to maintain its ecclesial identity, he seems to have left, hopefully, to others to address how this practical engagement is theologically fleshed out. In other words, what is lacking is a theological reconstruction as to what should constrain the extent of this noble engagement. Notwithstanding this minor and, indeed, humble critique, the book is an excellent piece of work on the significance of mutual practical inter-penetration between the church and the public sphere.

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Joseph Loconte. *The Searchers: A Quest for Faith in the Valley of Doubt*. Nashville: Nelson, 2012. 240 pp. £15.99/\$24.99.

My favorite of the resurrection accounts has always been the story of the two travelers on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35). Though the romantic in me wants to identify Cleopas and his walking companion as husband and wife, the critical consensus these days favors two male friends. Regardless, the story is one of great longing and intimacy and has the power to leap off the pages of the NT and into the heart of the modern reader.

The reason for that power is that we have all felt, at times, like those two travelers. All of us have gone through periods of great disappointment and confusion when our hopes and dreams seemed to have been smashed. The two who left Jerusalem for their seven mile journey to Emmaus felt just that way about the death of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had hoped beyond hope would be the promised Messiah who would save them from the tyranny of Rome.

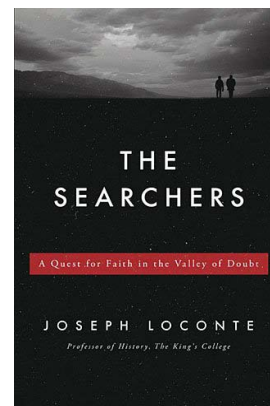
Yes, they had heard rumors that he had risen from the grave, but they dismissed such rumors (as many still do today) as a species of wishful thinking. And then, in the midst of their sorrowful journey, the risen Christ appears and walks with them. Slowly, gently, he opens their eyes, allowing them to understand how all that had happened to Jesus had been prophesied centuries before. Their hearts burn together as they listen, but it is not until they invite their unidentified fellow traveler into their home and participate with him in the breaking of bread, that their eyes are fully opened and they recognize that God has walked among them.

I know that I am far from the only person who has been touched profoundly by the Road to Emmaus. And yet, for some reason, no one has ever thought to write a book structured around that timeless tale. No one, that is, until now. With a firm command of the English language, an eye for detail, and a grasp of the greater patterns of God's divine narrative, Joseph Loconte, associate professor of history at King's College in New York City, has woven for modern (and postmodern) readers a tale of joy and desire that is as timeless as it is timely.

Avoiding both didacticism and polemicism, Loconte pierces to the longings and disappointments we all feel. For the two travelers, the fact that their own religious leaders had collaborated with the Roman oppressors to execute a son of Abraham proved a source of great cognitive dissonance. How could such things be?

In our own day, Christians struggle with the spotted record of the church. Rather than ignore the criticism of the new atheists, Loconte boldly confesses to past atrocities—the Inquisition, in particular—that have been committed by the church. Indeed, he goes so far as to adopt Christopher Hitchens's phrase the "poison of religion," a phrase he defines as "the Will to Power concealed by the language of faith."

Rather than try to conceal the "poison of religion," Loconte makes it clear that the Bible is utterly realistic about this poison and that Jesus himself attacked it head on. Still, he makes it equally clear that religion, especially Christianity, has been the source of most movements for freedom, tolerance, and innate human dignity. Other writers (Timothy Keller, for one) have made similar arguments, but Loconte incarnates the argument by keeping our focus on those two travelers who had been hurt by the poison of religion, yet still yearned for a higher vision.



Which leads Loconte to the core of his book: answering a critique that has reverberated in the modern west from Sigmund Freud to Sam Harris. According to that critique, the Christian story—grounded in the victory of Easter—is merely a species of wish fulfillment. The argument sounds like a powerful one, but it is flawed. Neither the travelers, nor any of the other followers of Jesus, were counting on a bodily resurrection. Despite rumors that Jesus had risen, the two were still skeptical. Yes, the good news that the carpenter from Nazareth had defeated death proved to be the answer to all their desires; but it was decidedly not what they were expecting.

So the wish fulfillment critique runs into trouble when put in its first-century context. But it runs into even greater trouble in the twentieth. In the century leading up to WWI, the Enlightenment had promised to remake the world through secular reason and science. As it turned out, the “most advanced, rational, and civilized nations of the earth had failed to prevent the worst conflict in human history. The verdict was in: progress was an illusion.” And the same proved to be the case for Communism’s promised goal to bring about “the complete transformation of modern society into a secular paradise.” Alas, despite “its talk of equality, rationality, and social justice, Communism could not conceal its wretched crimes in pursuit of its goals.”

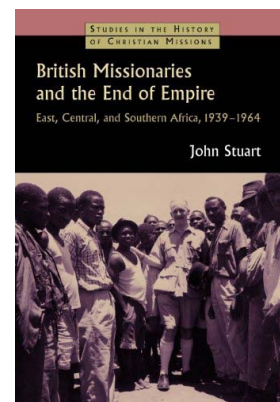
The previous quotes might suggest that Loconte’s book is a partisan one. But it is not. What Loconte offers is a meditation, filtered through the Road to Emmaus, on human need, longing, and desire. Even when he moves away from religion and politics to focus on that other hot-button topic (science), his focus remains on our need to make sense of our world. Whatever position we take on Darwinism, the fact remains that “the mystery of human existence” has not been, and ultimately cannot be, discerned through the “tools of modern science—reason, observation, experimentation.”

Loconte the historian knows that the reason modern people love conspiracy stories is that they long “to give meaning and purpose to events that seem to lack meaning or purpose.” What the travelers on the road to Emmaus learned, and what Loconte urges us to learn in our own day, is that the Resurrection offers just such a key for making sense of death and life, suffering and joy, disappointment and exultation.

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John Stuart. *British Missionaries and the End of Empire: East, Central, and Southern Africa, 1939–1964*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. 240 pp. £26.99/\$40.00.

This book covers a narrow range historically and geographically, but it raises larger questions about what role, if any, missionaries should have in the political affairs of the countries in which they work. Africa was a target for both British missionaries and British colonialism. This book seeks to chart the interrelationship between the missionaries, the colonial government, and the emerging churches. With few exceptions the missionaries are revealed as playing little direct role in the path towards the independence of African countries. Many were not concerned to think about the Africans as people with political ambitions or those who were resentful of colonialism. They were concerned with the task of preaching the gospel message and establishing the



church or churches. When issues arose, most of them acted in accordance with the preconceptions of their own class or inherited politics. Many of them had personal contacts and shared backgrounds with politicians and seemed to have expected, often erroneously, that their local knowledge would have a part in political considerations. Sometimes they discovered too late what was going on in the hearts and minds of their congregations, and although often sympathetic to Africans' concerns, they failed to supply the necessary support at the right time. They had great concerns about the effect on their ministry of any political position. South Africa, as it moved towards apartheid, is always there in the background.

Stuart has given us a good systematic account of what took place, wisely using source materials found in the archives of various Mission Agencies. Many of the leaders of the emerging nations had had the benefit of missionary school education and some had a personal Christian commitment. But what is missing from this book, and probably from the events it describes, is any theological discussion of the role of Christians in the struggle for political liberation from the colonial powers. Even more seriously there seems to have been little real biblical study by evangelicals of the role of race and its implications for inter-racial relationships within the church and state. As Stuart remarks, the missionaries were very often responding to events in an ad hoc fashion and there was not a planned construction of an indigenous church. The true merger of African thought and Christian fervour is probably to be found in the independent churches rather than those that still owe their structures to European patterns. The lack of real theological political thought is probably still to be observed in the lack of biblically based state building in Africa today.

This book will appeal most to those with an interest in the history of African missions. The issues that were faced by the missionaries were particular to that period of the end of colonialism, but the issue of the interface between Christian mission and political ideas is still one that needs to be considered in many parts of the world where the church is growing and active. The research presented in this book can contribute to that discussion.

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